

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union. NATO was the first peacetime military alliance the United States entered into outside of the Western Hemisphere. After the destruction of the Second World War, the nations of Europe struggled to rebuild their economies and ensure their security. The former required a massive influx of aid to help the war-torn landscapes re-establish industries and produce food, and the latter required assurances against a resurgent Germany or incursions from the Soviet Union. The United States viewed an economically strong, rearmed, and integrated Europe as vital to the prevention of communist expansion across the continent. As a result, Secretary of State George Marshall proposed a program of large-scale economic aid to Europe. The resulting European Recovery Program, or Marshall Plan, not only facilitated European economic integration but promoted the idea of shared interests and cooperation between the United States and Europe. Soviet refusal either to participate in the Marshall Plan or to allow its satellite states in Eastern Europe to accept the economic assistance helped to reinforce the growing division between east and west in Europe.

In 1947-1948, a series of events caused the nations of Western Europe to become concerned about their physical and political security and the United States to become more closely involved with European affairs. The ongoing civil war in Greece, along with tensions in Turkey, led President Harry S. Truman to assert that the United States would provide economic and military aid to both countries, as well as to any other nation struggling against an attempt at subjugation. A Soviet-sponsored coup in Czechoslovakia resulted in a communist government coming to power on the borders of Germany. Attention also focused on elections in Italy as the communist party had made significant

gains among Italian voters. Furthermore, events in Germany also caused concern. The occupation and governance of Germany after the war had long been disputed, and in mid-1948, Soviet premier Joseph Stalin chose to test Western resolve by implementing a blockade against West Berlin, which was then under joint U.S., British, and French control but surrounded by Soviet-controlled East Germany. This Berlin Crisis brought the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of conflict, although a massive airlift to resupply the city for the duration of the blockade helped to prevent an outright confrontation. These events caused U.S. officials to grow increasingly wary of the possibility that the countries of Western Europe might deal with their security concerns by negotiating with the Soviets. To counter this possible turn of events, the Truman Administration considered the possibility of forming a European-American alliance that would commit the United States to bolstering the security of Western Europe. The Western European countries were willing to consider a collective security solution. In response to increasing tensions and security concerns, representatives of several countries of Western Europe gathered together to create a military alliance. Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Treaty in March, 1948. Their treaty provided collective defense; if any one of these nations was attacked, the others were bound to help defend it. At the same time, the Truman Administration instituted a peacetime draft, increased military spending, and called upon the historically isolationist Republican Congress to consider a military alliance with Europe. In May of 1948, Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenburg proposed a resolution suggesting that the President seek a security treaty with Western Europe that would adhere to the United Nations charter but exist outside of the Security Council where the Soviet Union held veto power. The Vandenburg Resolution passed, and negotiations began for the North Atlantic Treaty.

In spite of general agreement on the concept behind the treaty, it took several months to work out the exact terms. The U.S. Congress had embraced the pursuit of the international alliance, but it remained concerned about the wording of the treaty. The nations of Western Europe wanted assurances that the United States would intervene automatically in the event of an attack, but under the U.S. Constitution the power to declare war rested with Congress. Negotiations worked toward finding language that would reassure the European states but not obligate the United States to act in a way that violated its own laws. Additionally, European contributions to collective security would require large-scale military assistance from the United States to help rebuild Western Europe's defense capabilities. While the European nations argued for individual grants and aid, the United States wanted to make aid conditional on regional coordination. A third issue was the question of scope. The Brussels Treaty signatories preferred that membership in the alliance be restricted to the members of that treaty plus the United States. The U.S. negotiators felt there was more to be gained from enlarging the new

treaty to include the countries of the North Atlantic, including Canada, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, and Portugal. Together, these countries held territory that formed a bridge between the opposite shores of the Atlantic Ocean, which would facilitate military action if it became necessary. The result of these extensive negotiations was the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. In this agreement, the United States, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom agreed to consider attack against one an attack against all, along with consultations about threats and defense matters. This collective defense arrangement only formally applied to attacks against the signatories that occurred in Europe or North America; it did not include conflicts in colonial territories. After the treaty was signed, a number of the signatories made requests to the United States for military aid. Later in 1949, President Truman proposed a military assistance program, and the Mutual Defense Assistance Program passed the U.S. Congress in October, appropriating some \$1.4 billion dollars for the purpose of building Western European defenses.

Soon after the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the outbreak of the Korean War led the members to move quickly to integrate and coordinate their defense forces through a centralized headquarters. The North Korean attack on South Korea was widely viewed at the time to be an example of communist aggression directed by Moscow, so the United States bolstered its troop commitments to Europe to provide assurances against Soviet aggression on the European continent. In 1952, the members agreed to admit Greece and Turkey to NATO and added the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955. West German entry led the Soviet Union to retaliate with its own regional alliance, which took the form of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and included the Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe as members.

The collective defense arrangements in NATO served to place the whole of Western Europe under the American "nuclear umbrella." In the 1950s, one of the first military doctrines of NATO emerged in the form of "massive retaliation," or the idea that if any member was attacked, the United States would respond with a large-scale nuclear attack. The threat of this form of response was meant to serve as a deterrent against Soviet aggression on the continent. Although formed in response to the exigencies of the developing Cold War, NATO has lasted beyond the end of that conflict, with membership even expanding to include some former Soviet states. It remains the largest peacetime military alliance in the world.

On October 1, 1949, Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong declared the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The announcement ended the costly full-scale civil war between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT), which broke out immediately following World War II and had been preceded by on and off conflict between the two sides since the 1920's. The creation of

the PRC also completed the long process of governmental upheaval in China begun by the Chinese Revolution of 1911. The "fall" of mainland China to communism in 1949 led the United States to suspend diplomatic ties with the PRC for decades. The Chinese Communist Party, founded in 1921 in Shanghai, originally existed as a study group working within the confines of the First United Front with the Nationalist Party. Chinese Communists joined with the Nationalist Army in the Northern Expedition of 1926-27 to rid the nation of the warlords that prevented the formation of a strong central government. This collaboration lasted until the "White Terror" of 1927, when the Nationalists turned on the Communists, killing them or purging them from the party.

After the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931, the Government of the Republic of China (ROC) faced the triple threat of Japanese invasion, Communist uprising, and warlord insurrections. Frustrated by the focus of the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek on internal threats instead of the Japanese assault, a group of generals abducted Chiang in 1937 and forced him to reconsider cooperation with the Communist army. As with the first effort at cooperation between the Nationalist government and the CCP, this Second United Front was short-lived. The Nationalists expended needed resources on containing the Communists, rather than focusing entirely on Japan, while the Communists worked to strengthen their influence in rural society.

During World War II, popular support for the Communists increased. U.S. officials in China reported a dictatorial suppression of dissent in Nationalist-controlled areas. These undemocratic polices combined with wartime corruption made the Republic of China Government vulnerable to the Communist threat. The CCP, for its part, experienced success in its early efforts at land reform and was lauded by peasants for its unflagging efforts to fight against the Japanese invaders.

Japanese surrender set the stage for the resurgence of civil war in China. Though only nominally democratic, the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai-shek continued to receive U.S. support both as its former war ally and as the sole option for preventing Communist control of China. U.S. forces flew tens of thousands of Nationalist Chinese troops into Japanese-controlled territory and allowed them to accept the Japanese surrender. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, occupied Manchuria and only pulled out when Chinese Communist forces were in place to claim that territory.

In 1945, the leaders of the Nationalist and Communist parties, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, met for a series of talks on the formation of a post-war government. Both agreed on the importance of democracy, a unified military, and equality for all Chinese political parties. The truce was tenuous, however, and, in spite of repeated efforts by U.S. General George Marshall to broker an agreement, by 1946 the two sides were fighting an all-out civil war. Years of mistrust between the two sides thwarted efforts to form a coalition government.

As the civil war gained strength from 1947 to 1949, eventual Communist victory seemed more and more likely. Although the Communists did not hold any major cities after World War II, they had strong grassroots support, superior military organization and morale, and large stocks of weapons seized from Japanese supplies in Manchuria. Years of corruption and mismanagement had eroded popular support for the Nationalist Government. Early in 1947, the ROC Government was already looking to the island province of Taiwan, off the coast of Fujian Province, as a potential point of retreat. Although officials in the Truman Administration were not convinced of the strategic importance to the United States of maintaining relations with Nationalist China, no one in the U.S. Government wanted to be charged with facilitating the “loss” of China to communism. Military and financial aid to the floundering Nationalists continued, though not at the level that Chiang Kai-shek would have liked. In October of 1949, after a string of military victories, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the PRC; Chiang and his forces fled to Taiwan to regroup and plan for their efforts to retake the mainland.

The ability of the PRC and the United States to find common ground in the wake of the establishment of the new Chinese state was hampered by both domestic politics and global tensions. In August of 1949, the Truman administration published the “China White Paper,” which explained past U.S. policy toward China based upon the principle that only Chinese forces could determine the outcome of their civil war. Unfortunately for Truman, this step failed to protect his administration from charges of having “lost” China. The unfinished nature of the revolution, leaving a broken and exiled but still vocal Nationalist Government and army on Taiwan, only heightened the sense among U.S. anti-communists that the outcome of the struggle could be reversed. The outbreak of the Korean War, which pitted the PRC and the United States on opposite sides of an international conflict, ended any opportunity for accommodation between the PRC and the United States. Truman’s desire to prevent the Korean conflict from spreading south led to the U.S. policy of protecting the Chiang Kai-shek government on Taiwan. National Security Council Paper NSC-68 (entitled “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security” and frequently referred to as NSC-68) was a Top-Secret report completed by the U.S. Department of State’s Policy Planning Staff on April 7, 1950. The 58-page memorandum is among the most influential documents composed by the U.S. Government during the Cold War, and was not declassified until 1975. Its authors argued that one of the most pressing threats confronting the United States was the “hostile design” of the Soviet Union. The authors concluded that the Soviet threat would soon be greatly augmented by the addition of more weapons, including nuclear weapons, to the Soviet arsenal. They argued that the best course of action was to respond in kind with a massive build-up of the U.S. military and its weaponry.

For more than twenty years after the Chinese revolution of 1949, there were few

contacts, limited trade and no diplomatic ties between the two countries. Until the 1970s, the United States continued to recognize the Republic of China, located on Taiwan, as China's true government and supported that government's holding the Chinese seat in the United Nations. Reeling from the recent victory of Communist forces in the Chinese Civil War and the successful detonation of an atomic weapon by the Soviet Union, Secretary of State Dean Acheson asked the Policy Planning Staff, led by Paul Nitze, to undertake a comprehensive review of U.S. national security strategy. Building upon the conclusions of an earlier National Security Council paper (NSC-20/4), the authors of NSC-68 based their conclusions on the theory that the decline of the Western European powers and Japan following World War II had left the United States and the Soviet Union as the two dominant powers. Nitze's group argued that the Soviet Union was "animated by a new fanatic faith" antithetical to that of the United States, and was driven "to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world." Furthermore, they concluded that "violent and non-violent" conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union had become "endemic."

NSC-68 outlined a variety of possible courses of action, including a return to isolationism; war; continued diplomatic efforts to negotiate with the Soviets; or "the rapid building up of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world." This last approach would allow the United States to attain sufficient strength to deter Soviet aggression. In the event that an armed conflict with the Communist bloc did arise, the United States could then successfully defend its territory and overseas interests.

The authors of NSC-68 rejected a renewal of U.S. isolationism, fearing that this would lead to the Soviet domination of Eurasia, and leave the United States marooned on the Western Hemisphere, cut off from the allies and resources it needed to fend off further Soviet encroachments. The report also ruled out a preventive strike against the Soviet Union, because its authors reckoned that such action would not destroy the Soviet military's offensive capacities, and would instead invite retaliatory strikes that would devastate Western Europe. Moreover, U.S. experts did not believe that American public opinion would support measures that might lead to a protracted war. NSC-68 did not rule out the prospect of negotiating with the Soviet Union when it suited the objectives of the United States and its allies; however, the report's authors argued that such an approach would only succeed if the United States could create "political and economic conditions in the free world" sufficient to deter the Soviet Union from pursuing a military solution to the Cold War rivalry.

NSC-68 concluded that the only plausible way to deter the Soviet Union was for President Harry Truman to support a massive build-up of both conventional and nuclear arms. More specifically, such a program should seek to protect the United States and its allies from Soviet land and air attacks, maintain lines of communications, and enhance

the technical superiority of the United States through "an accelerated exploitation of [its] scientific potential." In order to fund the substantial increase in military spending this conclusion demanded, the report suggested that the Government increase taxes and reduce other expenditures.

Initially, a number of U.S. officials strongly opposed NSC-68's recommendations. Critics such as Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, and senior diplomats such as Soviet experts and former ambassadors to the Soviet Union George Kennan and Charles Bohlen, argued that the United States already had a substantial military advantage over the Soviet Union. Kennan, in particular, disagreed with Nitze's assertion that the Soviet Union was bent on achieving domination through force of arms, and argued that the United States could contain the Soviet Union through political and economic measures, rather than purely military ones. However, the invasion of South Korea by Soviet and Chinese-backed North Korean forces in June 1950, and continuing charges by Congressional critics that the Administration was soft on Communism, quickly settled matters in favor of the report's recommendations. NSC 68's recommendations thereby became policy, and the United States Government began a massive military build-up. While NSC-68 did not make any specific recommendations regarding the proposed increase in defense expenditures, the Truman Administration almost tripled defense spending as a percentage of the gross domestic product between 1950 and 1953. There was no one process of decolonization. In some areas, it was peaceful, and orderly. In many others, independence was achieved only after a protracted revolution. A few newly independent countries acquired stable governments almost immediately; others were ruled by dictators or military juntas for decades, or endured long civil wars. Some European governments welcomed a new relationship with their former colonies; others contested decolonization militarily. The process of decolonization coincided with the new Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, and with the early development of the new United Nations. Decolonization was often affected by superpower competition, and had a definite impact on the evolution of that competition. It also significantly changed the pattern of international relations in a more general sense.

The creation of so many new countries, some of which occupied strategic locations, others of which possessed significant natural resources, and most of which were desperately poor, altered the composition of the United Nations and political complexity of every region of the globe. In the mid to late 19th century, the European powers colonized much of Africa and Southeast Asia. During the decades of imperialism, the industrializing powers of Europe viewed the African and Asian continents as reservoirs of raw materials, labor, and territory for future settlement. In most cases, however, significant development and European settlement in these colonies was sporadic. However, the colonies were exploited, sometimes brutally, for natural and labor resources, and sometimes even for

military conscripts. In addition, the introduction of colonial rule drew arbitrary natural boundaries where none had existed before, dividing ethnic and linguistic groups and natural features, and laying the foundation for the creation of numerous states lacking geographic, linguistic, ethnic, or political affinity.

During World War II Japan, itself a significant imperial power, drove the European powers out of Asia. After the Japanese surrender in 1945, local nationalist movements in the former Asian colonies campaigned for independence rather than a return to European colonial rule. In many cases, as in Indonesia and French Indochina, these nationalists had been guerrillas fighting the Japanese after European surrenders, or were former members of colonial military establishments. These independence movements often appealed to the United States Government for support.

While the United States generally supported the concept of national self-determination, it also had strong ties to its European allies, who had imperial claims on their former colonies. The Cold War only served to complicate the U.S. position, as U.S. support for decolonization was offset by American concern over communist expansion and Soviet strategic ambitions in Europe. Several of the NATO allies asserted that their colonial possessions provided them with economic and military strength that would otherwise be lost to the alliance. Nearly all of the United States' European allies believed that after their recovery from World War II their colonies would finally provide the combination of raw materials and protected markets for finished goods that would cement the colonies to Europe. Whether or not this was the case, the alternative of allowing the colonies to slip away, perhaps into the United States' economic sphere or that of another power, was unappealing to every European government interested in postwar stability. Although the U.S. Government did not force the issue, it encouraged the European imperial powers to negotiate an early withdrawal from their overseas colonies. The United States granted independence to the Philippines in 1946.

However, as the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union came to dominate U.S. foreign policy concerns in the late 1940s and 1950s, the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations grew increasingly concerned that as the European powers lost their colonies or granted them independence, Soviet-supported communist parties might achieve power in the new states. This might serve to shift the international balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union and remove access to economic resources from U.S. allies. Events such as the Indonesian struggle for independence from the Netherlands (1945-50), the Vietnamese war against France (1945-54), and the nationalist and professed socialist takeovers of Egypt (1952) and Iran (1951) served to reinforce such fears, even if new governments did not directly link themselves to the Soviet Union. Thus, the United States used aid packages, technical assistance and sometimes even military intervention to encourage newly independent nations in the Third World to adopt governments that

aligned with the West. The Soviet Union deployed similar tactics in an effort to encourage new nations to join the communist bloc, and attempted to convince newly decolonized countries that communism was an intrinsically non-imperialist economic and political ideology. Many of the new nations resisted the pressure to be drawn into the Cold War, joined in the "nonaligned movement," which formed after the Bandung conference of 1955, and focused on internal development.

The newly independent nations that emerged in the 1950s and the 1960s became an important factor in changing the balance of power within the United Nations. In 1946, there were 35 member states in the United Nations; as the newly independent nations of the "third world" joined the organization, by 1970 membership had swelled to 127. These new member states had a few characteristics in common; they were non-white, with developing economies, facing internal problems that were the result of their colonial past, which sometimes put them at odds with European countries and made them suspicious of European-style governmental structures, political ideas, and economic institutions. These countries also became vocal advocates of continuing decolonization, with the result that the UN Assembly was often ahead of the Security Council on issues of self-governance and decolonization. The new nations pushed the UN toward accepting resolutions for independence for colonial states and creating a special committee on colonialism, demonstrating that even though some nations continued to struggle for independence, in the eyes of the international community, the colonial era was ending.