INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
Toward a nuclear strategy: Eisenhower and the challenge of Soviet power, 1952–1956

Taylor, Matthew D., Ph.D.
Rice University, 1992

Copyright ©1992 by Taylor, Matthew D. All rights reserved.
RICE UNIVERSITY

TOWARD A NUCLEAR STRATEGY: EISENHOWER AND THE CHALLENGE OF SOVIET POWER, 1952-1956

by

MATTHEW D. TAYLOR

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Allen J. Matusow, Director
Professor of History

Ira D. Gruber
Professor of History

Francis L. Loewenheim
Professor of History

Richard J. Stoll
Professor of Political Science

Houston, Texas

April, 1992
Copyright
Matthew D. Taylor
1992
ABSTRACT

Toward a Nuclear Strategy: Eisenhower and the Challenge of Soviet Power, 1952-1956

Matthew D. Taylor

Dwight D. Eisenhower assumed the presidency convinced that atomic weapons should be employed as essentially conventional tools for war and diplomacy. Supported by the lessons of the Korean War, a conservative fiscal philosophy, advances in nuclear weapons technology, and an asymmetrical conception of containment, that conviction led Eisenhower to formulate a strategic vision that depended primarily upon nuclear weapons for deterring and fighting both general and limited war.

During his first term, however, the President's views on nuclear weapons and, thus, U.S. national security strategy, underwent a significant evolution. Although U.S. national security policy, military force structure, and war plans remained firmly based on nuclear weapons, by 1956 Eisenhower's readiness to fulfill the military logic of his "New Look" strategy had all but disappeared. Focusing on decision-making at the highest level, this dissertation describes and explains the evolution of Eisenhower's nuclear outlook, paying particular attention to the mistaken estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions, and the hypothesis of American vulnerability, which fueled that evolution.
Acknowledgments

I have always considered myself lucky. On this project I have had the good fortune to incur a wide range of debts which I take great pleasure in recognizing.

The Rice University history department provided generous financial support and a congenial but challenging environment for academic development. The dean of humanities supplied equally generous funding for research, travel and teaching. I am grateful to the Office of Air Force History for awarding me a Dissertation Year Fellowship (1989-1990), which supported essential research in Washington, D.C. I am particularly appreciative of Dr. Richard H. Kohn, then director of the Office of Air Force History, Major Mike Wolfert, and Major Bill Borgiasz for bringing some useful sources to my attention.

Most of my time in Washington was spent at the Library of Congress and National Archives. At the Library of Congress, the professional staff of the Manuscript Reading Room was wonderfully cooperative and provided a comfortable working atmosphere. At the National Archives, I benefitted tremendously from the aid and encyclopedic expertise of John Taylor and Eddie Reese, both of the Modern Military Branch. Also helpful were the staffs of the Naval Historical Center (Washington Navy Yard) and the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsyl-
vania.

Of course, every scholar of the Eisenhower presidency will be forever indebted to the dedicated people at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abeline, Kansas. While in Abeline, I had the pleasure of working with David Haight and Herb Pankrats. No less essential to this project was the support of my friends at Rice's Fondren Library. For many years of favors and support, thank you Sarah, Sara, Ola, Charlotte, Alexis, Scott, Tony, Bob, Jane, Douglas, Jennifer, and Mrs. Hyman.

A long list of friends and colleagues have provided various kinds of support during my years at Rice. I owe special thanks to Ken De Ville, who served as a model of hard work and intellectual integrity, and whose friendship helped me through many crises. Alan Bath, John Daly, A.J. Hood, Jeff Hooten, Caroline Levander, Jing Li, Tom Little, Captain Dana Mangham (USA), Captain Mat Moten (USA), Bill Warren, Sam Watson, and Charles Zelden provided unflagging friendship and encouragement. Additionally, Hood, Moten, and Watson read most of the manuscript as it was completed and offered helpful editorial and intellectual aid. Richard J. Stoll was instrumental in my decision to study the subject of nuclear strategy, and he graciously consented to serve on my dissertation committee.

Alan Bath, Katherine F. Drew, and Carol E. Quillen
offered not only moral support but places to live and work during the summers of 1989-1991. In addition to her irrepressible cheer and charm, Paula Sanders generously offered the use of her computer for the writing of the closing chapters.

I am especially grateful to the students of Margarett Root Brown College at Rice University, who inspired me throughout the final months of the dissertation and honored me with the position of faculty resident associate.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to Katherine F. Drew, Harold M. Hyman, Richard J. Smith, and Albert Van Helden for years of professional guidance.

My deepest gratitude and respect are reserved for my principal teachers, Allen J. Matusow, Francis L. Loewenheim, and Ira D. Gruber. Models of personal and professional integrity, inspirational teachers, patient advisors, and dedicated scholars, it is to their high standards that I will forever aspire.
CONTENTS

Preface: vii

A Note On Terminology: xiv

Chapter I: Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? Truman, Eisenhower, and the Use of Atomic Weapons in Korea. 1

Chapter II: Out With the Old and In With the New? 74

Chapter III: Actions Speak Louder Than Words: Implementing the New Look 142

Chapter IV: The New Look Embattled 196

Chapter V: The New Look Embattled . . . Anew 267

Chapter VI: "Never Let the Enemy Know What You Will Not Do." The Quemoy-Matsu Crisis 302

Chapter VII: "A Nuclear Pearl Harbor"? 366

Chapter VIII: "The Most Important Question in the Free World Today" 417

Conclusion: Sensibility Under Siege 478

Notes 499

Bibliography 617
Preface

In 1952, the United States found itself between two military-technological worlds. Seven years had passed since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but only recently had the United States achieved "atomic plenty" and, on October 31, 1952, successfully tested the world's first thermonuclear device. Not surprisingly, during the long stalemated Korean War, national debate about the future use and importance of nuclear weapons grew enormously.

Bitterly critical of Truman-Acheson military-political strategy during the 1952 presidential campaign, General Eisenhower promised a prompt rethinking of the entire subject. Indeed, no sooner installed in office in January 1953 than the new Republican administration commenced a vast reassessment of U.S. national security policy, which emerged the following year as the so-called "New Look."

At the time, the New Look strategy was widely misunderstood. Some observers dismissed it as merely "more bang for the buck," or interpreted its post-1956 revision as a simple retreat to "nuclear sufficiency." Other critics deplored the administration's increased reliance on nuclear weapons, which they wrongly believed Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had summarized in his "massive retaliation" speech and his occasional boasts of "brinkman-
ship." Eisenhower's new strategy, leading Democrats including Dean Acheson and Adlai Stevenson asserted, foolishly risked nuclear war. His significant reductions of U.S. conventional forces, they charged, forfeited military flexibility and helped the Communists because, short of a general Soviet attack, the U.S. would never respond to aggression with nuclear weapons.

By contrast, between 1955 and 1961, critics both inside and outside of the Eisenhower administration asserted that the President's tight-fisted defense spending and lagging reaction to mounting evidence of the Soviet Union's growing nuclear weapons capability had sacrificed America's nuclear superiority and left the U.S. dangerously vulnerable to nuclear attack.

In the Kennedy-Johnson 1960s, these criticisms were continued and elaborated. In a 1962 survey, scholars ranked Eisenhower among the worst chief executives in U.S. history. Professor Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. described him as an "ineffectual figurehead" and a "sanctimonious fraud." Similarly, the New Look was frequently scorned as a dangerous, penny-wise and pound-foolish policy that offered only a "splendid capacity to blow up the world," invited Communist expansion, and nearly lost the cold war.1

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the first wave of
Eisenhower revisionism began, and among its principal subjects were the former president's nuclear and national security policies. Disillusioned by Vietnam and other perceived Democratic failures, a number of writers harked back to Eisenhower's integrity, prudence, and stability. Historians such as Herbert S. Parmet and Charles C. Alexander characterized Eisenhower's policies as pursuits of the "middle way" or "holding the line." Still, most scholars criticized his nuclear policy as reckless, the product of the President's antiquated fiscal conservatism and Dulles's naive, monolithic view of Communism. 

As the 1970s wore on, and into the 1980s, a second wave of Eisenhower revisionists produced a proliferation of scholarly studies, most notably the work of Stephen E. Ambrose, Blanche Wiesen Cook, Robert A. Divine, John Lewis Gaddis, Fred I. Greenstein, and Richard H. Immerman. Beneficiaries of the opening of the extensive and revealing files at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abeline, Kansas, this generation of scholars discovered not a do-nothing but an activist Eisenhower. They also discovered evidence of a New Look that was considerably more complex and subtle than previously described. Few of the revisionists expressed any enthusiasm for Eisenhower's nuclear-oriented strategy. Many nonetheless admired his persistent efforts at peace and arms control, and acknow-
ledged the limited successes of his nuclear deterrence and crisis management.4

As Sir Herbert Butterfield wisely observed in 1950, history is all "a process of unlearning."5 The work of the Eisenhower revisionists has unraveled and corrected many of the myths and misinterpretations long attached to Eisenhower's person and presidency. New Eisenhower era sources, however, become available almost weekly. Based largely on this continued outpouring of newly declassified and published Eisenhower era documents, this study attempts to bring a new clarity and depth to our understanding of Eisenhower's national security policies and American perceptions of the Soviet threat, 1952-1956.

It has been known, for example, at least since the unraveling of the celebrated "missile gap" in 1962, that many Americans grossly exaggerated existing and expected Soviet military strength during the Eisenhower years. It is not known, however, precisely how these exaggerations came about, who in government supported (and opposed) them, and why they became so influential in U.S. national security policy-making, particularly in the super-secret realm of nuclear weapons strategy. More importantly, we have lacked a thorough understanding of the nuclear weapons views, and the extent to which the trend of exaggerations shaped the outlook, of the dominant nuclear strategist of the decade--
President Dwight D. Eisenhower himself. The present study seeks to answer these questions by providing the first in-depth exploration both of Eisenhower's personal views on nuclear weapons and of nuclear weapons' place in his strategic vision.

This work is not a comprehensive study of Eisenhower's national security policies, which is probably years away and depends upon the release of millions of pages of highly classified Eisenhower era records. Instead, this account centers on what the writer believes to be the most critical portion of Eisenhower's national security and military policies.

The first principal objective of this study is to isolate and trace the evolution of Eisenhower's nuclear weapons views. The very fact of that evolution is also the first of my main arguments and contributions to our knowledge and understanding of Eisenhower's presidency. The subtle changes in Eisenhower's views, particularly during his tumultuous first term, have either been overlooked or over-simplified. On the one hand, the present account demonstrates, I believe, more persuasively than has hitherto been done, how (and why) Eisenhower entered the White House determined that nuclear weapons could, and should, be employed as essentially conventional devices in the conduct of war and diplomacy. On the other hand, the
present account seeks to explain his partial retreat from that conviction, his carefully crafted decisions regarding the deployment and use of nuclear weapons, and his handling of individual crises from Korea to Vietnam and beyond.

Secondly, the present study shows that, by the end of his first term, Eisenhower himself had all but lost the will to implement his own strategic outlook. Despite his enormous political and military prestige, a detailed examination of the newly available record shows how Eisenhower's fundamental position was first challenged and then altered by unwarranted exaggerations of Soviet military capabilities, misguided presumptions of Soviet intentions, and the "hypothesis of American vulnerability."

The present study, however, goes beyond demonstrating that the estimates, assumptions, and convictions concerning Soviet capabilities and intentions and alleged American vulnerability were often mistaken. It suggests that the very foundations, methods and assumptions on which they were based were seriously flawed. Further, this account suggests that the errors and their shaping influence on Eisenhower's nuclear and national security strategies persisted over a number of years, even when available intelligence should have led Washington to more accurate and informed assessments of Soviet power.
Finally, this study suggests that these mistaken assessments may sometimes have been deliberately wide of the mark. Indeed, there can be little doubt that, intentional or not, an outright campaign on American vulnerability was zealously conducted during Eisenhower's presidency.6

A final caution seems in order. This study was begun in the winter of 1988, when Soviet diplomatic archives, to say nothing of Soviet military and intelligence records, were tightly closed. In recent weeks and months, those documents have at last become somewhat accessible, although no one can say with assurance what dramatic disclosures on the Eisenhower 1950s they may contain.

As it is, the present study attempts to show what Eisenhower and his chief advisers knew and believed about the nuclear balance and how they acted on the basis of that judgment. That alone significantly expands our understanding of Eisenhower's presidency, of the dynamics of the nuclear arms race, and of the ideas, individuals, and institutions that vitally shaped the American national security state during a crucial decade.
A Note On Terminology

The terminology used to identify "nuclear" weapons is usually quite generic. That is, all such weapons are commonly categorized in speech and writing as simply "atomic" or "nuclear" or "thermonuclear" weapons. In most discourses these generalizations raise no problems. After all, once one begins talking about weapons whose power is measured in thousands (kilotons, Kt.) and millions (megatons, Mt.) of tons of TNT, it seems almost obscene to insist on distinctions between, say, a 20 kiloton bomb, which proved quite adequate to level Hiroshima, and a 10 megaton weapon which, though some 500 times as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb, would produce a similarly horrible result if dropped on another city. Right? Wrong. The distinctions between "atomic" and "thermonuclear" weapons, particularly during the 1950s, were fundamental. Indeed, the blurring of the two helped to misshape public perceptions of, and the debate over, the New Look.

As noted in the Preface, Eisenhower presided over the revolutionary turn from the atomic to the thermonuclear age. In fact, the thermonuclear explosions of the IVY-Mike device on October 31, 1952, and especially of the CASTLE-Bravo weapon on March 1, 1954, marked as radical an advance in weaponry over the first "atomic" bombs as the Hiroshima
weapon had over conventional iron bombs. The transition to
the next generation of weapons, nonetheless, was not
immediate. Throughout the 1950s, the U.S. arsenal of
"special" weapons included a mix of "atomic" and "thermo-
nuclear" weapons. This created a problem both for the
Eisenhower administration and for the historian. For the
administration, to be able to implement and make credible
its policy of increased reliance upon atomic and thermo-
nuclear weapons, it had to overcome (or at least dull) the
moral repugnance that public opinion attached to all such
weapons. This involved making it clear that, 1) not all
atomic weapons were weapons of mass destruction and 2) that
there was a difference between tactical and strategic uses
of both atomic and thermonuclear weapons. As we shall see,
the Eisenhower administration largely failed to communicate
these distinctions.

For the historian, the problem created is one of
terminology. First, despite the administration's sensiti-
vity to the fact and the problems of distinguishing between
atomic and thermonuclear weapons, documents from the period
usually include blanket categorizations of such weapons as
"atomic" or "nuclear;" sometimes both terms appeared in the
same document. Second, because the issue of tactical
versus strategic use of these weapons was so central to
Eisenhower's strategic vision, to the debate it stirred,
and to the crises it endured, the precise meaning of each, as Eisenhower, his military advisers, and the services defined them, must be clear to the reader.

In technical or scientific terms, the distinction between an atomic and a thermonuclear weapon lies in how the atomic chain reaction that generates the enormous energy release (blast or yield) of each weapon is produced. In an atomic weapon, the chain reaction is produced by nuclear fission, the splitting of the nuclei of isotopes of uranium (U-235) and/or plutonium (Pu-239). In a thermonuclear weapon, the energy release is generated by nuclear fusion, the joining of the nuclei of two hydrogen atoms (thus the term "hydrogen bomb"), usually deuterium and tritium.1

In the present study, the term "atomic" will be used to refer to fission weapons—weapons based on the Hiroshima "Little Boy" and Nagasaki "Fat Man" designs. Most of these weapons had yields of 10-100 kilotons.2 The term "thermonuclear" will refer to fusion weapons—weapons with yields of 1 megaton or more. The term "nuclear" will serve as my all inclusive. For example, when writing about Eisenhower's Basic National Security Policy (BNSP) papers, I will refer to their sections on the use of "nuclear" weapons, meaning all fission and fusion weapons in the arsenal. When quoting directly from a contemporary
document, however, I will not impose my scheme and alter language. Unless otherwise noted, in these cases the reader should assume that, by the use of either "atomic weapons" or "nuclear weapons," the speaker (or note-taker) was being all inclusive. As I do, Eisenhower and his advisers employed the word "thermonuclear" when they wished to refer to weapons of extraordinarily high yields, probably including fusion-boosted fission weapons.

The distinction between the terms "tactical" and "strategic," particularly when attached to nuclear weapons use, is not as easy to make as that between atomic and thermonuclear. Beginning with the allied bombing campaigns of World War II, "strategic" came to be associated with long-range weapons systems (bombers) and attacks against the homeland of the enemy. "Tactical," by contrast, referred to weapons and attacks "whose purpose was to affect directly the course of a tactical maneuver or a battle."

Since the principal instruments of the first fifteen years of the nuclear era were long-range bombers and strikes against targets deep inside the Soviet Union, the wartime definition of "strategic" endured throughout the 1950s. This definition was complicated, however, by the tremendous destructive power of even the least powerful nuclear weapons. Could the term "tactical" be applied
legitimately to a weapon of Hiroshima-size yield even if that weapon were used against a "battlefield" target? Could such powerful weapons be used with any precision, or their effects confined to the battlefield?

Despite public perception to the contrary, the answer to both questions, of course, is affirmative. By 1954-55, the U.S. arsenal included nuclear warheads with yields ranging from less than one to several hundred kilotons, many of which were specially designed for precision delivery against a variety of battlefield targets.3 Yield, however, does not define use.4 Though it might be more appropriately (or efficiently) used to destroy an "urban-industrial complex" (i.e., a city, a more traditionally "strategic" target), in theory a weapon with a yield of 500 kilotons could be used against an enemy artillery line or troop concentration and would then be defined as tactical. That certainly was how Strategic Air Command (SAC) chief General Curtis E. LeMay defined the use of some of his long-range bombers and their high-yield ordnance against NATO theater targets as provided for in the Joint Chiefs of Staffs' war plans.

This author will follow General LeMay's lead on this point. In the manuscript, the term "strategic targets" will refer to a specific class of targets in the Soviet and Communist Chinese homelands: the fundamentals of a
nation's war-making ability, including its own nuclear stockpile and delivery systems, airbases, industrial centers, command and control centers, transportation complexes, and cities (populations/national will). Also included in the strategic category will be strikes by nuclear-armed naval aircraft against Russian and Chinese port cities and their military-industrial complexes.5

Accordingly, "tactical targets" will be used to refer to battlefield and/or theater targets (the latter being forward airbases and support/logistics facilities that provide reinforcement for the battlefield).6 Use of the terms "tactical atomic" or "tactical nuclear" weapons will not be confined to weapons below a certain yield threshold, though in most cases the warheads delegated for use against tactical targets (1952-1957) had yields under 40 kilotons. The phrase "tactical use of atomic (or nuclear) weapons," however, will connote one critical restriction. Any contemplated use of nuclear weapons against population centers or other civilian targets is not (and was not) considered tactical. But nuclear strikes by "strategic systems," like SAC's B-47 or B-36 bombers, against tactical targets, fall under the definition of tactical use.7
I

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?
Truman, Eisenhower and the Use of Atomic Weapons in Korea

By the time Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected President in November 1952, the Korean War had been deadlocked for over a year both on the battlefield and in the negotiations tent. Along the thirty-eighth parallel the opposing armies no longer waged war; they played chess for positions of strength upon a landscape of bald and bloody hills. At Panmunjon the two sides' representatives no longer negotiated; they exchanged soliloquys of demands in a type of theater, playing to world opinion rather than for soldiers' lives, national honor or ideology. In Washington, however, the Truman administration was moving toward drastic measures.

After General Douglas MacArthur met his Waterloo at the Yalu in December 1950, and as late as the spring of 1952, Truman's Korean policy had been governed by circumspection. It was circumspection with an apparent purpose--namely, the maintenance of "containment" and the alignment of military means with political objectives--but circumspection nonetheless. The President refused to make use of the full range of America's military might either to defeat the Communists or force them to accept an armistice. Most
tellingly, Truman and his Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) never seriously considered employing atomic weapons during this time. The primary reason for this was their estimate of Soviet intentions. They believed that Moscow would, in response to American escalation, intervene in Korea and the Far East and, even worse, that the Soviets were much more willing and prepared to wage global war than previously estimated.1

During the second half of 1952, however, upon the recommendation of the new United Nations Commander in Chief (CINCUNC), General Mark W. Clark, President Truman approved a dramatic escalation of U.S. attacks north of the thirty-eighth parallel. Clark, "a well-known supporter of the MacArthur strategy for ending the war in Korea," was overjoyed at this decision.2 It was a small step, in Clark's view of the war, but it was at least a step in the proper direction. Clark understood, as Richard Nixon did in Vietnam twenty years later, that sudden and savage escalation in a limited war can have a profound impact on an adversary. To implement Truman's decision, Clark launched devastating air strikes against previously off-limits targets (hydroelectric plants and transformer stations) located only a few miles south of the Chinese and Soviet borders.

On September 24, Truman went a step further. Reject-
ing Secretary of State Dean Acheson's plea that the U.S. continue to pursue a diplomatic resolution of the Korean stalemate, the President accepted a proposal by the Pentagon to compel an end to the war by applying increased military pressure. Surprisingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) were permitted to instruct Clark to prepare plans for an expanded war and, perhaps, for removal of restrictions on the use of atomic weapons.3

What was it that caused Truman and his JCS to opt for tactical escalation and to consider the use of atomic weapons? The pressures created by the 1952 presidential election campaign, the frustrations accumulated within the administration during two years of indecisive war, and the tremendous growth in U.S. and NATO military power since the beginning of the war, were certainly involved.4 More important, however, were changed estimates of Soviet intentions. Beginning in December 1951 and extending through all of 1952, as the Kremlin displayed a confounding inactivity toward Korea, the administration slowly came to the realization that Moscow wanted nothing to do with the Korean War.5 More specifically, the Kremlin did not wish to risk precipitating a global conflict with the U.S. By late summer 1952, the intelligence community and military commands in the Far East agreed that the Soviets would not intervene directly even if the U.S. extended the war by
atomic strikes against military targets inside China. These conclusions marked a critical, if temporary, stage in the American perception of the Soviet threat. The Truman administration had managed at last to distinguish between what it ominously perceived as a growth in Soviet capability for global atomic war and Soviet intentions concerning the Korean situation.

Despite growing confidence that the USSR wished to avoid direct involvement in a war in the Far East, Truman and the JCS chose in the end not to follow Clark's own plan for victory in Korea. Codenamed OPLAN 8-52, the plan provided for a combined offensive—including large amphibious landings on both Korean coasts, air and naval attacks on military targets inside China, and the use of Chinese Nationalist troops—to bulldoze the Communists back to the Korean waist. The plan did not expressly call for employment of atomic weapons but, as Clark pointed out to Army Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins in a telegram outlining his strategy, he would request prior authority for their use so that they would be available should he later determine that the situation demanded it... which it surely would. Though not explicitly stated in Clark's communication to Collins, any competent commander could see that the neutralization of Communist airfields in Manchuria was a prerequisite for Clark's proposed operation, just as
he could see that atomic weapons were perfectly suited for such targets.

The atomic option was no stranger to the Joint Chiefs; they had first rejected that option in December 1950 when U.N. forces were in retreat from the Yalu and again in the spring of 1951 when a Communist offensive was imminent. Even though the estimates of Soviet intentions and capabilities had brightened, they remained at the heart of the decision to pass over this option a third time in 1952. The story of the evolution of those estimates, and of Truman's atomic decisions during the war, is an important prelude to understanding how Eisenhower sought to use atomic weapons to end that war.

***

The story of American military strategy in Korea begins with NSC 68, "that mischievous document" as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. has described it, which "revolutionized perception of the Soviet threat." The NSC 68 study was originally intended to be a reexamination of U.S. national security policy following the Communist triumph in the Chinese civil war (October 1949), the Soviet atomic weapon test (late August 1949), and the signing of a top secret Sino-Soviet mutual defense treaty (February 1950). Instead, its authors—an ad hoc committee of State and Defense Department officials chaired by Policy Planning
Staff (PPS) director Paul Nitze--transformed NSC 68 into a sensationalist pamphlet designed to justify American rearmament and what John Lewis Gaddis has called "symmetrical" containment. Taking the Soviet atomic test as a starting point, and then building upon a pair of exaggerated intelligence estimates of future Soviet atomic capabilities, the authors of NSC 68 concluded that the Kremlin was building an air-atomic arsenal with the intention of executing a surprise attack on the West. The most likely time for this attack--the "year of maximum danger"--was 1954, when it was estimated that the Soviets would have a stockpile of 200 fission weapons and the capability to deliver 100 of them successfully upon U.S. targets.10 Indeed, the authors believed that the Kremlin wanted to, and would, attack the West once Soviet leaders felt they possessed the necessary atomic superiority to complement their existing conventional superiority. Accordingly, the Policy Planning Staff argued that it was imperative that the U.S. end its austerity defense program and, no matter what the cost, rapidly expand both its strategic and conventional capabilities.11

In composing NSC 68 during the early months of 1950, Nitze and his co-authors, along with the JCS who quickly endorsed the document's recommendations, made two serious errors--the same errors that would later plague the Eisen-
hower administration's assessments of the Soviet military threat. First, they attributed to the USSR the ability to produce rapidly and deliver successfully hundreds of atomic weapons. That the Soviets could construct an atomic device was no longer in doubt after the September 3, 1949 detection of the radioactive remnants of their first fission detonation.12 Similarly, the confidence that Stalin's scientists could make reliable, deliverably-configured atomic bombs rested on creditable evaluations of the quality of Soviet science and upon fears that the spy Klaus Fuchs had provided the Kremlin with indespensible details of U.S. weapons designs.13 However, the presumptions that the Russians could mass produce such weapons and bombers of intercontinental range to carry them, not to mention train competent crews to fly the planes, all rested upon questionable evidence.

The first two presumptions derived from a theory of production capacity. That is, accepting as a given a certain level of industrial capability, if the Soviets had X amount of industrial floor space and Y number of worker-man hours devoted, say, to bomber construction, then they had the capacity to produce Z number of aircraft per month.14 This theory amounted to nothing more than a projection of what the Soviets might do and of what they might be capable.
Such was the method behind the intelligence estimates of Soviet air-atomic offensive capabilities. Translated into policy paper prose by Nitze's ad hoc committee, it became the madness that attributed instantly to the Soviet Union the long-range bombing expertise of the Strategic Air Command and the industrial proficiency of postwar America. At the same time, NSC 68 discounted the ability of American forces to perform up to standards of efficiency and effectiveness equal to that of the Russian attackers.15

By far the most damaging of errors in the early versions of NSC 68 was the extrapolation of Soviet intentions from this misguided analysis of Soviet capabilities. Only eight months prior to the drafting of NSC 68, the CIA had reported that it could find no evidence that Moscow was preparing 'for direct military aggression' in the near future. And other intelligence reports in 1949 and early 1950 showed that the Red Army was anything but ready for war.16 Such analyses, however, were quickly forgotten. So surprised and shocked were the top policymakers at State, Defense and CIA by the Russian atomic test that they panicked and overreacted in their rush to interpret its significance. They mistook the test as an atomic warning shot across America's bow, as proof not only of the ability but of the intent to do battle.17 The result was the NSC 68 policy paper series which served as the foundation of
national security policy for the remainder of the Truman presidency and which, along with the Communist aggression in Korea, transformed official American perception of the Soviet Union, practically overnight, from a ruthless but war-ravaged and rebuilding adversary into a nascent atomic superpower bent on global war.\textsuperscript{18}

This perception worsened during 1950 and 1951. For American policymakers, the outbreak of the Korean War seemed not only to confirm the warnings sounded in NSC 68; it seemed also to justify a revision of them. As Paul Nitze wrote later in his memoirs, "A question that was on everyone's mind, especially Mr. Truman's, was what to expect next from the Soviet Union. Was Korea an isolated instance of local aggression or was it part of a general Soviet-directed offensive?"\textsuperscript{19} Early guesses tended to accept the latter scenario. In August 1950, the JCS's Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) warned that the "year of maximum danger" of a Soviet initiated global war was 1952, not 1954.\textsuperscript{(20)} The intelligence community concurred with this assessment. National Intelligence Estimate 3 (November 15, 1950) concluded,

In the belief that their objective cannot be fully attained without a war with the Western Powers, the Soviet rulers may deliberately provoke such a war at the time when, in their opinion, the relative strength of the USSR is at its maximum. It is estimated that such a period will exist from now through 1954 with
the peak of Soviet strength relative to the Western Powers being reached about 1952. From the point of view of military forces and economic potential, the Soviet Union is in a position to conduct a general war now.21

After Communist Chinese leaders ordered hundreds of thousands of their troops across the Yalu to sweep the U.N. forces off the Korean peninsula--just as Peking had warned they would do if MacArthur pressed his advance toward the Chinese border--this frightening estimate soon hardened into policy (NSC 68/4). To the Truman administration the conclusions were inescapable; "...that we had underestimated Soviet and Chinese intentions, that the dangers were even more grave than we had originally feared. . . ."22

General MacArthur had talked of the atomic option as early as July 1950. He felt that atomic weapons could be used effectively to destroy the bridges and tunnels that linked North Korea to Manchuria and Siberia. By November 1950, however, the gravity of the situation led MacArthur to seek authority to employ atomic weapons against Chinese military targets.23 The President and the Joint Chiefs summarily rejected the request. MacArthur had perhaps been encouraged to venture this request when the President remarked at a November 30 news conference that atomic weapons had always been under consideration for use in
Korea and that, if the decision to use them were made, the "military commander in the field will have charge of the use of the weapons, as he always has." But it was because he had no plans to take this decision that Truman said this. He was trying to send a message of deterrence to Moscow and Beijing. Instead, his words rang loudest in London. Alarmed by the idea of General MacArthur's anxious finger on the atomic trigger and the provocation of a third world war, British Prime Minister Clement R. Attlee rushed to Washington to preach restraint to Truman.

Attlee's concern was unnecessary. Truman had no intention of widening the war. The President was well aware that America's allies in the United Nations Command (UNC) feared such an expansion of the conflict. Moreover, he was determined to deal with the aggression in Korea within the framework of the United Nations and collective security. Therefore it took very little prodding from Attlee for Truman to clarify his position quickly and publicly. More significant, the Joint Chiefs of Staff adamantly opposed atomic escalation. As NSC 68/4 and recent U.S. intelligence estimates indicated, the Soviet Union, not Communist China, posed the real danger to Western security; and Moscow, not Peking, was the source of Communist aggression. 'It would be militarily foolhardy,' the Joint Chiefs argued, 'to embark on a course that would
require full-scale hostilities against great land armies controlled by the Peking regime, while the heart of aggressive Communist power remained untouched. The time was fast approaching, it was assumed, when the USSR would enjoy its greatest position of strength relative to the West, a time when the Kremlin might be expected to precipitate a general war. The proper policy for the U.S., therefore, was to husband its resources and build towards its own position of strength, hopefully to deter Soviet attack but, more crucially, to ensure that the West would prevail in this conflict.

In any case, atomic weapons remained an extremely rare commodity. At the time of the Chinese Communist intervention in Korea, the U.S. stockpile included only some 450 fission weapons. The fabled days of "atomic plenty" for the U.S. still lay two years in the future. Equally important, Truman and his Joint Chiefs did not think of these weapons as just another part of America's arsenal, to be used "just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else," as Eisenhower once put it in 1955. Rather, they thought of them as offering a unique and distinctive level of force, to be used only against strategic targets (cities, industry, airfields, command and control centers) under conditions of total war. Atomic weapons were not to be wasted upon inappropriate, tactical targets--like the
countless concentrations of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army—in wars of limited scope and objective—like Korea.31 By early spring 1951, the Truman administration not only believed the Soviets were readying for a global war; they also became convinced that the Kremlin would, in response to United Nations Command escalation or expansion of the conflict, risk such a war with the U.S. and intervene directly in the Far East. This second conviction derived from a series of intelligence estimates in March and April, reporting a substantial buildup of Soviet forces in the region and predicting that they might soon be used against American forces in Korea and Japan as part of a massive spring offensive.32

Confirming the United States' worst fears, the Soviets deployed air and other forces to forward stations in the Far East during the early spring of 1951, just prior to the failed Second Step offensive. Was Moscow trying to transmit some kind of message or warning to Washington?33 Early in April Truman transmitted a signal of his own. Though the President had considered ordering a wing of atomic-armed bombers to Okinawa to be used against any Chinese or Soviet airbases in the event of Communist escalation, he merely dispatched SAC's 99th Medium Bomber Wing to Guam and no further. And once there its atomic payload was immediately unloaded and sent on to Okinawa.34
Nonetheless, to make certain that his message was received by the Communists, Truman delivered an address on national radio and television. Though ostensibly intended to explain his reasons for firing MacArthur, the speech more importantly included a warning to Moscow and Peking not to escalate the fighting in Korea, as well as the statement that it would be "wrong, tragically wrong, for the United States to widen the war."35

These actions should not be seen for more than they really were. They were not signs that Truman was ready to use atomic weapons in Korea. They were, rather, proof that he was quite prepared to use atomic weapons against the USSR in a situation that threatened global war.36 The same conditions that dictated the response of Truman and the JCS to the December 1950 crisis still obtained. Indeed, estimates of Soviet willingness to initiate general war had grown even more grave, and the Joint Chiefs' convictions concerning the use of atomic weapons in Korea and the overriding primacy of preparing for total war had grown more adamant.37 In testimony before Congress that spring, Air Force Chief Vandenberg declared,

While we can lay the industrial potential of Russia today to waste, in my opinion, or we can lay the Manchurian countryside to waste, as well as the principal cities of China, we cannot do both, again because we have got a shoestring air force.38
JCS chairman Omar Bradley put it more succinctly. Enlarging the Korean conflict by taking the war to Red China, he stated, would involve the U.S. in the "wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy . . . ." 39

Though the Soviets did not launch a global war, in Korea, on April 22 and May 17, 1951, the Chinese initiated the largest ground offensives of the war. Both were utterly defeated by United Nations forces; the much touted Communist air offensive never materialized. Within the space of four weeks the Communists suffered over 160,000 casualties. Now commanded by General Matthew B. Ridgway (MacArthur having been relieved as CINCUNC by Truman on April 11, 1951) and led in the field by Lt. General James A. Van Fleet, the U.S. Eighth Army steamrolled the Communist forces completely out of South Korean territory by the end June. 40 Even when the U.S. Eighth Army appeared on the verge of victory, and Van Fleet urgently pleaded for the authority to press on into North Korea--"'. . . we had the Chinese whipped. They were definitely gone," as he later put it--Truman and the Chiefs refused to depart from their cautious, Clausewitzian course. As a result, they specifically ordered Van Fleet to stop short of Pyongyang and the Iron Triangle and kept America's atomic trump card securely in hand. 41
Throughout the summer and fall of 1951, NSC 68's legacy of exaggerated Soviet capabilities and presumed Soviet intentions lived on. For example, a July study by a committee of the Joint Staff concluded that Russian intervention in the Far East remained a legitimate possibility. Far worse, however, the committee reasoned that "the Soviets are prepared to implement their plans for global conflict at any time and the United States must plan accordingly."42 These gloomy predictions reached their peak a month later. The authors of NSC 114/1, a document updating the progress of the military buildup sanctioned in NSC 68/4, reported that the evaluations of the NSC 68 series had "underestimated Moscow's willingness to risk global war" and that Soviet military strength "had probably undergone [since 1950] a greater absolute increase than that of the Western Powers." Worst of all, the Soviet Union would attain the air-atomic capability to deal a crippling blow to the U.S. sometime in 1953, not 1954.43 In fact, the USSR was at the nadir of its power vis-à-vis the U.S. For the Truman administration, however, the possibilities of Soviet capabilities and intentions continued to haunt national security policy-making.

By the end of 1951, estimates of Soviet intentions as they related to Korea started to undergo a rather dramatic turnaround. The first tangible sign that earlier evalua-
tions were mistaken came only a few weeks after the State Department's Office of Intelligence Research had portrayed the Kremlin as solidly behind Peking and ready to engage the U.S. in global war to support its ally's efforts in Korea. The evidence was contained in a June 23rd address over U.N. Radio in New York, in which Soviet UN delegate Jacob A. Malik said that the Korean War should be resolved peacefully. Most American policymakers doubted the sincerity of the Soviet peace gesture, coming as it did shortly after it appeared that the Eighth Army might force the Communist armies to swim the Yalu. American observers were more inclined to believe the prevailing intelligence assessments of Soviet belligerence or to categorize Malik's speech as blatant propaganda.

Six months later, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon, and the State Department had all reversed themselves. Why? The key was nothing that the Soviets had done in the interim. Rather, it was that they had done nothing. Yes, they had supplied Communist China with a few pilots, hundreds of MIGs and millions of rubles in other aid; that kind of support was accepted in Washington as a given. But the predictions of direct intervention, of exploitation of American preoccupation in Korea by attacks on Western Europe or Japan or Indochina, had proved mistaken. Therefore, by the middle of 1952 (for the CIA as
early as December 15, 1951) many intelligence and military officials went so far as to argue that the USSR would not intervene in the Far East even if the U.S. made extensive air strikes on mainland targets.46

This devaluation of Soviet readiness to enter the Korean conflict marked a watershed for the Truman administration and America's Korea policy. For at the precise moment when U.S. policy-makers began to appreciate Moscow's disinterest in Korea, their estimates and fears of Soviet atomic capabilities experienced another upturn. Yet two major intelligence studies, NIE 31 (September 4, 1951) and SNIE 10 (September 15, 1951), both suggested that the connection between Soviet capabilities and Soviet intention to precipitate total war remained at the center of administration thinking.49

As 1951 progressed, and Russian inaction relative to the conflict in Korea lingered, Washington learned to distinguish between the two. On the one hand, succeeding intelligence estimates presented the Truman administration with pictures of a steadily growing and more effective Soviet atomic arsenal.48 Yet each month the CIA, the State Department and the Pentagon also grew increasingly confident that the Kremlin would not respond violently to American escalation in Korea.49 The acceptance of this disconnection freed the administration to consider a whole
new range of alternatives in Korea. For example, it contributed to Truman's acceptance of General Clark's May 1952 recommendation for air strikes along the Yalu. But what about "the big one"? What about Clark's plan for a war-ending offensive probably involving atomic weapons?

Washington's atomic decision rested on many factors. But one factor that had played a decisive role in earlier decisions by Truman and the JCS was clearly changing. Specifically, U.S. perceptions of the Kremlin's interest in global war evolved nearly as dramatically in 1952 as descending evaluations of Soviet belligerence in Korea. It seems worth recalling that the first versions of NSC 68, prepared in the spring of 1950, had both generated the idea of a Soviet desire to wage a global war and predicted that this was most likely to occur in 1954. In the closing weeks of 1950, NSC 68/4 and NIE 3 revised the "year of maximum danger" to 1952. And NSC 114/1, produced eight months later, warned that earlier estimates had seriously under-stated Soviet intent for global war. But by January 1952, the prevailing sense was that the Kremlin would not "deliberately initiate" general war that year. But the earlier conclusions died hard. As one NIE cautioned, "[T]he possibility of deliberate initiation of general war cannot be excluded even if, judged from the outside, it seems certain that the interests of the USSR would be
better served by other courses of action."50

Still, evidence and advice to the contrary mounted steadily during 1952. For example, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, since January 1951 NATO's supreme commander, the man who every day cast his thoughts across the Elbe to evaluate the Soviet threat, recognized that general war was no more probable in 1952 and 1953 than before the Korean War. Indeed, he believed that Soviet aggression would be a "great blunder."51 Even Secretary of State Dean Acheson began to appreciate that Soviet willingness to risk global conflict had been exaggerated, as he intimated to Prime Minister Winston Churchill early in 1952.(52)

By late summer 1952, reports from America's Far East command (CINCFE) displayed obvious disdain for Soviet abilities. In August a special consultant for the Army, who had just toured Korea and Japan, wrote that all American military commanders in the Far East agreed not only that the Kremlin would not intervene if the U.S. attacked Chinese Communist targets, but that the alleged Communist air superiority had likewise miraculously vanished. Soviet Asia and Manchuria, not Japan, were dangerously vulnerable to air attack. As Admiral C. Turner Joy, chief U.N. negotiator at Panmunjon, observed, "I know of not a single senior military commander of the United States forces in the Far East--Army, Navy, or Air Force--who believed the
USSR would enter war with the United States because of any action we might have taken relative to Red China."53 Similarly, in his response to the Joint Chiefs' order to prepare a plan for a wider war, General Clark replied confidently that the Russians would not be provoked out of inaction by his rout of the Communist Chinese.54

With all signs in the fall of 1952 pointing to Soviet acquiescence in an American thrashing of the Chinese, with U.S. conventional forces standing at more than double their 1950 strength, with the U.S. arsenal approaching "atomic plenty," and with the U.N. field commander begging for an offensive, why did Truman and the Joint Chiefs refuse to sanction OPLAN 8-52 or some variation thereof? There were three reasons. First, the JCS, despite tamed estimates of Soviet global war intentions, held firmly to their conceptions of U.S. strategic war plans and the proper uses of atomic weapons. In their judgment, America's growing atomic stockpile should be reserved for use in general war with the Soviet Union.55 A wider war with Communist China, even one that resulted in an American victory, would be inconclusive in the larger struggle of freedom versus Communism and, therefore, squander valuable strategic resources. Second, Truman held to his view of the distinctiveness of atomic weapons. Until the end, he saw them as ultimate weapons, not battlefield weapons. The application
of such power, he believed, was completely inappropriate for limited wars and limited objectives.56

Finally, and most important, Truman and his chief advisers were haunted by possibility. Though during 1952 they had begun to grasp that the probability of a Soviet-initiated general war—particularly one arising out of the Korean situation—was unlikely, they could not shake the possibility of such an eventuality. Two years of believing that the Kremlin sought conflict nagged them. Two years of believing that Soviet capability for atomic war amounted to intent for atomic war had made too deep an impression to allow them to risk the use of America's full power.57 Even as hundreds of American soldiers died each week in Korea, and as his administration steadily lost the confidence of the American people, Truman remained unwilling to unleash the power at his command.

Dwight D. Eisenhower shared none of these biases or ghosts. As NSC 68 had revolutionized perceptions of the Soviet threat and dominated the last years of Truman's presidency, so Eisenhower's atomic weapons policies would revolutionize America's national security system and dominate his entire tenure. And it all started with Korea.

***

Exactly three weeks after his inauguration, President Eisenhower proposed to the members of the NSC that the U.S.
use atomic weapons to bring an end to the war in Korea. Less than four months after Truman had rejected General Clark's OPLAN-8-52 and resigned to the hope of a negotiated armistice, Eisenhower was suggesting a kind of action his predecessor had never considered: use of atomic weapons not as response to Communist escalation but as tactical weapons against battlefield targets. What conditions or factors had changed in the interim to allow such a fundamentally different approach? The most significant change, by far, was the change of presidents. Put simply, Eisenhower thought differently from Truman, especially about atomic weapons and the nature of the Soviet threat. While his predecessor had come to think of atomic weapons as weapons of the last resort, reserved for general conflict with the USSR, Eisenhower, during his first months in office, quickly came to think of them as weapons for conventional use. And while Truman and his team had exaggerated Soviet capabilities and intentions, the new President assessed the Russian bear without discounting American capabilities and without allowing imagined possibilities to outweigh what he judged as probabilities.

***

Shortly after Truman dismissed Douglas MacArthur, Hearst reporter Bob Considine visited Eisenhower, then Supreme Allied Commander, NATO, at SHAPE headquarters in
Paris, to ask his opinion of his old boss and the circumstances surrounding his firing. Considine asked Eisenhower how he felt about the President's order that prevented MacArthur from bombing targets north of the Yalu River. "Confidentially," Eisenhower responded, had he been in MacArthur's position he would have "bombed the Yalu River and told the Pentagon about it afterwards." Still in uniform as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), and formally a member of the Truman administration until June 1, 1952, the general never said such things in public. Still, as his remarks to Considine revealed, this did not prevent Eisenhower from forming strong opinions about Korea and related topics.

One such topic was atomic weapons. First as Army Chief of Staff (December 1945-May 1947), and later as NATO chief (January 1951 to June 1952), Eisenhower gained substantial knowledge of the nation's atomic arsenal. Struggling as NATO commander with the problem of constructing a defense capable of stopping the Red Army from overrunning Europe, Eisenhower quickly grasped the potential contribution of atomic weapons.

December 1951 marked a turning point in General Eisenhower's attitude toward atomic weapons. Early that month, he and his staff at SHAPE were briefed on the findings of Project VISTA. Jointly sponsored by the three Services and
conducted at the California Institute of Technology, VISTA originated as a study of tactical air-support problems in Korea. By mid-1951, however, it had evolved into an analysis of the applicability of atomic weapons to ground warfare both in Korea and the Eurasian theater.61 Essentially, the report concluded that the extensive use of tactical atomic weapons could thwart ground offensives, for example, by hitting infantry concentrations and enemy airbases.62 But prevailing Air Force doctrine and existing U.S. war plans were based on mass strategic rather than tactical use of atomic weapons. VISTA, the Air Force brass were convinced, was part of a conspiracy led by J. Robert Oppenheimer to "denigrate the importance and effectiveness of strategic air power." They therefore made sure that VISTA was rejected by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and thereafter buried.63

But not before it was presented to Eisenhower. The general found the study's conclusions "vastly encouraging" and immediately engaged the project leaders in discussion of the types of tactical weapons systems he would like to have in Europe.64 Here, he recognized, was a way to close the superiority gap in conventional forces enjoyed by the USSR. And here was evidence that the awesome power of atomic weapons could be tailored to battlefied use and the achievement of finite objectives.
Though they were not Eisenhower's most immediate concern at the time, he must have recognized VISTA's immediate ramifications for the situation in Korea. Not only had the study found that tactical atomic weapons could be devastatingly effective against conventional armies; it also predicted that appropriately sized warheads and delivery systems (fighter-bombers and 280mm cannon) would be available within a year.65

These predictions soon proved to be accurate. During the early months of 1952, the Atomic Energy Commission and the Pentagon conducted an extensive series of tests in Nevada--code-named TUMBLER-SNAPPER--which demonstrated the reliability of tactical warheads. As AEC chairman Gordon E. Dean told members of the press invited to observe one of these tests,

Today, atomic weapons are thought of as tactical as well as strategic weapons--that is, they are thought of as weapons that can be employed by military forces in the field against other military forces in the field.66

Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with Dean's assessment, but only in the context of the defense of NATO and general war with the Soviet Union, not in Korea. If Eisenhower ever shared any of their attitudes or assumptions, he began to shed them after his VISTA briefing and was completely free of them by the time he entered the
White House.

The second benchmark in the formation of Eisenhower's attitude toward the Korean War and atomic weapons came during his trip to Korea in early December 1952. Throughout the presidential campaign, the GOP candidate had avoided committing himself to any specific courses of action where the war was concerned. The only concrete proposition he offered involved increasing both the size of the South Korean armed forces and their part in the fighting. Contrary to rumors at the time, he had no secret plan to end the war. Eisenhower was not being coy; he simply was unsure of which road led to a resolution of the conflict.67

Eisenhower did know which roads not to take. Neither concession nor withdrawal was an option. Both amounted to appeasement, and Eisenhower the general had learned too well the lessons of the Rhineland and Munich (and Yalta and the loss of China, he would claim during the campaign) to be tempted to settle for an easy peace. Full scale war with Red China on the Asian mainland also was out. Eisenhower also recognized that course as militarily insane.68

So what options remained? The path between these two extremes appeared to offer only more of what Truman had already tried to no avail: continued but confined military pressure along the 38th Parallel to force an armistice.
For the moment, Eisenhower chose not to choose. Instead, he decided that the dilemma required he travel to Korea to assess firsthand the situation and the alternatives.

Whether or not Eisenhower intended it, this decision represented the first step in his solution to the stalemated war. When he announced dramatically on October 24, 1952, that he would go to Korea, the implied message was unmistakable: the best-known military hero of the world's greatest war would bring an end to America's most frustrating war.69 This certainly was the message most Americans heard. As the election neared, the majority of the electorate not only was fed up with Truman and the war—which had cost some 44,700 American dead and wounded since the truce talks began in 1951—they also favored a strategy that included bombing targets in China and victory as an objective.70 When Eisenhower won a landslide victory twelve days later, the message must have been equally clear to Peking. Little is known about Chinese Communist leaders' knowledge of American politics. Perhaps they could not distinguish between Eisenhower the Supreme Allied Commander in World War II and of NATO, and Eisenhower the Republican politician. It is difficult to imagine what the Chinese Communist leadership must have thought when, in the midst of a prolonged war, the American people chose their
greatest general as President. Certainly one conclusion was that the U.S. was ready to press the war to a military end.71

Ten days before the president-elect departed New York for Korea on November 29, 1952, he met, presciently, with AEC chairman Gordon Dean. For two hours Dean briefed Eisenhower on the nation's atomic, and now hydrogen, weapons programs. The first issue discussed, naturally, was the October 31st thermonuclear test. Codenamed MIKE, the device had yielded a horrendous 10.4 megatons (some 500 times the power of the Hiroshima bomb) and vaporized an entire island. The impact on the American defense program was revolutionary, Dean told Eisenhower. Within a year or so, the AEC and Pentagon should be ready to test a deliverable thermonuclear weapon.72

More important, however, Dean discussed with Eisenhower the programs' progress in tactical weapons and, specifically, their applicability to the war in Korea. Dean explained that the development of smaller, lighter weapons for battlefield use was one of the Commission's highest priorities.73 During the past year and a half or so, the U.S. had perfected and begun to deploy atomic-capable fighters. In a few months, the 280mm atomic cannon would be ready to deploy. Tests in Nevada had shown that ground troops could, with cover, be positioned as close as
four miles to a Hiroshima-size blast and not suffer harm.74 Finally, the stockpile had been increased to some 1500 warheads.75 The U.S. now possessed no shortage of atomic weapons for any and every kind of target.

Eisenhower arrived in Korea on December 2, 1952. What he saw there convinced him that the stalemate was "intolerable."76 As he saw it, the U.N. was foolishly catering to the Communists' strengths, fighting along a static front in a game of men and guns, according to a list of rules all favoring the enemy. American and South Korean forces numbered some 768,00 men and were suffering more than 1,000 casualties per week.77 Worse yet, the delegates at Panmunjom peace-talks were not even meeting. For the hero of Normandy, the conclusion was obvious: "We could not stand forever on a static front and continue to accept casualties without any visible results. Small attacks on small hills would not end this war."78

Neither would a conventional offensive. This was the action South Korean President Syngman Rhee and General Clark expected Eisenhower to endorse. Both hoped to propose such a strategy to him while he was in Korea, but the President-elect did not give them the chance. In his opinion, striking north by conventional means was the "least attractive of all plans."79 Communist forces were too numerous (1.2 million) and too well dug in. Besides,
this would be playing their game all over again. If an offensive were called for, and it might be, Eisenhower thought, it must be quick and decisive and rely on America's strengths--air and naval firepower--and that meant a possible blockade of the Chinese coast and atomic strikes on Chinese military targets.80

Eisenhower did not want to have to make this choice. He much preferred a peaceful settlement. But he was quite prepared to make it, if necessary, for the war had to be ended. Not only was it costing American lives, but it also threatened to undermine so many of the objectives he held for his first year in office. Eisenhower's mind, therefore, was made up. The message would be delivered to the Communists: if they continued to obstruct progress toward an armistice, the U.S. would move decisively without limitations on weapons or borders.81

Eisenhower wasted little time in implementing his strategy. When he arrived home in New York after his trip to Korea, he made a brief statement to the press, which concluded, "'We face an enemy whom we cannot hope to impress by words, however eloquent, but only by deeds--executed under circumstances of our own choosing.'"82 On its face it, the ominous implications of Eisenhower's statement were inescapable. In fact, he had selected this phrase with extra care. He borrowed it directly from the
May 1952 Life essay in which John Foster Dulles (Secretary of State designate) had outlined the Republican Party's foreign policy philosophy. Dulles had written that U.S. policy, in case of of overt Communist aggression, should not be Truman-style containment, reacting to Communist challenges and seeking to match them man for man, gun for gun. Rather, the U.S. should "strike back where it hurts, by means of our own choosing." In other words, Dulles argued that the U.S. should challenge Communist aggression not where the aggression flared or with the scale of violence the Communists had selected, but where the aggression originated and with a level of violence calculated to punish Moscow or Peking and deter them from future aggression. Likewise, the implication of Eisenhower's statement was that the U.S. would no longer play to the Communists' strengths—at Panmunjon and along the 38th Parallel—but would move to end the war with the means and at the places best suited to American strengths.

Concurrent with Eisenhower's thinly veiled warning of December 14th, Chinese Premier Chou En-lai announced Peking's non-recognition of the UN General Assembly's resolution on POWs. Apparently the Chinese were prepared to see the deadlock continue. Chou's statement dashed the faint hopes of those who thought that the Communists might be anxious to reach a settlement before the more militant
Republicans came to power. It also condemned those in Korea to at least six more weeks of fighting and death, for it was unlikely that the American Government would take action of any consequence during the presidential transition.

Once the transition was completed, however, the pace of events quickened. In his first State of the Union Address, on February 2, 1953, Eisenhower announced he had ordered the U.S. Seventh Fleet out of the Taiwan Straits. The U.S. Navy would no longer serve as a buffer between Red and Nationalist China, preventing either from exploiting the hostilities in Korea as an excuse to attack the other.85 Though the President vowed that this was not an aggressive move on the part of the U.S., his intent was clear, nonetheless. Like his Korean tour, this "put the Chinese Communists on notice that the days of stalemate were numbered, that the Korean War would either end or extend beyond Korea."86

The President's implication that Chinese Nationalist troops might be used on the mainland struck at the heart of Peking's phobias. It indicated that if Peking remained intransigent and Eisenhower decided therefore to extend the war, that extension might not be limited to a pursuit of victory in Korea. It might well include as an objective the ousting of the Communist regime. Eisenhower, of
course, had no such intention. The practical results of removing the Seventh Fleet--beyond ruffling Peking's feathers--extended no further than permitting an intensification of CIA-supported Nationalist raids of the mainland coast. At the time, however, Mao Zedong and his government could not be certain of the President's intentions.87

But the Chinese Communists were unintimidated nonetheless. Five days after American vessels vacated the Straits, General Clark reported from Tokyo that the Chinese in Korea appeared to be massing for a spring offensive. He estimated that between one and three fresh armies were en route from Manchuria and, more disturbingly, that the Chinese Communists were using the Kaesong sanctuary--demilitarized by mutual agreement--as a hiding place for these troops. Clark, a soldier long frustrated by the constraints under which he had to fight in Korea, obviously bristled at this violation. He urged the JCS that he be allowed to put an end to it. If the Communists made offensive use of forces from the Kaesong-Munsan area, Clark proposed to annul the existing accord for security of the negotiations area and "attack immediately" with "all available weapons."88

Two days after his first report, Clark again cabled the Chiefs, this time detailing the buildup of Communist air strength in Manchuria. If the Communists chose to
attack, Clark predicted that they would make use of this considerable air force. In that case, he advised that it was "mandatory" the U.N. air forces be allowed to destroy these aircraft before they left the ground.89

Clark's reports and the situation in Korea served as the main order of business for the National Security Council at its February 11th meeting. After briefing the Council on Clark's recommendations, JCS chairman Omar Bradley said that the Chiefs opposed granting him authority to strike at Communist forces. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles offered that the U.S. ought at least to abrogate the sanctuary arrangements. The President agreed with Dulles and directed him to discuss this move with the UNC allies. But that was not all. Eisenhower immediately added that, if Clark's assessment were correct, the U.S. should eliminate the Communist concentrations with tactical atomic weapons. Three full armies crammed into this one area would make an excellent target, he thought. As always, Dulles was quick to support the President. We have got to eliminate "this false distinction" between atomic and all other weapons that the Soviets have fabricated, he argued. We cannot allow this falsehood to prevent us from making use of our arsenal where it is appropriate.90

General Bradley, on the other hand, urged caution.
The previous day, he told an executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that air strikes anywhere in Communist China would provoke massive Soviet intervention. Now he warned the NSC against making any hint of atomic weapons use to U.S. allies. The President, no less frustrated than General Clark with the paradoxes of limited war, shot back at Bradley, if our allies don't want us to use these weapons, "we might well ask them to supply [the] three or more divisions" it would take to defeat the Communists without atomic weapons.91 On the more immediate issue—Clark's requests—Eisenhower, however, concurred with the Joint Chiefs. Clark would not be given the authority he desired. United Nations reaction to a Communist air offensive would be governed by existing orders.92 Still, the President remarked, shaking his head, why the U.N. command had ever decided to forfeit the right of hot pursuit of enemy aircraft remained a mystery to him.93

On the issue of air retaliation across the Yalu, the NSC ruled in favor of restraint, though the Chiefs final order left room for escalation.94 Concerning the possible employment of atomic weapons, the official record is less clear. Other than Bradley's contention about the allies, there is no record that anyone challenged the President's reasoning that an atomic strike would be most effective against the Kaesong staging area. Then again, questioning
Eisenhower's judgment on a military matter was not often done.

The major offensive General Clark predicted never materialized. Instead, the fighting in Korea dragged on, almost somnambulent in its plodding attrition. The U.N. command continued its air offensive, bombing in search of that elusive pressure point which, once hit, would cause the Communists to throw down their arms in exhaustion. And the Chinese repeated, night after night, small attacks on even smaller hills, hoping the American people would tire of war before their soldier-President tired of restraint. The lull was contagious. The administration drifted temporarily, the threats for the moment ceased. Eisenhower's attention was distracted, as the Republican right pressed him for action on its agenda—the Bricker amendment, a balanced budget, and lower taxes.

The Communist leadership used the pause to hold a powwow. On February 24th, a Chinese delegation arrived in Moscow. Did comrade Stalin offer them words of wisdom, encouragement, perhaps chastisement for their struggle with the imperialists? Words of farewell would have been more appropriate, for less than two weeks later, the Soviet dictator was dead. What happened at this final meeting remains unknown. In any case, with this earthquake, Korea was thrown back to just off center stage.
The central issue for the new administration was how to respond to Stalin's death, how to take advantage of what surely was a signal opportunity.96 State Department Policy Planning Staff Director Paul Nitze recommended that the administration seize the moment to press for a Korean settlement. In its momentarily weakened condition, Nitze surmised, Moscow could be tempted to accept an armistice. If the U.S. were willing to apply enough pressure, the Soviet Union might cave-in and pull Peking along in its wake. The pay-off for the U.S. would be enormous: possible creation of a Sino-Soviet rift, enhancement of American strategic military flexibility, and removal of a problem area between the U.S. and its key allies.97

For the first, and perhaps last, time in their association, John Foster Dulles was in basic agreement with Nitze (whom he would soon oust from his position at the State Department).98 Indeed, Dulles was a couple of steps ahead of Nitze. The potential for driving a wedge between Moscow and Peking was something he and Eisenhower had already deduced.99 As the secretary of state explained to British foreign secretary Anthony Eden the day of Stalin's death, Dulles believed that America's anti-Communist policy in Asia hinged upon the creation of pressures on Communist China. Keeping the heat on Peking, and especially aggravating Sino-Soviet differences, would make Mao far less
able to pursue his aggressive ambitions in Indochina and Taiwan. Unlike Nitze, however, Dulles was not so anxious to use this strategy to seal a quick armistice. Rather, he hoped to parley the confusion caused by Stalin's death into a better settlement than previously anticipated.

The intimidating shadow of America's atomic arsenal would be critical to accomplishing these goals. In his meeting with Eden on March 6, 1953, Dulles repeated an important point he had made during the NSC's February 11 meeting: the U.S. could not allow the "stigma of immorality" to attach to atomic weapons. Second only to Eisenhower's fiscal philosophy, this idea was at the very heart of the new administration's national security goals. As the Korean conflict dragged toward its denouement, Eisenhower was beginning to formulate what would become the New Look (Chapter II). In this strategy, an increased dependence on atomic weapons held the key to lower defense spending, to flexibility and escalation dominance in responding to Communist aggression, and to an effective deterrent against general and limited war. This was why the president and secretary of state were so interested, not necessarily to see atomic weapons used, but to see them somehow conventionalized, de-mystified.

If push came to shove in Korea, Dulles confided to
Eden, the administration would consult with the British Government on a decision to widen the war. However, once this decision had been made, use of atomic weapons would not be open to question. Dulles thereby denied Churchill and Eden the power to veto American use of atomic weapons in Korea. Similar to U.S. policymakers in 1950 and 1951, Churchill was consumed by fear of the Soviet Union's growing atomic capability, but for a different reason. Churchill was convinced that in a general war the British isles would be an easy and early target for an air-atomic attack. In terms of the Korean crisis, the Prime Minister believed that American use of atomic weapons would provoke Soviet intervention and, thereby, risk escalation to general war and dreaded annihilation of the United Kingdom. Stalin's death and the Kremlin's subsequent "peace offensive" reinforced the aging Churchill's view that escalation in Korea would be a deadly error. He therefore redoubled his efforts not only to secure an agreement with Washington for prior consultation but especially to get Eisenhower to participate in a three-Power summit. Harold Macmillan, then Britain's Minister of Defense, wrote of Churchill's sentiments,

He believed, and continued to believe, that the supreme moment had come. He regarded his efforts to prevent a third world war as the final service he might give to the nation and to the world.
Eisenhower was not insensitive to the accommodationist mood generated in Europe by Stalin's death, the "peace offensive," the Russian military threat, and NATO's economic problems (among other factors). Indeed, it was a source of constant worry for him. Almost every administration policy was measured and scrutinized for the effects it might have on collective security, the ratification of Eisenhower's cherished European Defense Community treaty, and allied confidence in American commitment to Europe. And it was with Europe in mind that the President decided to respond to Stalin's death by making his April 16th "Chance for Peace" speech.

Meanwhile, the continued war in Korea evoked less pacific sentiments from the President. Despite his old friend Churchill's pleadings for a summit, and new Soviet premier Georgi Malenkov's March 15 proclamation of Russian readiness to resolve international disputes peacefully, Eisenhower continued to frame his Korean policy in terms of war fighting. On March 21, 1953, he directed that the Pentagon quickly produce a plan for a massive U.N. offensive. As his special assistant for national security affairs, Robert Cutler, informed Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, the President had specified that the projected offensive be designed to drive up to the Korean waist, dealing maximum damage to Communist forces. More
significant, Eisenhower also ordered that the inclusion of atomic weapons in this plan be guided solely by "military judgment as to the advantage of their use on military targets."106

Within a week of his order, the Joint Chiefs of Staff produced a preliminary finding on the use of atomic weapons in an American offensive. Submitted to Secretary Wilson on March 27, the Chiefs' report noted:

The efficacy of atomic weapons in achieving greater results at less cost of effort in furtherance of U.S. objectives in connection with Korea points to the desirability of re-evaluating the policy which now restricts the use of atomic weapons in the Far East.

In view of the extensive implications of developing an effective conventional capability in the Far East, the timely use of atomic weapons should be considered against military targets affecting operations in Korea, and operationally planned as an adjunct to any possible military course of action involving direct action against Communist China and Manchuria.107

That same day Generals Bradley, Collins, and Vandenberg, and Admiral Fechteler (the JCS less Marine Commandant Lemuel Shepherd) met with Paul Nitze and S. Everett Gleason, the deputy executive secretary to the NSC, to discuss the atomic weapons issue. It quickly became evident that the Army and Policy Planning Staff were joined in solid opposition to their use. General Collins informed Nitze that the JCS had just forwarded the above paper to Secretary Wilson, recommending that atomic weapons be
considered for use in Korea. The Army Chief added that he disagreed with this action. The Communists were simply dug in too well. Tests in Nevada, he reminded his listeners, showed that troops, if well covered, could survive an atomic blast at very close range.108

Nitze told the Joint Chiefs that State Department officials had debated the issue with the NSC's special panel of consultants.109 The consultants favored employing atomic weapons in Korea, arguing that the U.S. had not spent years of research and billions of dollars developing these weapons not to use them. The only way to settle on their efficacy (and, perhaps, win the war in the process) according to the consultants, was to test them in combat. Nitze disagreed. American employment of atomic weapons would alienate U.S. allies and, if they did not prove decisive, devalue the deterrent power of the arsenal. Finally, resorting to a favorite and often-repeated warning, Nitze claimed that American use might draw Soviet retaliation in kind.110

General Bradley cautioned Nitze that the consultants' opinion had gained broad approval within the Pentagon. An offensive limited to conventional weapons was certain to mean high American casualties. The U.S. might have to use every weapon at its disposal to win, Bradley concluded. The American people would stand for no less. Air Force
Chief Vandenberg weighed in against Collins. If the President decided to employ atomic weapons, he stated, we should use them against Communist airfields in Manchuria, for one could be certain they would be damned effective against those targets. Collins tried to counterattack. The U.S. should be more concerned with the exposure of its own troops to atomic attack, he warned Vandenberg. U.N. bases at Inchon and Pusan, and any amphibious force deployed onto North Korean shores, would make ideal targets for enemy atomic weapons.111

Eisenhower explained his own view of the proper military strategy and tactics to pursue in Korea to the NSC on March 31, 1953. In his judgment achieving a "sound tactical victory" by means of a conventional offensive was possible, but the difficulties and costs involved were unreasonable. It would require a substantial enlargement of American forces on the peninsula which the Communists would surely recognize and easily counter. In short, securing a victory (forcing the enemy behind the Korean waist and into an armistice) with conventional forces would necessitate nearly full mobilization. Atomic weapons offered a solution to this problem. Eisenhower admitted that, within Korea itself, there were not many good targets for atomic strikes. Still, he argued, they offered a shot at a "substantial victory" over the Communists.112
Robert Cutler, directing the flow of the meeting as always, asked the NSC consultants if they would support pursuit of a military victory in Korea if the Communists continued to obstruct the armistice talks. David B. Robertson answered that the consultants felt the American people would "support an all-out effort" if an armistice seemed out of reach. Fellow consultant Deane W. Malott agreed with Robertson. The U.S. ought at least be willing to use "a couple" of atomic weapons to break the deadlock in Korea.113

The President clearly favored some variation of this idea. A few atomic weapons, well placed on troop concentrations, supply lines and Manchurian airfields, could reduce the Communist war effort to chaos. In terms of military strategy and tactics it made perfect sense; inflict maximum damage while sustaining minimum losses. Politically, however, this option posed serious problems. Eisenhower told the NSC that the U.S. should use atomics in Korea, but the reaction of the allies to this would be terribly negative. Secretary Dulles echoed the President's concern. "[S]omehow or other the tabu which surrounds the use of atomic weapons must be destroyed," he declared, but world opinion today makes their use almost impossible.114

The seriousness with which the President and NSC considered atomic warfare is revealing, for just three days
before North Korean President Kim Il Sung and Communist forces commander Peng Dehuai had responded affirmatively to General Clark's proposal for an exchange of sick and wounded POWs. And only one day before the meeting, the New China News Agency had broadcast a statement by Chinese Premier Chou which confirmed the offer by Kim and Peng and, more importantly, seemingly accepted the concept of voluntary repatriation.115 This appeared to be a major breakthrough. Communist insistence upon involuntary repatriation had been the single insoluble issue in the armistice negotiations since December 1951.

Why had the Communist side suddenly decided to give in on this point? Had Eisenhower's threats of a wider war been effective? Had Moscow grown tired of financing the Communist effort and, perhaps, become fearful of being pressed into confrontation with a vastly superior United States? Had the debilitating effects of the conflict on a Chinese society still unrecovered from decades of civil and foreign war at last convinced Peking that it was time to withdraw?116

The President and other administration supporters of a tough stance in Korea—as the March 31st NSC session demonstrated—were not ready to accept Chou's words as proof that peace was at hand. Nor were they prepared to shy away from considering the use of atomic weapons on the basis of
warnings that such use would risk the possibility of Soviet retaliation. This was the heart of Nitze and Collins and Robert Bowie's (Nitze's replacement at PPS) case against Eisenhower's escalatory instincts, and they could, and did, cite the most recent intelligence to support it.

In January 1953, Nitze had argued that the growth in Soviet air-atomic capabilities "raises a doubt whether our net capability to injure the Soviet Union is increasing." More frighteningly, Nitze added, "the net capability of the Soviet Union to injure the United States must already be measured in terms of many millions of casualties and many billions of property damage and is rapidly increasing." This situation, the Policy Planning Staff director concluded, "leads me to question whether the U.S. Government will be willing to use the atomic threat or follow through on it in the event of any Soviet move short of direct atomic attack on the United States."

A March 5 National Intelligence Estimate had suggested that the Soviets had the air-atomic capability not only to hamper U.S. industrial mobilization and wartime reinforcement of allies but also to severely reduce SAC's retaliatory capabilities.118 And NIE-80, "Communist Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action in Korea," noted that the Communists were "capable of launching a major ground and/or air attack [in Korea] with little or no warning." The
Soviet Union itself had some 5,600 aircraft in its Far Eastern Air Force, 1,100 of which it could send against American forces in Japan and Korea.119

Eisenhower acknowledged that the existence of a Soviet air-atomic capability made it possible for Moscow to retaliate in kind for American use of atomic weapons in Korea or Manchuria, but he refused to concede that this was at all probable. Indeed, he believed that Nitze and Collins and Bowie had the equation backwards. Given America's unquestioned atomic superiority, it was the Soviets who should be worried about vulnerability.120 A majority of the intelligence community and Joint Chiefs had come to agree with the President's judgment as against Nitze's. Chairman Omar Bradley, responding to NSC 141 and Nitze's "Chicken Little" memo thereon, had asserted that both rested on exaggerations of Soviet capabilities and intentions.121 Sustaining a trend in assessments begun more than a year before, the CIA concluded in early April 1953 that despite Soviet capabilities in the region, "...the Kremlin has sought to limit its own role in the Korean war and has not sought to use the war as an excuse for initiating broader hostilities." The Communists would sustain the pressure in Korea by military operations, the CIA advised, but they had been forced to do so from a defensive posture.122

To Eisenhower, Secretary Dulles, and the JCS majority,
these evaluations, combined with Chou's concession and Moscow's spring thaw, apparently suggested that the policy of intimidation was working. But America was still at war, the situation on the ground in Korea remained deadlocked, and Communist words had yet to be matched by Communist deeds. Accordingly, Eisenhower and the Chiefs continued to plan for war; and as the President would come to believe more and more throughout 1953, planning for war necessitated planning to use atomic weapons.

Just how far Eisenhower's attitude had carried America's atomic war-fighting policy from the days of the Truman administration was vividly visible in NSC 147.(124) In this paper, submitted to the NSC on April 2, 1953, the Policy Planning Staff and NSC Planning Board analyzed possible courses of action in Korea. Their analysis centered around a JCS annex which outlined six alternatives for U.S. action in the absence of an armistice. Significantly, the annex was based on the Chiefs' March 27 opinion on the need to consider the use of atomic weapons.

The Chiefs grouped the alternatives under two broad categories: actions under current restrictions on military operations, and actions with these restrictions removed. Options in the first category included, (A) maintaining the present level of military pressure and increasing the size of the ROK army; (B) increasing pressure by
intensified ground, air and naval action, with the aim of increasing Communist losses and forcing an armistice; (C) launching a ground offensive designed to push forward to the Korean waist, inflict maximum losses, and force a favorable settlement. The second category included, (D) gradually intensifying military pressures, especially through air attack and naval blockade of Manchuria and China, with the possibility of a ground offensive, to force a settlement; (E) using a coordinated offensive to advance to the waist, including a blockade and air attacks on Manchuria and China; (F) launching a "large-scale" offensive, blockade and air attacks on Manchuria and China to destroy Communist forces and win a unified, non-Communist Korea.126

One sentence in NSC 147 stood out from all others. In it the JCS specified that each one of the six options, except A, permitted the use of atomic weapons.127 These plans were not for retaliation against possible Soviet intervention or to avert impending military disaster. They were for tactical purposes in the course of normal operations in a limited war, something the same Joint Chiefs of Staff had never considered in the Truman administration. Given the wording and implication of the Joint Chiefs' March 27 report, this was not surprising, for the true sense of that report warned that any expansion of U.S.
operations in Korea without the use of atomic weapons would be foolish and prohibitively expensive.128

However, because NSC 147 was mostly the product of the State Department Policy Planning Staff and NSC Planning Board, this sense was considerably diluted. The authors surrounded the Chiefs' annex with long lists of the military and political disadvantages involved in using atomic weapons. The authors included the military and political advantages which might accrue from use of atomics, but their doubt that anything positive could result from this remained pervasive. Also included were outdated ideas, such as the claim that the U.S. stockpile was not large enough to allow for the employment of atomic weapons outside the conditions of strategic war, and frequent references to the possibilities of Soviet atomic retaliation. Similarly, the document deemphasized probabilities that favored use of atomics.129 Finally, the most potentially influential conclusion of NSC 147 concerned the reaction of America's principal allies to the use of atomic weapons and aimed straight at the President's heart: "A U.S. decision to undertake Courses D through F would severely strain and possibly break the Western alliance and would certainly alienate pro-U.S. feeling in most of Free Asia."130

Despite the efforts of the State Department, the NSC
Planning Board and Army Chief of Staff Collins, the ground for a decision to use atomic weapons had been laid by the JCS annex to NSC 147. Eisenhower, in essence, had been prepared to take this decision two months earlier, but the divisions among his principal advisers, as well as his own profound hope for a peaceful solution to the war, had intervened. The JCS majority opinion, as expressed in the March 27th report and NSC 147 annex, marked a narrowing of these divisions.

No less significant, Secretary Dulles, emboldened by signs of Communist bloc weakness like a shark by the scent of blood, became more confident in his support of a hard line. For example, at the NSC's April 8th meeting, when men as close to the President as Cutler and Bradley urged patience and called attention to NSC 147's warnings, Dulles professed that the entire Korean picture merited reconsideration. American power had grown tremendously over the past year, while the USSR found itself in increasing difficulty. As a result, he argued, the administration should press for a better settlement than a Korea permanently divided at the thirty-eighth parallel.131

Eisenhower, nonetheless, eased his finger off the trigger of military escalation during the month of April, and for good reason. A resumption of negotiations seemed possible. Communist and U.N. liaison groups met April 6th
to arrange the transfer of sick and wounded POWs. This exchange, nicknamed operation "Little Switch," was carried out two weeks later. Most encouragingly, for the first time since October 1952, plenary sessions at Panmunjon resumed on April 26. Also, Eisenhower and his staff devoted considerable time and attention that month to his April 16 "Chance for Peace" speech. After this uplifting and ecumenical appeal for peace—a mixture of sincere sentiment by the President and calculated propaganda by the administration—Eisenhower wisely refrained from making belligerent moves in Korea, feeling a desperate need to counter the Kremlin's latest "peace offensive" and faintly hoping that an armistice might result.

The President's address received ebullient reviews in the U.S. and Europe. Winston Churchill was so overcome by the peaceful melody of Eisenhower's words that he urged his old friend to join him in traveling to Moscow boldly to impress upon the new Soviet leadership the prospects of peace. He also tried to withdraw British agreement to the Greater Sanctions statement.

Just prior to these British initiatives, the talks at Panmunjon once again derailed over the POW issue. Eisenhower's attitude hardened instantly. Writing to Churchill on May 5th, he expressed "astonishment" at the Prime Minister's summit proposal. The Communists' behavior in Korea,
their obstruction of the negotiations and continued belligerence (not to mention their new subversive activities in Laos), he noted bluntly, betrayed their true intentions. 134

The day after he sounded off to Sir Winston, and ten days after the latest rupture at Panmunjon, Eisenhower pressed the NSC, and especially the Joint Chiefs, for decisive recommendations on the use of atomic weapons. Reviewing for the Council a chart of the options the Chiefs had provided for NSC 147, Bradley answered the President by saying that the JCS had purposely not tendered a single preferred course of action. "...[I]t was inappropriate," he believed, "for them to fix on any course of action until the Council itself had decided on what our national objective was." 135

The President was not swayed by the Joint Chiefs' professed deference to civilian decision-making. He directed Bradley to meet with representatives from the State Department to work out a recommendation. Next, Eisenhower referred to a point made earlier in the meeting by Bradley, to the effect that the Communists were moving substantial numbers of aircraft onto four North Korean airfields. Were not these the perfect targets for atomic weapons? the President asked? Indeed, the President added, atomic weapons must be thought of, and treated as, a conventional, usable part of our arsenal. Bradley incor-
rectly replied that he doubted that airfields would make good atomic targets.136

Once again the official NSC minutes leave the reader hanging. No one apparently questioned the President's position on atomic weapons, beyond Bradley's feeble response. But that utterance suggests an important point, nonetheless. The Joint Chiefs, probably precisely because they were split on the question, wished to avoid responsibility for recommending use of atomic weapons. The other possibilities are either that they remained honestly unsure as to the national objective, or they truly believed the decision was entirely a political one.137 But after the May 6 meeting, there could be no doubt that the Commander in Chief leaned toward a plan to use atomic weapons and that he insisted that the JCS give him a definitive recommendation, one way or the other.

The day following this important meeting, General Clark reported another apparent breakthrough in the negotiations at Panmunjon.138 The President and his principal advisers took this as a positive sign, but the specifics of the Communist proposal fell far short of the terms they preferred and which South Korean President Rhee was demanding.139 Eisenhower's patience had worn perilously thin. Four months of indirect threats and awaiting substantive developments at Panmunjon had yielded nothing.
So instead of giving the Communists additional leeway and time to make good on their promises, as he had during April, the President turned up the heat. On May 13th, Washington directed the U.N. delegation to make a stiff counter-proposal and authorized General Clark to launch a heavy air assault on a North Korean dam network.140

Also on this date, the NSC moved appreciably closer to a decision on atomic weapons. The Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to shy away from offering the solid recommendation the President had sought a week earlier, but their preference was obvious. General Bradley told the Council that none of the options involving U.S. operations against Manchurian and Chinese targets could be effective without the employment of atomic weapons. General John E. Hull (Vice Chief of Staff, Army, Operations and Administration) affirmed that the Pentagon believed that if atomic weapons were used, "they must be used in considerable numbers to be effective."141 There were not many suitable targets in Korea itself, Hull added, but the military was "most anxious" to use atomic weapons against targets in China and Manchuria. Eisenhower argued this last point with Hull. He still felt that atomic weapons could be effective against Chinese army positions at the front.

Sitting in for Secretary Dulles, Under Secretary Walter Bedell Smith warned that following NSC 147 options
D, E or F would draw dangerous allied reactions, and (contradicting Secretary Dulles' opinion) might provoke Soviet intervention. However, the former CIA director believed, "Much would be forgiven us if we were quickly successful and ended the war." That is what the British and our other friends desired the most.142

Eisenhower recognized the danger atomic escalation posed to Western Europe. It was, after all, a problem he had had to consider daily for eighteen months as NATO's military chief. He further believed, as strongly as any man alive, that America's European alliances were crucial to Western and American security, but so were what he called "outposts of our national defense," like Korea. The problem, he worried, was that many Europeans would rather surrender to Communist domination than fight a global war.

At this point, Vice President Richard Nixon joined the debate and offered an important idea for consideration. The NSC had to cast its decision on how to proceed in Korea in the context of the long-term growth of the Soviet Union's atomic capability, he advised. At the moment, the Russians lacked the capacity to threaten the continental U.S. with a crippling blow. But they would have this capacity before long, and when that time came, American freedom of action in foreign policy, in decisions like the one the Council now faced on Korea, would be greatly
diminished.143

The JCS had escaped responsibility for the last time. At the end of the May 13th Council session, the President directed that they present their plan of action for Korea at the next meeting. In the interim, the Korean situation moved briskly toward a climax. The Communists rejected the U.N.'s May 13th proposal. Accordingly, General Clark cabled Washington the next day, advising preparation for a complete breakdown of negotiations and requesting authority, if this occurred, "to exert [the] max[imum] mil[itary] pressure within my capabilities" to force an armistice. Two days later Eisenhower and the JCS approved Clark's request, crucially excluding his suggestions for release of Communist POWs and removal of operational restrictions.144

As General Clark predicted, the situation in Korea deteriorated rapidly. On May 16, 1953, he reported that the negotiations had become hopeless. It was time, he argued, to reveal the Communists' bad faith and to force them to terms. Therefore, he recommended that the U.N. delegation make one last offer at Panmunjon. If rejected, he would break-off the talks and take the action outlined two days earlier. As a final word of warning, however, the U.N. commander urged that this series of actions be approved only if Washington had formally committed itself to strong action in the event of a rejection.145
Clark was not to be disappointed. On May 19th the Joint Chiefs completed their plan of action for Korea. "[B]ased on the assumption that it is decided to extend the war in an attempt to obtain a decision," Bradley wrote to Secretary Wilson, the Chiefs recommended a combination of NSC 147 options D, E and F. The U.S. should

extend and intensify military action against the enemy, to include air and naval operations directly against China and Manchuria, a coordinated offensive to seize a position generally at the waist of Korea and be prepared for further operations as required in order to:

a. Destroy effective Communist military power in Korea.
b. Reduce the enemy's capability for further aggression in Korea and the Far East.
d. Create conditions favorable for ROK forces to assume increasing responsibility for operations in Korea.

These measures, Bradley concluded, would require "extensive strategical and tactical use of atomic bombs" and be designed "to obtain maximum surprise and maximum impact on the enemy, both militarily and psychologically."146

The Joint Chiefs presented their conclusions and a scheme of implementation to the President, as ordered, at the May 20, 1953, meeting of the NSC. Eisenhower's first question related to how American forces would be protected from Communist air attacks once the war had been widened. Air Force Vice Chief of Staff General Nathan Twining
replied that the JCS had provided for that by planning for the "complete destruction of the Communist air force" before it even left the ground.147 The President's second question, more a conscious expression of an subconscious worry, concerned Japan. [A]lways in the back of his mind," he said, was the chance of Soviet retaliation against Japan. General Collins leaped at this opportunity, arguing that not only Japan but also Pusan and Inchon were likely targets if the Soviets intervened. The President made a quick about face and observed that the sooner the U.S. was able to take the action suggested by the JCS the more improbable Soviet intervention. The key, he noted, was to have everything ready to go so that the attack would be swift and decisive and preclude a deterioration of the situation into general war on the Asian mainland. Bradley agreed that speed was critical to success.148

The President closed the meeting by directing the record show that, "if circumstances arose which would force the United States to an expanded effort in Korea," the U.S. would follow the plan selected by the Joint Chiefs as the best to achieve its objectives.149

It should be noted that, at this meeting, Eisenhower expressed more concern about the possibility of Soviet intervention than at any time during the preceding five months. Why? Only two days earlier, he received a study
known as the Edwards Report. This was a report by the Special Evaluation Subcommittee of the NSC, formally entitled, "Summary Evaluation of the Net Capability of the USSR to Inflict Direct Injury on the United States Up to July 1, 1955." The subcommittee had been created by President Truman in the closing days of his administration as a result of the grim conclusions of NSC 141.(150) In the best tradition of that administration's obsession with Soviet capabilities, and reflecting the heavy influence of the Air Force, the Edwards Report (named for its chairman, Lt. General Idwall Edwards) presented a frightening and exaggerated picture of Russian air-atomic capabilities, implying the worst of Soviet intentions (for further detail, see below, Chapter II).

Clearly, Eisenhower had the Edwards Report on his mind during the May 20th Council meeting. Significantly, however, he committed to employing atomic weapons against Communist China in case of an armistice breakdown despite the study's gloomy conclusions. As the President saw it, though the Edwards Report and General Collins and others emphasized Soviet capabilities and possible actions, given a realistic appraisal of U.S. power and Soviet weaknesses, the probability of violent Soviet reaction was quite low. Had Eisenhower thought any differently, he would never have made the decision of May 20 nor the threats which follow-
ed.

Two weeks after this decision, when the NSC formally discussed the Edwards Report, the President's skepticism was obvious. With two remarks he devastated the report's conclusions. First, he asked if the subcommittee had really objectively considered the poor quality, "even incompetence," of the Soviets' long-range air forces. The meeting record shows no response. The truth was plain to the President—the report rested on exaggerations of Soviet capabilities. Next, he turned to the matter of Soviet intentions. With humor in his voice but steel in his eyes, Eisenhower explained that if the subcommittee members had put themselves in the Soviets' shoes and taken a hard look at America's strategic capabilities, they would have realized that the boys in the Kremlin "must be scared as hell" of us, not vise versa.151

Almost simultaneously with the benchmark May 20th meeting, the administration proceeded with the other elements of its plan to force the war to a rapid denouement. On May 21, 1953, Secretary of State Dulles, meeting in New Delhi with the Indian Prime Minister, warned Nehru that "if the armistice negotiations collapsed, the United States would probably make a stronger rather than a lesser military exertion, and that this might well extend the area of conflict."152 The Chinese, no doubt, received this mes-
sage from their Indian friends. If they had any doubt about its meaning, Eisenhower's deployment of atomic weapons to Okinawa about this time probably removed them. 153

On May 22nd the Joint Chiefs directed General Clark to present at Panmunjon, "with an air of finality," the U.N.'s last offer on POWs. If, after one week, the Communists rejected the offer, the Chiefs instructed Clark to terminate the negotiations, void the Kaesong-Panmunjon-Munsan sanctuary accord, and initiate the military actions (and POW release) already approved, as well as be ready to revise his operational plan to include atomic weapons. 154

Clark and chief UNC delegate Lt. Gen. William Harrison tabled the final proposition on May 25. The following day, Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen was ordered to inform Soviet foreign minister Molotov of this offer and its implications. Bohlen met with the stone-faced Molotov in Moscow on the twenty-eighth. In his own words, his mission was intended "to raise the fear of the Soviets of an expansion of the war, without driving them into a corner." 155 The Soviets, Bohlen reported, were afraid. They wanted no part of a war with the United States. Their forces in the Far East were substantial, and they could have caused serious problems for the United Nations Command. But doing so, the Kremlin knew, would open the Motherland to atomic devasta-
tion by the Strategic Air Command (SAC), because the USSR had penetrable air defenses and virtually no capability to strike the continental U.S. with atomic weapons. The Soviet Union could deal heavy blows to Western Europe and Japan, assuming its air forces—-which, by the way, were never on ground alert—-were able to get airborne with fuel and weapons and crews and flight plans before being vaporized by SAC.156 But the Soviet leadership would never assume these risks to salvage North Korea which, after all, was not nearly as important to Soviet security as any part of Eastern Europe or Peking's prestige, which the Kremlin preferred to see kept in check. The Soviets were, besides, heavily preoccupied during the early summer of 1953 with their own internal problems: power struggles within the Kremlin, including the Beria affair, and uprisings in East Berlin, for example.157

Therefore, shortly after the U.N. command made its final offer and Bohlen his call on Molotov, the Kremlin called a meeting with Peking and Pyongyang. It was probably here that Mao and Kim—though it is unlikely they had much thought of holding out at this point—were compelled to accept the imperialists' terms.158 A few days later, the Communist delegation at Panmunjon agreed to the U.N.'s repatriation scheme.

As Secretary Dulles would later claim, Eisenhower had
indeed gone to the brink of atomic war in Korea, and his willingness to do so had played an important part in the Communist decision to agree to an armistice.159 And, as events during the last half of 1953 demonstrated, the President was also quite willing to keep peering over the brink. In mid-June the Greater Sanctions statement became U.S. policy (as an annex to NSC 154). To be issued at the completion of an armistice, the statement clearly implied that, should the Communists renew armed aggression in Korea, the U.S.—preferably, but not necessarily, with the statement's fifteen co-signatories—would respond directly against Communist China.160 As Eisenhower decided on May 20th, that would mean substantial use of atomic weapons.

In the context of the Chinese' July offensive (aimed at dissuading South Korean President Rhee from any ideas about attacking North Korea on his own), Eisenhower reaffirmed this May 20th commitment. Intelligence reports presented to the NSC on July 23rd by Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Allen Dulles, suggested that the Chinese Communists were preparing for a major offensive. In response, the President ordered reinforcement of U.S. ground troops in Korea. Deputy Secretary of Defense Roger Kyes asked Eisenhower whether the situation also merited a regional buildup of American air power. Eisenhower's reply has been deleted by Defense Department censors, but the
next printed line—"Secretary Kyes agreed that our atomic capabilities must be used against the Chinese Communists if the armistice is violated"—leaves no doubt about his response.161

Not only did the NSC reaffirm this policy in November 1953; the consensus building in support of tactical use of atomic weapons actually grew deeper and bolder. By the fall of 1953, Eisenhower's new JCS were in place: Admiral Arthur W. Radford, chairman; General Nathan F. Twining, Air Force; General Matthew B. Ridgway, Army; Admiral Robert B. Carney, Navy; General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. continued as Marine Corps Commandant. The new Chiefs' initial review of the nation's defense structure—highlighted by the lessons of the Korean War, the President's commitment to decreased spending, and the Soviets' August 12 nuclear detonation—convinced them that the U.S. had to place a much greater reliance upon nuclear weapons. Beyond enlarging the arsenal to include more of the new strategic nuclear weapons and tactical atomic weapons, the Chiefs advised, this also mandated a policy commitment to a readiness to employ these weapons.162 The President and Secretary of State agreed.

A week after NSC 170/1 was approved, the new Joint Chiefs offered a revised strategy for dealing with Communist Chinese aggression. America's power and worldwide
objectives had changed since the armistice, the Chiefs argued. America's military capabilities and preparedness, particularly in its atomic strike forces, had improved substantially. However, America's global prestige had suffered and could not tolerate another challenge such as in Korea. Therefore, if Korean War resumed, the U.S. should not be satisfied with successfully defending South Korea, but should seek to destroy Communist capacity for aggression in the Far East and create conditions for a unified, Western-aligned Korea. To assure this result, the new Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that the President grant prior authority for the "immediate employment of nuclear weapons" in a major air offensive against any and all suitable targets in Korea, Manchuria and China. 163

On December 3, 1953, Admiral Radford presented the above plan of action at a National Security Council meeting. Eisenhower refused to grant prior authority to use nuclear weapons, but in all other respects he endorsed the Chiefs' views completely. For example, he quickly concurred with the JCS chairman that renewed attack by the Chinese in Korea meant general Sino-American war. America would respond to this, the President stated, by "hitting them hard and wherever it hurt most, including Peking itself." In Admiral Radford's estimation, this meant the U.S. should be ready to atomize every military target from
The Joint Chiefs' recommendations and the President's concurrence sparked a long and heated debate. Still reeling from the Soviets' August 1953 nuclear weapons test, the State Department was convinced that U.S. atomic action against Communist China would provoke general war with both that country and the USSR, drive America's principal allies into neutrality, and open all of Southeast Asia to Communist conquest. Accordingly, Dulles and Policy Planning Staff director Robert Bowie pressured Eisenhower for a strategy limiting American retaliation to Korean territory and to the goal of destroying any Communist military forces engaged there.

At NSC meeting on December 3, 1953 and January 8, 1954, the Secretary of State argued that, while renewed attack by the Communist Chinese might well develop into general war between the U.S and China, Washington "should not treat such a resumption of hostilities as general war from the very beginning." Rather, the U.S. should act with restraint, gradually increasing its reaction as it gained allied support. In particular, Dulles warned Eisenhower that America's commanders in the field should not be granted the freedom to respond to Communist aggression as they saw fit.

The President strongly disagreed with the State
Department's position. To him it plotted a strategy that promised a repetition of the mistakes of the Korean War. First, it mandated that the U.S., at least initially, fight a limited war for limited objectives. This assumed that the Communist Chinese attack would likewise be limited in scope and direction. And that made no sense at all. As Admiral Radford explained, and Eisenhower believed, Chinese attack would mean that Peking had decided on a general challenge to free world prestige and American credibility in Asia. The Chinese' only hope for victory in Korea rested upon surprising and crippling, at the outset, U.S. and South Korean forces. A lesser action would be senseless from a military standpoint, for it would surrender surprise and mass and allow the U.S. to gather itself for reply.167

Furthermore, Dulles's plan would compel the U.S. to sacrifice its powerful advantages. As the Joint Chiefs had described in their briefing, the best way to prevent the loss of Korea and the spread of Communist Chinese aggression in Asia was to react instantly and decisively against Chinese targets with the speed, surprise and mass of America's air and naval atomic strike forces. To be sure, allied support was critical, but moving gradually, with one eye always on Moscow and the other on London and Paris, would only produce reasons for not escalating. Another stalemate was bound to result. Whatever the American
response to renewed Communist Chinese aggression, the President assured the NSC, he would not fight "that kind of war." On the contrary, the best strategy was to strike simultaneously all of the Communists' forward air-bases in North Korea and China. Drop an atomic bomb on each one and you destroy every plane there and leave the few that manage to get airborne with no place to land. After all, Eisenhower added, isn't this what the U.S. planned to do to the Soviets if they started something?  

Secondly, the President objected to the State Department's desire to limit the discretion of U.S. field commanders. The JCS wished to include the following sentence in the Korean strategy paper:

Nothing in the above is intended to restrict in any way the authority of the U.S. Commander in Chief, F.E., to take whatever action is necessary to insure the safety of his forces.

Dulles pleaded with Eisenhower to rescind this provision because it obviously "was intended to convey authority to the U.S. commander to use atomic weapons without reference back to Washington." Eisenhower dismissed this contention. He was not going to abdicate to anyone the authority over atomic weapons. But, in his estimation, the Chiefs' qualifying sentence "seemed to him to merely set forth an inherent right of any military commander." General Hull (CINCFE), the President decided, should be told he had the
authority to react instantly, on his own judgment, and with all available forces and weapons.171

Finally, the President accused the State Department and CIA of exaggerating Soviet capabilities and intentions. He was certain that Moscow would not be foolish enough to intervene on any significant scale in an expanded Sino-American conflict. The risks of annihilation by SAC were too great, as were the problems involved for the Russians in mounting major operations in the Far East.172

***

Eisenhower's most well-known biographer, Stephen E. Ambrose, has portrayed him as a most reluctant exponent of atomic weapons—"those terrible things," Ambrose insists the President called them.173 No doubt if, in some make-believe world, Eisenhower had been given the choice, he would have preferred to see all atomic weapons destroyed.174 But the realities he confronted upon assuming office dictated otherwise. Indeed, in the context of the Korean conflict, Eisenhower embraced atomic weapons as war-fighting tools, tools appropriate for tactical, strategic and diplomatic use. He did this not out of some macabre, militarist insensitivity to the destructive power of atomic weapons or wish to inflict punitive damage upon the Communist Chinese. Rather, he did it with hopes of ending the war, while keeping American losses to a minimum
and securing American goals. He did it with the knowledge that success in war depends upon a willingness to apply whatever level of force is required to compel the enemy to do one's will.

More specifically, Eisenhower stood ready to use atomic weapons tactically because he was confident of their efficacy. Atomic Energy Commission tests conducted during the spring of 1953 strengthened his confidence, along with that of the military, that these weapons had been successfully tailored to battlefield application. Used selectively, he believed, such weapons could break the deadlock along the 38th Parallel and force a settlement favorable to the U.S. and the United Nations. More important yet, Eisenhower stood ready to employ atomic weapons strategically, in a war with China beyond Korea's frontiers, not only because the Joint Chiefs advised this as militarily essential, but because he judged the probability of violent Soviet response to be minimal.

Looking back, over forty years later, it seems clear that only the fear of allied reaction--voiced over and over by his closest advisers--and the prospect of appearing excessively bellicose in the context of the Kremlin's "peace offensive," prevented Eisenhower from pursuing the atomic option in Korea. But had the Communist Chinese chosen to break the hard won armistice or decided to widen
their earlier aggression, not even these concerns would have kept the President from approving what he believed to be a necessary and just response.
II

Out With the Old and in With the New?

Second only to his desire to end the war in Korea was Eisenhower's determination to overhaul Truman's defense policies. True to his recently found Republican lineage, Eisenhower believed that the Democrats' unrestrained military spending—underpinned by deficit financing, high taxes and price controls—amounted to fiscal irresponsibility. Similarly, he and his advisers rejected "containment" on the ground that it had surrendered the initiative in the cold war to the Communists, "lost China" to Mao Zedong, and invited war in Korea.1 In contrast to the previous administration's preoccupation with enemy capabilities and containing the near-term Soviet military threat, Eisenhower hoped to focus on long-term deterrence of all forms of Communist aggression. Both he and Secretary Dulles conceived of the cold war as the "struggle of the ages," a contest that would continue for the next fifteen to twenty-five years and encompass the realms of diplomacy, ideology, economics and warfare.2 In their view the odds in this epic struggle favored the Free World. Consistent with George Kennan's original vision of containment, the President and his secretary of state hoped to base the deterrence of Communist aggression on a strengthened system
of collective security, protection of the industrial societies of Western Europe and Japan, and building a prosperous, exemplary community of free, capitalist nations. Over the "long haul", Eisenhower and Dulles were certain that the Communist regimes would ultimately crack under their own oppressive weight. As Eisenhower put it in a letter in 1951, "the tyranny and threat represented in the announced and implacable antagonism of Communism to our form of government and society will not always be with us."

"The practice of the Godless doctrine of Communism carries within itself the seed of its own destruction. . . . If we can be strong enough, if we can endure enough, we can wait for the inevitable explosive process to take place."3

But the cold war also posed enormous dangers for the U.S. Fortified by the inflexibly conservative views of Treasury Secretary George M. Humphrey, the President believed that the nation's welfare and security—and, therefore, the welfare and security of the non-Communist world—rested upon a stable and healthy American economy. For 1950s Republicans, still largely dominated by the Taft wing of the party, this meant a balanced federal budget, low taxes and inflation, and no wage and price controls. If the U.S. continued the Truman policies of spending whatever it took to counter Communist aggression at all points on the globe, in addition to bearing the cost of building
and maintaining the strategic arsenal necessary for general war, Eisenhower was convinced the result would be the certain destruction of the very way of life he was sworn to protect. "To amass military power without regard to our economic capacity," the President warned in his first State of the Union message, "would be to defend ourselves against one kind of disaster by inviting another." The only answer was to formulate a national security strategy that achieved "both security and solvency."4

Moreover, Eisenhower was persuaded that Truman's style of symmetrical containment, in addition to risking national bankruptcy, also played to Communist strengths.5 It conceded to the enemy choice of time, place, and level of force. It also nullified the one area in which the U.S. enjoyed unquestioned military superiority--its air and naval atomic striking power.

Though not yet fully conceived, from early 1953 on Eisenhower's design for correcting the grave deficiencies in Truman's national security strategy implied an expanded reliance upon atomic weapons.6 With such weapons the U.S. could exploit its technological, air and naval superiority, reduce its costly ground force deployments abroad, and still effectively deter Soviet attack. Besides contributing to the President's budgetary objectives, the withdrawal of large portions of U.S. forces from around the Soviet
periphery might also reduce the chance of American involvement in costly Korean-type wars. The U.S. could then employ the flexibility and power of its overwhelming air and naval strike forces to deal with Communist attacks on its own terms.

It should be noted that the President's vision of a revised national security strategy was not primarily concerned with saving money. Nor was it preoccupied with using nuclear weapons. Rather, it represented a strategic vision which, unlike the policies of any previous presidential administration, aimed at forging a comprehensive (military, economic, diplomatic, psychological) program to guide national policy for years to come. However, in the early months of 1953 a number of obstacles frustrated progress towards the development and implementation of this strategy. To begin with, Eisenhower was confronted with the fiscal and bureaucratic legacies of the Truman administration. Along with a 1954 fiscal year budget and mentality that embraced increased military spending, the Truman-appointed officials in the Eisenhower government--including the Joint Chiefs of Staff and top NSC and State Department planners--brought with them a defensive-mindedness that recoiled at Eisenhower's apparent taste for an initiative-seizing, atomic arms-oriented strategy. Perched high in the national security bureaucracy, these officials and
their loyalty to the Truman-Acheson defense philosophy complicated the early formulation of a new national defense policy.7

More seriously, the formulation of a new strategy was challenged by an intellectual bequest of the Truman administration—the hypothesis of American vulnerability. Against Eisenhower's informed belief that atomic weapons were employable tools of warfare and his desire to exploit them to help realize his primary national security objectives, proponents of this hypothesis were no less convinced that the U.S. was critically vulnerable to Soviet atomic attack, that a military strategy reliant upon U.S. offensive nuclear superiority was not only misguided but certain to end in failure, and that national priority should be given to the early establishment of air defenses against possible Soviet attack, not to a balanced budget or regaining the initiative in the cold war.

Based on exaggerations of Soviet capabilities and seemingly confirmed by the unexpected Soviet nuclear test in August 1953, the idea of American vulnerability would gradually penetrate Eisenhower's defense establishment and play a major role in the shaping of the New Look. As a result of the dilemmas posed by this hypothesis, by Truman's budgetary and bureaucratic bequests, and by the demands of Eisenhower's own defense philosophy, the
President quickly faced a choice in framing his nuclear weapons policy: should he opt for an emphasis on continental defense, arms control, and atomic sufficiency suggested by the prophets of vulnerability, or should he choose a policy based on the deterrent and war-winning capability of a superior nuclear arsenal?

***

"The first order of business," Eisenhower explained to Congress and the nation in his State of the Union message on February 2, 1953, was to bring the Truman budget under control. To him, this was more than a matter of fiscal prudence or campaign promises. America's way of life was at stake. In less than three years, defense expenditures had risen from $13.5 billion to a proposed $45.4 billion. The projected budget deficit for fiscal year 1954 stood at $9.9 billion. Worse, Truman had allowed the Pentagon to contract for tens of billions of dollars in equipment on a cash-on-delivery basis. In January 1953, these "unfinanced authorizations" totalled $81 billion. The Republican goal of a balanced budget, the new Budget Director Joseph M. Dodge informed Eisenhower, could not possibly be achieved in fiscal year 1955, perhaps not even by the end of the President's term.9

Eisenhower's first task, therefore, was to cut back projected military expenditures in the fiscal year begin-
ning July 1, 1953, a feat he intended to achieve by reducing the size of expensive conventional forces, eliminating the "year of maximum danger" psychology that stimulated defense spending, and making long-term deterrence by nuclear strength the centerpiece of strategy. The challenge of drastically pruning Truman's budgetary mess was complicated by a peremptory challenge to Eisenhower's conception of the Soviet threat. In short, important segments of the national security community were convinced that the U.S. lay dangerously exposed to Soviet attack and that the only solution lay in emergency construction of continental defenses costing tens of billions of dollars. The hypothesis of American vulnerability had originated with NSC 68 in 1950 and underlay Truman's Soviet policy throughout the Korean War. During the closing months of 1952, three startling, interrelated studies of Soviet nuclear capabilities and American continental defenses catapulted the hypothesis to center stage where it awaited Eisenhower in January 1953.(10)

The studies' devotion to continental defense derived largely from the final report of the East River Project and its sister study, the report of the Lincoln Summer Study Group.11 In early 1952, the Pentagon, the National Security Resources Board, and the Federal Civil Defense Administration had contracted with a group of Manhattan-
based scientists for a study of civil defense. The scientists, however, strayed from their formal mission to concentrate on active defenses against Soviet air attack. From their investigation, the East River team concluded that the danger from a Soviet atomic blitz was so grave that the U.S. should immediately construct a preclusive air defense system. Its cost was irrelevant. In the atomic age there was no margin for error. All incoming Soviet aircraft had to be intercepted. This task could be accomplished, the scientists asserted, by construction of a radar net that stretched across the Canadian arctic and Greenland coast 2,000 miles north of the U.S.-Canadian border. Monitored by a computerized target identification and tracking system and backed by a greatly expanded fleet of fighter-interceptor aircraft and anti-aircraft batteries, this early warning line would enable North American defenders to engage and destroy Soviet bombers long before they could threaten American targets. In April 1952, the Pentagon, however, rejected East River's early recommendations, declaring it was impossible to try to build a security net that was 100 percent effective.12

Ostensibly under Air Force sponsorship and in connection with M.I.T.'s Lincoln Laboratory, many of the East River researchers continued their work throughout 1952. The Lincoln Summer Study Group, as they came to be known,
concurred with their predecessors' findings. Concluding that the Soviet Union now possessed the capacity to build and deliver as many atomic (and soon thermonuclear) weapons as it desired, the Lincoln scientists proposed a system of continental defense capable of exacting "almost complete attrition" upon an attacking air force. Much more dramatically than East River, however, the Lincoln study focused primarily upon the human casualties to be expected from a Soviet atomic strike. The Lincoln authors, J. Robert Oppenheimer conspicuously among them, claimed that at least twenty million American civilians would perish if the Soviets executed an attack with only 100 weapons of megaton yield. As one historian has noted, in 1952 such casualty figures were "newly appalling."13

In October 1952, Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Paul Nitze, both faithful to the gospel of American vulnerability, persuaded President Truman to override the Pentagon's objections and make Lincoln the subject of urgent government study.14 The results of this study, NSC 141 and NSC 135/3, the prevailing Basic National Security Policy when Eisenhower took office, were suffused by the idea of American vulnerability and the worst assumptions of possible Soviet intentions. Both documents defined American strategy on the basis of a Soviet Union already capable of executing a surprise nuclear blitz on the United
States--a Soviet Union which would do so once its leaders felt certain of success.15

Submitted the day before Eisenhower's inauguration, NSC 141 examined the Pentagon's major defense programs to determine whether resources were being properly allocated to meet national security objectives. Typical of the post-NSC 68 economic philosophy adopted by Truman, 141's guiding spirits--Defense Secretary Lovett, Secretary of State Acheson and Mutual Security Director Averell Harriman--concluded that an expansion, rather than a reallocation, of defense spending was required. Shocked by the Lincoln and East River findings, they warned that the "vulnerability of the United States to direct attack" from Soviet atomic (and perhaps thermonuclear) forces demanded dramatic increases in continental and civil defense programs without any diminution of strategic offensive or military assistance programs. Failure to provide for such increases involved "critical risks," for American air defenses, both in place and projected, were woefully inadequate. At best, they might be ten to fifteen percent effective.16

The third of the Truman documents was the report of the Panel of Consultants on Disarmament of the Department of State, created in April 1952 and known as the Oppenheimer Panel after its chairman, J. Robert Oppenheimer.
The consultants' detailed investigation of the accelerating Soviet-American atomic arms race had left them with "a greatly deepened sense of enormous and rapidly approaching peril." To be sure, the U.S. enjoyed atomic superiority at the moment, the Panel acknowledged at the outset. But this superiority was of little consequence, for the U.S. was helpless, short of waging preventive war, to prevent the USSR from soon achieving the ability "to threaten the destruction of our whole society."  

According to the Oppenheimer Panel, while the Russians inevitably approached this frightening ability, the U.S. Government had negligently preoccupied itself with construction of offensive atomic forces and formulation of war plans for the nuclear annihilation of Soviet society, while neither providing for an adequate defense of the U.S. from Soviet attack nor informing the American people of the growing danger of the situation. At a meeting of the National Security Council on February 27, 1953, Oppenheimer pleaded with the President to be candid with the public: "... tell the story of atomic danger, and in particular ... emphasize the growing capability of the Soviet Union and ... direct attention to the fact that beyond a certain point we cannot ward off the Soviet threat merely by 'keeping ahead of the Russians.'" The U.S. could and must, however, strive to lessen the very real danger of a
"knockout blow" by improving its continental defenses.18

The Truman reports deeply troubled Eisenhower and his associates. If the reports' recommendations were adopted, federal budget cuts were totally out of the question. The distant early warning lines proposed in the Lincoln study alone carried a price tag in the hundreds of millions of dollars. All together, the defense and mutual security programs specified in NSC 141—and these were in addition to the $41 billion in Pentagon appropriations projected by Truman for fiscal year 1954—amounted to $20 billion over four years.19 Equally disastrous from Eisenhower's point of view, the bequests of Truman's defense bureaucracy plotted a continuation of the infinite containment and "year of maximum danger" psychology that were anathema to the President's strategic vision.

The Truman reports promptly ignited a battle within the new administration. Support for the reports' conclusions came mostly from the hold-over Truman officials. Carlton Savage, a philosophical colleague of Paul Nitze on the Policy Planning Staff, for instance, defended the reports on February 16, 1953:

The impact of these three studies, taken together, is powerful. They treat a number of subjects but they converge with striking unanimity on one: continental defense. . . . The United States stands in greater peril today than at any time in our history. . . . [The studies] stand as a warning that if we do not heed the
counsel they contain, we could lose our existence as a free nation.20

The harshest criticism of the reports, however, came from Treasury Secretary George Humphrey and the Pentagon. Humphrey, the administration's strongest advocate of a balanced budget, was dumbfounded by the spending and debt figures so readily accepted by Truman and his advisers.21 Pentagon critics attacked as misguided the reports' skewed perception of Soviet and American military strength. The Joint Staff, for instance, then headed by Air Force Lieutenant General Frank Everest, reported to the Joint Chiefs in January 1953 that NSC 141 betrayed a "... consistent overemphasis of the atomic threat to United States metropolitan areas, without retention of that threat in its proper perspective in relation to the overall strategic position of the United States...in relation to the USSR." This over-emphasis, the Joint Staff deduced, derived from a preoccupation with "the theoretically possible threat which the Soviet atomic weapons capability may pose..."22

Air Force Secretary Harold Talbott was equally quick to question NSC 135/3 and 141. Writing to Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson on February 12, 1953, Talbott observed that
Both of these reports concentrate on the vulnerability of the U.S. and do not give adequate recognition to the increased offensive capabilities that such developments provide us. . . . These weapons give us an opportunity for exploiting our technological advantages over the USSR and should be our primary offensive instrument in a general war. . . .

Though Eisenhower did not dismiss the vulnerability studies, he moved to cut the defense budget as if they did not exist, finding justification in a March 31, 1953 report of the NSC's Civilian Consultants on Defense Programs in Relation to Cost. Speaking for his fellow Consultants, Houston attorney Dillon Anderson told Eisenhower precisely what he wanted to hear (and what he already believed). "The cost of rearmament since 1950, . . . undertaken in haste and in fear," Anderson said, had been "excessive," the use of military manpower "profligate." The new administration needed to act to "restore confidence to this nation for the long pull," as well as make immediate cuts in defense spending. These objectives could be achieved, the Consultants believed, if the administration concentrated on America's strengths, like atomic weapons, and limited national security expenditures to $45 billion for fiscal year 1954.

Armed with the Consultants' recommendations, Eisenhower quickly endorsed Defense Secretary Wilson's proposal to slash Pentagon appropriations from Truman's $41.3 billion down to $36 billion for fiscal year 1954. But
the President faced another major obstacle to the implementa-
tion of this cut. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were
unanimously opposed to it. During a NSC meeting on March
25, 1953, each of the Chiefs in turn expressed the opinion
that any cuts in the programmed growth of service capabil-
ties during fiscal years 1954 and 1955, given rapidly
expanding Soviet atomic capabilities, "would so increase
the risk to the United States as to pose a grave threat to
the survival of our allies and the security of this
nation." Already exasperated by the Chiefs' reticence
concerning action in Korea, and under increasing political
pressure from the conservative wing of the Republican party
to reduce spending and taxes, Eisenhower rejected the
Chiefs' arguments and ordered the armed services to plan
for the cuts specified in NSC 149/2.(26)

Since even a reduced defense budget would leave a
deficit, conservative Republicans were not appeased.
Informed by the President of his decision not to reach for
a balanced budget for the coming year, Republican Senator
Robert A. Taft exploded in a heated, personal attack
against Eisenhower at a White House meeting on April 30,
1953. The President's proposal, Taft raged, would not only
be defeated in Congress but also destroy the Republican
Party. Taft's outburst was a sad display that deeply
offended Eisenhower, and it took all the self-control he
could muster to refrain from berating the Senator for his limited knowledge of national security matters.27

The Air Force, on the other hand, attacked the President's budget decision on the ground that he was spending too little, not too much. Under Truman's fiscal year 1954 budget, the Air Force was scheduled to build to 133 wings by mid-1954 and 143 wings by January 1955. Under Eisenhower's revised budget, Air Force appropriations were decreased from $16.8 to $11.7 billion, with force objectives of 114 wings during fiscal year 1954 and 120 wings by January 1955.(28) Stuart Symington, the voluble Democratic Senator from Missouri and former secretary of the Air Force, claimed the Air Force would be unable to carry out its mission if prevented from growing to 143 wings during 1954. Worse, the President's defense cuts would leave the U.S. wide open to a Russian atomic blitz. The Air Force and its friends, moreover, did not stop there. In the May 1953 issue of Fortune magazine, prominent defense correspondent Charles C.V. Murphy—the beneficiary of leaks from his friends at the Air Force and Lewis Strauss (Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission)—wrote that the Air Force cuts and Project Candor had been manipulated by J. Robert Oppenheimer and others in a conspiracy to weaken the Strategic Air Command and the nation's thermonuclear weapons program.29
In reply to the critics and doomsayers, Eisenhower prudently seized the high ground. On April 30, 1953, the day of his confrontation with Taft, the President opened his weekly news conference with an explanation of his fiscal philosophy. He rejected both radical spending cuts and rushed buildups for years of maximum danger, adding that his administration would concentrate on security and solvency for the long haul. The proposed reduction of the Air Force's budget, for instance, was intended not to weaken that service but "to get 'as much effectual strength as we can immediately' by assuring that all operational wings would be manned and equipped." On May 19, 1953, Eisenhower appeared on national television and told the nation,

I deeply believe that it is foolish and dangerous for any of us to be hypnotized by magic numbers. There is no given number of ships--no specific number of divisions--no magic number of air wings . . .--no specific number of billions of dollars--that will automatically guarantee security. 30

Having seized control of the budget, Eisenhower now attempted to reshape the military bureaucracy for his purpose. Perhaps no man was better prepared for such a daunting task. It was his unique talents as an organizer and administrator that had catapulted the President up through the ranks of the U.S. Army and allowed him to plan the vast Allied invasion of Western Europe in 1944. Just
ten days after his inauguration, Eisenhower asked Secretary Wilson to assemble a special committee to lay plans for remodeling of the Defense Department. The resulting Rockefeller Committee, chaired by Nelson A. Rockefeller and formally entitled the President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization, was assigned three basic objectives: produce an organizational scheme that would improve civilian control of the Services, enhance Pentagon operations and efficiency "by eliminating unwieldy boards and committees and substituting instead responsible executive officials," and improve strategic planning.

During his thirty-five years of military service, Eisenhower had formed strong ideas about how the military should execute its planning and advising functions. Service rivalry for funds, roles and missions; squabbling among the Joint Chiefs over strategic plans; presidential politicization of the Chiefs--all characterized the new Pentagon's operation under Truman and angered Eisenhower to distraction. Reorganization Plan No. 6, submitted by the Rockefeller Committee on April 30, 1953, sought to correct these problems. It significantly strengthened the powers of the secretary of defense and JCS chairman, replaced the old War Department "Board" system with six new assistant secretaries of defense, removed the Joint Chiefs from the chain of command, and placed the JCS chairman in charge of
Joint Staff appointments and operations. These changes, Eisenhower hoped, would produce a defense department more closely in tune with his conceptions of military efficiency and personal loyalty. Above all, he wanted a Joint Chiefs apparatus which functioned primarily as a strategy-making body and adviser to the President, but also as a corporate body, making decisions based on what was best for national, not service, interests. Moreover, he wanted his principal military advisers—the secretary of defense and JCS chairman—firmly in control of the Pentagon.

Reorganization Plan No. 6 laid the foundation for the development of this control. It could not, however, guarantee Eisenhower that his Joint Chiefs would be either completely responsive or loyal. For this, he had to take more drastic steps, namely, the replacement of Truman's JCS. Fortuitously, the terms of all of the Chiefs were due to expire at the end of June 1953. Not surprisingly, the President chose not to reappoint any of them save Marine Corps Commandant Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. On May 7 and 12, 1953, Eisenhower announced that Admiral Robert B. Carney would succeed William M. Fechteler as Chief of Naval Operations, General Matthew B. Ridgway would replace J. Lawton Collins as Army Chief of Staff, General Nathan F. Twining would succeed the dying Hoyt S. Vandenberg as Air Force Chief of Staff, and Admiral Arthur W. Radford would
attempt to fill the spacious shoes of Omar Bradley as Chairman.37

At the time, the President attributed the decision not to renew the terms of the current Chiefs to Defense Secretary Wilson. By statute, the JCS serve as the "chief military advisers to the Secretary of Defense." Accordingly, Eisenhower claimed Wilson deserved to fill these posts with men of his own choosing.38 Wilson's personal preference may have been a factor, but Eisenhower had other reasons for his choices. For one thing, the current Chiefs were all Truman's men, in Republican eyes all tainted by their association with the interminable attrition of Korea and, worse yet perhaps, their well-known opposition to Douglas MacArthur in 1951. Equally important, however, Eisenhower had had enough of the Chiefs' reluctance to dismantle Truman's defense policies (not to mention their stonewalling over use of atomic weapons in Korea) and, as he saw it, their preoccupation with Soviet capabilities.

Emmet Hughes, for a time one of Eisenhower's top speechwriters, later recalled the President saying to Robert Cutler on May 12, "You know, all these fellows worry so damn much about what we'll do when the Russians attack. Well, I don't believe for a second they will ever attack."39 The Joint Chiefs' refusal during March and April 1953 to support cuts in programmed defense spending
sealed their fate.

Replacing most of the incumbent Chiefs must have been one of the more difficult decisions of Eisenhower's first term. He had known and served with Truman's Chiefs for decades. He and Omar Bradley were classmates at West Point and lifelong friends; Bradley and Collins had both held major commands under Ike in Europe during World War II.40 Perhaps this had something to do with the President's crediting Defense Secretary Wilson with the decision not to extend their tours. But it was Eisenhower, far more than Wilson, who needed pliant generals. In Radford, Twining, Ridgway and Carney, Eisenhower had a team who appeared to share his vision (or who would, at least, implement it loyally), thought in global terms, and understood his conception of the JCS as first and foremost a strategic policy-making team.41

Cutting the budget and reshaping the JCS hardly assured the success of Eisenhower's strategic concepts. Indeed, he had yet to overcome the major intellectual challenge to those concepts--namely, the hypothesis of U.S. vulnerability and a corollary, budget-busting continental defense system. In May 1953, the administration found itself caught in a second cloudburst of vulnerability studies. As with the first, the chief rainmakers were Truman holdovers and outside consultants. Dr. Mervin Kelly
(director of Bell Laboratories), headed a committee of consultants for the Pentagon, created at Truman's direction in December 1952 after he had reviewed the Lincoln Summer Study's startling vision of scores of millions of American nuclear fatalities.42 On May 11, 1953, the committee secretly presented its assessment of the nation's continental defenses to Secretary Wilson. It would be optimistic, Kelly told Wilson grimly, for U.S. air defenses to achieve a kill ratio of more than twenty percent in the event of a Soviet air attack. In the case of a well-designed and executed surprise attack, this ratio would fall to zero. However, Kelly rejected earlier calls by the East River and Lincoln scientists for crash construction of an air defense network capable of complete preclusion of enemy aircraft, but the study suggested an impressive list of defense measures as imperative to national safety.43

Vulnerability ideologue Paul Nitze (then serving his final days on the Policy Planning Staff) could not have been happier with the Kelly study's conclusions. A few days before the committee formally submitted its findings, Nitze co-authored a memo for the NSC Planning Board recounting all the studies asserting the vulnerability of the U.S. to Soviet attack. From NSC 68 to NSC 141, and from East River to the forthcoming Kelly and Edwards (see below) reports, Nitze argued, it was clear that Soviet
nuclear capabilities had sorely outpaced construction of U.S. air defenses. Yet little had been done to meet the obvious danger. The proper and mandatory course, Nitze concluded, was to spend whatever was necessary—regardless of the strictures of NSC 149/2—to erect an in-depth early warning system.44

Nitze and the other Cassandras of vulnerability gained a strong voice on May 18, 1953. That day, a week after Secretary Wilson received Kelly's review, the NSC received the report of the Edwards Special Evaluation Subcommittee. Four months in the making—Edwards was another progeny of NSC 141 and the summer studies—this investigation represented the most comprehensive assessment of Soviet atomic capabilities ever completed. The report not only detailed Soviet stockpile and bomber numbers but also war-gamed attack scenarios, assessed American air defense efficiency, and estimated possible SAC losses, U.S. industrial damage and civilian casualties. For example, for mid-1953 the subcommittee judged that the USSR could assault the continental U.S. with 120 atomic weapons dispersed among 1,000 Tu-4 bombers. Dividing their intended targets between SAC bases and thirty-one major cities, Edwards hypothesized, the Russians, losing only seven percent of this armada to U.S. defenders, could deliver sixty percent of their atomic payload, inflict nine million casualties, and destroy one-
third of U.S. industry and one-fourth of SAC's air fleet. Should the Russians choose instead to concentrate their offensive solely on America's most populous cities, the casualty figures could climb to twenty-four million.45

The one "comforting" aspect of the Edwards study was its conclusion that, even in the expected case of minimum warning before a Russian Pearl Harbor--approximately thirty minutes before the first targets disappeared beneath boiling mushroom clouds--enough SAC bombers would survive to deal a decisive retaliatory strike against the Russian motherland.46 Still, the crux of the report hinged upon the utter inadequacy of U.S. air defenses. Aside from its uncertain deterrent value, Edwards warned, SAC's offensive atomic power was useless in preventing a Soviet surprise attack.

Eisenhower detected the weaknesses of the Edwards report almost immediately--it exaggerated Soviet capabilities and took little note of American strengths (see Chapter I, p. 60). He also greeted the Kelly report with obvious skepticism, refusing to accept its conclusions and recommendations. Instead, he directed the NSC to create its own Continental Defense Committee--since Kelly and Edwards were creations of President Truman and his defense secretary, Robert Lovett--for further study of the issue.47

Perhaps encouraged by the movement toward peace in
Korea, but doubtlessly concerned by the effects of the current Soviet "peace offensive" and the European allies' slumping morale, the President's interest in Oppenheimer's Project Candor grew considerably during the summer months. In late May 1953, Eisenhower invited Oppenheimer and his co-author (and anti-thermonuclear weapons advocate) Vannevar Bush to discuss with the NSC the Project and the general problem of the atomic arms race. The two renowned scientists had been serving as consultants to a special ad hoc NSC subcommittee established in February 1953 to study the earlier Oppenheimer report. The subcommittee's report, the chief topic before the NSC the day of Bush and Oppenheimer's visit, essentially completed the first phase of Eisenhower's early nuclear policy review. It also illuminated the duality that had begun to characterize the administration's approach to nuclear weapons issues. Designated NSC 151, the new subcommittee's report wholeheartedly endorsed Oppenheimer's primary recommendation for an "affirmative policy of candor toward the American people." The object of this policy, NSC 151 provided, "would be to secure support of the American people for necessary governmental actions which would rest on an adequate understanding of the realities of the situation." But what were those realities? First and foremost, the public should be informed of the immutable fact of Ameri-
ca's vulnerability. Oppenheimer himself told the Council that the situation was "grim." Soviet intentions remained diabolical, and the U.S. could prevent neither a surprise attack nor Moscow's attainment of atomic parity. Anticipating what he wrote in the July 1953 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Oppenheimer urged the President to tell his fellow citizens that

We may anticipate a state of affairs in which the two Great Powers will be in a position to put an end to the civilization and the life of the other, though not without risking its own. We may be likened to two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of killing the other, but only at the risk of his own life.

[A]nd the basic fact that needs to be communicated is that the time in which this will happen is short.50

To balance this unsettling portrait, the *ad hoc* panel warned the President that he should be candid about the deterrent power of America's nuclear arsenal, but also spell out the administration's determination to protect that by enhanced continental and civil defenses. This eased Eisenhower's concerns about Project Candor somewhat. As secretaries Wilson and Humphrey put it, full candor about nuclear weapons was more likely to scare than reassure people. Eisenhower added that any speech he might deliver (the *ad hoc* panel was urging that Candor be launched by a personal presidential appeal) would focus on "vigilance and sobriety, not on panic."51
Plans for a presidential address soon went forward, under the watchful guidance of Psychological Strategy Board director C.D. Jackson. On the one hand, it was clear that Candor's aim would be to enlist the support of the American people for what promised to be years of tremendous expenditures for building defenses against Soviet attack. On the other hand, and sharply contrasting with NSC 151's treatment of the vulnerability problem, the ad hoc committee asserted that the Project Candor campaign should also seek to conventionalize atomic weapons. "The atomic weapon differs only in degree from other weapons," the authors of 151 wrote. Therefore, "Moral objections to the use of atomic weapons should be on the same basis [as] for other weapons capable of destroying life and inflicting damage."

This was telling language. At bottom, it reflected Eisenhower's view of atomic weapons as essentially normal tools for war and recognized his intention to expand the nation's (and the free world's) reliance upon them. Eisenhower left no doubt that this was his exact sentiment when, during the May 27, 1953 NSC meeting attended by Bush and Oppenheimer, he rejected Secretary Wilson's statement that the U.S. would never be the first to use atomic weapons in war. To the contrary, Eisenhower declared he could foresee a number of situations where the U.S. would engage in first use.52 As the administration's national
security policy began to take shape over the next five months, it became abundantly clear that a relentless pursuit of nuclear superiority and placement of atomic and thermonuclear weapons at the center of the nation's general and limited war capabilities and plans, not Candor or continental defense, constituted the foundation of Eisenhower's emerging nuclear philosophy.

***

The formulation of a new national security strategy really began in early May 1953 with the creation, at the President's instigation, of Project Solarium. Solarium involved a reevaluation of the basics of U.S. cold war strategy and tactics by three task force teams of Soviet and defense experts. Ostensibly assembled and overseen by Robert Cutler, Allen Dulles and Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith, the Solarium exercise actually represented, in part, another attempt by the President to exert his personal suasion over the national security planning bureaucracy.53 For instance, Eisenhower quietly took a hand in the selection of the task force members. Most significantly, the President excluded retiring Policy Planning Staff director Paul Nitze—whose obsession with Soviet capabilities and the possibility of a surprise nuclear attack on the West was "antithetical to Eisenhower's reasoning"—but he included George Kennan,
whose views closely mirrored his own, as a task force leader. 54

Despite the President's early intervention, Project Solarium was designed as a relatively open-ended exercise. Guided by three alternative strategies broadly outlined by Cutler and his colleagues, the task forces worked for the better part of June and July sequestered in secrecy in the basement of the National War College. Task Force A, chaired by Ambassador Kennan, produced a strategy of containment essentially unchanged from that of the Truman administration. 55 By contrast, Task Force B, chaired by Air Force Major General James McCormack, Jr., proceeded from the premise that containment had failed and called instead for drawing a cordon sanitaire around the Soviet periphery which, if transgressed by overt Russian military aggression, would provoke an instantaneous and total response by the U.S. Like Kennan's team, McCormack's task force acknowledged that growing Soviet atomic capabilities posed a considerable danger to U.S. security. On the other hand, team B also believed that an unambiguous, public declaration by the U.S. of its intent to unleash its full power on the USSR in the event of aggression would deter it. 56

Finally, Task Force C, chaired by Admiral Richard L. Conolly (formerly president of the Naval War College),
offered a strategy of "dynamic political warfare," a "forward and aggressive political strategy in all fields and by all means: military, economic, diplomatic, covert and propaganda." This bold scheme proceeded from team C's conclusion that the Soviet threat grew more grave every day. Conolly's report stated, "[T]ime has been working against us. The trend will continue unless it is arrested and reversed by positive action." 57

Though the alternatives proposed by the Solarium task forces differed substantially from one another, all three embraced atomic weapons as conventionally usable tools of war and an enhanced willingness to risk superpower conflict. For example, Kennan's team asserted, "In seeking to deter and oppose further expansion by the Soviet bloc, the [new basic national security] policy would include utilization of military operations . . . even at the grave risk of general war." Kennan's report additionally suggested that the President consider "announcing that the U.S. will feel free to use atomic weapons in case of local aggression." 58

Task Force B, of course, went considerably farther in its penchant to risk atomic war. Confident of both the war-winning and deterrent powers of America's atomic arsenal, in essence McCormack's team recommended the ultimate in what would later popularly be termed "brinkman-
ship." If the threat of nuclear retaliation failed to deter Soviet aggression, Task Force B's strategy required the U.S. to make good on that threat.

Perhaps most provocatively of all, strategy C advised that the U.S. take all steps short of initiating general war to halt and rollback Communist expansion. This mandated a willingness to "exploit to the fullest use of forces as instruments of national policy." Rejecting preventive war as unacceptable, Conolly's team nonetheless advised that the nation's atomic weapons be deployed in the custody of the armed services and that provisions be made within the government to allow for their use "without delay" in case of war. Equally telling, Task force C proposed measures such as active American support of a Chinese Nationalist invasion of the Chinese mainland and decisive American involvement in pursuit of military victory in Indochina, both of which suggested an extreme readiness to face, if not provoke, U.S.-Soviet conflict.59

When the President and his NSC gathered on July 16, 1953, to review Solarium's outcome, they were thus presented with three activist alternatives seemingly in tune with the philosophy that he and Secretary Dulles had professed since the 1952 campaign. Eisenhower, however, responded somewhat uncertainly to the task force summaries. Apparently surprised by the willingness of teams B and C to risk
atomic conflict, the President first sounded a note of caution: "The only thing worse than losing a global [nuclear] conflict," he told the Council, "was winning one." If the U.S. won, individual liberty would be destroyed and the task of dealing with a devastated Soviet Union would be incomprehensible, if not impossible. Yet, when Secretary Humphrey criticized the Solarium teams' devotion to increased military resources at significantly increased cost as the answer to the Soviet challenge, Eisenhower snapped that the administration's goal was "to build up our capability for action."60 For the President, nuclear superiority had two complementary corollaries--it would assure victory in war and it would assure peace by deterrence.

Clearly by late summer 1953, Eisenhower was being pulled in two directions. The Solarium studies indicated that the military superiority and foreign policy initiative he sought would cost far more than he believed the country could afford. Eisenhower hoped to achieve long-term deterrence, nuclear superiority, budgetary savings, economic health, Western solidarity and Communist disequilibrium. Yet, as Cutler advised the President, implementation of any one of the three Solarium options would require Truman-like defense expenditures, at least in the short-run.61 Political realities posed other distracting
problems. The American public was weary of war, Western Europe dispirited, and Congress busy reducing the already lean defense budget for fiscal year 1954(62).

How to realize the decisive military superiority necessary to reassure the Allies without terrifying them, how to deter Communist aggression without bankrupting the nation, how to regain the cold war initiative without provoking general war, and how to construct a viable, comprehensive strategy without evoking Congress' ignorant wrath—for such questions there were evidently no easy answers. Unwilling at this point to decide, Eisenhower wanted the Solarium teams to provide him with some answers. During the earlier debate over future strategy in Korea, he had finally insisted that the Joint Chiefs furnish him not merely with some options but the best option to end the war. Now the President desired Solarium to produce a clear choice. When it failed to do so, he ordered the task forces immediately to do so—devise a single strategy that combined the best features of each option. When they proved unable to harmonize their differences, Eisenhower entrusted the task to Robert Cutler.63

Cutler, intimately aware of the President's preferences, prepared a fresh set of strategy guidelines for the NSC to consider. Faithful to the President's personal
instructions, Cutler's outline combined the task forces' agreed emphasis on massive retaliatory power with the initiative-seizing features of plans B and C. For instance, Cutler proposed that the administration accept "moderately increased risks of general war by taking some of the aggressive actions . . . proposed by Task Force 'C.'" It should also adopt C's objective of creating a "'climate of victory' to bolster the morale and strength of the free world while forcing the Soviet bloc on the defensive." Finally, in line with team B's proposal, the new U.S. security policy should define what Soviet actions would provoke total American retaliation. Formally approved by the President on July 31, 1953, the NSC forwarded the new set of guidelines to the Planning Board to be fleshed out into a coherent national strategy.64

***

On August 8, 1953, a week after the NSC approved the Cutler guidelines, the new Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted their own evaluation of the defense establishment, which the President had requested a month before.65 The Chiefs warned that U.S. forces were dangerously overextended: "Our current military capabilities are inadequate to provide essential national security and at the same time to meet our global commitments." To correct this imbalance of means and ends, to cut costs, and to enhance strategic
flexibility, they advised consideration of substantial redeployments and creation of a mobile strike force based in the U.S. The nation's air and naval strike forces would become the primary weapon to deter and fight war, supplemented by allied ground units on forward defense assignments around the periphery of the Soviet Union. Finally, because this system would so depend upon American readiness to use atomic forces, the Chiefs recommended the NSC express that readiness in a clear and positive and public policy. Eisenhower's strategic vision, it seemed, was achieving ascendance.66

But the same day the Joint Chiefs submitted their findings to Secretary Wilson, Soviet Premier Georgi Malenkov profoundly altered the terms of the debate within the U.S. Government by proclaiming that the American H-bomb monopoly had ended. As Ambassador Bohlen observed from Moscow, Malenkov's proclamation was more "an implied claim on [the] hydrogen bomb" than a confident assertion of nuclear parity.67 Still, the implication was sufficiently unnerving to touch off a fresh wave of public exaggerations of Soviet capabilities and intentions and to reinforce this tendency within the U.S. national security establishment, at a critical moment in the process of Eisenhower's strategic policy revision.

Administration officials moved quickly to prevent a
hysterical reaction to the news of Malenkov's speech. At his weekly press conference, for example, John Foster Dulles registered strong doubt about the existence of a Soviet H-bomb. If the Soviets had detonated such a device, he said, the U.S. would have detected it. Lewis Strauss, the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, was more guarded in his effort to deflate speculation on the meaning of the Malenkov pronouncement. 'We have never assumed that it was beyond the capabilities of the Russians to produce such a weapon,' he remarked. It was this expectation that led the U.S. in 1950 to go ahead with its own thermonuclear program.68

Alarmist voices overwhelmed these attempts at official restraint. Not only was the idea of a Soviet thermonuclear capability taken at face value; it was also translated into fresh claims of exaggerated U.S. vulnerability. For instance, Deputy Federal Civil Defense Administrator Katherine G. Howard asserted on national television that "it was the view of the 'highest authority'" that the Soviets had the ability to attack the continental U.S. with 400 atomically-armed bombers. Soviet possession of the H-bomb, which she took for granted, severely increased the danger of this attack. Echoing Howard's alarm, Arthur S. Flemming, director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, claimed that the USSR now possessed the capability to
deliver "the most destructive weapon ever devised by man on chosen targets in the United States."69

Answering skeptics who pointed to the lack of evidence of a Russian nuclear test and to the fact that the Russians had exploded only three atomic devices since 1949--while the U.S. had tested at least forty-four--*New York Times* military writer Hanson W. Baldwin wrote on August 19th that his scientific and intelligence sources believed the Soviets had already "standardized an A-bomb of considerably greater power than that used at Hiroshima." Rather than squandering their precious supply of fissionable material on unnecessary tests, Baldwin surmised, the Russians were forging ahead, "producing weapons as rapidly as possible."70

Congress was equally swift reacting to Malenkov's announcement. The Senate Armed Services Committee hastily asked Robert C. Sprague to conduct an emergency review of U.S. air defenses against Soviet attack.71 Congressman Sterling Cole (R-N.Y.), chairman of the powerful Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, wrote to the President on the Committee's behalf, urging a vigorous reaction to the Soviet surprise. Cole pleaded that "no effort be spared" in the development of a superior U.S. thermonuclear capability. He also emphasized, however, that a Soviet nuclear arsenal demanded extensive efforts to improve
continental defense and establish international arms control.72

On August 12, 1953, four days after Malenkov's speech, U.S. Air Force planes detected the radioactive remnants of a Soviet test. According to Chairman Strauss's August 19th press release, the USSR had exploded a device of considerable force "involving 'both fission and thermonuclear reactions'"73 Strauss's choice of words was critical. The evidence collected suggested that the August 12 test had not been a "true" thermonuclear weapon. And indeed it was not. Assertions at the time (and ever since) that the Soviets had developed a deliverable thermonuclear bomb before the U.S., and that the U.S. "had taken the wrong path in using deuterium [as the key catalytic element for the October 31, 1952 MIKE thermonuclear device] while the Russians had struck out directly for the more practical lithium-deuteride approach," were all wrong.74

As the father of the Soviet H-bomb, Andrei Sakharov, indicated in his Memoirs (published in 1990), the Soviets did not master the secret to thermonuclear weaponry--"the principle that makes it possible to obtain an almost infinite explosive yield from a combination of fission and fusion reactions"--until late 1955. The "Joe IV" test device (as American officials named it) was merely a "boosted" atomic device that yielded a fraction of the
power of America's first thermonuclear detonation nine months before. Nonetheless, the Soviet test revived the vulnerability hypothesis and strengthened the arguments of those whose purposes would be served by a bigger defense budget than the President was struggling so hard to achieve.75

A month after the test, Eisenhower asked Robert Cutler to obtain Strauss's opinion of "what this explosion might mean in the capability of the Soviets to produce such devices in the next two or three years. . . ."76 A week later, Strauss replied that, at most, Joe IV yielded perhaps one-third the power of the November 1952 American thermonuclear (MIKE) device. More dubiously, he added, "there is no reason to think they were necessarily trying for size," and "I assume that their weapons can be equal in magnitude to ours." Strauss concluded that though Joe IV was apparently not an air drop, the Soviets would have no problems perfecting a deliverable H-bomb and could have ten such weapons within a matter of months and 119 by 1956.(77)

Why did Strauss choose to base his conclusions not on the evidence he possessed—that Joe IV was neither a thermonuclear device nor a deliverable design—but on what he "assumed" and the "possible" and "production capability?"

Most likely, the AEC chairman offered the most pessimistic possible assessment of Joe IV because such an assessment
served his ideological and institutional requirements. Convinced of the Russians' evil and aggressive intentions, determined to meet them with nuclear superiority, and anxious to prevent the Eisenhower budget slasher from curtailing AEC weapons production, Strauss opted for the worst-case analysis. Thus, despite evidence to the contrary, on September 30, 1953, Strauss publicly announced that the Soviets had jumped ahead of the U.S. in the development of thermonuclear weapons.78

Strauss was not alone in knowingly presenting a misleading picture of the August 12 Soviet test. Air Force Chief of Staff Nathan Twining and Air Force Secretary Harold Talbott both argued that a Soviet thermonuclear delivery capability justified restoration of the cuts imposed upon the Air Force by NSC 149/2. Specifically, Twining pressed his JCS colleagues to approve a 137-wing objective for fiscal year 1957 to deter a Soviet Union now capable of executing "an immediate air [atomic] attack on any point in Europe and any point in the United States."79 Apparently, Eisenhower's new Chiefs were not so pliant after all.

Twining and Talbott chose not to mention U.S. intelligence reports showing that the only bombers in the Soviet Long Range Air Force (Tu-4s) were poor copies of American B-29s that had been stranded in the Soviet Union during
World War II. These aircraft could reach American targets only if stripped of all excess weight, launched from forward Arctic bases on the Kola and Chukotski peninsulas, and refueled in flight. As Twining and Talbott knew, U.S. military intelligence had no evidence showing that the Soviets were able to extend the Tu-4s to intercontinental range or that they had developed an aerial refueling capability. Furthermore, the Soviets did not yet have modern air bases in the Arctic. The Air Force did have evidence that the Russians were working on a new long-range turbo-prop bomber—denoted as the Type 31 in intelligence documents. But that evidence also suggested, in the words of the Air Force, that "even the Type 31 [would] not solve the Soviet range problem" without the necessary Arctic bases and aerial refueling.

In succeeding weeks, the apparent consensus among the Joint Chiefs of early August fell apart not only because Joe IV revitalized the vulnerability thesis. It became clear that the consensus never really existed. All of the Chiefs had agreed to the contents of the August 8th report on strategy; however, Admiral Carney and General Ridgway had done so reluctantly, if not conditionally. Their concern centered on the conventional force reductions implied in the President's strategic vision. They made this clear at the NSC meeting on August 27, 1953.
Carney, for example, refused to concede that the West could rely upon the "deterrent force represented by air power and atomic weapons." As he put it, "air and naval forces alone could never constitute an effective deterrent to enemy ground attack." Ridgway concurred with Carney's thinly veiled denigration of the Air Force. It was downright dangerous, Ridgway argued, to believe "that you could prevent war through the deterrent effect of any single military arm." For that reason, the Army Chief of Staff refused to condone the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces abroad. 83

Though previously an advocate of nuclear deterrence, Secretary Dulles appeared sympathetic to Carney and Ridgway's concerns. Dulles worried particularly about the effects upon the NATO allies of the proposed withdrawal of U.S. troops. For most of 1953, as the Western European economy endured another year of recession, as European fears of Soviet atomic capabilities grew, as the Soviet "peace offensive" corroded European resolve, and as relations strained over the European Defense Community and German rearmament, U.S. diplomats in Europe reported an ever-worsening morale among NATO governments and peoples. John C. Hughes, the U.S. Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council, judged that the NATO "military alliance" was "cracking under increasing pressure of
popular belief (wish being father of the thought) that the threat of open aggression [is] receding."84 Livingston Merchant, the assistant secretary of state for European affairs, told Dulles that NATO's "malaise" reflected "a growing loss of confidence in Europe in American leadership." In Merchant's opinion, "many influential Europeans believe that we have lost confidence if not interest in Europe and its defensibility."85

Secretary Dulles carried the weight of such worries when he traveled to Denver in early September 1953 to discuss his view of the Joint Chiefs' debate with the vacationing President. Though Eisenhower had already communicated his wholehearted support of the proposed redeployment scheme, Dulles advised him this was a dangerous move. In the secretary's opinion, "the NATO concept [was] losing its grip." Frightened by the Soviets' growing atomic and now thermonuclear capabilities, to which the continental U.S. was now quite vulnerable, the Western allies were losing faith both in this country's escalatory dominance and especially in Washington's willingness to open the U.S. to Soviet nuclear attack by coming to Europe's defense. Following the Joint Chiefs' original plan--reducing U.S. ground forces in Europe and increasing continental defenses and dependence upon nuclear weapons--the Secretary argued, would add to such fears, convincing
Europeans that the U.S. was reviving the "Fortress America" concept. Such action would seriously undermine the integrity of the alliance, compel America's friends to embrace neutrality, and disastrously shift the world balance of power.86

Dulles sought to reconcile the President's desire for substantial troop redeployment and the Allies' fears for their own safety by proposing "a spectacular effort to relax world tensions." Specifically, Dulles envisioned a demarche that would include agreement on nuclear arms control and climax with mutual withdrawal of American and Soviet troops from Europe. Left intact would be America's home-based nuclear arsenal and strategic reserve, thus guaranteeing continued U.S. military superiority. The secretary of state's proposal would allow the U.S. to reap the budgetary and strategic benefits of redeployment without suffering the public relations and diplomatic costs of proceeding with the JCS plan. The time for such a bold move, Dulles concluded, was now. The U.S. presently enjoyed a position of strength. The Korean War had been ended under threat of possible U.S. atomic escalation; the Communist challenge in Iran had been repulsed; the French were putting up a vigorous fight in Indochina, and Adenauer had recently won reelection in West Germany. But time was working against the West for, as Dulles noted, the full
impact on world opinion and the balance of power of advances in Soviet nuclear weapons had yet to be felt.87

On September 8, 1953, the President wrote the Secretary of State that he was "in emphatic agreement that renewed efforts should be made to relax world tensions on a global basis," and that the idea of mutual troop withdrawals might be a place to start. But Eisenhower also made it clear that he envisaged something much less grand than Dulles. Indeed, the President devoted most of his letter to arguing the need to describe publicly the power of nuclear weapons in the context of a demonstrated and continuing Soviet unwillingness "to make an honest effort" toward their control. That Soviet unwillingness, the President continued, revealed that the Kremlin was contemplating the "aggressive use" of these weapons of mass destruction. To meet this danger, to build the military might necessary to "avert disaster" in case of a Soviet surprise attack and respond instantly and decisively, Eisenhower believed, "We must have the enlightened support of Americans and the informed understanding of our friends in the world . . . that increased military preparation had been forced upon us."88

One part of the nation's "military preparation"--continental defense--appeared destined for extensive enlargement. All of the Truman studies urgently recommended it.
The new Joint Chiefs of Staff had generally cited it as a necessary component of a credible deterrent, and the anxiety created by the August 12 Russian "nuclear" explosion seemed to demand it as a matter of survival. Originally unconvinced by the Truman vulnerability studies, Eisenhower and the NSC decided to establish the administration's own panel to examine the problem. Headed by General Harold R. Bull (USA), the Continental Defense Committee of the NSC (the "Bull Committee") delivered its report in late July. Overall, the Joint Chiefs approved Bull's extensive program, as amended by various agencies, for air defense enhancement. The existing system's inadequacies, they noted, reflected their assessment of the nation's general military overextension and neglect of "our vitals in [the] United States." Not excepting Carney and Ridgway, however, the Chiefs were long experienced officers who thought in terms of the offensive. They had all read Clausewitz on the advantages of the defense, but the great Prussian had not lived to see Hiroshima or Bikini. As the Chiefs wrote to Secretary Wilson, in the nuclear age "an aggressor nation will be far more deterred by evidence that we have the offensive potential and the mobility capable of dealing it decisive blows than by the excellence of our defenses." Accordingly, the Chiefs agreed to endorse expanded continental defenses, but only as long as that expansion did not
come at the expense of offensive programs.\textsuperscript{90}

The NSC considered the "final" version of NSC 159 (NSC 159/4) on September 24, 1953. The wording of this document left no doubt that the specter of American vulnerability and an exaggerated Soviet nuclear delivery capability had infected the Eisenhower national security apparatus. NSC 159/4 described U.S. continental defenses as "clearly inadequate" and unable "to prevent, neutralize or seriously deter" the current and expanding Soviet capacity to deal a "devastating" atomic attack on the U.S. American vulnerability had reached critical proportions also because of what the document's authors described as a Soviet stockpile nearing 'atomic plenty' and "undoubted possession by the Soviets of a thermonuclear device of quality. . . ." This last fact, demonstrated by the Soviet test on August 12, 1953, mandated a review of all relevant national security policies promulgated prior to that test.\textsuperscript{91}

But what about Soviet intentions? Would the men in the Kremlin take advantage of this situation and attack? Significantly, NSC 159/4 judged that Soviet initiation of general war during the next two years was "unlikely." Still, the document warned that the possibility of general war could not be ruled out, especially given the Kremlin's "basic hostility to the free world and its ultimate objective of dominating the world." Accordingly, its authors
urged immediate implementation of a number of air defense and early warning improvements.92

During the NSC meeting on September 24, 1953, Admiral Radford expressed profound skepticism about the premise of NSC 159/4. The problem with such frightening studies, he said, was that they "tended to be based on [exaggerated] assumptions as to the enemy's capabilities." This in turn produced demands for what the JCS chairman labeled "an impossible program of continental defense." The President agreed with Radford. As he had lectured the Edwards Committee the previous June, Eisenhower reminded the National Security Council that he was disturbed by the tendency "invariably to underestimate the difficulties which the USSR would encounter in making an attack upon the continental United States."93

Not all of the members of the NSC were persuaded by the President's judgment. A few weeks later, as the NSC discussed a revision of the nation's emergency mobilization plans, Arthur Flemming, the director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, criticized prior planning assumptions for having "never taken account adequately of the massive damage which this country might suffer" from a Soviet atomic blitz. Any new set of assumptions, he felt, had to correct this oversight. Eisenhower curtly corrected Flemming, warning that the NSC not err by focusing inordi-
nately upon what the Russians might be able to do and overlooking what the U.S. unquestionably could do: inflict decisive blows upon any would-be aggressor.94

National Security Advisor Robert Cutler seconded the President's attack on Flemming's case. Cutler argued that the Soviet capacity to deal devastating damage to the U.S. rested upon the idea that the Soviets could start a global war, i.e., attack the U.S. without warning. CIA director Allen Dulles interjected that he considered this a "possibility." The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Cutler responded, rejected both assumptions. They were confident that the U.S. would detect Soviet bloc preparations for war long before Moscow could attack. The Chiefs also believed, and Cutler said he agreed, that the Planning Board (and thus Flemming) had based the proposed mobilization plans on the "worst possible case."95

The reservations registered by Eisenhower, Radford and Cutler reflected opinions then being voiced in such disparate places as the super-secret quarters of the Air Force Directorate of Intelligence and the various offices at the State Department. For example, Brigadier General W.M. Burgess, the Air Force deputy chief of staff for intelligence, wrote:

In crediting the Soviet with limited numbers of Type 31s in late 1953, followed by small numbers of B-47
type and B-52 type jets later on, we are doing so without firm or factual intelligence to support our estimate. In effect, we are crediting the Soviet . . . with the U.S. program in toto. It is as if we note the Soviet has almost complete access to our program and rationalize that because he is bound to know we are fairly smart, he will adopt it as his own, although lagging a few months in its accomplishment.

Our air defense plans throughout the middle and late 1950s are built on this intelligence assumption which may well be erroneous.96

On the same day that the National Security Council met to conclude NSC 159/4, James C. Bonbright, Jr., the deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs, advised Secretary Dulles that the present NATO estimates of Soviet capabilities were deeply "suspect." In fact, the very method by which the estimates were made ensured an inflated, misleading result. In essence, the estimates exaggerated the capabilities of the Soviets while belittling those of the West. For instance, Bonbright wrote, they "assumed [the] maximum [Soviet] threat at all places at once." And yet, "Account is not taken of allied counter action (i.e. strategic air attack) on the enemy's capabilities . . . . Since attack . . . inevitably involves U.S. retaliation, such an estimate is unrealistic. Certainly, the enemy does not evaluate his own capability under such an assumption."97

It is unknown whether either Burgess or Bonbright's warnings were passed on to the White House, though it is
unlikely that the secretary of state would have kept such information from the President. In any case, Eisenhower was persuaded by the support NSC 159/4 received from the JCS majority and State Department. He formally approved the new policy on September 25, 1953, thereby all but completing the integration of the Truman administration's concept of American vulnerability into the fabric of his national security policy.

The cost to Eisenhower's strategic vision was significant. In preparing the fiscal year 1955 budget, the NSC refused to grant the Pentagon's request for larger appropriations to accommodate the new air defense scheme. In effect, this meant that the new programs of NSC 159/4 had to be paid for by reductions in other security programs, precisely the result the Joint Chiefs had warned against. This translated into $3.198 billion out of the $38 billion scheduled for defense in fiscal year 1955, up from the $2.939 billion budgeted for continental defenses in fiscal year 1954. More than dollars and balance, however, the real damage to the President's philosophy came in the realm of perceptions. Over the next five years, this idea of American vulnerability would, largely against Eisenhower's stout-hearted resistance, grow into an obsession for many individuals within his administration, Congress and the national security establishment.
***

The NSC meetings of October 1953 marked some of the most important days of Eisenhower's first term as President, for it was during these meetings that the strategic outlines of the New Look were at last completed. Forged by the NSC Planning Board from Robert Cutler's revision of Project Solarium and the Joint Chiefs' August reports, the proposed strategy first appeared as the draft Basic National Security Policy paper NSC 162. This paper centered upon three fundamental concerns: the need to counter the unquestioned ability of the Soviet Union to execute a crippling nuclear attack on the U.S., the necessity of sustaining and strengthening the NATO alliance, and the desire to balance security and solvency.

Significantly, none of the Planning Board's members disputed the provision that an expanded reliance upon nuclear weapons was indispensable to U.S. national security strategy. On the other hand, as Cutler explained to the National Security Council on October 7, 1953, the question of how this enlarged arsenal might be used remained unresolved. Most contentious of all was the question of use as it related to the allies. For example, should the U.S., Cutler asked, secure "understanding and approval of the use of special weapons by [from] our allies"? The President quickly summarized his position on this dilemma: the U.S.
Government should not only seek allied approval but should do so prior to using atomic weapons. Cutler replied that the Joint Chiefs sharply disagreed with this position. They advised that the NSC provide a firm, definitive policy statement supporting the use of atomic weapons. As currently written, the Chiefs argued, NSC 162 confined the U.S. to a timid, inactive policy dominated by fear of antagonizing the Russians and alienating the European allies.100

Eisenhower, initially, seemed unpersuaded, if not perturbed, by the Chiefs' contention. Would they, he wondered, have him boldly announce a policy of employing nuclear weapons? In his opinion, "nothing would so upset the whole world." Defense Secretary Wilson explained that the Joint Chiefs could not proceed with their primary duties--formulation of war plans and force structure--if unsure of whether or not the U.S. intended as a matter of policy to use nuclear weapons in war. At the very least, Admiral Radford interjected, it was vital that the NSC agree to a strategy allowing for the employment of atomic weapons "from bases where the permission of no foreign government is required."101

Eisenhower reminded Wilson and Radford that final authorization to employ special weapons would always reside in the president's hands, and he assured them that he would not hesitate to make that decision if it were "dictated by
the interests of U.S. security." As a military man, however, the President understood that this did not satisfy the requirements of sound military readiness. Accordingly, he told Wilson and Radford that, in their war plans, the Chiefs "should count on making use of special weapons in the event of a general war," but not in "minor affairs."

Much as he did during the deliberations over the use of atomic weapons to end the war in Korea, Eisenhower now suppressed his true inclinations out of concern for the solidarity of the Atlantic alliance. Without question, he concurred with Secretary Dulles's oft-expressed view--voiced once again during the NSC meeting on October 7, 1953--that it was imperative that the administration "remove the taboo" from the use of nuclear weapons, integrate them into public consciousness, and bring the allies up to speed in their thinking about them. But all of this had to be approached with extreme care, as the reports from American diplomats in Europe indicated.

The U.S. could not force its policy upon its principal allies, even if the President were convinced it was essential to Western security. As Eisenhower once remarked, "You do not lead by hitting people over the head. Any damn fool can do that . . . . I'll tell you what leadership is. It's persuasion--and conciliation--and education--and patience. It's long, slow, tough work. That's the only
kind of leadership I know—or believe in—or will practice." And so the President instructed the secretary of state to work quietly on this problem in the capitals of Europe.

The President, however, made his real feelings known when he told the Council that the U.S. must "be able to hit the Soviets, if necessary, from any point on the compass."104 In other words, the former NATO commander understood all too well that the success of the U.S. general war plan depended upon an instant strategic response to a Soviet attack from any and all U.S. bases. Any restrictions upon that response invited military disaster.

President Eisenhower's approach to the use of nuclear weapons seemed straightforward. Allied sensitivity demanded that the administration obtain their consent to use of weapons based on allied soil. The U.S. would seek to change that precondition, to win prior consent to the use of these weapons. In the meantime, the Joint Chiefs could plan on instant use of all nuclear forces in case of general war.

Almost immediately, however, the Pentagon complicated the President's clarity. The problem was that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were deeply split over defense strategy.105 At the NSC meetings of October 7th and October 13, 1953, Admiral Radford implied that his colleagues strongly
endorsed a policy that depended on the use of nuclear weapons. Towards the end of the October 13th meeting, however, Radford declared that they regarded NSC 162's provision on use--the one supposedly clarified by the President on October 7th--as "insufficient guidance." Eisenhower snapped back that he disagreed completely. The provision communicated his wishes quite accurately. In that case, Radford retorted unhesitatingly, could the Chiefs count on using atomic weapons if the Communists renewed war in Korea? He did not believe NSC 162 gave a clear answer to this. What was needed, he argued, was a policy that permitted use of atomic weapons "in a blanket way," a policy that would allow the Pentagon to draw plans for a single kind of war rather than compel it to provide expensively and inefficiently the plans and forces for several kinds of conflict.106

Though supported by General Twining, Radford's remarks did not represent the feelings of Admiral Carney and General Ridgway. There was another side to Radford's position: "blanket" reliance on nuclear weapons would free the administration to substantially reduce the number of U.S. ground forces overseas. This equation had been fundamental to Eisenhower's strategic vision, and Carney and Ridgway had endorsed it in principle as a long-term objective necessary to correct America's currently overex-
tended posture. Since the August 27 NSC meeting, however, the two Chiefs had retreated from their position. Angered by the potential diminution of the Army and Navy's roles and institutional power, resentful of what they considered arbitrarily imposed budget ceilings, and opposed to the projected dependence on atomic weapons, Carney and Ridgway recoiled from the implications of the President's strategic vision and, during the force structure debate, fought hard against it.107 One way to prevent atomic weapons from dictating force levels was to keep open the question of whether they would be used. If that remained unclear, then a larger army and navy must be maintained as options.

Ridgway made it explicitly clear that Radford had not spoken for him on October 13th. On October 19th, the Army Chief wrote that he had "little patience" with "segments of highly placed, very influential people in our Government who are playing with the idea that because of this tremendous atomic and nuclear capability we are evolving, the time will soon come, if perhaps it has not already come on the planning stage, when we can scrap our conventional weapons, and rely on knocking out any opponent by unrestricted use of unconventional weapons."108

Planting the seeds of a thesis which would gain increasing acceptance within the administration during the next few years, Carney and Ridgway and certain State
Department officials contended that the U.S. and USSR were fast approaching nuclear parity. The result would be effective nuclear stalemate, with neither side willing to resort to use of "special weapons" for fear of escalation. The Soviets, however, would seek to exploit this mutual fear, seeing it as an opportunity to pursue their objective of world domination through subversion and piecemeal aggression, without fear of American retaliation. The U.S., too dependent on atomic weapons because of budget constraints and a misplaced faith in their deterrent value, would then find itself faced with the horrendous choice of either doing nothing or initiating an atomic exchange.109

During the NSC meeting on October 13, 1953, Secretary Wilson and assistant defense secretary Wilfred J. McNeil announced that the Joint Chiefs had requested increases in force strength and budget for all three services, a total of $3.128 million men and $43 billion in appropriations for fiscal year 1955. Hearing this unexpected retreat from the strictures of NSC 149/2 and 153/1, the President, Treasury Secretary Humphrey and Budget Director Dodge almost fell out of their chairs. Three times Defense Secretary Wilson sought to explain that the proposed figures were the best his department could do without a stronger policy on the use of atomic weapons and readiness to reduce U.S. forces abroad.110 Of course, the implications of Wilson's remarks
concealed Carney and Ridgway's vehement opposition to troop reductions and nuclear dependency.  

All the same, there was more than a bit of political theater at the October 13th meeting. To begin with, before the meeting a bit of Pentagon "logrolling" had apparently occurred.111 Put simply, a deal had been struck among the Chiefs (and Services). In exchange for Chairman Radford's agreement to back them on the questions of budget and force structure, Carney and/or Ridgway acceded to the Radford-Twining position on the need for a more definitive policy statement on the use of nuclear weapons.112 JCS decisions required a simple majority. Carney, Ridgway and Marine Commandant Lemuel Shepherd formed such a majority on the issues of budgets and forces. However, because Secretary Wilson (not to mention the President, Humphrey, Dodge and others) believed strongly in the need for substantial budget cuts, the majority realized that without Radford's powerful influence, Wilson might well overrule its decision and present one calling for less spending and fewer troops. But because Radford's position on troop levels was not clear-cut, the majority could persuade him to condone larger conventional forces in return for their support of more specificity on the use of nuclear weapons. The idea of substantial troop withdrawals from abroad and the creation of a central strategic reserve in the U.S. had
been Radford's idea, first outlined for Eisenhower during his voyage home from Korea in December 1952. Ten months later, Radford still believed this was essential to relieve U.S. overextension and remove the temptation to engage in other Korea-type wars. However, geopolitical conditions in the fall of 1953 convinced him his objective could not be hastily accomplished. Radford therefore agreed with the JCS majority that troop withdrawals should initially be limited to the Far East.

Radford, nonetheless, refused to concede the issue of nuclear weapons use. More than any top official in the Eisenhower administration, except perhaps Generals Twining and LeMay, the JCS chairman believed in the use of nuclear weapons. At the very moment the debate on NSC 162 raged, however, Joint Staff war planners were complaining that the lack of guidance from the JCS on nuclear policy was obstructing their duties. As Major General John Samford, head of the Air Force's Directorate of Intelligence (the office responsible for drawing up the list of enemy targets to be destroyed by atomic weapons) put it briefly in a memorandum dated October 20, 1953, "The atomic annexes that are now being reviewed in accordance with JCS 2056/24 make it clear that more guidance is necessary." "[A]llocations [of atomic weapons] cannot be made properly until the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicate in more precise language the
various objectives to be achieved by the use of atomic weapons . . . "115 As Radford and Secretary Wilson indicated to the NSC, the Chiefs could not do this as long as they remained uncertain about the essentials of nuclear policy.

The record of the October 13th NSC debate made it appear that the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs in particular, had to press Eisenhower toward an indubitable position on the use of nuclear weapons. This was true only in one respect, namely, obtaining consent to the use of nuclear weapons from foreign bases in limited conflicts without allied approval. Without question, the President displayed much more caution on this matter than Radford and Twining and even Wilson preferred. But the Pentagon represented largely a military perspective. The President, on the other hand, understood that the employment of nuclear weapons was a political as much as a military question. By late 1953, the politics of the United Nations, the NATO alliance, and the proposed European Defense Community, all demanded that the President employ extreme care in his handling of nuclear issues. For example, when Admiral Radford asked Eisenhower about the implications of NSC 162 for Korea, the President answered that it would be best to withhold use of atomic weapons until the sixteen nations of the U.N. Command had been consulted. However, Eisenhower
added, he firmly believed the U.S. should respond with atomic arms in the event of renewed Communist aggression in Korea. Secretary Dulles backed the President. Whereas the U.S. all but embodied the U.N. Command in Korea, he noted, it could use atomic weapons any time "military considerations dictated their use."116

For his part, Eisenhower desired a certain amount of structural ambiguity to ensure that any and every decision on use of nuclear weapons rested in his hands. This was not so much a matter of civilian control of the military. It was, rather, a reflection of a basic tenet of his governing philosophy: always retain all options, never circumscribe your choice of actions.117

The fact was that Eisenhower led the way towards the New Look's bold nuclear weapons policies. He gave a better indication of this, of how he planned to interpret and implement NSC 162/2's provision on use by his actions concerning custody of nuclear weapons and his approval of 162/2's specification of a policy of retaliation. Reviving a heated dispute that had arisen in 1945 over civilian control of atomic weapons and generated the restrictive Atomic Energy Act of 1946, in January 1952 the Joint Chiefs had again registered their objection to AEC interference in the advising of the President on military application of atomic weapons. The Chiefs asked Defense Secretary Robert
Lovett to lobby for an end to this and for transfer of complete control of the weapons stockpile to the Pentagon. The sagacious Gordon Dean, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, artfully parried this thrust, retaining a role for the AEC in the advising function and limiting the change in custody arrangements to the formulation of plans to allow for speedy transfer of completed weapons to the services in an emergency.118

Soon after becoming President, Eisenhower moved to alter radically this arrangement. In June 1953 he approved transfer of a significant portion of the nation's atomic weapons into the custody of the armed services. By the end of 1954, approximately half of the AEC's atomic and thermo-nuclear stockpile had been turned over to the Pentagon, with a substantial portion of this deployed abroad.119 Eisenhower instigated this change for obvious reasons. The administration had decided, as NSC 162/2 demonstrated, that atomic and nuclear weapons would play a newly important role in U.S. and Western defenses. Not only would they wholly comprise the nation's strategic strike force; they would also be deployed in rapidly escalating numbers for use as theater weapons.120 As a military man, Eisenhower recognized that the credibility of the American deterrent and the ability of American forces to fight depended upon the dispatch of these weapons to military units.
This understanding related directly to his sanction of a strategy of first use of nuclear weapons in war. In his memoirs, Eisenhower declared, "My intention was firm: to launch the Strategic Air Command immediately upon trustworthy evidence of a general attack against the West." Notice, the President's intent, as he stressed, was not to await this attack but to preempt it. Given the perceived level of Soviet atomic capabilities and the rapidity of delivery made possible by modern arms, American forces had to be able to respond instantly. Through transfer of custody and the policy guidance of NSC 162/2, Eisenhower attempted to give them this capability. Similar to the line drawing recommended by Task Force B of Project Solarium, NSC 162/2, the Basic National Security Policy produced by the administration's year-long defense strategy overhaul, provided that an attack on NATO, West Germany, Berlin, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, the American Republics, or the Republic of Korea would automatically involve the U.S. in war with the aggressor. If the aggressor were the Soviet Union, the response was certain to be nuclear. And NSC 170/1, do not forget, provided for atomic retaliation against China if Peking committed overt aggression in Asia.122

A majority of the Joint Chiefs--Carney, Ridgway and Shepherd--worried that this emphasis on atomic retaliation
entailed the exclusion of most conventional force programs and missions. At a meeting of the NSC on October 29, 1953, Admiral Carney, the Chief of Naval Operations, cautioned the President that the U.S. could not afford to cut its conventional forces and concentrate on atomic deterrence as long as its military commitments remained unchanged. "Offensive missions," Carney explained, were but a part of the services' responsibilities. "It was unwise, he insisted, to put all our eggs in one basket of striking power."123

This was not, of course, what the President or anyone else in the administration contemplated in the framing of NSC 162/2. As Eisenhower pointed out again and again to Admiral Carney, it was a matter of emphasis. He had no intention of eliminating critical service missions in favor of nuclear monopoly. But the President did, as a matter of deterrence and decisive war-fighting, intend to emphasize the area of America's greatest advantage, atomic and nuclear striking power.124

Carney appreciated the President's position, but what he did not disclose to the National Security Council was that he and Ridgway (and probably General Shepherd) disagreed with Eisenhower's implicit and express objectives. For Ridgway especially, atomic arms might be suitable for total world war, but they could not be employed
successfully either to deter or fight limited wars. Indeed, Ridgway rejected "completely the idea that economic stability was a factor of military importance." What he and Carney preferred as national security strategy bordered on Trumanstyle containment—in Carney's own words, a "readiness to oppose aggression wherever it may occur and in whatever form it may take."125 This attitude was completely out of step with the philosophy of their Commander-in-Chief.

***

Formally approved by Eisenhower on October 30, 1953, NSC 162/2, the product of the administration's year-long review of defense strategy, was a remarkable document. On the surface, it manifested the strange side-by-side triumph of Oppenheimer Report-inspired exaggerations of Soviet power and American vulnerability, and Eisenhower's commitment to an unquestioned nuclear superiority. For instance, NSC 162/2 included the dubious conclusion that the Soviet Union "has sufficient [atomic] bombs and aircraft, using one-way missions, to inflict serious damage on the United States, especially by surprise attack," and "may soon have the capability of dealing a crippling blow to our continued ability to prosecute a war."126 But, then again, it was just such exaggerations which persuaded many within the administration to support a nuclear-based strategy.
Furthermore, NSC 162/2 included a potent combination of measures recommended by the Solarium study. As noted above, it provided for the brinkmanship urged by Solarium Task Force B: "the United States should make clear to the USSR and Communist China . . . its intention to react with military force against any aggression by Soviet armed forces." In amended form, the NSC also adopted Task Force C's aggressive cold war campaign aimed at reducing the capabilities and influence of the Communist powers. Still, the dominant themes echoed Kennan--long-term deterrence built upon Western solidarity--and Eisenhower-nuclear superiority and economic solvency. And improving continental defenses took a backseat only to enhancing offensive nuclear capabilities and budgetary balance.127

Most important and remarkable of all, however, was the decisive manner in which Eisenhower intervened personally to frame the language and meaning of the policy document. "In the event of hostilities, the United States will consider nuclear weapons to be as available for use as other munitions;" the Strategic Air Command was described as "the major deterrent" rather than as "a major deterrent" to Soviet aggression as the Planning Board recommended; and the U.S. would maintain a strong military posture emphasizing not just including the capability of inflicting massive retaliatory damage by offensive striking power.128 Each of
these provisions was the work of the President himself. And each reflected that he had, despite many concessions to the defense bureaucracy and the prophets of national vulnerability, begun to take the nation's nuclear weapons strategy to a plane well beyond Truman's vision: a readiness to employ nuclear weapons not just as deterrents and money-savers but as both preemptive and theater tools.
By the end of October 1953, Eisenhower had successfully imposed the New Look on the national security bureaucracy. But crucial details of implementation remained to be determined. During the next several months, the administration faced four issues whose resolution would do much to flesh out the President's strategic vision. First, was the New Look consistent with efforts to de-escalate the arms race and lessen the dangers of surprise attack on the U.S. and NATO? Second, precisely what level of conventional forces and what kind of nuclear weapons should the U.S. deploy? Third, how might those nuclear weapons be employed? And finally, what manner of strategic war plan should the nation adopt for cases of Soviet aggression? Eisenhower's answers to each of these questions would offer chilling proof of his determination to guarantee and use America's nuclear superiority to assure his global objectives. By February 1954, he had approved construction of a thermonuclear and atomic stockpile which one AEC commissioner predicted would give the U.S. the firepower "to destroy the entire arable portion of the Soviet Union." Eisenhower also sanctioned general war plans which aimed at Strategic Air Command preemption of a Soviet attack and at
atomic obliteration of Chinese Communist military targets in case of renewed aggression in Korea or Southeast Asia. After a briefing on the Strategic Air Command's plan for general war, one naval officer remarked that General Curtis LeMay's boys, in a matter of two hours, would leave the Soviet Union "a smoking, radiating ruin." In short, behind a sincere demonstration of peaceful aspirations, Eisenhower put the whip to a strategy founded on a determination to win world opinion, solidify NATO around the New Look, and guarantee unquestioned nuclear superiority for the U.S.

***

Eisenhower's deterrent strategy included a willingness to employ America's nuclear capabilities in conflicts large and small to stop Communist aggression. But from his first days in office, there was a part of Eisenhower that earnestly desired to play the peacemaker and defuse the cold war with the Soviet Union. The New Look promised an absence of war by cowing the Communists into inactivity. However, peace might also be pursued through negotiating agreements based on Soviet-American cooperation. Therefore, just as the NSC entered into its decisive discussions of NSC 162/2, Project Candor, the alter ego of the administration's nuclear weapons strategy, was itself reaching maturity. As originally conceived and recommended by the
Oppenheimer Panel (see above), Candor was composed of two parts: a belief that the American and world public, once informed of the dangers of the nuclear age, would somehow contribute to more determined efforts to reduce them; and a belief that a more open sharing of atomic weapons information by the U.S. with its chief allies would enhance Atlantic solidarity. 3 Even before it was presented to him in February 1953 (indeed, long before he became president), Eisenhower strongly endorsed the idea of expanded atomic cooperation with the allies, especially Great Britain. Shortly after he received the Candor recommendations, he ordered work toward amendment of the restrictive Atomic Energy Act of 1946 to allow for freer exchange. Of Oppenheimer's desire to inform the public, however, he was more skeptical. 4

On May 27, 1953, Eisenhower finally gave his approval to pursuit of a variation of the principal Candor objective. 5 Throughout the summer, Psychological Strategy Board chairman C.D. Jackson directed the project, which had come to center around drafting speeches for delivery by the President and his chief advisers. After weeks of effort, nothing came of it. As Jackson described it at the time, all of the drafts proved unsatisfactory; "they either told too much or too little and were uniformly dull," or they
emphasized an undesirable and morbid theme, what Jackson described as "mortal Soviet attack followed by mortal U.S. counterattack--in other words, bang-bang, no hope, no way out at the end."6

By the early fall, Eisenhower's interest in Candor took on broadened justification and a fresh urgency. The catalyst was the Russians' purported August 12 thermo-nuclear test. Already smarting from the post-Stalin "peace offensive," which had depicted the U.S. as a bellicose, atom bomb-tossing tyrant, the August blast now convinced many that the U.S. had fallen behind in nuclear technology.

There can be no doubt that Eisenhower genuinely held the hope that he might somehow, perhaps through the Candor campaign, find a way to reduce U.S.-Soviet tensions, lessen the risk of nuclear conflict, and point the way to peaceful uses of the atom. But after the Russians' nuclear surprise, he and most of his principal advisers came to think of Candor primarily as a means of propaganda counter-attack. Easily surpassing his aspiration to play the peacemaker was Ike's distrust of the men in the Kremlin and his absolute dedication to the maintenance of "a clear American superiority in nuclear arms."7 The Soviet nuclear blast, propaganda offensive, and proposal to outlaw nuclear weapons gravely threatened that superiority, not to mention the European allies' resolve.
Secretary Dulles, always the most sensitive of Eisenhower's men to the vagaries of public opinion, was the first to propose a response to the apparent crisis. As it happened, his suggestion of a Soviet-American agreement on arms control and mutual withdrawal of forces from Central Europe, outlined for the President in Denver on September 7, helped to spark Eisenhower's formulation of a rough but promising way to deal a public relations blow to Moscow.8 The other impetus came from an NSC study on American disarmament policy that Robert Cutler delivered to Eisenhower a few days later. In the President's absence, Cutler reported, the NSC had endorsed the Planning Board's suggestion that the U.S. "should not initiate any new substantive proposals on disarmament in the Eighth General Assembly" of the United Nations. However, the Planning Board advised, the U.S. should strive to gain the initiative in this field. By at least exhibiting a desire for progress toward disarmament, the administration might allay allied concerns "augmented by their hopes arising from the Soviet peace offensive and their fears derived from the announcement that the Soviets had exploded a hydrogen bomb . . . ."9

While discussing this advice with Cutler, Eisenhower struck upon the idea for Soviet and American donations of fissionable material to the U.N. for peaceful purposes. By fixing the amount at a level which the U.S. could easily
afford, but which "would be difficult for the Soviets to match," given that they needed all the atomic materials they could muster to try to overcome U.S. weapons superiority, Eisenhower thought the U.S. could force the Kremlin into a public relations corner.10

Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) Chairman Lewis Strauss, who had opposed Project Candor since its inception and whose distrust of the Soviets was unsurpassed, quickly recognized the substantive emptiness of the President's idea. Working with C.D. Jackson on a way to proceed with Candor, Strauss devised a clever way to flesh out the President's plan and, at the same time, untie the Candor speechwriting deadlock. Specifically, the Candor braintrust had been unable to produce a speech for the President that balanced a frank explanation of the dangers of the nuclear era with an apparently plausible plan for reducing those dangers, a speech which offered mankind hope, not just terror. Strauss proposed creation of an international atomic energy agency which would oversee the pooling and allocation of fissionable materials for peaceful purposes, and he suggested halting both the mining of these materials and their conversion into plutonium.11

If carefully conceived and presented, a presidential announcement of this plan would be a no-lose situation. If Moscow agreed to the plan, it would play as an enormous
diplomatic coup for the President, enhancing his international reputation, easing Europe's concerns, and perhaps launching an era of U.S.-Soviet cooperation. It would also hinder the Soviet nuclear buildup. In the much more likely event that the Kremlin rejected the plan, the onus of the nuclear arms race would shift to the Russians, exposing the insincerity of their proclaimed peaceful intentions and verifying the Eisenhower administration's assertion of the need for continued Western nuclear superiority.

At the end of October, the first draft of what would later be billed as the "Atoms for Peace" speech began to take shape. But it almost met a premature end, for it was strongly opposed by the most powerful voices in the administration. Secretary Dulles lodged the first complaint. In a special memo for the President dated October 23, 1953, he advised against any move towards serious talks with the Soviets on nuclear matters until after the European Defense Community (EDC) issue was resolved (which he optimistically predicted would be in January 1954). Any appearance of U.S.-Soviet rapprochement would cause the EDC to be put on hold, and the Soviets would use the talks to "concentrate on breaking up Western defense arrangements rather than on trying to reach a constructive settlement." If their current propaganda line was any indication, the Russians could also be expected to widen the discussions to address
the issue of nuclear weapons on foreign bases, something the U.S. wanted desperately to avoid. Indeed, Dulles argued, the way to proceed was first to establish a "firm foundation in Western Europe"—in other words, the European Defense Community—and then use that foundation as leverage to compel the Communists into agreements. Finally, Dulles asserted that a presidential address was not the way to make diplomatic overtures. Such an address could be construed as propaganda or mere rhetoric and, even worse, might give too much away before the proffered negotiations had begun.12

The second and more stinging critique of the Atoms for Peace draft came from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chiefs were deeply troubled by the messages the proposed speech conveyed. They felt the speech overemphasized the Soviet atomic threat. Furthermore, the draft erroneously implied that America's nuclear strike capability was confined to the U.S. Air Force, and it underestimated the efficiency of the early warning system then under construction. More seriously, the Chiefs complained that the language of the draft described at length "the grave threat involved in the continued buildup of Soviet atomic capability," but it failed to enunciate the administration's strategy for dealing with that threat. While the speech mentioned U.S. strategic offensive superiority, it nonethe-
less left "the impression that the inevitable results to the United States and the USSR of war in the atomic age would be equally disasterous." Worst of all, as the Joint Chiefs saw it, this suggested not only that the U.S. would not prevail in a general war, but also that it "could not be provoked into a war in which atomic weapons might be used, or that the United States would not initiate the use of atomic weapons in the event of war."13 In other words, the speech contradicted the very essence of the credibility of America's deterrent posture and commitment to defend its allies, not to mention the key provisions of NSC 162/2.

The Joint Chiefs' memo clearly reflected the concerns of their new chairman, Admiral Arthur W. Radford. In the National Security Council, Radford was currently arguing that U.S. policy should clearly and publicly describe the awesomeness of the American arsenal and the administration's readiness to use it against aggressors. The memo also reflected the distaste shared by all of the Chiefs for disarmament talks with the Soviets. As C.D. Jackson recognized, the JCS and the Pentagon as a whole were neither prepared nor eager for furthering the prospect of nuclear arms limitations. But the State Department was. Several weeks later, when Jackson convened an interdepartmental meeting to plot strategy for the "exploitation" of the President's Candor address, State's representatives
contended that the atomic pool proposal and call for talks with Moscow contained in the address cleared the way for pursuit of nuclear arms control separate from a comprehensive disarmament agreement. Unpersuaded, the Pentagon's representatives summarily dismissed the State Department view, labeling it "defense suicide." Not only would it leave the West in a militarily indefensible position--thanks to the Communists' advantages in conventional forces and manpower--it also stabbed at the very heart of the President's new national security strategy, which depended on a nuclear weapons buildup.14

Less obviously, the Chiefs' memo also mirrored a tendency that would increasingly trouble the services, particularly the Air Force. When it could be used to their advantage--for example, as an argument in favor of more bombers or men or money--the services would make the most of the threat posed by Soviet capabilities. After all, the Chiefs also served as the heads of their respective services. Yet, when this threat was used to support movement toward disarmament negotiations or construction of defensive over offensive systems, the services were quick to label the threat an exaggeration.

Eisenhower soon overruled both Dulles and the Joint Chiefs and decided to proceed with plans for his speech. The Joint Chiefs' assessment resulted in changes of
language in the Atoms for Peace draft, but it did not lead to the project's cancellation. As the date proposed for the speech approached, Eisenhower grew increasingly hopeful about its prospects. C.D. Jackson was hard at work laying plans with the Psychological Strategy Board, State Department, U.S. Information Agency and Operations Coordination Board for "exploitation" of the speech.15 Everything was set, pending the approval of British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill and French Premier Joseph Laniel at their Bermuda summit in early December 1953.

Eisenhower explained the reasoning behind the Atoms for Peace plan to the two leaders during the first plenary meeting of the summit on December 4th. As the President put it, "The world was in a rather hysterical condition about the atomic bomb." While his speech would admit the dangers of the atom, he hoped to draw attention to the "constructive capabilities of atomic energy" as well. He described the atomic pool scheme as "a concrete proposal" to use the atom for the good of mankind, not just a "pious hope." Still, the propagandist thrust of his plan became evident when Eisenhower went on to describe the speech as a way to counter the image of "belligerence and truculence" which attached to the West for its alleged promise to retaliate without limitation in case of renewed aggression in Korea. He felt that the peaceful uses issue offered "an
area where we could do something that would bring a large number of people to our side." The President also noted that one of the proposal's objectives, in the very unlikely event of Soviet acceptance, was "to diminish the Soviet stockpile." 16

Without hesitation, Premier Laniel said he "approved entirely" of the President's proposition. Churchill, however, expressed some doubts and said he wanted first to examine the speech more closely before giving his opinion. 17

Eisenhower also used the Bermuda summit as an opportunity to launch the all-important campaign to advance the allies' thinking on nuclear weapons and to win NATO's acceptance of the New Look. Knowing European sensitivity to nuclear weapons and pressure from Washington to enlarge their own contributions to Western defenses, he did not expect this to be an easy task. Still, the President did not pull any punches. He frankly informed Churchill and Laniel that the U.S. considered atomic weapons as part of its conventional arsenal, weapons which in certain instances should be employed automatically and unflinchingly. Surprisingly, Churchill agreed atomic arms should be viewed conventionally, but almost in the same breath, he joined Laniel in resisting automatic use, even in the event the Communists renewed the war in Korea.
Just as he had done during the first half of 1953, when Eisenhower hinted at the use of atomic weapons in Korea, the prime minister argued this action would provoke Russian retaliation, probably against the defenseless cities of Great Britain. Eisenhower replied that he thought such a scenario highly improbable, especially since American atomic action against the Chinese Communists would be confined to military targets and would not include cities. Despite British and French objections, Eisenhower concluded that he would not tolerate renewed aggression in Korea. He would, if it occurred, take the war decisively to the Chinese mainland.

Two days later, on December 6th, when Eisenhower and Dulles dined privately with Sir Winston and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, the two British statesmen reiterated their discomfort with the American position on use of nuclear weapons. Eden, in particular, seemed deeply troubled by the President's adamancy on this point. American readiness to follow a policy of first use, Eden explained, was "several years ahead" of British thinking. Acting on such a policy, both he and Churchill agreed, would be "morally repellant to most of the world." They preferred caution, delay and localization in case of conflict.

The dinner meeting with Churchill and Eden left the
President distinctly unhappy. In his diary, he recorded his impatience with his old friends' attitude toward nuclear weapons. "They apparently cling to the hope (to us fatuous) that if we avoid the first use of the atom bomb in any war, that the Soviets might likewise abstain." Eisenhower thought this sanguine "conjecture" about Soviet intentions was misguided. He honestly believed the West should not, and would never, initiate a war. But that was a different matter from being the first to employ nuclear weapons in war. The President was convinced that these were weapons to be used if necessary, not husbanded as a last resort. The realities of the age dictated that any nation which delayed use of its nuclear forces in war "might suddenly find [itself] subjected to such a widespread and devastating attack that retaliation would be next to impossible," Eisenhower wrote. In other words, as he had made clear in discussions of NSC 162/2 and elsewhere, Eisenhower believed in nuclear preemption.

The following morning, December 7th, Churchill's secretary observed, the British delegation was "in rather a state" over Eisenhower's bold nuclear policy. Under pressure from Eden, Churchill dispatched a note to the President informing him that London could not agree to the American policy on use. In other words, the British would not give prior consent for employment of American atomic
forces stationed on British soil. However, Sir Winston's note also expressed his general approval of the President's proposed Atoms for Peace address: "It is a great pronouncement and will resound through the anxious and bewildered world."23

It must be remembered that Churchill himself numbered prominently among the "anxious and bewildered" of whom he wrote. Ever since he returned to office in October 1951, and especially after Eisenhower's inauguration, the prime minister had worked assiduously to arrange a big three summit, driven on by his profound fear of Soviet atomic capabilities and his hope of one last triumph in the world arena. At Bermuda, however, the Americans again rebuffed his plan to meet with Soviet Premier Malenkov. Churchill's response to this rejection was confused. On the one hand, he privately and angrily lashed out at Ike and especially Dulles, whom he described to Lord Moran as a "bastard" and a "terrible handicap."24 On the other hand, shortly before the summit ended and Eisenhower departed for New York to address the U.N., Sir Winston pulled the President aside and secretly indicated that he was more worried about a public announcement of U.S. policy to conventionalize nuclear weapons than about the policy itself. As he had on December 6th, the prime minister urged Eisenhower not to spoil the psychological impact of his Atoms for Peace
speech by an incongruently bellicose statement on weapons use. As Ike later told the NSC: "The gist of Sir Winston's view . . . was let us plan to use these weapons . . . , but let us not talk about these plans."25

On December 8th, Eisenhower ascended the podium before the United Nations General Assembly and, as he remembered in Mandate for Change, made "a clear effort to get the Soviet Union working with us in a noncontroversial phase of the atomic field and thus begin to divert nuclear science from destructive to peaceful purposes."26 Indeed, to most ears the President's words sounded a dramatic call for reason and the search for peace. Eisenhower declared,

My country's purpose is to help us move out of the dark chamber of horrors into the light, to find a way by which the minds of men, the hopes of men, the souls of men everywhere, can move forward toward peace and happiness and wellbeing.

.............
The United States . . . is instantly prepared to meet privately which such other countries as may be 'principally involved' to seek 'an acceptable solution' to the atomic armament race which overshadows not only the peace, but the very life, of the world.27

The tone of the address was remarkable, and Eisenhower garnered instantly the world's acclaim.28 But this, despite his sincere hope to open the door to reduced Soviet-American tensions, was part of the administration's overriding nuclear weapons scheme. Ninety-five percent public relations and five percent substance, the Atoms for
Peace speech aimed chiefly at enhancing the strategy of nuclear superiority. The original intent of Oppenheimer's conception of Candor survived, (29) but even more conspicuous was Eisenhower's assertion of American military might and the administration's intent to use it to punish aggressors.

Today, the United States' stockpile of atomic weapons, which, of course, increases daily, exceeds by many times the explosive equivalent of the total of all bombs and all shells that came from every plane and every gun in every theater of war in all the years of World War II.

............
Atomic weapons have virtually achieved conventional status within our armed services.

............
Should such an atomic attack be launched against the United States, our reactions would be swift and resolute . . . . the defense capabilities of the United States are such that they could inflict terrible losses upon an aggressor . . . . the retaliation capabilities of the United States are so great that such an aggressor's land would be laid to waste. 30

The President's careful blend of words, images and messages, express and implied, achieved the desired effects all around. From his immediate audience he received "an outburst of enthusiasm unprecedented in U.N. history." In the capitals of Europe, New York Times correspondent Harold Callender wrote at the time, the speech was "everywhere considered a brilliant and logical move and therefore had immense propaganda value at a time when Europeans were filled with suspicions of American policy." 31 This was
crucial, of course, since the speech was part of the administration's campaign to win NATO acceptance of the New Look.

The men of the Kremlin were not so easily fooled, though they may well have been frightened. On December 9, Moscow radio charged that the President's speech "threatened atomic war."32 Even on its face, the President's proposal was onesided, asking Moscow to voluntarily diminish its stock of fissionable materials and, implicitly, its rate of atomic weapons production—at a time when the Soviet arsenal was at best miniscule compared to that of the U.S. Still, Moscow cautiously endorsed the idea of talks on atomic issues. But to no one in Washington's surprise, the Soviets then returned to their usual call for a declaration banning nuclear weapons. And it was not long before they lambasted Eisenhower's proposal as hollow propaganda, containing no provision to slow nuclear arms production or to place limits on their use.33

As McGeorge Bundy recently concluded, it was precisely because Eisenhower's proposal posed no danger either to nuclear weapons production rates or to the newly adopted policy regarding their use that the Pentagon and AEC muted their concerns. "The Russians were right; in Washington--as in Moscow--building more weapons remained the top priority..."34 But for the moment, a particularly
pivotal moment for the administration's future course, for NATO, and for the nuclear era, this was not how most of the world interpreted Eisenhower's address. He had timed and phrased it brilliantly to coincide with and to cover the administration's campaign to sell the New Look to NATO. More than a counterthrust to Soviet propaganda, then, the address served briefly as a public relations and diplomatic and strategic offensive of sorts. Stephen Ambrose has described Atoms for Peace as "the most generous and the most serious offer on controlling the arms race ever made by an American President." There can be little doubt that this judgment was exaggerated, for within a matter of weeks of making this "offer," Eisenhower would in practice reaffirm the pledge Lewis Strauss made to Press Secretary James Hagerty on December 14: "...Atoms for Peace would not soon take precedence over Atoms for War."35

***

At the same time Eisenhower was devising a propaganda cover for the New Look, he made a series of decisions clarifying the kind of nuclear weapons he wished to deploy and the circumstances of their use. Though the rhetoric of Atoms for Peace suggested a commitment to a negotiated resolution of the nuclear arms race, the super-secret development of the nation's arsenal and war plans and the changes in service force structure demonstrated the prac-
tical application of Eisenhower's nuclear philosophy. Beyond the objective of deterrent sufficiency, his policies fostered creation of an all-Service, war-fighting capability in tactical atomic systems and an unstoppable capability for nuclear preemption in a general war.

But even while the President was preparing for his U.N. address, behind the scenes two skirmishes erupted within the administration over the meaning and implementation of NSC 162/2. Not surprisingly, the problems involved service force structure and nuclear weapons use. In the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Robert Carney and Matthew Ridgway fought unsuccessful rear guard actions to minimize the impact of the emphasis on air-nuclear forces. And the State Department wrestled with the Pentagon over the meaning of 162/2's groundbreaking paragraph 39b: "In the event of hostilities, the United States will consider nuclear weapons to be as available as other munitions."36

Once again, President Eisenhower's hold on the national security bureaucracy threatened to come unraveled.

At the climactic NSC meeting of October 13, 1953, when the Joint Chiefs insisted on larger budgets and force sizes for all three services in fiscal year 1955, Eisenhower had responded unequivocally. He reminded everyone present of his "long pull" philosophy and ordered a reduction of the fiscal year 1955 force levels to three million men. Auster-
ity and the goal of a "respectable posture of defense," he told the Chiefs and defense secretary Charles Wilson, must be their guides. 37 Lest there be any confusion about the President's wishes, Defense Secretary Wilson directed the JCS on October 16th to complete the recommended force levels for fiscal year 1955-1957 in line with the 'feasible annual expenditures and new appropriations of funds' specified by the Secretary of the Treasury and Director of the Budget. Wilson even provided the Chiefs with a range of acceptable manpower levels—between 2.5 and 3.0 million. As if this did not already provoke the ire of the Army and Navy, Wilson, clearly acting under instructions from the White House, further defined what was expected of the Chiefs: 'We shall assume that [atomic] weapons will be used in military operations by U.S. forces engaged whenever it is of military advantage to do so.' 38

Wilson's memo effectively shattered the compromise among the Chiefs on the matters of nuclear weapons policy and force reductions. During the October 13th NSC session, the Chiefs had proposed increases in each service's manpower and budget and called for a more definitive statement than NSC 162 provided concerning when nuclear weapons might be used. Radford had conceded to the increases in exchange for Ridgway and Carney's agreement that more specific language on use was required for planning purposes.
Ridgway and Carney had agreed to this, hoping the President would respond with a narrowed interpretation, to secure Radford's support for what they viewed as essential force and budget augmentations (see pp. 126-27, Chapter II). Their hopes were soon to be disappointed, however. For Secretary Wilson's memorandum of October 16 left no doubt that the President had ruled solidly in favor of the Radford-Twining camp on both issues. Service allocations and, therefore, manpower levels, would stay within limits set outside the Pentagon. Planning would proceed on the basis of a policy of nuclear weapons use broader than that previously expressed by the President.

Divided and immobilized by this reopening of old wounds, the Joint Chiefs promptly established a special ad hoc committee to iron out service differences on the forces needed to implement NSC 162/2. Though composed of two representatives from each military branch, the committee was dominated by its chairman, Joint Staff director Lieutenant General Frank F. Everest (USAF). During the mid- and late 1940s, General Everest had served as the senior army air force representative on the Joint War Plans Committee. In this capacity, he had been an outspoken advocate of a preemptive atomic strike strategy. It was precisely because of his attitude toward nuclear weapons that Radford had handpicked Everest to head the Joint Staff
and the ad hoc committee. In the latter position, Radford was confident Everest would effectively prevent any dilution of the President's, and Radford's own, vision of an enhanced role for nuclear weapons in Western defenses.

Radford was not disappointed. Submitted to the Joint Chiefs on November 30, 1953, the Everest committee's report declared unequivocally that "our superiority in atomic weapons must be exploited to the maximum."40 A necessary response to the growth in Soviet nuclear capabilities, this exploitation of America's nuclear technology would also allow major reductions in conventional forces over the New Look's proposed period of implementation—through fiscal year 1957. Indeed, the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps representatives on the committee agreed that the Army (currently twenty divisions) should shrink to less than one million men (fourteen divisions) during this period. For fiscal year 1955, this meant a ten percent reduction of Army manpower.41 The Army not only balked at these figures but promptly leaked its dissatisfaction to the press. On December 3, 1953, for example, the New York Times reported that a "member of the Army Staff" had charged that those supporting the proposed ten percent cut had ignored the Army's professional judgment in the interest of saving money and at the expense of national security.42

Despite the Army's grumblings, the Everest committee
report concluded that only the Air Force should be permitted to expand in size. But consistent with the President's direction, and Carney and Ridgway's entreaties, the committee also advised limiting troop withdrawals in the near term to Korea and Japan, with future phased reductions of U.S. forces in Europe dependent on the success of the administration's efforts to persuade its NATO allies to replace American troops with their own. Again, however, nuclear weapons were determining in the committee's recommendations. Everest advised that force levels abroad could be altered further as Western units around the Communist periphery were armed with tactical atomic weapons systems.43

As with NSC 162/2, Carney and Ridgway argued that the Everest report not be interpreted to emphasize excessively air-atomic forces. Neither filed a formal dissent, but in a December 9th memo to Army Secretary Robert T. Stevens, Ridgway aired his strong dissatisfaction with Everest's outcome and the entire process by which the New Look strategy had been developed. Though he would formally concur with the force levels the Chiefs extrapolated from Everest's recommendations, those levels "represent a 'directed' verdict," he told Stevens. The normal strategy-making process had been inverted. As Ridgway saw it, rather than receiving from the NSC "a statement of missions
sufficiently accurate to permit a computation of force requirements for the accomplishment of such missions," the Joint Chiefs' "military judgment has been circumscribed . . . by the fixing of an overall control, namely the funds expected to be available." To be sure, Ridgway agreed with the New Look objectives of "correcting the Army's present overextension and faulty overseas deployment," but he sharply criticized the pace at which Eisenhower planned to achieve them. In short, the adjustment of conventional forces embraced by the New Look would endanger U.S. national security by short-changing the Army, creating an imbalance of military ends and means, and destabilizing the free world's collective security structure.44

Despite Ridgway's seething dissatisfaction, chairman Radford persuaded all of the Chiefs to agree that the Air Force should expand to 137 wings and that total military personnel strength should shrink to 2,815 million by fiscal year 1957. These figures, along with the projected fiscal year 1957 defense budget of $33.8 billion, represented substantial readjustments from the 120 wings, 3.128 million men and $43 billion in expenditures proposed by the Pentagon to the NSC on October 13, 1953.(45) And regardless of Ridgway's oral caveats--that these figures would have to be changed if the world situation deteriorated--the JCS had thus expressly approved a strong emphasis on
strategic retaliatory power. Moreover, the Chiefs codified for the first time "the provision of tactical atomic support for U.S. or allied military forces in general war or in local aggression" as a principal component of U.S. military posture and strategy.46

President Eisenhower approved the JCS recommendations on December 16, 1953. His strategic vision had emerged stronger than ever from the force structure debates within the JCS and Everest committee. His year-long struggle to overhaul Truman's policies and to mold the national security bureaucracy to his purposes was succeeding. The New Look was almost ready to fly, but behind the scenes some important battles remained to be fought.

***

By the close of 1953, the outline of the New Look and the struggle amongst the armed services over men and money had become public knowledge. Almost daily the front pages of the major newspapers featured stories about Pentagon manpower and spending cuts, or high ranking administration officials highlighted some aspect of the New Look in public addresses. Defense Secretary Wilson, for example, told the Senate Appropriations Committee that the new strategy was based on "a logical application of economy in [sic] force to be attained by the exploitation of new nuclear weapons." And on December 26 the President announced the progressive
withdrawal of U.S. ground troops from Korea and an enhanced role in Asia for U.S. air power. Even then, the definition of how the nation's nuclear striking power might be employed remained unsettled within the administration.

Less than one month after the President approved NSC 162/2, the State and Defense Departments were at odds over paragraph 39b of that document, the groundbreaking provision on the conventionalization of nuclear weapons. On December 3, 1953, Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith tried to explain the disagreement to Eisenhower. According to Smith, the State Department believed that the "purpose of paragraph 39b was primarily to permit the military to make plans on the basis of availability of nuclear weapons . . . ." The paragraph was not intended as "a present decision that atomic weapons will, in fact, be used in the event of any hostilities." "In the event of an atomic Pearl Harbor," employment "would be virtually automatic," the State Department acknowledged. But in all other cases—i.e., in any conflict below the threshold of general war—the decision to employ nuclear arms was more a political than a military question. Even if recent advances in tactical weapons systems had, in effect, conventionalized atomic weapons, Smith observed, the danger of strategic nuclear retaliation by the Soviet Union, the risk of escalation to unlimited war, and the almost certain loss of
allied support, mandated that use in limited wars be decided by the President after a process wherein the "political issues" involved were first considered.49

The crux of Smith's memo to Eisenhower was that the State Department did not want the nuclear decision in military hands. This focus betrayed Secretary Dulles's influence and State's institutional sensitivity. Indeed, each of the elements of the State Department's case were calculatingly conceived. First, State smartly used Smith—an Army general and Eisenhower's chief of staff during World War II—to make an anti-military argument. Without question, Wilson, Radford and Twining interpreted 39b as all but ensuring the U.S. would use atomic weapons in certain limited conflicts. Another war of the scale and costliness of Korea, for instance, could not be tolerated. The U.S. must, the Pentagon (excepting the Army) was convinced, decide such conflicts with atomic weapons before they could unfold. The State Department now implied that those holding these views were extremists willing to grant discretion over first use to commanders in the field. Finally, Smith raised the specter of unintended and uncontrollable escalation, total war, and the collapse of the Western alliance as consequences of first use in lesser conflicts.50

The problem was that Smith's was the same case the
State Department had been making since early in the Korean War. Though not insensitive to the concerns aroused by that case, Eisenhower had nonetheless already ruled on them. He had instructed the Pentagon to formulate war plans on the basis of a nuclear-oriented arsenal, explained to his Joint Chiefs that the decision to employ nuclear weapons would always be his, directed transfer of most of the AEC's stockpile to military control, ordered deployment of new tactical atomic systems to the European and Asian commands, and determined upon an immediate and total nuclear response to Soviet attack on the West. Moreover, he all but enunciated his personal interpretation of NSC 162/2's operative paragraph at a press conference on December 16, 1953: "After war started, if you ever had that tragic eventuality, you would use atomic weapons through whatever means that would best advance the interests of the United States." 51 What Eisenhower did not say, and what the State Department seemed reluctant to accept, was that the means to which the he referred included thermonuclear weapons and victory-ensuring war plans and that the U.S. was well on its way to achieving both.

***

The State Department's objections were not repeated at the Atomic Energy Commission, where chairman Lewis Strauss was cracking the whip and fast converting Eisenhower's
nuclear policy into reality. When he took over the chairman's seat from Gordon Dean in July 1953, Strauss inherited an organization that was riding a wave of successes. The thermonuclear breakthrough of the IVY-MIKE test on October 31, 1952, the rapid progress in tactical warhead design achieved during the Upshot-Knothole test series in the spring of 1953, and the recent acceleration of the rate of atomic weapons production, all testified to the AEC's ability to surmount whatever technical challenges it faced. On the other hand, the AEC's understandable confidence had been shaken by the Soviets' surprise detonation in August 1953. Despite evidence to the contrary, Strauss worried that U.S. nuclear superiority had been lost, and he tried to convince the President of the same.52

Though Eisenhower remained skeptical, his personal commitment to maintaining the American nuclear advantage was such that he backed Strauss in what was a critical decision. On September 30, 1953, before the final debate on NSC 162 had even begun, before the Pentagon had calculated guidelines for future force structure, and before the Joint Chiefs had provided the required statement of military need, the AEC embarked on production of a deliverable "dry" thermonuclear weapon.53 Such a weapon had yet to be successfully tested (tests were scheduled to begin in March 1954). Strauss and Eisenhower wagered that the March
experiments with the dry design would prove successful and ordered the program started, including most notably the immediate construction of new facilities at Oak Ridge, Tennessee for manufacture of the lithium deuteride agent that was the magic of this untested design. Bypassing the usual channels for the sake of secrecy, the funds for the project were allocated clandestinely by Budget Director Joseph Dodge.54

Strauss and Eisenhower anticipated this gamble would enable the U.S., once the March tests verified the dry design, immediately to begin stockpiling of high-yield, deliverable thermonuclear bombs. Thereby, they hoped, the U.S. might at least stay even with Russian nuclear capabilities. The alternative was to proceed with development of a nuclear weapon based on the "wet" refrigerated liquid lithium device just to ensure the U.S. had some sort of hydrogen weapon in production. This route held little promise, however, for the experimental "wet" device, though successful, had been the size of a small house, weighing in at sixty-two tons; and bombs based on it tipped the scale at twenty-one tons.55

The September 30, 1953, decision was remarkable for what it revealed about Eisenhower's attitude toward nuclear weapons and war planning. As he did when the NSC and Defense Department haggled over the policy provisions of
NSC 162/2, Eisenhower (with Strauss's help) pulled the Pentagon along in his wake, instituting another dramatic alteration of the nation's nuclear strategy, arsenal and war plans. He had, without question, opted for a strategy, arsenal and plan based solidly on high-yield thermonuclear weapons.56

When they were finally ready to respond to the President's lead, the Joint Chiefs' formal statement of a military requirement for a stock of thermonuclear weapons reflected Lewis Strauss's justification of the September 30 decision: it was an emergency response to the Soviets' August test. Moscow was certain to pursue as rapidly as possible the enlargement of its thermonuclear arsenal, the Chiefs asserted in their December 15 statement. If the U.S. failed to meet this challenge, the Russians would enjoy unquestioned strategic superiority no later than 1958. Accordingly, the Chiefs ratified the AEC's fait accompli, recommending reconfiguration of the U.S. stockpile to emphasize high-yield thermonuclear weapons, with a second priority for small fission warheads for tactical and air defense uses. In terms of weapon numbers and total yield, the Joint Chiefs' request envisaged a stockpile equivalent of several billion tons of TNT and required full capacity production at all AEC weapons facilities.57

In his usual imperial style, Strauss had begun imple-
mentation of the September 30th decision without consulting the Atomic Energy Commission's four other commissioners. Therefore, a number of the commissioners (all of whom were Truman appointees) were stunned when presented with the Joint Chiefs' statement of military need on December 15th. Though he did not think it wise for the AEC to question the Chiefs' military judgment, commissioner Eugene M. Zuckert thought the planned concentration on thermonuclear weapons of megaton yield was excessive. Could such unimaginable destructive power be consistent with U.S. policy objectives? he asked Strauss. Commissioner Henry D. Smyth thought not. The radioactive fallout from concentrated use of such weapons, he declared, would be hazardous not only for allied forces but also for the populations of Western Europe.58

Strauss disagreed with his colleagues' concerns. Still, he bowed to their insistence that their questions be presented for the President's consideration. After they compiled a summary report of the positions of the Joint Chiefs and the AEC commissioners, Strauss and Defense Secretary Wilson, accompanied by Admiral Radford, Robert Cutler and Budget Director Joseph Dodge, met with Eisenhower on February 6, 1954 to discuss stockpile composition. The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged that the administration "take full advantage of thermonuclear weapons,"
both "to insure that the United States maintains its superiority over the U.S.S.R." and as the least expensive way--Dodge was no doubt pleased to hear--"to obtain high yield weapons and improved destructive capability." Chairman Strauss added that the Atomic Energy Commission believed it could meet the expanded weapons production requirements through mid-1956. Without hesitating, Eisenhower approved the new weapons program. As Strauss predicted ten weeks earlier, Atoms for Peace had thus all but vanished under the burgeoning thermonuclear cloud of atoms for war.

***

The development of thermonuclear bombs for strategic war and of small nuclear weapons for limited war and air defenses both stimulated and reflected an evolution in U.S. war plans. Beginning in the spring of 1952, partly at the behest of then NATO Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower, the Truman administration started deploying limited numbers of small fission weapons to air and naval units in the NATO theater (see Chapter I, p. 12 and note 33). Like the rest of the existing U.S. atomic arsenal, these weapons were strictly for use against Soviet bloc forces in a general war. By the end of 1953, however, the number of tactical weapons deployed in Europe and Asia had mushroomed to more than 200. This reflected Eisenhower's vision of
atomic arms as usable tools of war, the New Look's principle of substituting American technological firepower for American manpower overseas, and the expanding availability of tactical systems. For example, the Mark 5, Mark 7 and Mark 12 fission bombs, weighing 3,000, 1,700 and 1,000 pounds, respectively, could all be carried by air force fighter bombers and some naval attack aircraft. They were also fit for warheads on atomic artillery shells, mines and depth charges, and Corporal, Matador and Honest John surface-to-surface missiles.61 Thus freed of the constraints on deliverability imposed by the early generation of multi-ton fission bombs, and the strategic constraints imposed by Truman and his Chiefs, the U.S. military now planned and equipped to fight with atomic arms in theater conflicts.

The foremost beneficiary of this new freedom was the Tactical Air Command (TAC). In 1953 and 1954, all of its aircraft in Europe were modified to carry atomic ordnance.62 Air Force Chief of Staff Nathan Twining told the House Committee on Appropriations that the capability created by this modification marked "one of the most significant developments in modern warfare." The Air Force, Twining declared, had all but perfected "a tactical air force geared to the frequent and routine use of atomic weapons." In terms of war plans, Twining's testimony
implied and the Pentagon believed, Eisenhower had sanctioned plans to use nuclear weapons "not only during general war but also in situations of limited hostilities." The recommendations of Project VISTA—the 1951 study of the effectiveness of tactical atomic weapons that had so impressed NATO commander Eisenhower—had become a reality. Small fission weapons delivered by all three military services were becoming the focus of U.S. plans to retard the projected Soviet ground offensive in Europe and to respond to limited Communist aggression in Eurasia.

Compared to this change of attitude concerning tactical atomic weapons, the shift to high-yield thermonuclear weapons for strategic targets and general war derived from a more complex set of factors and carried even greater implications for U.S. war plans. As far as the change in the hardware itself, it was a matter of the technology becoming available and, as explained earlier (Chapters II and III), the scramble to match perceived Soviet nuclear capabilities. Also at work, however, was the influence of Air Force doctrine and the personality and power of the Air Force's most influential officer, Strategic Air Command commander-in-chief General Curtis E. LeMay.

Between the end of World War II and 1953, U.S. Air Force strategy and doctrine focused almost solely on offensive bombing. Air Force Manual 1-2, issued in March
1953, proclaimed that strategic air power was the "primary offensive manifestation of national power in war."66 If the balloon were to go up for World War III, the Air Force's overriding mission, to be executed by the Strategic Air Command, was to attack Soviet bloc targets with nearly all of the nation's nuclear weapons. Because of the lessons drawn from the strategic bombing campaigns of World War II--skewed by Air Force brass into proof of aerial bombing's war-winning ability--and the relatively small number of atomic bombs in the U.S. stockpile before 1952, these targets were predominantly Soviet urban-industrial centers (i.e., cities).67 For example, the 1950-1951 Joint Outline Emergency War Plan, codenamed OFFTACKLE--the plan which would be implemented if the Soviets attacked the West--included a SAC offensive against 104 urban-industrial complexes, using 220 fission bombs (with a second-strike reserve of 72 bombs).68

This air offensive was not expected to prove decisive, however. Submitted in May 1949 by a special JCS committee, the Harmon Report concluded that even an entirely "successful" SAC offensive--including accurate delivery of all atomic weapons on seventy priority targets, infliction of close to three million instant enemy deaths, and destruction of forty percent of Soviet industrial capacity--would neither compel Soviet surrender nor halt the Soviet ground
offensive in Eurasia. The solution to this problem, the Harmon panel advised, was an intensified war plan backed by a threefold increase of America's atomic arsenal.69

Once the Russians gained a purported air-atomic capability of their own (late August 1949) and the American atomic arsenal multiplied, U.S. war plans were redrawn. In a reinforcing, almost symbiotic relationship, as David Alan Rosenberg has brilliantly shown, the perceived increase in the number of Soviet targets requiring destruction—namely, the many elements of the Soviet atomic capability—fueled an enormous expansion of the American stockpile and SAC fleet. In mid-August 1950, the Joint Outline Emergency War Plan target scheme was enlarged and subdivided into three categories, designated BRAVO, ROMEO and DELTA.70 The BRAVO, or "blunting," mission aimed at 'the destruction of known targets affecting the Soviet capability to deliver atomic bombs.' The Joint Chiefs of Staff quickly elevated this target category to priority status in SAC's mission, not only because Soviet atomic forces posed the most horrible threat to Western cities and defenses but also, as described in Chapter I, because U.S. planners presumed the worst of Soviet intentions.71 Truman's policymakers and planners worried that Moscow, unlike Washington, was plotting to initiate a nuclear war. The BRAVO targeting priority reflected policymakers' hope to avoid neutraliza-
tion of SAC by a Soviet surprise attack. Ideally, NSC 68 provided, the West would receive sufficient warning of such an attack to enable its air forces to destroy most of Moscow's atomic resources on the ground.72

ROMEO stood for "retardation." This phase of the emergency war plan looked to contain the Communist land offensive in Eurasia. Designated SAC's second priority, the ROMEO mission was an integral part of the politically-imperative NATO forward defense strategy—the commitment to engage the Red Army as far east as possible.73 The DELTA target category, "disruption," represented the remnants of the "city-busting" war plans of 1945-1950. This mission, carried out by SAC alone, was designed to destroy Soviet war-making capacity and shatter the Soviet people's will to fight. In the Truman-Nitze-Bradley world of preoccupation with Soviet atomic capabilities, this phase of the Joint Outline Emergency War Plan was downgraded to third priority in the initial Western counteroffensive.74

Subject to the final approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, this scheme was included in the Joint Outline Emergency War Plan—renamed the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan in March 1952—as the atomic annex, Annex C.(75) The scheme originated, however, as a list of potential targets prepared by the Air Targets Division of the Air Force Directorate of Intelligence in Washington, D.C. Based
mostly on intelligence gathered by the Air Force, the Air Targets Division compiled its list of recommended targets for review by the Joint Staff's Joint Intelligence and Joint Strategic Plans Committees, which then forwarded the list and any suggested revisions to the JCS. When approved by the JCS, Annex C then served as a guide to operational planning for the various specified and unified commands.76

About the only thing the Air Force, and Curtis LeMay in particular, liked about the three-pronged target scheme of the Joint Outline Emergency War Plan was that its expanded target list justified enlargement of the Air Force's budget and SAC's bomber fleet. Between 1950 and 1954, for instance, Air Force expenditures grew from $4.6 to $16.2 billion—an increase from thirty-two to forty-five percent of the Pentagon's allocation.77 Moreover, during this same time period, SAC's bomber fleet swelled from 225 to more than 800 nuclear-capable bombers, most of which were B-47s and B-36s.78 General LeMay, nonetheless, was not satisfied with the BRAVO-ROMEO-DELTA targeting subdivision. He bristled at the idea of jointly-staffed committees in Washington telling him how to employ the Strategic Air Command. This merely provided the Army and Navy an opportunity to meddle in his bailiwick. The BRAVO-ROMEO-DELTA gradation confirmed his worst fears of this arrangement. He especially resented the order to use
SAC forces to attack the battlefield targets of category ROMEO.79 LeMay believed, largely from the extraordinary success of the terror-bombing campaign against Japan during World War II, which he conceived and directed, that the quickest and surest route to victory in a war with either the USSR or Red China (or both) rested upon the obliteration of their cities and industries by large-yield nuclear weapons. Ruthlessly and massively applied, nuclear air-power might even prove decisive by itself.80 This application also met the fundamental requirements of concentration of force and minimization of losses. Rather than unreasonably endanger SAC's precious payloads and irreplaceable crews by scattering the air fleet across the Russian heartland in search of BRAVO and ROMEO-class targets (airfields, atomic weapon storage and production sites, troop formations, transportation lines), LeMay preferred a one-time, city-busting blitz of Communist airspace. Executed by hundreds of SAC bombers simultaneously from all points on the compass and climaxed by brief assaults on large, easily found targets, LeMay's tactics would limit the exposure of SAC aircraft to enemy air defenses. This plan promised not only better survival rates for crews and aircraft but also more efficient use of destructive power. For the large-yield thermonuclear and fission weapons that SAC favored need not be placed with pinpoint accuracy to
inflict at least "bonus damage" on the many targets within an urban area.81

Beginning in 1951 LeMay rebelled against the Joint Chiefs' BRAVO-ROMEO-DELTA guidelines and formulated his own plan along the lines just described. He started by convincing the targeters at the Air Force Directorate of Intelligence that the JCS prescriptions, drawn from the Air Targets Division list, were inconsistent with Air Force doctrine and complicating SAC's ability to fulfill its proper mission. The Air Staff therefore agreed to submit its target recommendations to LeMay for comment and revision before forwarding them to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This arrangement allowed LeMay to exert enormous influence on the atomic annex of the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan.82

Next, LeMay and the Air Force brass, at just about the time that Eisenhower and Strauss made the decision to go with production of a "dry" thermonuclear bomb, began agitating for a major increase in the thermonuclear stockpile. This, of course, derived directly from LeMay's desire to reshape the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan around the DELTA mission. Kenneth Mansfield, executive secretary of Congress's Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, learned of LeMay's intentions at a meeting on October 14, 1953, with Robert LeBaron and other members of the Military
Liaison Committee (the panel which functioned as the liaison between the Pentagon and AEC on nuclear weapons matters). "I gathered," Mansfield recorded, "that the [Joint Chiefs'] requirement represents only about one-third of the number of hydrogen weapons the Air Force believes it could profitably deliver at the beginning of 1957." What was more, LeBaron told Mansfield, the Air Force, meaning SAC, would "come to rely almost exclusively on hydrogen weapons for its strategic mission" long before this 1957 projection.83

In the meantime, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were having serious difficulty translating Eisenhower's nuclear policy into strategic war plans. Under the provisions of JCS Memorandum of Policy 84 of July 14, 1952, the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan for an assumed D-day of July 1, 1953 was supposed to be submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the Joint Staff committees no later than March 1, 1953. Deadlocked by the same "search for maximum advantage by the Services" which had frustrated the revision of defense policy at the NSC level, the Joint Staff not only missed the March deadline by six months but also ultimately failed to come up with a unified plan.84

General LeMay had not been content to wait for the Pentagon to resolve its internal disputes over the war plan and atomic annex. Rather, he exploited the impasse and
formulated a SAC Emergency War Plan which not only diverged from existing JCS guidelines but which he refused to submit for JCS approval. On two levels, this action appeared well justified. First, denied the prescriptions of an updated Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, LeMay nonetheless bore responsibility for the preparedness of the West's nuclear shield and sword. Regardless of service rivalries and outdated war plans, SAC had to be ready for its mission. The Soviets could not be counted upon to accommodate Washington's planning cycles.

Secondly, as "both a separate major Air Force administrative command under the Air Force Chief of Staff and a specified command within the JCS national unified and specified command system," the Strategic Air Command held a unique position in U.S. operational war planning. In short, SAC enjoyed the authority to formulate its own plan, subject to JCS approval. Without reviewing the details of LeMay's plan, the Chiefs adopted it as an interim Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan and ordered that the emergency plan then under debate be completed by January 1, 1954 as the war plan for an assumed D-day of July 1, 1954.(87) Accepted without careful review, how effectively did the SAC plan translate the President's nuclear strategy?

On March 15, 1954, Captain William Brigham Moore (USN) of the Atomic Energy Division of the Office of the Chief of
Naval Operations (Op-36) received a briefing of SAC's Emergency War Plan at SAC headquarters in Omaha. As described by Major General William D. Old, SAC's director of operations, SAC's optimal plan would involve 735 bombers (150 B-36s and 585 B-47s) armed with 600-750 nuclear weapons in one massive first strike on the Soviet bloc.

"The final impression," Moore wrote of Old's presentation, "was that virtually all of Russia would be nothing but a smoking, radiating ruin at the end of two hours."

The overriding message Moore drew from the SAC briefing and General LeMay's responses to questions afterwards was SAC's supreme confidence in its ability to execute its mission, whatever the circumstances. Thirty days at the most, LeMay proclaimed at one point, would be all he and his men required to conclude World War III. Still, Moore heard a number of things that troubled him. Most significantly, he observed, LeMay flaunted an "indifference to JCS allocations" and Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan guidelines. For example, the target scheme detailed by Old failed to assign the priority to ROMEO targets Moore correctly thought the JCS had ordered in the new Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (see note 83). Instead, SAC's operational plan concentrated on DELTA and BRAVO targets, with the lion's share of nuclear weapons allocated to the former. SAC's briefing officer even admitted to his audi-
ence that SAC, independent of the strictures of the existing Annex C, had formulated its own nuclear annex which identified some 1,700 Designated Ground Zeros (DGZs). This greatly exceeded not only the number of DGZs specified for destruction by the Joint Chiefs but also the number of nuclear weapons the Chiefs had allocated to SAC for use in general war. Stunned by SAC's bravado, Moore recorded that LeMay had no doubt he would get the weapons he (LeMay) believed necessary if war erupted. General Old pointedly summarized SAC's attitude when he said, "The exact manner in which SAC will fight the war is known only to General LeMay and [he] will decide this matter at the moment, depending on the existing conditions."  

The briefing Moore received revealed only a glimpse of the true scale of SAC's Emergency War Plan and LeMay's independent mindedness. During the second half of 1953 and the first two months of 1954, two Defense studies were conducted on the existing Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan. Revealingly, both focused on the DELTA section of SAC's Emergency War Plan. The first study, completed in 1953 by the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group (WSEG)--a semi-autonomous analytical study group, organized on a combined multi-service and civilian basis--concluded that the programmed DELTA attack would not slow the expected Soviet ground offensive for three to six months. In
other words, the Red Army could function for this period on existing stocks of war materiel before SAC's atomization of Soviet industrial capacity substantially affected its operations. However, WSEG's report also concluded that without the DELTA portion of SAC's offensive, "Russia could support immense armed forces for at least two years of intensive warfare." Even more significant for the Air Force, however, WSEG believed "some level of atomic attack--presently beyond U.S. capabilities--would be decisive against the civic-political structure" of the Soviet Union.94

WSEG's conclusion that the DELTA mission currently planned by SAC would be insufficient to produce a decisive result did not, however, diminish the Air Force's confidence in strategic nuclear bombing. General Twining was informed that Air Force analysts considered WSEG Report No. 10 outdated because it woefully underestimated SAC's nuclear firepower. Most significantly, the report gave no consideration either to the thermonuclear weapons the Air Force analyst described as "now in stock" or to the huge numbers of thermonuclear weapons SAC hoped before long to add to its arsenal. In other words, the Air Force interpreted WSEG No. 10 as supporting its conviction that SAC's plan to concentrate its attack on DELTA targets not only was proper but might well prove decisive.95
The second evaluation of the DELTA portion of the Emergency War Plan left no doubt that LeMay had decided that, in case of general war, the Strategic Air Command would give overriding priority to DELTA targets. The evaluation, conducted by the Air Force Directorate of Intelligence, was detailed in a March 10, 1954 letter by Colonel F. Ledeboer (Chief of the Army Component of the Air Targets Division) to the Director of Intelligence, USAF, Major General John A. Samford. According to Ledeboer, SAC planned to dump all 610 nuclear weapons allocated to the DELTA mission in one massive strike on 408 urban-industrial "target complexes." A mere five days after this memo was written, Navy Captain Moore was told that SAC's Emergency War Plan depended on a total of 600 to 750 nuclear weapons. As Moore indicated in his record of the March 15 briefing, it seems evident that General LeMay had opted to devote almost his entire allotment of weapons to the DELTA mission. But recall that General Old acknowledged during his presentation that SAC's own nuclear annex listed not 610 but 1,700 Designated Ground Zeros, 409 of which involved destruction of Soviet airfields--i.e., BRAVO-class targets. Moreover, during the early summer of 1954, LeMay aggressively lobbied the Air Staff for a revision of targeting priorities to include the destruction of Soviet airpower--again, mostly BRAVO targets--as a priority at
least equal to that of the DELTA mission.97

These facts suggest some interesting conclusions about the 1954 Emergency War Plan. First, Moore's unease with the SAC briefing was well-placed. Apparently the plan presented to him at Offutt Air Force Base on March 15, 1954, as The Plan was, at best, only a plan—an option roughly in line with the requirements of the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan agreed to by the Chiefs two weeks earlier and the weapons allocated to SAC by the JCS. At worst, it was a deliberate deception intended by LeMay to give the appearance of inter-service cooperation and SAC compliance with JCS guidance, providing SAC a cover under which to lay plans for a much larger and very different nuclear offensive.98

Colonel Ledeboer's memo supports the latter scenario. He specifically pointed out, for example, that the very thrust of SAC's independently revised DELTA scenario undermined the Joint Chiefs' ability to 'exercise a positive centralized control over certain of the uses of atomic weapons.' In other words, the Directorate of Intelligence's examination of SAC's war plan discovered that General LeMay was apparently intentionally evading the requirement that SAC justify the selection and exclusion of the targets it programmed for attack.99 By relying upon high-yield thermonuclear and atomic weapons and adjusting
the detonation points of SAC's BRAVO targets—the majority of which were airfields situated in and around Soviet cities, SAC's DELTA targets—LeMay's planners blurred the distinction between target categories but maintained the focus on the DELTA preference. Indeed, SAC went so far as to redesignate Annex C's "target categories" as "target complexes" in its own atomic annex, betraying the fact that the immensely powerful weapons delivered by SAC bombers would achieve "bonus damage" on several targets surrounding a single Designated Ground Zero.100 As RAND Corporation analyst and nuclear strategist Bernard Brodie wrote in the January 1954 issue of Foreign Affairs,

Obviously [a thermonuclear weapon of megaton yield] is not going to be used against individual [targets]. Whether we like it or not, such a weapon when used strategically is a 'city buster.' It could not be used on any industrial concentration or near a city . . . without destroying that city.101

The Emergency War Plan that LeMay forged at Offutt during the early spring of 1954, the heart and soul of America's defense of the West, was designed to deliver swift and unquestioned military decision. The operational details of that plan remain highly classified, but the available sources leave little doubt that the commander of SAC plotted an attack that aimed both at the preemption of a Soviet atomic assault on the West and the swift thermonuclear annihilation of Soviet will and capacity to fight.
How well did this plan fit with President Eisenhower's nuclear weapons policies? General LeMay claimed he never discussed the specifics of SAC's operational plans with the President. That was the duty of the Air Force chief of staff, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And Eisenhower would not have expected LeMay to do so. From his own service as a field commander, Ike firmly believed the Commander-in-Chief should not meddle with his generals' operational prerogatives.102 We can be certain, however, that Eisenhower endorsed the idea of a preemptive attack on Russian forces. He made this crystal clear to the Chiefs and NSC when they debated the meaning of NSC 162 in October 1953, and he reaffirmed it consistently thereafter.103

Eisenhower's primary national security objective was to deter the eruption of a third world war. Yet he understood that the intimidating ability of the Strategic Air Command to strike anywhere in the world, instantly and with devastating force, combined with his own express determination to make use of that ability to punish aggression, stood as the bulwark of Western defenses. As he told a group of congressional leaders at the White House on December 17, 1953, the day he approved the New Look force levels, "The things we really need [for defense] are the things the other fellow looks at and respects." When Ivan looks across the Elbe and sees the skimpy ground
forces we have in Europe, respect is not what he feels. It is the sight of our superior nuclear capability that inspires his respect.104 NSC 162/2, the New Look's expanded Air Force, and the decision to produce a deliverable "dry" thermonuclear weapon, translated by General LeMay into a superior and demonstrable capability, were critical steps toward establishing such unmistakable respect on Moscow's part.

Still, another related question remains: how accurately did LeMay's nuclear war plan translate the President's political and military objectives for war? On March 25, 1954, the NSC gathered to address this issue of U.S. general war objectives.105 Not surprisingly, a split among the Joint Chiefs posed the main obstacle to agreement on the newly-drafted set of objectives, NSC 5410. Admiral Radford informed the Council that he and General Twining were quite satisfied with 5410 as a guide for war planning, but Admiral Carney and General Ridgway were not. Actually, Radford declared, his two dissenting colleagues were singing their same old tune. They claimed the projected "full exploitation of our nuclear capability" in a general war would leave Europe and Russia so devastated as to annul any and all U.S. political objectives for war. In other words, Radford incisively remarked, Carney and Ridgway wished to undo the military strategy established by NSC 162/2; they
wished to retreat from U.S. plans to respond to Soviet attack with the nation's full nuclear might.

"With considerable vehemence and conviction," the President rejected Carney and Ridgway's thinly disguised play for limitations on U.S. nuclear strategy. As Eisenhower put it, "Everything in any future war with the Soviet bloc would have to be subordinated to winning that war." Ten years earlier, he explained, he might have agreed with the limitations they suggested. But the harsh nuclear realities of 1954 made it "impossible and impractical even to consider these suggestions." Should war between the U.S. and USSR erupt, the President added, the U.S. would unleash "a force so terrible that one simply could not be meticulous as to the methods by which the force was brought to bear." There could be no strategy other than to hit the Russians as hard as possible; there could be no objective other than victory.106 Curtis E. LeMay could not have said it any better.

***

In politics, words are almost never meaningless or innocuous. But oftentimes they carry a meaning separate from, or hiding, another reality. The words in NSC 162/2 were full of meaning. They conveyed the Eisenhower administration's sense of the primary threats to U.S. national security. They described a strategy for dealing with those
threats--most important, a strategy for nuclear deterrence. Similarly, the words of the Atoms for Peace address carried seemingly clear messages--hopes for a safer world, frank admission of the dangers of the age, warnings to would-be aggressors. As the saying goes, however, actions speak louder than words. Nowhere was this more true than in the actions the Eisenhower administration took to implement the President's nuclear strategy. Hardly inconsistent with Eisenhower's strategic vision or his hopes for peace, these steps, rather, brought his vision to life; indeed, they translated it into a reality, a nuclear strike and deterrent capability larger than life.

Important questions, however, remained: would that capability work--would it help achieve Ike's extensive national security objectives? Would it ensure an unquestioned nuclear superiority? Would it deter the Communist powers from aggression, both limited and total? Would it solidify the NATO alliance behind a single, affordable and effective defense policy? Would it endure over the long haul, or even to the projected date of the New Look's maturity? The administration did not have to wait long to begin answering these questions.
As Eisenhower explained to congressional leaders on December 17, 1953, the deterrent objective of the New Look depended primarily upon intimidating Moscow and Peking with a visible, operational capability for decisive nuclear retaliation. But this capability was only part of the deterrent equation. Beyond appreciating the military might arrayed against them, the Communist powers also had to be convinced of the President's willingness to employ that might. Moscow and Peking would be deterred from aggression in certain places only if they believed that aggression would probably bring painful—perhaps unbearably costly—consequences. Moreover, as clearly stipulated in NSC 162/2, the practical success of Eisenhower's defense strategy relied as much on the cooperation and support of the American people and NATO allies as on nuclear weapons. Without the informed understanding and resolute consent of the electorate and Congress to the measures necessary to confront and deter Communist expansionism, the credibility of the determination Eisenhower hoped to project would be markedly diminished. And without NATO's prompt and purposeful adoption of the President's defense strategy, the New Look would be meaningless and Eisenhower's concept
of collective security would be disemboweled.

Coincident with the steps aimed at translating the new strategy into force structure and war plans, the administration launched a multi-layered campaign of public and private initiatives to demonstrate the President's resolve and solidify allied and public support for the New Look. But almost as soon as this effort was underway, Eisenhower's new strategy came under heavy attack—an attack which lasted throughout 1954 and threatened the intellectual, and especially the practical, viability of the new strategy. In the arena of public debate and partisan rhetoric, the attack on the New Look stemmed from a mis-reading of the strategy's design. Sparked by Secretary of State Dulles's controversial January 12, 1954 address to the Council on Foreign Relations, this battle raged mostly over what "massive retaliation" meant and intended. On a second front, the attack traveled over the well-worn terrain of the vulnerability hypothesis. As it had during 1953, this challenge came mostly from within the defense establishment. During 1954, however, the vulnerability proponents were more persistent, their arguments more exaggerated, and their efforts ultimately more successful—affecting even Eisenhower's shaping and conduct of U.S. defense policy. Finally, the President's nuclear weapons policies encountered a series of successive
crises which brought into question the policies' practical and political efficacy. The fallout, both literal and figurative, from the CASTLE series of thermonuclear weapons tests, worldwide pressure for a moratorium on nuclear testing, and France's collapse in Indochina, turned global opinion increasingly against the U.S., seriously weakened Western solidarity, and diminished the administration's faith in its own strategy. As a result, U.S. national security policy was in flux throughout 1954. The administration was tossed into eight months of debate over nuclear policy and U.S. vulnerability. By the end of 1954, Eisenhower appeared to retreat from the implications of the nuclear concepts he had recently fathered.

***

The administration's carefully orchestrated plan to integrate the principles of the New Look into NATO defenses and public consciousness reached a dramatic and unexpected climax during the opening weeks of 1954. On January 12, 1954, in what was announced in advance as a major foreign policy address, Secretary of State Dulles spoke before the influential Council on Foreign Relations in New York. The object of Dulles's appearance was to elaborate on the new national security strategy President Eisenhower had outlined five days earlier in his State of the Union message.1 "A maximum deterrent at a bearable cost" over
the "long haul," grounded in an enhanced collective security, the secretary remarked, was the administration's goal. Nowhere in the speech did the Dulles specifically refer to nuclear weapons. He emphasized, however, that the Eisenhower NSC had replaced the Truman policy of "meeting aggression by direct and local opposition" with the decision "to depend primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our own choosing." The ability to respond at the point of attack with local defenses would not be abandoned. Allied forces would assume this task. However, Dulles stressed, "local defenses must be reinforced by the further deterrent of massive retaliatory power. A potential aggressor must know that he cannot always prescribe battle conditions that suit him."2

On the face of it, Dulles's address contained little that was new. Even before Eisenhower assumed the presidency, both he and Dulles had stated, in reference to Korea, that the administration reserved the option of responding to aggression massively, "by means and at places of our own choosing."3 Though some observers interpreted the January 12th speech as just another instance of hyperbolized "Dulles-speak," most Democratic spokesmen reacted as if the Secretary had all but declared nuclear war on the Soviet Union and Communist China. In the context of the
New Look's recent announcement, these critics construed Dulles's words to mean that nuclear attack on Moscow or Peking would be the administration's preferred response to any case of Communist aggression.

Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Chester Bowles, and 1952 presidential nominee Adlai E. Stevenson, among others, charged that Dulles's foolish saber-rattling and the New Look's over-reliance on nuclear weapons risked transforming every limited Communist incursion into unlimited nuclear war. This accusation carried particular resonance given that the administration had just submitted its defense budget for fiscal year 1955, which included the Everest Committee-inspired cuts (for details see Chapter III) in Army and Navy manpower. Eisenhower, it seemed, was deconstructing the U.S. military to where it would be unable to respond to crises with anything but atomic airpower.4

Acheson summed up the case of the Secretary's critics. He recognized the "no more Koreas" message strongly implied in Dulles's speech. But Acheson, writing in the New York Times Magazine, adamantly rejected the idea that the U.S. could not afford, and should not get involved in, another limited war like the Korean War. Soviet nuclear parity with the U.S., Acheson implied, mandated "that such a war is the only kind that we or anyone else can afford."
Only a madman [perhaps meaning the President or Dulles?] would attempt to avoid such conflict by plunging into the unspeakable disaster of a world war." The New Look and Dulles's threat of "massive retaliation," Acheson charged, contemplated a policy of aggression which violated "the deepest moral convictions of the [American] people" and "their profound attachment to peace." Moreover, to argue as Eisenhower and Dulles had done that the U.S. had seized the initiative in the cold war "through our so-called massive retaliatory power is a fraud. . . ." Indeed, Acheson warned, because the New Look stripped the U.S. of the capacity to deal with lesser aggressions except by nuclear retaliation, the U.S. would in fact surrender the initiative to the Communists.5

Other critics were even blunter than Acheson. Many asserted that Eisenhower cared more about balancing the federal budget than providing for the nation's security. Louis Johnson, Truman's temperament, failed secretary of defense, they contended, had done much the same in the year preceding the Korean War, with nearly disastrous results. Though the U.S. then enjoyed an effective monopoly on atomic weapons, thanks to Johnson's budgetary austerity it found itself with neither the manpower nor the conventional arms to repel the advance of a third-rate North Korean force.
Adlai Stevenson echoed Acheson but used stronger language. "Massive retaliation," he said, really amounted to "appeasement," for the U.S. would never employ atomic weapons to respond to limited Communist aggressions.6

The negative reaction to Dulles's address resulted from several factors. On the one hand, the adversarial, lecturing character of his public pronouncements often provoked a visceral response. Seemingly disdainful of subtlety, Richard Immerman recently observed, Dulles "projected an austere, impersonal demeanor, as if he were both unconcerned with and ignorant of the human dimension" of foreign policy matters. That posture made him a favorite, and often easy, target for partisan attacks. And during the early months of 1954, an election year, Washington gorged on partisan attacks.7 On the other hand, many in the capital, in the Congress and out, simply misunderstood both the Secretary of State's speech and the President's strategic vision. The idea that the U.S. "would rely almost exclusively on a threat of instant atomic retaliation to deter Communist aggression" was not to be found in either Dulles's January 12th address or the New Look. Though it certainly placed a much greater reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence and war-fighting, Eisenhower's national security policy included many other means for deterring and containing Communist aggression:
collective security, covert operations, psychological warfare, foreign aid, among them. Militarily the New Look also envisioned choice, not an inflexible strategy of atomic retaliation.8

At the same time, however, the notion that Dulles's provocative language was inconsistent with Eisenhower's assumed moderation had no basis in fact. The President and Dulles met and discussed the secretary's address the day it was delivered. After the meeting, Press Secretary James Hagerty observed, "In effect [the speech] serve[s] notice to [the] Communists we'll counter revival of hostilities (anywhere) with instant retaliation, putting them on notice we won't stand for any funny business. . . ." Timed just two weeks before the Berlin conference of foreign ministers and set against the backdrop of intensifying military action in Indochina, Dulles's message seemed unmistakably clear: there would be no more Koreas. Overt Communist Chinese intervention in Indochina on behalf of the Viet Minh, for example, might well provoke American nuclear retaliation against the mainland.

Still, Dulles's message was intentionally ambiguous. Though it was important that Moscow and Peking appreciate America's will and readiness to respond forcefully to aggression, it was equally important to Eisenhower's deterrent strategy that potential adversaries be uncertain
about how, when and where that response might occur. Secretary Dulles's speech informed the Communists that the only certainty was that these choices would be made in Washington.9 The President himself engaged in this veiled forewarning during his news conference on February 3, 1954. New England Papers correspondent May Craig asked him,

Mr. President, . . . our new look puts our dependence on air power and air power weapons, and it is said that they are deterrents of war. Now, if the enemy gets the idea that we will not use them, will they be a deterrent?

Eisenhower did not flinch at this insightful challenge to the logic of his nuclear strategy.

Well, Mrs. Craig, I will tell you: I spent some little time at war, and I don't think that big and bombastic talk is the thing that makes other people fear. I think that a calm going about of your business, pursuing a steady course, that is the thing that makes him [sic] begin to tremble and wonder what you are going to do.10

It was a characteristic Eisenhower response--part lecture, part substance, part non-answer. More important, this reply revealed not only the President's confidence in his deterrent strategy but also his disdain for the arguments of its critics. As he later wrote in his White House memoirs, the critics' alternative strategy--Truman-style containment, involving the U.S. in innumerable limited wars
but recoiling from the use of America's nuclear strength out of fear of Soviet retaliation—"was the product of timidity." It was "a solution that began by seeing danger behind every tree or bush" and then "required [a buildup of] massive [conventional] defense units." Instead of acting as a deterrent and enhancing Western security, Eisenhower was convinced that this strategy promised only more Koreas and transformation of America into an "armed camp."

Still, to be viable, Eisenhower's nuclear strategy had to be credible. Mere words, no matter how tough, would not be enough. The credibility of the American deterrent had to be earned, particularly as it applied to limited conflicts. This unresolved problem was why, when events in Indochina heated up during the next few months, May Craig's simple question returned to haunt the Eisenhower administration.

***

The vulnerability hypothesis that had intruded into Eisenhower's revision of the nation's defense strategy throughout 1953 resurfaced with a vengeance in February and March 1954. Within the administration, disturbing new assertions of Soviet capabilities for attack on the U.S. threatened to undermine the New Look's premise of American superiority. Taken by itself, Dulles's Council on Foreign Relations speech conjured up images of an imminent nuclear
exchange. In Washington, the ongoing debate over the New Look intensified noticeably in February and March as Congress considered Eisenhower's proposed budget for fiscal year 1955.

From the outset, members of Congress appeared dissatisfied by the President's redistribution of the appropriations and manpower pies. And the administration itself was by no means united. General Ridgway, for instance, made a last-ditch effort to prevent the planned cuts of Army manpower. More significant, many Air Force boosters were unappeased by the Service's forty-six percent share of Pentagon expenditures. Grumblings steadily mounted after Aviation Week published photographs of what its editors claimed were two new types of Soviet long-range bombers. As many as 400 of these nuclear-capable aircraft, the magazine stated, were already in place on forward Arctic air bases, within easy striking distance of the U.S. Armed with the Aviation Week story and photos, Senator Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) delivered a slashing attack on the Eisenhower administration and especially Defense Secretary Wilson, who had gone to considerable lengths to downplay Soviet nuclear capabilities. The United States, Symington warned on the Senate floor on February 15, 1954, "may now be looking down the barrel of a possible intercontinental
[nuclear] attack." The former Truman Air Force secretary reminded his colleagues that Wilson had predicted only a few months before that Moscow would possess neither aircraft with sufficient range nor a deliverable H-bomb with which to strike the U.S. until sometime in 1955. The Soviet blast of August 12, 1953 and the Aviation Week photos revealed the foolishness of the Defense Secretary's assertions. Indeed, Symington charged that Wilson and the administration had deliberately and "incorrectly belittled Soviet air power" as part of their campaign to cut spending. A lesser threat required a smaller defense budget. Such flagrant misrepresentation had to cease, Symington warned, or the administration's mistaken estimate of Soviet bomber strength "could well be the last mistake we will ever be allowed to make."14

Two days after Symington's fusillade, New York Congressman Sterling Cole, chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, made a shocking revelation. Speaking in Chicago, Cole revealed previously secret details concerning the world's first thermonuclear detonation, the America MIKE test on October 31, 1952. The MIKE explosion at Eniwetok, Cole said, left a crater in the ocean floor measuring one mile across and 175 feet deep--large enough to swallow 140 U.S. Capitol buildings. If dropped on a U.S. city, a bomb of MIKE's destructive power would
completely destroy everything within a three mile radius of
ground zero. The New York Times account of Cole's speech
included a map of New York City with such a damage area
indicated. While praising the administration's efforts to
maintain a superior thermonuclear retaliatory capability,
Cole warned that the U.S. did not possess a continental
defense system capable of preventing the Soviets from
delivering such weapons against U.S. cities.15

Symington and Cole had both tried to awaken the nation
to the dangers of the New Look. For Symington, the year of
maximum danger was now, and the President's budget limita-
tions and long pull philosophy should be scrapped in favor
of an all-out buildup of U.S. air power. Similarly, Cole
argued that the Soviet nuclear threat mandated increased
spending on continental defenses and, implicitly, a retreat
from the "massive retaliation" brink. Inspired by Cole's
Chicago speech, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill
imagined the Kremlin in possession of MIKE-like H-weapons
and wrote to Eisenhower pleading once again for an early
U.S.-U.K.-USSR summit. Remember Pearl Harbor!, Sir
Winston warned. Like the Japanese, the Bolsheviks might be
tempted to launch a nuclear surprise attack to destroy the
West's thermonuclear threat.16

Worse than these episodes, the administration received
reports in February 1954 that the U.S. was vulnerable to a
Soviet nuclear missile attack and that SAC could not execute its critical mission. The estimates of Soviet missile capability had their origin in Pentagon and RAND Corporation studies of the U.S. missile programs. As part of the comprehensive review of all defense programs ordered by Eisenhower and Budget Director Dodge in February 1953, Air Force Secretary Harold Talbott had directed his special assistant for research and development, Trevor Gardner, to cull Air Force programs for savings. In April 1953, Gardner in turn ordered the Air Research and Development Command (ARDC) to review the current missile programs.

As it had done in October 1951 and March 1952, the ARDC strongly recommended accelerating development of the Convair Corporation's ATLAS intercontinental ballistic missile program. 'The ballistic rocket, the Air Defense and Research Command reported on May 13, 1953, appears at present to be the ultimate means of delivering atomic bombs in the most effective fashion.'17 As it had in 1951 and 1952, however, the Air Staff ignored ARDC and refused to increase funding for the ATLAS missile in June 1953. According to the Air Staff, problems of warhead size, weight and missile accuracy rendered the ballistic missile a bad risk, although the IVY test series in late 1952 had pointed to the solution of these problems. In reality, the Air Force brass, all members of the strategic bomber
fraternity, viewed the ballistic missile as a "Buck Rogers idea" and sought to prevent a redirection of funding from SAC and bomber programs to missile development.18

Dissatisfied with the outcome of the missile review, Trevor Gardner worked tirelessly in the fall of 1953 for ATLAS's reconsideration. Armed with the opinions of scientists Edward Teller and John von Neumann (chair of the Nuclear Panel of the Air Force Science Advisory Board) that existing technology sufficed to construct a megaton missile warhead weighing less than 3,000 pounds, Gardner won Defense Secretary Wilson's approval--over strong Air opposition--to take another look at the nation's missile programs. To undertake this sensitive task, Gardner called on von Neumann to head the Strategic Missile Evaluation Committee (known as the von Neuman Committee).19

Submitted to Air Force Chief of Staff Nathan Twining on February 10, 1954, the von Neumann Committee's findings boiled down to two points. First, advances in thermonuclear warhead technology would allow a relaxation of ATLAS payload and accuracy requirements. In other words, the ATLAS rocket would not have to be the size of the Empire State Building and deliverable within a narrow circular error probable (CEP). A relatively light, megaton or multi-megaton warhead could be carried by a rocket of moderate thrust which need not precisely strike its target.
to be effective. Given adequate funding and an all-out effort, von Neumann concluded, the U.S. could deploy an ICBM by 1960. (20) Second, and more important, the von Neumann study warned that the U.S. trailed the Soviet Union in ballistic missile development. Unless the administration took drastic action to speed construction of its own missile capability, the U.S. would soon find itself mortally vulnerable to Soviet missiles. In other words, the very heart of the New Look, its objective of long-term nuclear deterrence, was threatened with early obsolescence. 21

***

The President could effectively quash attacks on the New Look from within the national security bureaucracy. Challenges from without, however, were more harder to handle. During March and April 1954, two such challenges--the nuclear test ban debate and the French collapse in Indochina--exploded on the world scene and compelled the administration to reassess the geopolitical and military viability of its nuclear strategy.

On March 1, 1954, for the first time since 1946, the skies over Bikini Atoll in the Pacific were lit by the iridescent flames of a nuclear fireball. Codenamed CASTLE-Bravo, this detonation was the first test of the "dry" thermonuclear weapon design which AEC chairman Lewis
Strauss, Eisenhower and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had selected as "the winning weapon" of America's nuclear strategy and war plans.22 BRAVO's results were stunning, shocking, and revolutionary. BRAVO was a "fission-fusion reaction: a small atomic bomb served as [BRAVO's] trigger, creating the heat to transform the lithium-6 deuteride into tritium and begin a self-generating fusion explosion." AEC scientists anticipated that this design would produce a six megaton blast. BRAVO measured fifteen megatons, 800 times the power of the Hiroshima bomb.

In the words of the official Armed Forces Special Weapons Project report on CASTLE, BRAVO launched the world "into a new era of nuclear weapons. [It] represented as revolutionary an advance in explosive power over World War II atomic weapons as the Hiroshima weapon had over conventional bombs dropped in Europe during the war." More important, BRAVO proved (along with the other four multi-megaton tests in the CASTLE series) the "dry" design, thus validating the stockpile reconfiguration the President had ordered three weeks earlier. Perhaps most significant of all, BRAVO confirmed the conclusions of the von Neumann and RAND missile studies. Thermonuclear warheads in a spectrum of yields could be made smaller, lighter and with larger yields from smaller amounts of nuclear material. The chief obstacle to ICBM design had been conquered.23
At first, the Air Staff had greeted the von Neumann report unenthusiastically and resisted Trevor Gardner's plea for acceleration of U.S. missile development. Armed with the results of BRAVO, however, Gardner on March 11 bypassed Air Force channels and took his case directly to Air Force Secretary Harold Talbott and Air Force Chief of Staff Nathan Twining. If implemented immediately and aggressively, Gardner told them, his recommendations could result in an emergency U.S. ICBM capability as early as 1958. Gardner's perseverance paid off handsomely. On March 15, 1954, the Air Council (Twining's five principal deputies) ordered revision of ATLAS's payload and accuracy requirements and creation of a new civil-military organization to oversee missile construction. CASTLE thus cleared the way for acceleration of the drive for unquestioned thermo-nuclear superiority that underlay Eisenhower's nuclear strategy.

But something had gone terribly wrong with the BRAVO experiment that imperiled this strategy. Even more than the blast yield, the radioactive fallout from BRAVO wildly exceeded expectations. The chief monitoring station for the test was situated twenty miles from ground zero in a bunker protected by three-feet thick concrete walls and buried in ten feet of sand. Shortly after the detonation, this station was bombarded with fallout. At its peak, the
radiation level there exceeded that present at ground zero during any of the 1951 RANGER atomic tests in Nevada. 25 Eighty-five miles from Bikini, a group of Japanese fisherman sailing the Fukuryu Maru not only witnessed BRAVO's flash but were covered two hours later by a rain of white, radioactive ash. Fallout from BRAVO blanketed some 7,000 square miles. According to the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project report, if such a blast occurred in a populated area with no passive defenses against fallout, the fatality rate would be 100 percent in an area at least this large. 26

BRAVO coincided with a peak in the public debate over the New Look. Congressional hearings on the President's proposed defense budget for fiscal year 1955 were in full swing. Air Force Chief of Staff Twining was singing the praises of Eisenhower's forthright nuclear strategy. General Ridgway, on the other hand, continued to register dissent. And the controversy stirred by Secretary Dulles's "massive retaliation" address still raged. Indeed, it seemed to intensify in the context of the growing crisis in French Indochina. On March 13, 1954, after weeks of feints, preparatory forays, and French declarations of confidence, the Viet Minh army of General Vo Nguyen Giap assaulted the French garrison at Dienbienphu. This led many observers to ask if the President would apply his
"massive retaliation" policy to the task of rescuing the embattled French and crushing Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. With a whiff of war in the air less than eight months after the Korean armistice, a new note of anxiety crept into the debate on the New Look.

President Eisenhower was not one to be pressured into questioning or revealing the direction of his own strategic military judgment by acrimonious press or political controversy. But in an attempt to deflate the ongoing attacks on the New Look (and perhaps diplomatically to signal Moscow and Peking to stay out of Indochina), the administration in March sought to "clarify" its defense strategy. On March 9, in a speech to the Economic Club of New York, JCS Chairman Arthur Radford explained:

Our planning does not subscribe to the thinking that the ability to deliver massive atomic retaliation is, by itself, adequate to meet all our security needs. It is not correct to say we are relying exclusively on one weapon, on one Service, or that we are anticipating one kind of war.27

A week later, Secretary of State Dulles, in what the New York Times wrongly interpreted as "an authoritative modification of the 'instant retaliation' policy," reminded reporters that the President had specifically said the U.S. would not intervene in Indochina without first consulting
with and receiving the approval of Congress. (This did not mean, Dulles was careful to add, that the U.S. would not act swiftly, for instance, in response to overt Communist Chinese intervention in Indochina). Dulles also released a copy of an article he was to publish in the April issue of Foreign Affairs to better explain the New Look and "massive retaliation." Deterrence, Dulles wrote,

requires that a potential aggressor be left in no doubt that he would be certain to suffer damage outweighing any possible gains from aggression.

.........
A would be aggressor will hesitate to commit aggression if he knows in advance that he thereby not only exposes those particular forces which he chooses to use for his aggression, but also deprives his other assets of 'sanctuary' status. That does not mean turning every local war into a world war. It does not mean that if there is a Communist attack somewhere in Asia, atom or hydrogen bombs will necessarily be dropped on the great industrial centers of China or Russia.

.........
The free world [however] must maintain the collective means and be willing to use them in the way which most effectively makes aggression too risky and expensive to be tempting.28

Before the press could digest Dulles's explanation, the secretary of state complicated matters by asserting, at the same March 16 news conference, that the President possessed the authority, under the Rio and NATO accords, to order atomic retaliation in Europe and the Western Hemisphere, without first consulting Congress, if an ally were attacked.29 Once again, a Dulles pronouncement set the
stage for almost immediate trouble. The following day, a number of Japanese newspapers reported the radioactive contamination of the fisherman aboard the Fukuryu Maru. On March 21st, the New York Times reported that radiation monitoring posts set up in the U.S. by the Atomic Energy Commission to sample fallout from weapons tests conducted at the Nevada Proving Grounds registered increased atmospheric radiation over the continental U.S. following BRAVO. The testing and construction of a nuclear arsenal that Eisenhower had portrayed as essential to mankind's defense against totalitarian aggression now appeared to endanger mankind with silent poisoning.

The Russians were quick to respond to BRAVO. On March 14th, Harrison Salisbury reported from Moscow that Premier Malenkov, in the "sternest" speech ever "delivered by a Soviet spokesman since nuclear weapons came into being," warned the U.S. that a nuclear war would result in the 'destruction of world civilization.' Four days later, Malenkov hinted at a Soviet stockpile of thermonuclear weapons and charged the U.S. with preparing a nuclear assault. The Soviet military paper Red Star claimed the Soviet Union had tested another H-weapon. And the New York Times reported that "informed circles" in Washington believed that the Soviets had tested a thermonuclear device more powerful than America's MIKE device and that Moscow
had "pioneered vitally important new techniques" in nuclear weaponry. Playing the role of the peace-loving giant, the Kremlin also issued its usual call for a ban on nuclear weapons. And on March 31, Moscow reiterated the proposal Molotov made at the Berlin Conference of Ministers in early February for the conclusion of an All-European Security Treaty and Soviet membership in NATO. Beneath its bombastic rhetoric, however, the Soviet leadership may have been deeply worried. BRAVO had struck a nerve in the Kremlin by dramatically demonstrating how overwhelming U.S. nuclear superiority was rapidly becoming.31

The Eisenhower administration's attempt at public relations management of the fallout crisis heightened rather than eased the fears raised by BRAVO. On March 24th, during his usual Wednesday press conference, Eisenhower said of BRAVO, "It is quite clear that this time something happened that we have never experienced before, and must have surprised and astonished the scientists." This was an honest statement, but hardly a sagacious one and distinctly out of character for the President. Congressman Chet Holifield (D-Calif.), a leading member of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, promptly charged that BRAVO had been "out of control."32

Privately, AEC chairman Lewis Strauss claimed that rumors about BRAVO being out of control, about alleged
excessive radiation, and about the contamination of the Japanese fisherman were manufactured "by those who wish we did not have such a weapon and don't care if Russia has it." In fact, Strauss later told the President's press secretary, James C. Hagerty, that he believed the *Fukuryu Maru* was a "Red spy outfit" and that rumored catches of contaminated tuna smelled of Communist handiwork. "If I were the Reds," Strauss told Hagerty, "I would fill the oceans all over the world with radioactive fish" as a way to undermine America's nuclear program and world image.33 Dulles was not amused by such wild notions. The situation was most serious, he told Strauss in a telephone conversation on March 29, 1954. World sentiment against nuclear testing suddenly verged on hysteria. The Japanese, quite naturally, were upset. The British were once again worrying about their possible nuclear annihilation, and other key allies appeared concerned that the U.S. was actually preparing for war. Appeasement of the Russians, rejection of the New Look, and renewed Soviet proposals for a ban or nuclear weapons might result. Strauss asked Dulles what he wanted done. For starters, the secretary quipped, the U.S. could have no more experiments capable of killing everything within an eighty mile radius.34 Strauss's chance to calm the "hysteria" evoked by *BRAVO* came on March 31st. Accompanied by Eisenhower, he
held a special news conference--his first as head of the AEC--to address rumors about the March 1st explosion. White House Press Secretary Hagerty anticipated a cool public relations performance from the experienced Strauss. Instead, Strauss laid a giant egg. He explained that BRAVO had been more powerful than expected and that changes in the wind had created some fallout difficulties. When asked by Richard Wilson (of Cowles Publications) just how powerful H-bombs could be, Strauss responded that there was no limit to their power. One bomb could certainly be "large enough to take out a city." How big of a city,? Merriman Smith, the White House correspondent of UPI, asked. "Any city," Strauss blurted out, even the entire New York metropolitan area.35

As Hagerty put it frankly in his diary, after Strauss's gaffe "All hell broke loose." The front page of the April 1st New York Times screamed, "H-BOMB CAN WIPE OUT ANY CITY." Also on April 1st, the lower house of the Japanese Diet unanimously passed a resolution calling for international control of atomic energy and prohibition of atomic weapons. The following day, Indian Prime Minister Nehru pleaded for an immediate suspension of all nuclear testing while the United Nations formulated a formal, test-ending disarmament package. Indeed, Nehru implied that America's nuclear policy had racist overtones: "It is
of great concern to us that Asia and her peoples appear to be always nearer these occurrences and experiments and their fearsome consequences, actual or potential. 36

Even the British obliquely condemned the U.S. On April 5th, the House of Commons adopted a Labour party resolution (without a formal vote) calling the H-bomb a threat to civilization and urging the leaders of the U.S., Britain and the Soviet Union to meet and consider arms control. Inspired by Strauss's boast of the city-busting power of thermonuclear weapons, in its April 8th issue U.S. News and World Report (usually a strong pro-administration publication) featured a map of the northeastern U.S. indicating that the fallout from a BRAVO-size bomb detonated over Philadelphia would stretch over Washington, D.C., New York and New Hampshire. 37

Finally, as a part of Project Candor, the Eisenhower administration released a film of the IVY test series, including the MIKE thermonuclear shot. Aired on national television on April 7th, the film's impact was tremendous. The sight of Eniwetok Atoll disappearing beneath MIKE's boiling plume was a fitting climax to a historic month in the nuclear era. As Professor Robert Divine has aptly noted, "The genie had escaped from the bottle--all the Eisenhower administration could do now was try to reassure a frightened world that the danger could be contained. 38
Publicly, Eisenhower downplayed the idea that BRAVO signalled the dawn of an era of heightened nuclear danger. In a televised address on April 5th, the President told the nation, "Now, . . . the H-bomb and the Atomic Age. They are not in themselves a great threat to us." The real danger was the "threat imposed by aggressive communism." Though the Soviets possessed nuclear weapons and were potential aggressors, Eisenhower reassured the country that Russia would not attack the United States, for the men in the Kremlin knew such an action would result in the certain destruction of their regime by American retaliation.39

The American press appeared unpersuaded by such comforting assertions. During his April 7th news conference, the President was asked if the U.S. planned to keep making bigger and bigger thermonuclear bombs, since Admiral Strauss had said on March 31st that there was no limit to the power of H-bombs. "No," Eisenhower replied. ". . . We know of no military requirement that could lead us into the production of a bigger bomb than has already been produced." Unfazed, the irrepressible May Craig quickly jumped up to inquire, "Mr. President, aren't you afraid that Russia will make bigger hydrogen bombs before we do?" Again, Eisenhower's response was negative, but Mrs. Craig's question represented the kind of anxiety, not so much about radioactive fallout but about Soviet nuclear capabilities
and surprise attack, that the announcement of "massive retaliation," BRAVO, and the continuing Indochina crisis had all generated. 40

Behind the scenes, the administration wrestled with the domestic and worldwide repercussions of its nuclear policies. Serious attention focused on a nuclear test moratorium as a potential solution to the U.S. public relations dilemma. This idea first surfaced in Washington in February 1954. Concerned by the decision to reconfigure the American arsenal in favor of city-busting thermonuclear weapons, AEC commissioner Thomas E. Murray suggested a moratorium to the President as a way to slow the nuclear arms race and perhaps improve relations between the U.S. and Soviet Union. 41 Eisenhower himself revived the moratorium idea within the administration on April 6th, four days after Prime Minister Nehru's international appeal for a ban on all nuclear testing. Like his interest in Project Candor and Atoms for Peace, the President's interest in a moratorium was both sincere and calculated. At some point, he told the NSC on May 27, 1954, the arms race had to be stopped. A future that held only "more and more bombs" was "no future for us. All we are doing now, Eisenhower stressed, is assuring our capability to destroy." 42

At the same time, Eisenhower could not free himself of the prevailing cold war mentality. He had been pushed into
consideration of a test ban. Without the public relations catastrophes of January-April 1954, the idea would never have received serious attention. Above all, Eisenhower viewed a moratorium as an emergency response to America's damaged world image. "Everybody seems to think that we're skunks, saber-rattlers and warmongers," he complained to his chief advisers. The administration had to undo this perception and "gain some significant psychological advantage in the world."43

Eisenhower was well aware of the high stakes involved. America's "image" remained a critical resource in the struggle against Communism. If world opinion turned against the U.S., particularly against his strategy of deterrence through nuclear strength, other critical strands of his cold war strategy could likewise unravel, including Western solidarity, integration of the New Look into NATO, domestic support of the New Look, and collective security. The viability of a testing moratorium thus depended on whether or not it would contribute to the success of the President's strategic vision: would it protect or undermine the U.S. nuclear advantage, strengthen or weaken the Atlantic alliance, pose a problem or an opportunity for the Soviet Union?

***

Despite both Eisenhower and Dulles's earlier enthus-
iasm, it seemed that the idea of a testing moratorium would be stillborn. Only three weeks after the President raised it for consideration, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed Secretary Wilson that a test ban would violate existing U.S. policy on arms control (NSC 112, July 1951), which provided that agreements on atomic weapons could not be separated from a comprehensive arms control accord, including establishment of an international authority to administer the accord. Secondly, the Chiefs strongly opposed a moratorium because they were convinced it would be followed by ever-increasing pressure on the U.S. to agree to limits on the military application of nuclear weapons, the centerpiece of the West's deterrent and war-fighting strategy. Third, the Chiefs argued that the Soviets could not be trusted to adhere to a moratorium. Moscow had a history not only of violating agreements but of avoiding the consequences of those violations. Finally, the Chiefs contended that a moratorium would endanger America's nuclear superiority because it would not prevent the Russians from advancing their theoretical work on nuclear weapons, closing the gap with the U.S. and then restarting testing. In short, the JCS concluded that any political benefits which might accrue from U.S. acceptance of a moratorium would be temporary, "whereas the military disadvantages probably would be far-reaching and perma-
In addition to the Joint Chiefs' strongly worded objections, U.S.-Soviet contacts during the opening days of the Geneva conference demonstrated that a negotiated relaxation of the arms race was not likely. For instance, on April 27, 1954, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov presented Secretary Dulles with a memo containing Moscow's final response to the President's Atoms for Peace plan. Moscow would have nothing to do with America's proposals, the Soviet note said, unless and until Washington first agreed to renounce production and use of all nuclear weapons. Though, for propaganda purposes, the Eisenhower administration would keep it secret until late September 1954, its Atoms for Peace plan was now effectively dead.45

Still, Eisenhower and Dulles found it hard to give up the moratorium option. Despite vocal opposition from Defense Secretary Wilson, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and AEC chairman Lewis Strauss, the President and Secretary Dulles combined forces during the May 6th NSC meeting to agree that America's image in the world had been bloodied and demanded dramatic attention. Secretary Dulles contributed the decisive comment when he connected the decline in America's image from the fallout and Indochina crises to a deterioration of allied faith in American leadership. The failure of the British to stand with the
U.S. on Indochina, Dulles said, derived from "their obsession over the H-bomb." In Western Europe as a whole, he added, America's image worsened daily. Labels such as "militaristic" and comparisons of America's nuclear arsenal to "Hitler's military machine" were now commonly applied to the U.S. "Speaking," as the official minutes stressed, "with great conviction," Dulles insisted that the administration could not go on relentlessly developing "bigger bombs without any regard for the impact ... on world opinion. In the long run it isn't only bombs that win wars, but having public opinion on your side." Eisenhower was persuaded and directed Dulles, Strauss, Wilson and the CIA to study and report back to the NSC on the viability of a moratorium.46

The Eisenhower-Dulles flirtation with a moratorium was fleeting. Over the final three weeks of May 1954, the President's chief advisers, including Dulles, formed a formidable phalanx of opposition to any limits on nuclear testing. Their arguments were overwhelming, and all pointed to the fact that nuclear weapons had become indispensable to U.S. strategy. Exploitation of the American nuclear advantage, not limits upon it, was the consensus policy. Lewis Strauss, for instance, explained that limits on testing would impair U.S. development of specialized nuclear weapons for air defense and surgical,
tactical uses. The CASTLE thermonuclear test series (completed on May 14th), Strauss and Radford agreed, had been immensely successful. The American nuclear program had reached a critical threshold from which the pace of development could accelerate dramatically. This opportunity should be exploited to expand the nation's nuclear advantage. Treasury Secretary George Humphrey concurred. At the NSC meeting on May 27, 1954, he declared that it was "unthinkable that we should take any measures to retard our progress in this field." The CIA concluded that a moratorium would be only a first, damaging step in this direction.

Echoing the Joint Chiefs' April 30th report, CIA director Allen Dulles warned that the propaganda payoff from a moratorium would be short-lived. Intense pressure from hostile or neutralist nations like India and the Soviet Union for limits on production and use of nuclear weapons would inevitably follow. Strauss added that agreement to a moratorium would set an ominous precedent of U.S. concession to external pressure. For practical purpose, it would amount to an admission that previous American tests had been hazardous.47

Once he realized the damage it would do to the New Look, Secretary Dulles too recoiled from the moratorium idea. On May 25, 1954, he told the British ambassador, Sir Roger Makins, that he opposed a moratorium particularly
because it would slow the progress of U.S. missile programs. As Dulles well knew, the CASTLE test series had revealed critical breakthroughs in terms of missile warhead design. A test moratorium would prevent exploitation of the breakthroughs—a dangerous scenario given the von Neumann Committee's conclusion that the U.S. already lagged the USSR in this field.

Not surprisingly, then, on June 21, 1954, the ATLAS ICBM program was given the highest national priority within the Air Force. Two days later, on behalf of the senior panel Eisenhower had established on May 6th to evaluate the viability of a moratorium, Dulles advised the President that the U.S. should not agree to any limits on nuclear weapons separate from a comprehensive disarmament package. As long as the West relied on nuclear arms for its security, and as long as the Soviets possessed the ability to strike the this country with thermonuclear weapons, such limits could only be self-defeating.48

Though Eisenhower approved his advisers' recommended veto of the moratorium, he seemed clearly disappointed by the decision.49 His faith in nuclear weapons had been shaken by the BRAVO/fallout controversy and the White House debate that followed. Now more often and, one senses, more honestly, the President professed a desire to see all nuclear weapons destroyed. Earlier Radford had been the
only service chief bolder than Eisenhower on the possible use of nuclear weapons. Now all the Chiefs except Ridgway surpassed the President in their apparent willingness to confront the reality of nuclear conflict, large and small. On June 24, 1954, the day after Eisenhower had abandoned the moratorium idea, the JCS majority recommended to the NSC that the U.S. break-off arms negotiations with the Soviet Union and pursue the active reduction of the Soviet threat. The President, however, refused to give up on the possibilities of negotiation. "No one who was in his right mind," as he put it, would give up on the search for arms control options.50

But the chilling realities of the cold war meant that this search would take a back seat to the search for nuclear advantage. Even as a moratorium on testing received the administration's careful attention, Eisenhower was moving to solidify the West's reliance on nuclear weapons.51 More specifically, he sought to enhance collective security by winning NATO's acceptance of the nuclearization of its strategy and forces. Despite doubts raised by vocal critics of the New Look and by adverse world reaction to CASTLE, the President remained convinced that the long-run security and vitality of the free world depended on the implementation of his strategic vision. Offsetting the Communists' superiority in conventional
weapons and manpower with the West's superior technology, mobility and firepower; easing the financial strain of deterrence over the long haul by a division of military missions between the U.S. (air and naval striking power) and its allies (local defenses); and inhibiting Communist aggression by confronting Moscow and Peking with the prospect of swift and decisive retaliation at times and places of the West's choosing—each of these key components of Ike's defense concept required implementation of a coordinated nuclear strategy.

NATO's military chiefs understood this requirement and shared President Eisenhower's eagerness to make it operational. As the Military Representatives Committee of NATO put it in the fall of 1954, "Soviet aggression against NATO nations can be deterred or defeated if, and only if, NATO forces have the capability both to withstand a Soviet nuclear attack and to deliver an immediate effective nuclear counterattack." Even if the Soviet Union attacked without using its nuclear arsenal, the NATO generals warned that the West "would be unable to prevent the rapid overrunning of Europe without immediate employment by NATO of nuclear weapons, both strategically and tactically."

Eisenhower pursued the nuclearization of NATO's strategy and forces because he believed it was essential to the West's survival in the event of war. However, he was
also concerned with peacetime impressions. Presentation of a united NATO position on nuclear weapons, the President realized, counted for nearly as much in the deterrent equation as actual military preparation. Convincing Moscow, and Peking for that matter, of NATO's solidarity and willingness to employ its nuclear advantage—in part by a publicized adoption of the New Look—appeared especially important in the spring of 1954. Eisenhower was deeply and rightly concerned that the events of March and April had weakened European faith in American leadership. With the ratification of the European Defense Community plan stalled in the French Assembly and the Italian Parliament, with Dienbienphu and the entire French effort in Indochina on the verge of collapse, with London refusing to join in united action, and with world opinion gripped by nuclear fear, the collective security arrangement Eisenhower hoped to establish on the foundation of NATO, the New Look and EDC appeared gravely threatened.53

To make matters worse, all of these factors combined on the eve of the Geneva Conference. To enter the conference—which was scheduled to deal with Korea and Indochina and include the U.S., Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, Red China, the State of Vietnam, and the so-called Democratic Republic of Vietnam—in a position of weakness and with the Atlantic powers divided among themselves was
anathema to Eisenhower and Dulles. The administration's solution to this perilous situation was its plan for "united action." By united action, the President hoped to keep France in the fight in Indochina, remove the pressure for unilateral American intervention, obtain French support for EDC, demonstrate the vitality of Western collective security, and thus intimidate the Communists at Geneva.54

A concurrent approach involved securing NATO's embrace of the New Look. Not only would such agreement demonstrate essential Western solidarity and materially and psychologically enhance deterrence. It might also persuade Moscow and Peking that the application of "massive retaliation" in Indochina was a serious possibility, leading them to tread more carefully at the Geneva conference.

Secretary of State Dulles travelled to London and Paris twice during April to campaign for united action in Southeast Asia and the nuclearization of NATO forces in Western Europe. Washington's consideration of a partial ban on nuclear testing played a part in this campaign. Already uneasy about the accelerating nuclearization of the cold war--and particularly the prospect of Western Europe becoming a nuclear battlefield in a third world war--some of the NATO governments were shaken by the controversy surrounding "massive retaliation" and nuclear testing. In order to revive European faith in American leadership and
to convince the allies that he was not hell bent on a belligerent path, Eisenhower—as he had done with Atoms for Peace the previous December—privately proposed the moratorium idea. On April 12, 1954, for example, Dulles told British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden that the President was seriously contemplating ceasing hydrogen bomb tests once the CASTLE series was completed in mid-May.55

Dulles's conversation with Eden in London, however, also disclosed that exploiting America's nuclear advantage, not freezing it by a moratorium, was foremost on the secretary of state's agenda. He bluntly informed Eden that nuclearization of NATO's strategy and forces was essential to Europe's security. The National Security Council had already decided that "atomic tactical weapons should be incorporated as a matter of course into our military planning and armament." The Joint Chiefs of Staff, Dulles told Eden, worried that this policy would not be enforced because "certain of our Allies apparently continued to draw a sharp line of distinction between the use of conventional weapons and atomic weapons." This "raised the most serious [of] problems," Dulles said. In addition to their "clear-cut superiority over us in manpower and conventional weapons," the Soviets themselves possessed tactical atomic weapons. To surrender the West's nuclear superiority by not being prepared to use it in tactical situations, Dulles
warned Eden, was "reckless." Such action would "tie our hands behind our backs" and place the free world "at the mercy of [Communist] blackmail." Moreover, it would require NATO to maintain "two separate military establishments," one conventional and one atomic, at double the financial cost and with incalculable damage to the West's free society.56

After treating London to the customary preview of Washington's European plans, Dulles carried the nuclearization campaign to Paris and the Thirteenth Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council. On April 23, 1954, at the fifth anniversary meeting of NATO, Dulles sought to convince the allies that their survival hinged upon not only a nuclearized force structure but upon a strategy and a willingness to use nuclear weapons first, tactically and strategically, and not merely in retaliation for a Soviet nuclear attack. To the North Atlantic Council, the secretary repeated what he had earlier said to Eden, adding that the Soviets not only enjoyed conventional superiority but possessed nuclear weapons which they were prepared to use "with maximum surprise . . . whenever they consider it to their advantage to do so." NATO had to be ready to use its nuclear superiority, in general or local war, to offset these Communist advantages. Concessions to calls for renunciation of nuclear weapons, Dulles stressed--and to
parallel calls for a nuclear test ban, he implied—would provoke, not deter war. 57

Coming only three weeks after news of BRAVO's results had evoked global outcry, Dulles's address, though secret, was a bold one. Surprisingly, however, nearly all of the NATO governments welcomed its strength and agreed with its conclusions. The fact of the matter was that the NATO members had few illusions concerning Moscow's nefarious design to divide and weaken the West, and even fewer questions about the growing danger posed by Soviet military might. 58 With little debate, therefore, the member nations agreed to undertake the study and preparation of a new strategy and force structure along the lines recommended by Washington. Known not accidentally as the "New Approach" studies, these were conducted from late April until November by the NATO Military Representatives Committee and Standing Group, in coordination with SHAPE and SACEUR General Alfred M. Gruenther. 59

Consensus on plans and forces came relatively quickly among NATO military officials. By the time of their meeting in Washington in November 1954, the Military Representatives had reached "complete agreement" on a new design, assistant secretary of state Livingston Merchant reported. The product of their consensus was known as MC-48, "The Most Effective Pattern of Military Strength for
the Next Few Years." True to the New Look, MC-48 labeled as "indispensable" a NATO strategy and "capability for immediate nuclear counter-attack in the event of Soviet armed attack (whether or not the Soviet first uses nuclear weapons)."60

Though united in their concern with the Soviet threat, many of NATO's civilian leaders nonetheless hesitated to commit their countries to the nuclear war-fighting implied by MC-48. According to State Department records, a variety of doubts and fears underlay this hesitation. There was, for example, the matter of money. Unlike implementation of the New Look at home, reconfiguration of NATO forces for nuclear war-fighting would be expensive; and the allies expected the U.S. to bear the bulk of this expense.61 For Eisenhower, this not only complicated achievement of the balanced budget he so desired. It also meant requesting substantial increases in foreign assistance from a Congress he had battled for two years for cuts in American defense spending. Even more problematic, a number of NATO nations recoiled from the new strategy's plan to respond to a non-nuclear Soviet attack with nuclear weapons. Like Army Chief of Staff Ridgway, some of the allies preferred that NATO develop defenses capable of fighting and winning either a nuclear or a non-nuclear war. This alternative strategy, of course, would be enormously expensive and was
based on a naive optimism about the nature of the next war--namely, that Western restraint would breed Soviet restraint even after the Soviets attacked--that Eisenhower rightly considered absurd.62

Other allies resisted the new strategy on political grounds. While ready to approve military planning and preparations for a nuclear response, they were not ready to decide in advance that nuclear weapons would actually be used. During his April 23rd address to the NAC, Dulles had urged its members to take this giant step. Still, the President did not want this step to serve as a binding agreement that nuclear weapons would be employed in all cases. No one understood better than Eisenhower that war was unpredictable and that decisions on if, when and where nuclear weapons would be employed would, almost certainly, be made as a particular military crisis unfolded. What Eisenhower sought, rather, was to ensure that there would be no obstacles to a prompt decision for use in a crisis.

The sticking point to MC-48's adoption, then, was the issue of consultation. All of the atomic and nuclear weapons deployed by NATO were controlled by American troops. For these and all SAC bombers stationed on allied territory, Eisenhower was pledged to consult with, and to obtain the approval of, NATO (or in the case of the SAC bombers, the host government) before ordering their use.
But as Dulles candidly noted in his April 23rd speech to the NAC, the requirement of consultation could not be allowed to stand in the way of security. There might well be cases when time would not permit the luxury of consultation. In such instances, Dulles strongly implied, the U.S. would respond as the President felt was necessary, with or without prior consent.63 This, of course, was precisely Eisenhower's plan—to launch, at any hint of a Soviet offensive move in Europe, that portion of SAC's fleet not based on allied soil. The critics of MC-48 sought to prevent an extension of this thinking to NATO's forces. Reconfiguration of those forces for nuclear combat, they feared, would limit NATO's options in case of war, thus effectively confronting the political authorities with a fait accompli. Under the new plan, NATO units would not be stripped of all conventional capabilities, and nuclearization would not be completed for another two years. In any case, the pressure to employ all means available, nuclear and non-nuclear, in the event Soviet forces struck west would be enormous.64

The hesitations over MC-48 caused considerable concern in Washington. The administration worried that any leak of the existing differences on this basic issue would be exploited by the Kremlin. Not only would a lack of harmony suggest a lack of preparedness on NATO's part to defend
itself with nuclear weapons. It might well be used by Moscow as propaganda, proving that the United States was forcing nuclear weapons down the throat of a peaceful world, while the President hoped to present NATO's adoption of MC-48 as proof of Western resoluteness and the vitality of collective security.65

Eisenhower therefore did everything he could to assuage the allies' doubts and fears. After engineering passage of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 in August, for example, he pushed for the maximum sharing of atomic information with key allies allowed by the new law. In early December 1954, just before the North Atlantic Council met to vote on MC-48, Eisenhower ordered a substantial increase in deployment of atomic and nuclear weapons to Europe, thus assuring the allies that American NATO forces would be armed and ready to carry out the new strategy.66 Most importantly, Dulles held extended meetings with his British, Canadian, and French counterparts on the question of authority for using NATO's nuclear forces. With the sanction of the President, NATO chief Gruenther, and JCS Chairman Radford, Dulles negotiated an agreement providing that MC-48 would serve as a "basis for planning and preparations by the NATO military authorities" and would not "involve the delegation of the responsibility of governments for putting the plans into action in the event
of hostilities."67

This agreement removed the last thorn of contention from the "New Approach" debate. The North Atlantic Council formally approved MC-48 on December 17, 1954. That action clearly marked a major victory for the President's strategic vision. No matter the absence of a prior political decision for use, NATO strategy would now be built on the basis of first use of nuclear weapons, tactical as well as strategic. The new plan was widely publicized and rapidly implemented, putting Moscow on notice that any use of force in Eurasia would probably provoke a nuclear response.

Together with the October 24, 1954 agreements granting West Germany's full membership in NATO and rearmament within the Western European Union, the new NATO strategy and force structure carried the New Look to the threshold of military reality. More significant yet, this combination revitalized the concept of collective security and contributed to the deterrence of general war that Eisenhower ultimately sought to achieve.68

***

The challenge facing the Eisenhower administration in the spring of 1954 went beyond containing the world's escalating fear of nuclear weapons and deterring general war with the Soviet Union to the question of whether the New Look could contain limited Communist aggression.69 The
French, once confident of their ability to defeat the Viet Minh and spoiling for a clash of arms in Indochina, now appeared on the verge of collapse both at Dienbienphu and in Paris. American military intervention—long considered by Washington as an option only against overt Communist Chinese intervention—now appeared to many observers as the only way to forestall a defeat in the one place where the Free and Communist worlds directly confronted one another.70

By the early spring of 1954, however, the question of American intervention was not so clear-cut. Ostensibly, Washington's primary objective in Indochina remained containing the spread of international Communism. The "domino theory" was an Eisenhower article of faith. Loss of Indochina, the President and his top advisers feared, "would almost certainly result in the communization of all Southeast Asia." And that, in turn, would threaten Japan, both economically and politically, as well as endanger the strategic and geographic integrity of America's Pacific island defense chain. Eisenhower said it all when he exclaimed to congressional leaders on February 8, 1954, "My God, we must not lose Asia."71

Yet the President and Dulles worried that the U.S. might do just that by intervening to save the French. The two statesmen believed that the future focal point of the
struggle against Communism would be in the underdeveloped world for the loyalty of the newly-emerging nations. The West could win this contest, Eisenhower was convinced, only if it disavowed colonialism and championed independence for these nations. The problem, then, was how to support the French effort in Indochina without the U.S. being tainted by association with the old order.72

Continued U.S. credibility was likewise on the line. Should Indochina fall without overt American military intervention, American credibility might suffer a dangerous blow in the eyes of non-communist Asia, thus paving the way for Asian accommodation with Moscow and Peking. Eisenhower, of course, was even more concerned about the effects of non-intervention on America's European allies. Despite London's resolute unwillingness to get involved in Indochina, and Paris' refusal to meet U.S. preconditions for possible action, Washington feared that failure to defend France's vital interests overseas would send potentially disastrous signals to NATO about American leadership and to the Communists about fissures in collective security. Most dangerous of all, this would jeopardize ratification of the European Defense Community, currently the top objective of Eisenhower's European policy and an indispensable complement to the New Look.

Finally, the dilemma of intervention challenged the
New Look itself. Because it coincided with the administration's public declaration and defense of the President's new strategy, the Indochina crisis stood as an uncomfortably obvious test of the strategy's ability to cope with limited aggression. Critics of the New Look were certain that it would fail the test. How would the administration respond, they asked, if Communist China did not intervene militarily but if France pulled out of the region as Great Britain had pulled out of Greece in 1947? Would the President employ atomic airpower against the Viet Minh army to keep all of Indochina from falling to the Communists? Many observers thought not. Even if Communist China did intervene, the U.S. could not respond with the "massive retaliation" mandated by the New Look. For an atomic war against China could not be contained. It was virtually certain to escalate into global war with China's Soviet ally, or at least result in Soviet retaliation in kind against Western Europe and/or Japan.

The President's critics were correct on one point. The success of the New Look and its "massive retaliation" component did rely on the credibility of America's retaliatory deterrent. Coming at this time, after the administration's public threats, an effectively unchallenged Communist victory in Indochina could conceivably shatter the credibility of the American deterrent long before the New
Look was fully in place.73

When the topic of U.S. intervention in Indochina had been raised in the National Security Council in January 1954, Eisenhower had unequivocally ruled out the use of American ground forces. He told the NSC on January 8,

he simply could not imagine the United States putting ground forces anywhere in Southeast Asia, except possibly in Malaya. . . . There was just no sense in even talking about United States forces replacing the French in Indochina. If we did so, the Vietnamese could be expected to transfer their hatred of the French to us. I can not tell you how bitterly opposed I am to such a course of action. This war in Indochina would absorb our troops by divisions! 74

Commitments of large American ground units to Korean-like quagmires were precisely what the New Look was designed to obviate. It was also designed, however, to enable the U.S. to act decisively in response to limited Communist aggression. But military intervention at Dienbienphu would lend credibility to the New Look only if it achieved a swift and decisive result. By late March 1954, the French position at Dienbienphu had so deteriorated that it was not clear whether even American air power could deliver any measure of military victory there.

The French government first requested U.S. military intervention the night of April 4, 1954. The request came from French Chief of Staff Paul Ely by way of the ambassador in Paris, C. Douglas Dillon. Ely asked for immediate
air strikes to rescue the French forces encircled at Dienbienphu. Only an hour before the White House received this call for assistance, Eisenhower had met with a handful of his top advisers and said that he would be prepared to order military action if three conditions were fulfilled: if Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and a number of Asian nations joined the action; if the French agreed to continue fighting the Viet Minh; and if Paris guaranteed full independence for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. 75 Unilateral American action remained out of the question for a number of reasons. For starters, the Joint Chiefs of Staff judged the situation at Dienbienphu beyond rescue. At a special meeting on March 31, 1954, they had unanimously voted that the administration should reject any plea for intervention to save the French garrison. Only Admiral Radford at this point favored granting Paris' request. By April 2nd, however, even he grudgingly concluded that Dienbienphu was lost. 76

The morning of April 5th, Washington informed Paris that its request had been denied. The U.S. would not intervene alone. But this decision did not mean that the idea of American intervention was dead. Indeed, it was just coming to life in the guise of "united action." First publicized in a March 29th speech by the Secretary of State, the administration's united action plan aimed at
organizing a coalition of nations with interests in South-east Asia--led by the U.S. and Great Britain--which would stand ready to intervene in Indochina to prevent French surrender or expanded Communist aggression in the region.77 Eisenhower initiated this plan in a letter to Prime Minister Churchill, sent just as the French call for air strikes arrived. If Indochina fell to the Communists, the President wrote his old friend,

the ultimate effect on our and your global strategic position with the consequent shift in the power ratio throughout Asia and the Pacific could be disastrous and, I know, unacceptable to you and me. It is difficult to see how Thailand, Burma, and Indonesia could be kept out of Communist hands. This we cannot afford. The threat to Malaya, Australia and New Zealand would be direct. The offshore island chain would be broken. The economic pressure on Japan which would be deprived of non-Communist markets and sources of food and raw materials would be such, over a period of time, that it is difficult to see how Japan could be prevented from reaching an accommodation with the Communist world which would combine the manpower and natural resources of Asia with the industrial potential of Japan.78

To prevent this dire sequence of events from occurring, the President asked Churchill for British participation in a "new, ad hoc grouping or coalition" to check Communist expansionism in Asia. The coalition would have to be "strong and . . . willing to join the fight if necessary." Most important, however, the coalition had to be organized before the Geneva Conference convened on April 26th, for what Eisenhower envisaged was not allied military
action in Indochina but a bolstering of the French effort and intimidation of Moscow and Peking.

Ideally, the President and Dulles believed that prompt formation of a coalition prior to Geneva, pledged publicly to support the French (and the freedom and independence of Vietnam and the Associated States) and to oppose further aggression in the region, would keep the French fighting, perhaps improve the prospects of EDC's ratification by the French Assembly, and send a strong signal of Western solidarity to the Russians and the Chinese, thereby establishing a position of strength from which to negotiate at Geneva. The object, of course, was to hold Indochina without having to fight, by appearing ready to fight. As Dulles told the ambassadors from Australia and New Zealand on April 4th, he believed that Moscow feared being drawn into a war with the U.S. as a result of Peking's and Hanoi's zealotry. United Western action would thus lead the Kremlin "to call off the Chinese and write off Ho." Or as Eisenhower wrote to Churchill, united action might convince the Chinese "that their interests lie in the direction of discreet disengagement."79

Throughout April, the administration worked vigorously to make united action a reality. Twice, on April 10th and 20th, Dulles traveled to London and Paris to sell the plan to the Churchill and Laniel governments. On both occasions
he came away empty handed. The French wanted American military assistance but only on their own terms. Moreover, Dulles detected that they hoped to exploit any U.S. aid not to hold the line in Indochina, as the President desired, but as leverage at Geneva for better terms of exit.80

The British were only slightly less uncooperative. Like the French, they looked to Geneva for a peaceful end to the Indochina saga. The threat of military intervention implied in united action, Churchill and Eden feared, might have to be fulfilled, and they were certain that Anglo-American action would provoke Chinese retaliation and perhaps spark World War III. Though not prepared to take such risks to preserve the remnants of the French empire, the British were, however, interested in protecting their remaining Asian dominions from Communist aggression and subversion. Accordingly, Eden told Dulles on April 11th that London would be willing to consider some form of Southeast Asian defensive arrangement, but only after Geneva.81

Although essentially unsuccessful in both London and Paris, Dulles managed by his strenuous efforts to create the impression that the Atlantic powers were indeed preparing for concerted military action.82 A positive achievement for the anxiety it may have caused in Moscow and Peking, this impression nonetheless had little effect
on the military situation on the ground in Indochina, and it did nothing to reinforce the credibility of America's limited war deterrent. Anticipating that the President, even if he arranged a united action coalition, would continue to rely on impressions and half measures, several key members of the administration now began advocating a policy not of smoke and mirrors but of fulfilling the military tenets of the New Look.

For example, in a confidential meeting with State Department counselor Douglas MacArthur, II on April 7, 1954, Admiral Radford's special assistant, Captain George Anderson, reported that the Joint Advanced Study Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had concluded that the U.S. could "smash" the Viet Minh at Dienbienphu with just three tactical atomic weapons. This conclusion, Anderson said, had led Admiral Radford to ask Secretary Dulles whether the U.S., in the event a coalition was formed and military intervention became necessary, would be prepared to use atomic weapons against the Viet Minh if such weapons promised the best military results. Though Radford's implied course of action was precisely in line with the New Look, MacArthur seemed taken aback. The inquiry came, remember, at the height of public and political uproar over BRAVO's results. MacArthur thus was quick to tell Anderson that the mere suggestion that atomic weapons be used in
Indochina would lead to chaos among the allies and, should it become public, to a damaging propaganda bonanza for the Soviet Union.83

Surprisingly, Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway proposed a plan of action even more blunt than Radford's. In a memo to his fellow Chiefs dated April 6, 1954, Ridgway first stated his opposition both to unilateral U.S. action in Indochina and to any allied plan designed to meet the Communist threat in the region by military action geographically confined to Indochina. "The immediate and major source of Viet Minh military power is Communist China," Ridgway wrote. "With that source destroyed or neutralized, the Viet Minh would cease to present a major military problem to the French." Should the President determine that the West had to act to prevent the loss of Indochina or further Communist advances in Southeast Asia, any attempt to achieve this by limited force on the Indochinese peninsula "would constitute a dangerous strategic diversion of limited United States military capabilities, and would commit our armed forces in a non-decisive theatre to the attainment of non-decisive local objectives." The sensible course of action, Ridgway advised, would be a decisive [read atomic] use of force by the U.S.--with the backing of as many allies as possible--against Communist China itself.84
Ridgway's memorandum cut straight to the heart of the New Look's military logic. To contain and defeat localized aggression, without playing to Communist strengths by committing U.S. forces to innumerable limited but costly conflicts on the Sino-Soviet periphery, Eisenhower's strategic vision depended upon (and the administration trumpeted) a readiness for selective use of decisive air and naval striking power at either the point or the origin of aggression. The operative terms in this concept were selectivity and decisiveness. The U.S. would resort to the use of force not in response to every challenge nor on the ground chosen by the enemy, but when vital U.S. interests were threatened and on terms and at places advantageous to U.S. forces. And it would do so with force sufficient not just to halt the aggression, as in Korea, but to destroy it and to deter it in the future.

Did the rapidly deteriorating situation in Indochina warrant such a response as Ridgway implied? The fact was that President Eisenhower had deemed preventing the loss of Indochina and further Communist expansion in Southeast Asia as vital to U.S. and free world security interests. That was the conclusion of the administration's existing statement of policy on Southeast Asia (NSC 5405, dated January 16, 1954), which was reaffirmed in the strongest possible language by Eisenhower and Dulles in the midst of the April
crisis. The free world "could no longer accept further Communist takeovers, whether accomplished by external or internal measures," the Secretary of State had told the NSC during its meeting on April 6, 1954. "Indochina," the President added, "was the first in a row of dominoes. If it fell its neighbors would shortly thereafter fall with it, and where did the process end? . . . 'in certain areas at least we cannot afford to let Moscow gain another bit of territory.'"85

Determined to draw the line against further Communist victories in Southeast Asia, for the duration of the crisis Eisenhower nonetheless remained reluctant to bend to the logic of his own national security strategy. The most telling instance of this came not with Dienbienphu—where his strategic reasoning dictated non-action—but when the President confronted the question of an American response to Communist Chinese intervention in the region.86

For about six weeks after the May 7th fall of Dienbienphu, this question crept distractingly into allied planning for the post-Geneva defense of Southeast Asia. The Viet Minh had performed very well indeed against the French without help from Communist Chinese air or ground forces. So there really was no reason for Peking to intervene openly in Indochina as long as the U.S. stayed out and as long as Paris and London seemed anxious to
settle at Geneva. Washington, nevertheless, worried that the Communists would exploit their control of Indochina—the expected outcome of the Geneva conference—as a jumping off point for further aggression in the region. The French, on the other hand, worried that Hanoi would call on Communist Chinese air power to deliver the coup de grace to their forces as they sought to regroup in (or to withdraw from) the Tonkin Delta.87

Before the question of overt Chinese intervention came to a head, the White House asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to formulate military options for the defense of what remained of Southeast Asia after Geneva. By their reply, the Chiefs made it clear that they had closed ranks behind Ridgway and Radford. Assuming that the Communist Chinese stayed out of the conflict, the Chiefs said that "the best military course for eventual victory in Indochina is the development of effective native forces." If a number of strictly defined preconditions were met, the U.S. might support this option by way of training and limited air and naval forces. However, the Joint Chiefs adamantly opposed devotion of any substantial American forces to this part of the world. To commit U.S. troops to a region "devoid of decisive military objectives," in support of a cause which Communist propaganda could easily label as imperialist, would damage not only American prestige but also the
country's ability to respond to major military threats elsewhere in the world.88

Not surprisingly, Admiral Radford carried his colleagues' findings to a more extreme conclusion. Once northern Indochina was lost, no form of "static defense" or limited, local military force could prevent the eventual loss of the entire region to Communist control, he said. The only way to preempt that result, he believed, was to "go to the source of Communist power in the Far East, i.e., China, and destroy that power." In a variation of an argument he would doggedly pursue over the next seven months relative to the implementation of the New Look, Radford warned that the U.S. should act now to reduce the Communist Chinese military danger before the Soviets attained nuclear parity and the balance of military power shifted to the Communists' favor.89

Collectively, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not willing to go so far as to suggest that war with Communist China was necessary. Should Peking intervene directly or support further military aggression in the region, however, the Chiefs did not hesitate to advise that the U.S. respond with a nuclear offensive against the mainland. There was nothing bold about this position; for Japan, Korea, Formosa and Indochina, it had been U.S. policy for over a year. What was new and striking in May and June 1954 was Eisen-
hower's resistance to this policy.90

During the last few days of May, Ambassador Dillon reported from Paris that the French General Staff believed that Communist Chinese air power might soon be employed in Indochina against the port of Haiphong and French forces in the Tonkin delta. In that case--based upon earlier administration statements and alleged private pledges by Admiral Radford to General Ely in March--Paris felt the U.S. was committed to intervene immediately. To prepare for, and to deter, such an event, Dillon noted, the French government now requested that Eisenhower obtain prior approval from Congress to reply with force and that he or Dulles issue a public warning that Communist Chinese air intervention would provoke an American response. Dillon added that, if Washington refused to take such action and the French Expeditionary Corps was subjected to Communist Chinese air attacks during the evacuation of Tonkin, the ramifications for U.S. foreign policy would be clamatious, perhaps leading even to the loss of France to Communism.91

A bit over-dramatic, Dillon's assessment was probably correct on one key point: an American refusal to respond militarily to an open Communist Chinese attack on a NATO ally would almost certainly spell the end of the alliance. To be sure, it seemed ludicrous to believe that Peking would intervene in Indochina and risk atomic war with the
U.S. at the very moment when France and Britain seemed ready to hand over Indochina at Geneva. Still, the President's reaction to Dillon's message is revealing. Informed of the French request by Robert Cutler on June 1st, Eisenhower reacted strongly, saying that the U.S. would never intervene in Indochina outside of united action. Only a joint resolution by Congress ordering him to do so could lead him to take this step, even if Communist China were involved.

But what about the administration's existing policy on Southeast Asia, Cutler asked? NSC 5405 provided that, in the event of overt Communist Chinese aggression in this region, the U.S. would have to "consider taking action alone" if its allies refused to join in retaliation. Moreover, on a number of occasions--indeed as recently as May 7th--Dulles had publicly warned that Communist Chinese military action in Southeast Asia would draw U.S. retaliation outside the area of attack, unmistakably implying use of atomic weapons.92

Eisenhower's apparent retreat from the policy of nuclear retaliation against China cast him into conflict with most of his senior advisors and led to a remarkable exchange with Dulles at the NSC meeting on June 3, 1954. When the Council took up the question of U.S. policy in the event of Chinese military aggression, the President declar-
ed that, if the United States acted unilaterally to counter such aggression, it "would mark the complete collapse of the American policy of united action. . . ." Eisenhower conceded that "it was right for the United States to commit armed forces to prevent overt Chinese Communist aggression," but only if the Pacific allies joined the U.S. in this effort (emphasis added). If the allies refused, "they would have in effect quit on us," he said. And he could never go before Congress and ask for war against China under these circumstances. Moreover, to use force without the participation of America's Pacific allies was "to stand alone before the world as an arbitrary power supporting colonialism in Asia."\textsuperscript{93}

Eisenhower's remarks provoked a rare outburst of total and emotional opposition from his faithful secretary of state. The issue, Dulles reminded the President,
Dulles' insistence that the U.S. be ready to retaliate for Chinese aggression was significant not only because it contradicted the President but because it signaled the secretary's agreement with the Joint Chiefs that retaliation include atomic weapons and not be subject to allied veto.

Vice President Nixon agreed with the secretary of state and, in a single sentence, perhaps best summarized the NSC's reaction to Eisenhower's position. "If the Chinese Communists moved overtly against any free country in the Asian area, and the United States, with allies or without them, did not move to resist such aggression, 'the jig certainly was up.'"94

The stormy June 3rd NSC meeting resulted in a compromise statement of policy that indicated a marked weakening of Eisenhower's readiness to resort to atomic retaliation. The essence of the year-old policy on Southeast Asia ostensibly remained intact. If Communist China committed overt aggression in Southeast Asia or the Western Pacific, the President was immediately to request congressional approval for the use of American forces to defeat the aggression. The administration would also "seek to persuade our Pacific allies, Thailand, and other free nations to join in the action." Finally--and here lay the new and critical loophole--the new policy statement
provided that, if the allies would not join the fight, the plan to obtain congressional approval and to respond with armed force "will be subject to reexamination." In other words, there was no commitment to oppose Chinese Communist military aggression, even if it were against the vital nations of, say, Japan or South Korea. There was, however, a sense that U.S. national security policy had become a prisoner of what the Joint Chiefs of Staff would soon label the "the fears of our weakest allies." 95

In the end, the feared Communist Chinese intervention in Indochina never materialized, and the 1954 Indochina crisis stumbled to a close on July 21, 1954. On July 20, French, North Vietnamese, and Cambodian officials signed an Indochina-wide armistice, and on July 21, the British, French, Chinese, Soviet and North Vietnamese representatives concluded an unsigned Final Declaration. The most important provisions of the settlements included the "partitioning of Vietnam into two regroupment zones divided at approximately the seventeenth parallel," and a countrywide election in July 1956 as a referendum on unification. Like the State of Vietnam, the United States refused to sign the Geneva settlements. Strongly opposed to several key provisions of the Final Declaration, the administration agreed only to take note of them and pledged not to disturb them by the threat or use of force. 96
Had Eisenhower's strategic vision failed a crucial test in Indochina? Had his administration, by its acquiescence in France's defeat and Geneva's diplomatic recognition of Communist North Vietnam, been a party to a "Far Eastern Munich," as Republican Senator William Knowland and other conservative critics charged? It could be argued that the terms obtained at Geneva were more favorable to the West than the French military situation in Indochina warranted. That this was so may have been the result of the imposing shadow cast by America's growing nuclear superiority and Washington's threat of "massive retaliation." It is believed by many scholars—though even in early 1992 no one could be certain—that Moscow and Peking were cowed by the prospect of U.S. intervention and the possibility of nuclear escalation. Because of this they pressured Hanoi to accept terms that did not reflect their near victory in Indochina.97

On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the outcome of the crisis and the Geneva conference amounted to a serious blow to American prestige. France, with virtually unlimited U.S. financial support, had suffered a military and political defeat at the hands of the Chinese-Soviet-backed Viet Minh; and perhaps the most strategically valuable region of Southeast Asia—the northern part of Vietnam, including the Red River Delta—had passed into
Communist hands.

Eisenhower's reluctance to use force against Communist China in line with the dictates of his own military strategy can only be explained in the context of the remarkable events of spring 1954 and the resulting evolution of his views on nuclear weapons. One year earlier, Eisenhower had taken the lead in formulating a national security policy which declared atomic weapons to be "as available for use as other munitions," and which clearly contemplated employment of these weapons in limited wars. It had also been Eisenhower who, after Korea, fought for the plan to respond to renewed Communist Chinese aggression in Asia with atomic strikes against mainland targets—the very policy apparently undone by the NSC at its meeting on June 3, 1954.(98) Now the President appeared more than ready to question his earlier policies.

One factor that impelled Eisenhower's growing doubt was the profound fear that permeated the public mood, both at home and abroad. The siege of Dienbienphu and rumors of U.S. intervention coincided with the uproar produced by publicity of BRAVO's frightening results. Winston Churchill was not alone in envisioning the struggle in Indochina mushrooming into a global conflict in which the United States and Soviet Union set fire to (or poisoned) the world with blasts of BRAVO-sized weapons. Defusing
such fears, repairing America's battered world image, and restoring the NATO allies' faith in his leadership, not adding fuel to the fire by a military response in Indochina, became Eisenhower's primary concerns that spring. Those tasks were made even more imperative because of the American political atmosphere, redolent with the stench of the nauseous Army-McCarthy hearings and Oppenheimer case, and the poisonous atmosphere of the 1954 election campaign.

Another factor contributing to Eisenhower's restraint in Indochina was his continued preoccupation with the state of Western European collective security. Put simply, many aspects of the administration's Indochina policy were manipulated to achieve a positive impact on NATO and especially on France's pending ratification of the European Defense Community. Once the Geneva Conference convened on April 26, 1954, this generally meant backing away, however gradually, from any notions of military intervention, which both Paris and London viewed with increasing alarm.99

Even more important to understanding why the President recoiled from the military implications of the New Look, it must be remembered that his strategic vision consisted of more than the containment of Communism by air and naval striking power. The New Look included a variety of other means for prosecuting the cold war and promoting the secur-
ity of the free world—covert operations, propaganda, military and economic assistance, and especially regional alliances and collective security. Given this and the events of spring 1954, it is hardly surprising that Eisenhower chose to pursue U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia by a combination of these other means, primarily by collective security. In fact, "united action" was just another name for deterrence through collective defense, which was no less critical to Eisenhower's strategic vision than nuclear strength.

The ultimate product of Eisenhower's vision and the geopolitical circumstances of 1954 was the Southeast Asian Defense Treaty (SEATO). SEATO was united action come to life in Asia. It formed another branch of the Eisenhower-Dulles "pactomania" tree: NATO, ANZUS, CENTO, and the bilateral defense pacts with Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Signed in Manila on September 8, 1954, by the U.S., Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan, the SEATO treaty—also known as the Manila Pact—pledged each of its signatories to regard an armed attack "in the treaty area" as a threat to its own security, and to respond to the threat "in accordance with its own constitutional processes."

By a separate protocol—whose fateful potential was not remotely understood at the time—the pact provided that
the treaty area would include South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Eisenhower and Dulles considered the Manila Pact not as a stopgap measure but as a triumph for the President's strategic vision. It marked the realization of "united action" and, along with the accords on West German rearmament, signed in Paris on October 23, 1954, demonstrated the continued vitality of collective security. Moreover, the administration was convinced that SEATO revived American prestige in non-Communist Asia, healing those doubts perhaps raised by Washington's reluctance to respond militarily to the Communists' advances.101

The problem with this primary component of Eisenhower's national security strategy was that deterrence by collective security, particularly as practiced by the U.S. through SEATO, was supplemented by the rhetoric of and arms buildup of "massive retaliation." The deterrent effect of the new alliance depended not upon the fact of the alliance itself-though this certainly struck a "psychological blow in the cold war" for the West--but upon Washington's repeated proclamation that it had drawn the line against further Communist aggression, and the unmistakable implication that transgression of that line would provoke the wrath of America's striking power. But here one is reminded anew of May Craig's question at the President's news conference on February 3, 1954. If the Communists got
the impression that the U.S. would not use its striking power in cases of limited war, what then? U.S. policy during the Indochina crisis certainly had done nothing for the credibility of that striking power.

At the end of the Korean War in July 1953, the members of the United Nations Command had, in the Greater Sanctions Statement, drawn a line and provided a threat similar to those implied in SEATO. And the Eisenhower administration had made this stance its own policy by well-publicized warnings of the "grave results" that would follow renewed Chinese aggression in Asia. In 1954 Peking had not, of course, obliged Washington with a clear-cut provocation of overt military intervention. But even if it had, the position Eisenhower and the National Security Council codified on June 3rd suggested that he would not have replied, at least not without the full approval and support of key allies. This did not bode well either for SEATO or the President's overall strategy. In the fall of 1954, the perceived growth in Soviet nuclear capabilities and American vulnerability would further erode the military logic of the New Look.
The Joint Chiefs of Staff welcomed the President's reluctant retreat from a moratorium on nuclear testing and NATO's careful embrace of nuclearization in the summer of 1954. At the same time, they were deeply troubled by the alarming state of national security disclosed by the recent Indochina crisis. For Eisenhower's military chiefs, developments in Indochina and at the Geneva conference signalled that the New Look was failing. More specifically, they believed that the activist strategy outlined in NSC 162/2—with its emphasis on a strengthened collective security and swift, decisive retaliation against Communist aggression—had not been properly implemented. The Joint Chiefs' concern surfaced during May 1954 and escalated precipitously during the next several months, for, coincident with the diplomatic denouement at Geneva, new intelligence studies showed dramatic increases in Soviet nuclear capabilities and American vulnerability. Added to their "victory" in Indochina, the Communists were now perceived as approaching nuclear parity with the U.S. As a result, only seven months after the completion of NSC 162/2 on October 30, 1953, the administration began a searching reassessment of the the President's strategic vision.
The review of the New Look commenced in June 1954, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff supplied Defense Secretary Wilson with their traditional mid-year evaluation of the West's military posture. Like the latest set of forbidding intelligence estimates of Soviet capabilities, the Chiefs' evaluation turned on the perceived onrush of Soviet nuclear parity, but the Chiefs' starting point remained Indochina. The Eisenhower administration's handling of the Communist challenge there, the Chiefs declared candidly, had rapidly degenerated into a Truman-like "policy of defensiveness characterized 'by a continued emphasis on reactive-type security measures.'" Moreover, the crisis revealed that the allies (meaning Great Britain and France) could not be counted upon to do their part in upholding the concept of collective security. As the Joint Chiefs saw it, the West's failure to unite either politically or militarily to confront the Communists in Southeast Asia and at Geneva climaxed six months of non-implementation of the policies laid down by NSC 162/2.(2)

Most disturbing of all to the Chiefs, the West's inaction in Indochina had permitted yet another Communist triumph in an era in which the U.S. enjoyed unquestioned nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. This suggested a dark future for the free world. As Soviet nuclear capabilities grew, the Chiefs worried, the deterrent effect of
America's nuclear power would be increasingly diminished. The Communists would therefore be tempted "to pursue their ultimate objective of world domination through a succession of local aggressions... all of which could not be successfully opposed by the Allies through localized counteraction." What about "massive retaliation" and Eisenhower's strategy of responding to such aggressions with U.S. air and naval striking power? Again, expansion of Soviet nuclear capabilities--soon to reach effective parity with those of the U.S.--"would create a condition of mutual deterrence" in which the U.S. would be averse to using its air and naval power to quash limited wars for fear of igniting a general war with an adversary of equal nuclear strength. The struggle between the free and Communist worlds, the Chiefs solemnly warned, had reached a "precarious if not critical stage." The outcome of this struggle depended upon how the United States chose to proceed in the interim period before nuclear parity became a reality.

The Chiefs did not, however, propose the abandonment of what recent events suggested was a flawed New Look. For the JCS majority, the problem with U.S. policy lay as much in the realm of tactics as strategy. Pointing to the provision in NSC 162/2 calling for the creation of conditions, prior to Soviet achievement of atomic plenty, that would enable the U.S. to meet Communist aggression reso-
lutely and to press for the reduction of that threat, the Chiefs urged a more forceful application of the New Look. They restated their support for the brinkmanship and multifaceted cold-war offensive envisaged in options B and C of Project Solarium:

a plan by which the power of the Free World could be applied . . . to wrest the initiative from the Communist Bloc. Such a plan would include measures by which the Soviets could be convinced that the only alternative to satisfactory negotiated settlements of the problems threatening world peace would involve grave threat to the continued existence of the Soviet regime itself.

In other words, before the Soviet Union achieved nuclear parity, the U.S. should exploit its own nuclear advantage and compel the Soviets to concede to its demands.4

The most significant strategic change in the Joint Chiefs' proposal involved America's allies. Allied solidarity in pressing Western demands was indispensible. U.S. policy, they wrote, would be far more effective if the West stood together and confronted Moscow and Peking "with unmistakable evidence of an unyielding determination to halt further Communist expansion" and a credible declaration that any further aggression would be met by decisive counteraction. However, if Western Europe refused to join in this stand, the JCS majority recommended that the U.S. be prepared to proceed alone, if necessary using nuclear
weapons in limited conflicts—as Dulles had suggested it was in his April 1954 address to the North Atlantic Council but as Eisenhower implied that it was not in the early June debate on Indochina. As the Joint Chiefs saw it, excessive deference to allied opinion implied in NSC 162/2, and disastrously evidenced in Indochina and at the Berlin and Geneva conferences, had crippled proper implementation of Eisenhower's strategic vision and contributed to the growth of the Communist menace. That serious error had to be excised from U.S. policy.5

Revealingly, the Joint Chiefs' frank critique of Eisenhower's conduct of the cold war and the beginning of a rigorous review of the New Look coincided with the President's rejection of a test moratorium, the campaign to nuclearize NATO's strategy and forces, and the decision to elevate the ICBM program to highest priority within the Air Force. These choices seemed to reaffirm the tenets of "massive retaliation" and Eisenhower's commitment to nuclear superiority. Yet the review of NSC 162/2 soon uncovered deep disaffection and uncertainty with this path. The NSC Planning Board's draft of a new set of guidelines (NSC 5422) for the implementation of NSC 162/2 put the question bluntly. Should the U.S. depend on the use of nuclear weapons even in general war in an era of nuclear parity?
The NSC itself debated this question during its June 24, 1954 meeting. The interesting thing about that debate was that both sides—those who were inclined to short-term confidence in U.S. nuclear superiority and those who opposed the Joint Chiefs' proposed plan of confrontation—proceeded from an exaggerated perception of Soviet nuclear capabilities. Moreover, both sides now accepted the case General Ridgway and Admiral Carney had presented eight months before—that Soviet nuclear parity would dilute the deterrent value of America's nuclear arsenal against limited aggression and enhance Washington's aversion to risking U.S.-Soviet conflict. The Army and State Department concluded from this view that the U.S. should enlarge its conventional military capabilities, be prepared to fight a general war without strategic use of nuclear weapons, and explore arms negotiations with the Soviets—in other words, a position almost identical to that espoused by the critics of Dulles's January 12th "massive retaliation" declaration.

When he learned about that fundamental shift of opinion, Eisenhower was dumbfounded by such readiness to undo basic nuclear strategy. More than a year earlier, he reminded the NSC on June 24, the administration had decided that the U.S. could neither plan for nor maintain the forces to fight all possible types of wars. Should it now
reverse this position, the administration would sacrifice its objective of a sound U.S. economy and cast the nation on the road to becoming a "garrison state."9

Sensing the drift of the discussion, Robert Cutler sought to return the debate to the problem of Soviet capabilities. The dilemma at hand, he remarked, was "atomic plenty" and the state of "mutual deterrence" it would create. The President reacted sharply to Cutler's statement, labelling the idea of mutual deterrence "completely erroneous." The more nuclear weapons each side possessed, he believed, the more anxious they would be to use them. For example, U.S. nuclear superiority would not cause the Russians to abstain from use of their own nuclear weapons in a general war.10

Eisenhower was visibly displeased by his advisors' confusion and readiness to disassemble his strategic vision. Of course, he too had briefly flirted with a renunciation of the New Look--during the debates over a moratorium on nuclear testing and over whether and how the U.S. would respond to Communist Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia. These episodes demonstrated that his attitude toward nuclear weapons was evolving. He had exhibited the most disappointment when he vetoed the moratorium idea and the most reluctance to plan for unilateral nuclear retaliation against China. The repeated assaults on his
national security policy, aggravated now by the new estimates of Soviet nuclear power, had made a deep impression on his thinking about nuclear policy in war and peace. On the one hand, he therefore agreed with the view expressed at the NSC meeting on June 24, 1954, that the dramatic change in Soviet nuclear capabilities required an American adjustment. On the other hand, he refused to allow the extremes of either side of the strategy debate to derail his basic national security objectives—deterrence, fiscal balance, and collective security based on Atlantic solidarity. Therefore, Eisenhower issued a challenge to both sides in the debate. If it was true that America's nuclear advantage was declining and that further Communist expansion was unacceptable, he asked seriously, "should the United States now get ready to fight the Soviet Union?"

This final, apocalyptic question was an example of a tactic the President not infrequently employed to make his hawkish advisers confront the ultimate implications of their counsel. He left the National Security Council to ponder this conundrum while the various departments, agencies and the NSC Planning Board reconsidered NSC 5422.

Completed and approved on August 7, NSC 5422/2 appeared to reaffirm most fundamental aspects of the New Look. Equally important, with General Ridgway dissenting, it seemed to incorporate at least the spirit of the Joint Chiefs'
emboldened tactical recommendations, symbolized by a greater willingness to combat the Communist threat unilaterally if necessary. Even more tellingly, 5422/2 wholeheartedly accepted the new estimates of Soviet nuclear capabilities and confirmed the thesis of American vulnerability. But if the U.S. was vulnerable, was the New Look still viable? 5422/2 was intended solely as an interim guide to basic national security policy implementation. By mid-October 1954, the process of revision would start all over again, as if the battles of June, July and August had never occurred.

***

It was the growing fear of vulnerability--brought to life in a striking new series of intelligence reports on Soviet strength--that stimulated the continued reassessment of the administration's national security strategy. The most influential of these reports were produced by the Air Force Directorate of Intelligence and the Sprague Committee of the NSC Planning Board. Significant by themselves, the May 1, 1954 and July 1, 1954 estimates from these bodies nonetheless took on an increased importance in light of BRAVO's frightening revelations. Moreover, they built upon a foundation of fears laid earlier in 1954 by the von Neumann Committee and the RAND Corporation (see above).

The von Neumann report, dated February 10, 1954,
recall, had warned that the U.S. already trailed the Soviet Union in ballistic missile development. The RAND study reached an even more startling conclusion. While the threat of an operational Russian ICBM was several years in the future, RAND analyst Albert Wohlstetter argued that the Strategic Air Command's bomber fleet was in immediate danger of destruction. Wohlstetter founded this conclusion on his investigation of SAC's overseas staging bases. During the early 1950s, because SAC's fleet was composed mostly of aircraft that did not have true intercontinental range—the B-29, B-50, and B-47—SAC's plan for striking the Communist bloc relied upon missions flown by bombers stationed at forward bases around the Eurasian perimeter and by bombers which had to be flown from bases in the U.S. and staged (refueled) through these forward bases. In the event of war, SAC believed it could execute this plan in about three days. Wohlstetter contended that this strategy exposed SAC's aircraft to a preventive Soviet atomic blitz.

Wohlstetter's work was notable for its reliance on the Pearl Harbor analogy, inspired by his wife's work on the Japanese surprise attack. Originally completed for RAND and published in declassified form in 1962, Roberta Wohlstetter's groundbreaking *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* examined the reasons for America's failure to
prepare for surprise attack.18 Projecting the scenario onto the mid-1950s, Albert Wohlstetter portrayed the Russians in the role of the Japanese, SAC's bombers as the Pacific fleet, and SAC's bases as Pearl Harbor. In summary, he believed that SAC's planners had erroneously based their war plan on the World War II experience of a U.S. bomber fleet largely secure from enemy attack. But all of SAC's bases in 1953-54 were within reach of the Soviet Long Range Air Force, Wohlstetter argued. This fact took on enormous significance when it was considered that U.S. policy confined SAC to a retaliatory role. If Moscow decided on war, he therefore concluded, its most promising plan of action—which he calculated the Air Force had mistakenly discounted—would be to launch a surprise atomic assault on the American air bases. For those bases on the Soviet periphery, the Russians could, with only some 120 atomic bombs, obliterate 75 to 85 percent of SAC's strike force, a success reminiscent of the Japanese decimation of the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. Indeed, Wohlstetter found U.S. staging strategy and bases to be so exposed that they invited surprise attack. By the end of his study, he was convinced he had proved "that the most powerful force in the history of the world was really quite vulnerable, and at the outset of a war would be lying there in pieces."19
Wohlstetter and his associates at RAND first presented their findings to the SAC brass at Offutt Air Force base in March 1953. During the next year, he was called upon to present the briefing over ninety times. Though some of his recommendations for base hardening and bomber dispersal were readily adopted by the Air Force, by the spring of 1954, when his study was completed, it was already out of date. On several critical points Wohlstetter's analysis had been badly misguided from the beginning. For example, he had exaggerated Soviet capabilities and made unreasoned assumptions of Soviet intentions. Equally significant, General Curtis E. LeMay, head of SAC, had made major advances in reducing vulnerability through aerial refueling, intelligence of Soviet activities, and plans--unknown to RAND--for preemptive of any Soviet air attack.

Despite this, Air Force intelligence estimate AIE-1/54, dated May 1, 1954, resonated with Wohlstetter's concerns about U.S. vulnerability. The Russians, the Air Force analysts claimed, possessed the nuclear arms and delivery systems to saturate and penetrate U.S. air defenses in sufficient numbers to "inflict grave damage" on the continental U.S., including substantial neutralization of SAC's retaliatory capability. Such action could force the U.S. "to cease organized resistance, at least temporarily." At the moment, existing U.S. military capabilities
and the ever-present uncertainties of war injected enough risk to cause the Soviets presently not to chance such an attack. Still, the Air Force presumed the worst of Moscow's intentions: if the USSR achieved what its leaders believed was a "clear strategic advantage," they would be tempted to launch a nuclear attack "to eliminate the U.S."

The future envisioned by the Air Force appeared bleak. Soviet progress in development of nuclear weapons had been "spectacular," AIE-1/54 declared. During the remainder of the 1950s, the Soviet Union could be expected to duplicate that success in the "design and operation of delivery vehicles," giving it a nuclear capability "wholly adequate [as a] counter-threat" to America's nuclear arsenal. If this capability included intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)--and AIE-1/54 predicted the Soviets could be mass-producing such missiles by 1960, with as many as 2,500 by 1965--Moscow "might consider an attack upon the United States as being assured of success."23

Worried by reports such as AIE-1/54 and the frightening implications of the CASTLE test series (see above), Eisenhower in May asked consultant Robert C. Sprague to oversee the NSC Planning Board's review of U.S. continental defense programs. Sprague, a New England industrialist educated at the U.S. Naval Academy and MIT, had first become involved in the continental defense issue immediate-
ly after the Soviets' August 1953 nuclear test, when the Senate Armed Services Committee appointed him to head its study of U.S. air defense.

Initially presented to the National Security Council on July 1, 1954, the Sprague-Planning Board conclusions were alarming. In the five months since the administration's continental defense program (NSC 5408, February 17, 1954) had been formally approved, Sprague reported, "the threat to our national survival in the event of a Soviet surprise attack" had increased "enormously." During this period, three critical dangers had been revealed. First, the CASTLE series of thermonuclear tests demonstrated that the Soviets could soon have a large, deliverable stockpile of multimegaton weapons. Second, BRAVO also revealed the "devastating hazard" of the radioactive fallout that these weapons produced. Finally, the Soviets had begun producing a new jet-bomber (designated Type 39 in U.S. estimates, later known as the Badger) that threatened to make U.S. air defenses obsolete. To lessen vulnerability, Sprague urged accelerated construction of almost every aspect of the U.S. continental defense system. That his recommendations would cost billions of dollars and shatter Eisenhower's economic objectives did not concern Sprague. Cost was irrelevant when the alternative was possible national destruction by nuclear surprise attack. The ghosts of
NSC-68, the Lincoln Summer Study, and the Oppenheimer and Edwards committees (see Chapters I, II), haunted the Eisenhower White House once more.

Did the Sprague report and other estimates of nuclear parity and American vulnerability support or undercut the Joint Chiefs' recent call for aggressive measures against the Soviet Union? On the one hand, the grim forecast of present and future Soviet nuclear capabilities implied caution. Risking nuclear exchange with a well-armed nuclear adversary bordered on the irrational. Better to concentrate on deterring a possible Soviet attack by improving U.S. ability to fend one off. On the other hand, the views of Sprague and the Air Force confirmed the Joint Chiefs' judgment that time was not on the side of West. Under those circumstances, it was preferable to seek to force concessions from the Communists while the U.S. still enjoyed nuclear superiority and at least moderate solidarity with its major allies, than to await nuclear parity (if not inferiority), allied defection to neutralism, and increased Communist activism.

Beginning with his initial presentation to the National Security Council on July 1, 1954, the Joint Chiefs fought Sprague's proposals for spending more on continental defense. As in the past, the services turned against exaggerations of Soviet capabilities when those exaggera-
tions threatened diversion of Pentagon appropriations to defensive from offensive systems. The same day that Sprague presented a critical assessment of the Pentagon's response to his July recommendations, the Joint Chiefs advised the National Security Council, "The non-Communist world, if it [took] positive and timely dynamic countermeasures," already possessed the means to meet and reduce the growing Communist military threat without sacrificing its values or vital interests. Should Moscow or Peking react to these countermeasures by initiating a war, the West would triumph "beyond any reasonable doubt." But failure immediately to counter the prospective Communist danger could only lead to the isolation and further endangerment of the U.S., perhaps to the point where Washington would be faced with the choice of accommodating Soviet conquest or fighting the USSR from a position of weakness.

The Pentagon's case against Sprague received strong support from three evaluations of Soviet nuclear capabilities completed in September, November and December 1954. The first was the work of the CIA. As the latter saw it, not until 1957 would the Soviet Union be in position to launch a significant attack without the U.S. receiving at least several hours of warning. Whether or not the Soviets chose to initiate war by a full-scale land, air and naval
offensive, an all-out air-atomic blitz, or an invasion of Western Europe with forces already stationed in Eastern Europe, their intentions would probably be exposed by a period of "heightened political tension" and certainly by days or weeks of preparatory military movements. As for fears of a surprise Soviet nuclear attack, the CIA concluded, "If the USSR chose to undertake a maximum-scale air attack on the U.S. . . . we believe the indicators would probably assume a meaningful pattern in time for intelligence to give warning 15-30 days prior to attack."29

Though the CIA chose not to spell out the implications of its detailed report, those implications were obvious. For the Soviet Union, surprise and therefore neutralization of America's retaliatory capability was impossible. Initiation of war would mean national suicide.

The second evaluation of Soviet nuclear attack capability came from the special Net Capabilities Evaluation Subcommittee (NCES) of the NSC. Created by Eisenhower in June 1954 on the recommendation of the Bull continental defense committee the preceding year (see Chapter II), the NCES was primarily a military-CIA team of war-gamers organized to issue regular assessments of the net capabilities of the Soviet Union for nuclear attack on the continental U.S.30 The "net" designation meant the NCES was supposed to consider Soviet abilities in light of U.S. defenses and
retaliatory power. On several occasions Eisenhower had vigorously complained that he was tired of being inundated with estimates that touted Soviet power yet all but ignored America's military strengths and how they might offset Soviet capabilities and influence Soviet intentions.31 Part of the NCES's mission was to avoid that error.

Presented to the National Security Council on November 4, 1954, the "Net Estimate" corroborated the earlier findings of the CIA. In the words of a chief contributor to the document, Ray Cline, the Net Estimate concluded that "it [would be] a pretty desperate move for the USSR to attack us with their substantially inferior long-range air force. . . ." The Russians had no hope of achieving surprise. They were "neither ready nor able to resort to direct military action" against the U.S.32

Sprague sought to invalidate the credibility of the Net Estimate. During his appearance before the NSC on November 24, 1954, Sprague argued that the Net Estimate's relatively comforting predictions derived from its authors' exaggerated projections of the state of American and Canadian defenses in 1957. For instance, he claimed that the Net Estimate overstated the ability of U.S. radar systems and fighter-interceptor aircraft to cope with the Soviets' new Type-39 bomber. Although Sprague had no way of knowing the precise capabilities of the Type-39, he assumed
they would be at least comparable to those of American B-47s. For its next exercise, Sprague therefore recommended that the NCES substantially alter its profile of Soviet capabilities to include an all-jet bomber force exclusively armed with multi-megaton weapons and launched from "advanced Arctic bases." 33

The Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), in the third evaluation of Soviet attack capabilities that autumn, offered a definitive refutation of Sprague and the most effective rebuttal of the vulnerability hypothesis to appear during the Eisenhower's first term. 34 ONI based its estimate not on what the Soviets could achieve theoretically but on what they were actually doing. Dated December 10, 1954, the ONI report concluded, "the Soviets do not now have aircraft in operational units which have the necessary range to attack the U.S. . . . except on one-way suicide missions." While admitting that "the Soviets appear further along in their atomic energy program than we had previously estimated," Navy intelligence also pointed out that "we have no evidence that they have developed a workable [nuclear] bomb or have ever dropped a weapon from the air." Moreover, "we have no intelligence that the Russians have developed or used inflight refueling; we have no intelligence that they are developing their forward base areas for long-range combat operations." 35
ONI disputed the widely accepted fact of Soviet nuclear parity in the near future and directly challenged Robert Sprague's respect for the Soviets' new prototype jet bombers. The Type 39 medium bomber, ONI argued, was even less of an intercontinental threat than the obsolete Tu-4. Due to its inferior range and the Soviet Union's lack of forward air bases to handle jet operations, "As re-equipment with Type 39 jet medium bombers progresses, Soviet capabilities for attacking the U.S. will further deteriorate," ONI said. Deployment of the Type 37 heavy jet bomber would create other difficulties: "problems of inflight refueling, base development and the logistics support of forward areas will be compounded with the development of jet heavy bombers."36

In a thinly veiled indictment of the Air Force and Sprague's studies, ONI stated, "available intelligence has been stretched to the limit--or even beyond--in developing the current estimated Soviet air capabilities." Available intelligence on Soviet air and nuclear forces had been misshaped "by a series of assumptions and possibilities to develop an extreme picture of capabilities." The assumption of "maximum theoretical capabilities predicated on 'ifs'" in turn resulted in "facile generalizations" of intentions and "probable courses of action." Indeed, Naval intelligence charged that the Air Force largely ignored
Soviet intentions and other indications which argued strongly against a present or future capacity and desire of the Soviet Union to execute a surprise nuclear war against the West.37 ONI clearly believed, but did not say, that Sprague and the Air Force had deliberately exaggerated Soviet capabilities. And indeed, a year before, Air Force intelligence had emphasized the limitations of Soviet bomber operations for much the same reasons that ONI now did.38

The Navy did not dismiss the Soviet danger and acknowledged that the "destructive power of nuclear weapons makes it worth going to extreme measures to deliver them." In the event of general war, the Soviets could probably deliver some nuclear weapons on American targets. But a careful examination of available intelligence, present Soviet capabilities, and other relevant factors, indicated that Soviet air-atomic capacity was at best "marginal" and that the Soviets were focusing their military efforts on "defense of their homeland and in tactical support" of European theater operations.39

In an era of intense Service rivalry for funds, roles and missions, when the Navy was feeling the squeeze of the New Look and the Air Force's growing institutional power, the hostile tone of the Office of Naval Intelligence's report was not unusual. Conflicting service assessments of
the Communist threat and how to meet it appeared throughout and long after the Eisenhower presidency. Still, the Navy report was special, both in terms of its timing and contents. Though completed late in the administration's review of NSC 162/2 and NSC 5422, an early version had been presented to Sprague before he issued his series of alarming recommendations on U.S. continental defenses. It is difficult to say whether Sprague simply ignored the Navy's findings, whether Admiral Carney presented them to the Joints Chiefs, and whether Radford passed on the ONI report to the President. And even though the Joint Chiefs' proposal for active reduction of Communist power was predicated on Soviet achievement of nuclear parity, ONI's portrait of a "marginal" Soviet nuclear capacity indicated that the Joint Chiefs' activist strategy would be far less dangerous than its opponents claimed.

Most significant of all, ONI demonstrated methods of intelligence analysis and estimation which had, until the second half of 1954, informed Eisenhower's reasoned assessment of the Soviet threat—including his refusal to become preoccupied with enemy capabilities, his consideration of the probable rather than all possible courses of enemy action, and his judgment of available evidence rather than presumptions of evidence based on worst-case scenarios and mirror-imaging. Combined with the Net Capabilities Evalua-
tion Subcommittee's recent measurement of Soviet attack capacity in light of American capabilities, these methods of analysis pointed, if not to a moderation of the increasingly ominous arms race, at least to the correctness of asymmetrical containment. Nevertheless, toward the end of 1954, accumulating exaggerations of Soviet nuclear capabilities fed an increasingly influential vulnerability hypothesis which, in turn, decisively shaped the administration's review of the New Look.

***

Curiously, and still unexplained, the penetrating questions raised by the Net Capabilities Evaluation Subcommittee and Naval intelligence concerning the barrage of bleak estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions were conspicuously absent from the November and December 1954 NSC deliberations concerning revision of New Look strategy. Indeed, the administration apparently accepted imminent, if not effective, Soviet nuclear equality with the U.S. as fact. The debate therefore settled down to how the U.S. should prosecute the cold war given this fact. With the President's sympathy, Secretary of State Dulles headed those advisers who felt nuclear balance demanded that the administration's primary objective must be to deter the "incalculable disaster" of total war. Dulles tried to sidestep the issue of mutual deterrence, asserting
that the U.S. must remain willing to respond decisively to Communist aggression to make deterrence work. Yet he also cautioned that the U.S. should respond only "where feasible" and in ways that would not risk nuclear war. He worried that a strategy which relied on nuclear weapons for NATO's defense would frighten and alienate the allies. But he also called for a NATO strategy based on nuclear weapons, and he lobbied his fellow foreign ministers and the North Atlantic Council to win their approval of MC-48.\(^{40}\)

The JCS majority, on the other hand, still argued that the approach of nuclear parity mandated that the West act to reduce the Communist threat while it enjoyed a position of military and political strength. Dulles's position, the Chiefs thought, represented the deference "to the counsel of the most cautious among our allies" that had obstructed proper implementation of the President's strategy throughout 1954.\(^ {41}\)

The two visions of an adjusted New Look clashed head on during the NSC meeting on November 24, 1954--the same meeting in which Robert Sprague impugned the credibility of the Net Estimate and urged acceleration of every major U.S. continental defense program.\(^ {42}\) The two principal debaters--Secretary Dulles and Admiral Radford--criticized each other's position with rare intensity. Dulles led off
by asserting that the administration's cold war policy had been essentially successful, "even if . . . it hasn't got us into war," he said in an obvious swipe at the JCS majority's recommendations. Directly contradicting his own November 15 position paper—not to mention the assertions he made to Western European leaders when pitching nuclearization—Dulles then argued that the Joint Chiefs had exaggerated the alleged deterioration of the world balance of power. With the recent signing of the SEATO treaty and the Paris accords on West German rearmament, the U.S. had attained new heights of respect in the world and in its relations with its allies. The idea of decline, he contended, applied only in terms of relative nuclear capabilities, and the U.S. was powerless to prevent such change.

JCS Chairman Arthur Radford replied to Dulles's indictment first by refuting the CIA and State Department's interpretation of Soviet intentions. Soviet achievement of nuclear parity, Radford cautioned, would not lessen the risk of general war. Rather, it would increase it by diminishing Moscow's aversion to initiating war. Shockingly, Radford warned the NSC that, once the Soviets had achieved effective parity, the Joint Chiefs "could no longer guarantee a successful outcome for the U.S." in a general war. As he had done many times over the previous
five months, Radford argued that time was running out on the West. As Soviet strategic forces grew stronger, the Kremlin would sooner or later--certainly by 1959 or 1960--"elect to force the issue." The U.S. should preempt this eventuality by exploiting its present nuclear advantage to reduce the Communist threat. Asked for specific alternatives, Radford responded that the Joint Chiefs declined to make political or diplomatic recommendations. They would, however, promise that, should the activism they advised lead to war, either limited or total, the U.S. would emerge victorious.43

Eisenhower was clearly dissatisfied with what he heard from his two most valued national security advisers. Dulles's approach offered only negatives--avoid provocative acts, limit any wars in which the U.S. was involved, do not upset America's allies. The best the secretary of state would venture was that the administration should present a "more aggressive tone" in its cold war posture. Radford, on the other hand, seemed to advocate action that only stopped short of provoking total war. Was this really be the best that the President's ablest and most experienced advisers had to offer more than five months after the review of NSC 162/2 had begun? The NSC was designed to forge operational options, the President said. Give me some specifics!44
Though Eisenhower did not get the answers he sought at the meeting on November 24, 1954, a week later Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway presented him with a simple and precise alternative: abandon the New Look. In a special appearance before the NSC, Ridgway advised the President to do away with the nation's reliance on nuclear weapons and asymmetrical retaliation, replacing them with a structure of balanced forces capable of flexible, non-nuclear response at all levels of conflict. The Army Chief of Staff also advocated abolition of the President's fiscal priorities.45 Eisenhower was not impressed. He considered Ridgway's contention that U.S. nuclear restraint in war would produce Soviet restraint to be naive. More important, the President firmly believed that the economic costs and strategic implications of Ridgway's plan for balanced forces--meaning major increases in conventional forces--would undermine American society. Concluding the meeting, Eisenhower displayed his continued preference for the nuclear-based defense he judged to be a military, economic, political, and strategic imperative.

Our only chance of victory in a third world war [the President said] . . . . would be to paralyze the enemy at the outset. Since we cannot keep the United States an armed camp or a garrison state, we must make plans to use the atom bomb if we become involved in a war. We are not going to provoke the war, and that is why we have got to be patient. If war comes, the other fellow must have started it. Otherwise, we would not
be in a position to use the nuclear weapon, and we have got to be in a position to use that weapon if we are to preserve our institutions in peace and win the victory in war.46

Eisenhower repeated these sentiments to congressional leaders in the Oval Office at meetings on December 13 and 14, 1954.(47) Laying the groundwork for the expected Capitol Hill battle over his austere fiscal year 1956 defense budget, the President told the legislators, "The evidence today all points to the fact that Russia is less likely to attack us than at any time within recent years." Apparently discounting (or possibly ignorant of) the recent CIA and ONI studies, he added that the U.S. was now vulnerable to nuclear attack, but his answer to this purported vulnerability remained unchanged: "(1) massive retaliation, which simply means the ability to blow [the] hell out of [the Soviets] in a hurry if they start anything and (2) a system of advance warnings . . . to minimize" the danger of a Soviet attack. Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn questioned the President's plan to concentrate on air power and make further cuts in the Army. But Eisenhower was no more patient with the respected Texan than he had been with Ridgway: "You could," he admonished the Speaker, "take all the gold in Fort Knox and pour it into the ground forces and get nowhere."48

***
The year-long succession of challenges to the New Look had not undermined the President's faith in the tenets of his strategic vision. Nuclear deterrence and budgetary austerity by way of increased dependence on air power, nuclear weapons, and reductions in conventional forces continued to dominate his national security philosophy. Eisenhower's proposed fiscal year 1956 defense budget was sufficient proof of that. Requested Pentagon appropriations totaled only $34.36 billion—9.7 percent of GNP, down from 10.5 percent the year before. Despite Ridgway's protests, Army manpower was scheduled to shrink to 1.027 million men by mid-1956, a cut of one-third from its strength at the end of the Korean War. The Air Force, conversely, was scheduled to expand from 119 to 130 wings by mid-1956. By the beginning of 1955, moreover, SAC's bomber fleet had grown to almost 1,100 nuclear-capable aircraft (up from 762 at the end of 1953), and the nation's nuclear stockpile included between 2,250 and 3,000 warheads.49

Despite these indicators of determined progress toward the New Look's mid-1957 force structure goals, the results of the administration's half-year long review of NSC 162/2 betrayed the divisions over basic national security policy the controversies and debates of 1954 had evoked. On December 17, the JCS majority made a final plea:
Our national strategy should recognize that, until the Communist Regimes are convinced that their aggressive and expansionist policies will be met by counter-measures which inherently will threaten the continued existence of their regimes, it will not be feasible to induce a change in their basic attitude" or their objectives.50

Deterrence, in other words, was not enough, nor was preparation to fight and win a general war. Indochina and Geneva—and now Communist China's air and artillery attacks on the Chinese Nationalist-held offshore islands in the Taiwan Straits—were ample proof this. The U.S. had neither established its ability to deter limited Communist aggression nor fulfilled NSC 162/2's demand for creating positions of strength from which to reduce the Soviet danger before Moscow attained nuclear parity.

During the NSC meeting on December 21, 1954, Eisenhower and Dulles finally rejected the Joint Chiefs' appeal. Dulles remarked that he had "some sympathy" for the Chiefs' call for a more dynamic security policy, recalling his own statements during the 1952 campaign. The events of the past two years, however, demonstrated this was impossible. The kind of activism and brinkmanship the Chief's proposed would, at best, shatter the free world alliance and still leave untouched the Soviet nuclear arsenal. At worst, it would result in total war.

Eisenhower agreed with Dulles. Ignoring the practical effect of NATO, SEATO, the Pacific island defense peri-
meter, and his own policy of asymmetrical containment, the
President declared, "if and when you should decide on a
policy of drawing a defensive line beyond which you tell
the enemy he cannot step without risking a clash, you
automatically give the initiative to the enemy. . . ."
Even Treasury Secretary Humphrey joined the assault on the
Joint Chiefs. Any roll-back of Communism, he concluded,
was impossible. Eisenhower refused to go so far as
Humphrey, repeating the bold statement he had made during
the Indochina crisis. The U.S. could not stand idly by
while the Communists absorbed more and more of the free
world.51 But, in the end, the presidential stance was not
incorporated into policy. Eisenhower had rejected the
Joint Chiefs' plan to stop continued Communist expansion-
ism. He had, in short, decided to wage the cold war
defensively.

Though NSC 162/2 had never been intended to guide
U.S. policy toward conflict--deterrence remained the Presi-
dent's preferred objective--it had accurately embodied
Eisenhower's concept of nuclear weapons as employable tools
for both limited and general war, and clearly envisioned
active responses to Communist aggression. This concept had
shifted slightly during 1954. Eisenhower still viewed
nuclear weapons as theater, not just strategic, weapons.
For instance, he told his Cabinet in mid-December 1954,
"we must be prepared to use atomic weapons in all forms.'" Had he truly believed otherwise, he would never have staked both American and European defenses on them.52 Nonetheless, Eisenhower's willingness to employ nuclear weapons, especially his sense of the implications of their use, had changed. The vulnerability hypothesis and its exaggeration of Soviet capabilities had begun to penetrate the President's long-held skepticism of Soviet capabilities and the probability of a Soviet surprise attack.

Approved on January 7, 1955 as the Basic National Security Policy replacing NSC 162/2 and NSC 5422/2, NSC 5501 reflected this shift in the President's outlook.53 To begin with, all of its provisions proceeded from the presumed approach of Soviet "nuclear plenty," mutual deterrence and the enhanced likelihood of limited war. It accepted that the Soviet Union could inflict "serious damage" on the U.S. by nuclear attack, and would soon "develop the net capability to strike a crippling blow at the United States." Attainment of such capacity would probably not lead Soviet leaders to initiate general war with the West, unless "they believed that they could neutralize, or by initial surprise could destroy, U.S. retaliatory power before it could be used."

According to NSC 5501, however, this capacity would encourage Moscow and Peking to "increase the pace" of their
expansionism. That situation required that the U.S. reject provocative tactics and concentrate on deterrence and an active cold war strategy designed to discourage Communist adventure. This new cold war campaign would stress the "other means" of the President's strategic vision: coordinated diplomatic, economic, propaganda and covert actions, aimed at "bringing about at least a prolonged period of armed truce, and ultimately a peaceful resolution of the Soviet bloc-free world conflict . . . ."54

"Effective nuclear-air retaliatory power" remained the critical military element of U.S. deterrent strategy; but it was no longer considered a sufficient deterrent by itself to all levels of overt Communist aggression as in NSC 162/2. Instead--and this was a direct reflection of recent events in Indochina, General Ridgway's persistent lobbying, and especially of the perceived onset of mutual deterrence--the U.S. would now maintain limited war forces, over and above those of the allies, to deter and fight local conflicts "in a manner and on a scale best calculated to avoid the hostilities broadening into total nuclear war."55 Significantly, NSC 5501 further specified that these forces would be equipped with atomic weapons to enable them "to deter any [Communist] resort to local aggression" and "to punish swiftly and severely any such local aggression." But they were also intended to allow
the U.S. "to apply force selectively and flexibly" so as not to arouse allied fears of inevitable escalation. With this and the following provision, the administration seemed to respond, at least in part, to the Joint Chiefs' concerns, demonstrating that it had learned from the experience of Korea and Indochina. "The United States and its allies," the new policy statement continued,

must never allow themselves to get into the position where they must choose between (a) not responding to local aggression and (b) applying force in a way which our own people or our allies would consider entails undue risk of nuclear devastation. However, the United States cannot afford to preclude itself from using nuclear weapons even in a local situation. . . . In the last analysis, if confronted by the choice of (a) acquiescing in Communist aggression or (b) taking measures risking general war or loss of allied support, the United States must be prepared to take these risks if necessary for its security.56

However, like the practice of Eisenhower's crisis management until Suez, the succeeding paragraph of the new statement of policy made it quite clear that preventing the loss of allied support" was more critical to his cold war strategy than this proclaimed determination to protect the national security by nuclear responses to limited Communist aggression. Indeed, rather than demonstrating that the NSC had absorbed the lessons of the past two years, the new provisions betrayed an administration still wrestling with the increasingly complex dilemmas of the thermonuclear age.57
Colored by the perception of a rapidly expanding Soviet nuclear danger, the controversies and crises of 1954 nudged Eisenhower towards a position almost the reverse of the nuclear weapons policy set out in 5501. Far from becoming more appreciative of a need to be ready to use nuclear force with or without allied support, the President appeared increasingly to be flirting with an idea that he often voiced for dramatic effect in public: "There is just no alternative to peace. . . . The results of any war, as I see it," he said on October 27, 1954, "would be only the choice between destruction and defeat and the averting of complete defeat."58
VI.

"Never Let the Enemy Know What You Will Not Do."
The Quemoy-Matsu Crisis

In 1955 yet another major international crisis forced the Eisenhower administration to confront anew the complex dilemmas of the thermonuclear age. During the prolonged debate on NSC 5501, the U.S. increasingly faced a war-threatening situation in the Straits of Formosa. It was precisely this coincidence, however, that made NSC 5501 such an important measure of Eisenhower's view of nuclear weapons. For in that document the President had supposedly spelled out the policies which would guide any decision to use nuclear weapons, and he had done this, moreover, at a time when such a decision appeared imminent.

The crisis in the Straits had erupted on September 3, 1954, when the Chinese Communists (ChiComs in the contemporary language of the White House) opened up heavy artillery attacks on the Chinese Nationalist-held island of Quemoy (Jinmen). Located less than five miles off the mainland coast at Amoy (Xiamen) harbor, the Quemoys were one of three groups of tiny islands near the mainland that the followers of Chiang Kai-shek had occupied as they fled from Communist forces in 1949. The other two groups were the Matsus (Mazus), which stood about ten miles across from the port of Foochow (Fuzhou), and the Tachens
(Dachens), 200 miles north of Formosa and, again, only a few miles off the China coast. Peking claimed that all of these offshore islands, including Formosa (Taiwan) and the Pescadores (Penghus), belonged to "China," and declared its intention to "liberate" them by force. Staging areas for Chiang's fantasized reconquest of mainland China, bases for U.S.-sponsored raids of Communist territory, and frontline fortresses against Chinese Communist invasion of Formosa and the Pescadores, Chiang had garrisoned the islands with some 60,000 regular troops, more than eighty percent of whom were on Quemoy.3

Even more than the crisis in Indochina, the Communist attacks on Quemoy, which initially killed two U.S. military advisers and soon spread to the Matsus and Tachens, loomed as an obvious test of Eisenhower's national security strategy and his willingness to use nuclear weapons.4 The U.S. had no formal treaty obligation to defend any Nationalist-held territory, but, since the outbreak of the Korean War, Washington had declared Formosa and the Pescadores vital to U.S. security interests as links in the Pacific island defense perimeter. The U.S. had, moreover, provided Chiang's regime with millions of dollars in military and economic aid and, for four and a half years (beginning June 27, 1950), the protection of the U.S. 7th Fleet for Formosa
and the Pescadores. General Douglas MacArthur once described Formosa as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" which could not be allowed to fall to the Communists. If it fell, the Chinese Communists could load it with hundreds of aircraft, threatening Japan, the Philippines and essential shipping lanes.5 Held by the Chinese Nationalists, however, Formosa could serve a similar function for the United States, providing a base from which the region could be protected. Chiang's large army, moreover, also functioned as an ever-present military threat to Red China's flank, a threat which Washington believed might cause Peking to think twice before embarking on military adventures elsewhere.

When the Communists began bombarding the offshore islands, the concern in Washington, therefore was not for the islands themselves but for Formosa and the long-term viability of the Nationalist regime, whose very existence symbolized America's commitment to the non-Communist nations of Asia and the Western Pacific. What effect would the loss of the offshore islands have on the defensibility of Formosa? On the morale of Chiang and his troops? On America's standing in Asia? Was the bombardment the precursor to an attempt to seize not only the offshores but also Formosa?

The seriousness of the crisis was intensified by its
timing. The September 3, 1954 attack on Quemoy started six weeks after the Geneva conference had revealed deep rifts between the U.S. and its principal allies concerning the need to stand up to Communist aggression in Asia and only three days prior to the opening of the Manila conference and negotiation of the SEATO treaty. Though the Nationalist islands were not formally included in SEATO's defense area, there could be little doubt that the Communist assault was a direct challenge to Eisenhower's Far Eastern policy and to the concept of collective security as a deterrent to Communist expansion in Asia and the Pacific.

Nor could there be any doubt that the Straits crisis challenged the New Look. Since the closing months of the Korean War, Eisenhower and Dulles had publicly and privately warned Peking of the "grave consequences" of renewed aggression in Asia—particularly in Korea, Indochina, or the Formosa area. The implication in these warnings had been unmistakable: overt aggression would produce U.S. atomic retaliation, probably against mainland targets. Peking had kept its intervention in Indochina limited and covert, and for the tangle of reasons described earlier (see Chapter IV), the President had decided not to reply militarily. But in the Straits, Communist China's aggression not only was overt; it was publicly proclaimed as the precursor to the invasion and conquest of the territory of
an ally of the U.S.6

How would Eisenhower respond to these challenges? On the surface, despite the extreme reluctance to retaliate against Communist China that he had exhibited during the NSC meeting on June 3, 1954, existing administration policy suggested a military response. According to the policy on Formosa (NSC 146/2, November 6, 1953), the U.S. would "take all necessary measures" to prevent Communist conquest of Formosa or the Pescadores, "even at grave risk of general war." As for the offshore islands, the U.S. would, "without committing U.S. forces, unless Formosa or the Pescadores are attacked, encourage and assist the Chinese Nationalist Government to defend the . . . offshore islands against Communist attack."7

As an interim position, only two weeks before the shelling of Quemoy began, the administration adopted an even tougher China policy in a paper that highlighted recent damage to American prestige in Asia and urged steps to repair it. To accomplish this objective, the new policy specified that the U.S. should be ready to "react with force, if necessary and advantageous, to expansion and subversion . . . supported and supplied by Communist China;" "react with immediate, positive armed force against any belligerent move by Communist China;" "create internal division in the Chinese Communist regime and impair Sino-
Soviet relations by all feasible overt and covert means;" and "reduce the power of Communist China in Asia even at the risk of, but without deliberately provoking, war."8

The language of the NSC policy guidelines made it clear that Communist aggression in the Formosa area might create a volatile situation. It was the U.S. military, however, who reminded the National Security Council that such aggression injected nuclear weapons into U.S. calculations. Within ten days of the opening Communist artillery barrage, both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the commanders-in-chief of the U.S. unified commands in the Far East and the Pacific advised the White House that defense of the offshore islands, Quemoy in particular, could not be undertaken successfully without use of atomic weapons against mainland targets. Because of the islands' proximity to Communist air bases, and because an unsuccessful intervention would deal a "catastrophic" blow to American prestige, General John E. Hull, U.S. Commander-in-Chief, Far East (CINCFE), warned that a U.S. effort to defend the islands 'must be done with whatever force is necessary to achieve success;' and that would require atomic weapons and 'going inland to some degree.'9 On September 11, 1954, the JCS majority agreed with Hull and further recommended that the U.S. commander on the scene be given the authority to strike any Chinese Communist air or ground concentration
which he felt threatened the islands, rather than waiting for the Communists to strike first.

Only Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway did not consider the islands worth defending. As he saw it, they were not important to the defense of Formosa and they could not be held without an infusion of U.S. ground troops. But even Ridgway believed that if the U.S. did undertake their defense, atomic weapons should be employed against the mainland. Clearly mindful of the lessons he had learned while commanding American forces against the Chinese Communists in Korea, Ridgway stated that defense "should be undertaken by U.S. forces adequate beyond any possibility of failure. If we go in," he cautioned, "we must go in to win." And that meant removal of all restrictions on air attacks on mainland military targets.10

While the nation's top military officers basically agreed on how to defend the offshore islands, the administration itself was divided on whether they should be defended at all. Predictably, the debate over this question mirrored the one then raging over the broader question of how the New Look should be implemented (see Chapters IV and V). The JCS majority, strongly supported by Harold Stassen, the usually more dovish director of the Foreign Operations Administration, favored an active implementation of the President's strategy—in this case, a refusal to
cede free world territory, that is, the offshore islands, to Communist aggression, and adherence to existing policies calling for steps to reduce the Communist threat in Asia. "We have got to show strength and determination," Stassen told the NSC on September 12. "If we show the Communists we are going to slap them down, we will be able to hold our position in the Far East." Continued acquiescence to Chinese Communist violence, on the other hand, as in the case of American inaction in Indochina, would certainly aggravate the 'whole cycle of deterioration in the world situation.'

Unlike Stassen, most civilian NSC officials favored a defensive approach in the Straits, eschewing all provocative measures and stressing negative objectives, such as not undermining Atlantic solidarity, not damaging Nationalist morale or American prestige, and not surrendering all of the offshores. President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles led those inclined to caution. According to Dulles, any American attempt to defend the offshore islands "would involve us in a war with Communist China." And "outside of [South Korean President] Rhee and Chiang, the rest of the world" and most of the American people would condemn such a war. "That ... was the kind of war you lose." The islands, moreover, were probably not even essential to Formosa's security. Given this, not to mention British
fear that atomic war with Peking (and perhaps Moscow as well) could result, an American pledge to defend the islands, Dulles warned, "would alienate world opinion and gravely strain our alliances." And with ratification of the European Defense Community and West Germany's rearmament and membership in NATO still hanging uneasily in the balance, the health of the alliances merited particular priority.14

The President shared his secretary of state's concern for allied and American public reaction to any U.S. action in the Straits. However, the crux of the issue, Eisenhower recognized, was that the offshore islands simply were not vital to U.S. security, either militarily or strategically. Let's face it, he admitted to the NSC on September 12, "Quemoy is not our ship," and it would be "a big job to explain to the American people the importance of these islands to U.S. security." Indeed, letters to me "constantly say what do we care what happens to those yellow people out there."15

Eisenhower's comments during the second week of the crisis suggested that the administration distance itself from the besieged Nationalist islands. But there was a catch: the islands were important psychologically. To surrender them to Peking might deal a crushing blow to Nationalist morale and have serious repercussions in
non-communist Asia and on American prestige. Yet from the start Eisenhower saw the danger in trying to prevent those consequences by an American promise to defend the islands. American promises to hold specific areas around the globe would play into Communist hands, giving Moscow and Peking the initiative, tying down precious U.S. forces, and involving U.S. prestige. As Eisenhower himself put it, once "we get our prestige involved anywhere then we can't get out."16

Another consideration was that American prestige was already well tied to the offshore islands. As Harold Stassen aptly noted early in the crisis, "the whole world knows that we have been on those islands" and used them for various military and political purposes for years. In Dulles's words, the Eisenhower administration obviously faced a "horrible dilemma."17 To renounce any intent to defend the islands would undoubtedly invite the Chinese Communists to seize them, and that could trigger not only the collapse of Chiang's regime but also a wave of accommodation in Asia. To promise to defend the islands, however, would alienate key allies, perhaps assure the early defeat of the European Defense Community, and place the decision for war in the unpredictable hands of Mao and Chiang. And should a Communist military challenge to such a promise arise, Eisenhower would be confronted with the
nuclear decision that he ultimately hoped to avoid.

Fortunately, Dulles had a less risky alternative in mind—the United Nations. More specifically, in mid-September 1954, Dulles proposed that the U.S. place the Quemoy-Matsu issue before the U.N. Security Council as a case of "incipient aggression." That is, Washington would ask for a cease-fire injunction to maintain the status quo in the Straits, on the contention that Peking's aggression was "not directed only against Quemoy but also against Formosa." Dulles's idea seemed to offer a no-lose outcome. If Moscow used its Security Council veto to kill an injunction—an injunction that Dulles thought a majority of the General Assembly would support—then Peking could pursue its campaign of conquest in the Straits only against the will of that majority. Under those conditions, the U.S. could secure the backing of the allies and the American people for a tougher stance in the region. On the other hand, Dulles ventured, if the Soviets cooperated in the Security Council, "this might be the beginning of a series of steps to stabilize the situation in the Far East." More significant, the U.S. would avoid the possibility of going to war alone, and the offshore islands would (at least for the time being) be held.18

While cautious, the secretary of state's plan was not without risks. As Vice President Nixon pointed out at the
NSC meeting on September 12, 1954, taking the issue to the U.N. meant that the U.S. would largely forfeit control over what happened next. There was no guarantee, moreover, that the Generalissimo would go along. Finally, U.S. domestic politics had to be considered. The 1954 mid-term elections were fast approaching, and the administration could not ignore that many Americans still believed that the "UN had kept our boys from doing what should have been done in Korea." While not saying so in specific language, Nixon implied that White House resort to the U.N. on the Straits would expose the President to charges of appeasement. Such a mild-mannered reaction to a clear case of Communist aggression was certain to aggravate conservatives in the President's own party, including Senate Majority Leader William Knowland (R-Cal.), sometimes referred to as the "Senator from Formosa."19

Although he exhibited flashes of belligerence during this September 12th NSC meeting (held in Denver where the President was vacationing), Eisenhower clearly favored Dulles's diplomatic proposal, and he ordered that it be studied and London's reaction to it be obtained. For the next six weeks, however, the President's public approach to the crisis followed one of his vice president's suggestions: "not to announce any decision, to keep the Communists guessing" as to U.S. intentions.20 Though not yet
evident at this point, Nixon, in fact, had spelled out what eventually became the guiding concept behind the administration's Formosa policy for the next seven months. The concept, actually, was one that Nixon later said he had learned from Eisenhower himself: "You should never let the enemy know what you will not do."21

By the end of September 1954, it was clear that the President had all but decided that the U.S. should not intervene to defend the offshore islands.22 But for reasons of domestic politics, American prestige, and Nationalist morale, Eisenhower had also decided that he could not allow the Nationalists to be forced from the islands, or for it to appear that the U.S. had either forced them from the islands and/or backed down before Chinese Communist coercion. Reading from page one of the New Look strategy guide, thus, the trick was to make Peking believe that any attack on the offshores would provoke U.S. military intervention, probably the "massive retaliation" so well publicized. The trick, in other words, was not to let Peking know what the U.S. in fact would not do: go to war to defend the islands.

In practice, pursuit of this negative objective translated into what Secretary Dulles would label "fuzzing up." Between the important NSC meeting on September 12, 1954, and the middle of October, "fuzzing up" meant two
things: buying time, with administration officials saying very little about U.S. policy while the State Department worked behind the scenes to orchestrate Dulles's U.N. initiative, codenamed ORACLE;[23] and sewing uncertainty, with Dulles in particular hinting that the U.S. might react militarily to defend the offshore islands. For example, on September 12th Dulles told reporters in Denver that the "defense of Quemoy is primarily related to the defense of Formosa." On September 15th, he pledged that the U.S. "stood ready 'at all times' to strike back at Communist aggression in Southeast Asia or the Pacific 'by means and at places' of its own choosing."24

As Nixon anticipated, however, ORACLE encountered problems—most seriously, Chiang's resistance. The American ambassador in Taipei, Karl Lott Rankin, also tried to warn Washington of this obstacle. Informed of plans to try out the U.N. idea on Chiang, Rankin wrote on October 5th that the Generalissimo would probably denounce such a compromise as "another Yalta."25 Eight days later, that is essentially what Chiang charged. To rescue the plan and secure Chiang's cooperation, Washington quickly offered to sweeten the deal by offering finally to sign the mutual defense treaty with Taipei that Chiang had sought for many months. But within this deal another compromise was hidden. In exchange for conclusion of the treaty before
ORACLE was tabled at the U.N., Chiang agreed to limit retaliatory operations against the mainland within bounds prescribed by Washington.26

A mutual defense treaty, of course, could serve purposes other than bringing Chiang into line. For example, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson advised Dulles that such an agreement, by making unmistakably clear a U.S. commitment to defend the Nationalist regime, would certainly contribute to the administration's chief objective in the Straits--to deter Peking from aggression.27

Superficially, Dulles shared Robertson's opinion of the deterrent effect of a mutual defense treaty with Formosa. He differed, however, on precisely how a treaty would achieve this effect--and therein lay one of the shaping factors of Eisenhower's slowly emerging Formosa policy. The key to a treaty's success, Dulles told the National Security Council on November 2nd, was not how clearly it spelled out America's intentions but how subtly, in the treaty's text, the U.S. was able "to 'fuzz up'. . .[its] reaction with regard to a Chinese Communist attack on Formosa as such an attack would affect the Nationalist-held offshore islands." As Dulles envisioned it, the "U.S. action specified in the treaty would not be specifically and explicitly limited to an attack on Formosa
and the Pescadores, but would leave open to U.S. determination whether or not to construe an attack on the offshore islands as an attack on Formosa itself. The advantage of this fuzzing up," Dulles argued, "would be to maintain doubt in the minds of the Communists as to how the U.S. would react to an attack on the offshore islands." 28

More significant than maintaining "doubt in the minds of the Communists," the "fuzzing up" was intended to protect both American prestige and the credibility of America's nuclear forces as a deterrent to and an option for limited wars. In other words, Dulles here proposed a scheme to sustain a facade of readiness to do precisely what the President had all but determined he was not ready to do: respond with atomic ("massive") force to a Communist invasion of the offshore islands. 29 Dulles's fuzz and bluff, as it were, contravened advice that the White House was receiving from numerous sources, all of which concurred with Assistant Secretary Robertson's call for unmistakable clarity. From Ambassador Charles Bohlen in Moscow, from the Joint Staff, from Harold Stassen, and from the intelligence community, the consensus was that the chance of escalation in the Straits would be high "as long as the Chinese Communists are uncertain as to U.S. intentions." By contrast, notifying Peking that an all-out attack on the islands would guarantee an American military response
offered the best way to deter such an attack.30

Despite that consensus, despite the Joint Chiefs' contention that the offshore islands should be included within the cover to be provided Formosa and the Pescadores by the projected mutual defense treaty, and despite growing pressure from conservatives at home for a tough stand, President Eisenhower decided to rely on ORACLE and the "fuzzed up" treaty. It was understood at the White House that this course, eventually, would probably require the Nationalists to withdraw from the islands, but as Eisenhower judged, this course offered the "least bad of bad choices." "By and large," he told the NSC on November 2nd, "it was better to accept some loss of face in the world than to go to general war in defense of these small islands."31

In reality, however, ORACLE and especially the mutual defense treaty were designed to save, not to admit a loss of, face. Quite calculatedly, the President refused to renounce any intent to defend the offshore islands. That was the very purpose of the fuzzing up—to keep Peking guessing whether or not the offshore islands were covered and to cool the crisis in the Straits, thereby allowing Chiang in his own time, not under the rain of Communist guns and bombs, to see the necessity of withdrawal, and without the administration having to risk a loss of
prestige by announcing a decision not to defend the islands.32 The President and his secretary of state followed this path, in part, on the basis of a flawed assumption. Hoping to deter Peking not only for the present but also in the future and throughout Asia by the threat of some unknown but probably severe retaliation, the strategy hinged on keeping the Communists in doubt as to how the U.S. would react to escalation in the region. The flaw was that Eisenhower and Dulles merely assumed that the Chinese Communists would not doubt if the U.S. would respond with force to escalation.

From November 23, 1954, the day that Dulles and Chinese Nationalist foreign minister George K.C. Yeh initiated the mutual defense treaty, until the temporary end of the crisis in late April 1955, Washington and Peking tested the validity of that assumption and, in the process, came dangerously close to testing Eisenhower's readiness to employ the nuclear arm of his New Look.

***

At first glance, Peking seemed hardly deterred by the mutual defense treaty between the U.S. and the Republic of China. On the contrary, the treaty appeared to provoke the Communists to greater violence. On November 23, 1954, Peking announced the conviction of thirteen American POWs, held by Communist China since the Korean War, as spies,
sentencing them to prison terms ranging from four years to life. On January 10, 1955, four days after the President submitted the treaty for Senate ratification, the Communists launched sizable air attacks against the Tachens. And on January 18th, they mounted their first amphibious operation against any of the offshore islands, successfully overrunning the garrison of 1,000 Nationalist soldiers and eight American advisers on the island of Ichiang (in the Tachens group).33

Despite that escalation and obvious testing of U.S. intentions, Eisenhower's reaction further highlighted his determination to avoid a military clash with China and the nuclear decision such a clash would raise. Washington directed Chiang's forces to confine their retaliation for the Tachens assaults to minor air raids on mainland coastal ports and shipping. And on January 15, 1955, the President formally approved a new NSC policy for Formosa (NSC 5503), replacing the belligerent provisions of NSC 146/2 with guidelines clearly more concerned with keeping Taipei from drawing the U.S. into war with Communist China than with reducing Peking's influence in Asia.34

It took Peking's brutally illegal treatment of the American POWs and its attacks on the Tachens to convince Eisenhower, and especially Secretary Dulles, of a fact that several officials and the CIA had been asserting since Sep-
tember 1954: to deter further aggression in the Straits, Washington must make its policy for the region absolutely clear. At a luncheon meeting with the President and Admiral Radford on January 19, 1955, Dulles therefore recommended that the "fuzzing up" be ended. While it had not deterred the Reds, it had convinced many observers, particularly those in non-Communist Asia, that the U.S. was committed to defend all of the offshore isles. Because of this perception, American credibility was suffering as Peking escalated its provocations and the U.S. offered no resistance. As a solution, Dulles proposed that the administration persuade the Generalissimo to evacuate the Tachens (with the help and protection of the U.S. Navy) in return for an American pledge to defend Quemoy. This would end speculation that Washington was reneging on a pledge to hold all of the islands and delineate for Peking the limits of America's toleration for aggression. The President and Radford quickly agreed to Dulles's plan, the JCS chairman adding, however, that once this commitment was made the administration must be willing to see that it "stuck."

Dulles took his proposal from there. He explained to Chinese Nationalist diplomats on January 19th, and to the NSC and congressional leaders on the 20th, that the new strategy was aimed at lessening the risk of war with Peking while simultaneously protecting American prestige in the
region. To ensure that the Communists would not underestimate U.S. intentions, the administration would secure prompt Senate ratification of the Mutual Defense Treaty, ask for a joint resolution from Congress authorizing the President to use armed force to defend the treaty area, and announce that the U.S. would defend Quemoy as long as Peking continued to express its intention to attack Formosa and the Pescadores. In exchange for this announcement—and to remind the non-Communist world of Washington's desire for a peaceful resolution of the crisis—the Nationalists would withdraw from the Tachens and the U.S. would acquiesce in a United Nations-sponsored cease fire (ORACLE).37

But then Dulles fuzzed it up again. After intensely questioning the secretary of state, the congressional leaders indicated that Congress would move rapidly to enact the resolution the President desired. Some of the legislators, however, asked for Dulles's assurance that the administration would, in the words of Senator Earle Clements (D-Ky), make absolutely clear "what we are willing to defend, where we will draw the line, and where we will retreat no further." This line of inquiry forced Dulles to reveal the ambiguity still pervading White House policy. On the one hand, Dulles assured Clements that "the time has come when we need to make our position clear and that we will stick to it." In the next breath, however, he confes-
sed that the U.S. would not draw a hard and fast line—that the administration would not permanently commit itself to protecting any of the offshore islands. Indeed, Radford and Dulles all but admitted what had been clearly understood inside the White House since the crisis began: the offshore islands, even the Quemoys, were not essential to Formosa's security. Their importance derived from the present circumstances, where their surrender would damage U.S. prestige, embolden the Chinese Communists, and devastate Nationalist morale.38

While the resolve of Eisenhower and Dulles was less than firm, several other members of the NSC were outright opposed to the new plan. Treasury Secretary George Humphrey, for one, said it was "ridiculous" to try to hold islands that sat smack in the middle of a Communist harbor. Defense Secretary Wilson believed that Formosa and the Pescadores had to be held, but he candidly declared that he thought every other aspect of the President's policy in the Straits was "foolish." It was foolish to consider going to war with Communist China over those "piddling little islands," and even more foolish to continue abetting Chiang's fantasy of a return to the mainland. Any attempt to hold onto Quemoy or Matsu, Wilson warned, could only lead to war. Even Robert Cutler, the President's respected special assistant for national
security, ventured a rare expression of personal opinion. The administration had to face the fact, he cautioned, that if it were forced to fulfill the proposed commitment to defend Quemoy, it would have to attack targets on the mainland. In other words, the new plan would unquestionably increase the risk of general, that is nuclear, war with China.

Eisenhower and Dulles differed sharply with Cutler, arguing that the planned alteration of policy would certainly reduce the risk of war. This was, to say the least, a disingenuous reply on Dulles's part, since the previous day he had told his chief assistants at State that the new plan "increases the risk of war."39

Indications that the new strategy would merely extend the strategy of deterrence by ambiguity were confirmed on January 21, 1955. The night before, Dulles had met with British Ambassador Sir Roger Makins to obtain London's reaction to the administration's latest thinking. Though Churchill's cabinet had yet to transmit its official reaction, Makins had made it amply clear that his government opposed the new plan. London continued to believe that there should be no commitment to hold any of the offshore islands. Washington's proposal to the contrary would destroy any prospect of a U.N.-directed cease-fire. More important, the new U.S. position would probably lead
to a Sino-American war and, most dreaded of all, American use of nuclear weapons. Fearing this and escalation to an even wider war, the British made their support of the other elements of Eisenhower's plan conditional upon Washington not making any public commitment to defend the offshore islands. 40

The proposed announcement of American intent to defend Quemoy was abandoned. Faced with a potential public breach of Atlantic solidarity, Eisenhower and Dulles beat a rapid retreat from a position which, only hours earlier, they had deemed essential to a favorable resolution of the crisis. Convinced that an Anglo-American split over the need to take a stand against the Chinese Communists would adversely affect ratification of the Paris accords and reward the Soviet leaders with the strained NATO alliance they hoped the pressure of local aggression would produce (particularly in light of the fact that this same tactic in Indochina had generated obvious tension between Washington and London at Geneva), Eisenhower decided to rely on the deterrent effect of a joint resolution. And this resolution, Dulles told the NSC, would not enlarge the area the U.S. was pledged to defend under the new treaty with Taipei but merely reaffirm the treaty's commitment to defend Formosa and the Pescadores, while authorizing the President to use armed force to secure and protect "such related positions
and territories of that area . . . as he judges to be required or appropriate in assuring the Defense of Formosa and the Pescadores."

Together with his secretary of state, Eisenhower retreated to the safety of diplomatic ambiguity. Neither the Mutual Defense Treaty nor the joint resolution committed the U.S. to defend any of the offshores, but both documents allowed him to do so if he chose. Behind the scenes, however, in order to get Chiang to agree to evacuate the Tachens, the President decided to promise that the U.S. would defend both Quemoy and Matsu.41

On January 24th, Eisenhower formally asked Congress to enact a joint resolution that "would clearly and publicly establish the authority of the President as Commander-in-Chief to employ the armed forces of this nation promptly and effectively" if necessary "to assure the security of Formosa and the Pescadores." Such a resolution, the President wrote, "would make clear the unified and serious intentions of our Government, our Congress and our people," and thus "reduce the possibility that the Chinese Communists, misjudging our firm purpose and national unity, might be disposed to challenge the position of the United States, and precipitate a major crisis which even they would neither anticipate nor desire." In the only hint that he contemplated defending Quemoy and Matsu, the President
added,

I do not suggest that the United States enlarge its defensive obligations beyond Formosa and the Pescadores, as provided by the Treaty now awaiting ratification. But unhappily, the danger of armed attack directed against the area compels us to take into account closely related localities and actions which... might determine the failure of the success of such an attack. The authority that may be accorded by the Congress would be used only in situations which are recognizable as parts of, or definite preliminaries to, an attack against the main positions of Formosa and the Pescadores.

Eisenhower also hinted at the kind of preemptive action the JCS majority and U.S. military commanders in the Pacific had said might be necessary. "We must be alert to any concentration or employment of Chinese Communist forces obviously undertaken to facilitate attack upon Formosa, and be prepared to take appropriate military action."42

Approved by the House (410-3) on January 25th and by the Senate (85-3) on January 28th, the tough language of the "Formosa Resolution" represented both a step back from and a step in consonance with Eisenhower's strategic vision. On the one hand, the decision to defer to London's disapproval of a public commitment to defend the islands and to its deep concern about of the possible use of atomic weapons against Communist China, seemed quite at odds with the purposes of the New Look. The central purpose behind the aborted announcement that Quemoy and Matsu would be
held was to make war less likely, to deter the Chinese Communists from mounting an invasion of these islands to which the U.S. might have to respond as part of the defense of the main islands, and which the Joint Chiefs of Staff had said would have to be met with nuclear weapons. It was a course of action recommended by the New Look: (1) put the enemy on notice that local aggression against certain vital areas or allies was guaranteed to draw an American response not necessarily confined to the area of attack and certain to entail enormous costs to the enemy; and (2) employ nuclear weapons if they promised the most favorable military result.

President Eisenhower certainly had no intention of making such a specific, prior commitment to any single course of action. Retaining maximum freedom of action was always a primary objective of his during crises, and in this crisis he believed that such a commitment would severely limit his options, placing the situation in the untrustworthy hands of Mao and Chiang. Still, choosing not to declare Quemoy and Matsu under American protection just as certainly implied that they were not, a condition which the State Department, Pentagon, and CIA had warned significantly increased the likelihood that the Chinese Communists would attempt to seize those islands.43 Indeed, a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) completed two weeks
after the Formosa Resolution took effect, suggested that the administration's deference to Great Britain, and its failure to apply the military logic of the New Look in Asia since 1953, enhanced the risk of war.

In the light of Chinese Communist activities in recent months and their reactions to the recent US policy pronouncements on the defense of Formosa and the Pescadores, we are not confident the the Chinese Communists clearly understand which, if any, of the offshore islands the US would defend with its own forces, the circumstances under which the US would defend them, or the extent to which the defense would be carried.

... They may not be convinced, in the light of the restraint exercised by US policy in Korea and Indochina, that the US would in fact react to attacks on the offshore islands by attacks on the mainland. Or, they may believe that the scale of any US reaction, even if it involved some attacks against the mainland, could be controlled by them, perhaps by diplomatic action at a critical juncture, in which they would count heavily on the restraining influence of US allies on US policy.44

In other respects, however, the joint resolution and Mutual Defense Treaty appeared to convert Eisenhower's strategic vision into diplomatic reality. He had thrown down the gauntlet to Peking, drawing a line of protection around the vital islands of Formosa and the Pescadores that the Communists dared not cross. After that, there could be little doubt in the minds of most observers, whether in Peking, London or Moscow, that a Communist attack across this line would provoke a determined U.S. military response. The only uncertainties in this case involved
whether or not this response would be nuclear and/or preemptive; that is, would Eisenhower order the commanders of American forces in the Pacific to obliterate any apparent Communist invasion force as it assembled on the coast across the Straits from Formosa rather than waiting for it to begin offensive operations? And would the President allow those commanders to employ the nuclear weapons around which their forces were structured?

Though this mix of messages contained some aspects of strategic design, it mostly reflected the complexity of the web in which the administration found itself caught. Quite bluntly, the President and his secretary of state felt trapped by the crisis as it stood at the end of January 1955. As Eisenhower later described it in his memoirs, he felt as though the nation was moving "through treacherous cross-currents with one channel leading to peace with honor and a hundred channels leading to war or dishonor."45

From the outset of the crisis, the President had determined that the offshore islands were neither defensible nor essential to Formosa's long-term security. Indeed, he hoped to persuade Chiang in the near future to recognize this also and to withdraw from the islands on his own. To acknowledge this or to be seen as forcing the Nationalists to abandon the islands, however, would invite Communist invasion of the islands, give the appearance of
another American setback in Asia, cause the collapse of Nationalist morale, and foster the spread of neutralism among non-Communist Asian nations. And yet, neither could Eisenhower publicly commit the U.S. to Quemoy and Matsu's defense, for such action would not be supported by world opinion or by America's key allies. Moreover, a commitment to the offshores, Eisenhower wrote his old friend General Alfred Gruenther, then the Supreme Allied Commander, NATO, on February 1, 1955, would compel the U.S. "to maintain in the area, at great cost, forces that could assure the defense of islands that are almost within wading distance of the mainland." Not only would this be unwise militarily, but in the world's eyes it would appear that the U.S. was "practically goading the Chinese Communists into a fight." 46 And on top of all these concerns, Eisenhower had somehow to ensure the security of Formosa and the Pesca-dores, uphold the credibility of U.S. power as a deterrent to Communist expansion, and most important of all avoid precipitating war.

In their effort to juggle all these considerations, between the end of January and early March, Eisenhower and Dulles employed a mix of signals, conveying both toughness and restraint. In public, they were cautious, repeating the limits of America's commitment. During a speech in New York City on February 16th, for instance, Dulles declared,
It is important to take note that the [mutual defense] treaty ... covers only the islands of Formosa and the Pescadores, and an armed attack directed against those islands.

The United States has no commitment and no purpose to defend the coastal positions as such. The basic purpose is to assure that Formosa and the Pescadores will not be forcibly taken over by the Chinese Communists.47

All the same, behind the scenes the administration maintained a facade of toughness. To the NSC and to the congressional leadership, for example, the President promised that, should the U.S. and Communist China engage over Quemoy, American forces would not "fight another war with handcuffs on as we did in Korea." The Chinese would not have the benefit of a "Yalu River sanctuary." American commanders would be free to strike mainland targets. Moreover, they would not necessarily wait for the Communist invasion to start. "If we see the Chinese Communists building up in their forces for an invasion of Formosa," the President told the congressmen on January 25th, "we are going to have to go in and break it up."48 Before an executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Dulles testified that the President had indeed decided to draw a line against further Communist expansion in Asia. The U.S. could give no more ground, he sternly told the committee. It had to take a stand against this outright Communist challenge to its prestige.49
Eisenhower reserved some of his toughest language for Winston Churchill, who persisted in his effort to convince the President to disentangle the U.S. from the meaningless offshore islands. Eisenhower, in turn, stingingly implied that those who recoiled from standing up to Communist aggression in the Pacific were repeating the errors of 1930s appeasers. The Chinese had come to see American restraint in Asia as a sign of weakness, he wrote the Prime Minister on February 18th. "There comes a point where constantly giving in only encourages further belligerency. I think we must be careful not to pass that point in our dealings with Communist China," the President warned. "In such a case, further retreat becomes worse than a Munich because at Munich there were at least promises on the part of the aggressor to cease expansion and keep the peace. . . . The Chinese Communists have promised nothing. . . . Indeed, they treat the suggestion of peace there as an insult." 50

Eisenhower supplemented his strong language with impressive military moves. On January 25, 1955, Defense Secretary Wilson approved the deployment of one wing of nuclear-capable F-86 fighter bombers to Formosa. By February 1st, the U.S. Navy had four aircraft carriers and twelve destroyers on station with the 7th Fleet in the Straits area, with an additional three carriers en route.
On January 31st, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (on the basis of a December 6, 1954 presidential order) directed the expansion of the nuclear weapons stockpile at Kadena air force base, Okinawa. The following day, the Joint Chiefs ordered General Curtis E. LeMay, commander-in-chief of SAC (CINC-SAC), to prepare plans for possible nuclear strikes against the Chinese mainland. And on February 18th, the administration engaged in a different sort of intimidation when AEC Chairman Lewis Strauss announced the beginning of the TEAPOT series of nuclear weapons tests in Nevada.51

Threatening as these preparations appeared, they were designed to deter, not to be used—to make Peking back down without a fight and yet to enhance the perception of a U.S. prepared to use its nuclear strength. But Eisenhower simultaneously moved to place strict controls on their use. On January 28, 1955, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Robert Carney telegraphed Admiral Felix B. Stump, commander-in-chief of U.S. forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC), that the President's "objective [in the Straits] is the averting of war, and his publicly stated intent to personally retain control of the initiation of combat operations, other than self defense, is assurance to our countrymen and our friends against impulsive action by field commanders."

Even the authority of Stump and 7th Fleet commander Vice Admiral Alfred M. Pride to fight in self-defense was
On January 29th and 31st, on Eisenhower's instruction, Admiral Radford cabled Admiral Stump in Honolulu with the following operational constraints: U.S. forces in the Straits could defend themselves if attacked during the Tachens evacuation, which would begin February 5th. They could not, however, extend their defensive actions to strikes against the mainland airbases from which they were attacked, "unless this was essential to the success of the operation" (so much for the President's promise that there would be no sanctuaries!). American assaults against any other mainland targets had to be cleared through CINCPAC who, of course, would have to obtain approval from Washington before acceding to any request from the 7th Fleet.

Finally, the President also suspended the atomic weapons annex of CINCPAC's operational war plan, in effect telling his commanders in the field that they might not be allowed to fight with their best arms and plans. Eisenhower was making certain that the decision to employ nuclear weapons would be his alone and that any initial Sino-American clash of arms would not mean war. He had, moreover, demonstrated that nuclear weapons were hardly a conventional part of the U.S. arsenal.

While trying to walk the fine line between toughness and restraint, the administration endured attacks from all
sides. At home, the conservative right and China Lobby charged appeasement. Democrats such as Adlai E. Stevenson claimed that the New Look had led the U.S. to the insane brink of nuclear war over meaningless islands.54 And Army Chief of Staff Matthew Ridgway, testifying at congressional hearings on Eisenhower's fiscal year 1956 defense budget, asserted that the President's proposal for further reduction of Army manpower jeopardized national security. For example, Ridgway said that the Army already was too small and spread too thin to be used in the defense of Formosa and the offshore islands; and without a division of American infantry, these islands could not be held.55

Abroad, Chiang Kai-shek was so angered by Washington's unwillingness to publicize its intent to defend Quemoy and Matsu that for ten days he refused to evacuate the Tachens. The British were hardly more cooperative. Twice during the first half of February 1955, Eden and Churchill reminded Washington that Great Britain would not support U.S. military action to protect Quemoy and Matsu. In a letter to the President, Churchill said that he recognized that U.S. backing of the Chinese Nationalists was a "matter of honour." But, the Prime Minister continued, Eisenhower should recognize that the offshore islands were "legally part of China and which nobody here considers a just cause of war."56 Peking's reaction to the Formosa Resolution and
to the United Nations' offer to participate in cease-fire
talks had been belligerent. 57  Premier Chou En-lai called
the resolution an act of war, rejected the U.N. offer, and
demanded the replacement of Taipei's representative to the
world body with one from Peking.  More important, as the
U.S. began assisting in the withdrawal of Nationalist
troops from the Tachens, the Communists began a substantial
buildup of air and ground forces across from the offshores.

The President's position thus was indeed precarious in
February 1955.  On the one hand, he possessed unprecedented
power and freedom to use it.  As one Eisenhower biographer
has recently noted, "For the first time in American
history, the Congress had authorized the President in
advance to engage in a war at a time and circumstances of
his own choosing." 58  And Peking appeared primed to offer
him the provocation he needed to use this authority.  But
the catch was that Eisenhower's overriding objective was
peace; more precisely, to make the Communists back down
without resort to war and without the loss of Quemoy, Matsu
or American prestige.  One critical question remained.
What if deterrence failed and the Communists crossed the
line the President had carefully drawn around Quemoy,
Matsu, Formosa and the Pescadores?  Given the feelings of
the British, the continuing struggle with Moscow for world
opinion, and the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that
nuclear weapons would have to be used, would Ike live up to his declaratory policy, the written provisions of NSC 5501, and the logic of the New Look?

***

The understanding that nuclear weapons would probably have to be employed to defend Quemoy, and would unquestionably be employed if the main islands were attacked, had cast a shadow over the administration's handling of the crisis since September 1954. But it was only with Secretary Dulles's visit to Taipei during the first days of March 1955 that nuclear weapons started to dominate Eisenhower's approach to the crisis. During his visit to the Far East, Dulles swung to the side of the hawks. The Generalissimo and other Asian leaders, as well as Admiral Carney and Admiral Stump (both of whom accompanied Dulles to Taipei), convinced the secretary that the U.S. must fight if necessary to keep Quemoy and Matsu from being overrun. The situation in the region, Dulles informed the President on March 6th and the NSC on March 10th, was "critical and acute." Surrendering all of the offshores was no solution, he said, for the reaction in non-Communist Asia would be disastrous and Peking would be confirmed in its design to conquer Formosa. The question, then, was not whether but when the U.S. would have to fight the Communists. Preferably, Dulles averred, the administration
should do everything in its power to avoid war before the issues of West Germany's sovereignty, rearmament, and NATO membership were resolved. Still, the U.S. had to get ready for war, for the Chinese Communists were not going to stop their aggression "until the United States decides to 'shoot off a gun' in the area." It is time to "demonstrate our position by deeds rather than by words," the secretary concluded.59

Even more significant than Dulles's conclusion that the United States should fight for the islands was his judgment of how it should fight. During his private meeting with the President on March 6th, he said that his visit to Formosa and his talks with the U.S. commanders on the scene had convinced him that Quemoy and Matsu could not be defended without use of atomic weapons (this, of course, was precisely what the Joint Chiefs had told the NSC within days of the start of Chinese Communist attacks on the islands the previous September). Eisenhower agreed, adding that there would be no need for "weapons of mass destruction," only for precise tactical atomic strikes to destroy mainland airfields and artillery emplacements.

On March 10, 1955, Dulles presented his views to the NSC with two additional and particularly revealing remarks. First, he urged that the administration make an extensive effort to educate the American people about the
seriousness of the crisis and especially to "create a better public climate for the use of atomic weapons by the United States." Second, Dulles declared that it was time that the administration "face up to the question whether its military program was or was not in fact designed to permit the use of atomic weapons." If it were not, or if it were inhibited from living up to this design by fear of adverse world reaction—a concern expressed to him by American commanders in the Pacific—then the administration should revise its entire national security strategy.

Admiral Radford immediately seconded the secretary of state's warning. The Joint Chiefs, he reminded the NSC, had never wavered from the position that the U.S. had to be willing to use atomic weapons in limited wars. "Indeed, our whole military structure had been built around this assumption." The U.S. therefore could successfully deal with the Chinese Communists in the Formosa area only by the employment of atomic weapons.60

Dulles's and Radford's remarks were stunning, not because they recommended the use of atomic weapons, but because they revealed the doubt that now surrounded the nuclear weapons provisions of Eisenhower's strategic vision. The President's two trusted advisers were exactly correct in what they implied: the viability and credibility of the New Look were at stake. Given the structure of
America's armed forces--particularly the air and naval forces upon which the U.S. and its allies depended in the Pacific--and the policy history of NSC 162/2, NSC 5422/2 and NSC 5501, American readiness to use nuclear weapons in a limited war in defense of a vital ally and in retaliation for recurring Chinese Communist aggression, should not have been in question. But ever since the crises and controversies of 1954, the nuclear weapons provisions of the New Look strategy had been considerably diluted, if perhaps more in the minds of chief policymakers than in the pages of basic national security policy.

Equally significant and revealing were Dulles's concern for world opinion and his appreciation of its inhibiting effect on U.S. nuclear strategy. Throughout the opening weeks of the Eisenhower administration and the closing months of the Korean War, it had been Dulles (with the President close behind) who had recognized that the viability of the President's strategic vision, and perhaps the security of the free world as well, depended upon elimination of the inhibition surrounding the use of atomic weapons.61 The very fact that Dulles felt compelled to make his March 10th statement demonstrated the extent to which this prerequisite had not been achieved. Indeed, precisely the opposite was the case. The early months of 1955 opened a new chapter of worldwide nuclear fear.
Concerns which had taken hold following the CASTLE-Bravo thermonuclear test a year before were now intensified by frightening speculations about the health hazards of fallout from testing and from new revelations (by the Atomic Energy Commission) about Bravo's horrific extent.

With the exception of occasional remarks by AEC and Pentagon officials that atomic weapons had become "conventional," the administration had made no serious efforts to undo the perception of all nuclear weapons as extraordinary weapons. Though the U.S. in 1955 possessed several tactical systems capable of delivering nuclear ordnance with yields ranging from two to twenty kilotons, popular perception was that all nuclear weapons were "weapons of mass destruction," indiscriminate, civilian-slaughtering weapons. Could Eisenhower's defense strategy be implemented successfully under such conditions?

At their March 6th meeting, Eisenhower told Dulles that he was ready to use nuclear force in the Straits and to prepare public opinion for this event. The President therefore ordered the first of what quickly became a series of public statements about U.S. nuclear capability and his own readiness to put it to use. Dulles implemented this directive on March 8th, in a TV and radio address detailing his recent Asian tour and the prevailing crisis in the Straits. In an unmistakable warning to Mao, he said that
the world should not be fooled into believing Peking's propaganda that the U.S. was a "paper tiger," or that American restraint equalled a "weakness of will." If necessary, the U.S. stood ready to "meet hostile force with the greater force that we possess" and which now included "new and powerful weapons of precision [already deployed in the Pacific] which can utterly destroy military targets without endangering unrelated civilian centers."63

One week after this intimidating speech, Dulles made another, more specific reference to America's capability for use of battlefield nuclear weapons against military targets. Eisenhower followed up at his March 16th news conference, saying that he could see no reason why, in war, tactical nuclear weapons "should not be used [against military targets] 'just exactly as you would a bullet or anything else,'"64

How serious was the President about using nuclear weapons against the Chinese if they moved (or prepared to move) against Formosa? It was one thing to trumpet, as Dulles did, the existence of an extensive U.S. tactical nuclear capability. But what about the declarations of the existence of the political (and personal) will to use that capability? Was Eisenhower actually trying to prepare world opinion for an American nuclear response, or was he merely trying more desperately to achieve his desired
objective in the Straits by deterrence, without having to face the nuclear decision?

An important, though not easily decipherable, component of the answer to this question was Eisenhower's reading of Soviet intentions and capabilities. Throughout the first four months of the Formosa crisis, one will recall, the administration was engaged in a major revision of national security policy guidelines based largely upon the idea of imminent Soviet nuclear parity. Because of their growing nuclear strength, the Russians were expected to increase the boldness of their cold war tactics, though not to the point of risking general war with the U.S.65 Between the eruption of the crisis in early September and the end of 1954, assessments of Moscow's role in the crisis and how it would react to a Sino-American war were mixed. The U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, Charles E. Bohlen, wrote in October, "I find it difficult to believe that [the] Soviet Government would be prepared to run serious risk of involvement in major war over Chinese claims to Formosa. . . ."66 By November the sense that the Soviets would not intervene directly in a Sino-American war in the Formosa area persisted, fueled by the popular perception that Moscow was seeking to reduce tensions with the West. But the U.S. intelligence community nonetheless believed that Moscow might well favor such a conflict because of the
rift it would almost certainly open between the U.S. and its NATO allies. Until the end of January 1955, Eisenhower tended to accept this view, though on one occasion—November 2, 1954—he speculated that if the Soviets did not join their ally in the event of a Sino-American war, "the Soviet empire would quickly fall to pieces." 67

Then on February 8th, the world learned that there had been a major change of leadership in the Kremlin. Georgi Malenkov had been ousted as Premier and replaced by Nikolai Bulganin, and Nikita Khrushchev was elevated to first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party. Initial signals indicated that the new leaders were interested in improving East-West relations. A few days later, however, the job of assessing Soviet intentions was further complicated by new estimates of Soviet nuclear capabilities. Compiled by a special team of consultants (known as the Technological Capabilities Panel), the new estimates asserted that, as early as 1958, the Soviet Union might attain the capability (including superiority in nuclear-armed missiles) to defeat the U.S. by surprise attack. And despite U.S. superiority in offensive nuclear forces, the Strategic Air Command might already be dangerously vulnerable to Soviet attack—indeed, vulnerable enough to invite such an attack. 68

February and March intelligence community estimates of
Moscow's stance on the Formosa situation tended to follow the consultants' lead. That is, they began to offer less optimistic predictions of possible Soviet responses to Sino-American war. For example, in a mid-March National Intelligence Estimate, all but two members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee judged that the Soviets would go to war with the U.S. "to prevent the destruction of the Chinese Communist regime." And all but one (the Joint Staff representative) warned that the Russians might "retaliate in kind" if the U.S. used nuclear weapons against China.69

Eisenhower, joined most consistently by Secretary Dulles and Ambassador Bohlen, took the lead in arguing that the new Soviet government might restrain rather than encourage Peking's belligerence in the Straits. On February 8th, for example, the same day the Soviet leadership change was revealed, Eisenhower told Press Secretary James Hagerty and presidential aide Colonel Andrew J. Goodpastor, that he believed Bulganin's promotion, because of the premier's military background and association with Marshal Georgi Zhukov (whom Bulganin named defense minister), would make the Kremlin more risk averse. The Soviet military knew the score; they appreciated America's nuclear might, Eisenhower explained. "They're not ready for war and they know it." "They also know if they go to war,
they're going to end up losing everything they have." They would not be foolish enough "to experiment with means of defense against the bombing we could conduct" against their heartland, he told Al Gruenther a few days earlier.70

Eisenhower, in other words, calculated that the probability of Soviet intervention in the event of a Sino-American war in the Formosa Straits was exceptionally low. Neither mesmerized by the possibility of Soviet intervention or atomic retaliation, nor yet preoccupied with the specter of Soviet surprise attack, the President instead based his judgment on what he knew—and what he believed the Soviets knew—American military might could do. He and Dulles were confident enough of this assessment to take a hard line throughout March 1955, with the related goal of exacerbating possible tensions between Moscow and Peking. Indeed, their joint assessment may well have influenced Eisenhower's willingness to publicize the nuclear threat as he did, as well.71

Though Eisenhower's interpretation of Soviet intentions may have informed his nuclear threats, his administration's concern with allied reaction to actual use of nuclear weapons suggested that these threats may well have been empty ones. One day after Secretary Dulles's belligerent statement to the NSC, Robert Cutler recalled the President's attention to his administration's two most
important policy statements on the use of nuclear weapons. The first, the January 4, 1954 interpretation of NSC 162/2's (October 30, 1953) paragraph 39b, specified that U.S. willingness to use nuclear weapons in the event of hostilities "does not constitute a decision in advance that atomic weapons will in fact be used in the event of any hostilities. . . . Many situations, however, will involve political questions of the gravest importance which cannot be precisely foreseen. For example, in the event of limited hostilities, it will be essential to consider whether immediate use of atomic weapons. . . . would increase the danger of their strategic use by the enemy, lose the support of allies, expose them to devastation, or widen the hostilities. The President should be in a position to consider such issues and make his decision as each case arises, in light of the circumstances existing at the time.

The second policy statement was NSC 5501, which suggested that the U.S. had to be willing to use nuclear weapons to defeat Communist aggression in limited wars even when the allies disapproved.72 Cutler also presented the President with a summary of Secretary Dulles's dramatic exposition on the requirements of U.S. nuclear strategy from the day before (March 10). Significantly, the President said that he thought the 1954 interpretation applied well to the Formosa situation. Moreover, he abruptly rejected Cutler's recommendation that this position be reviewed and that the JCS provide him with a set of
military options for the Straits. Clearly, Eisenhower wanted no written statements to limit his freedom of action, including a prior commitment to employ nuclear weapons. The decision of how the U.S. would proceed in the Straits crisis, he informed Cutler, would rest in the President's hands alone.73

That same morning, the President told his key advisers that he wanted "to discuss how to avoid direct U.S. intervention in the Formosa area, at a time while the Western European Treaties were pending; [and how] to limit U.S. intervention as much as possible if it became necessary to intervene" (emphasis added). Eisenhower's position, of course, differed sharply from his earlier pledges that U.S. forces, if they intervened, would not be handcuffed as in Korea. After this introduction, Dulles and Radford displayed surprisingly little of the commitment to nuclear weapons they had voiced just one day before. Instead, it was quickly agreed not only that use of atomic weapons should be avoided, especially for the next forty to sixty days while NATO completed the protocols on West Germany, but also that "the U.S. should do every practical thing that could be done to help the Nationalists to defend themselves; that if it were necessary later for the U.S. to intervene to repel an attack on the offshores, it should do so with conventional weapons" (Eisenhower suggested Napalm
as the "best thing to use against landing troops."). The President acknowledged that U.S. intervention confined to conventional weapons might not bring a decisive result. Still, he ruled that atomic weapons should be used only as a last resort and after consultation with key allies.74

Eisenhower had good reason to fear how the world and key allies would react to American use of nuclear weapons against Communist China. Throughout the eight months of the crisis, the intelligence community produced study after study warning that this reaction would be distinctly negative. "If we use nuclear weapons in reaction to Chinese Communist moves," one report noted, "the predominant world reaction would be one of shock, especially if used to defend the offshore islands or to destroy a Communist build-up prior to assault of the islands," which, of course, was precisely what the President privately said he was prepared to do. According to a State Department study, the "initial response of nearly all non-Communist nations and peoples [would be] highly unfavorable," especially in the Far East where "the U.S. action would be viewed as indicating a contempt for Asian life and Asian sensibilities. . . ." Throughout the world, the State Department continued, "the image of the United States would undergo a lasting change." "The prevalent sentiment," especially outside of the West, "would be that the United States had
opened the door to a force potentially capable of obliterating civilization, and had done so in a cause that was essentially trivial."

Equally inhibiting sentiments were present in Western nations. Ever since the CASTLE test series of 1954, the State Department reported, there had been a marked rise in "the special horror that attaches to nuclear weapons as such." Polls conducted by the U.S. Government in Western Europe in late 1954 indicated a profound popular fear of nuclear weapons. "According to these polls, an overwhelming majority in the UK, West Germany, France, and Italy believed that "in the case of an attack without atomic weapons," the attacked nation would not be "justified" in using atomic weapons in self defense." 75 In other words, the U.S. would be vilified if it retaliated with atomic weapons for a Chinese Communist invasion of the Nationalist islands.

Such reports constituted vivid testimony of the administration's failure to remove the taboo from the use of nuclear weapons, to distinguish between tactical and strategic weapons, to convince America's NATO allies that nuclear weapons should, as Eisenhower once put it, be used "just like a bullet." Eisenhower and Dulles were vividly aware of this failure, which doubtless contributed to Eisenhower's reluctance seriously to consider such weapons
as a primary option for fighting limited wars. However, the record of the offshore islands crisis also suggests that the leaders themselves no longer believed the declaratory policy of the New Look. The extraordinary care with which they tiptoed around the issue of nuclear weapons use in this limited conflict illustrated that they considered such weapons anything but conventional, regardless of administration rhetoric, policy statements, or the fact of America's increasingly nuclear weapons based-force structure.

This drift in administration thinking was recognized and opposed by Admiral Radford, General LeMay, and the American field commanders in the Pacific. The debate triggered within the administration raged with a fresh intensity between March 31 and April 11, 1955, the catalyst being the sudden buildup of Chinese Communist air power in the Straits area. The JCS majority (Ridgway being the lone dissenter) advised that the President respond by informing Peking and Taipei that the U.S. would defend Quemoy and Matsu, announcing that scheduled reductions of U.S. military forces were being halted, and taking all necessary steps to prepare the U.S. military to intervene decisively. Each of these steps, the Joint Chiefs added, were based on the assumption that the U.S. would use atomic weapons if war broke out.76
On March 31, 1955, Admiral Radford laid out the nuclear option fully. Should the buildup of Communist forces along the mainland coast reach a certain stage—which he defined as completion of airfields then under construction, deployment of MIG-15s to these airfields, stockpiling of POL, and assembly of landing craft and troops—the President should order the preemptive destruction of those forces. The President should further order CINCPAC to assume the defense of the Chinese Nationalists, including air strikes against key mainland targets. He should also authorize SAC to "support CINCPAC atomic operations as may be requested" and to be ready "for expanded operations against Communist China" in case of Communist escalation or refusal to cease-fire. The Commander-in-Chief of U.S. forces, Far East (CINCFE) would support this operation by providing air defense for Formosa and air attack from Okinawa. The Navy, employing conventional weapons to avoid civilian casualties, would take care of Chinese Communist ground concentrations and port facilities associated with the invasion force.77

Though Radford's plan for preemption may have appeared extreme, in essence, as he noted on March 26th and 31st, he was merely reiterating the position laid out by Secretary Dulles on March 10th. The situation in the Straits could not be resolved satisfactorily without a fight. And if the
U.S. was going to fight, it would be foolish, risking serious American losses, to ignore the Communists' "active preparations for war." 78

As evidence of the Communist buildup accumulated during the first week of April 1955, several of America's field commanders in the Pacific, along with the Nationalist government, joined in the appeal for action. On April 2nd, for example, the commander of U.S. air forces on Formosa warned CINCPAC that, once the Communists completed the coastal airbases and supply lines, "localization of war here will no longer be possible." In other words, should the Communists then attack, U.S. intervention could not be effective without major (read atomic) attacks on mainland (and inland) targets. Taipei had requested permission to strike a number of mainland airfields before they became operational. The U.S. air commander urged that this request be approved. More significant, clearly anticipating that Nationalist attacks might well provoke the Communists to invade the offshore islands, he also urged deployment of a substantial force of atomic-capable aircraft to ready positions on Guam, Okinawa and Formosa. 79

On April 8th, Admiral Felix Stump (CINCPAC) added his voice to the chorus of warnings. Stump informed Washington that the Communist buildup marked a "radical change in ChiCom dispositions, facilities and concentrations of
war-making potentials directed toward ChiNat territory . . . ." If the U.S. allowed this to go forward, once Peking decided to attack, "it will be too late for us to do anything about it except to resist to the utmost." American retaliation, Stump warned, would have to be immediate and depend upon atomic weapons. Sounding very much like the President in his letters to Winston Churchill, Stump warned of the danger of the U.S. appearing timid before the Communist challenge. "The non-Communist world . . . will be more disposed to respond to strength than to weakness on our part . . . I can think of no greater stimulus to Communist aggressive action than the belief on their part that the democratic nations, and particularly the US, are afraid to risk war in order to avoid it."80

The advice for action, especially that implying preemptive atomic air strikes, continued to pour into Washington. SAC commander General Curtis LeMay reported on March 31st that he had a wing (36) of B-36 heavy bombers (with nuclear ordnance) in position on Guam and two more on alert in the U.S. ready for immediate execution of his plans "to deal with any eventuality involving Communist China."81 Just a few days earlier, in an internal Air Force policy debate, LeMay had argued vigorously that "any political or psychological restraint in employing atomic weapons be erased from U.S strategy." The alternative was
fighting more Korean-type wars of attrition, and that, the general thought, was unacceptable.

Though he would after March 11th occasionally pay lip-service to the idea of using atomic weapons to defend the Formosa area, Eisenhower rejected almost all of the advice for action, the sole exception being the blockade idea recommended by Karl Lott Rankin (U.S. Ambassador to Taipei) and Major General William C. Chase (Chief, U.S. MAAG, Formosa). During the last few weeks of the crisis, the President focused his efforts on convincing Chiang to "voluntarily" abandon Quemoy and Matsu. In exchange, Eisenhower was prepared to station several thousand troops on Formosa, deploy nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles to Formosa, enhance Nationalist armaments, and even establish a maritime "zone of defense" read blockade) along part of the Chinese coast.82

The President now set his sights on a long-term solution to the Formosa area problem. If atomic weapons were used, or especially if the U.S. moved to destroy the invasion threat preemptively, the international repercussions could be catastrophic. With the Senate's April 1st ratification of the Paris accords and Moscow's sudden agreement to end the occupation of Austria, Eisenhower and Dulles believed that the U.S. was achieving a new position of international strength and that the Soviets were weaken-
ed. The two statesmen wanted desperately not to sacrifice this strength on the altar of a few rocky islands in the Formosa Straits, and to take advantage of the Kremlin's apparent interest in reducing East-West tensions. If Chiang's army would leave Quemoy and Matsu, the most volatile flash point between the U.S. and Red China would be eliminated. And if this were done cautiously, under the cover of a voluntary decision by Chiang and a strong reaffirmation of Washington's commitment to Formosa's security, the administration's most valued objectives--the maintenance of a non-Communist Formosa, of Nationalist morale, and of American prestige in Asia--could be achieved.83

Chiang Kai-shek, "visibly shaken" by the news that Washington was withdrawing its private pledge to defend Quemoy and Matsu--news delivered to him by Admiral Radford and Assistant Secretary of State Walter S. Robertson on April 24th--bitterly refused to abandon the islands. Why should he agree to do this, he told the two envoys, "in return for another undertaking from which the United States would find reason for withdrawing"?84

Chiang's refusal might have caused the Eisenhower administration considerable difficulty had the crisis not lurched to an end shortly thereafter. On April 23rd, while attending the Bandung Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, Communist Chinese Premier Chou En-lai was asked by another
delegate how the Formosa situation might be defused. In his answer, Chou included the statement that "China does not want war and [is] willing [to] enter into negotiations with the U.S." Later that evening, the Chinese delegation followed up on Chou's remark with a public statement declaring Peking's wish to avoid war, the friendship of the Chinese people for the American people, and Peking's willingness to negotiate with Washington. With this unexpected gesture, the crisis was effectively, if temporarily, at an end. Not just Peking, but Eisenhower as well, had dodged the nuclear bullet.

***

The closing three months of the crisis in the Formosa Straits raise two historical questions. First, if the Chinese Communists had attempted to seize Quemoy and/or Matsu in a manner which seemed to endanger Formosa, would Eisenhower have lived up to the administration's threat of nuclear retaliation? And second, had the New Look passed or failed this obvious test of its viability?

The evidence that Eisenhower would have responded with nuclear weapons to a Chinese Communist invasion of the offshore islands is not insubstantial. Though he had clearly downgraded the likelihood of such action by April 1955, the pressure to take it nonetheless from his Joint Chiefs of Staff, his commanders on the scene, and some
conservatives in Congress would have been enormous. To have done anything less—particularly in light of the unmistakable language of the March threats, two years of retaliation rhetoric, and the recent run of U.S. setbacks in Asia—would have opened the administration to damaging charges of appeasement and of repeating the errors of Korea.86

And what about the damage a retreat from nuclear weapons would have inflicted on the credibility of the U.S. deterrent, and on the reliability of U.S. commitments, had Taipei chosen to publicize Eisenhower's earlier pledge to defend the islands? The President well recognized these problems. They were, to a large degree, why he and Dulles worked so hard to keep the crisis from coming to a head and to maintain the delicate balance of the policy of "fuzz and bluff." Eisenhower also recognized the increasingly problematic dilemma that his reliance on deterrence was creating. The dilemma, he wrote to Churchill during the height of the crisis, was that deterrence offered, "of itself, no defense against the losses that we incur through the enemy's political and military nibbling. So long as an enemy abstains from doing anything that he believes would provoke the free world to an open ended declaration of a major war, he need not fear the 'deterrent.'" At some point, the deterrent had to be made credible and the enemy
made to pay the cost of aggression. Or, as Eisenhower and Dulles said over and over again during the crisis, the U.S. could retreat no further in Asia before the Communists' bullying. In the crunch of a Chinese Communist assault in force against the islands, it is plausible that the President's reaction may have turned on this belief, transforming the fuzz and bluff to lightning and thunder.

The bulk of the evidence, however, suggests that Eisenhower would not have resorted to nuclear weapons, short of a Communist assault on Formosa itself. Certainly by April, as he prepared to reneg on his pledge to defend Quemoy and Matsu, Eisenhower had decided to limit any American intervention to conventional weapons. Given the islands' long-term military indefensibility and the potentially steep geopolitical costs of an American nuclear response, non-use was the only practical course. Even during the most dangerous weeks of the crisis, when the administration raised the stakes with the joint resolution and the thinly veiled nuclear threats, it seems doubtful that the President would have used nuclear weapons to repel (and to punish) a Communist invasion. Although the stakes in the Straits were high, Eisenhower judged that the stakes in the struggles for world opinion and for Western solidarity were substantially higher. Critical though it was to take a firm stand against Chinese aggression in Asia, in
the end Eisenhower's objectives of a unified NATO and a vital collective security, of winning the struggle against neutralism and for the loyalty of the non-aligned and developing nations, of lessening the world's fear of nuclear weapons and fallout, and of exploiting Moscow's alleged new willingness to reduce international tensions, all demanded that the crisis be resolved without U.S. resort to nuclear weapons.

The crisis was, of course, temporarily resolved without such escalation. Had the New Look proved itself? At first glance, the answer must be affirmative. The crisis ended with Quemoy and Matsu still in Nationalist hands. Peking had appeared as the party that backed down. America's key allies had not been alienated; and Formosa and the Pescadores emerged more secure, bolstered by the Mutual Defense Treaty between Washington and Taipei.

Arguably, all of these positive results were the product of the New Look and, of course, Eisenhower's leadership. The Communists, confronted by America's massive and flexible air and naval striking power, and put on notice that expanded aggression would provoke decisive retaliation at the time and place of Washington's choosing, had placed their plan to "liberate" all of the Nationalist held islands on hold. This may well have been the case, but without access to Communist archives, it is impossible
to be certain. But how do the events and outcome of the crisis appear in the light of the policy guidelines and objectives of Eisenhower's strategic vision? To be sure, the administration did appear to achieve most of its immediate objectives in the Straits area. But how did this contribute to the realization of the strategic vision? One measure of this contribution is provided by another look at NSC 5501 (January 7, 1955). The key paragraphs of 5501 on nuclear weapons specified:

The ability to apply force selectively and flexibly will become increasingly important in maintaining the morale of the free world to resist aggression. . . . As the fear of nuclear war grows, the United States and its allies must never allow themselves to get into the position where they must choose between (a) not responding to local aggression and (b) applying force in a way which our own people or our allies would consider entails undue risk of nuclear devastation. However, the United State cannot afford to preclude itself from using nuclear weapons even in a local situation, if such use will bring the aggression to a swift and positive cessation. . . . In the last analysis, if confronted by the choice of (a) acquiescing in Communist aggression or (b) taking measures risking either general war or loss of allied support, the United States must be prepared to take these risks, if necessary for its security.87

By the measure of this guideline, was Eisenhower's handling of the offshore islands crisis a failure? It is true that the 7th Fleet's response to the crisis, particularly its adept handling of the Tachens evacuation, demonstrated a degree of flexibility. And there is no doubt
that U.S. forces could have struck the Communists with substantial firepower, conventional or atomic, if so ordered. But the New Look was designed for, and demanded, decisiveness when U.S. forces were committed to war. To achieve this in the Straits, all of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and all of the theater commanders agreed nuclear weapons would have to be employed.

Because Eisenhower refused to accept that necessity, by the end of January 1955 it became evident that the U.S. found itself precisely in the position declared unacceptable by NSC 5501. The administration faced the choice of not responding to local aggression in the manner demanded by U.S. strategy and force structure, or of applying force in a way which would alienate its allies. By its failure to make nuclear weapons a politically viable military alternative in limited war, and especially by its deference to the fears and sensitivities of America's principal allies, the Eisenhower administration had effectively precluded itself from being able to use its nuclear arsenal below the threshold of general war. In the process, it had thereby created a possibly insurmountable problem for the New Look. Was it possible to envisage a case where America's allies and world opinion might support U.S. use of nuclear weapons in retaliation for limited Communist aggression? Would President Eisenhower ever risk weakening
America's alliances and evoking the wrath of world opinion by the logical employment of the military system he had carefully established? For how long would Moscow and Peking believe that the U.S. was prepared to live up to its nuclear rhetoric? In other words, how much longer could the deterrent credibility of the New Look survive?

There can be little doubt that the New Look and Eisenhower's personal view of nuclear weapons had reached a crossroads in the spring of 1955. Two years before, Eisenhower had entered the White House convinced not only that nuclear weapons would have to play a larger role in U.S. defenses but also that they should be treated as a viable option for limited wars. The Formosa crisis demonstrated conclusively that this view had changed. After the crisis, the Eisenhower administration policy clearly no longer considered nuclear weapons as conventional, as "available for use as other munitions." Nor was the President prepared to face the test of allied and world disapproval envisaged by NSC 5501. Instead, Eisenhower's policy for the employment of nuclear weapons in limited wars boiled down to one of deterrence, with the decision for use—a decision of last resort—resting solely in the president's hands.

Ironically, about the time that the Formosa crisis raised serious questions about nuclear weapons and the New Look as usable tools and a viable strategy for the contain-
ment of international Communism, there emerged a new and frightening picture of Soviet nuclear capabilities and a mounting danger of surprise attack which gave rise to deep concern about the adequacy of nuclear deterrence. As Vice President Richard Nixon had warned at the climax of the Indochina crisis a year before, one had to wonder in mid-1955 if the "jig was up" for the New Look?
"A Nuclear Pearl Harbor"?

A sense of urgency and uncertainty had pervaded the Eisenhower administration's formulation of NSC 5501 and handling of the crisis in the Formosa Straits. That sense differed dramatically from the sober confidence that the President and his team had exuded when they assumed power two years earlier, certain of their ability to clean up the Democrats' messes—to end the Korean War, to balance the federal budget, to strengthen collective security, and to regain the initiative for the West in the cold war.

Although Eisenhower and the Republicans had succeeded to some degree in each of these endeavors, their success was increasingly overshadowed, as 1955 wore on, by widespread belief that the United States was rapidly losing (or had actually lost) superiority in airpower and nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union. Thus did the hypothesis of American vulnerability grow more urgent and the political costs of its nuclear policy mount for the administration. In fact, charges that his austere defense budgets and lagging response to the challenge of Soviet nuclear power were jeopardizing the security—if not the survival—of the United States matured by early 1956 and dogged Eisenhower until the final days of his presidency.
Even inside the administration, the hypothesis of American vulnerability, underwritten by a growing certainty of an impending Soviet intermediate and intercontinental ballistic missile capability, generated equally intense pressures for a fundamental revision of the President's strategic vision. By December 1955, for example, the notion of Soviet nuclear parity (if not superiority) and the moral and practical inhibitions on the use of U.S. nuclear power it helped to sustain, would lead Secretary of State Dulles to warn Eisenhower that the United States' "whole international security structure was in jeopardy."

There can be little doubt that, by the climax of the Quemoy-Matsu affair, Eisenhower's views on the use of nuclear weapons were well set for the change in direction suggested by Dulles at the end of 1955. Schooled in the limits of American power during the crises in the Formosa Straits and Indochina, and at Geneva 1954, convinced more than ever of the necessity of free world solidarity and the importance of "world opinion" to the balance of power, and somewhat awed by the implications of the thermonuclear revolution, Eisenhower was no longer prepared to follow the military logic of his nuclear strategy, regardless of the provisions of NSC policy.

And yet, by the middle of 1956, after the dreaded idea of Soviet nuclear parity had become accepted as fact, and
after enduring a year of challenges to his strategic vision, Eisenhower reaffirmed his commitment to his nuclear-oriented strategy. And he did this not only in terms of NSC policy, but also in the Pentagon budget, military force structure, weapons research and procurement, and war plans.

As the end of his first term as President approached, therefore, Eisenhower's strategic vision appeared to have come full circle. Two critical questions, nevertheless, remained. How appropriate was that strategy given the rapidly changing character of global politics and military technology? And, had Eisenhower at last met the challenge not only of Soviet power but of the hypothesis of American vulnerability?

***

As had been true since 1950, the sharp upswing of public concern with Soviet nuclear capabilites and American vulnerability in mid-1955 was dramatically presaged inside the Eisenhower administration. Spurred by the thought of a Soviet Union armed with an arsenal of BRAVO-sized thermonuclear bombs, Eisenhower on March 27, 1954, had ordered the Science Advisory Committee of the Office of Defense Mobilization to examine the "current vulnerability of the United States to surprise attack" and to examine "how science and technology could be used to reduce that vulnerability."
The Technological Capabilities Panel (TCP) was the eventual product of this order. At the President's request, James R. Killian, Jr., the president of MIT, agreed to chair the Panel, which soon became known as the Killian Committee.2

After more than five months of work, the Killian Committee produced its final report, "Meeting the Threat of Surprise Attack."3 Submitted to Eisenhower in mid-February 1955, the TCP report presented its conclusions within the framework of a timetable comparing the anticipated strength of American and Soviet nuclear capabilities for the next fifteen years. The timetable was divided into four periods. During the first, ending sometime in 1956, the U.S. would continue to enjoy a substantial advantage in offensive nuclear capabilities. However, the U.S. also would remain dangerously vulnerable to Soviet nuclear attack--so vulnerable, in fact, that, the panel concluded, the "Soviets might be tempted to try a surprise attack."

In the second period, beginning sometime in 1956 and ending between mid-1958 and early 1960, America's nuclear advantage would peak and its vulnerability would temporarily decrease. "Our military superiority may never be so great again," the TCP reported. Before the Soviets achieved the ability to deliver a decisive attack, before they developed multimegaton warheads, a mostly-jet bomber force, and an intercontinental ballistic missile capability at the end of
this second phase, the Killian Committee suggested that the U.S. convert its relative strength into political and diplomatic leverage.

Killian envisioned the third phase of the U.S.-Soviet arms race—beginning as early as 1958—as a volatile period of transition. The danger to the U.S. during these years would depend upon how well U.S. air defenses kept pace with the expected improvement of Soviet delivery systems. If air defenses were not dramatically improved, and especially if SAC's "unacceptable ground vulnerability" were not reduced, the Soviet Union would achieve the ability to inflict a "crippling" nuclear blow on the U.S. as early as 1958.

During the final phase of the timetable, the Killian Committee predicted that both sides would attain a secure second strike capability. Victory in a general war would be impossible because "an attack by either side would result in mutual destruction." Still, the committee warned that the prospect of a Soviet breakthrough in missile capability made this period—commencing sometime in the early 1960s—"so fraught with danger to the U.S. that we should push all promising technological development" to the limit to avoid passing out of periods two or three.4

That the U.S. should leave no scientific or technological stone unturned both to maintain offensive nuclear
superiority and to attain an adequate continental defense was the Killian Committee's overarching recommendation. The committee offered this recommendation, Killian himself later wrote, with "a sense of urgency without pessimism." He and his colleagues were confident that "the United States has the will and the resources moral, political, economic, and technological to maintain a degree of strength, alertness, and resilience that deters aggressors and that provides the basis for a sense of steady confidence without complacency, a sense of urgency without despair." In fact, confidence was the major casualty of the Killian report.

The Killian Committee's three chief recommendations revealed the anxiety that informed the entire study. First and foremost, the administration should take radical action to improve the nation's early warning system and continental defenses. For U.S. (and Canadian) air defense forces, this meant a dramatic expansion and overhaul of the programs adopted in February 1954 under the provisions of NSC 5408 (see Chapter II), including the rapid completion and seaward extension of the Distant Early Warning Line and the adoption of nuclear warheads as the major armament in air defense. For this last point, the TCP even suggested that Washington negotiate with Ottawa an agreement "to provide defense forces with authority for instant use" of
these warheads over Canadian airspace (emphasis added).

In its second major recommendation, the Killian Committee called for immediate action to reduce the vulnerability of the Strategic Air Command. Specifically, the committee urged the dispersal of SAC aircraft among a much larger number of bases, the hardening of SAC facilities to better withstand nuclear attack, and the implementation of an alert system to get U.S. bombers airborne more quickly in case of an attack.

For the Killian Committee, no less important than continental defense was the need to embark on a massive campaign to build ballistic missiles. Like the von Neumann study group organized by Trevor Gardner in early 1954 (see Chapter IV), Killian and his team were convinced that the U.S. substantially trailed the Soviet Union in the missile field. Not satisfied by the Air Force's priority status for the ICBM project--180 other Pentagon projects rated a similar status--the committee asked Eisenhower for presidential action making achievement of an operational ICBM (capable of delivering a multi-megaton warhead over a range of 5,500 nautical miles) the highest national priority. The TCP also advised more concerted and efficient development of an intermediate range missile (1,500 miles), both land and sea-based. Upon the ability of the U.S. to deploy such weapons either before or coincident with the Soviet
Union hinged future American vulnerability, the balance of power, and the cohesion of the free world.7

On one level, the Killian Committee offered wise counsel. Given the rapid development of Russian nuclear capabilities since the end of the Second World War and the frantic pace of technological change then sweeping the defense realm, a case could be made that the U.S. had little choice but to exploit to the fullest the technological enhancement of its offensive and defensive capabilities.8 The deterrence of major Soviet aggression and the future of the free world depended upon it. On the other hand, the TCP report represented one of the most weakly grounded readings of Soviet capabilities and intentions since NSC-68.

The Killian Committee, naturally, had relied upon the U.S. intelligence community for estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions. In the opening paragraphs of its final report, the committee noted that its timetable "assumes the correctness of the current national intelligence estimates of the corresponding Soviet air-atomic power. It is obvious that a serious error in these estimates . . . would destroy the foundation on which this timetable is constructed."9 The existing National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) did exaggerate Soviet strength, but it took the authors of the TCP report to make the worst of
these estimates and to derive from them presumed and mis-
guided divinings of Russian intentions.

For example, early in 1955 the intelligence community
concluded that the Soviet nuclear arsenal included about
500 atomic and nuclear warheads and would grow to some
1,250 warheads by mid-1958 (The U.S. stockpile, by con-
trast, included approximately 4,750 warheads in 1955 and
7,100 in 1958). Intelligence also predicted that the Soviet
Long Range Air Force would, by mid-1958, include more than
1,000 jet bombers to deliver this nuclear arsenal on U.S.
targets. Like the December 1954 study by the Office of
Naval Intelligence (see Chapter V), however, the NIEs
also pointed out that the U.S. still possessed no evidence
of a Soviet aerial refueling capability and that the
Soviets had not yet tested a thermonuclear device.10 The
Killian Committee expressly noted this last deficiency, but
apparently ignored the refueling problem and the less
pessimistic conclusions of other intelligence sources. For
instance, in the spring 1955, Joint Staff war-planners
estimated that the Soviet nuclear arsenal probably totaled
284, and perhaps as few as 190, weapons.11

In any case, the Killian Committee went on to conclude
first, that the Soviet Union was currently capable of
executing a devastating (though not decisive) nuclear
surprise attack on the U.S. and, second, that this capabil-
ity could become decisive as soon as 1958. The committee, moreover, arrived at a critical judgment about Soviet intentions: that Moscow might actually launch a surprise attack due to Soviet strength and the temptation of the vulnerability of the Strategic Air Command.12

The membership of the TCP helped tilt its findings in the most pessimistic direction. From its inception in 1941, civilians from outside of government had played a shaping role in the U.S. atomic weapons program. Beginning in 1948, with the presidential commission on intelligence activities, the Truman administration all but institutionalized the use of civilian consultants for conducting studies and advising the White House and the Pentagon on nuclear weapons and continental defense issues.13 The most important of these consultants under Truman included the scientists and engineers at MIT's Lincoln Laboratory, RAND Corporation analysts, the civilian panelists of the Kelly, Oppenheimer, and VISTA studies, Bernard Baruch, and the military retirees involved in the Harmon and Hull war plan studies.

The Eisenhower administration expanded what the Truman administration had begun. From the very start of his presidency, Eisenhower called upon civilian consultants from a wide variety of fields for advice on the federal budget, psychological warfare, continental defense, and national
security. Initially a move to obtain advice independent of the national security bureaucracy inherited from the Demo-
crats, Eisenhower's extensive use of these consultants increasingly reflected his particular frustration with the counsel he was receiving from the Pentagon, which he felt as colored by service rivalry.

On the whole, the outside consultants made a positive contribution to the policy-making process of the Eisenhower White House. But in the areas of nuclear weapons and continental defense policies, the use of civilian consultants yielded a disturbing trend. With the completion of the Killian report in the early spring of 1955, it became clear that the study groups in these fields, not just under Eisenhower but also under Truman, were dominated by a small circle of influential consultants and analysts. And wherever these individuals surfaced, the hypothesis of American vulnerability inevitably followed. In other words, beginning with NSC-68 in 1950 and the summer air defense studies of 1951-52, and stretching through the Killian report to the famous November 1957 Gaither Commit-
tee report on U.S. vulnerability, a shockingly small number of prominent scientists, engineers, educators, former government officials, and the ideas of an even smaller group of military-strategic analysts, found their way into almost every critical quasi-governmental study of nuclear
strategy.14

Typical of these consultants, both in his background and outlook, was Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner, professor of electrical engineering at MIT, who had worked on the 1951 Project Lincoln at MIT's Lincoln Laboratory. Along with the East River Project, Lincoln was one of the continental defense studies that had decisively influenced the Truman administration's concept of Soviet nuclear capabilities and American vulnerability. An avid proponent of the need for expanded American air and civil defenses and a critic of the U.S. Air Force, Wiesner in 1952 had leaked information concerning Project Lincoln's disconcerting conclusions to columnists Joseph and Stewart Alsop in an effort to undermine the Air Force's campaign for expansion and increased reliance on air-atomic power.15 Dr. Wiesner, it turns out, was later consulted by the Kelly continental defense committee (see Chapter II), the Killian Committee, and served as a leading member of the panel that produced the Gaither report, the climactic vulnerability study of Eisenhower's second term.16

Also serving on the Killian Committee was Robert C. Sprague, a notorious exponent of U.S. vulnerability.17 Sprague had worked on the problem of U.S. air defenses/vulnerability since August 1953, as a consultant both to Congress and to the NSC. He parlayed this experience into
enormous influence inside the national security establishment. At the same time Dr. Killian appointed him to the steering committee of the Technological Capabilities Panel, Sprague was leading the NSC Planning Board's investigation of U.S. continental defenses (see Chapter V). At the NSC meeting on March 17, 1955, where Eisenhower had assembled some fifty officials to hear the TCP's findings, Sprague insisted upon special time to present not part of the TCP's conclusions, but his own view of American vulnerability. One can only conclude that the Killian committee's grim timetable, and particularly its overriding emphasis on SAC vulnerability, owed much to Sprague's input.18

Not surprisingly, only two months after the Technological Capabilities Panel presented its findings to Eisenhower, Sprague was arguing on his own that the Killian timetable was overly optimistic. The United States, Sprague warned, would lose its nuclear superiority and pass into the dangerous third phase of the timetable in 1957, not sometime between 1958 and 1960 as Killian predicted.19 By the end of 1955, Sprague's prophecy was becoming gospel among a majority of Eisenhower's top advisers, including Lewis Strauss, Dr. Arthur S. Flemming (director of the Office of Defense Mobilization), and others.

The impact of the TCP report, compounded by the showdown with Communist China in the Formosa Straits, helped to
define a crossroads in the history of Eisenhower's presidency and in his own outlook on nuclear weapons. Eisenhower had assumed office in 1953 convinced that atomic weapons could and should be used to deter and fight limited wars. By April 1955, that contingency had been reduced in his mind to a most undesirable and unlikely course of action, thanks to the Formosa crisis and the TCP report. Even more in doubt by April 1955 was the profound skepticism of Soviet capabilities the President had displayed throughout his first term. Still confident in 1955 of his reading of Soviet intentions--of Moscow's unwillingness to risk war with the West--Eisenhower was nevertheless beginning to bend under the weight of two years of increasingly strident and alarming estimates of Soviet nuclear capabilities and American vulnerability.

The Killian Committee, more than any other source thus far, pointed the way for this shift. As Commander-in-Chief, Eisenhower had to take seriously the possibility of Soviet nuclear surprise attack and protect against it, even though he thought that the probability of such an attack was minimal.

***

In May 1955, three months after submission of the Killian report, the prophets of vulnerability found dramatic new confirmation of their false hypothesis. During
rehearsals for the annual May Day air show in Moscow, American observers were shocked to see eleven or twelve (some claimed as many as eighteen) four-engined, heavy jet bombers--earlier designated the Type 37 or "Bison" by U.S. intelligence--streak above the domes of the Kremlin. A year before, the Russians had displayed just one Bison, described by U.S. intelligence as a prototype.20 Followed by the Soviets' unveiling of a new prototype turbo-prop bomber in the fall of 1954 (designated the Type 31 or "Bear"), this lone Bison sighting had helped to inspire Robert Sprague, the Air Force and, most recently, the Killian Committee, to make their claims of U.S. vulnerability. Now the 1955 May Day fly-by inspired a major upward revision of Soviet nuclear delivery capabilities. Overnight, observers both inside and outside the administration became convinced not only that the Russians were capable of building a jet bomber of intercontinental range that was the equal of America's new B-52, but also that they had started to mass produce such a bomber and would have an armada of hundreds of them within a few years.21

News of the Soviet air demonstration sparked immediate and heated criticism of the Eisenhower administration. Democratic party hawks like Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) and Senator Henry Jackson (D-Wash.) led the way. Symington, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called for
an investigation of what he charged was the loss of America's airpower superiority. Jackson accused the Pentagon of hiding the truth from the American people about the growing threat of Soviet airpower. Though he could not have had any knowledge of the performance specifications of the Bison (like Robert Sprague the previous fall), Jackson also confidently asserted that the Bison had intercontinental range and could out-fly all existing U.S. fighter-interceptor aircraft. Both Jackson and Symington further charged that the USSR, already superior to the U.S. in total numbers of jet aircraft, would soon surpass the U.S. in overall airpower unless U.S. production of combat aircraft was substantially increased. Columnist Hanson W. Baldwin concurred with the Senators, writing in the New York Times that annual Soviet production of military aircraft nearly doubled that of the U.S.22

For President Eisenhower the first problem was the effect the new hysteria might have on his fiscal year 1956 defense budget, then still pending before Congress. Along with Defense Secretary Wilson and Assistant Secretary of Defense Donald Quarles (the Pentagon's point-man in defense of the President's budget), Eisenhower was skeptical that the fly-by proved that the Soviets had completed a giant leap in intercontinental nuclear delivery capability. As Wilson pointed out to the NSC on May 5, 1955, the adminis-
tration simply did not know enough about the "speed, performance, and durability of the Type 37 bomber" to draw any conclusions about its significance. Within three weeks of this meeting, Eisenhower and Wilson were, nevertheless, convinced that the threat signalled by the Bison sighting was serious enough to merit a major increase in B-52 production, from the current rate of twelve per month to a new rate of seventeen per month. 23 This decision was made public on May 26th, when Wilson appeared before Congress to ask for $356 million in supplemental appropriations to fund the faster production. 24

What had led Eisenhower and Wilson to the swift change of heart? For the President, the move appeared chiefly aimed at undercutting his critics and placating the hawks perched in judgment on his defense budget in Congress. He could support the required supplemental spending, moreover, because it would require only a minor adjustment of his fiscal year 1956 budget, because it might keep the spenders in Congress from trying to undo the key manpower cuts of his strategy, and because the higher rate of bomber construction would merely add to the nuclear superiority which was a foundation of the New Look policy. More influential in Wilson's calculation, however, was the assertion by the intelligence community, the Air Force, and even Admiral Radford that the fly-by not only confirmed the
upward trend in Russian delivery capabilities detailed by Killian, but that it also proved that the U.S. had for years been **underestimating** the development of those capabilities.25

On May 17, 1955, the latest National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), specially updated to take account of the Soviet air show, provided the hard numbers to support the pessimists. By 1958, the TCP's year of presumed danger, the intelligence community estimated that the Russians would have 350 Bisons, 250 Bears and 700 Badgers (designated the Type 39, a medium jet bomber first seen on May Day 1954).26

The Air Force made the worst case in this May National Intelligence Estimate of how many bombers the Soviets might build, and took the same position in public. Writing in the May 27, 1955 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, for instance, General Twining asserted that the recent shock of the Bison fly-by was just another example of the underestimating of Soviet military technology and capabilities that had plagued the U.S. since World War II. Significantly, Twining dismissed the charge that the U.S. had lost, or was in immediate danger of losing, air superiority to the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, he warned that the air power demonstration in Moscow proved that the Soviets were "developing and producing the planes for a mighty bomber
force—an offensive force that could strike us." And that fact demanded a major upward revision of American estimates of Soviet capabilities.27 By October, Twining publicly claimed that U.S. bomber production in fact lagged that of the Soviet Union.28 The Air Force persisted in this charge despite denials by President Eisenhower and Secretary Wilson, and despite the usually definitive opinion of Janes' that the Russians were substantially inferior to the U.S. in bomber quality and quantity.29

The Bison fly-by and the outcry it provoked in Washington were godsend to General LeMay and his supporters inside the Air Force, who continued to believe that manned bombers rather than ballistic missiles were the key to U.S. military strength and deterrence. For in the summer of 1955 charges of U.S. inferiority were not confined to intercontinental bombers. Claims that the U.S. trailed the USSR in the race to develop ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads were nearly as prevalent in public as were claims related to bombers; and the former were more prevalent and influential within the Eisenhower administration. The TCP report had bestowed new credibility upon this claim (a year after the Von Neumann Committee had focused Pentagon attention on the missile race) and had sufficiently impressed the President to order a priority study of the pace, progress and organization of
all U.S. missile programs.30 As this investigation proceeded, Senator Symington and others began converting leaks from the Executive and armed services into public pronouncements of U.S. inferiority in missiles. Congressman Overton Brooks (D-La.) went so far as to assert that the Russians already had "launching platforms" for missiles in place in Eurasia, i.e., that they were nearing deployment of operational missiles.31

Had it not been for the shock of Soviet progress in nuclear delivery vehicles provided by the Bison fly-by, such sensational allegations concerning Soviet missiles probably would not have garnered much serious attention. But the fly-by lent them instant credibility, for it appeared as another instance of Washington having been caught by surprise by an advance in Soviet military technology—a surprise that might well be repeated in the missile realm. The administration's counterclaims that Russia was at least five years away from developing a workable ICBM, therefore, fell on skeptical ears.32

Some of the biggest skeptics resided in the Air Force itself, where the findings of the Killian Committee had re-ignited a pro-missile insurgency inside the manned-bomber fraternity. Thus in mid-1955, against the lobbying and power of Twining and LeMay, the men in charge of the Air Force's research and development office and missile
programs made an effective pitch for an intensified missile effort.

Late in May 1955, Trevor Gardner, then assistant secretary of the Air Force (research and development), and Major General Bernard Schriever, who headed the Western Development Division (or WDD, the executive agency within the USAF in charge of the technical side of the ICBM program), paid a visit to Senators Clinton P. Anderson (D-N.M.) and Henry Jackson. Anderson served as chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE), and Jackson chaired the JCAE's super-secret military applications subcommittee. During this visit, and later when Anderson and Jackson toured WDD's facilities in Inglewood, California, Gardner and Schriever told the Senators that U.S. missile programs trailed the Soviet Union's programs and needed to be accelerated. Their interest in America's nuclear inferiority already piqued by the Soviet bomber sensation a few weeks before, the Senators immediately thereafter organized special hearings before Jackson's subcommittee on the status of U.S. missile programs.

The June 1955 hearings convinced the JCAE subcommittee that America was in grave danger. The Soviet Union, the JCAE's report on nuclear preparedness concluded, was more than two years ahead of the U.S. in development of intermediate range missiles and substantially ahead on long-
range missiles. If the Russians possessed a small number of both of these weapons, the JCAE warned, they could wipe out SAC's bases overseas and in the United States. And if they possessed them while the U.S. did not, America's key allies would be under "very severe psychological and political pressure" to reach some accommodation with Moscow. "We believe," Anderson and Jackson warned Eisenhower in a June 30th letter,

the question of war or peace may depend upon who gets the ICBM first. This is truly the ultimate weapon... If the Soviets win the race for the ICBM, and if they thereupon use it in a massive surprise attack against our cities and industries and the bases of the Strategic Air Command, effective retaliation may be impossible.33

Accordingly, the JCAE recommended that the U.S. ICBM program "should represent the single most important project in our entire defense program." It should be placed on a "wartime footing" akin to the Manhattan Project, while development of an IREBM should proceed urgently.34

There were many "ifs" and "mays" in the JCAE's calculation, and it was a giant leap from the fact that the Soviets did not have an operational ICBM in mid-1955 to the JCAE's imagined surprise attack by scores of missiles, accurately hitting their targets after several thousand miles of flight. But this was precisely the kind of worst-case analysis then beginning to dominate the dis-
course. The JCAE, however, did not confine this "analysis" to the missile threat. On the issue of conventional air-power—bombers and fighter-interceptors—the committee acknowledged the current U.S. advantage. Like the Killian Committee and Sprague, however, the JCAE then transformed U.S. strength to weakness. "If present trends continue," the JCAE said in the report issued after the June missile hearings, the Russians would, by 1958, have more and better long-range bombers than the U.S. Once complemented by the deployment of ballistic missiles, there would be the "possibility of a nuclear Pearl Harbor" against the U.S.

Though the authors of the JCAE report shared Killian's and Sprague's alarmist view of Soviet capabilities, they differed from them in one important respect. Rather than advising a primarily defensive response—i.e., Killian and Sprague's emphasis on reducing U.S. vulnerability through enhanced and enlarged continental defenses—the JCAE urged a massive buildup of offensive nuclear systems. "All possible steps should now be taken to improve our capability to deliver nuclear weapons against enemy targets," the JCAE report stated. More precisely, the Democratic hawks who dominated the JCAE (as they did the armed service committees) called for more bombers, all-out development of nuclear missiles, more nuclear warheads, and expanded AEC industrial facilities dedicated to producing nuclear
materials and ordnance. And they expressed support for intensified nuclearization of all the armed services, especially the Army and Air Defense Command.36

The proceedings of Senator Jackson's military applications subcommittee and that body's report to the President were highly classified—and indeed, all of the subcommittee's records remain classified today. Jackson, however, using the excuse of a letter of concern to Defense Secretary Wilson, sought to exploit the subcommittee's findings for political gain. His June 27th letter, though addressed to Wilson, was distributed to the press the next day. In it, Jackson wrote that he was "sorely troubled by the massive and growing evidence of the extraordinarily rapid progress the Soviet Union is making in the field of air power." "Six years ago," Jackson continued, "American air-atomic might was incontestible." During the Eisenhower administration, however, the U.S. had been repeatedly caught off guard by advances in Soviet nuclear power. Now "we find ourselves trying to keep up with Soviet progress in delivery vehicles—rather than being decisively ahead." "In all honesty, the ineluctable logic of present trends impels me to fear that the Soviets will be our unquestionable superiors in air power a few short years hence unless we do something about it now." This is true both for manned bombers and for ballistic missiles. A Soviet
victory in the missile race would "turn the balance of world military power upside down . . . , and it could well cause the breakup of the free world's alliance system."

Jackson's publicity stunt was an important statement from a man acknowledged as one of Congress's most knowledgable members on defense issues. In addition to his claims of imminent U.S. inferiority, Jackson went on to warn of "military disaster" (a presumption of Soviet intentions--the willingness to launch a nuclear war if they attained superiority) and to list twelve questions, really assertions of fact by Jackson, that he wished the secretary of defense to answer (publicly) concerning relative U.S.-Soviet capabilities. For example:

Is it accurate to say that, even with the proposed 35% acceleration in B-52s, the Soviets may have more long-range jet bombers in their air force by 1958 than we will?

Is it accurate to say that the Soviets have been able to tool up for mass production of aircraft more quickly than we have. . . ?

Is it accurate to say that, by 1960, the Soviets will probably have more scientists and engineers working in the airpower field than we ourselves will have?

Is it accurate to say that the Soviets may achieve an intercontinental ballistic missile before we do?

Though Wilson refused to give Jackson the public battle he, Symington, and others desired, the press was quick to beat the drums of U.S. vulnerability. For
instance, in a mid-July article on U.S. continental defenses, the editors at Newsweek opened with this disturbing sentence: "The Russians are talking peace right now [the Geneva summit was about to convene], but Americans can never forget that fourteen years ago, come Dec. 7, the Japanese were talking peace, too--when the bombs started falling on Pearl Harbor." The article went on to make a number of sensational assertions; for instance, that "if the Russians ever attack the United States, the first warning may very well come from a Protestant missionary living among the Eskimos of Alaska"--i.e., that the nation's early warning system depended mostly on civilian ground observers; that the Russians had scores of thermonuclear bombs and a refueling capability for their antequated Tu-4 bombers; that the "Reds can hit any city in the nation," despite the lack of forward airbases and a modern bomber fleet, by riding the jet-stream across the North American continent; and that the Soviets had the ability to attack the U.S. from the south!39

Unlike the rather contentious public debate over comparative U.S.-Soviet bomber capabilities, the first round of the debate over missiles (the debate would resurface with the launch of Sputnik in October 1957 and be carried on for the remaining three years of Eisenhower's presidency), was amazingly subdued. Actually, it was not
much of a debate at all. Eisenhower and his principal advisers privately agreed that the U.S. probably trailed (or at best was even with) the Soviet Union in the ballistic missile field, as they agreed it was vital to the cohesion and security of the free world that the U.S. at least keep pace in the race. The administration was particularly concerned that Soviet achievement of an operational ICBM before the U.S. would not only increase America's vulnerability to surprise attack but would create the perception that America's nuclear umbrella had become inadequate, leading the allies to seek accommodation with the Kremlin.40

The most important questions, then, were how to tackle this problem, how best to close the gap, and how to ameliorate the potential psychological and political repercussions of a Russian missile deployment. One obvious answer to all of the above was to go all out to win the missile race. Unfortunately, things were not so simple. Three major factors complicated the equation. First, the administration was unsure whether it should concentrate on countering a Soviet intercontinental (ICBM) or intermediate (IRBM) range missile capability. The latter missile--actually, missiles, with ranges from 900 to 1,500 nautical miles--were believed to be nearer an initial operating capability. Once deployed in Soviet Eastern Europe, a
weapon with a 1,500 mile range would instantly threaten all the European members of NATO and all of SAC's bases in Europe. Should the U.S. seek first to counteract this danger by rushing to perfect its own IRBM which, once deployed in Western Europe and Asia, would threaten many critical targets in the Soviet Union? Or should the administration worry most about a prospective ICBM, which would be able to reach into the American heartland, the deterrent effect of which on Washington's willingness to defend Western Europe against Soviet attack might be cause for greater concern in NATO capitals than Soviet IRBMs?41

The second difficulty involved choosing from among the variety of U.S. missile programs. The Air Force's ATLAS project was presently the lone ICBM under development, but there were five intermediate range missiles in the works. Which one should receive priority? Which of the armed services--each had its own IRBM program--would lose out? Was success more likely if all of the projects proceeded apace? These difficult choices would task Eisenhower for years to come.

Finally, and inevitably, there was the problem of money. Despite the incessant complaints of Democratic hawks--including former President Truman--that Eisenhower was dangerously tight-fisted where defense spending was
concerned, the Congress appeared more likely to cut than to add to the President's Pentagon budget. Eisenhower and his economic gurus, moreover, were determined to balance the federal budget at last in fiscal year 1956 or 1957. Achieving these goals while satisfying the continental and civil defense wish-lists of Robert Sprague, the Killian Committee, and Federal Civil Defense Administrator Val Peterson, while simultaneously increasing missile and bomber production, seemed certain to upset the New Look's financial imperative. It is not surprising, then, that Eisenhower put the missile decision on hold, pending a report by the Pentagon in late July.42 But neither that decision nor the fears of a Soviet missile lead which compelled it could be avoided for long. Before the year was out, both would help to propel the administration toward a major reconsideration of national security policy.

The report of the Killian Committee, then being reviewed for action, would have the greatest impact on the NSC policy review. The report, remember, recommended urgent improvement and expansion of U.S. continental defenses. On June 16, 1955, the Pentagon presented to the NSC its semi-annual Progress Report on Continental Defense, its first in light of Killian's findings. Critically important, Robert C. Sprague was, once again, brought in to evaluate the Pentagon's report and give his personal view
of the status of America's home defenses to the NSC. The full details of Sprague's assessment before the NSC on June 16th remain classified, but other sources make clear that he found the Pentagon's evaluation to be misguidedly optimistic.43 No longer satisfied even by the Killian Committee's grim forecast for the 1958-1960 period (phase III of the timetable), Sprague warned that the danger period could start sometime in 1957. In less than two years time, because of the inadequacy of U.S. air defenses and the enormous growth in Soviet delivery capabilities, the Soviets would be able not only to damage the U.S. critically but to "destroy [completely] our nuclear retaliatory power by surprise attack," Sprague said. And they might achieve this result, he thought, with less than twenty nuclear weapons. Sprague's advice, as always, was precisely the opposite of General LeMay's and the hawks in Congress. According to Sprague, the best defense against Soviet nuclear attack was not an unbeatable offense, as LeMay insisted, but the best possible defense. In other words, Sprague again called for emergency spending increases on continental defenses.44

This time Sprague's ravings met resistance. Although the President personally thanked him at the June 16, 1955 NSC session for his work and his concern for America's safety, CIA Director Allen Dulles, Defense Secretary
Wilson, Air Force Chief of Staff Twining and Eisenhower himself proceeded to question Sprague's exaggerations. Most significant were the comments of Dulles and Twining. Mr. Dulles acknowledged that Sprague's prediction that the Soviets would achieve a decisive nuclear capability in 1957 was based on CIA estimates. But he advised the NSC to consider these estimates with "a great deal of care." The spymaster himself thought that they were inflated, a judgment the President said he shared.

At this point Eisenhower still clearly understood the fact of U.S. deterrent power. More interesting, General Twining dismissed Sprague's conclusions out of hand. Twining rejected Sprague's fantastic vision of a small nuclear attack that could wipe out SAC, one-way suicide missions by the Soviet air force, and a crash effort to build U.S. fighter aircraft with interceptor capability at 57,000 feet (the ceiling at which Sprague imagined the Bison could fly). Twining, most significantly of all, then made a statement which should have quieted all the talk of the threat of Soviet surprise attack by manned bombers. Responding to the inquiry of Lewis Strauss as to "how much time would be required to get all SAC planes in the air, assuming there was some warning," Twining replied that SAC could get all of its offensive fleet airborne with one and a half hours warning. General LeMay, Twining added, would
actually get eighty percent of his strike force off the ground much more quickly.45

Though Twining's rejection of Sprague's worst-case analysis seemed at odds with the Air Force's public expressions of concern with the alleged growth of Soviet air capabilities, it was not. At the NSC meeting on June 16, 1955, as in all other forums, the Air Force brass affirmed America's current and short-term air and nuclear superiority. No evidence whatsoever could be mustered, they knew, to dispute this unquestioned advantage (the exception being the case of jet fighter aircraft, of which the USSR had more than 5,000 of proven quality). Thus, to claim otherwise would have been to play the fool and to sacrifice credibility in the critical contest for Pentagon funds. It would also have meant that Air Force commanders would have to admit failure as individuals and as a service.

What the Air Force did instead during mid-1955, and consistently thereafter until 1960, was to resort to what may be called the "two year rule." Under the two year rule, officers and analysts acknowledged America's present air-atomic superiority, but then also warned ominously that, within two years or so, the U.S. nuclear lead would dwindle or be lost, and American vulnerability would grow—unless presently programmed service projects were dramatically enlarged or amended.
The Air Force employed this approach into 1957, arguing the need for more B-52s and a more sophisticated generation of intercontinental bombers. It was also the tactic it would use after Sputnik to win approval of an increase in the numbers of Minuteman ICBMs scheduled for construction during the 1960s.

The Air Force was not alone in this practice. Indeed, the Damoclean sword of the future threat—the potential expansion of Russian nuclear capabilities and a deepening of American vulnerability—was and had been a prime weapon of the prophets of vulnerability. It was, in 1955 and 1956, a variation on the year of maximum danger theme Paul Nitze and others had first employed in the NSC-68 series five years before. The Killian Committee, for example, had predicted a period of maximum danger commencing some time between 1958 and 1960. Sprague, of course, advanced this benchmark to sometime in 1957. For Senators Jackson and Symington and other critics of Eisenhower's defense moderation, the danger year had, perhaps, already arrived, and the future held only the prospect of America (and her allies) at Moscow's mercy.

Before the spring of 1955, Eisenhower had mostly resisted giving in to the exaggerations and worst case estimates of the vulnerability prophets. To do that, he had relied on confidence in his own ability to gauge
Moscow's intentions and to know, better than anyone else, what the maintenance of America's military deterrent, political credibility, and economic health required. Somewhat eroded by the Quemoy-Matsu crisis, that confidence and Eisenhower's ability to cope immediately with the bomber and vulnerability controversies were further complicated in mid-1955 by the public's "nuclear fear" and particularly by the flurry of diplomatic "concessions" hatched by Moscow in May and June.

***

The New Soviet leadership surprised the West in May and June 1955 not only with a demonstration of airpower but with a demonstration of new behavior--behavior generally interpreted in the West as indicating a desire for better relations and reduced tensions. First, Moscow unexpectedly agreed to end allied occupation in Austria and to permit that country's neutralization. The Austrian State Treaty was signed on May 15th. On May 10th, the Soviets tabled a surprising new arms control proposal at the London Disarmament Conference. The proposal even included a provision for placing ground inspection teams within the USSR, something the Russians had previously refused to consider. And on May 13th, Moscow announced that Premier Bulganin and Communist Party General Secretary Khrushchev would lead a delegation to Yugoslavia, the first high-level contact
between Moscow and Belgrade since Marshal Josip Broz Tito's defection from Stalin's control in 1948. (46)

The combination of world nuclear fear and the domestic political outcry evoked by the Soviets' new nuclear capabilities, as well as the hope inspired by the Soviets' apparent shift in intentions, placed Eisenhower in a bind. John Foster Dulles, the West's most prominent interpreter of Moscow's actions, was convinced that the Kremlin's new behavior was motivated by weakness and that the proclaimed campaign for "peaceful coexistence" marked only a change in Soviet tactics, not objectives. Indeed, Dulles told the President that this campaign was primarily a reaction to the West's new strength, particularly to West Germany's rearmament and NATO membership.

The latest peace campaign was, secondly, a product of Soviet internal problems. Intelligence, including illuminating reports from Ambassador Bohlen in Moscow, indicated that the Soviet economy was badly overextended. In the attempt to keep up with the U.S. in the arms race and to meet the rising aid demands of Peking and the European satellites, Moscow had tried to expand its industrial base. But as Bohlen put it, "the burden of modern armaments" was obviously taking its toll, and he thought Moscow thus had launched the peace campaign in search of a way to ease the arms race. Dulles concurred. Now more
than ever, the Kremlin was dedicated to the goals of undermining the Western alliance, maneuvering the U.S. out of Europe, and neutralizing the leverage of America's nuclear superiority. But now, because of Russia's many problems and the world's heightened sensitivity to nuclear danger, Dulles said, Moscow had concluded that "less aggressive tactics were more likely to succeed in dividing the West and lowering its guard."47

Nonetheless, Washington came under enormous pressure from the NATO allies to agree to a Big Four heads-of-government summit. The British, who had been the most disturbed by the prospect of war in the Formosa Straits, exerted the most pressure on the administration. A Big Three summit, of course, had been Churchill's fondest hope since his return to office in October 1951. Now Anthony Eden, at last having succeeded Churchill as prime minister, took up the standard, writing to Eisenhower of a summit, "much in our country depends on it."48 Eden was not alone. Writing from Paris in early May 1955, Secretary Dulles reported a "passionate eagerness here in Europe for a meeting of the Big Four, particularly at the Head-of-Government level, on the theory that this will produce some kind of miracle."49

Despite misgivings, Eisenhower acceded to the pressures for a summit, mainly to gain advantage in the
competition for world opinion, and agreement was reached for a meeting of heads of state at Geneva in mid-July. The main objective of the summit was to parry the Soviet propaganda thrust and re-establish the image of the U.S. and its president as the real champions of peace.

***

The Four Power Summit at Geneva, July 18-23, 1955, is remembered for many things—for being the first meeting since Potsdam of American and Soviet heads of government; for the "spirit" of comity and relaxed tensions it supposedly engendered; for its demoralizing impact on Eastern Europeans; for being Bulganin and Khrushchev's first appearance on the world stage. But most of all, Geneva 1955 is remembered for "Open Skies." Open Skies was the name attached to Eisenhower's stunning proposal that the U.S. and Soviet Union exchange complete "blueprints" of their defense establishments and open their nations' airspace to unfettered aerial reconnaissance.50 Brilliantly simple in design and intention, but extraordinarily complex as a matter of implementation, Open Skies served both as the President's frontal assault on the danger of surprise attack and as an inspired propaganda punch which restored his image as a peacemaker.

The idea that became Open Skies originated with a group of eleven experts known as the Quantico Vulnerabili-
ties Panel. Assembled by presidential assistant Nelson A. Rockefeller, the Quantico Panel met in Quantico, Virginia, June 5-10, 1955, to explore strategies for the summit and for exploiting the Communists' weaknesses. Though organized to look at Soviet vulnerabilities, the panel focused most of its attentions on American vulnerability. Clearly influenced by the conclusions of the Killian Committee, and composed of many veteran vulnerability prophets, the Quantico group judged America's present nuclear and technological superiority to be "transitory," and expected "over-all superiority of Soviet military technology in the not too distant future" (by 1960). Even worse, the panel warned of a possible Russian breakthrough in nuclear-military technology, which the Kremlin might use to attack or blackmail the U.S. and its allies.

Like Killian and the Joint Chiefs, the Quantico group advised the administration to take advantage of its present position of strength and negotiate concessions from the enemy. More specifically, the panel offered a variety of proposals that the administration could table at Geneva to test Moscow's intentions. The most important of these were proposals for "an agreement for mutual inspection of military installations, weapons and armaments" and for "a convention insuring the right of aircraft of any nationality to fly freely over the territory of any country for
peaceful purposes." This last idea, Professor Walt W. Rostow of MIT, the panel's chairman later admitted, derived precisely from the panel's concern with Soviet capabilities and the danger of surprise attack.51

In addition to its recommendation to negotiate from strength and its concern with America's dwindling nuclear superiority, the panel also sensed the need to repair America's damaged world image. "A basic aim at Geneva," Nelson Rockefeller wrote to the President on July 11th, "must be to capture the political and psychological imagination of the world." The U.S. had already been damaged by the impact of the bomber controversy and the Soviets' May initiatives, and the President could count on the Soviets seeking to add to this with carefully orchestrated moves at Geneva, Rockefeller warned.52

It was the secrecy of the Soviet system, Washington recognized, which made a Soviet surprise attack a possibility and required the U.S. to prepare for the worst. If accepted by Moscow, Open Skies would largely end the guesswork and speculation concerning the Soviet Union's nuclear delivery capability, allow the U.S. to pin-point most potential targets for the BRAVO-ROMEO-DELTA emergency war plan, and, most critically, make surprise attack by the Soviet Union impossible. The ramifications for the U.S. defense budget, world tensions, and history were potential-
ly great.

Much more than Atoms For Peace, finally, Open Skies was a no-lose proposition for Eisenhower. If accepted, the latter would achieve these ends and virtually lock-in America's nuclear edge. If rejected, it would make the Soviets appear as the frustrators of peace. In either event, it would reaffirm Eisenhower's claim to "waging peace," bolster America's sagging image, and reassure the European allies.

It may seem surprising, then, that the President arrived in Geneva still undecided about Open Skies. But the Open Skies concept had received a mostly unfavorable reception among his key advisers, Secretary Dulles most notably. In fact, to circumvent the imposing obstruction of the secretary of state, Rockefeller had to deliver the plan surreptitiously by hand to the President, a move for which he was severely and personally chastened by Dulles.53

Though Dulles believed that the U.S. needed to take the initiative in the disarmament field, he was unhappy with the fact of the summit and petrified—not unlike George Schultz with President Ronald Reagan at Reykjavik in October 1986—that Eisenhower would make and/or accept some disastrous proposal there. To prevent this, Dulles, on July 11, 1955, told former Operations Coordinating Board director and presidential confidant C.D. Jackson, that he
was prepared "to be the devil at Geneva." To prevent a diplomatic disaster, I might have "to behave in such a way," Dulles said dramatically, "... that my usefulness as Secretary of State ... will come to an end."54

Dulles really had no need for such concern, for Eisenhower, as he said many times during the weeks leading up to the summit, did not plan to conclude agreements in Geneva. As he explained to the American people in the speech he made on July 15th, just minutes before departing for Switzerland, his real goal was to lay a foundation for future negotiation and agreement by first "changing the spirit that has characterized the intergovernmental relationships of the world within the past ten years."55

At Geneva, Eisenhower explained his genuine concern with the problem of surprise attack. In his opening address (delivered at the inauspicious location of the Council Chambers of the old League of Nations Headquarters, the Palais des Nations), speaking "with force and great earnestness," the President declared that the Big Four had gathered "in response to a universal urge" for a reduction of international anxiety and danger. The "possibility of frightful surprise attacks" and "for destruction far beyond anything which man has yet known," the President asserted, was partly responsible for this anxiety. The Big Four had to search for "dependable" methods of mutual
inspection "so that there can be no frightful surpris-
es. . . . 56

Focusing on inspection and fears of surprise attack, Eisenhower had pin-pointed the lynchpins of the nuclear deadlock. For the U.S., inspection was the magic bullet. No arms control agreement with the Kremlin could work without a reliable system of inspection—because everyone believed the Soviets would otherwise cheat. And a reliable system of inspection could substantially reduce the danger of surprise attack. Accordingly, since the Baruch Plan in 1947, Washington had made inspection the prerequisite of any accord.

Even more than the Americans, the Soviets were terri-
ified by the possibility of nuclear surprise attack.57 Reliable inspection, however, was anathema to them. Secrecy, perhaps as much as arms themselves, formed the heart of the Soviet Union's military muscle. Not unlike the intentional ambiguity of the New Look rhetoric of "massive retaliation," the secrecy surrounding Soviet society created an uncertainty that was central to the deterrent power of Russia's nuclear capability. Not only would a dependable system of inspection pierce this veil of secrecy; it would, more damagingly, reveal the true inferiority of the Soviet Union's nuclear capability and economy. What Moscow wanted was to reduce its inferior-
ity—i.e., to reduce America's nuclear strength. Therefore Moscow's idea of arms control was unenforceable pledges not to use nuclear weapons and to halt nuclear testing and production.58

At Geneva, Eisenhower tried to penetrate the Russians' paranoia by a variety of tactics—reassurances of NATO's defensive character based on his word of honor, appeals to mutual interest, and intimidation.59 The first night of the summit, July 18th, the President hosted a dinner at his villa for the leaders of the Soviet delegation—Bulgariin, Khrushchev, Molotov, and Andrei Gromyko, Moscow's ambassador to the United States. Sitting with Molotov and Bulgariin on either side of him, Eisenhower tried two of these approaches. "You know," he said, "we both have enough weapons to wipe out the entire northern hemisphere from fall-out alone. No spot [not even the vast Soviet Union, he implied] would escape... from an exchange of nuclear stockpiles."60 Surely the U.S. and Soviet Union could recognize this horrible fact. Unimpressed, the Soviet leaders spent the evening displaying the grace of bears in a Russian circus with their all-too-serious warnings that the USSR should not be mistaken for weak and their transparently insincere proclamations of peaceful intentions.61

Meantime, much to Secretary Dulles's displeasure,
Eisenhower had ordered Stassen, Rockefeller, Radford, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert B. Anderson to assemble in Paris for possible consultation. Informed by the President's staff secretary, Andrew J. Goodpaster, of the summit's dreary stalemate, this group quickly composed a draft proposal of Open Skies. After securing the blessing of both Radford and NATO chief General Alfred E. Gruenther (one of the President's closest friends and correspondents), they forwarded the proposal to Geneva.

On July 20th, the entire entourage, including Gruenther, was summoned to Geneva by the President.62 That morning, Eisenhower had met with British Prime Minister Anthony Eden and his advisers, who expressed considerable concern that the Soviets' would continue to transfix world opinion with, as Foreign Minister Harold Macmillan put it, their "'Ban the Bomb' motto." The British were anxious to try to dilute the potency of the Kremlin's appeal by tabling a detailed inspection plan for NATO and Soviet bloc forces in Central Europe and by exposing the "incomplete-ness and inadequacy of the inspection system the Soviets had proposed" in May.63

His own concern with the struggle for world opinion reinforced by the British, Eisenhower, at a fireside meeting that evening with Dulles, Merchant, Goodpaster, Dillon Anderson, and the Paris entourage, decided to shock
the Soviets with Open Skies at the next day's plenary session. Extra care was ordered to keep the plan secret to enhance the dramatic effect of its announcement both on the summit participants and the world.64

On July 21, 1955, following Soviet Premier Bulganin's speech regurgitating Moscow's May 1955 disarmament plan, Eisenhower rose to make his dramatic offering. The President began by reiterating a theme he had used with resounding effect in his "Chance for Peace" address on April 16, 1953--namely, that the burden of the arms race and the threat of nuclear war made for a "life of perpetual terror and tension with the cost of arms draining the wealth and energies of all people."65 As Eisenhower put it, only a "dependable system for less armament on the part of all nations," based on an agreement providing for comprehensive and reliable inspection and reporting, could ease this burden and danger. "I have been searching my heart and mind," he said, "for something that I could say here that could convince everyone of the great sincerity of the United States in approaching this problem of disarmament." Turning and speaking directly to the Soviet delegation--because the "risks and dangers of surprise attack" rested with their and America's nuclear arsenals--Eisenhower proposed "that we take a practical step, and we begin an arrangement, very quickly, as between ourselves . . . to
give each other a complete blueprint of our military establishments, from beginning to end, from one end of our countries to the other. . . . Next, [the American and Soviet governments would] provide within our countries facilities for aerial photography to the other country" and the freedom "to make all the pictures" each chooses. "By this step, [Washington and Moscow] would convince the world that [they] are providing . . . against the possibility of great surprise attack, and so making more easily attainable a more definite and comprehensive and better system of inspection and disarmament. . . ."

Just as the President was completing his remarks, there was a loud clap of thunder and the lights in the conference hall went out. "Well, I didn't know I would put the lights out with that" proposition, he quipped to his audience's delight.66 Eisenhower's bold plan (or perhaps the lightning's shock) inspired a rare moment of hope at the summit. Speaking after him, French Prime Minister Edgar Faure said that this day would be marked as the beginning of a new era in the search for arms control. Anthony Eden admitted that he was "deeply moved" by the President's sincere commitment to and quest for peace. Even Bulganin said that Eisenhower's idea had positive points and that the Soviet delegation would study it at once.67
This warm afterglow, however, was shortlived. Immediately after the session convened, Khrushchev cornered Eisenhower and said of Open Skies, according to Chip Bohlen who translated the conversation for the President, "whom are you trying to fool? In our eyes this is a very transparent espionage device... You could hardly expect us to take this seriously." Marshal Zhukov, in tow of the General Secretary, said he agreed with Khrushchev's opinion. Eisenhower replied that he was merely "trying to outline one first concrete step which might dispel fear and suspicion and thus lighten international tension by reassuring people against the dangers of surprise attack." Khrushchev repeated his charge, adding that the "right way" to relax tensions was to reduce nuclear stockpiles, and the President's plan made no provision for this. 68

Eisenhower was disappointed by Khrushchev's flat dismissal, though it was instructive on one point. It convinced him that Khrushchev, not Bulganin, was top man in the Kremlin. 69 Still, Eisenhower did not abandon Open Skies. Twice before the summit closed he challenged the Russians to accept Open Skies in exchange for U.S. endorsement of their May 10th ground inspection plan. 70 And the administration continued to press the idea in public for several months thereafter, with the President even expanding the
offer to include aerial reconnaissance of U.S. nuclear facilities (if the Soviet Union would reciprocate) and blueprints of U.S. bases overseas.71

The Soviets never formally rejected the Open Skies package; instead, they tried to counter the international acclaim it garnered for Eisenhower with public relations moves of their own. In mid-August 1955, for example, the Kremlin announced a cut of 640,000 troops from its military manpower, and throughout the fall it proclaimed its readiness to accept aerial inspection if the U.S. would agree to a ban on the use of nuclear weapons.72 The Soviets also invited West German Chancellor Conrad Adenauer to Moscow, where they recognized his government.73

But these were mostly machinations, sideshows. The U.S. and Soviet Union were, as ever, deadlocked on arms control. For the next few months, the much touted "spirit of Geneva" would appear to have created a less tense atmosphere and to sustain a more civilized dialogue between Washington and Moscow. For most of the following year, Eisenhower and Bulganin, for instance, would conduct a highly publicized correspondence, concerned mostly with arms issues.74 But the reality behind the "spirit" smoke-screen was business as usual. The U.S. insisted on inspection as a prerequisite to any arms control accord, and the Soviet Union wanted to eliminate the U.S. nuclear
advantage by unverifiable prohibitions on testing, production, and use.

The celebrated reduction of tensions was equally illusory. It is true that the year between the summit and the eruption of the Suez and Hungarian crises marked the longest span of "international calm" since the end of World War II. But nothing of substance between the superpowers had changed. Indeed, the falseness of the "spirit of Geneva" was brusquely revealed less than two months after the summit adjourned, when the Soviets concluded a massive arms deal with Egypt (and made a similar offer to the Saudis) and launched a newly aggressive pursuit of Third World "allies." 75

Khrushchev, of course, had been correct in his evaluation of Open Skies. It was, first and foremost, a winch designed to lift the Iron Curtain and the critically important secrecy that shrouded Soviet military capabilities. It must be remembered that Open Skies had grown out of the conviction that the Soviets were strong, that their nuclear delivery capability would soon be on a par with that of the U.S., giving them, especially because of their closed society, the ability to launch a devastating surprise attack on the West. The primary purpose of the Open Skies plan, Eisenhower would insist later, was to make such an attack impossible. 76
But above all else in 1955, and for the rest of the decade, the Soviets dreaded revealing that such an attack never had been possible. They feared revealing just how weak militarily they truly were and the debilitating result this revelation would have on their diplomacy and international standing and objectives.77 As Eisenhower admitted in his White House memoirs, the Kremlin's decision to reject Open Skies was on one level, thus, a wise one. Not only did this keep Soviet nuclear inferiority hidden, but because of the openness of American society, Moscow had no incentive to open its capabilities to inspection when it already had access to an extraordinary amount of information on the structure and capabilities of America's defenses.78

On another level, however, the Soviet rejection proved immensely costly. By the time that the Geneva conference convened, President Eisenhower had learned that a spin-off project from the work of the Technological Capabilities Panel--an odd-looking but revolutionary reconnaissance aircraft named the U-2--would be ready to begin spying on the USSR by mid-1956. Russia's skies, in other words, might soon be open whether or not the Kremlin agreed to the President's proposal. In the meantime, moreover, the rejection of the proposal, and the anxiety and uncertainty that Soviet secretiveness engendered, propelled the U.S.
along an accelerating path of nuclear buildup, one which the Russians could not match and which would leave them increasingly inferior to the U.S. for another decade. 79
VIII

"The Most Important Question in the Free World Today"

Despite the failure of Open Skies and the lack of progress on the other key issues at Geneva, the Eisenhower administration exited the summit in an upbeat mood. As an exercise in public relations, the summit, and particularly the President's Open Skies appeal, proved a substantial success. Indeed, it was so successful that Secretary Dulles urged that the administration "not follow up on [it] as if it were a propaganda stunt." The Soviet Union had been put on the defensive, Dulles in particular was persuaded, the West had demonstrated a new measure of unity, and both should be exploited. Eisenhower, moreover, emerged from Geneva as a leading voice for peace, the "outstanding personality of the Western World, in the words of Newsweek.1

These positive results, and what Secretary Dulles described as the "unconcealed anxiety of Soviet rulers" to ease tensions and the arms race, contrasted dramatically with the administration's evolving response to the Soviets' perceived (and anticipated) nuclear strength.2 With the Pentagon's submission of its Killian Committee-inspired report on U.S. missile programs on July 28th, it was evident that a Soviet lead in nuclear ballistic missile
development had become an article of faith inside the administration. That the U.S. had to close this gap had been clear to Eisenhower since his decision in July 1954 to accelerate the ATLAS project.3 What was much less clear in late 1955 and throughout 1956, however, was how the anticipated realities of the missile age would affect his strategic vision and U.S. national security policy.

The debate that had surged and ebbed within the administration since its earliest days, when the Oppenheimer Panel report and early continental defense studies had warned that U.S. vulnerability to Soviet nuclear capabilities would nullify U.S. nuclear strength, gained a new momentum in the closing months of 1955. Could the New Look work if the threat of Soviet nuclear missiles became reality? Would (could) Eisenhower ever implement asymmetrical containment by use of American air and naval striking power—i.e., fight limited wars with tactical nuclear systems—knowing that the possibility of Soviet nuclear retaliation might now be less than thirty minutes away? As the vulnerability prophets had claimed since 1950, did financial sensibility really have no place in the age of nuclear danger? Once again, the New Look seemed on the verge of unravelling.

***
Between August and December 1955, decisions concerning U.S. missile programs came in a rush. The most important of those, Eisenhower's decision to move forward "with maximum urgency" to develop and deploy an ICBM, came just six weeks after the Geneva Summit. Precisely as the Killian Committee had recommended in February, on September 8, 1955, the President directed that the Air Force's ATLAS project, for construction of a ballistic missile capable of carrying a multi-megaton warhead over a range of 5,500 miles, proceed with priority "above all others." On December 21, 1955, Eisenhower formally approved a similar priority for the U.S. IRBM programs.

Hardly indicative of the new "spirit" in East-West relations supposedly established at Geneva, these were, rather, decisions born of a complete mistrust of Moscow's intentions, a growing fear of surprise attack, and hope of avoiding a major setback in the cold war. For between August and December 1955, almost all of the President's principal military and foreign policy advisers came to accept forecasts of American vulnerability and Soviet nuclear strength that exceeded even the pessimistic predictions of the Killian Committee.

This shift in outlook had been building within the administration for nearly three years. Still, the timing
and severity of the shift derived directly from the seeds of doubt planted by the Technological Capabilities Panel and from evidence suddenly accumulating in the fall of 1955 that appeared to confirm the TCP's timetable for the eclipse of U.S. nuclear and technological superiority.

That evidence was concentrated in two areas: Soviet missile development and Soviet thermonuclear warhead development. By December 1955, few Eisenhower officials doubted that the Soviet Union was on the verge of perfecting a ballistic missile of intermediate range (1,500 miles). If not in 1956, an operational weapon almost certainly would be deployed in the first half of 1957.(6) Although this first generation of missiles would not have the range to threaten the continental United States, its implications for U.S. national security were profound nonetheless, particularly if the Soviet Union demonstrated an operational weapon before the U.S. A State Department study, dated December 1, 1955, offered warnings almost identical to those issued by the congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy back in June. Prior achievement of an IRBM could have disastrous consequences. "The first reaction on the part of free world countries," the study concluded, "... would probably be dismay at this evidence that the U.S.S.R. was capable of more rapid technological progress than the U.S." More than ever, America's princi-
pal allies would be convinced, by Soviet possession of this "invulnerable weapon," "that their countries would be devastated in a war." This conviction, in turn, could lead to a dramatic trend toward neutrality and accommodation. "Any U.S. policies which were believed to carry risks of war" would be strongly resisted. "Pressures for limiting U.S. [military] base rights [in these countries] might begin to mount," as would pressures for compromise with Moscow on disarmament.7

The outlook in the race to perfect a nuclear-armed missile of intercontinental range was equally grim. Trevor Gardner, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Development, the individual who single-handedly had convinced the Pentagon in 1953 and 1954 to accelerate the ATLAS program, claimed that the Soviet Union still enjoyed a substantial lead over the U.S. in ICBM development, probably as much as two years. If correct, Gardner's arithmetic was sobering, for even the most optimistic U.S. estimate predicted that the ATLAS missile would not be operational before 1959.

As with an intermediate range missile, the State Department predicted that prior achievement of an intercontinental range missile by the Soviets could produce "devastating" results. In the worst-case scenario, State ventured that America's allies might "be willing to break
their alliances with the U.S. under extreme Soviet pressure, since they would fear that those alliances might stimulate rather than avert Soviet attack upon them." Accordingly, as Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr. informed the NSC on September 8, 1955, the State Department urged that the U.S. place its ICBM program on the same crash basis as that assigned to the Manhattan Project during World War II.8

Among Eisenhower's top advisers, only Air Force Secretary Donald Quarles seemed unperturbed by the status of the U.S.-Soviet missile contest. Appointed secretary in August 1955, Quarles wasted no time in assimilating the views of the Air Force brass. He did not question the significance of the Soviet threat or the need for the U.S. to perfect its own ballistic missiles as soon as possible. Rebutting Secretary Hoover at the NSC meeting on September 8, 1955, however, Quarles pointed out that the first generation of ICBMs would not be "ultimate weapons." In fact, they would be inferior to manned bombers "both in accuracy and weight of destructive force."

Quarles also refuted the assertion made by Vice President Nixon and Harold Stassen that any Soviet ICBM capability would immediately threaten the destruction of U.S. nuclear retaliatory forces. The notion that Moscow possessed or would soon possess such a capability, Quarles
said, "required a very great stretch of the imagination." As Eisenhower would assert many times over the next five years, Quarles explained to Nixon and Stassen that there was a tremendous difference between deployment of a missile that could carry a certain weight over intercontinental distance and perfection of the large fleet of very accurate, nuclear-armed ICBMs that such a preventive strike on the U.S. would require. The Soviets, in Quarles' judgment, would not begin to approach such a capability before 1960.(9)

One of the key facts that sustained Quarles's calm in September 1955 was that the U.S. still had no evidence the Soviets had developed a nuclear warhead for missile delivery.10 The U.S. itself was perhaps a year away from perfecting a megaton warhead for an ICBM. The expected inaccuracy of the first generation of long-range missiles was such that, without the capability to deliver a high yield weapon, they would not be very useful military tools.

Eisenhower understood this right away. In February 1956, for example, he ventured that he could sit in the middle of a runway at any SAC airbase and, for the next decade, be in no danger of atomization by a Soviet missile.11 Further guided by his infantryman's skepticism of "ultimate" weapons, the President at first intuitively questioned the notion that ballistic missiles would
instantly revolutionize warfare and the balance of power. They would, as he put it, instead transform war from a "contest" into "complete destruction," because ICBM inaccuracy would make them useful only for attacks on large cities.12

Nevertheless, the political and psychological imperatives involved in the missile race could not be ignored. After elevating the IRBM and ICBM programs to top priority, Eisenhower thus made it unmistakably clear that he attached great importance to their rapid success. On December 1, 1955, he insisted that Defense Secretary Wilson update him on the progress of the missile programs "at least once a month." As the President put it, he was "absolutely determined not to tolerate any fooling with this thing."13

Accurate or not, a Soviet missile fleet, as a supplement to the alleged superior Soviet bomber fleet of 1957–58, confronted the President with the prospect of potential devastation of the United States by surprise nuclear attack. Indeed, no American president, save only Lincoln, had had to face what Eisenhower now was increasingly told he faced—a concrete military threat to the Republic's survival.

And between November 1955 and January 1956, that threat assumed an even more daunting reality. On November 6th and 22nd, the U.S. detected the detonation of two
thermonuclear devices in eastern Siberia near the Soviets' Semipalatinsk test range. As with the Soviet Union's first atomic test in late August 1949 and what was wrongly believed to be its first thermonuclear test on August 12, 1953, the birth of this apparently new generation of Soviet nuclear technology produced a dramatic reaction in Washington.

At the NSC meeting on November 15, 1955, Atomic Energy Commission chairman Lewis Strauss reported that the first blast—described by U.S. intelligence as "a large [thermonuclear] air burst" with a yield of "several hundred KT"—had been, in his estimation, a successful test of a ballistic missile warhead. Once again, Strauss added, the Soviets had surprised Washington with their ability to surpass U.S. military technological progress, as they had done six months earlier with the Bison bomber demonstration. Although Strauss said he would withhold final judgment until further data on the Soviets' November 6th explosion was analyzed, he made no effort to disguise his true pessimism. Echoing Robert Sprague, Strauss assumed the worst and informed the NSC that he believed the Killian Committee timetable had underestimated Soviet capabilities. The end of America's nuclear superiority would probably arrive in mid-1957, not one to three years later, as the Technological Capabilities Panel had projected.
U.S. evaluation of the second Soviet blast inspired even grimmer conclusions. Air Force intelligence believed that this blast had been an air burst of a thermonuclear weapon of at least one megaton yield. The fallout from the explosion was so heavy that it produced a significant rise of radiation levels in Japan. Most officials in Washington and the press immediately concluded that the second test had been dropped from a Soviet bomber and that this was the first time that a true H-bomb had been so delivered. The result was that the Soviet Union appeared solidly ahead of the United States not only in missile (and perhaps bomber) but in warhead technology as well. Critical U.S. tests of missile warheads and air-dropped hydrogen bombs would not take place until May 1956 as part of Operation REDWING.

The deepening concern inspired by the Soviets' latest nuclear tests was reflected in the year-end estimates of American vulnerability. Between December 8, 1955 and January 23, 1956, the Air Force, the Net Evaluation Subcommittee (see Chapter V), and the Office of Defense Mobilization Defense Working Group, presented the President with portraits of American vulnerability and impending Soviet nuclear superiority which seemed to demand an urgent response. Coming only a few weeks after the President had returned to work from his September 24th heart attack, it is a wonder that the news did not cause another seizure,
for the studies indicated that U.S. strategic forces would soon be helplessly vulnerable to Soviet missile attack, that the U.S. was in imminent danger of falling behind the USSR in military technology, and that a Soviet surprise attack could kill or incapacitate up to sixty-five percent of the U.S. population and leave American cities and industry in ashes.

The first dose of bad news came from the Air Force. At the NSC meeting on December 8, 1955 at Camp David, Major General R.C Lindsay, Director of Plans, Headquarters, USAF, outlined the status of Air Force efforts to reduce what the Killian Committee had described as the Strategic Air Command's "unacceptable ground vulnerability." Given the recent intelligence on Soviet military advances, several NSC members were disturbed by what Lindsay reported. Arthur S. Flemming, director of the Office of Defense Management, and disarmament adviser Harold Stassen, in particular, urged that the Air Force accelerate its implementation of the Technological Capability Panel's recommended defensive measures. As it stood, the Air Force did not expect to complete those measures until 1962, but Flemming and Stassen worried that this would leave SAC open to attack by 1957, the projected year of a Soviet missile and superior bomber capability. Defense Secretary Wilson grimly summarized the mood of the meeting, as only he
could, observing that, with or without a reduction of SAC's vulnerability, "the stark facts are that the [military] developments [by the U.S. and USSR] are such that in time both will be able to destroy the world, including the birds."18

ODM director Flemming's reaction to the Air Force briefing was characteristic of the exaggeration of Soviet capabilities that he apparently encouraged at ODM. In the fall of 1953 for example, Flemming had been one of the most vocal critics of the inadequacy of U.S. air and civil defenses. On one occasion, Flemming had even directly challenged the President's skeptical reception of NSC 159/4 (see p. 121). It was under the aegis of Flemming and ODM's Science Advisory Committee, moreover, that the Technological Capabilities Panel operated.

In the late fall of 1955, the TCP's monitoring of status of Soviet and American military-technological capabilities was carried on by the Office of Defense Mobilization's Defense Working Group. Submitted to the NSC on December 20, 1955, the Defense Working Group's latest findings could not have been more frank, more frightening, or more predictable. "The maintenance of technological superiority by the U.S. over the U.S.S.R. could mean the difference between peace and general nuclear war," the Working Group warned. If the Soviets achieved nuclear
superiority by some technological breakthrough, the Kremlin might well decide to exploit its presumably temporary advantage and attack the U.S. "In certain important fields of weaponry"—for instance, fighterinterceptor aircraft, ICBMs, and bombers—"the Soviets are now several years in advance of U.S. technology." According to the ODM Working Group, the next year or two could prove decisive. Unless the U.S. quickly stopped its slide into inferiority in the short run, "there may be no long run."19

The third and most influential vulnerability study was presented by the Net Evaluation Subcommittee in January 1956. Inspired by the activities of Sprague and Killian, Eisenhower in February 1955 had approved establishment of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee (NESC) as a permanent review body. The mission of the NESC was "to provide integrated evaluations of the net capability of the USSR, in the event of general war, to inflict direct injury upon the continental U.S. and U.S. installations overseas, and to provide a continual watch for changes which would significantly alter those net capabilities."20 For its first evaluation, completed on October 27, 1955, the NESC selected two war scenarios, both of which assumed a war erupting on July 1, 1958. The first scenario also assumed, however, that the U.S. would receive no warning of a Soviet attack until the enemy's bombers reached the Arctic DEW
radar line, while the second anticipated a month of tension prior to the Soviet air attack.

Due to his heart attack, Eisenhower was not briefed on the NESC's findings until January 1956. He summarized the shocking outcome of the first scenario in his diary on January 23, 1956.(21)

Under the first case, the United States experienced practically total economic collapse, which could not be restored to any kind of operative condition under six months to a year. Members of the Federal government were wiped out and a new government had to be improvised by the states. Casualties were enormous. It was calculated that something on the order of 65% of the population would require some kind of medical care, and in most instances, [would have] no opportunity whatsoever to get it.

The limiting factor on the damage inflicted was not so much our defensive arrangements as the limitations on the Soviet stockpile of atomic weapons in the year '58.

Despite the enormous damage that the continental U.S. was expected to suffer from this undetected Soviet attack, according to the NESC U.S. strategic forces would still be able to inflict "three times greater" damage on the Soviet Bloc. The expanse of Eurasia decimated by fallout, the President noted in his diary, would be "appalling." Russia would be unable to continue the war after the U.S. nuclear blitz. For the U.S., the nuclear exchange would mean, nevertheless, "literally . . . digging ourselves out of [the] ashes, starting again."22
The results of the second scenario were no less shocking than those of the first. Despite the month of strategic warning granted in the second instance, the NESC concluded that there would be "no significant difference in the losses [the U.S.] would take."23

Eisenhower discussed the implications of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee report with his top national security advisers on January 23, 1956.(24) Significantly, one of the first suggestions to emerge from that discussion involved the reliability of the report. Admiral Radford was among the skeptics. The NESC had "leaned over backwards," he informed the President, "to look at the worst situation from our standpoint, and assumed things which might not or would not necessarily have to happen in the event of atomic war." Lt. General Harold L. George, the head of the NESC working groups, sharply disagreed with the JCS chairman. George defended the NESC exercises, declaring that they had been "played out pretty faithfully along the lines of a realistic appraisal of what would happen."

Which officer was telling the truth? Significantly, Eisenhower believed that Radford had it right. As had been the rule with vulnerability studies in the past, it seemed to the President that the NESC analysts had shortchanged U.S. capabilities. Specifically, the NESC appeared to have underestimated the effectiveness of U.S. air defenses, par-
ticularly where warning time was involved, and had therefore exaggerated Soviet penetration capabilities and the damage the U.S. would sustain.

Secondly, Eisenhower in a sense impugned a basic premise of the NESC exercise. The Soviets, he said, certainly "had conducted exercises similar to the NESC study" and, therefore, the leaders in the Kremlin no doubt appreciated the fact that nuclear war meant the utter destruction of their regime and homeland. "We [have] to give them credit for having some sense," the President explained. He simply could not believe that the Soviets welcomed or contemplated risking the staggering results of "an exchange of all-out blows with thermonuclear weapons."25

As he had in the past, in other words, Eisenhower questioned advisers whom he thought were too quick to believe that Moscow would risk a surprise nuclear attack on the U.S. The President was particularly skeptical when he detected, as with the NESC report, that this belief derived from an underestimation of U.S. defense capabilities. At the NSC meeting on December 8, 1955, in response to Arthur Flemming's alarm at the alleged vulnerability of SAC and the slow pace of improvements in U.S. continental defenses, the President pointed out that this startling interpretation was one-sided. "We haven't had any Killian
Committee to tell us the Russian side of the story," as he put it. In assessing the Soviet threat, U.S. strike capabilities must not be minimized. They created rather daunting problems of vulnerability for the Soviets, the President imagined. Concentrating too much on one side of the equation—which, by the way, was what the NESC was supposed to prevent—would result in the U.S. spending not only more than it needed on continental defenses but more than it could afford. Reiterating a basic premise of the New Look, Eisenhower stressed that the administration had to keep its eye on the long term. The challenge of Soviet power, nuclear and otherwise, would be with the U.S. for many, many years to come. That fact and the vigilance, both military and monetary, that it demanded, must not be lost sight of in a rush to counter possible Soviet military capabilities.26

Eisenhower's reaction to Flemming and to the pessimism inspired by the vulnerability studies demonstrated much more than his enduring skepticism of dire interpretations of Soviet capabilities and intentions. His reaction demonstrated that he was struggling to remain faithful to the foundations of his strategic vision while, at the same time, attempting to cope with an apparently unfavorable shift in the nuclear balance. Though the President himself wanted to remain focused on the long run, this perceived
shift, along with the Kremlin's new cold war tactics, convinced many of his advisers that U.S. national security policy needed adjustment in the short run.

On September 2, 1955, three weeks before he suffered a severe heart attack in Denver, Eisenhower had authorized a review of the administration's Basic National Security Policy.27 Ostensibly part of the annual formulation of a new defense budget—usually completed each December and submitted to Congress early in the new year—the BNSP review conducted during the fall of 1955 and winter of 1956 owed more to the rapidly changing challenge of Soviet power than to the budgetary cycle. In fact, in each succeeding year of the Eisenhower presidency, this review became an annual (and on-going) process, interrelated but also distinct from the budget process. The outcome each spring was a new BNSP document.

The first policy adjustment produced by this review was the elevation of the U.S. ICBM and IIRM programs to a new priority.28 That adjustment, however, created the first major bone of contention with the emerging policy and highlighted the President's struggle to hold on to the New Look. The decision to accelerate the missile program itself did not entail a fundamental change in Eisenhower's nuclear strategy. In perfect tune with the New Look, the acceleration aimed at protecting U.S. nuclear superiority,
sustaining deterrence and, thereby, free world confidence in American technology and leadership. The anticipated cost of the missile program acceleration, however, was at odds with the fiscal imperative of the New Look. Expected to add a one billion dollar bulge to the Pentagon's budget for fiscal year 1957 alone, the cost of the acceleration was piled on top of the steep costs of the massive improvements in U.S. continental defenses recommended by Killian and Sprague, the accelerated production of B-52s, KC-135 tankers, and assorted fighter aircraft demanded by the Congress, and the greatly expanded foreign assistance programs called for by the State Department to meet Moscow's new economic challenge in the developing world.

The total bill for all of this, Defense Secretary Wilson informed the National Security Council on November 15, 1955, amounted to a "considerable shock." The primary culprit in Wilson's mind was the Killian Committee. Added to a normal level of projected defense and military assistance programs, the recommendations of the Killian Committee would require a Pentagon budget of approximately "$45 billion a year for some years," according to estimates by the armed services. By comparison, total Pentagon expenditures for the current fiscal year were expected to be only $35.1 billion.29

Predictably, Eisenhower greeted the early projections
of increased Pentagon spending with the distaste he reserved for Washington columnists and Communists. Determined as he was to meet the growing challenge of Soviet power, the President remained committed to achieving both "security and solvency." With the end of his first term approaching, moreover, Eisenhower was particularly anxious to balance the federal budget as he had promised, though "never," he pledged to the NSC on November 21, 1955, "... at the cost of the welfare of the United States."30 With the one exception of Treasury Secretary George Humphrey, however, Eisenhower stood alone in his confidence that projected defense spending could be cut significantly in fiscal year 1957. Even the usually frugal Wilson and Radford bucked at the notion of spending cuts in the coming year.

Though the top two men at the Pentagon were willing at least to search for possible savings, many White House advisers and most all military brass contended that the threat of Soviet power mandated that budgetary considerations be put aside. For instance, on November 15, 1955, Arthur Flemming, relying specifically on the possible loss of U.S. nuclear superiority predicted in the Killian timetable, asserted that the U.S. had reached a critical crossroad in the nation's security history. And that was not time, he declared, to "set some ceiling figure" for the
defense of the United States.31

Not surprisingly, the armed services shared Flemming's view of a spending cap. Clearly acting on instructions from the White House, Secretary Wilson had, shortly after November 15th, presented the service chiefs and secretaries with a tentative ceiling of $34 billion for fiscal year 1957. The reaction, Wilson reported to the President, "had been so explosive that it had almost brought down the Pentagon."32

Despite its angry rumblings, the Pentagon did not explode when Eisenhower held his ground. Wilson and the services managed to meet the President's low target figure, and in January 1956 the Defense Department submitted a budget to Congress requesting new obligational authority for $34 billion in spending for fiscal year 1957.(33)

On the budgetary front, at least, Eisenhower appeared initially to have emerged from the year-end upward revision of Soviet power with his commitment to the New Look intact. His principal advisers, however, had not. Displeasure with the size and distribution of the budget was just the beginning. Two more significant challenges to the President's strategic vision came from the State Department and from the Army, each of which aimed directly at the most fundamental tenets of administration nuclear strategy.

Ever since its elucidation in NSC 162/2 on October 30,
1953, the State Department had been uncomfortable with the President's policy for the use of nuclear weapons. Each of Secretary Dulles's chief subordinates at State--Walter Bedell Smith, Douglas MacArthur, II, Herbert Hoover, Jr., Robert Bowie, Livingston Merchant, and Walter Robertson--had lobbied in some form to curb the Pentagon's control over, and any tendency towards the automatic, use of nuclear weapons. Even more specifically, these officials strongly opposed the notion, as supported by the JCS majority, the Air Force, Lewis Strauss, and the President himself, that nuclear weapons should be used in limited wars as conventional weapons.

Despite this consensus among his top aides, Dulles's own views were somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, Dulles had on several occasions--most recently during the Quemoy-Matsu crisis--advocated a campaign to remove the moral inhibition on the employment of nuclear weapons. Beginning with the 1952 campaign, moreover, Dulles had also been a vocal advocate of Eisenhower's concept of asymmetrical containment--what the President's critics labeled "massive retaliation." For that, Dulles erroneously garnered the image as the originator and dogmatic proponent of a defense strategy that not only depended upon nuclear weapons for deterrence but warmly welcomed their use.

Behind the scenes, on the other hand, the record
indicates that the secretary of state had acted regularly as a restraining influence on the President's instinct to formulate military strategy without sufficient reference to political factors.

By the end of 1955, Dulles's views suddenly solidified in favor of the latter tendency. And in what can only be described as near panic, he proceeded in December 1955 and early 1956 to bombard Eisenhower with recommendations to undo prevailing U.S. nuclear policies. Two factors lay at the root of Dulles's panic: his acceptance of effective Soviet nuclear parity as a fact; and his profound concern that U.S. nuclear policy was fueling a loss of allied and world opinion.

Dulles's change of heart became dramatically apparent in the days and weeks following the Soviets' November nuclear weapons tests. The Soviet tests created not just military but critical foreign policy problems for Washington. Fallout from the tests produced suddenly high levels of radiation from Tokyo to Paris. The November 22nd blast, more significantly, was trumpeted by media and governments as the first instance of air delivery of a hydrogen bomb and, thus, as proof of a Soviet lead in thermonuclear weaponry. Together, the results of the tests generated a new wave of global nuclear fear and an upsurge of emotion against nuclear weapons.
The Kremlin moved immediately to exploit this phenomenon, following the November tests with an all-out propaganda blitz. To Washington's dismay, the fact of the tests themselves was soon overshadowed by Moscow's latest call for an "unconditional prohibition of the production, use or experimentation of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons." Even more disconcerting to Dulles, the Kremlin's insincere appeal, issued while Bulganin and Khrushchev were in India, was instantly followed by Prime Minister Nehru's plea for a ban on nuclear weapons testing—a plea formally noted in a disarmament resolution passed by the U.N. General Assembly on December 16, 1955—and by Pope Pius XII's Christmas Eve appeal for a test ban and the elimination of all nuclear weapons.35

Gripped by new fears of the hazards of fallout and the Soviet Union's newly demonstrated nuclear capabilities, the peoples of the non-Communist world were not at all immune to these appeals. Secretary Dulles, always hyper-sensitive to the tides of "world opinion," started to come unglued at this prospect. Washington, he felt, was under enormous pressure to come up with a dramatic initiative on the disarmament front. On December 8, 1955, Dulles took matters into his own hands, making a speech in which he downplayed the massive in "massive retaliation." Echoing the case that the Army was presently making for a "flexible
response" strategy, and revealing his apparent willingness to retreat from the New Look, Dulles essentially declared that the U.S. would place limits on its use of force in retaliation for aggression.36

In a private meeting with the President on December 26, Dulles confided to Eisenhower that he "had come to the conclusion that our whole international security structure was in jeopardy." The military foundation of that structure--"local defensive strength with the backing up of United States atomic power"--was no longer sound. For "that striking power," Dulles declared, "was likely to be immobilized by moral repugnance. If this happened the whole structure could readily collapse."37 In other words, Dulles had concluded, not only from the events of the closing months of 1955, but no doubt also from the administration's frustrating experiences in 1954 and 1955, that the U.S. could never live up to the military logic of Eisenhower's strategic vision. And without that, without a credible military deterrent and without a demonstrated will to act, Dulles no doubt was correct; the alliances might well fall apart.

As a solution to this troubling prospect, Dulles proposed the following. "Atomic power," he explained to the President on December 26, 1955, "was too vast a power to be left for military use of any one country." Accord-
ingly, he proposed that Washington assemble its forty-two security treaty partners and establish "an international group which would make the decision as to when and how to use atomic weapons for defense--always reserving of course the right of the United States, in the event that it was directly attacked, to [reply with] whatever means it had." Further, once Moscow surrendered its veto power, Dulles said he would then propose that of responsibility for nuclear weapons be transferred to the U.N. Security Council to use as a deterrent.38

But the secretary of state did not stop there. Increasingly unnerved by the Soviets' confounding public relations success, and particularly fearful of that success eroding Western solidarity and furthering Communist influence in the developing world, Dulles and his chief aides lobbied inside the administration for more immediately effective disarmament initiatives.39 As Dulles later explained to the Senate Subcommittee on Disarmament, chaired by Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.), it was absolutely essential that, in the eyes of the world, the U.S. have the "moral right on its side." "'Not by force, not by might, but by spirit, said the Lord of Hosts.'" This lesson from the Old Testament, the secretary of state declared, should guide the U.S. in its cold war struggle. At the close of 1955, however, he feared that the U.S. was instead being
damaged by the taint of "militarism." 40

The State Department's efforts met with little success. Without any intervention on his behalf by the President, Dulles's atomic pool proposal was quickly tagged as being unworkable—which, of course, it was. Eisenhower continued to pin his hopes on Open Skies to break the ice with Moscow. Presidential disarmament adviser Harold Stassen simply dismissed Dulles's plan. Stassen was more interested in winning Eisenhower's support for the latest version of the scheme Stassen had hatched prior to the Geneva summit. Dulles, in turn, derisively proclaimed that Stassen's plan "would make the United States a laughing stock." The Atomic Energy Commission and Pentagon refused to waver from the position they had held for several years. They rejected every disarmament initiative but Open Skies, and were particularly worried that Dulles and Stassen would lead the administration into a fatal compromise, initiating a spiral of pressures for limits on America's nuclear strength. As Lewis Strauss passionately put it, the pressure for nuclear arms limitations emanating from Moscow was hardly "inspired by humanitarian considerations." That pressure was designed solely to undo U.S. nuclear superiority, the chief obstacle to the Communists' aim of "our subjugation and their domination of the world." 41
While Eisenhower's principal civilian advisers were woefully polarized on nuclear arms control, his principal military advisers, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were no less divided on nuclear weapons' place in national security strategy. None of the Joint Chiefs was satisfied with the existing Basic National Security Policy, NSC 5501 (Chapter V). The JCS "feel strongly," Chairman Radford informed Secretary Wilson in February 1956, "that there has been a marked deterioration of the Free World position in the past year." Greatly strengthened militarily, Moscow was "moving with far greater flexibility and assurance to isolate the U.S. from the rest of the free world and to create doubts in the minds of our allies as to U.S. intentions. . . . Unless U.S. policy is realistically revised to meet the new Soviet tactics, U.S. leadership of the Free World will be jeopardized."42

The question remained, however, just what direction that revision should take. Again, the Chiefs agreed on generalities. The Eisenhower administration needed to wage the cold war less defensively and put America's strength to more effective use. As they had argued forcefully, but largely unsuccessfully, during the fall 1954 policy review that produced NSC 5501, the JCS majority again contended that, while America's military strength was adequate for its security, the administration's political will was not.
As the Joint Chiefs put it, to achieve the President's primary national security objective, the "deterrence of war, large and small"—i.e., deterrence not only of a Soviet surprise attack on the West but also all lesser forms of armed Communist aggression—U.S. military strength "must be reinforced by a worldwide understanding that the United States will use that strength promptly to support free world interests when necessary. . . . the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that there is a feeling throughout the world that the United States lacks the essential determination to act in time." [emphasis added] 43

The Joint Chiefs, however, sharply disagreed as to how nuclear strategy should be adjusted to achieve that objective. Predictably, the two sides of the Pentagon debate were led by Admiral Radford and General Maxwell D. Taylor. On the one hand, Radford desperately wanted the NSC to approve a definitive commitment to employ nuclear weapons in limited wars whenever militarily advantageous. He wanted recognition, in other words, of what had become fact in U.S. force structure—namely, that nuclear weapons had become conventional, integrated at all levels in each of the services. In Radford's mind, such a policy provision not only made military sense; it would go a long way toward settling other policy and planning problems. For example, once the NSC provided this, the armed services could better
tailor force structure and plans to policy, and resist pressure for increases in conventional forces.44

NSC refusal to recognize this connection had been a major restraint on U.S. action over the past three years. And in Radford's judgment that restraint, especially when contrasted with Communist advances, had seriously damaged U.S. credibility. Though not stated explicitly in the memo he authored in March 1956, Radford clearly implied that he was still smarting from what he viewed as the costly and unnecessary setbacks of Korea, Indochina/Geneva, and Quemoy-Matsu. Washington's continuing failure to demonstrate its resolve and ability to halt Communist expansion had seriously diminished American credibility, thereby enhancing the power and influence of Moscow and Peking. And that failure derived in no small part from the inhibition on nuclear strategy.45

In contrast to what Admiral Radford saw as fulfillment of the New Look, General Taylor and his supporters sought to undo completely the President's nuclear-oriented strategy. Rather than extend to limited war the President's commitment to employ nuclear weapons in general war, Taylor wanted to remove from U.S. policy and strategy any commitment to employ nuclear weapons, even in the event of a Communist attack on NATO.46

Elaborating on the case insistently made by his prede-
cessor, General Matthew B. Ridgway, during his abbreviated tenure as Eisenhower's Army Chief of Staff, Taylor contended that America's de facto dependence upon nuclear weapons to deter and fight both limited and general war endangered U.S. and free world security. As he explained in The Uncertain Trumpet, his anti-New Look memoir published in 1959 shortly after his resignation as Army Chief, Taylor agreed with the view prevailing in 1956 that nuclear parity and, thus, mutual deterrence of general war had become fact. Along with the administration's critics, Taylor also believed that this condition would make limited wars more, rather than less, likely. For Moscow and Peking, cognizant of America's inflexible dependence on nuclear forces, and confident that Washington would not risk direct entanglement with Soviet nuclear power, would be emboldened to pursue their nefarious ambitions. Unable to respond to local aggression without resort to nuclear weapons, the U.S. would be increasingly paralyzed.

In place of Eisenhower's nuclear-oriented strategy, Taylor proposed a strategy of "flexible response." Rather than relying on allies' ground forces backed by American air and naval nuclear power, flexible response envisioned a buildup of mobile U.S. forces capable of responding swiftly and appropriately to any and all levels of conflict. The objectives were to enable the U.S. to respond without risk
of nuclear escalation, decrease Communist activism by demonstrating an ability to respond, and foster allies' support for action by diminishing the prospect of the use of nuclear weapons.48

Although theirs was a distinctly minority position, Taylor and the Army nevertheless managed to bring the Pentagon's war and force structure planning to a halt between November 1955 and March 1956. Thanks in no small part to the anxiety stirred by the increasingly alarming estimates of Soviet nuclear capabilities, Taylor was able to ignore the fact that U.S. nuclear strategy had supposedly been settled back in 1954, as reflected not only in American but also in NATO war plans (Chapter IV). As one of Admiral Radford's top aides wrote in February 1956, "the Army at every opportunity re-opens the issue [of nuclear strategy] and attempts to restate policy."49

By preventing the Joint Chiefs from resolving that issue on their own, the aide warned, the Army seemed bent on forcing Defense Secretary Wilson to resolve it for them by "directed verdict." The political repercussions of such action could be serious.50 Radford's aide implied that a "directed verdict" by Wilson, which would almost certainly be leaked to the press or disclosed in congressional testimony on the new defense budget, would create a storm of controversy. Such concern was not unjustified, for in
Congressional testimony in 1955, General Ridgway had implied, and in advanced excerpts from his memoirs he had specifically charged, that New Look budget and conventional force cuts had been imposed by the White House, just as administration critics charged in mid-1955 that Wilson and Eisenhower's refusal to follow service advice had resulted in the loss of U.S. air superiority. 50b

***

U.S. nuclear weapons policy came to a major crossroad during the early months of 1956 as the tensions that had pushed and pulled at the administration throughout 1955 began to converge. Inside the administration, the NSC was approaching the final phase of its review and revision of Basic National Security Policy. The Joint Chiefs remained diametrically split on nuclear policy and thus turned to the President for resolution. The oppressive weight of more than a year of vulnerability studies and alarming estimates of Soviet nuclear capabilities impelled the President's thoughts increasingly to the problem of surprise attack and how he should act to meet it. Outside the administration, moreover, critics of Eisenhower's response to growing evidence of the Soviet nuclear threat went on the offensive, launching an all-out campaign to expose what they alleged were the dangerous inadequacies of Eisenhower's defense strategy.
For example, between January and August 1956, the editors at Aviation Week magazine, a loyal mouthpiece of the Air Force and the military aviation industry, trumpeted the demise of U.S. air and nuclear superiority. Nineteen fifty six, they pronounced, would be America's "year of decision," for the new strength of Soviet air-atomic capabilities posed the "gravest crisis in our history as a nation. Never before," the editors continued, "had the U.S. "faced the possibility of total destruction."52 Given this unprecedented danger, Aviation Week and other Air Force boosters were outraged at the Air Force's share--$16.1 billion--of the President's meager $34 billion defense budget for 1957. The assertion by the administration that that amount was adequate Aviation Week described as a "fraud being perpetrated on the American people . . . ."There can be no doubt" that the President's budget "will doom this country to protection by a second rate Air Force." Trevor Gardner, who resigned in February 1956 as head of research and development at the Pentagon because he was dissatisfied with the resources devoted to the missile race, put it even more bluntly. "With every tick of the clock, the Soviet Union is moving closer to the capability of knocking this country out" by nuclear surprise attack.53
Eisenhower did not need the indictments of his partisan critics or vulnerability prophets to alert him to the challenge of Soviet nuclear power. Still, when added to top of the pile of vulnerability studies already on his desk, these attacks on his defense strategy nonetheless spurred the President to a surprising outpouring of opinions on nuclear weapons strategy and, ultimately, to a defense of his strategic vision. That outpouring of opinions began in late January 1956, with high level discussion of the NESC report, and climaxed in the heat of the bomber gap controversy in May 1956. On several occasions during this period, as he had throughout his first term, Eisenhower made it unmistakably clear that he would respond to any Soviet attack on America's allies or on the U.S. alone with the full force of U.S. strategic nuclear power.

One particularly remarkable instance of such reiteration occurred on May 24, 1956. Meeting that day with Admiral Radford and General Taylor--specifically at Taylor's request so that he could present his "flexible response" alternative to the President--Eisenhower explicitly rejected challenges to his strategy. The notion that the Soviets would initiate a war against the West without using nuclear weapons from the start of hostilities, as
General Taylor argued, depended upon the naive assumption that the Communists "think as we do with regard to the value of human life," Eisenhower declared. They did not, and he was certain that the Soviet Union would employ its nuclear weapons "at once, and in full force" in any war. To believe otherwise was "fatuous." "Massive retaliation, although the term has been scoffed at," Eisenhower explained, "is likely to be the key to our survival." At the first sign of hostile action by the Soviets, the U.S. must get its nuclear strike forces airborne and seek to destroy the enemy nuclear forces before they could attack.54

Steadfast though the President appeared in his determination to employ America's overwhelming nuclear capabilities to meet major Soviet aggression, his pontifications on the prospect of nuclear war were increasingly punctuated in early 1956 with expressions of abject horror, almost despondency, at what such a war would mean. Indeed, from these episodes there emerges a picture of a man profoundly disturbed by the ever-more frightening realities of the thermonuclear age--by the potential for unimaginable destruction in Soviet and American hands and the fact that the U.S., in the event of war, could not be shielded from such destruction.

For example, in a letter to Richard L. Simon of Simon
& Schuster, Inc., dated April 4, 1956, the President wrote, "We are rapidly getting to the point that no war can be won." War no longer entailed a contest. Instead, war now "comes close to destruction of the enemy and suicide for ourselves..." Yet, in the prospect of destruction lay the lone glimmer of hope. Eisenhower predicted,

When we get to the point, as we one day will, that both sides know that in any outbreak of general hostilities, regardless of the element of surprise, destruction will be both reciprocal and complete, possibly we will have enough sense to meet at the conference table with the understanding that the era of armaments has ended and the human race must conform its actions to this truth or die.55

Perhaps the most remarkable juxtaposition of Eisenhower's commitment to nuclear superiority and retaliation with his growing dismay at the prospect of nuclear conflict occurred in a meeting he held with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on February 27, 1956. That meeting addressed the current and future shape of the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal and how that arsenal should be employed in a general war.

The record of the meeting, made by Andrew Goodpaster, is an extraordinary document--almost one of a kind among the Eisenhower era documents declassified thus far.56 Presented by the Joint Chiefs with statistics on the number and type of nuclear warheads presently included in the
U.S. arsenal, Eisenhower first declared that he favored an extensive buildup of high-yield thermonuclear weapons through 1959, at which point he believed the buildup should level off. This course appeared to make the most efficient use of fissionable materials, would produce the most potent stockpile, and conformed to the recommendation of the Pentagon.

Examining the nation's plans for general war with the Communist bloc, however, the President discovered much that he did not like. For example, the plans betrayed a disconcerting amount of target overlap—that is, instances in which more than one nuclear weapon, and in some instances several weapons, were assigned for destruction of a single target. The President was sufficiently disturbed by this "overkill" to order the Pentagon to conduct a "careful review" and "appropriate subsequent revision in targeting plans."

After considering the plans further, Eisenhower also said that he "was inclined to question . . . whether thermonuclear weapons were not being used inappropriately—for example, against industrial targets of too little overall importance . . . and in other ways causing unnecessarily high population losses." The President therefore informed the Chiefs that "weapons [with yields] greater
than two megatons [or 100 times the blast yield of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima] should be used only for special purposes, and only after the Chiefs justify to themselves each particular use of that kind." Eisenhower also preferred that U.S. forces employ "air rather than ground detonations of thermonuclear weapons" to minimize fallout effects. Finally, he employed the Joint Chiefs to "think out carefully and objectively" each of these matters, giving special attention to the "procedures, the reasoning, and the basis of operational concepts" employed to determine the size, makeup, and use of the nation's nuclear arsenal.58

What does this extraordinary account reveal about Eisenhower's evolving nuclear strategy? First, we must recognize that, even for a Commander-in-Chief of Eisenhower's unmatched military experience, this meeting was a highly unusual instance of presidential involvement in the business of military planning. It seems undeniable that Eisenhower here directly intervened in decisions affecting not only which weapons U.S. military commanders might include in their war plans but also how those weapons might be used. Although decisions for use of atomic weapons had, by provision of the Atomic Energy Act of 1946, always rested in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief, all U.S.
war planning had proceeded on the assumption that, once that decision had been made, selection of weapons and targets would remain the prerogative of U.S. specified and unified commanders. 59

More generally, Eisenhower's remarks reflected the ineluctable dichotomy that was beginning to guide his nuclear outlook. On the one hand, the President ruled in favor of increasing the number and importance of high-yield thermonuclear weapons in the U.S. stockpile, in accordance with the development of the stockpile since September 1953 (Chapter III). On the other hand, he theoretically undercut this decision by expressing disapproval of existing target schemes, which assigned an increasing number and variety of targets to thermonuclear eradication.

If Eisenhower viewed nuclear war as unwinnable and disapproved of the overkill of megaton weapons, why did he authorize a dramatic increase in the number of those weapons and insist on war plans based on a massive preemptive strike by the Strategic Air Command? One likely answer is that exaggerations of Soviet offensive capabilities and misreadings of Moscow's intentions to include preparation for a nuclear Pearl Harbor, convinced Eisenhower that any lesser strategy would seal America's destruction. At the first indication of Soviet offensive
action, the U.S. must respond at once, with everything it had, with weapons most likely to destroy targets, and while the bulk of Soviet nuclear forces remained on the ground, or risk being destroyed.

The flip side of this imperative for a superior and preemptive capability was Eisenhower's conviction that such a war must never be allowed to erupt—the imperative of deterrence. This conviction reflected his growing appreciation of the potential horrors of a nuclear exchange and of the damage the U.S. could suffer in such an exchange. For the moment and foreseeable future, deterrence depended upon maintenance of a strategic capability so formidable that Moscow would never risk conflict. Eisenhower's nuclear outlook, it seems, was shifting. More and more, nuclear weapons became tools not for war but for protecting an uneasy peace.

This shift did not extend necessarily to the realm of limited war. Eisenhower's discourses on the use of nuclear weapons in limited wars offered even more significant and revealing evidence of the evolution of his views. It is useful to recall that it had been his views on this use of nuclear weapons that had distinguished Eisenhower's nuclear strategy from Truman's. Truman had been no less committed than Eisenhower to unleash U.S. strategic forces in the
event of general war. Unlike Truman, however, Eisenhower assumed the presidency convinced that nuclear weapons could and should be employed as essentially conventional weapons, in wars large and small.

As earlier chapters illustrated, however, misguided perceptions of Soviet capabilities and intentions, unfavorable developments in the cold war, and deference to allies' concerns, progressively chipped away at that conviction. But in the opening months of 1956, surprisingly, the President boldly reasserted his determination to use nuclear weapons in limited war situations. On January 23, 1956, in a discussion with Secretary Dulles and Lt. General Harold L. George concerning the implications of the U.S. and Soviet Union's growing thermonuclear capabilities, Eisenhower vigorously reaffirmed the New Look tenet of asymmetrical containment. Even though thermonuclear weapons might well produce an era of mutual deterrence, the President said that "he was all the more convinced that we could not prepare for little wars at great distances from the United States, and commit several divisions here and several divisions there to resistance against local aggression." Rather, the U.S. would depend on its nuclear striking forces and the "major deterrent that the prospect of strategic thermonuclear war would bring."
America's non-NATO allies would not be comforted by this strategy, Secretary Dulles interjected. They would want to know how the U.S. would respond to help them if they were attacked. The President's reply to Dulles bluntly summarized one of the fundamental elements of his defense outlook. "These little countries are going to have to be in a position to defend themselves on the ground," Eisenhower said, "depending upon the United States to send in air, naval, and other forms of mobile support."

Disturbed that the President's statement implied use of conventional forces alone in these instances, General George asked Eisenhower to clarify. Did he mean that "there would never be another Korea, i.e., that the U.S. would never again enter such a conflict "without the willingness to use [the] additional power that nuclear weapons give us to support the indigenous defending ground troops"? Eisenhower answered affirmatively, declaring that he would "'never commit our forces to battle where I cannot get at the heart of the enemy's power,'' as opposed to the "self-imposed limits upon our conduct of the Korean conflict."60

Eisenhower used similarly unmistakable language in a meeting with the Joint Chiefs on February 10, 1956. Referring to what staff secretary Goodpaster recorded as "peripheral war," the President assured the Chiefs that he would
never "commit small packets of [American] troops to such conflicts." But in conflicts "where the [Communist] attack is clear," Eisenhower promised that the U.S. would employ nuclear weapons in retaliation, unless the negative political consequences of such use were overriding.61

Despite such apparently definitive statements by the President concerning the use of nuclear weapons, actual NSC policy remained unsettled in the spring of 1956. Indeed, as revealed by the climactic NSC debate on the nuclear provisions of the new Basic National Security Policy, NSC 5602/1, and by the final provisions of NSC 5602/1 itself, the administration was essentially confused about the parameters of its policy on the use of nuclear weapons.62 Moreover, the debate suggested that the administration was regressing in this confusion to issues and disputes supposedly long-settled, exposing Eisenhower's apparent inability to make his national security policies stick.

The climactic NSC discussion of NSC 5602 took place on February 27, 1956. From the start of this meeting, there was sharp disagreement on whether and when the U.S. would employ nuclear weapons. Speaking for the majority of his colleagues (with the Army dissenting), Admiral Radford made it clear that the armed services believed that nuclear weapons should be viewed as conventional weapons. Like
any conventional weapon, in the event of war, they should be used whenever that use would improve the effectiveness and reduce the losses of American forces. Radford also explained, moreover, that the continuing failure to incorporate this view into national policy created a dangerous dichotomy between U.S. action policy and the actual shape and planning of U.S. military forces, and he urged the President to bring the two into line. "[N]uclear weapons would soon be so thoroughly integrated in the U.S. armed forces," the JCS chairman declared, "that inability to use these weapons would greatly reduce both our defensive and offensive capabilities. Indeed," Radford warned, "the idea of some dividing line between use and non-use of these weapons"--which had supposedly been erased by the New Look--"was getting us further and further from the realm of the possible and the actual."63

Eisenhower's reply to Radford's plea summarized the essence of his nuclear policy since Korea. U.S. defense strategy, he said, cannot overlook the serious "political implications" that would arise from use of nuclear arms. Given the state of allied and world opinion, the U.S. would encounter "serious political problems" if it used nuclear weapons in a limited war. The President claimed that he concurred with Radford's position, "from a strictly
military point of view," and that he did not necessarily believe that the world's repugnance at the use of nuclear weapons was correct. That repugnance "was nevertheless a fact." And because of that fact, Eisenhower predicted it would be a very long time before the U.S. could "adopt any military course of action it regards as appropriate" without regard for the political repercussions of such a course of action.64

Eisenhower's remarks were, on the one hand, eminently sensible and Clausewitzian. To employ force without regard for the political consequences of the use of force would fly in the face of the first "law" of war. On the other hand, the President was roaming well beyond this sensibility, and all but admitting that U.S. military policy had and would be controlled by world opinion. This was not theory, it was a fact, demonstrated quite clearly by the administration's approach to the use of force in the Korea, Indochina, and Quemoy-Matsu crises.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff recognized this and were convinced that it was undermining the effectiveness of U.S. national security strategy. It is interesting to recall what they wrote the President after their famous strategy conference in Puerto Rico in March 1956. "If there has been any single tendency in the execution of our national security policy which has operated against our
national interests in the past few years, it has been an over-concern for the acquiescence of allies in major crises."65 In other words, what Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles defined as political sensitivity and necessity, the Chiefs defined as producing a new kind of national impotence.

After Treasury Secretary Humphrey attempted to bolster the Joint Chiefs' case with an economic argument, Dulles entered the fray of the February 27th debate. Treating the hawkish position with obvious contempt, Dulles derisively quipped that their recommendation would permit the U.S. to use force as it wished, but at the cost of "losing all our allies." Dulles also invoked the authority of world opinion to rebuke Humphrey and Radford. Conjuring up the moral shadow of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Dulles urged the NSC to consider the "terrible repercussions" that would result if the U.S. employed nuclear weapons "against the colored peoples of Asia."66

Perhaps sensing that the moral and political inhibitions implied by the secretary of state went too far, Eisenhower suddenly retreated from his caveat of political considerations. First, he asserted that Dulles's conditions could not be applied to the defensive use of nuclear weapons. The President said he would not stand for a policy which did not permit American forces to "use any
weapon available to us in the event that our forces are directly attacked. . . ."

Next, when the NSC addressed the more specific policy for meeting and deterring local aggression, Eisenhower completely contradicted his earlier statement to Radford. One of the present administration's most severe criticisms of the Democrats, the President reminded the NSC, concerned their handling of the Korean War—namely, waging the war "with handcuffs on." The U.S. must never again fight a war in that manner nor allow limited war to drag on. Echoing Admiral Radford and Secretary Humphrey, Eisenhower now insisted, "we must plan to fight peripheral wars on the same basis as we would fight general war." For example, had the NSC not agreed that, if the Communists renewed their aggression in Korea, the U.S. would respond without any restrictions?

As he had done on previous occasions, Dulles sought immediately to moderate Eisenhower's firm commitment to a nuclear strategy. How would the U.S. respond, the secretary asked, if the Communists attacked South Vietnam? "Would we proceed to drop atomic bombs on Peking?" Undeterred by Dulles's application of the tactic favored by Democratic critics of "massive retaliation," the President replied, "we might not drop bombs on Peking," but "we would certainly bomb the bases in [Communist] China which were
supporting the aggression."

At this point, the historian is tempted to plead, "will the real Eisenhower please stand up!" How does one reconcile Eisenhower's refusal to grant the JCS majority a definitive statement of policy on the employment of nuclear weapons in limited wars, with his seemingly definitive assertion that the U.S. would fight limited wars "on the same basis as [it] would fight a general war"? Was the President really committed to removing the "handcuffs" from America's use of force in actions below the threshold of general war?

Judging by the history of his first term, one must conclude that Eisenhower was not so prepared. In his and Dulles's judgment, the political requirements of Atlantic solidarity and favorable world opinion would always override "military necessity" or military effectiveness, except in the event of Soviet attack on the continental U.S. or NATO. This appeared particularly true for the world of 1956 and beyond, in which the added inhibitor of alleged Soviet nuclear parity would not only make Washington think at least twice before intervening militarily in any level of conflict, but would almost certainly cause America's key allies to exert even greater pressure on the U.S. to avoid provocative actions.

What, then, was the reality of Eisenhower's nuclear
strategy at the end of his first term? One must conclude that, despite strong assertions to the contrary both by the President and included in NSC 5602/1—the product of the year-long revision of Basic National Security Policy initiated by the Killian Committee—Eisenhower's nuclear strategy was neither what it had been nor quite what the administration perceived it to be.

The text of NSC 5602/1 leaves no doubt that the President's defense strategy remained firmly based on nuclear weapons. In places, the new policy document even suggests an enhanced readiness to employ nuclear weapons in limited conflicts, regardless of allied disapproval. For example, echoing the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the policy specified strict limits on consultation. "If time permits and an attack on the United States or U.S. forces is not involved, the United States should consult appropriate allies before any decision to use nuclear... weapons is made by the President" [emphasis added]. As if this sentence did not leave Washington sufficient freedom of action, the NSC also specified that, "In the event of actual Communist local aggression, the United States should, if necessary, make its own decision as to the use of nuclear weapons." In other words, if confronted with the choice of permitting aggression to
succeed or taking action which increased the risk of
general war or loss of allied support—such as employing
nuclear weapons to blunt the aggression—Washington must be
ready to incur such risk.69

Further indicative of a reaffirmed nuclear strategy,
NSC 5602/1 included a provision for advance authorization
of nuclear weapons use.70 That provision hinted of a major
step forward in Eisenhower's nuclear outlook. Not only was
the provision the first of its kind. It also suggested a
readiness to depart from the tradition—and the State
Department's long-standing insistence—that the first use
of nuclear weapons by the U.S. must be authorized by the
President only at the moment of crisis and after considera-
tion of all political factors. The provision certainly was
not intended at the time for application to offensive
actions by American forces—although Eisenhower's tacit
approval of General LeMay's plan for strategic preemption
of a Soviet attack already effectively amounted to such an
application. And it probably was inserted into the new
Basic National Security Policy to appease the JCS. Still,
the provision was not without practical impact. Before the
end of 1956, Eisenhower would in fact grant prior authori-
zation to the Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD) for
employment of nuclear warheads in air defense.71
If any more proof of the firmness of Eisenhower's commitment to his nuclear strategy was required, it could be found in statements made by his principal advisers to Congress at the close of his first term. As Radford explained, "Our whole military program is based on the use of atomic weapons in global war and on the use of atomic weapons in accordance with military necessity in situations short of global war. . . . From the tactical and strategic point of view, the atomic weapon is integrated into all our plans and programs." Defense Secretary Wilson was equally blunt. "In other words, the smaller atomic weapons, the tactical weapons, . . . have now become conventional weapons. There is no such thing," he told the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense in January 1957, "as a nice, easy-going war. If you have one, you have to go into it and win it."72

But was the administration in fact prepared to use nuclear force without or against the advice of its principal allies as NSC 5602/1 required? Did the White House really consider tactical nuclear weapons to be conventional? The events of 1953-1956 suggest a negative answer to both questions. That history suggests, for example, that fear of weakening Western solidarity, and other negative political consequences, would almost always outweigh the
stakes involved in individual instances of "local" aggression or the potential benefits of the quick defeat of such aggression by resort to nuclear weapons. Another point in the new policy document recognized frankly that key allies desperately feared and would resist use of nuclear weapons below the threshold of general war. "The apprehensions of U.S. allies to using nuclear weapons to counter local aggression can be lessened if the U.S. deterrent force is not solely dependent on such weapons, thus avoiding the question of their use unless and until the deterrent fails."73

This statement injected a specious assumption into U.S. policy. For it strongly implied that only America's allies, not the Eisenhower administration itself, were troubled by "apprehensions ... as to using nuclear weapons to counter local aggression." The President's occasional bold remarks not withstanding, it would seem that Eisenhower and his advisers, save the JCS majority and Secretary Humphrey, possessed nothing but "apprehensions" when it came to nuclear weapons and limited wars.

Frank statements such as those made by Wilson and Radford hardly indicated otherwise. On the contrary, what was remarkable about those and countless other White House pronouncements on a nuclear strategy was not their blunt
acknowledgment of a dependence on nuclear weapons, but rather that they had to be made at all. Three and a half years after the New Look had been formulated, after the administration had quite clearly decided in favor of the conventionalization of nuclear weapons, the basic elements of Eisenhower's strategic vision had been repeatedly debated in the NSC and Pentagon, and then were explained in public as if they were something new. What is more, the definitive character of such statements is troubling given the reality of the President's political unreadiness to live up to them.

As the end of Eisenhower's first term approached, his administration had, for practical purposes, recoiled from the New Look. Rhetorically, Eisenhower had reaffirmed his commitment to the nuclear and non-nuclear components of his strategic vision. In terms of force structure, the New Look objectives were on schedule for achievement in 1957.(74) And the federal budget was, temporarily, in balance. But the political will that was key to full implementation of the military and diplomatic elements of this strategy was severely weakened. For instance, that Eisenhower would actually employ nuclear weapons in response to Communist aggression below the threshold of general war had become extremely doubtful. The notion of
resorting to swift, decisive use of American tactical atomic—or even conventional—power to prevent localized Communist aggression from escalating into another Korea had evolved into a policy whereby the U.S. might resort to nuclear weapons once the aggression had, in the President's words, "[grown] to anything like Korea proportions." But as NSC 5602/1 clearly stated, even at that point the American response would be selective and tailored so as not to risk escalation and/or allied disaffection.

Eisenhower had won the presidency in 1952 in no small part on the basis of his pledge to re-take the initiative in the cold war. Reflecting the bitter frustration felt by the American people at the steady expansion of international Communism since the end of World War II, the new administration had designed its defense strategy to put an end to that expansion by a carefully crafted assortment of means—including collective security, covert operations, psychological warfare, and economic and military aid. But above all, the stifling of Communist expansion, Eisenhower and his advisers understood, would rely upon military deterrence—namely, the threat of overwhelming retaliation by U.S. air and naval power—and, if deterrence failed, upon the defeat of aggression by swift and punishing use of this power.
In 1956, the administration remained committed to deterring general and limited war by America's superior air and naval nuclear capabilities and, in the case of the Soviet nuclear threat, by an adequate continental defense. Rather than one of the primary means to the larger end of reducing Communist power, however, the deterrence of conflict had become the primary end in itself for the administration. Ostensibly, this objective conformed perfectly to the New Look. According to the Eisenhower-Dulles philosophy of the "long haul," if long confronted with the challenge of a free, prosperous, and united Western world, the Communist empires would eventually implode. The object of deterrence, therefore, was not only to prevent war but to buy time and contribute to the aggravation of the "internal contradictions" of the Communists' authoritarian societies.

But what if deterrence failed? In 1956, that was a question which, compared to 1953-54, the Eisenhower administration was unprepared to answer with assurance and purpose. Increasingly after 1954, the only answer apparently considered viable was to avoid any action which might possibly lead to nuclear escalation or to allied alienation, Suez notwithstanding. The notion that the U.S. would act militarily to punish aggressors who had any connection
to Moscow or Peking was more dream than reality. Indeed, one is tempted to characterize as self-deception the administration's continuing declarations—in policy papers, in public, and among its top members—that it was quite ready to use nuclear weapons in this capacity.

Eisenhower, as we have seen, repeatedly proclaimed himself committed to such action, and he did so with increasing frequency and passion as 1956 wore on. Secretary Dulles, despite his stated objections to a policy commitment to the employment of nuclear weapons in limited wars, reassured the President that he supported a nuclear-oriented strategy and the notion of defensive use of nuclear weapons by American forces. Within Eisenhower's top circle of national security advisers, only General Taylor consistently and obviously recoiled from this strategy. As a result, national security policy, military force structure, and war plans were all mapped out in line with this strategy. It was almost as if the President and his team had no memories—that they forgot the very consequential and constricting qualifications which they themselves always attached to prospective use of nuclear weapons.

At the end of Eisenhower's first term, Washington's assessment of the military balance between the United
States and Soviet Union—with its acceptance of nuclear parity and American vulnerability, its expectation of increasing Communist subversion and local aggression, and its warning of the fragility of the U.S. military-technological advantage—at first glance casts the contradictions of Eisenhower's reaffirmed nuclear strategy in stark relief. Given those contradictions, and considering the Communists' many successes during the decade of unquestioned U.S. nuclear superiority, why would the President extend a strategy that depended upon nuclear deterrence and which, in the past, had apparently hindered U.S. ability to respond to Communist activism?

Two answers are suggested. First, for Eisenhower and the vast majority of his advisers, the increasing danger of the Soviet nuclear threat—as manufactured by exaggerations of Soviet capabilities and presumptions of Soviet intentions—made deterrence the only option. To risk nuclear exchange with a Soviet Union now armed with multimegaton weapons and an allegedly superior fleet of bombers and missiles was madness. Though Eisenhower himself vacillated between doubt and acceptance of the notion that mutual deterrence would increase along with the size and potency of the American and Russian nuclear arsenals, he needed no convincing that a nuclear exchange could mean the
end of civilization. General James M. Gavin, head of Army
research and development, said as much in testimony before
Senator Symington's subcommittee on airpower in June 1956.
In one day, Gavin asserted, a strike by 150 Soviet ICBMs
could kill seventy million Americans and, depending on
which way the winds were blowing, leave much of North
America uninhabitable due to fallout.77

Secondly, the threat of Soviet nuclear power, and the
intimately related demands of U.S. economic strength and
Western collective security, created dilemmas which
Eisenhower was unable to resolve. Short of completely
discarding his views on fiscal responsibility and collec-
tive security, the President could see no way to maintain
deterrence without a nuclear-oriented strategy. The
unacceptable alternative included massive defense expendi-
tures for U.S. and allies' conventional forces, constant
involvement in peripheral wars, and a slide into the kind
of "garrison state" that Eisenhower deeply feared. From
there, it was a short step to defeat in the cold war.
Still, the inescapable demands of world opinion and allied
solidarity required, at the very least, a practical
moderation of a strategy built on nuclear strength.

Moreover, while Eisenhower was trying to satisfy these
somewhat contradictory demands at the international
level, at home he was being vigorously attacked from three different sides. General Taylor and the Army continued to lobby against his defense strategy, claiming that its devotion to nuclear weapons jeopardized free world security and paralyzed America's ability to respond appropriately to Communist aggression. The Air Force, the press, and Democratic hawks in Congress, by contrast, claimed that the President was jeopardizing America's survival by not spending enough on nuclear capabilities. Finally, during the 1956 campaign, Adlai Stevenson and his supporters--to Stevenson's political demise--charged Eisenhower both with allowing the U.S. to fall behind in the missile race and with failing to pursue arms limitations and a nuclear test ban.78

Thus, what appeared at the close of Eisenhower's first term as confusion on nuclear weapons policy and strategy was also the latest and most difficult phase of the administration's ongoing struggle with the progressively complex dilemmas of the thermonuclear age. Eisenhower was continuing his battle to provide "both security and solvency," but under increasingly fluid and volatile international conditions and the ever-expanding demands of free world leadership. Was his strategic vision appropriate to those conditions and demands? More important, was it
adequate to meet the challenge of Soviet power? In the words of General LeMay, this second question was the most important question facing the free world between 1957 and 1960. President Eisenhower thought that his was the proper course, but he was also the first to recognize that the answer, like the end of the "struggle of the ages" itself, was one for the long term.
Conclusion

Sensibility Under Siege

During his first term as President, Dwight D. Eisenhower had encountered three principal obstacles to the successful implementation of his strategic vision: political and institutional resistance to his budgetary conservatism and conventional force reductions; the shifting requirements of a geopolitical environment constantly buffeted by crises; and the intellectual challenge of the hypothesis of American vulnerability. Judging by the composition of the U.S. armed forces, the President's fiscal year 1957 defense budget, and the state of the Western alliance in mid-1956, one might conclude that Eisenhower had successfully overcome each of those obstacles. But he had not.

Even before the ink had dried on NSC 5602/1, the Joint Chiefs and the armed services were again wrestling over force structure, nuclear strategy, and service missions. Before the end of 1956, the crises over Suez and Hungary had severely weakened the Atlantic alliance and the credibility of the U.S. deterrent. And in mid-1956, the hypothesis of American vulnerability had resurfaced, exposing, many believed, the utter failure of Eisenhower's nuclear
strategy. The question was not easily settled, however. For the entirety of Eisenhower's second term, in fact, the adequacy of U.S. nuclear forces and national security policy became the subject of intense public concern, fiery congressional debate, and electoral politics.

Inspired by the grim estimates and vulnerability studies of 1955, and intensified by the partisan politics of the 1956 election season, the charge that Eisenhower's nuclear strategy was inadequate became the centerpiece of special hearings on U.S. and Soviet airpower before the Subcommittee on the Air Force of the Senate Armed Services Committee.1 Held between mid-April and early July 1956, the airpower hearings marked the public maturation of the vulnerability hypothesis. The hearings were dominated by subcommittee chairman Stuart Symington, fellow Democrat Henry M. Jackson, and the parade of high-ranking Air Force officers the senators called to bear witness to the gospel of the "bomber gap" and American vulnerability. With unbridled enthusiasm, Symington and Jackson drove the proceedings toward a single, inexorable conclusion: the Eisenhower-Wilson defense policy—in particular, the inadequate funding of the U.S. Air Force—jeopardized not only the security but the very survival of the United States.
Specifically, the Symington committee's final report charged that Eisenhower and Wilson had placed a balanced budget ahead of military strength, ignored and/or underestimated unimpeachable evidence of the Soviet Union's rapidly growing air-nuclear capabilities, and thereby allowed the Communists to equal, if not surpass, the U.S. in airpower. Moreover, the administration had intentionally deceived the American people as to the reality of the airpower race and the seriousness of the Soviet nuclear threat. In fact, as General LeMay himself testified, the committee asserted that the Soviet Union was producing twice as many long-range bombers as the U.S. and would, perhaps, as early as 1958, attain the capability to deliver a decisive nuclear surprise attack on the U.S.2

When Defense Secretary Wilson appeared before the Symington committee and attempted to defend the President's defense strategy and the adequacy of Air Force appropriations, the hearings took on a distinctly McCarthyite tone. For example, when Wilson rejected the assertions of impending U.S. bomber inferiority and maintained that the U.S. would retain its superiority through 1960, Symington accused him of lying and of unconstitutionally opposing the "expressed will of the Congress by refusing to increase B-52 production as promptly as practical." Of Wilson,
Symington then publicly declared, "the usefulness of this Cabinet officer has come to an end." 3

Followed shortly by Suez and the apparent paralysis of American power displayed during Hungary's dark hour, the indictments of American vulnerability and impending nuclear inferiority leveled during the airpower hearings suggested to many observers that Eisenhower's cold war and defense strategies were bankrupt.

Just when it appeared that confidence in Eisenhower's strategic vision had fallen to a new low, however, something extraordinary occurred. In late February 1957, Air Force Secretary Donald Quarles and Air Force Chief of Staff Nathan Twining appeared before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense to discuss the Pentagon's budget for fiscal year 1958. But rather than discuss Air Force programs and allocations for the future, Quarles and Twining were interrogated about information the Air Force had given to Congress in the past. Specifically, they were asked about data provided to the Symington subcommittee—data which had served as the basis for that body's damning indictment of Eisenhower's nuclear strategy.

Estimates of Soviet bomber strength and production rates supplied by the Air Force in 1955 and 1956, it turns out, had been grossly exaggerated. The number of Soviet
intercontinental bombers, which the Air Force had claimed would grow to between 500 and 800 aircraft by 1958, was known to be less than 75 at the beginning of 1957.(4) As the present study has shown, such exaggerations had been characteristic of Air Force intelligence estimates for years, and the Air Force had used this latest set to secure more funding from Congress.5 But now the exaggeration had been uncovered. Early flights of the new U-2 photo-reconnaissance aircraft had confirmed suspicions long-held by Eisenhower and CIA that the Air Force's ever-rising estimates of Soviet airpower were wide of the mark.6 It was discovered, moreover, that the Air Force, though it possessed the new intelligence, had provided the inflated figures to Congress. Further, it was only when presented with this revelation that the Air Force volunteered new estimates.

Why, Congressman Daniel J. Flood (D-Pa.) asked Twining and Quarles in February 1957, had the error not been reported to Congress? Why had the emergency increase in appropriations for and production of U.S. bombers gone forward if the Russians were in fact grievously inferior to the U.S. in airpower? Secretary Quarles preferred to respond to Flood off the record, but General Twining's explanation was nothing short of stupifying. Retreating to
the safety of the "two year rule," Twining briefly acknowledged that the U.S. presently was "considerably stronger than the Soviets" in airpower. However, he emphasized several times over several days of testimony that the updated estimates reduced Soviet bomber strength only as it currently existed. "This does not mean," Twining said, that the Soviets "cannot in time do what we estimated [last summer]. They have the capability to go up in the next couple of years to where we had them originally." With the Soviet Union's unquestioned "mass production" capacity, the loss of air-atomic superiority predicted by the Symington Committee might still occur.7

Twining, in other words, defended the estimates error, defended the faulty intelligence method that had contributed to the exaggerations, and repeated predictions of impending Soviet strength and increasing American vulnerability based on these same discredited beliefs.

Along with Congressman Flood, only Jamie Whitten (D-Miss.) and Errett P. Scrivner (R-Kan.) seemed to grasp the meaning of what had just transpired. Despite the Air Force's egregious errors--and implicit deception of the White House and Congress--Whitten declared in amazement, "I have heard practically no questions as to the soundness of your original premise"--that is, that the Russians have the
ability to launch a surprise nuclear attack on the U.S. Instead, the Air Force continued to "build up our figures putting Russian strength up to the highest possible figure" and "play ours down to the worst we could possibly do if everybody [on our side] had bad breaks."8

Despite Whitten's perceptiveness, the Air Force's version of the hypothesis of American vulnerability was allowed to stand. For no sooner had the bomber gap come unraveled than a new gap, a missile gap, was fabricated to take its place. On October 4, 1957, only seven months after General Twining's testimony, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, the world's first man-made satellite. Carried into orbit by an enormous SS-6 rocket, Sputnik was instantly interpreted as proof of a Soviet megaton ICBM capability and, therefore, as confirmation of the inferiority of America's military technology and the vulnerability of American targets. Without hesitation, most Americans accepted the notion that the U.S. had lost the missile race, and Soviet Premier Khrushchev's boast that "American weapons, . . . including the B-52, belonged in museums."9

Mostly unknown to the public at the time, Sputnik triggered a wave of vulnerability and missile gap hysteria inside the administration. The Soviet achievement was by
no means a surprise to the Pentagon or the U.S. intelligence community, and Eisenhower viewed the event not as a military but as a psychological blow to the West. But among the President's civilian advisers and consultants, alarm soared to unprecedented heights. On November 7, 1957, Eisenhower received the report of the Security Resources Panel of the Federal Civil Defense Administration's Science Advisory Committee. Known as the Gaither Committee--after its chairman H. Rowan Gaither, chairman of the boards of the Ford Foundation and the RAND Corporation--the Security Resources Panel had been established by the President in April 1957 to study civil defense, largely on the advice of Nelson Rockefeller. Staffed by a Who's Who of vulnerability prophets, the Gaither Committee and its final report, secretly written by Paul Nitze, "practically predicted the end of civilization."10 According to the committee, the Soviet Union was only two to three years away from deploying scores, perhaps hundreds, of ICBMs of megaton yield. The Soviet GNP was growing much faster that that of the U.S., and the Soviets were currently armed with at least 1,500 nuclear warheads, 4,500 bombers, and 300 submarines. Directly influenced by the work of Albert Wohlstetter and his colleagues at RAND, the Gaither report
offered, finally, a chilling portrait of American vulnerability. Unable to get its bombers airborne with less than several hours of warning, the Strategic Air Command would be destroyed on the ground by a Soviet surprise attack, the committee alleged. And America's population would suffer tens of millions of casualties in such an attack because of the lack of emergency shelters.  

Outside the administration, aided by the leak of portions of Gaither's findings to Chalmers Roberts of The Washington Post, the notion of a missile gap led Symington and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Tx.) to launch another investigation of Eisenhower's defense programs. Johnson's Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee would hound the administration and celebrate the hypothesis of American vulnerability for the next three years.

The evidence of the Soviet Union's expanding nuclear capabilities that informed these allegations and investigations was not insignificant. In the summer of 1956, for example, the U.S. intelligence community radically revised its estimate of the size of the Soviet Union's nuclear stockpile and supply of fissionable materials. No less substantial, however, was evidence that the hypothesis of American vulnerability was being grossly exaggerated. By
the end of 1958, for instance, intelligence estimates of Soviet long-range bomber strength for 1960-61 had declined to only nineteen percent of the figure flaunted by the Air Force and the Symington committee in 1956.(14) In fact, as Nikita Khrushchev later admitted, American airpower superiority was "both qualitative and quantitative. . . . Our country was," as he put it, "literally a great big target range for American bombers. . . ." Moreover, neither the Bison nor the Bear bomber had the range or speed to execute a surprise attack on the U.S.15 Finally, in late 1961, the Kennedy administration revealed that the missile gap had never existed. The Soviet Union had deployed, at most, a mere four ICBMs.

***

Khrushchev's admission of Soviet vulnerability refocuses attention on three critical questions raised by the present study. First, how much did the Eisenhower administration really know about the Soviet Union's intentions and air-nuclear capabilities? Second, was sufficient mitigating information available at the time to permit a more accurate assessment of Soviet capabilities? and if so, what difference would such an assessment have made in Eisenhower's conduct of national security policy? Finally, with or without a better appreciation of Soviet weakness and
American strength, was Eisenhower's nuclear strategy ever viable?

One must acknowledge that there were severe limitations on American knowledge of life behind the Iron Curtain. Although Western intelligence sources were extensive, especially after 1955, penetration of the Soviet Union's closed society was anything but complete. Needless to say, the gathering of information about that society's most closely-guarded military secrets posed another challenge altogether. Therefore, when attempting to assess the Eisenhower administration's studies and predictions of Soviet nuclear capabilities, one must immediately recognize that these were just that—studies and predictions based on estimates. And intelligence estimates, even the best, are sometimes little more than sophisticated guesses. Given this fact and the climate of fear that pervaded the 1950s, perhaps more accurate readings of Soviet military capabilities could not be expected.

Because of these circumstances, and because of the hard lessons of the 1930s and Pearl Harbor, the U.S. intelligence community lived by the "better safe than sorry" method of military estimates—namely, basing one's own military preparations on worst-case estimates of enemy capabilities, rather than on guesses of enemy intentions or
even known enemy forces.

This method had much to recommend it; that is if, in practice, it translated into that which it promised: intelligence estimates based solidly on the best available information on demonstrated Soviet capabilities. But that was not the case. As the present study had shown, the hypothesis of American vulnerability, and the intimately related tendency to exaggerate Soviet military capabilities and to presume Soviet intentions, had so penetrated the thinking of key administration officials, military officers, and civilian consultants that whatever information the U.S. collected on the Soviet Union was inevitably plugged into this preconceived framework. As the noted Soviet specialist Raymond Garthoff put it, "The dictum 'estimate capabilities and not intentions' conceals a smuggled assumption. It really means 'estimate capabilities to build up military forces assuming implicitly an intention to maximize capabilities;' usually it also assumes--and sometimes imputes--hostile intentions."16

This connection between readings of capabilities and intentions is fundamental. Estimates of "capabilities and intentions are not separate elements; there is a dialectic between them."17 During the Eisenhower (and Truman) presi-
dency, misguided estimates of each--exaggerations of the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal and delivery capability, and presumptions of a Soviet willingness to launch an offensive strike on the West--worked in tandem to generate a particularly grim outlook. In short, the notion that the Kremlin would actually consider a surprise attack on the U.S. led many American analysts and officials to exaggerate any enhancement of the Soviet arsenal. And exaggerations of Soviet military strength further convinced Washington of the offensive bent of Moscow's intentions.18

The catalyst to this formula, and the real key to its influence on U.S. national security policy after 1950, was the hypothesis of American vulnerability. For only with the additional conviction that the United States had become extremely vulnerable to Soviet nuclear attack did the danger embodied by Russia's nuclear forces and possible war plans become palpable.

Thus we come to the question of whether a more accurate assessment of American vulnerability and Soviet capabilities would have produced or permitted a meaningful change in Eisenhower's conduct of national security policy? It is not the domain of the historian to make such guesses. The historian may seek an answer, however, by way of examining two things: the path that Eisenhower pursued
on the basis of his administration's misguided readings of Soviet capabilities and American vulnerability; and the policies that Moscow pursued on the basis of its full knowledge of its own nuclear inferiority.

As the present study has demonstrated, exaggerations of Soviet capabilities and the hypothesis of American vulnerability progressively bled Eisenhower's strategic vision of much of its original design. Having entered the White House committed to re-taking the initiative in the cold war and to the selective application of U.S. military strengths to contain and punish Communist aggression, beginning in 1954 the Eisenhower administration nevertheless retreated to the same reactive policy and defensive posture for which the Republicans had criticized Truman and Acheson. And it also retreated from the military logic of the New Look.

Similarly, between 1953 and 1960, Moscow's global policy followed two principal paths, both of which betrayed the enormous restraining influence of U.S. air, naval, and nuclear superiority. First, Khrushchev devoted considerable attention to disguising the extent of Soviet nuclear inferiority. Second, Moscow pursued its revolutionary ambitions by less overtly provocative tactics.

Compared to its estimates of Soviet capabilities,
Washington's estimates of Soviet intentions were accurate. While it is doubtful that the Kremlin planned a preventive war against the West, Moscow was, as the White House discerned, committed to holding on to leadership of the forces of anti-democratic revolution, undermining America's relations with its European allies, and spreading Soviet influence throughout the developing world. The dilemma for the Kremlin, however, was how to pursue these objectives in the face of U.S. nuclear superiority—in other words, without provoking direct superpower confrontation and U.S. application of massive retaliation to the USSR or its clients.

Moscow's answer to this dilemma was twofold. First, following the death of Stalin, the Kremlin relied increasingly on economic, military, and industrial aid to win allies and influence in the struggle for the Third World. Second, and more important, the Soviets carefully constructed the myth of nuclear parity and, exploiting the West's fear of possible nuclear war, carried on their revolutionary activities beneath the umbrella of a fabricated nuclear stalemate. Not unlike Hitler's intimidation of 1936-1938, Moscow perceived that its adversary's nuclear superiority and escalatory options could be neutralized if the West could be made to believe that nuclear parity existed and
that any confrontation would escalate to general war.19

The Soviet strategy worked well in the short run. With the aid of America's vulnerability prophets and the cloak of secrecy shrouding Soviet society, periodic displays of apparently advanced Soviet nuclear capabilities convinced Washington of Soviet nuclear parity and of American and West European vulnerability. And the President, accordingly, grew increasingly reluctant to make use of U.S. air and naval striking power either selectively or decisively, short of general war. This strategy, moreover, worked hand-in-hand with Moscow's "peace campaign." Launched immediately after Stalin's death in March 1953, and elaborately sustained throughout the 1950s, this campaign aimed, first, at enticing America's European allies to convert their fears of the Soviet Union's alleged nuclear strength into a belief that Moscow was open to serious negotiation and, second, into pressure on Washington to moderate its nuclear strategy.

Together, these elements of Moscow's strategy were designed not only to weaken NATO and to neutralize U.S. nuclear superiority, but to buy time. Because the Soviet Union, prior to 1957-58, lacked a significant nuclear threat to the United States and could not afford to keep pace with the U.S. in the arms race, Khrushchev used the
cover of the fabricated nuclear stalemate to build a Soviet ballistic missile capability which, it was hoped, would establish effective nuclear parity and mutual deterrence.20

Some readers might conclude that the writer is suggesting that a more accurate assessment of Soviet nuclear capabilities would have permitted Eisenhower to employ nuclear weapons to contain the challenge of Communist power. In response, those readers might assert that there was never an occasion instance where U.S. nuclear power could have been effectively employed without risking total war or inflicting indefensible civilian casualties. The critical issue, however, is really not where or when, given such an assessment, the U.S. might have employed its nuclear strength effectively. The critical issue is the effect that such an assessment could have had not only on Washington's calculations but on the calculations and actions of Moscow and Peking.

Citing the Communists' belligerent behavior during the years 1948-1960, some critics might contend that the effect would have been inconsequential. The Soviets, they would say, displayed no tendency to bend to American coercion during this period. Such arguments are flawed. Most scholars would agree—and Soviet archives may soon confirm—that Moscow was chary of a confrontation with the
U.S. and, therefore, exercised a moderating influence at the end of the Korean War, at the Geneva Conference of 1954, and during both Quemoy-Matsu crises. Another measure of the Soviets' appreciation of the true balance of nuclear strength lies not in what they did but in what they refrained from doing during the Eisenhower years. One can only wonder what activities the Communists might have foregone had the limits of Soviet military capabilities been public knowledge in the West.

Similarly, one can only speculate how Eisenhower's strategic vision might have fared without the myth of Soviet parity and the challenge of the hypothesis of American vulnerability. One possibility is that the President would have adhered more forthrightly to the tenets of his strategy. By this, I do not mean that he would have become trigger happy with American nuclear forces, but that he might have pursued a more assured and active implementation of the Eisenhower-Dulles vision of containment.

This raises the third and final question. With or without a finer understanding of Soviet capabilities and intentions, was Eisenhower's nuclear-oriented strategy viable? Was a more assured and active implementation of that strategy possible? On the one hand, the first
question must be answered affirmatively. Although it underwent considerable evolution and, in some respects, considerable dilution, Eisenhower's nuclear strategy remained in place throughout his presidency. To that strategy, moreover, must be attributed the achievement of several important U.S. objectives: deterrence of major conflict for nearly eight years; construction of a strategic arsenal and continental defense system which secured the U.S. and its allies and established the basis of free world security for the next fifteen years; and formulation of defense budgets that provided both security and solvency.

On the other hand, the question of viability raises some difficulties. For example, was Eisenhower's nuclear-oriented strategy ever truly viable given the formidable moral stigma attached to all nuclear weapons? Even though a very strong case can be made that any moral distinction between the use of nuclear versus non-nuclear weapons against military targets is fatuous, the Eisenhower administration never persuasively made that case; just as it failed to make the case that all nuclear weapons are not weapons of mass destruction. Though the President and most of his principal advisers disagreed intellectually with
such a moral distinction, in the end they bowed to it, recognizing that most of the world believed in it.

The problem of moral inhibition, of course, was compounded by the deep uneasiness most of America's chief allies felt regarding the implications of Eisenhower's nuclear strategy. As long as London, Paris, Bonn, and Tokyo opposed the use of nuclear weapons—or even the swift employment of non-nuclear air and naval striking power—in any instance short of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, could the President's strategy work? Regardless of the severe limits of the Soviets' ability to strike the U.S., the fact that they were quite capable of a devastating attack on Western Europe was impossible to escape and would, it seems, always hold the New Look captive.

As a matter of practical policy, therefore, the notion that nuclear weapons were conventional weapons was all but dead in the White House by early 1955—though it remained very much alive in U.S. national security guidelines, military force structure, and war plans. If deterrence had ever failed, this dichotomy could have become problematic. But what were the alternatives to the strategy Eisenhower formulated, particularly considering American perceptions of Soviet capabilities and intentions and American vulnerability? Had Eisenhower, in fact, followed the right
strategy at least partly on the basis of the wrong reasons—namely, the misguided estimates of Soviet strength and American vulnerability?

Despite Washington's grim view of the nuclear balance, Eisenhower cautiously believed that time was on the side of the West. Although the short term appeared to hold only the prospect of increasing danger to the West and increasing pressure for compromise with the Communists and compromise of the President's fundamental fiscal and military beliefs, Eisenhower remained confident that, in the long run, the free world would prevail and the Communist empires would collapse. But this would occur only if the West remained strong, united, and secure, based on the collective security, prosperous economy, and unchallengable military deterrent demanded by his strategic vision. The determining question was whether the United States could endure the costs that this long-term struggle would entail. With constant vigilance, strength, and moral probity, Eisenhower thought that it could. He was right.
Preface


Note On Terminology

1. Thomas B. Cochran et al., Nuclear Weapons Databook, Volume I, U.S. Forces and Capabilities (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing, Co., 1984), pp. 22-23. Thermonuclear weapons are not purely fusion weapons. The fusion of the thermonuclear material is itself achieved by a fission explosion which produces tritium and the extreme temperature, 10-100 million degrees Kelvin, required for fusion. The thermonuclear material is usually lithium-6 deuteride, the chemical compound that is solid at normal temperatures, unlike tritium and deuterium which are gases, and thus which proved the secret key to thermonuclear weaponry. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

2. These designs, both gun-type and implosion designs, included the following warheads during Eisenhower's presidency: Mk-1, Mk-III-Mk-13, W19, B20-B26, T4, B28, W28-W33, B36, B39, W37, W39, W40. Ibid., pp. 6-8. The yield of fission weapons could be boosted up to several hundred kilotons by fusion.


4. For example, though the B-52 bomber was (and is) a "strategic" system and delivered an enormously large payload (both nuclear and conventional) over long distances, its use against concentrations of North Vietnamese units in Indochina was tactical.

5. By 1953-54, some naval aircraft were quite capable (with aerial refueling and external tanks) of reaching targets deep inside Communist bloc territory. Although U.S. war plans throughout the 1950s apparently assigned most naval aircraft to coastal and Soviet naval targets, any such inland strikes (and there were some) would of course be defined as strategic.


7. As an example of this, General Curtis E. LeMay was ordered by the Joint Chiefs during the 1954-55 Quemoy Matsu crisis to plan tactical nuclear strikes with B-47s against Chinese Communist targets. See Chapter VI, notes 51 and 81.
Chapter I


4. **In June 1950 U.S. forces included ten Army divisions (nine at reduced strength), 238 major combat vessels, forty eight Air Force wings, and a total of 591,487 personnel. By July 1952, conventional forces had**
grown to twenty Army divisions (five reduced), 400 major combat vessels (including twenty-nine aircraft carriers), ninety-five Air Force wings, and a total of 1,594,693 personnel. Poole, JCS History, IV, p. 120.


196; Paul H. Nitze with Ann M. Smith and Steven L. Reardon, From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), p. 113; Foot, Wrong War, pp. 164-165.

6. Foot, Wrong War, pp. 196-198.


10. NSC 68 appears in FRUS, 1950, Volume I, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1977), pp. 234-292. In his recent book, Nitze insists that he and his chief co-authors--John Paton Davies, Bob Tufts and Robert Hooker--did not compose the paper believing that the Kremlin had plans to attack in 1954. Rather, they concluded that 1954 would be the "year of maximum danger" if the U.S. did not greatly accelerate its rearmament to counter the certain tremendous increase in Soviet capabilities in the interim. Nitze's disclaimer is unconvincing. The reality in 1950 was that he and others focused all attention on exaggerated estimates of Soviet atomic capabilities, taking them as fact and deriving from them much more certain
claims about Soviet intentions than he would have his readers today believe. Nitze, From Hiroshima, pp. 93-97.


16. Matthew Evangelista has noted that, in 1950, one half of the Red Army's transport in Eastern Europe was horse-drawn. Furthermore, the railroads there remained in disrepair from WWII, and even differed in gauge from Soviet railroads. Additionally, a large percentage of Soviet troops were engaged in reparations removal, and most Soviet combat divisions were woefully under strength. The image widely touted in the West, especially after NSC 68 and the outbreak of the Korean War, of 175 crack divisions of Soviet troops poised and ready to roll over Western Europe, was absolutely false. Matthew A. Evangelista, "Stalin's Post-War Army Reappraised," International Security, 7, 3 (Winter 1982-83), pp. 112-129, 134-135. Evangelista's work is supported by figures cited by Robert P. Berman and John C. Baker, Soviet Strategic Forces: Requirements and Responses (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 39; and by Ross, American War Plans, pp. 5-20.

17. Garthoff explains this connection in terms of worst-case analysis: "A very important, and frequent, negative consequence of worst-case estimating of capabilities is its insidious infiltration (or, less often, conscious misuse) in estimates of intentions of an adversary. This consideration relates not only
to overall attitudes of the enemy... but also to views about why the opponent is pursuing policies or taking actions..." Garthoff, "Worst-Case," p. 100. Also see Ephraim Kam, Surprise Attack: The Victim's Perspective (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 57, 197.

This process also worked in the reverse, as will be shown in later chapters. Policymakers and planners during the 1950s came to assume the worst of Soviet intentions--namely, that the Kremlin hoped to achieve the superiority which would enable them to launch a Pearl Harbor style surprise attack on the U.S. This contributed to their tendency to exaggerate, or misinterpret, the true extent of Russian capabilities.

18. Gregg Herken has documented and described how the Truman administration expected America's atomic monopoly to last into the 1950s in The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945-1950 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980). In a memo written on February 16, 1950 to Defense Secretary Louis Johnson, Brig. General Herbert Loper, then a member of the Military Liaison Committee, argued that the Russians already possessed thermonuclear weapons. Meilinger, Vandenberg, pp. 156-157. Also in February, a group known as the Sutherland Committee, assembled after the Soviets' first test to analyze their capabilities, predicted a Soviet thermonuclear test as early as October 1950. RG 341 USAF HQ, 1953, DOI File, Entry Group 214, Document No. 3-3034.


20. Poole, JCS History, IV, pp. iv-v.


22. Rees, Korea, pp. 106-109, 130, 136; Poole, JCS History, IV, p. v; The quotation is from Nitze, From Hiroshima, p. 109.


27. Quoted in Futrell, Korea, pp. 226-229.


   On December 24, 1950, General MacArthur again pressed the JCS for an atomic offensive and all-out war against China. He submitted a plan to hit 26 "retardation" targets with atomic weapons; 4 more atomic weapons would be used on Chinese troop positions in Korea and 4 on Communist airfields in Manchuria. Additionally, MacArthur's plan called for a blockade of the China coast, naval air and artillery destruction of Chinese industrial and port facilities, and a Chinese Nationalist invasion of the mainland. General Ridgway, named commander of the U.S. 8th Army on December 25, thought the idea of a Nationalist diversion to relieve pressure on UNC forces was "brilliant." The Joint Chiefs, however, rejected the plan. Schaller, Douglas MacArthur, pp. 225-226.

30. Public Papers of the Presidents, 1955, p. 322.

31. Truman and the JCS decided to proceed in 1952 with the development of tactical weapons and to deploy atomic-capable aircraft to NATO. The first of these arrived in Europe in April 1952 (two Air Force wings and 17 naval aircraft). Also, the JCS authorized SACEUR to arrange with the commander of the Strategic Air Command (Gen. Curtis LeMay) for the latter's forces to deliver atomic weapons against tactical targets in the Eurasian theater. Therefore, beginning in April 1952, SHAPE headquarters prepared its general war plan to include the employment of tactical atomic weapons. However, these arrangements all fell within the context of a general war between NATO and the USSR. Plans to employ atomic weapons in limited wars would be an invention of the Eisenhower administration. Louis Galambos, ed., The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: NATO and the Campaign of 1952, Volume XIII (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 1226-1227. For more details on the role of atomic weapons in U.S. war plans, 1950-1952, see Department of State memo of conversation, February 29, 1952, State Department Central Decimal File, 1950-1954 (hereafter RG 59, State CDF), 711.5611, Box 3174; also, Poole, JCS History, IV; David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-1960." International Security, 7, 4 (Spring 1983), pp. 3-71; Anthony Cave Brown, ed., Dropshot: The United States Plan for War with the USSR in 1957 (New York: Dial Press, 1978); Ross, American War Plans.


33. According to Schaller, "Few in Washington considered the possibility that the Chinese and Soviet buildup might actually be designed to deter a renewed American push into North Korea or an attack upon China." Schaller, Douglas MacArthur, p. 234.

34. Truman, instead, opted to grant General Ridgway conditional authority to strike airfields across the Yalu (with conventional ordnance) if the Communists mounted an air offensive against UNC forces. FRUS, 1951, Volume VII, Part 1, Korea and China (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1983), p. 386. Dingman and Schaller have argued that Truman's deployment of the
99th bomb wing was actually part of the President's strategy to convince the Joint Chiefs to support, and to ease congressional reaction to, the firing of MacArthur; Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy," pp. 69-74. Schaller, Douglas MacArthur, pp. 235-238. Foot, Wrong War, pp. 160-161.

On April 6, 1951, Truman ordered AEC chairman Gordon Dean to transfer 9 assembled atomic weapons to the Pentagon. These bombs were then deployed on April 10. Schaller, Douglas MacArthur, pp. 235-236.


36. No note.


38. Poole, JCS History, IV pp. 92-93; NSC 114/1, FRUS, 1951, I, pp. 127-157. Poole explains how the Air Force sought to exploit NSC 114/1's gloomy predictions to pressure the administration and Congress into approving a priority expansion of the Air Force to 140 wings by fiscal year 1954. During the MacArthur hearings, shortly after the first drafts of 114/1 appeared, Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg asserted that the Air Force's atomic striking power was "the only thing that has, up to date, kept the Russians from deciding to go to war.

Armed with 114/1's grave estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions (and with some good old Pentagon "logrolling"), Vandenberg was able to win his case. The JCS eventually agreed to a goal of 138 combat wings by the end of FY 1954. This decision, as reflected in Truman's defense budget for FY 1953, effectively ended the tradition of a balance of forces--three-way division of the budget among the services. The Air Force had gained unquestionable fiscal priority. Poole, JCS History, IV, pp. 94-101. See also Papers of Nathan Twining, Box 122, Top Secret File (1)-1952-1957. This practice of capitalizing on (and intentionally creating) exaggerations of Soviet capabilities and intentions by the Air Force continued, to much worse result, under Eisenhower, and will be a major focus of later chapters.

38. Futrell, Korea, p. 228.
39. Quoted in Rees, Korea, p. 274.

40. Ibid., pp. 243-263; Futrell, Korea, pp. 335-343.

41. Rees, Korea, pp. 257-259.

42. JCS 1924/65, RG 218, JCS 1951-1953, CCS 092 USSR (3-27-45), Section 61.

43. Poole, JCS History, IV, pp. 92-93; FRUS, 1951, I, pp. 127-157. These estimates continued to rest on the theory of production capacity and presumptions of the worst of Soviet intentions. The Joint Chiefs' figures, included in the new Joint Outline Emergency War Plan (IRONBARK) of May 1951, placed the size of the Soviet stockpile at a mere 50 weapons. This was a long way from the devastating capability attributed to the USSR by other departments. RG 218, JCS 1951-1953, CCS 381 USSR (3-2-46), B.P. Pt. 5.

44. Foot, Wrong War, pp. 160-162.

45. Nitze, From Hiroshima, pp. 113-114; Futrell, Korea, p. 343. At the time, State Department Counselor Charles Bohlen was one of the very few who argued, correctly, that Moscow truly wanted an end to the war. He believed that Soviet leaders feared the war might escalate, drawing them into a conflict with the U.S. for which they were ill-prepared. Bohlen's prescience would recur throughout 1952 and 1953, when he would argue that U.S. estimates exaggerated Soviet capabilities. Foot, Wrong War, pp. 161-162; FRUS, 1952-1954, VII, pp. 1045-1047; Charles E. Bohlen, Witness to History, 1929-1969 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973), pp. 288-305, 337-351; Nitze disagrees with this assessment, arguing that the Soviet Union's peace signals were quickly appreciated and acted upon. Nitze, From Hiroshima, pp. 113-114.

46. The one caveat to this prediction was that such American attacks not threaten the existence of the Communist regime in Peking. FRUS, 1951, VII, pp. 1263-1264; Foot, Wrong War, pp. 162-165, 196-198; Also see the February 29, 1952 memo of conversation in RG 59, State CDF, 1950-1954, 711.5611, box 3174. One of the factors that contributed to this assessment, Nitze claims, was that the U.S. learned the USSR was not providing China with all the material and financial support Peking wanted. Nitze, From Hiroshima, p. 111.
47. Memo by the Executive Secretary of the Policy Planning Staff (Schwartz) to the Counselor (Bohlen), May 12, 1952, FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1, p. 12. This reappraisal would eventually become part of NSC 135/3, October 15, 1952, FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1, pp. 17-18.


50. NIE-48, January 8, 1952, FRUS, 1952-1954, VII, pp. 954-961. NSC 135/3 claimed that Soviet leaders "...would probably initiate general war" if they believed they had the ability to defeat or seriously damage the U.S. FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1, p. 150.


54. Foot, Wrong War, p. 197.

55. Gaddis, Strategies, p. 123; Poole, JCS History, IV, pp. 309-310; Also see note 31.

56. Gaddis, Strategies, pp. 98-104; Challener in Graeber, ed. The National Security, p. 44.

57. Paul Nitze's description of the reasons for Truman's refusal to consider using atomic weapons is illustrative: "The stockpile was not large enough to mount an effective attack against China and still have sufficient weapons to deal with the Soviets if they decided to intervene." Nitze, From Hiroshima, p. 110. NSC 135/3, the BN SP prevailing when Truman left office, confidently asserted, "The Soviet long-range air force is capable of atomic attack on the U.S. and
might achieve surprise in the initial strike." FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1, p. 151. It was, chiefly, the combination of fear of the possibilities of Soviet action and power, and ideas about the limits of atomic weapons which drove policy.


60. As Chief of Staff Eisenhower was responsible for the Manhattan Engineering District and sole channel of atomic stockpile information to civilian policymakers. Rosenberg, "Overkill," p. 27; Galambos, ed., Eisenhower Papers, XIII, p. 1225.


63. Meilinger, Vandenberg, p. 197. The VISTA project became caught up in the heated debate within the atomic community over the development of the H-bomb. For years officials within the AEC and Pentagon suspected that a group of Los Alamos scientists, led by Robert Oppenheimer and Hans Bethe, were conspiring to delay this program. Record Group 128, the records of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy at the National Archives, indicate that this suspicion was well placed. Also see Richard C. Hewlett and Jack M. Holl, Atoms for Peace and War, 1953-1961: Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 34-112; and Joseph W. Alsop and Adam Platt, "Witness to the Persecution," The Washington Post Magazine, February 2, 1992, p. 29.

A JCAE staffer recalled in an October 3, 1952 memo that the Air Force brass "were aghast" when presented with the original VISTA report. "Machinations
were then undertaken by the Air Force," he wrote, "to reorient Oppenheimer's introduction." They also immediately dispatched Lauris Norstad to Paris to present the Air Force's version to Eisenhower. RG 128, Records of the JCAE, Thermonuclear Program, July 1952-Dec. 1952, JCAE No. 3049, Gen.Subj. Class., Box 59.


65. The Vista report stipulated that tactical atomic weapons should be used no closer than 20-25 miles away from of one's own troops. Elliot, "Vista," pp. 177-178. However, AEC-Pentagon tests in Nevada during 1952 demonstrated that infantry, with good cover, could be as close as 4 miles to ground zero of multi-kiloton blasts, moving even closer on foot after detonation without unreasonable danger. Richard L. Miller, Under the Cloud: The Decades of Nuclear Testing (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 142; Ryan details tests in which volunteers were placed even closer to ground zero. Ryan, Chinese Attitudes, pp. 147-149. For details on the first tactical atomic weapons deployments, see note 31 and Ryan, idid., pp. 137-141.

66. Miller, Under the Cloud, pp. 145-146.


69. Whether or not those familiar with Professor Ambrose's account of the October 24 speech will believe it, I wrote this passage before reading his. Ambrose, Eisenhower, vol. 1, p. 570.

70. Polls taken in June and July showed 61 percent of voters in favor of bombing targets inside China and 53 percent in favor of an all-out effort for victory. Foot, Wrong War, p. 189. For more on public exasperation with the war, see Ambrose, Eisenhower, vol. 1, p. 570; Rees, Korea, pp. 387-394. The casualty figure comes from Kaufman, The Korean War, p. 303.

72. The meeting was attended by the other AEC commissioners. Though Eisenhower first learned of the MIKE test from a November 7 letter from Dean, this discussion was much more detailed. Barton J. Bernstein, "Crossing the Rubicon: A Missed Opportunity to Stop the H-Bomb?" International Security 14, 2 (Fall 1989), pp. 133, 150; Roger M. Anders, ed., Forging the Atomic Shield: Excerpts From the Office Diary of Gordon E. Dean (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 233-235; Hewlett, Atoms for Peace, pp. 6-14.

73. Anders, ed., Forging the Atomic Shield, pp. 234-235. In a "Key Data Book Prepared by the Reporting Unit of the NSC for the President,"--dated November 19, the date of Eisenhower's meeting with the AEC--it was noted that the U.S. program had made the greatest progress in the development of tactical weapons for delivery by all types of aircraft. This and other advances in the area of tactical atomic, the report concluded, would have a profound impact on ground warfare. FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1, pp. 166-173; MacDonald, Korea, p. 175; Miller, Under the Cloud, p. 142.


81. Ibid., pp. 96-97, 181.

82. Ibid., p. 97; Ambrose, Eisenhower, vol. 2, p. 34.


84. The Indian resolution provided that force not be used "to prevent or effect" POWs' return to their homeland and that a commission of neutral nations be established to oversee repatriation. If any POWs remained unrepatriated 90 days after completion of an armistice, "their status would be determined by the post-war political conference already agreed in the draft Armistice Agreement. In the last resort, those who refused to go home would become wards of the United Nations." The UNGA approved the resolution on December 3, 1952. Rees, Korea, pp. 403-404.

85. Public Papers of the Presidents, 1953, p. 17.

86. Eisenhower, Mandate, p. 123.

88. The Commander in Chief, UNC to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 7, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, XV, 1, pp. 742-745.

89. Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 9, 1953, ibid., pp. 758-759.

90. Memo of Discussion at the February 11, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 769-770. The day before this meeting, General Bradley told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "there are no strategic targets worth mentioning in Korea," no targets "sufficiently remunerative...for the expending out of the stockpile." "However, get them [the Chinese] out in the open, and I think we would have to consider it [using atomics] very seriously." Executive Sessions, 1953, p. 114


92. The prevailing order had been issued to General Ridgway on April 28, 1951, when the Truman administration believed that a Communist air offensive was imminent. The order provided CINCUNC the authority to use U.S. forces for aerial reconnaissance over Manchuria and the Shantung peninsula; attack Communist air bases in these areas, without reference to the JCS, if the Communists attacked UNC forces from outside Korea; but if time permitted, CINCUNC should consult with the JCS and the UNC allies. FRUS, 1951, VII, 1, p. 386.


94. On February 13, the JCS wired Clark and refused his requests of February 7 and 9, stating that they felt he would have time to refer to them in any crisis. FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, p. 776. Five days later, however, they altered the February 13 directive and granted Clark the authority he requested, with the condition that he provide Washington with details of any crisis situation prior to authorizing attacks on Chinese airbases. FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, p. 759.

95. Richard K. Betts, Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institu-
tion, 1987), p. 44.

96. Eisenhower, Mandate, p. 144. The U.S. Government found itself at a disadvantage at the time, for Charles Bohlen, Eisenhower's choice to replace George Kennan as Ambassador to the Soviet Union, had been kept from going to Moscow by the battle in the Senate over his confirmation. Bohlen did not arrive in Moscow until April 11. Bohlen, Witness to History, p. 334-336.

97. Memo by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Nitze) to the Secretary of State, March 10, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, VIII, p. 1107.


100. Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President, March 6, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, p. 805.

101. Emmet Hughes records a conversation he had with Dulles in which the Secretary of State said, 'I don't think we can get much out of a Korean settlement until we have shown--before all Asia--our clear superiority by giving the Chinese one hell of a licking.' Emmet John Hughes, The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years (New York: Atheneum, 1963), pp. 104-105; MacDonald, Korea, pp. 178-179; Kaufman, The Korean War, p. 307.


103. Dulles summarized this meeting with Eden in a March 7 memo to the President. He wrote that Eden had referred to an agreement reached by Truman and Churchill on January 9, 1952, which specified that the U.S. would have use of its forces stationed on British bases on the condition that 'the use of these bases in an emergency would be a matter of joint decision...' Dulles told Eden that the U.S. would
honor this understanding, excepting any personal commitments made by the former President, by consult-
ing with the British "on situations that may arise which might lead to general war, and on the best means to apply in those situations, "to the extent that time and circumstances permitted." RG 59, State


105. The best Churchill could do was to persuade Eisen-
hower to agree to a meeting of the U.S., U.K., and
France in Bermuda. The conference was set for June,
but Churchill's illness--another stroke--forced a
delay until December. Ibid., pp. 511-513.

106. Memo by Cutler to the Secretary of Defense, March
21, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, p. 815; Gaddis,
Long Peace, p. 125; Rosemary J. Foot, "Nuclear Coer-
cion and the Ending of the Korean Conflict," Interna-

107. RG 218, JCS 1953, CCS 383.21 Korea (3-19-45), Section
125, Box 43; Goulden, Untold Story, p. 628.

108. The AEC had been testing the reaction of troops to
atomic blasts at the Nevada Proving Grounds since
early 1951. The most recent test series, UPSHOT-
KNOThOLE, had just begun on March 17. In this
series, some U.S. infantry volunteers in trenches had
been less than 2,000 yards from ground zero of multi-
kiloton blasts. Of course, soldiers taking part
always had warning of the blasts (often protective
eyewear) and kept covered until the resulting shock
waves passed over them. Communist troops in Korea,
one would guess, would not be granted such advantages
in the case of a U.S. attack. Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, pp. 144, 149-150; Miller, Under the

109. The "consultants" were a seven-man ad hoc committee
of civilian advisers, established on February 25,
1953 to aid the NSC in its review of basic national
security policy. They included, Dillon Anderson,
James B. Black (president of Pacific Gas & Electric),
John Cowles (publisher), Eugene Holman (president of
Standard Oil), Deane W. Malott (president of Cor-
nell), David B. Robertson (union president), and
Charles A. Thomas (former president of Monsanto and a
member of the Manhattan Project). Memo of the Substance of a Discussion at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, March 27, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, p. 817.

110. Ibid., pp. 817-818.

111. Ibid.

112. Memo of Discussion at a Special Meeting of the NSC, March 31, 1953, ibid., pp. 826-827; a more complete record of this meeting appears in FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1, pp. 264-281.


114. Ibid., p. 827.

115. Specifically, Chou proposed that both sides hand over at war's end all POWs who desired repatriation. Any non-re-patriates would then be transferred to a neutral state, pending further decision. This amounted to acceptance of the very terms Moscow and Peking and Pyongyang had rejected in December 1952. Ibid., p. 824; Rees, Korea, pp. 406-407.

116. Probably all of these factors were involved in this decision. Kaufman and MacDonald give greatest weight to Moscow's influence, arguing that the concession was forced on Peking as part of Moscow's "peace offensive," the post-Stalin thaw, the real goal of which was to ease East-West tensions and make it, thereby, more difficult for the West to proceed with the rearmament of West Germany and Japan. Also, the Kremlin was tired of paying the lion's share of the cost of a war which increasingly seemed at odds with its best interests.

Rosemary Foot agrees with this, but also takes note of the impact of the North Korean famine and especially the intensified UNC bombing of the war's last year. All authors mention, of course, the costliness of the war to Chinese society as a major factor. MacDonald, Korea, p. 182; Kaufman, The Korean War, pp. 306-307; Foot, "Nuclear Coercion," pp. 107-108; Rees, Korea, pp. 406-407. I would agree that all these factors were at work, but I would also give substantial weight to the role of Soviet fear that Eisenhower would escalate the war and, thereby, force them to disavow their February 1950 mutual
defense treaty with the Chinese.

117. Nitze was commenting on a draft of NSC 141. FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1, pp. 202-204.


119. NIE 80 attributed to the Soviet Far Eastern Air Force 1,760 jet fighters, 320 light jet bombers, 1,150 piston light bombers, and 220 Tu-4 bombers. It claimed the Soviets "could launch air strikes with approximately 150 light jet bombers, 820 piston light bombers, and 130 piston medium bombers from present bases in the Southern Maritime and Port Arthur areas against UN installations in Korea and Japan while maintaining an air defense of Soviet territory," and the capacity to airlift 15-18,000 paratroops in five days. FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, pp. 865-873.


123. The President made a very specific call for deeds demonstrative of a change in Communist intentions in his April 16, 1953 "Chance for Peace" address. Public Papers of the Presidents, 1953, p. 184.

124. White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (hereafter WHO-OSANSA), NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 4, NSC 147-Courses of Action in Korea (2). This document can also be found in FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, pp. 838-849.

125. NSC 147, April 2, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, p. 844.

126. Ibid., pp. 838-840.

127. Ibid., p. 845.

128. See note 112.
129. Paragraph 26 of NSC 147 states, "We believe that if atomic weapons were employed by US/UN forces in any of the above alternative courses of action, the Communists would recognize the employment of these weapons as indicative of Western determination to carry the Korean war to a successful conclusion. We are unable to estimate whether this recognition would by itself lead the Communists to make the concessions necessary to reach an armistice. FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, p. 846.

This contrasted with the view expressed by the intelligence community in SE-41, "Probable Communist Reaction to Certain Possible US/UN Military Courses of Action With Respect to the Korean War," April 8, 1953: ". . . [if] the Communists recognized that they were faced with a clear choice between making the concessions necessary to reach an armistice, or accepting the likelihood that US/UN military operations would endanger the security of the Manchurian and Soviet borders, destroy the Manchurian industrial complex, or destroy the Chinese Communist armed forces, the Communists would probably agree to an armistice." FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, pp. 886-888.

130. Ibid., p. 848.

131. Memo of Discussion at the April 8, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 893-894. Dulles had said a week earlier that the U.S. had to end the "peril represented by the Soviet Union...by inducing the disintegration of Soviet power." Stalin could not be replaced, he added, and "the current peace offensive is designed by the Soviets to relieve the ever-increasing pressure upon their regime." Accordingly, he concluded, "we must not relax this pressure until the Soviets give promise of ending the struggle." The President "emphatically endorsed" this strategy. FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 267-268.

On April 17, Dulles told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the administration considered the proposed armistice line along the 38th Parallel unacceptable. "We would have to find some way, either by diplomacy or by force, to get north of it." Executive Sessions, 1953, p. 318.


Greater Sanctions statement were laid out in NSC 48/5, May 17, 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, p. 37, and in NSC 124/2, June 19, 1952, FRUS, 1952-1954, XII, 1, pp. 125-134. Details of the British attempt to withdraw from this accord, and of the American pressures that succeeded in frustrating it, are found in the May 4, 1953 Memo of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson), FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, pp. 968-969, the May 9, 1953 Memo by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Robertson) to the Acting Secretary of State, ibid., pp. 996-997, and in the June 5, 1953 Memo of Conversation by Johnson, ibid., pp. 1147-1148.


136. Ibid., p. 977. Bradley's was a very poor answer, given that U.S. strategic war plans devoted a considerable portion of the atomic stockpile to Soviet airfield targets. For details on U.S. war plans in 1953 see Chapter III.

137. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee also experienced little success in eliciting a definitive recommendation for action from the JCS. Bradley explained this in terms of the Chiefs' perception of their proper role: "...our job is to take the various courses of action that are suggested in the problem and analyze them from the military point of view, telling the President...what our capabilities are and...what risks are being taken when we pursue either this course or that course.

Generally, however, I do not feel that it is Joint Chiefs of Staff responsibility to recommend specifically which course of action the Government should take." Executive Sessions, 1953, p. 131.

138. The Communists' chief delegate, Nam Il, proposed that a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission be composed of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland (the nations already selected for a supervisory commission), along with India. He also lowered the demanded time for persuasion of non-repatriates to 120 days. Commander in Chief, UNC to the Joint

139. Rhee had insisted that all Korean POWs be granted civilian status upon the signing of an armistice. Until July he opposed any armistice which left Korea divided and Chinese troops in Korean territory. The UNC delegation countered Nam Il's plan with this first demand, plus a reduction of the period of persuasion to 60 days. Rees, Korea, p. 416.


142. Ibid., p. 1015.

143. Ibid., p. 1016.

144. Specifically, Clark proposed an offensive-defense on the ground, air and naval attacks on North Korean dam networks and the Kaesong sanctuary, and the release of 35,000 North Korean POWs. These tactics, he averred, were the best he could offer unless restrictions were removed on the use of atomic weapons and strikes across the Yalu. FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, p. 1022, 1027. The strikes on the dams went forward, beginning on May 13 and continuing on May 15, 16, 22, 29 and June 13-18. The results were devastating. Hundreds of thousands of acres of North Korean crop lands were flooded. Clodfelter, The Limits of Air Power, pp. 17-18.

145. Under Secretary of State Bedell Smith sent a strong memo to the President in support of Clark's plan. He also added key details which Eisenhower would follow, especially that Ambassador Chip Bohlen--simultaneous with the presentation of the final offer at Panmunjon--meet with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov in Moscow to inform the Kremlin of the seriousness of America's intentions. FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, pp. 1033-1036, 1046-1047.

146. Political Adviser for the Armistice Negotiations (Murphy) to the Department of State, May 19, 1953, ibid., p. 1057; Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Japan, May 19, 1953, ibid., pp. 1058-1059;
Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, May 19, 1953, ibid., pp.1059-1063.

147. What Twining meant, of course, was that the JCS planned preemptive atomic strikes on all forward enemy airfields; Memo of Discussion at the May 20, 1953 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, XV, 1, p. 1065.

148. Ibid., pp. 1065-1066.

149. Roger Dingman, in a recent article, argues that Eisenhower was much more timid about atomic weapons than the JCS. Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy," p. 85. Rosemary Foot claims just the opposite. She sees the May 20th decision, along with the order to Clark to make the UNC's final offer, as putting the U.S. one week away from using atomic weapons. Foot, "Nuclear Coercion," pp. 97-99. Also see Foot's excellent book, The Wrong War, in which she embraces a thesis of a progressive American willingness to expand the war against China. Buhite and Hamel, "War for Peace," p. 379, agree with Foot; Ryan, Chinese Attitudes, pp. 58-72, is guarded concerning the meaning of the May 20 decision.


151. Memo of Discussion at the June 4, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 369-370. Emmet Hughes recorded in his diary an enlightening remark Ike made on May 12: 'You know, all these fellows worry so damn much about what we'll do when the Russians attack,' he said to Cutler. 'Well, I dont [sic] believe for a second they will ever attack.' Quoted in Richard H. Immerman, "Confessions of an Eisenhower Revisionist," Diplomatic History (Summer 1990), pp. 332-33.

152. Dulles noted in his record of this conversation, "I assumed this [message] would be relayed [to Peking]." FRUS, 1952-54, XV, 1, p. 1068. Most scholars agree that some form of message was transmitted. For examples, see Betts, Nuclear Blackmail, p. 44; Foot, "Nuclear Coercion," p. 93; Rees, Korea, p. 417; MacDonald, Korea, p. 189; Kaufman, The Korean War, p. 320. More important, the American Ambassador to India at the time, George V. Allen, wrote to the State Department on May 26, 1953 that Nehru had personally told him that the Indian Ambassador to Peking had been instructed to keep in close contact with the Chinese government on the Korean situation.
FRUS, 1952-1954: XV, 1, p. 1105. Ambrose argues that no "direct" warning was made to the Chinese. More important, he claims, was that the Chinese "already knew that Eisenhower had a nuclear option; they knew that his patience was limited. . . ." Eisenhower, vol. 2, p. 98. Only Dingman asserts that, even if Dulles' message was sent, it carried no hint of an atomic threat and had little impact on Beijing. Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy," pp. 85-87.


154. Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark), May 22, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 1, pp. 1082-1085. The final offer provided for the surrender of all POWs to the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC), made up solely of an Indian chairman and Indian security forces, a sixty-day period of voluntary repatriation, and a 90-120-day period for persuasion of any remaining POWs. Any POWs still left after this would either be freed or turned over to the UNGA. Rees, Korea, pp. 416-417. It is important to note that this offer marked a step back from the former U.S. position that all Korean POWs should be freed. Max Hastings, The Korean War (London: Michael Joseph, 1987), p. 398; MacDonald, Korea, p. 190. Kaufman asserts that this retreat was due to pressure exerted on Washington by Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium and Italy. Kaufman, The Korean War, pp. 312-316. Betts points out that the Communists also made concessions after the May 25 final offer. He believes that Eisenhower's atomic threats were central to these concessions and the final truce, otherwise the Communists would have broken off the talks when, on June 18, Rhee released thousands of their POWs. Betts, Nuclear Blackmail, p. 45.


156. SAC commander in chief, General Curtis E. LeMay, has averred that, for "a time in the 1950s," the U.S. could have struck the USSR almost at will, with its
losses being "essentially the accident rate of the flying time." Soviet air defenses were so poor, LeMay added, that "we flew all of the reconnaissance aircraft that SAC possessed over Vladivostok at high noon," without any interceptions by Soviet air defenses. It was no exaggeration, LeMay concluded, to say "...we could have delivered the stockpile, had we wanted to do it, with practically no losses" during this period. Richard H. Kohn and Joseph P. Harahan, eds., Strategic Air Warfare: An Interview With Generals Curtis E. LeMay, Leon W. Johnson, David A. Burchinal, and Jack J. Cotton (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1988), pp. 95-96; Berman and Baker, Soviet Strategic Forces, p. 36.

157. In early July 1953, Bohlen wrote that Moscow desperately wanted "a return to diplomacy and a lessening of world tension [i.e., an end to the Korean War] for an indefinite period of time." Why? He argued, "Fear of general war--even before the death of Stalin there was evidence that the Soviet Government was becoming genuinely concerned . . . that the intensity of the cold war, resulting from their attitudes and actions in [the] postwar world, was leading to a situation where events could take over with the consequent automatic progression towards general war, which I believe at all times the Soviet Union has been most anxious to avoid." Eisenhower and Dulles agreed completely. FRUS, 1952-1954, VIII, pp. 1193-1195; Also see Stephen S. Kaplan et al., Diplomacy of Power: Soviet Armed Forces as a Political Instrument (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1981), pp. 333-336.

158. The interpretation of this event is mine. Foot reports its occurrence but does not emphasize it as decisive. Foot, "Nuclear Coercion," pp. 107-108.


160. The wording of the statement provided, "We affirm, in
the interests of world peace, that if there is a renewal of the armed attack, challenging again the principles of the United Nations, we should again be unified and prompt to resist. The consequences of such a breach of the armistice would be so grave that, in all probability, it would not be possible to confine hostilities within the frontiers of Korea. NSC 154, June 15, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 2, pp. 1173-1174. The statement was signed by the sixteen UNC member nations the day after the armistice, July 28, but it was not publicized until August 7 as part of General Clark's final report to the UN. Kaufman, The Korean War, pp.338-339.

162. NSC 170/1, November 20, 1953, ibid., pp. 1620-1624.
163. Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, November 27, 1953, ibid., pp. 1626-1628.
164. Memo of Discussion at the December 3, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 1637-1638.
165. Memo by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Secretary of State, December 3, 1953, ibid., pp. 1634-1635; Memo of Discussion at the December 3, 1953, ibid., pp. 1639-1642; Memo of Discussion at the January 8, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 1704-1708.
166. Memo of Discussion at the December 3, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 1640-1641; Memo of Discussion at the January 8, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 1704.
167. Memo of Discussion at the January 8, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 1707.
168. Memo of Discussion at the December 3, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 1640.
169. Memo of Discussion at the January 8, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 1707.
170. Ibid., p. 1704, 1705.
171. Ibid., p. 1705. Eisenhower had once asserted that "he detested the idea of a person twenty thousand miles away running a war." Memo of Discussion at the
July 23, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 1422.

172. Memo of Discussion at the January 8, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 1706. Dulles's relentless advocacy of a policy of limited response paid off. In the end Eisenhower ordered State and the JCS to work out their differences, and a compromise was produced early in 1954. The policy favored State's concept, but it was worded with sufficient ambiguity to allow for a wider response and escalation. Ibid., pp. 1673-1674, 1700-1708. More important, however, the President himself continued to favor the Chiefs' plan. During the Bermuda Conference, Eisenhower told Prime Minister Churchill that if the Chinese broke the armistice the U.S. would respond with atomic weapons against military targets directly supporting the aggression. And he told U.S. congressional leaders a month later that renewed Chinese aggression would see the U.S. 'hit them with everything we got.' John Foster Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 1, 12-4-53 Memo of Conversation. RG 59 State CDF, 1950-1954, 711.5611, Box 3174, December 11 memo of a December 5 conversation between Ike and Churchill; Robert H. Ferrell, ed. The Diary of James C. Hagerty: Eisenhower in Mid-Course (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 3-4 (hereafter Hagerty Diary); Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the Secretary of Defense, December 18, 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 2, p. 1674.


Chapter II


5. Gaddis coined this term in his seminal work on containment. Strategies, p. 101.

6. Watson, JCS History, V, p. 4; Twining Papers, Box 58, Office File AFC VC, Reading File, February 1953.

7. Some Truman hold-overs included Paul Nitze, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and all five AEC commissioners.


11. The East River Project was a descendant of Project Charles. Its name taken from the Charles River that skirts MIT's Cambridge campus, Project Charles involved the study of air defense technology, contracted with MIT by the Pentagon at the end of 1950. As part of this project, MIT and the Pentagon founded a permanent laboratory for air defense research--the Lincoln Laboratory. Charles was completed in August 1950. Soon thereafter, Defense, the National Security Resources Board, and the Federal Civil Defense Administration contracted with a team of scientists based in Manhattan--hence, the East River title--to study civil defense. Ten of the twelve had worked on Charles or at Lincoln. The Lincoln Summer Study Group was organized by East River scientists Lloyd V. Berkner (then president of Associated Universities, Inc.) and Jerrold R. Zacharias (professor of physics at MIT) in cooperation with Albert G. Hill, director of Project Lincoln at MIT. Joseph T. Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs: Canada, the United States, and the Origins of North American Air Defence, 1945-1958* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), pp. 61-68. The final report of the East River project, ten volumes in all, was submitted to Washington in January 1953. All except two of the volumes were made available. *FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1*, p. 20n.

12. The Lincoln air defense system, much of which was later adopted by the Eisenhower administration, would include two distant early warning lines (DEW), aural presentation radar, airborne radar aircraft, and interceptors armed with nuclear air-to-air missiles. Jockel, *No Boundaries*, pp. 63, 65-67. The computerized tracking system suggested by East River was developed and in partial operation by the late 1950s. It was known as SAGE: Semi-Automatic Ground Environment. Jockel, pp. 62-64.

14. Secretary of Defense Lovett and Air Force Secretary Finletter refused to place the report before the NSC. It was finally sponsored by the National Security Resources Board for the September 24, 1952 NSC meeting. The Air Force viewed the Lincoln report as part of a larger conspiracy, headed by Robert Oppenheimer, to discredit offensive nuclear forces, especially SAC. Ibid., p. 67-68; Futrell, Ideas, pp. 331-332; Watson, JCS History, V, p. 117.


18. Report by the Panel of Consultants of the Department of State to the Secretary of State, "Armaments and American Policy, January 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1065-1080, 1084. It should be noted that Oppenheimer and Bush, the Panel's dominant members, had been adamantly opposed to the nation's thermonuclear program since the January 31, 1950 decision to proceed with development of H-weapons. They tried to use the Panel as a spring board to lobby for cancellation of the MIKE test and for a proposal to Moscow of a moratorium on all thermonuclear testing. Bernstein, "Crossing the Rubicon," pp. 142-144. Robert Divine,

19. Memo of Discussion at the October 7, 1953 NSC meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, p. 520; Memo of Discussion at the March 31, 1953 NSC meeting, ibid., p. 279.


23. February 12, 1953 letter from Harold Talbott to Charles Wilson, Twining Papers, Box 58, Office File, AFC VC, Reading File, February 1953.

24. Editorial Note and Memo of Discussion at the March 31, 1953 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, p. 244, 264-281. The "consultants" were a seven-men ad hoc committee of advisers, established on February 25, 1953. They included Dillon Anderson (Houston attorney), James B. Black (president of Pacific Gas & Electric), John Cowles (publisher), Eugene Holman (president of Standard Oil), Deane W. Malott (president of Cornell), David B. Robertson (union president), and Charles A. Thomas (former president of Monsanto and a consultant on the Manhattan Project). FRUS, 1952-54, XV, 1, pp. 817, 817n.


26. Ibid., p. 279. The quote is from a March 24, 1953 memo from Secretary Wilson to the NSC, ibid., pp. 258-261; See also Futrell, Ideas, p. 422, and Watson, JCS History, V, pp. 8-9; NSC 149/2, April 29, 1953, appears in FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 305-316.


28. Navy appropriations were cut from $11.4 to $9.7 billion; Army appropriations, due to Korea, were
increased from $12.1 to $13.7 billion. Watson, JCS History, V, p. 9; Morgan, Ike Versus the 'Spenders,' p. 53.


31. Eisenhower, Mandate, p. 447. An early move on Ike's part that aimed at controlling the bureaucracy was the inclusion of Treasury Secretary Humphrey and Budget Director Dodge—men he knew would support his fiscal objectives—in NSC meetings. Futrell, Ideas, p. 424.

32. Eisenhower, Mandate, p. 447; Borklund, Men of the Pentagon, p. 153.

33. Galambos, ed., Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Volumes VIII, IX. As Chief of Staff after the war and Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1948 and 1949, Eisenhower had advised Defense Secretary Forrestal to centralize power in the Pentagon in the hands of the secretary of defense and JCS chairman to enable them to cope with what Ike viewed as the scandalous service rivalry demonstrated by the "revolt of the admirals." Eisenhower's advice contributed significantly to creation of the position of JCS chairman by the 1949 amendment to the National Security Act of 1947. Teamwork and unswerving loyalty to the President, Eisenhower wrote Forrestal, had to be the centerpieces of JCS operations. Eisenhower also suggested removal of the Chiefs from their service responsibilities so they could devote their time to national planning. John Charles Binkley, "The Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in National Security Policy Making: Professionalism and Self-Perceptions, 1942-1961," Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1985, pp. 172-175.

34. The likes of the Research and Development Board were replaced by functionally designated assistant secretaryships. The secretary of defense's authority over the Services was reaffirmed and extended, the only
limitation being "the statutory prohibitions against transferring, reassigning, abolishing or consolidating combat functions, merging the military departments, or creating a supreme commander of general staff." John Ponturo, Analytical Support for the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The WSEG Experience, 1948-1976 (Arlington, Virginia: Institute for Defense Analysis, July 1979), pp. 105-106.

The new chain of command went from the president to the secretary of defense through service secretaries and onto the specified and unified commands. Previously, the Chiefs had served as the "executive agents" of the unified commands in which their branch had a primary interest. The Chiefs, however, retained the authority for the strategic direction and combat operation of the Services in war. Putrell, Ideas, p. 424; Binkley, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff," pp. 177-178; Borklund, Men of the Pentagon, p. 154.

35. Eisenhower, Mandate, pp. 448-449.

36. As of July 1953, Bradley, Collins and Vandenberg would have served four years each, Fechteler two years. The Chiefs were appointed customarily for a two year term renewable at the President's discretion. Watson, JCS History, V, p. 15. Omar Bradley claimed Eisenhower was under pressure from the Republican leadership to do this immediately upon assuming office, but that he personally persuaded him to wait; Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, A General's Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 654.

37. Public Papers of the Presidents, 1953, pp. 278-283; Eisenhower, Mandate, pp. 448-449; Watson, JCS History, V, p. 15. Eisenhower's appointment of Radford was surprising. When he was serving as Acting Chief of Staff, he was so disgusted by Radford's role in the "revolt of the admirals" that he refused to attend any meeting at which Radford would be present. But Radford, with his Asian experience and orientation and his hard line on atomic weapons, was a favorite of the Republican old guard. He impressed Eisenhower during the December trip to Korea. Robert J. Donovan, Eisen- hower: The Inside Story (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956), pp. 17-19; Binkley, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff," pp. 269-71.


42. Watson, JCS History, V, p. 117; Jockel, No Boundaries, p. 68.

43. Jockel, No Boundaries, p. 72. The recommended measures included a centralized continental air defense command, an early warning line 400 to 600 miles north of the U.S.-Canadian border, elimination of gaps in existing radar lines, eventual construction of a DEW line, research and development on an automated ground control system, and a vigorous civil defense program. Watson, JCS History, V, pp. 119-120.


45. NSC 140/1, May 18, 1953, ibid., pp. 328-345.

46. Ibid., p. 343.

47. Jockel, No Boundaries, p. 73.

48. The summary of the May 27 meeting appears in FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1170-1174. The Ad Hoc Committee on Armaments and American Policy, established as a subcommittee to the NSC Planning Board on February 25, 1953, included R. Gordon Arneson (State, chair), John Ferguson (State), Charles P. Noyes (Defense), Ray B. Snapp (AEC), William P. Bundy (CIA), Horace S. Craig (PSB), and Philip H. Watts (executive secretary). FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1134.

49. NSC 151, May 8, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1151, 1158; Memo of Discussion at the May 27, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 1170.


51. NSC 151, May 8, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1154,
1155, 1158, 1160; Memo of Discussion at the May 27, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 1172-74.

52. Ibid., pp. 1153, 1160, 1173

53. May 9, 1953 memo to the President from Cutler and May 20, 1952 memo to the Secretary of State from the President, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 323-326, 349-354.

54. Apparently, Eisenhower also intervened by removing from consideration a fourth option--preventive war, thereby narrowing the range of choices and gently steering the Project towards a desired result. Immerman, "Confessions," pp. 337-338.


56. Task Force B's report added, "An aggression which would bring on general war would be no trifling border incident but armed aggression that would be clearly recognized as such by the President and the people of the U.S., as well as the free world as a whole." FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 412, 414. McCormack's plan also aimed at long-term economic savings by preparing for one type of conflict, refusing engagement in costly brushfire wars and the necessity of maintaining the dual force capability it would require. Watson, JCS History, V, p. 12.


58. Summaries Prepared by the NSC Staff of Project Solarium Presentations and Written Reports, Enclosure to Memo to the NSC by Lay, July 22, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 400, 402.

59. Notes Taken at the First Plenary Session of Project Solarium, June 26, 1953, ibid., pp. 391-392; Summaries Prepared by the NSC Staff of Project Solarium Presentations and Written Reports, Enclosure to Memo to the NSC by Lay, July 22, 1953, ibid., pp. 413, 417-418, 420-430.

60. Memo by Cutler, July 16, 1953, ibid., p. 397; Memo of Discussion at the July 30, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., 436-437.

62. In the end, Congress reduced Eisenhower's FY 1954 defense figure by $1.6 billion, to just over $34 billion. Futrell, Ideas, p. 422; Morgan, Ike Versus the 'Spenders,' p. 53.


64. July 31, 1953 Memo to the President from Cutler and August 12, 1953 Memo by the Executive Secretary of the Policy Planning Staff, Philip H. Watts, ibid., pp. 440-442.


67. Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Bohlen) to the Department of State, August 8, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, VIII, p. 1211.

68. New York Times, August 13, 1953, 4:5; August 9, 1953, 1:5. Other theories circulated after Malenkov's speech were that his announcement was propaganda timed to influence the upcoming talks on Korea and the preparations for the conference of foreign ministers; or that the speech might have been a reply to General Mark Clark's assertion the week before that the U.S. should use atomic weapons against the Communists if they violated the Korean armistice.

69. Ibid., August 10, 1953, 11:1; Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, p. 61.

70. New York Times, August 9, 1953, 30:1. Prior to the August 12 detonation, the last Soviet atomic test occurred in October 1951.

72. August 21, 1953 letter to the President, WHO-OSANSA, Special Assistant Series, Subject Subseries, box 1, AEC-General (2) [June-Oct. 1953].


74. Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, p. 59. In the first week of October 1990, two Soviet scientists, V.A. Romanov and V.I. Ritus, published papers in the journal Priroda (Nature) as eulogies to Sakharov which revealed that the August 12, 1953 test was not at all thermonuclear. It was, rather, an enhanced atomic bomb. Moreover, it was not a weapons dropped from a plane. The Soviets had not yet mastered the physical separation of hydrogen fuel from the atomic bomb trigger which was the secret to the American lithium-6 H-bomb. New York Times, October 7, 1990, 10:1. The atom bomb trigger served to compress or fuse the lithium-6 deuteride into the tritium element responsible for the hydrogen weapon's enormous power. Divine, Blowing on the Wind, p. 17.

Until very recently, most all historians and journalists had argued that the U.S. program, until the March CASTLE test series, had followed an unfruitful course and that the Joe IV test involved a deliverable weapon. For examples, see Divine, Blowing on the Wind, p. 17; Pfau, No Sacrifice, pp. 145-146; and Prados, The Soviet Estimate, p. 19. An early exception was David Holloway. Relying upon information supplied by Livermore Lab insider Herb York, Holloway pointed to the truth in The Soviet Union and the Arms Race, p. 23.

75. In his excellent article on the Oppenheimer Panel, Barton Bernstein argues that the Soviets were so far behind the U.S. in development of thermonuclear weapons in 1952-53 that they might have jumped at the chance of "an American [thermonuclear] test ban offer as a way of blocking [U.S. stockpiling]." "Crossing the Rubicon," pp. 152-153. Andrei Sakharov admits the Soviets trailed the U.S., but he rejects Bernstein's thesis: "Any move toward abondoning or suspending work on a thermonuclear weapon would have been perceived either as a cunning, deceitful maneuver or as evidence of stupidity or weakness. In any case, the Soviet reaction would have been the same: to avoid a possible trap, and to exploit the adversary's folly at

More significantly, Sakharov acknowledges that Joe IV was a tower device; he never refers to it as a bomb or weapon; pp. 156, 174. Most importantly, he implies that the Soviets, misled by Klaus Fuchs's espionage of the early U.S. thermonuclear research, pursued the wrong path to the H-bomb for many years. It was not until "sometime in the spring or summer of 1955," Sakharov wrote, "[that] we realized we should use a new kind of material in our projected device." And it was not until the test of November 22, 1955 that the Soviet Union "essentially solved the problem of creating high-performance thermonuclear weapons." pp. 94, 182, 185, 193. These elliptical admissions were all confirmed by his two colleagues October 1990 revelations.

A final sign of how the Soviets trailed the U.S. in nuclear technology, Sakharov writes that he and his colleagues had to rely on what they called the "Black Book," an American manual on the effects of nuclear explosions, in order to calculate the fallout potential of their August 12 test; p. 171. Not until late November 1955, three years after America's MIKE thermonuclear test, would the Russians test a true superbomb.

76. Memo by Cutler, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1213; Memo by Cutler to the Chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission (Strauss), ibid., pp. 1213-1214.

77. Memo for the President by the Chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission (Strauss), ibid., pp. 1219-1220. This was a gross exaggeration on Strauss's part. The AEC and Pentagon's evidence suggested in fact that the Soviet device had, at best, yielded only one-tenth, more likely one-twentieth to one-fiftieth, the power of MIKE. The Joe IV yield was approximately 300 kilotons, while MIKE came in at 10.4 megatons. Also see Ambrose, Eisenhower, v. 2, p. 168.

78. Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, p. 61.

view of the Soviet nuclear capability was that the existing "conservative" estimates were "detrimental to the present efforts undertaken by General Twining."
RG 341, USAF HQ, 1953, D/I File, Entry group 214, Document No. 3-3034. Most likely, Possony was referring to Twining's effort to secure JCS approval of a 137-wing Air Force and a greater role for nuclear weapons in national strategy.


82. The August 27 NSC meeting summary appears in FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 443-455; Watson, JCS History, V, p. 34.


86. September 3, 1953 memo to the Secretary of State from Cutler, and September 6, 1953 memo by the Secretary of State, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 455-459; also see Duchin, "The New Look," pp. 126-127; Trachtenberg, "Wasting Asset," p. 38; NIE-99, "Estimate of the World Situation Through 1955," October 23, 1953, FRUS,

87. Memorandum by the Secretary of State, September 6, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 457, 459.

88. Memorandum by the President to the Secretary of State, September 8, 1953, ibid., p. 461. For a different interpretation of this letter see Ambrose, Eisenhower, v. 2, pp. 122-124. Ambrose sees Eisenhower's letter as establishing that "the tone of the new post-Korea foreign policy was to be one of an all out effort to find a way to disarmament." This is incorrect. Eisenhower's disarmament policy was extremely cautious. Until forced to action by the Soviets' unilateral test ban on March 31, 1958, the administration's policy was to insist on no atomic disarmament accords or test bans without a comprehensive arms control agreement and reliable inspection system.

89. For an account of the evolution of NSC 159 see FRUS, 1952-1954, II, 1, pp. 465-466n.

90. Quoted in Watson, JCS History, V, pp. 128-129. It is not clear whether or not this conditional approval was unanimous. If it was, my opinion is that it reflected two distinct sentiments. First, Radford and Twining, proponents of atomic air power, philosophically saw over-attention to defensive measures as contrary to the spirit and substance of the administration's newly forming strategy. Radford, quickly filling the role of Eisenhower's point man at the Pentagon, also supported the move to nuclear weapons as a way to reduce spending. Carney and Ridgway, on the other hand, feared that an overly-enlarged air defense program would further siphon funds away from the already diminished Army and Navy budgets. But they also, perhaps, viewed continental defense as a way to keep the Air Force from securing total budget domination.


92. Ibid., pp. 480-483.

93. Memo of Discussion at the September 24, 1953 NSC Meeting, pp. 467, 469, 471.

94. Memo of Discussion at the November 19, 1953 NSC
Meeting, ibid., pp. 599-601.

95. Ibid., pp. 602-603. The Planning Board's draft, "Report to the National Security Council on Interim Defense Mobilization Planning Assumptions," was approved by Eisenhower as NSC 172, with the condition that due account be given to U.S. ability to destroy the enemy. NSC 172/1 provided that global war could come without warning, but the most likely scenario was a long period of tension and, perhaps, limited conflict, prior to such a war. FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 604-607. See also Executive Sessions, V, pp. 417-418.

96. RG 341, USAF HQ, 1953, D/I File, Entry Group 214, Document No. 3-216. Burgess went on to make a shockingly accurate judgment. His office--the Air Defense Command's Indications Board--believed the information they had showed that the Tu-4 was the first and last long-range bomber the Soviets would build in any quantity. He concluded, "could [the Soviets] now be placing all development effort on the long-range missile with the hope of weathering the critical mid-1950s by political and diplomatic maneuvering pending the day when they can surprise us with a fait accompli long-range missile-wise?" Sadly, Burgess closed, "I also realize that the safest thing for our reputations is to keep our mouths entirely shut on the subject of what the Soviets will have."

97. Bonbright prepared this memo in consultation with Robert Bowie, Director of the PPS, R. Gordon Arneson, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Atomic Energy Affairs, and Frederick E. Nolting, Jr., Acting Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs. FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 442-443. Bonbright also pointed out that estimates of future conditions failed to consider the impact of America's planned deployment of immense numbers of advanced tactical atomic weapons systems.

98. The final form of NSC 159/4 remained contingent upon financing. The services forwarded their individual plans for air defense to Secretary Wilson on October 2, with JCS approval. This package was part of the Defense budget rejected by the NSC on October 13.

99. This draft also included a number of important departmental splits; NSC 162, September 30, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 489-514; Brands, "Age of Vulner-
ability," p. 969.


103. See notes 84 and 85; Memo of Discussion at the October 7, 1953 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, p. 533.


108. Ridgway Papers, Box 28, Army Chief of Staff Official Papers, 1953-1955, October 19, 1953, memo for the record.

109. Ibid; See also NHC, Records of the Strategic Plans Division 1953-1954, Box 284, December 7, 1953 memo from Carney to the JCS.

110. Memo of Discussion at the October 13 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 534-549; NSC 149/2 set a target of $40 billion as the maximum defense budget

111. The term logrolling refers to the practice in which one service would agree to support another's project if the other, in turn, would support something the first service wanted.

112. This is a theory based on my reading of Watson, _JCS History_, V, and RG 218, JCS 1951-53.

113. For Eisenhower's reflections on the policy discussions during the return trip from Korea in December 1952, see Galambos, ed., _The Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower_, vol. XIII.

114. Watson, _JCS History_, V, pp. 21-22, 30-32.


120. JCS 2101/113, December 10, 1953, RG 218, JCS 1951-53, CCS 381 U.S. (1-31-50), Sec. 32.


123. During the October 29 NSC meeting, the Chiefs urged that the Council change the wording (and meaning) of paragraph 9-a-(1) of NSC 162/1, which provided that
the U.S. maintain 'A strong military posture with emphasis on the capability of inflicting massive retaliatory damage by offensive striking power,' to read, 'A strong military posture to include the capability of inflicting massive damage by offensive striking power.' The President preferred the first version; after all, he said, the U.S. was not planning "to build up equally all types and varieties of military strength." FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 562-564, 569-570.


125. NHC, Records of the Strategic Plans Division, 1953-1954, Box 284, December 7, 1953 Memo for the Record, and Box 300, undated memo by Carney in reference to JCS 2101/132.

126. NSC 162/2, October 30, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, p. 579.

127. Ibid., pp. 582, 583, 591-595; Watson, JCS History, V, p. 25.

Chapter III


8. Memo by the Secretary of State, September 6, 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1*, pp. 459; Memo by the President to the Secretary of State, September 8, 1953, ibid., p. 463 note; Memo by Cutler to the President, September 10, 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2*, p. 1213.
9. NSC 112/1, Report to the NSC by the NSC Planning Board, September 1, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1191-1192, 1213.

10. Memo by Cutler to the President, September 10, 1953, and Memo by Cutler to Strauss, September 10, 1953, ibid., p. 1213; Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p. 252; On December 10, 1953, Eisenhower wrote in his diary that, in the unlikely event the Soviets cooperated with the pooling plan, "the U.S. could unquestionably afford to reduce its atomic stockpile [sic] by two or three times [what] the Russians might . . . and still improve our relative position in the cold war and even in the event of the outbreak of war." Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 4, DDE Diary, Oct.-Dec. 1953.


12. Memo for the President by the Secretary of State, October 23, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1234-1235. What Dulles wished to imply was that this was a job for the State Department--for cautious, professional, behind-the-scenes maneuvering by himself. As with his later intense turf battles with Nelson Rockefeller and Harold Stassen, Dulles's jealously extended even to the President. White House chief of staff Sherman Adams described Dulles's behavior this way: although "Dulles was a man of great moral force and conviction, he was not endowed with the creative genius that produces bold, new ideas to gain hitherto unattainable policy goals." Usually, Dulles expressed ideas in negative terms; he opposed innovation, especially by those administration officials out of or juxtaposed to his reach of control. Sherman Adams, Firsthand Report (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 110.

14. Memo from the Special Assistant to the President (Jackson) to the President, December 29, 1953, ibid., pp. 1314-1318; Memo by the President to Jackson, December 31, 1953, ibid., pp. 1321-1322; Memo of Conversation, undated, ibid., pp. 1324-1330; Duchin, "The New Look," pp. 198, 335-339.


18. RG 59, State Department Central Decimal File, 1950-54, 711.5611, Box 3174, December 11, 1953 memo by L. Strauss to W.B. Smith, recording a December 5 meeting at Bermuda; FRUS, 1952-54, XV, 2, p. 1654. The night before the summit opened, Churchill told his delegation, "We have been living in a time when at any moment London, men, women and children, might be destroyed overnight." Colville quoted by Gilbert, Churchill, VIII, p. 917.

19. RG 59, State Department Central Decimal File, 1950-54, 711.5611, Box 3174, December 11 record of December 5 meeting at Bermuda by Strauss to W.B. Smith; FRUS, 1952-54, V, 2, pp. 1767-69, 1816.


22. Colville, Fringes of Power, pp. 684-685; Gilbert,


25. FRUS, 1952-54, XV, 2, 1654-1655. Lewis Strauss recorded a conversation among the President, Prime Minister, Lord Cherwell and himself on December 5, when Churchill made a similar statement; FRUS, 1952-54, V, 2, pp. 1767-1768.


29. During a January 6, 1954 meeting of State, Defense and AEC heads on the implications of the Atoms for Peace speech, Lewis Strauss argued, "it would be illusory to suppose that we can get a binding agreement on the reduction of armaments out of the Russians. Foster Dulles concurred. There could be no serious and enforceable arms accord before there was "a fundamental transformation of the environment--there must be an opening up of the present iron curtain. FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1324-1329. During a January 7, 1954 meeting in Washington with British Ambassador Sir Roger Makins, Dulles said the U.S. would conduct talks with the Soviet Union on peaceful uses of the atom, but "there could be no confidence in the Soviets abiding by any agreement to ban atomic weapons . . ." FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1333. On December 16, 1953, the President and his chief security advisers had concluded, "Although the U.S. would listen to any proposals which the USSR cared to submit on the control or abolition of nuclear weapons, we would not be drawn into any negotiations on this subject." FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1343.

For passages from the Atoms for Peace speech echoing Candor, see Public Papers of the Presidents, 1953, pp. 815-816; New York Times, December 9, 1953, 10:1.
30. Public Papers of the Presidents, 1953, pp. 815-817. Eisenhower wrote on December 10 that the Atoms for Peace address "gave the opportunity to tell America and the world a very considerable story about the size and strength of our atomic capabilities . . ." Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, DDE Diary (1) Dec. 1953.


34. Bundy, Danger and Survival, pp. 294-295. While Ike expressed his willingness to enter into an ideal agreement that would eliminate all nuclear weapons, he no less forcefully stated that this was, for the foreseeable future, an impossibility. FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1314-1322, 1330-1333, 1342-1343; Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, Diary (1) Dec. 1953, December 31, 1953 memo for C.D. Jackson; Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, p. 215.


36. NSC 162/2, October 30, 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, p. 593.

37. Memo of Discussion at the October 13, 1953 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 543-545.


39. Watson, JCS History, V, p. 28; Buhite and Hamel, "War for Peace," p. 373. Everest was not isolated in this thinking. Other Air Force general officers who shared his view included Carl Spaatz, SAC commander Curtis E. LeMay, and Ira Eaker, to name a few.

41. The Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps members agreed to a manpower total of 2.75 million by FY 1957. The Army wanted 2.765 million and insisted this was an absolute minimum, which might well have to be substantially larger if certain geopolitical conditions did not exist. Watson, *JCS History*, V, p. 29. As of February 28, 1953, Army strength stood at 1.495 million. The target figure for FY 1955 most commonly cited was 1.281 million. Watson, *JCS History*, V, pp. 61, 67; *New York Times*, December 2, 1953, 2:6.

42. *New York Times*, December 3, 1953, 1:6; General Ridgway issued a similar charge in Cleveland on November 11, 1953, when he said, "Any weakening of United States ground forces now could be a 'grievous blow to freedom.'" Jurika, ed. *From Pearl Harbor*, p. 328.


45. Watson, *JCS History*, V, p. 30; *JCS 2101/113*, December 10, 1953, RG 218, JCS 1951-53, CCS 381 U.S. (1-31-50), Sec. 32; Futrell, *Ideas*, pp. 426-427. The FY 1955 force levels were set at 1.162 million for the Army, 682,000 for the Navy, 215,000 for the Marines, and 970,000 for the Air Force--a total for 3.029 million, just over the 3.0 million maximum requested by Eisenhower on October 13 and Wilson on October 16. As the Joint Chiefs were considering the Everest recommendations, Eisenhower told Budget Director Dodge and Secretary Wilson to seek "personnel ceilings in each service that will place everything except a few units on an austerity basis." However, combat and air units in Korea and essential SAC units would be maintained at full strength. The Pentagon, Eisenhower stated, should make savings "without wailing about the missions they have to accomplish." December 1, 1953 memo from Eisenhower to the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 3, DDE Diary (2) Dec. 1953.


49. December 3, 1953 Memo for the President from W.B. Smith, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 1, Atomic Energy-The President [May 1953-March 1956] (2).

50. Ibid., December 3, 1953 memo by Strauss to Cutler; December 3, 1953 memo for the President from W.B. Smith; *FRUS*, 1952-54, XV, 2, pp. 1704-1705.

51. *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 1953, p. 835. Unable to agree on the meaning of paragraph 39b, the specially created NSC Committee on Atomic Energy (Wilson, Strauss, Foster Dulles) submitted the separate views of its members to the President for his decision. December 16, 1953 Memo for the President from J. Lay, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Atomic Energy-The President [May 1953-March 1956] (2).


53. Though I have been unable to locate documentation—and Hewlett and Holl do not provide theirs—that Eisenhower was apprised of this move, it is unthinkable that a man even of Strauss's audacity would have taken such a major decision without the President's consent. This conclusion is supported by Hewlett's statement that the AEC went directly to Dodge for the money to finance the facility at Oak Ridge. Dodge certainly would have sought Eisenhower's permission on this, especially since it was not backed by the usual statement of military need from the Pentagon. Hewlett and Holl, *Atoms for Peace*, p. 166.

The JCS were formally charged with the setting of requirements for atomic weapons production. Their requirements were passed through the Military Liaison Committee to the AEC. Poole, *JCS History*, IV, p. 142.

54. Ibid.
55. Cochran et al., *Nuclear Weapons Databook*, I, p. 34, 34n.

56. For assertions of JCS delinquency in association with the military requirements for H-bomb production, see RG 128, Records of the JCAE, Series 2, General Subject Files, Thermonuclear Program 1953, JCAE #3675, Box 59.

57. Hewlett and Holl, *Atoms for Peace*, pp. 166-167; January 28, 1954 record of the January 27, 1954 meeting of the JCS—approval and decision on JCS 2096/19, RG 218, JCS 1957, CCS 471.6 (12-14-49), Section 4, Box 151.


59. February 6, 1954 Memo for the President from Strauss and Wilson, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 1, Atomic Energy, Misc. [1953-1954] (4). The last quotation came from a JCS memo inserted into the Strauss-Wilson document. "At yields over approximately 50 kilotons, thermonuclear weapons can be produced at much lower cost and much less weight than pure fission weapons." Cochran et al., *Nuclear Weapons Databook*, I, p. 34.

   Construction of new production facilities for the new thermonuclear program, the AEC estimated, would cost $360 million, with an increase of $75 million in operating costs during FY 1955. February 6, 1954 Memo for the President from Strauss and Wilson, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 1, Atomic Energy, Misc. [1953-1954] (4). For Eisenhower's decision see February 6, 1954 memo to Strauss from the President, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 1, Atomic Energy Misc. (3).

60. Berman and Baker, *Soviet Strategic Forces*, pp. 133-134; also see Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race*

61. The Corporal, Matador and Honest John missiles were first deployed in 1953, 1951 and 1954, respectively. The 280mm atomic cannon was deployed to Europe in June 1953. The following non-strategic aircraft were capable of carrying atomic ordnance by 1954: the AD-4B and AD-5N Skyraider, the AJ-1 and AJ-2 Savage, the A-3 Skywarrior, the B-45 Tornado, the FJ-4B Fury,
the F9F-8B Cougar, the F-84G Thunderjet, the F-86H Sabre, the F-89 Scorpion, the F-100 Supersabre, the P2V3C and P2V5 Neptune, the P5M2 Marlin, and the S-2 Tracker. Cochran et al., *Nuclear Weapons Databook*, I, pp. 10-11; Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," p. 30; *FRUS*, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 437-440.

Particularly important also was the flexibility of yields these warheads offered. The Mk-7, for instance, was built with yields ranging from 1 to 70 kilotons. Ryan, *Chinese Attitudes*, p. 138.


64. On VISTA see Chapter I, pp 24-25; Rosenberg, "Smoking, Radiating Ruin," p. 10; Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill, p. 34.


kill," pp. 16-17; Reed, "The Case of the Minuteman," p. 17.

68. OPFTACKLE, approved December 8, 1949, projected a sustained bombing offensive, both conventional and atomic, against the Soviet bloc extending from the initial atomic blitz through D-day plus 24 months. On the ground, the plan was to conduct a fighting retreat to the Pyrenees and/or southern France for evacuation to Britain and North Africa. The West then, under cover of the air offensive, would build for an invasion of the continent, to come sometime between D plus 12 and D plus 24 months. Ross, American War Plans, pp. 115-118; Poole, JCS History, IV, pp. 161-164; Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," pp. 16-17.


70. Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," pp. 3-71; Rosenberg, "Smoking, Radiating Ruin," p. 10. The JCS decision for the new target scheme can be found in JCS 2056/7, August 12 and August 15, 1950 decision, RG 218, JCS 1950, CCS 373.11 (12-14-48), Section 2.


72. NSC 68 provided, "The military advantages of landing the first blow . . . require us to be on the alert in order to strike with our full weight as soon as we are attacked, and, if possible, before the Soviet blow is actually delivered." NSC 68, April 14, 1950, FRUS, 1950, I, pp. 281-282; Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," p. 25.


75. Memorandum of Policy 84, "Joint Program for Planning," July 14, 1952, replaced the Joint Outline Emergency
War Plan with a set of three strategic plans. The Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) was the emergency war plan for the current fiscal year. The Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP) was a mid-range plan, based on an assumed D-day of July 1 three years after the plan's approval. And the Joint Long Range Strategic Estimate (JLRSE) for five years hence, served mostly as a forecast and guide for research and development. Watson, *JCS History*, V, pp. 89-91; Poole, *JCS History*, pp. 175-177.

Annex C included a list of targets and destruction requirements for those targets which served to guide the atomic operational planning of the specified and unified commands. Rosenberg, *Origins of Overkill*, pp. 9-10.

76. The jointly-staffed Air Targets Division was renamed as such in 1952 from the Air Force Intelligence Production Division. Rosenberg, *Origins of Overkill*, pp. 9-10; "Smoking, Radiating Ruin," pp. 8-9. The Unified commands included the European (Paris), Atlantic (Norfolk), Caribbean (Panama Canal Zone), Far Eastern (Tokyo), Pacific (Honolulu), Continental Air Defense (Colorado Springs), and Alaskan Commands; SAC was the lone specified command.

77. Watson, *JCS History*, V, p. 68. During fiscal years 1955-1957, the New Look period, the Air Force received 47 percent of total Pentagon appropriations. The Navy got 29 percent and the Army 22 percent. For FY 1950, the Air Force received $4.6 billion of the $14.2 billion total, while the Army received $4.5 and the Navy $4.3 billion. Snyder in Schilling, *Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets*, p. 52.


79. Rosenberg, "Smoking, Radiating Ruin," p. 10; Ziemke notes that SAC at first resisted surrendering responsibility for these targets for fear of diluting its power within the Air Force over money, aircraft pro-
duction priorities and the like. Tactical Air Command, however, wished to enlarge its role in the atomic war plan. Ziemke, "In the Shadow of the Giant," pp. 228-237.


82. Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," p. 18. The Joint Staff and Joint Chiefs of Staff did not often challenge the Air Targets Division's lists. The Air Force and SAC enjoyed official responsibility for producing the intelligence upon which the ATD's lists were based. The CIA and the other Services' intelligence offices participated in the planning process, but neither they nor especially the Office of the JCS had the time or resources to challenge the Air Force's estimates in detail. Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," p. 11.

83. October 14, 1953 "Memo for the Files" by Kenneth Mansfield, RG 128, Records of the JCAE, Series 2, General Subject Files/Thermonuclear Program 1953, JCAE #3675, Box 59.


86. Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," pp. 9-10. The other strike forces, for example, the Navy's carrier attack aircraft and TAC planes, "were under the planning aegis and operational control of JCS mixed-service unified commanders in Europe, the Atlantic, and the Pacific."


88. This account is drawn from the transcript of Moore's record of the briefing which is reprinted in Rosenberg, "Smoking, Radiating Ruin," pp. 18-28.
89. Ibid., pp. 25, 35.
90. Ibid., p. 27
91. Ibid., pp. 9-10, 18; Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," p. 35.
93. The Weapons System Evaluation Group was formally chartered on December 11, 1948 by the JCS and the Research and Development Board, with the secretary of defense's concurrence. It was primarily intended to provide the "JCS with an alternative source of analytical support outside of the Joint Staff" above and free of service interests. For an extensive history of WSEG's operations and studies, see John Ponturo, Analytical Support for the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The WSEG Experience, 1948-1976 (Arlington, Virginia: Institute for Defense Analysis Study S-507, July 1979); Ibid., pp. xxx-xxxii, 2, 34, 39. The information on WSEG No. 10, "Evaluation of the Effects of the Mid-1954 First Phase Atomic Offensive Against Fixed Industrial Targets in the Soviet Bloc," comes from an evaluation of the WSEG study by the Air Force, submitted to General Twining sometime in the spring of 1954, Undated "Comments on WSEG #10 for General Twining," Twining Papers, Box 120, "Ready File," 1954.
94. Twining Papers, Box 120, "Ready File," 1954.
95. Ibid; Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," p. 36.
96. The March 10, 1954 memo is found in RG 341, USAF HQ, 1954, D/I File, Entry Group 214, #4-759.
98. Recall, the new JSCP was nearing its approval date of March 31. Watson, JCS History, V, pp. 100-101. Concerning SAC's duplicity, Captain Moore observed, "SAC purposely gives the impression at such briefings that they consider themselves a 'delivery service' to attack whatever targets the JCS tell them to attack--
and, in effect, do not originate strategic air targets directly or indirectly." Rosenberg, "Smoking, Radiating Ruin," p. 28.


100. March 10, 1954 memo in RG 341; Kaplan, Wizards, pp. 211-212.


106. Ibid., pp. 638-641.
Chapter IV

1. For the text of the State of the Union Message, see Public Papers of the Presidents, 1954, pp. 6-23.


3. See Chapter I, pp. 33-34.


On top of Air Force augmentation and Army and Navy cuts, the Pentagon simultaneously announced it was putting teeth into the New Look with deployment to Europe of a second and third battalion of atomic artillery and two squadrons of atomic-capable Matador missiles. Newsweek, January 25, 1954, p. 22, February 15, 1954, p. 35.


9. Ferrell, ed. Diary of James C. Hagerty, p. 7; Eisen-


15. Ibid., February 18, 1954, 1:3; March 9, 1954 letter to Eisenhower from Winston Churchill, Whitman File, International Series, Box 17, President-Churchill, Jan. 1-June 30, 1954 (7); This letter may also be found in Boyle, ed. The Churchill-Eisenhower Correspondence (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 122-123.


17. Edmund Beard, Developing the ICBM: A Study in Bureaucratic Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 135, 137, 145-146; First deployed in 1959, ATLAS was a liquid-fueled, single-warhead ballistic missile with a range of some 5,000 miles. By the end of 1962, SAC was armed with 142 of these weapons; Kohn and Harahan, eds. Strategic Air Warfare, pp. 100n, 102n.

18. Beard, Developing the ICBM, pp. 135-137, 140-142, 148-149, 164; At the time of the MIKE test (October 31, 1952), Air Force requirements for an ICBM included a Circular Error Probable (CEP)--"the radius of a circle within which 50 percent of the missiles aimed at its center are expected to land"--of 1,500 feet for a missile traveling 5,000 miles and carrying a 10,000 pound warhead. After MIKE proved the thermonuclear design--meaning a much greater yield could be obtained from a smaller warhead--a special committee of the Air
Force's Science Advisory Board recommended relaxation of these requirements to a CEP of 5,280 feet with a warhead of 3,000 pounds. The enormous destructive power of H-weapons made accuracy less important; Beard, ibid., p. 143; Rosenberg, "Origins of Overkill," pp. 44-45; George B. Kistiakowsky, A Scientist at the White House: The Private Diary of President Eisenhower's Special Assistant for Science and Technology (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p.xxxiii.

19. Kaplan, Wizards of Armageddon, p. 115; Bundy, Danger and Survival, p. 326; Beard, Developing the ICBM, pp. 156-57; The von Neumann Committee included Hendric Bode (Bell Labs), Louis G. Dunn (director, Jet Propulsion Lab, Cal Tech), George B. Kistiakowsky (Harvard), Charles C. Lauristen (Cal Tech), Clark B. Millikan (president, Guggenheim Institute, Cal Tech), Allen E. Puckett (Hughes Aircraft), Jerome B. Wiesner (MIT), Lawrence A. Hyland (Bendix Aviation Corporation), and consultants Simon Ramo and Dean Wooldridge. Von Neumann stacked the deck of the committee in favor of ATLAS, for he had served as a consultant to Convair on the ATLAS program for many months; Ramo and Wooldridge were Air Force contractors, with connections to Convair; and Millikan had chaired the Air Force Science Advisory Panel which, in December 1952, had pressed the Air Force to increase ATLAS's funding.


A study headed by Bruno Augenstein at RAND echoed von Neumann's conclusions. Submitted to the Air Force on February 8, 1954, it argued for alteration of ICBM requirements to a three-mile CEP and a 1,500 pound warhead. Augenstein briefed the von Neumann committee on his findings December 17-19, 1953; Kaplan, Wizards of Armageddon, pp. 113-116; Beard, Developing the ICBM, pp. 160-163.


24. The Air Force Council was composed of the Air Force Chief of Staff's five main deputies. It was responsible for advising him on matters of Service policy and resource allocation; Kohn and Harahan, eds. Strategic Air Warfare, p. 13; Beard, Developing the ICBM, pp. 164-171, 178-179.


26. Pfau, No Sacrifice Too Great, p. 164; Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, pp. 175-178, 277; Miller, Under the Cloud, p. 197. After the Bravo shot, the AEC and military task force in charge of the testing enlarged the exclusion area surrounding Bikini from 67,000 to 575,000 square miles, an area twice the size of Texas.


31. New York Times, March 14, 1954, 1:2; March 18, 1954, 10:3; March 27, 1954, 8:4; Editorial note, March 31,
1954 memo from Livingston Merchant to Foster Dulles, and April 2, 1954 telegram from Dulles to Aldrich (London), FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 487-491; Merchant pointed out, "The Soviet move is well timed in terms of French indecision over EDC and the current outcry over the H-bomb tests..." On April 8 John C. Hughes, the U.S. Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council, wrote that the NAC agreed the Soviets were seeking to torpedo EDC and to take the propaganda initiative on nuclear disarmament. Turkey's representative said, "His government feels [the] Soviets are in [an] inferior atomic and thermo-nuclear position. As they need time to catch up in this field, their propaganda line on H-bomb may be designed [to] spread fear and influence Western public opinion [to] urge curtailment [of] further thermonuclear development and tests." FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 489-497.

32. Divine, Blowing on the Wind, p. 8; Pfau, No Sacrifice Great, pp. 164-165; Ike's statement appears as a gaffe especially in light of Press Secretary James Hagerty's diary entry for March 23. In it Hagerty boasts of having persuaded the President not to deal with questions the next day concerning the Pacific tests, but to await Lewis Strauss's return; Ferrell, ed. Diary of James C. Hagerty, p. 32.

State Department records for the weeks following the news of Bravo and Nehru's call for a test ban are full of reports from U.S. embassies worldwide, remarking on foreign criticism of U.S. nuclear testing; State CDF, 711.5611, Box 3174.

33. Memo of Telephone Conversation Between the Secretary of State and the Chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, March 29, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1379; Ferrell, ed. Diary of James C. Hagerty, pp. 40, 42; For an excellent account of the Atomic Energy Commission's extensive and extended efforts at covering up the dangers of fallout from atmospheric testing, see Miller, Under the Cloud.

34. FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1379.


36. Ferrell, ed. Diary of James C. Hagerty, p. 39; Divine,
37. FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1382; Pfau, No Sacrifice Too Great, p. 168; Newsweek, March 29, 1954, p. 20; U.S. News and World Report, April 8, 1954, pp. 22-23. The editors at U.S. News had actually underestimated the area of fallout coverage. During a May 24, 1954 meeting of the AEC, it was estimated that if Bravo had been detonated over Washington, D.C., fallout as radioactive as that which covered the Fukuryu Maru would have spread over all of New England and into parts of Canada; Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, p. 182.

38. Pfau, No Sacrifice Too Great, pp. 166-168; Divine, Blowing on the Wind, pp. 21-22; Progress Report of the Working Group of the Operations Coordinating Board, April 30, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1408. Divine points out that the AEC also released photographs from the film of IVY to Life magazine, but then tried to prevent foreign distribution of the issue containing the photos—as well as the movie itself—fearing they would contribute to the deterioration of America's image abroad.


40. Ibid., pp. 381, 383. It was during this same news conference that Eisenhower made his famous "row of dominos" analogy to Southeast Asia.

41. Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, pp. 272-274.

42. Bernstein, "Crossing the Rubicon," p. 159; Eisenhower repeated his interest in a moratorium on all nuclear testing during an April 19 meeting with Foster Dulles while vacationing in Augusta, Georgia; Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 1, Meetings with the President 1954 (3); Also see Ambrose, Eisenhower, v. 2, pp. 169-170. Memo of Discussion at the May 27, 1954 NSC meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1453-1456.


44. Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, April 30, 1954, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, Box 1 AEC-Nuclear Testing
[1954-1959]; this memo also appears in FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1438-1439; also see Watson, JCS History, V, p. 194.

45. Secretary of State to the Department of State, April 28, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1398; Editorial Note, ibid., p. 1519; Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace, p. 221. In a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on September 23, 1954, Dulles detailed the history of U.S.-Soviet negotiations concerning Ike's Atoms for Peace proposals, and how Moscow had rejected them. He said that the U.S. remained ready to talk with the Soviets about peaceful uses and other atomic cooperation; but in the meantime, Washington would proceed without them in creation of an International Atomic Energy Agency; Editorial note, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1519.


47. Ibid., pp. 1425-1427; Memo by the Director of Central Intelligence to the Executive Secretary of the NSC, May 25, 1954, ibid., pp. 1445-1447; Memo by the Federal Civil Defense Administrator (Peterson) to the Executive Secretary of the NSC, May 26, 1954, ibid., pp. 1449-1452; Memo by the Secretary of State to the Executive Secretary of the NSC, June 23, 1954, ibid., pp. 1463-1466. May 26, 1954 memo to James Lay from Val Peterson, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 2, NSC 112/1 Disarmament (5).

48. The May 25, 1954 Memo to Robert Bowie from Livingston Merchant details the Dulles-Makin's conversation, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1448; Beard, Developing the ICBM, p. 181; Bundy, Danger and Survival, p. 326; June 23, 1954 memo to Lay on the State Department's view of a moratorium, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, Box 1, AEC-Nuclear Testing [1954-1959]; Memo of Discussion at the June 23, 1954 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1468-1470. AEC chairman Strauss reported during the June 23 meeting that another obstacle to a workable moratorium was that control and monitoring of compliance was not yet technically reliable. In short, the U.S. could not be certain of Soviet adherence to any ban.

49. For evidence of Eisenhower's sentiment in favor of a moratorium, see FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1425-1428, 1454-1456, 1469-1470.

51. Another example of Eisenhower's move during this period to enlarge the nuclear advantage was his August 30, 1954 decision to approve plans for a new series of nuclear weapons tests to begin in February 1955. Codenamed Operation TEAPOT, this series ran from February 18 to May 15, 1955, and included 14 shots, mostly for air defense and tactical warheads; August 30, 1954 letter to the President from Strauss, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 1, Atomic Energy Misc. (3); Cochran, et al., Nuclear Weapons Databook, II, pp. 154-155; Miller, Under the Cloud, pp. 213-242, 421-430.


53. Memo from the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs to the U.S. Permanent Representative to the NAC, November 24, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 538-539; Memo from the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs to the Secretary of State, April 29, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, XVI, pp. 618-619; Eisenhower, Mandate, pp. 13-14, 353, 398-408.


57. The text of Secretary Dulles's April 23 speech appears in FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 509-514; Dulles's May 6 report to the NSC on the NAC session and on the reaction to his speech appears in FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, p. 1424.

58. Telegram from the U.S. Permanent Representative on the NAC to the Department of State, April 24, 1954 FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 515-516.

British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden perhaps best captured this realism with two comments he made that April. First, expressing to Dulles his repugnance at the prospect of a continued arms race and Soviet parity, Eden said that the West had a duty "to consider again some practical approach to disarmament." However, Eden instantly recognized this as unrealistic, for in any such agreement "[the Soviets] always cheat." FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, p. 500; And at the April 23 NAC meeting, Eden called the idea of a strategy based on nuclear superiority unpleasant. Yet, he added that "he could not help but think how much more unpleasant it would be if we did not have superiority..." Ibid., p. 515.

59. FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 520-562; see especially pp. 520-521, 520 note. General J. Lawton Collins was the U.S. member of both the Military Representatives Committee and the Standing Group.

60. Memo from the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs to the U.S. Permanent Representative to the NAC, November 24, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 538-539; Ibid., pp. 527-529. The quote is from Merchant's memo; MC-48 remains classified.

61. Memo from the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs to the Secretary of State, November 1, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 527-529; see also the attached November 2, 1954 Memo to the President, pp. 530-532, and a more complete version of this second memo in the Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 3, Dulles, John Foster--Nov. 1954 (2).


63. Ibid., pp. 509-514.

64. For details of Eisenhower's general war plans see Chapters III and V; also see Eisenhower, Mandate, p. 453.
65. FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, pp. 538-539. To guard against this scenario, Merchant offered an elaborate plan for handling MC-48 at the December NAC meeting; he even suggested a script that Secretary General Lord Ismay might follow when he introduced the strategy.

66. For the best accounts of Eisenhower's efforts on behalf of the 1954 act, see Botti, Long Wait, and Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace and War. On the expanded deployment of nuclear weapons abroad, see Memo by the Staff Secretary to the President (Goodpaster), undated, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 2, pp. 1576-1577; Ambrose, Eisenhowcr, vol. 2, pp. 224-225; Botti, Long Wait, pp. 144-145.


68. For Eisenhower's views on these events, see Mandate, pp. 395-408.


70. FRUS, 1952-54, XII, 1, pp. 1008, 1026, 1146-1148.


74. Memo of Discussion at the January 8, 1954 NSC meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, XII, 1, p. 949.

75. April 5, 1954 cable from Dillon to the State Department, FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, pp. 1204, 1236-1238; Editorial Note, ibid., p. 1236; Anderson, Trapped by Success, pp. 24-36; Burke and Greenstein, How Presidents Test Reality, pp. 46-52.


April 2, 1954 memo of conversation with the President, Dulles Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Box 7, JFD Chron. April 1954 (4); April 5, 1954 memo for the Secretary's File of an April 3, 1954 conference with congressional leaders, Dulles Papers, JFD Chronological Series, Box 7, JFD Chron. April 1954 (3).

77. Memorandum of Presidential Telephone Conversation, April 5, 1954, FRUS, XIII, pp. 1241-1242; Memo of Discussion at the April 6, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 1261-1264; Burke and Greenstein, How Presidents Test Reality, pp. 68-69; Boyle, ed., Churchill-Eisenhower, p. 136; Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, pp. 1238-1241; Anderson, Trapped by Success, p. 32.

The President did, however, want to do what he could to keep the French fighting in Indochina.
Therefore, he agreed to Paris' April 2 request that the U.S. provide air transport for two French para-
troop battalions from North Africa to Indochina. 
April 3, 1954 memo of conversation (by Bonbright) 
among Secretary Dulles, MacArthur, and French Ambassa-
dor Bonnet, FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, p. 1229.


79. Ibid.; Memo fo Conversation, by the Deputy Secretary 
of State for European Affairs (Bonbright), April 4, 
1954, FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, pp. 1231-1233; Memo of 
Discussion at the April 6, 1954 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 

80. Burke and Greenstein, How President's Test Reality, 
pp. 75-81; Memo of Discussion at the May 20, 1954 NSC 
Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, 2, pp. 1588-1589; 
Anderson, Trapped by Success, p. 34.

81. FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, pp. 1307-1309, 1311-1313, 1319-
1320; Gardner, Approaching Vietnam, p. 260. Ike was 
frustrated by the British phobia of provoking war with 
the Soviet Union. He wrote to friend Swede Hazlett on 
April 27: the British "have a morbid obsession that 
any positive move on the part of the free world may 
bring upon us World War III; FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, p. 
1428.

82. This impression was fed by the press' interpretation 
of Dulles' travels; by their April 17 leak of Vice 
President Nixon's off-the-record remark that French 
withdrawal from Indochina might necessitate deployment 
of U.S. ground forces to the region; and by the Penta-
gon's April 21 announcement that U.S. aircraft had 
just delivered hundreds of French paratroops to Indo-
china from France and North Africa and that 25 U.S. 
combat planes had been transferred from the carrier 
Saipan to French forces in Indochina. Burke and 
Greenstein, How Presidents Test Reality, pp. 75-78; 
New York Times, April 17, 1954, 1; FRUS, 1952-54, 
XIII, pp. 1321-1322, 1321 note, 1310.

83. Memo by the Counselor (MacArthur) to the Secretary of 
State, April 7, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, pp. 1270-
1272. On April 6, 1954, the NSC Special Committee on 
Indochina--created on January 21, 1954 by Eisenhower--
advised the NSC that the U.S. should "accept nothing 
short of military victory in Indochina," oppose any 
compromise settlement at Geneva, and be ready to step
in if the French pulled out of the region. The Committee's working group was chaired by General Graves B. Erskine; Part I of its findings were submitted to the President on March 11; Part II was briefed to the NSC on April 6. FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, pp. 986, 1108-1116; Burke and Greenstein, How Presidents Test Reality, p. 71.

84. Memo by the Army Chief of Staff to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 6, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, pp. 1269-1272; Jurika, From Pearl Harbor, pp. 405-406.


86. Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Department of State, April 22, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, XIII, pp. 1361-1362; Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Department of State, ibid., p. 1374; Memo of Discussion at the May 6, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 1483-1484; Francis N. Dawson Collection, Oral History Interview with Douglas MacArthur II, pp. 11-12.


89. FRUS, 1952-54, XII, 1, pp. 464-465.

90. See Chapter I, pp. 62-70 and notes 160 and 171.


92. Memo by the Special Assistant to the President (Cutler) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, June 1, 1954, ibid., pp. 1647-1648; Memo of Conversation between the President and General Cutler, June 1, 1954, ibid., pp. 1648-1649; John


94. Ibid., 521-528; Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series, Box 2, Dulles, John Foster--May 1954 (1), May 28, 1954 Memo by the Secretary of State re May 21, 1954 Memo to the President.


98. See Chapter I, pp. 60-68.

99. See the *FRUS* volumes on Indochina, 1952-54, XIII, 1 and 2.


Chapter V


3. The quotes from a May 21, 1954 JCS letter to Defense Secretary Wilson appear in Watson, *JCS History, V*, p. 43; Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, p. 132; June 23, 1954 JCS memo to Defense Secretary Wilson, *FRUS*, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 680-681, 684-685; JCS 2101/136, June 23, 1954, RG 218, JCS 1954-56, CCS 381 U.S. (1-31-50), Sec. 39; NIE 11-5-54 offered a conclusion similar to that of the Joint Chiefs: "It should be borne in mind that the progress being made by the USSR in the development of nuclear weapons, and the increasing Soviet capability to deliver these weapons, are changing the world power situation. . . . Under this condition, Soviet rulers will almost certainly believe that, as Soviet nuclear capabilities increase, the aversion of the U.S. and its allies to general war will correspondingly increase." The USSR thus may pursue its goals "without running substantial risk of general war." NIE 11-5-54, June 7, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, VIII, pp. 1235-1237.


7. See Chapter II, pp. 133-134.


10. Ibid., pp. 689-690.

11. Ibid., pp. 692-696.

12. For examples of this practice see Memo of Discussion at the June 3, 1954 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, XII, pp. 532-535; March 14, 1956 Memo of Conversation with the President (Wilson, Radford, Goodpaster), WHO-SS, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, Box 4 Joint Chiefs of Staff (2).

13. Watson, JCS History, V, p. 47; The paragraph in NSC 5422/2 dealing with the allies provided: "As a broad rule of conduct, the U.S. should pursue its objectives in such ways and by such means . . . as will maintain the cohesion of the alliances. The U.S. should, however, act independently of its major allies when the advantage of achieving U.S. objectives by such actions clearly outweighs the danger of lasting damage to its alliances. In this connection, consideration should be given to the likelihood that the initiation of action . . . prior to allied acceptance may bring about subsequent allied support. Allied reluctance to act should not inhibit the U.S. from taking action, including use of nuclear weapons, to prevent Communist territorial gains. . . ." This paragraph appears in FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 721-722 and is quoted in Botti, The Long Wait, p. 138.


15. See Chapter IV, pp. 214-216.

16. A.J. Wohlstetter et al., Selection and Use of Strategic Air Bases R-266 (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, April 1954).


For evidence of the Air Force's view of Soviet bomber capabilities, see RG 341, USAF HQ, 1953, D/I File, Entry Group 214, No. 3-4193 and No. 4-39A; Curtis LeMay argued later that, "As for [the Soviets'] offensive capacity: not one bomb or missile, in that day, could have hit the United States; LeMay with Kantor, Mission With LeMay, p. 481.

Philip K. Lawrence, Preparing for Armageddon: A Critique of Western Strategy (Brighton, Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1988), pp. 28; Herken, Counsels, pp. 94-97; Rosenberg, "Smoking, Radiating Ruin," p. 24; In reflection, LeMay was even more blunt. During the early 1950s, he claimed, "it would have been possible, I believe, for America to say to the Soviets, 'Here's a blueprint for your immediate future. We'll give you a deadline of five or six months ... to get out of the satellite countries, and effect a complete change of conduct. You will behave your damn selves from this moment forth," or face SAC's power; LeMay with Kantor, Mission With LeMay, p. 481; On the inability of the USSR either to execute an attack on the U.S. or to stop SAC, see Matthew B. Ridgway's testimony on May 19, 1953 in Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Historical Series, Vol. V, p. 419; and RG 341, USAF HQ, 1953, D/I File, Entry Group 241, No. 3-4193.

22. AIE-1/54, May 1, 1954, RG 341, USAF HQ, 1954, Operations: Director of Intelligence Numerical File 1954,
Box 189, Folder 4-1846. The destruction of U.S. retaliatory capability would demand devotion of one-half of the Soviet nuclear stockpile to destruction of U.S. nuclear weapons storage facilities.

23. Ibid; the intelligence community's NIE 11-5-54 reproduced the Air Force's exaggerations. For instance, the NIE estimated that the total megatonnage of the Soviet stockpile had increased by more than four times the level estimated one year earlier. The 1953 figure was 6 megatons, while NIE 11-5-54 gave a figure of 25 megatons. NIE 11-5-54 also predicted that the Soviets could have as many as 900 jet bombers by 1959; the actual total peaked at 195. June 7, 1954, "Soviet Capabilities and Main Lines of Policy Through Mid-1959," FRUS, 1952-54, VIII, pp. 1235-1237; FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, p. 651; Richard K. Betts, Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 152.

Berman and Baker, Soviet Strategic Forces, p. 25; Michael McGwire, Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987), pp. 94-95; AIE-1/54 predicted 200 Tu-20s by 1955 and 500 Mya-4s by 1960, RG 341, USAF HQ, DCS Operations: Director of Intelligence Numerical File 1954, Box 189, 4-1846. These figures were, of course, based on production capacity estimates. As of 1954, the Soviets had only one Mya-4 prototype and perhaps twenty Tu-20s; See also NIE 11-4-54, September 14, 1954, "Soviet Capabilities and Probable Courses of Action Through Mid-1959," FRUS, 1952-54, VII, pp. 1249-1250. This NIE offers an example of how the exaggerations of Soviet attack capabilities were extended to submarines and submarine-launched nuclear missiles.

24. Watson, JCS History, V, p. 135; March 3, 1954 Memo for the Secretary of Defense, Twining Papers, Box 72, 1954, Secretary of Defense. The precise language of Sprague's November 24, 1954 report read, "The probability (based on our recent Pacific test of nuclear weapons) that the Russians might have within the next few years, --and possibly as early as mid-1957, --a significant stockpile of [deleted] deliverable by long-range Russian bombers on our continent." WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 9, NSC 5408-Continental Defense (2). The inference from the deletion is obvious. Sprague's language was seriously flawed. "Probability" should have been, at best,
"possibility." His deduction was, moreover, a good example of the mirror-imaging that often shaped U.S. estimates. Of course, the Soviets had not detonated a thermonuclear device of any sort when Sprague's report was completed, and would not for another year. For explanation of mirror-imaging see Jonathan Samuel Lockwood, The Soviet View of U.S. Strategic Doctrine: Implications for Decision Making (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1983). For details on the timing of the first Soviet thermonuclear test, see Chapter II, pp. 102-106.

25. November 24, 1954 Sprague Report, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 9, NSC 5408-Continental Defense (2); Watson, JCS History, V, pp. 136-137. Sprague was particularly concerned that the DEW line, Pacific Ocean radar net, low altitude radar capability, and the Air Force's nuclear-armed air-to-air missile be completed.


27. The Chiefs were quoted by Secretary Wilson in his November 22, 1954 report to James Lay. Wilson noted in the cover memo to this report that he, along with the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force, supported the Chiefs' views. FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 785-786; See also November 11, 1954 JCS memo to Wilson, RG 218, JCS 1954-56, CCS 381 U.S. (1-31-50), Section 47; and Trachtenberg, "Wasting Asset," p. 41; For the record of the NSC meeting where these views were aired, see FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 788-795.

28. SNIE 11-8-54, "Probable Warning of Soviet Attack on the U.S. through Mid-1957." The September 10, 1954 draft of this document is found in WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Subject Subseries, Box 11, SNIE 11-8-54 re Warning of Soviet Attack.

29. Ibid.

30. The NCES was established by NSC 5423 on June 23, 1954 and approved by the President on June 24. On February 14, 1955, as per NSC 5511, the NCES was renamed the Net Evaluation Subcommittee (NESC) and established as a permanent body to report at least annually to the NSC on the "net capability of the USSR, in the event of general war, to inflict direct injury upon the continental U.S. and key U.S. installations over-
The NESC was chaired by the JCS chairman and included the director of the Office of Defense Mobilization, the Federal Civil Defense Administrator, the Director of Central Intelligence, the chairman of the Interdepartmental Intelligence Conference and the chairman of the Interdepartmental Committee on Internal Security; NSC 5511, February 14, 1955, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 15, NSC 5511-Net Evaluation Subcommittee; Also see the February 16, 1954 message from CINCFE Hull to the Department of the Army (for Radford), RG 218, CJCS Radford, 1953-1957, CCS 381 (Net Evaluation, Jan-May 1955), Box 50; Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, Volume XIX, National Security Affairs (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1990), p.56; The NCES report is commented on in detail by Sprague in his November 24, 1954 report to the NSC, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 9, NSC 5408-Continental Defense (2); Also see Watson, JCS History, V, pp. 139-140.


32. The "Net Estimate" was presented to the NSC on November 4, 1954, by Thomas H. Robbins, Jr., Chief of Staff of the Naval War College and staff director of the NCES. Minutes of November 4, 1954 NSC meeting, RG 273; FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, p. 2n; The summary of the November 4 NSC meeting is found in the Whitman File, NSC Series; The corroboration of the Net Estimate and SNIE 11-8-54 is not surprising, given that Cline was the CIA "Estimates Officer" in charge of preparing Soviet estimates. Ray S. Cline, Secrets, Spies, and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1976), pp. 133, 142; Ambrose and Immerman, Ike's Spies, pp. 254-255.

It is interesting to note that the Net Estimate was an early example of computerized war-gaming. The NCES requested and was granted permission to use the Navy and the Air Force's UNIVAC computers for its task. July 20, 1954 memo to Twining from Radford, and August 6, 1954 memo from Carney to R.Adm. Thomas H. Robbins (director of the NCES staff), RG 218, CJCS Radford 1953-57, CCS 381 (Net Evaluation), Box 50.


35. Ibid., pp. 6-8.

36. Ibid., pp. 8, 10.


40. November 15, 1954, "Suggestions of the Secretary of State, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 772-775; Foster Dulles was backed by his brother, CIA director Allen Dulles. See the latter's November 18, 1954 memo, ibid., pp. 776-777.

41. November 12, 1954 memo from the JCS to Wilson, quoted by Watson, JCS History, V, pp. 48-49.


43. Ibid. Dulles knew very well that the Soviets probably trailed the U.S. substantially in the nuclear field. For evidence of this, see April 12, 1954 Memo of Conversation (London), FRUS, 1952-54, V, 1, p. 500.

Dulles's boast concerning the new heights attained by the U.S. in foreign policy is recorded by Sherman Adams in Firsthand Report, pp. 126-127.

44. Memo of Discussion at the November 24, 1954 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 792-793.

45. The details of Ridgway's presentation to the NSC on December 3 have been deleted by government censors, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 804-806; The story comes from Watson, JCS History, V, p. 50. For a detailed
explanation of Ridgway's plan, see his November 22, 1954 memo for the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Ridgway Papers, Box 30, Historical Record, July 1953-July 1955.


47. Summaries of the two meetings--on December 13 with the Republican leadership and December 14 with a bipartisan group--are provided in Ferrell, ed. Diary of James C. Hagerty, pp. 133-134, 140-141; and Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 5, Staff Notes, January-December 1954.


The Air Force was scheduled to expand to its New Look objective of 137 wings by June 30, 1957, including 54 wings of strategic bombers, 34 wings of continental interceptors, 38 tactical air fighter-bomber wings, and 11 transport wings. For the figures on SAC and the nuclear stockpile, see Development of Strategic Air Command, pp. 42, 48; and Cochran et al., Nuclear Weapons Data Book, I, p. 15.

50. Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, December 17, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, II, 1, pp. 828-829.


54. For the readers' convenience, I will refer to the FRUS pages where 5501 appears. Ibid., pp. 25, 29-32. The interpretation of Soviet intentions is notable.
Though the administration did not think the Kremlin would presently risk nuclear war, it nonetheless speculated that Soviet leaders would take such a risk if confident of victory or of an ability to substantially neutralize SAC. This idea that the Soviets were inherently aggressive, intended the violent destruction of the U.S., informed Washington's interpretation not only of Soviet foreign policy as a whole but especially of the posture of Soviet military capabilities. The administration moved quickly to implement the strategy of 5501. On January 27, 1955, the NSC adopted NSC 5502, "U.S. Policy Toward Russian Anti-Soviet Activities," and NSC 5505, "Exploitation of Soviet and European Satellite Vulnerabilities." Ibid., pp. 38-39.

55. FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 32-33; Watson, JCS History, V, pp. 52-56.


57. Ibid., pp. 33-36

Chapter VI


2. For statistics on troop strength, see SNIE 100-4-54, September 4, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XIV, 1, pp. 563-571.

3. Brands, "Testing Massive Retaliation," p. 126. Peking's public assertions of its intention to "liberate" Formosa and the other Nationalist islands were many in 1954 and 1955; see the *New York Times*, July 26, 3:2; August 14, 1:7; August 21, 3:6; August 23, 2:3; September 6, 3:8; September 7, 8:3, 5; September 18, 3:2; September 24, 3:1, 2; October 2, 2:4; also see *Department of State Bulletin*, February 21, 1955, pp. 287-289.


6. See note 3.


8. Memo of Discussion at the August 18, 1954 NSC Meeting,


12. Defense Secretary Charles Wilson demonstrated a rare and unusual depth of thought on this issue. The crisis in the Straits, he argued on October 6, was merely the latest chapter in the saga of the postwar collapse of colonialism in Asia. The U.S. should not repeat the mistake of Indochina, he said, where it sought to support the survival of French colonial rule. "We "talked 'very big' about [Indochina], but when the showdown came we decided not to go in. Now we're talking big again about the offshore islands . . . .if the United States is the real power in the Pacific and has the courage to say and do what it thinks right, we may be able to bring peace to Asia. What I propose, then, is that we tell the Gimo that we will not back him up in defending the off-shore islands, and that we try to get him to remove his troops from these islands. In return . . . we will sign a treaty with him to defend Formosa and the Pescadores. This kind of action would get much more U.S. and world support than would our getting involved in a war with China." Memo of Discussion at the October 6, 1954 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1952-54, XIV, 1, pp. 697-699.

13. Memo of Discussion at the August 18, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 536; Memo Prepared by the Secretary of State, September 12, 1954, ibid., pp. 611-613.


15. Ibid., pp. 617-622.

16. Ibid., pp. 616-622.
17. Ibid., p. 619.
18. Ibid., pp. 619-620.
19. Ibid., pp. 621-622.
26. Ibid., pp. 132-134.
27. Robertson, among others in the administration, also recommended a treaty with Taipei because Formosa was the only member nation of the Pacific island defense chain with whom the U.S. did not have such an accord. Memo from the Assistant Secretary of State, Far Eastern Affairs, to the Secretary of State, October 7, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XIV, 1, pp. 706-707.
30. Telegram from the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow to the Department of State, October 2, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-54, XIV, 1, pp. 674-675; Memo of Discussion at the November 2, 1954 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 834; SNIE 100-4/1-54, September 10, 1954, ibid., p. 596; Memo for the Special Assistant to the JCS for NSC Affairs from R. Adm. Edwin T. Layton, October 26, 1954, RG 218, CJCS
Radford CCS 091 China (Oct.-Dec. 1954), Box 7.


32. On December 2, 1954, the day the treaty was signed, Henry R. Lieberman reported from Taipei that it "still left the offshore island question clouded." There were no clouds fogging Taipei's reading of the treaty, however. The Nationalists, Lieberman observed, viewed it "as formal affirmation by the United States that it regards the Nationalist Government as the only legal Government of China." New York Times, December 5, 1954, IV, 6:1-2.


35. SNIE 100-4/1-54, September 10, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, XIV, I, p. 596; Memo from the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs to the Secretary of State, October 7, 1954, ibid., pp. 706-707; Memo for the Special Assistant to the JCS for NSC Affairs from R. Adm. Edwin T. Layton, Deputy Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff, RG 218, CJCS Radford 091 China (Oct-Dec 1954), Box 7.


40. Memo of Conversation, Department of State, January 20, 1955, ibid., pp. 86-89; Memo of Discussion at the January 20, 1955 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 73; Memo of Discussion at the January 21, 1955 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 90-96. For the text of the joint resolution, January 29, 1955, see ibid., pp. 162-163.

41. For the NSC decision, see Memo of Discussion at the January 21, 1955 NSC Meeting, ibid., pp. 95-96; Dulles told foreign minister Yeh of these decisions on January 21; Ibid., pp. 99-103.


45. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p. 483; Preussen in Immerman, ed., John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War, pp. 41-42.


47. Editorial Note, FRUS, 1955-57, II, pp. 277-279. Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 7, 1955, Dulles similarly attempted to ease concerns that the joint resolution signalled a U.S. commitment to the offshore islands. "It is our view," he told the committee, "that an agreement to extend the coverage of the Chinese defense treaty to additional territories would in practical terms amount to an amendment of the treaty and should be submitted to the Senate for its advice and consent." Department of State Bulletin, February 21, 1955, p. 288.


51. January 25, 1955 Telegram from the JCS to CINCFE (Hull) and CINCPAC (Stump), *FRUS*, 1955-57, II, p. 123; Memo of Discussion at the January 27, 1955 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 136. The commander of the U.S. 7th Fleet was Vice Admiral Alfred M. Pride. Pride also served as commander of the Formosa Defense Command. JCS Decision on 2019/116, March 9, 1955, RG 218, JCS 1957, CCS 471.6 (8-15-45), Sec. 59, Box 153, describes the steps that led to the increased deployment of Mk-7 warheads to Okinawa; Bramds, "Age of Vulnerability," p. 983.

52. Air Force Chief of Staff General Nathan Twining issued an identical note of limitation to General E.E. Partridge, Commander, Far Eastern Air Forces (CINCEAF, Tokyo). Partridge had appealed to Washington for greater leeway in combat operations, reconnaissance, and demonstrations of force in the region—for example, authority to shoot down Communist aircraft that overflew UNC territory in South Korea, and authority for reply to such overflights with armed reconnaissance flights over North Korea.

This request came after a series of incidents in which U.S. reconnaissance patrol aircraft were attacked by North Korean and Soviet Fighters, including one in which the Soviets violated Japanese airspace to shoot down an American RB-20. Twining Papers, Box 81, 1955 Top Secret Material (2), 23 February 1955 letter from Twining to CINCEAF; ibid., undated letter from Partridge to Twining; *FRUS*, 1955-57, II, February 5, 1955 Memo of Conversation with the President, p. 221.

53. On January 25, in response to fears evoked by the language of his message to Congress and the proposed joint resolution, Eisenhower issued a statement


55. Though chiefly aimed at building congressional opposition to the New Look cuts in Army manpower, Ridgway's criticism also aimed at fostering opposition to U.S. intervention in defense of Quemoy and Matsu, a move he had opposed since September. His tactics were distinctly questionable, however, for he well knew that he alone believed that U.S. ground troops would be required for such a defense, and that Eisenhower never for a moment considered inserting U.S. ground forces into a war with China.

Eisenhower's reaction to Ridgway's comments was explosive. He told Dulles he was going to fire Ridgway (his retirement was announced March 15, 1955). When asked by congressional leaders about the soundness of Ridgway's views, the President responded emphatically, saying that if he had all the money in the world he would not spend it on more ground troops. Eisenhower even said that Ridgway's misguided thinking while he was SACEUR, just before Eisenhower succeeded him in January 1951, had almost led SHAPE to "ruin." Ferrell, ed., Hagerty Diary, pp. 181-183, 219-220; Ambrose, Eisenhower, vol. 2, pp. 234-235; February 1, 1955 call from the President to Radford, Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 9, Phone Calls, Jan-July 1955; FRUS, 1955-57, II, pp. 39-40.


57. The U.N. offer was the result of Dulles's ORACLE plan. On January 29, 1955, Sir Leslie K. Munro, New Zealand's U.N. representative, had, at Washington's urging,
submitted the cease-fire resolution to the Security Council. Eisenhower, Mandate, p. 469.


59. March 4, 1955 telegram from the Secretary of State to the Department of State, FRUS, 1955-57, II, pp. 329-330; March 7 Memo of Conversation with the President by the Secretary of State, Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 3, Meetings with the President 1955(7); Memo of Discussion at the March 10, 1955 NSC meeting, Whitman File, NSC Series; Memo of Discussion at the 240th NSC meeting, FRUS, 1955-57, II, pp. 346-347.

60. March 7, 1955 Memo of Conversation with the President, Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 3, Meetings with the President, 1955 (7); Memo of Discussion at the 240th meeting of the NSC, Whitman File, NSC Series.

61. See Chapter I.

62. Hewlett and Holl, Atoms for Peace; Miller, Under the Cloud; Ryan, Chinese Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons, pp. 137-141; Cochran, et al., Nuclear Weapons Databook I.


64. FRUS 1955-57, II, pp. 61; Public Papers of the President 1955, p. 332. On March 17, Vice President Nixon joined in the carefully orchestrated PR campaign, telling an audience in Chicago that "tactical atomic weapons are now conventional and will be used against the targets of any aggressive force." Quoted in Chang, "To the Nuclear Brink," p. 107; New York Times, March 16, 1955, 1:1, March 17, 1955, 1:6.


66. Telegram from the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Bohlen) to the Department of State, October 2, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, XIV, 1, p. 674.

67. NIE 10-7-54, November 23, 1954, FRUS, 1952-54, XIV, pp. 930-931; on January 20, 1955, the President agreed with Secretary Humphrey when Humphrey asserted that "nothing


69. SNIE 11-4-59, February 19, 1955, FRUS, 1955-1957, II, pp. 275-276; RG 218, CJC Radford, 1953-1957, 091 China (16 Mar. 1955), NIE 100-4-55. An interesting note, as during the final months of the Korean War, the Army offered the most alarming view of Communist intentions and the potential repercussions of U.S. use of nuclear weapons against China. Ibid.


73. FRUS 1955-57, II, pp. 355-357, 356n. The January 4, 1954 interpretation of NSC 162/2 was also extended by Eisenhower to the key paragraphs of NSC 5501 (1/7/55), which had indicated that the U.S. needed to be ready to use nuclear weapons in limited war situations even if the allies disagreed. The January 4, 1954 interpretation clearly was being used by Eisenhower in this case as an out from the military's belief that administration policy was to consider nuclear weapons of first resort. See WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Subject
Subseries, Box 1, Atomic Weapons, Correspondence & Background for Presidential Approval [1953-1960] (1), March 14 SS memo by James Lay for F. Dulles, Radford and L. Strauss.

74. Memo for the Record by Cutler, March 11, 1955, FRUS, 1955-57, II, pp. 357-359. Eisenhower's brief record of this meeting stated: "The discussion centered around the capacity of the Chinese Nationalists to defend Formosa during the coming weeks without active intervention on our part; alternatively, if this should not prove possible, how effective could be our cooperation without the use of the atomic bomb." Ibid, p. 357n.

75. Various estimates and studies are quoted within NHC, Strategic Plans Division, Box 319, May 11, 1955, Memo to Op-90 from Op-61, Subject: "Appearance of Chief of Naval Operations before Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy on May 17, 1955; Ibid., Box 319, July 18, 1955, State Department Office of Intelligence Research Estimates Group, Intelligence Estimate Number 78, "Probable World Reactions to Use of Nuclear Weapons Against Communist China." The final quotes used on the polls taken in Europe appear in the May 17, 1955 Navy Summary, and were taken from a February 23, 1955 State Memorandum No. 8, "Current and Foreign Relations."


77. Radford's first-strike targets included the airfields at Chanting, Chien-ou, Machiang, Koachi, Mantai, and Swatow, and the POL facilities in the Canton and Shanghai areas. RG 218, CJCS Radford, 1953-57, 091 China (31 Mar 55), Briefing Notes for the March 31, 1955 NSC meeting.


79. RG 218, JCS 1954-56, CCS 381 Formosa (11-8-48), Sec. 21, April 2, 1955 message from COMPACAF to CINCPAC; Gen. E. E. Partridge, COMPEAF in Tokyo, made a similar request to Gen. Twining on April 5. Twining Papers, Box 100, Messages, April-May 1955. CINCPAC authorized the ChinNats to attack Chi Com forces "when imminent danger exists to offshore islands, Taiwan, or Pescaderes," but not to attack "inland targets." Above all, however, CINCPAC's instructions were for U.S. advisers on Formosa
to restrain the Nationalists from provocative acts. RG 218, JCS 1954-56, CCS 381 Formosa (11-8-48), Sec. 21, April 1, 1955 Message from CINCPAC to MAAG, Formosa; Farrell, ed. *Hagerty Diary*, p. 220; Brands, "Testing Massive Retaliation," p. 143.

80. Telegram from Stump to Carney, April 8, 1955, FRUS, 1955-57, II, pp. 471-473; For examples of this sentiment in Ike's letters to Churchill, see Boyle, ed., *Churchill-Eisenhower Correspondence*, January 25, February 10, and March 29, 1955 letters pp.186-188, 190-192, 203-206; These can also be seen in Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 9 & 10, DDE Diary (1), Jan. 1955, Mar. 1955. For a detailed description of why the Navy advised against the recommendations of Chase and Stump, see NHC Records of the Strategic Plans Division, Box 327, EF-37(2), April 12, 1955, Memo from Director, Strategic Plans Division to CNO via Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Plans & Policy, Op-602).

81. Twining Papers, Box 100, Messages, Jan.-March 1955, March 31, 1955 message from CINCSAC to Twining; Twining Papers, SAC Comments on FSPO-65, March 21, 1955, Box 81, Top Secret Material (2). In his message LeMay had voiced detailed opposition to deployment of some of SAC's B-47s to Guam for possible use against China. These, he wrote, were needed for SAC's general war plan. Twining, however ordered LeMay to prepare to deploy one wing of B-47s to Guam, which Twining described as more flexible and better suited to attacks on various coastal invasion targets. LeMay, it seems, was planning to hit more strategic-type targets. Ibid, Box 100, messages Apr.-May 1955, April 4, 1955 message to CINCSAC, APCCS TS5598.

82. For the most detailed discussion of Eisenhower's proposed "Zone of defense," see Chang, "To the Nuclear Brink," pp. 113-117; and these documents in FRUS, 1955-57, II: Telegram from the Chief of U.S. MAAG, Formosa to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, April 8, 1955, pp. 465-466; Memo of Conversation with the President, April 22, 1955, p. 503; Message from the CNO to CJCS, April 22, 1955, p. 504; Message from the Deputy Secretary of Defense to CJCS, April 22, 1955, pp. 505-506; and Memo for the Record, by the Ambassador in the Republic of China, April 29, 1955, pp. 529-531. Memo of Conversation with the President by the Secretary of State, *FRUS*, 1955-57, II, pp. 475-476; April 17, 1955 Memo of Conversation with the President, ibid., pp. 491-492; Brands, "Testing Massive Retaliation," pp. 144-146. For the plan of action proposed to Chiang by Radford and
Assistant Secretary of State Walter S. Robertson on April 24, see ERUS, 1955-57, II, Annex E attached to Dulles's April 17, 1955 memo of conversation, pp. 491-495. For Chiang's reaction, see April 29, 1955 Memo for the Record by the Ambassador to the Republic of China (Rankin), ibid., pp. 529-530.


84. Memo for the Record by the Ambassador to the Republic of China (Rankin), April 29, 1955, ERUS, 1955-57, II, pp. 529-530. The "visibly shaken" description also was Rankin's, quoted in Brands, "Testing Massive Retaliations," p. 146.


86. Up until the final days of tension and as the Communist buildup across from the islands proceeded through 1955, the administration was hounded from the right to hold a tougher line. New York Times, 4/1/55, 19:4; 4/2/55, 1:1; 4/28/55, 15:3; 4/28/55, 1:6.


89. These problems were first convincingly raised outside the administration by William M. Kaufmann and Paul Nitze in 1956. William M. Kaufmann, ed., Military Policy and National Security (Princeton University Press, 1956);
Chapter VII

1. Memo of Conversation with the President by the Secretary of State, December 26, 1955, Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 3, Meetings with the President 1955 (1); also see Challener essay in Graebner, ed., The National Security, p. 71.


3. Ibid., pp. 41-56; Killian provided an almost word-for-word description of the TCP report in his White House memoir, Sputnik, Scientists, and Eisenhower: A Memoir of the First Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1977), pp. 62-86.


6. Report of the Technological Capabilities Panel, February 14, 1955, FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 45-53. By the end of 1956, Eisenhower would indeed grant prior authority to the commander of CONAD to use nuclear weapons against an attacking air force over U.S. airspace. RG 218, JCS 1957, CCS 471.6 (8-15-45), Sec. 88, Box 156; Memo from CINCONAD to the JCS, RG 218, JCS 1957, CCS 373.11 (12-14-48), Sec. 33.


10. NIE 11-3-55, May 17, 1955, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series,

11. NHC, Strategic Plans Division Records, Box 319, A16-10, April 6, 1955, Briefing of WSEG Report No. 12.


19. Memo of Discussion at the June 16, 1955 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 87-94; Report of the Techno-
logical Capabilities Panel, February 14, 1955, ibid., pp. 43-46.

20. U.S. News and World Report, May 27, 1955, p. 118, June 3, 1955, p. 19; Moulton, From Superiority to Parity, p. 17; Editorial Note, FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, p. 78. The American observers at the air show rehearsal were tricked, it was later discovered. Instead of seeing the 18 Bisons they claimed, they had in fact seen an initial flight of 10 bombers, eight of which, after circling out of sight, quickly returned for a second pass. This display helped to convince U.S. intelligence, nonetheless, that the Soviets had four times as many Bisons as the U.S. had B-52s, and that Bisons were being produced at a rate of 25 per month. Burrows, Deep Black, p. 68; Futrell, Ideas, p. 509; Prados, The Soviet Estimate, p. 43.


23. FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 78, 82. The Pentagon had also increased production of America's best fighter aircraft, the F-100. Memo of Discussion at the June 16, 1955 NSC Meeting, FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 89-90.


25. Radford seemed convinced that the Bison was the B-52's equal. He declared that U.S. intelligence had been proven "way off the beam" by the Soviet fly-by, and he told Wilson that he thought the "Soviets were doing better than we give them credit for doing." FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 79, 82; Memo for the Secretary of Defense from the Chairman of the JCS, June 14, 1955, Twining Papers, Box 81, Office File, Chief of Staff, 1955, Secretary of the Air Force (1).


34. Report by the JCAE Subcommittee with Cover Memo by Senators Jackson and Anderson, July 29, 1955, WHO-SS, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Box 4, Atomic Energy, Joint Committee on (2) [July-August 1955].

35. The JCAE also strongly urged improvement of air defenses, for example reducing SAC's vulnerability by dispersal of the bomber fleet to a larger number of bases. Ibid.

36. Ibid.


38. Ibid. Wilson's June 30th reply is attached to Jackson's letter in the Anderson Papers file. Wilson explained to Senator Jackson that the answers to his questions involved highly classified material, suitable for executive session only. Revealing Jackson's stunt, Wilson added, "full information concerning our defense programs and our evaluation of Russia's military potential has been presented to the appropriate Committees of the Congress, including several of which you are a member."

40. Memo from the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Bowie) to the Secretary of State, September 7, 1955, *FRUS*, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 110-111.


43. My research has convinced me that such sanitization of a document usually hides something important. In this case, I am confident that Sprague's excused remarks not only denigrated the Pentagon's assessment of U.S. continental defenses but that Sprague, as he had in the past, celebrated Soviet capabilities anew. Sprague's report is in the DDEL's WHO-OSANSA file.


45. Ibid., pp. 85n, 90; Memo of Discussion at the July 14, 1955 NSC Meeting, Whitman File, NSC Series.


47. May 19, 1955 Outline for a speech by the Secretary of State, *FRUS*, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 79-81; Memo of Discussion at the May 19, 1955 NSC Meeting, ibid., V, p. 185; Letter from the High Commissioner for Germany (Conant) to L. Merchant, April 25, 1955, ibid., V, pp. 147-148; Telegram from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State, June 12, 1955, ibid., V, pp. 221-222; Memo from the Director of Central Intelligence to the Executive Secretary of the NSC (Lay), July 1, 1955, ibid., V, pp. 247-249.

49. Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Department of State, May 9, 1955, FRUS, 1955-57, V, pp. 174-175; Memo of Discussion at the July 28, 1955 NSC Meeting, ibid., p. 535.


In late March 1992, the 24 member nations of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) agreed in Vienna to the essentials of Eisenhower's Open Skies plan. New York Times, March 21, 1992; also see note 68 below.

51. A summary of the panel's recommendations appears in FRUS, 1955-57, V, pp. 216-220; Rostow, Open Skies, pp. 11-12, 26, 29-31, 150-151. Panel members whose advice had previously contributed to the vulnerability hypothesis were, Dr. Frederick Dunn, Director of the Center for International Studies, Princeton; Dr. Max Millikan, Director of the Center for International Studies, MIT; Dr. Stefan Possony, Directorate of Intelligence, USAF; and Dr. Hans Spier, RAND. FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, p. 84.


Dulles would continue his feud with Rockefeller, as he would with Harold Stassen, jealously guarding his powerful relationship with the President and his control of all matters related to foreign policy. His efforts led to both Rockefeller's and Stassen's resignation. Memo of Conversation with the President, May 18, 1955, Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 3, Meetings with the President 1955 (3).

54. Jackson recorded that Dulles's remarks were "said with a depth of emotion on his part such as I had never heard before, and I was quite shocked." C.D. Jackson Log, July 11, 1955, FRUS, 1955-57, V, pp. 301-303; Rostow, Open Skies, pp. 46-48, 86-87; Ambrose, Eisenhower, v. 2, pp. 260-261; Bundy, Danger and Survival, p. 296.
55. *Public Papers of the Presidents, 1955*, p. 702.


In November 1989, Anatoly Dobrynin, long-time Soviet ambassador to the United States, told an audience at Georgetown University that "Khrushchev favored accepting . . . . Eisenhower's 1955 Open Skies proposal but was voted down by the rest of the Politburo in fear it would 'legitimize spying against the Soviet Union.'" Khrushchev, Dobrynin claimed, argued that acceptance would mean a major propaganda victory because the U.S. Congress would never agree to allow Soviet aircraft to overfly the U.S. as Open Skies required. Dobrynin's speech was made at a time when President George Bush was reviving the Open Skies idea. *Washington Post*, November 18, 1989.


Eisenhower was apparently going to make a third attempt at convincing the Soviet delegation to consider Open Skies. His secretary, Ann Whitman, recorded that he rushed to see Bulganin just as the summit closed, but the Soviet delegation had already departed. Donovan, (ed.), *Confidential Secretary*, p. 87.


73. Coincident with the move to recognize the Bonn government, Moscow offered to make peace with Japan. *FRUS*, 1955-57, V, p. 548.

74. The Eisenhower-Bulganin correspondence can be found
at the DDEL, Whitman File, Dulles-Herter Series. For example, see Letter to the President, August 9, 1955, Box 4, Dulles, John Foster, August 1955 (2).

Telegram from Hoover to the Secretary of State and to the Special Assistant for Disarmament (Stassen), with attached Bulgakpin letter, ibid., Box 4, September 1955 (1).


Moscow's stepped up activity in the developing world after Geneva, though mostly via economic and military aid, was not unlike that following the 1972 Nixon-Brezhnev summit. As in the latter case, the Soviet leadership came to Geneva in 1955 desirous of gaining international legitimacy, especially since the regime was then only six months old. Once the Kremlin felt it had that legitimacy--and as long as the U.S. was intimidated by the false notion of Soviet nuclear parity--the Soviets felt relatively free, as they did during the 1970s when nuclear parity was a reality, to pursue their aims without fear of military confrontation with the U.S. Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remem- bers, pp. 392-393.


78. Eisenhower, Mandate, p. 532.

Chapter VIII


7. RG 273, Meetings of the National Security Council, Record of the 299th Meeting, December 1, 1955, Box 59, November 30, 1955 Memo from Lay to NSC Members, Subject: U.S. and Soviet Missiles.


21. January 23, 1956 Diary Entry by the President, Whitman File, Diary Series, Box 9, Diary-Copies of DDE


24. The advisers mentioned in the meeting summary are Dillon Anderson, Secretaries Dulles and Wilson, Chairman Strauss, Admiral Radford, and NESC director Lt. Gen. Harold L. George.


31. Memo for the NSC from the Executive Secretary (Lay), November 2 and 9, 1955, ibid., pp. 146-147.

32. Editorial Note, ibid., pp. 151-152.

33. Department of Defense, Semiannual Report of the Secretary of Defense, January 1 to June 30, 1956, p. 8. The total request for fiscal year 1957, after additions by Congress for increased B-52 production, was $35.5 billion. Congress finally approved $36.2 billion.


37. Memo of Conversation with the President by the Secretary of State, December 26, 1955, Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 3, Meetings with the President 1955 (1).

38. Ibid.

39. Letter from Dulles to Stassen, undated, WHO-OSAD, Box 5, Nuclear Weapons Tests, Jan.-May 1956 (1); Memo of Conversation by the Secretary of State (December 31, 1955) of a December 30, 1955 meeting with Stassen, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 4, Disarmament 1955, 1956 (2); Memo by J.W. Hanes, Jr. for the Secretary of State, January 6, 1956, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Box 4, Disarmament, 1955, 1956 (2).


41. Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 7, 271st Meeting of the NSC, December 22, 1955; Memo by Strauss to the Secretary of State, December 13, 1955, WHO-OSAD, Box 5, Moratorium on Nuclear Weapons Tests-1955 (3).

42. Memo from the Secretary of State to the Executive Secretary of the NSC, February 24, 1956, FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, p. 199; Memo from the JCS to the Secretary of Defense, February 24, 1956, ibid., p. 200.

43. Memo for the Secretary of Defense from the JCS, March 12, 1956, WHO-SS, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, Box 6, Military Planning, 1956-1957 (2).

45. Memo for the Secretary of Defense from the JCS, March 12, 1956, WHO-SS, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, Box 6, Military Planning, 1956-1957 (2); also see, FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 236-237.


52. *Aviation Week*, January 30, 1956, p. 21; February 27, 1956, p. 21.


54. Memo of a Conference with the President, May 24, 1956, *FRUS*, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 311-313; also see, Memo for the Record, February 10, 1956, WHO-SS, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, Box 4, Joint Chiefs of Staff (2).

55. Letter by the President to Richard L. Simon, April 4, 1956, Whitman File, Diary Series, Box 14, Misc. (5), April 1956; also see Memo for the Record, February 10, 1956, WHO-SS, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, Box 4, Joint Chiefs of Staff (2); Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 7, January 12, 1956 NSC Meeting.

56. Memo for the Chairman of the JCS, February 29, 1956, by Goodpaster of the JCS Meeting with the President on February 27, 1956, WHO-SS, Subject Series, DOD Subseries, Box 4, Joint Chiefs of Staff (2).


58. See note 56.


61. Memo for the Record, JCS Meeting with the President, February 10, 1956, WHO-SS, Subject Series, Department of Defense Subseries, Box 4, Joint Chiefs of Staff (2).

62. NSC 5602/1, March 15, 1956, WHO-OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 17, NSC 5602/1--Basic National Security Policy (1); also see *FRUS*, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 242-268.

64. Ibid.


67. Ibid., pp. 205-211.

68. See note 62.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. RG 218, JCS 1957, CCS 471.6 (8-15-45), Sec. 88, Box 156; Memo from CINCCONAD to the JCS, February 19, 1957, ibid., CCS 373.11 (12-14-48), Sec. 33.


73. See note 62.


77. Gavin also stated that the after-effects of a U.S. nuclear offensive against the Communist bloc would be much worse. "Current planning estimates run on the order of several hundred million deaths . . . depending upon which way the wind blew." See letters from Herbert Loper (Assistant Secretary of Defense, Atomic Energy) to Gordon Gray (Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs), July 10, 1956 and August 24, 1956, attached to Note by the Secretaries to the JCS on "Radioactive Aspects of Atomic Warfare," August 16, 1956, RG 218, JCS 1957,
Conclusion


   To prevent the loss of U.S. air superiority, one of General LeMay's chief recommendations was a massive increase in production of B-52s and their companion tanker, the KC-135. The Air Force was scheduled to build about 600 B-52s. LeMay called for 1,800 by 1960. For fiscal year 1957, LeMay also said that SAC required $8.0 billion--$3.8 million more than allocated in the Pentagon's budget, or an amount more that one half of the total Pentagon budget for 1950. FRUS, 1955-57, XIX, pp. 240-241; Airpower Hearings, April 30, 1956, pp. 102-106; Aviation Week, February 13, 1956, p. 23, June 18, 1956.


7. House, Subcommittee on Defense, Hearings on Department of Defense Appropriations for 1958, February 20-27,
1957, pp. 911-1036, 1086-1109; also see Prados, The Soviet Estimate, p. 47; and Aliano, American Defense Policy From Eisenhower to Kennedy, p. 107.


13. Specific figures of the new estimates of the Soviet stockpile and supply of fissionable materials have


20. Of course, when this strategy failed—as the first generation of Russian ICBMs proved essentially unusable—the Soviets attempted an even more dramatic effort to make up for their military-technological inferiority, placing short-range missiles in Cuba. Rostow, *Open Skies*, pp. 18-22; *World Weapon Database*, I, pp. 31, 57.
IBLIOGRAPHY

I. UNPUBLISHED COLLECTIONS

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library:

The Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President of the United States, 1953-1961 (Whitman File).

The John Foster Dulles Papers.

The Christian Herter Papers.

The John McConne Papers.

White House Central Files.


Library of Congress:

The Papers of Clinton P. Anderson.

The Papers of Curtis E. LeMay.

The Papers of Nathan F. Twining.

The Papers of Hoyt S. Vandenberg.

The Papers of Thomas D. White.

National Archives:

Record Group 59, United States Department of States, Central Decimal File, 1950-1959, 711.5611, 761.5611 (RG 59).

Record Group 128, Records of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (RG 128).
Record Group 218, Papers of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1953-1960 (RG 218, JCS and RG 218, CJCS).

Record Group 273, Meetings of the National Security Council (RG 273).


Naval Historical Center:

The Arthur Radford Papers.

Strategic Plans Division Records, 1953-1955, Subject and Serial Files (NHC, Strategic Plans Division).

U. S. Naval Institute Oral History Collection.

United States Army Military History Institute:

Francis N. Dawson Collection, Oral Histories.

The Matthew B. Ridgway Papers.


Senior Officers Oral History Program. General J. Lawton Collins.

II. PUBLISHED COLLECTIONS


1950, Volume I, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy.

1951, Volume I, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy.


1955-1957, Volume XX, Regulation of Armaments; Atomic Energy.

III. CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS


Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations.


Committee on Foreign Relations.


Dissertations


NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS


Aviation Week, 1953-1956.


BOOKS


Berman, Robert P. and John C. Baker. *Soviet Strategic Forces: Requirements and Responses*. Washington,


Collins, General J. Lawton. Lightning Joe, An Autobio-


Evangelista, Matthew. Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Developed New


Gervasi, Tom. The Myth of Soviet Military Supremacy. New


Niztze, Paul H. with Ann M. Smith and Steven L. Reardon. From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989.


Ryan, Mark A. *Chinese Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons: China and the United States During the Korean War*. 


ARTICLES


Huntington, Samuel P. "To Choose Peace or War--Is There a Place for Preventive War in American Policy?" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (April 1957).


Keefer, Edward C. "President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the End of the Korean War," *Diplomatic History*, 10 (Summer 1986).


Leffler, Melvyn P. "Commentary on the `Novikov Telegram,'" *Diplomatic History* 15, 4 (Fall 1991), 548-553.

Marks, Frederick W., III. "The Real Hawk at Dienbienphu: Dulles or Eisenhwoer?" *Pacific Historical Review* LIX, 3 (August 1990), 297-322.


Quester, George H. "Was Eisenhower a Genius?" *International Security*, 4, 2 (Fall 1979), 159-179.


"SAC in Transition: Special Report on Strategic Air Command," Aviation Week, 72 (June 20, 1960), 101-144.


