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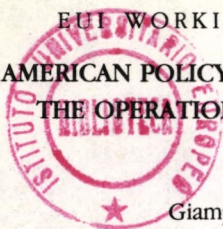
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**AMERICAN POLICY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN:
THE OPERATIONAL CODES, 1945 - 1952**



by

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AMERICAN POLICY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN:
THE OPERATIONAL CODES, 1945-1952

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Mediterranean policy was probably the first aspect of American foreign policy to be analyzed almost simultaneously with the early making of it. Reitzel's book The Mediterranean: Its Role in American Foreign Policy appeared in 1948¹: it was the first in this direction of research as well as the last.

Later both orthodox and revisionist historians paid particular attention to the drawing up of compact interpretive frameworks, in which local or regional events usually served to furnish evidence in support of broad generalizations. From the middle of the 1970s a new interesting began to emerge. It took the form mainly through case studies in line with the most favoured tendency of the post-revisionist school of historiographical thinking. The role of bureaucracies in foreign policy making of the United States, the interplay between local/regional and international dimensions of American foreign policy in the early Cold War, and the interrelations between the American policy on foreign societies, their impact, and the responses arising from them represented the lines of research more commonly carried out.

Under those multiple perspectives an increasing amount of attention has been paid to such countries as Greece, Turkey, Italy and - to a lesser extent - Yugoslavia, or to such events as the creation of the State of Israel.

Undoubtedly the case studies gave a powerful contribution to the emerging of a new consensus on the problem of the Cold War origins². However, the need of redressing the balance in favour of the 'lumpers' has also been emphasized. In this regard US Mediterranean policy can surely be regarded as an abstraction; but that does not imply that American policy in the Mediterranean lacked common denominators, relating not so much to the conduct of foreign policy as to its source (or sources) of inspiration. The question can be put in these terms: in what interpretive context (or contexts) did American foreign policy thinking set the Mediterranean area in the years of the Truman administration? What were the operational codes³ of American policy towards the

Mediterranean? To what extent did the bipolar approach, based on the interplay of challenge and response between the two superpowers, work in the Mediterranean and, conversely, when and to what extent were depolarized approaches applied there? According, the reason for reconsidering American policy in the Mediterranean is intimately bound up with the basic issue of the history of the Cold War: to what extent was Cold War a global perspective?

The American interest towards the Mediterranean area began to develop during World War II as a consequence of military operations. In the course of a long debate with the British partners, which was opened in 1942 and whose last chapter was written in September-October 1944, the American planners showed a clear determination not to make military strategy into an instrument for the division of Europe into spheres of influence, so as to create a countervailing power to the Soviet Union. In American eyes the basic aim of military strategy should be the defeat of Germany - hence the priority given to the western Front compared to the Mediterranean - and the maintenance of the wartime alliance with the USSR, on the basis of which the postwar world order would be reconstructed. The armistice agreements themselves, first with Italy and later, on the Russian front, with Rumania, were intended as temporary arrangements responding to military exigencies in the first instance; and in Roosevelt's policy, wartime and postwar arrangements were to be kept separate.

On the other hand, from the middle of 1943, there was full awareness in the United States that the Soviet Union would fill the power vacuum left by the German retreat in Central Europe. In this regard some authors have recently stressed the fact that Roosevelt gave every indication to the Soviets that some type of sphere of influence in Eastern Europe would be acceptable.

What, then, was the basic ingredient in American wartime foreign policy? Was Roosevelt basically a realist forced by internal constraints to use Wilsonian language or, on the contrary, a Wilsonian idealist forced not to ignore the realities of power emerging from the conduct of military operations? The

reply cannot be given in unilateral terms, since ambiguities and contradictions characterized Roosevelt's foreign policy. Undoubtedly a gap existed between the two approaches. It began widening just after the Yalta conference: the declaration on a liberated Europe was a substantial element of the public image of Soviet-American cooperation, while on the other hand the USSR was implicitly granted a free hand in the internal affairs of Poland (which was intended to be the testing ground of the Yalta declaration)⁴.

Truman inherited this gap in the conduct of foreign policy towards Eastern Europe, and how to fill or to reduce it was considered to be the first task of the State Department. Projecting the domestic policy context onto international relations, Secretary of State Byrnes adopted a new approach based on the assumption that the US possessed the lever that would force the Soviet Union to negotiate: the atomic bomb monopoly.

The first experiment in what has been termed 'negotiation from strength' was made, in its full sense, at the London meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in September 1945. Here Byrnes tried to use the 'understated presence' of the atomic bomb in order to dictate his own terms of negotiation to the Soviets. In London Byrnes linked American recognition of the Bulgarian and Rumanian governments to the implementation of the principles of the Yalta declaration on a liberated Europe (free and unfettered elections, government representatives of all the democratic tendencies, freedom of access to western journalists and observers); the only outcome was a stalemate. The other version of atomic diplomacy (the bomb as a carrot, not as a stick) brought an agreement during the Moscow meeting between Byrnes, Molotov and Bevin in December 1945 but it did not affect the substance of Soviet control in Eastern Europe⁵.

Thus the two versions of atomic diplomacy dissolved any expectation that a degree of western influence on Eastern Europe could be assured. On the contrary, even though the internal political spectrum in the various Eastern European countries differed the American perception was that the USSR was following

unilateral policies aiming at establishing a substantial control there over a wide range of aspects of internal and external life⁶. Whether Soviet unilateralism was a response to American negotiation from strength or a consequence of internal determinants of the Soviet system is a matter open to speculation. What is unquestionable is that the gap between idealism and realism was unbridgeable, that no middle ground existed between the two alternatives, in conclusion that American policy towards Eastern Europe and generally towards the USSR was deadlocked, was lacking an agreed set of terms of reference⁷.

This was the content in which Kennan's long telegram of February 1946 was sent. The wide circulation given to the 8,000-word message and the broad consensus that ensued within the Truman administration are undoubtedly due to the fact that the long telegram filled an interpretive vacuum, got rid - to use Yergin's image - of the paralysing dilemma between the Yalta and the Riga axioms. But the very sense of liberation that emanated from the long telegram was crucial in generating the consensus on Kennan's analysis. It completely discharged the policy makers of having determined Soviet decisions, of having provoked the USSR to react. It acquitted Byrnes's foreign policy as well as Truman's lack of interest in it after the Potsdam conference; and that is the reason why both of them were rapidly converted to the new creed⁸.

"Official Soviet thesis" - Kennan wrote - "that the outside world is hostile and menacing to Soviet peoples ... is not based on any objective analysis of situation beyond Russia's borders. (...) It arises mainly from internal necessities": the 'traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity', deepened by Marxism-Leninism, also for reasons of internal legitimization. The consequence was the "inability of foreign governments to place their case squarely before Russian policy makers". Even though there was in the long telegram no explicit reference to the Eastern European countries, Kennan's previous support for recognizing Eastern Europe as a Soviet sphere of influence implies that American foreign policy was unable to

influence Soviet policy on Eastern Europe, or, in other words, the non-negotiability of Soviet policy on Eastern Europe.

In Kennan's view, outside Eastern Europe Soviet policy was designed to "undermine the general political and strategical potential of major Western powers", to create conditions of instability and penetration acting directly or through the communist movements. Against that trend American foreign policy had to follow a realistic course, rejecting the dilemma between Rooseveltian Wilsonism and 'hysterical anti-sovietism': "impervious to the logic of reason ... [USSR] is highly sensitive to the logic of force. For this reason it can easily withdraw - and usually does - when strong resistance is encountered at any point"⁹.

In the last analysis Kennan's long telegram suggested sealing off Eastern Europe and, on the other hand, exerting counterforce against Soviet pressures outside the Soviet sphere. This twin perspective was the source of inspiration for American policy in the Mediterranean context, in Turkey and Greece first of all, much more than such concepts as the classic balance of power or great-power politics.

During 1945, after having denounced the treaty of 1925, the USSR urged Turkey to open negotiations for a new treaty, making it conditional on the following clauses: territorial claims regarding Turkish eastern provinces, revision of the Montreux convention on the Straits (1936) and a Soviet military base in the Dardanelles, the defence of which would be jointly guaranteed by the USSR and Turkey. The first American reaction generally relied on the confidence that a minor change in the Montreux convention, without prejudice to its multilateral character, could settle the Russian-Turkish dispute. From the last months of 1945 American diplomats on the spot tended to interpret renewed Russian demands and pressure against Turkey as means to establish a special relationship between the two countries and put "an end to western influence in Turkey" in the context of traditional great-power politics (a kind of new stage of the 19th-century Eastern Question)¹⁰.

This was the framework for interpreting Soviet initiatives outlined by Kennan to serve as a basis for American perception and response when, in August 1946, the Soviet Union formally proposed to Turkey to open bilateral negotiations for a new regime for the Straits, based on a Russian-Turkish condominium. The diplomatic note to the USSR rejected the assumption that the problem of the Straits regime was a matter for bilateral agreements. Eastern Europe cast its shadow on Russian-Turkish relations. If the Soviet Union were allowed to place the Straits under Russian-Turkish condominium the axis of Turkish foreign policy would be determined by Soviet-Turkish relations. In the long run the Turkish government would thus be forced to abandon its anti-Russian stand and the perceived result was "Soviet control over Turkey", its assimilation into an Eastern European pattern¹¹.

Very broad, and intimately connected with Kennan's news, was the consensus on the repercussions of such a case outside Turkey: "Any weakening which resulted in even partial attainment of Soviet objectives in Turkey would have disastrous effects upon the nations" fearing "the spreading power of the USSR". It would undermine their stand against "Soviet pressure and expansionist policy", it would develop the tendency to come to terms with the Soviet Union and it would make it "extremely difficult, if not impossible to prevent the Soviet Union from obtaining control over Greece and the whole of the Near and Middle East".

The arguments that called for diplomatic support and later for military and economic aid were summarized in a memorandum of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in early 1947: "Turkey's determination to stand up to Russian pressure and the West's democratic ability to support her will prove a test case to all Middle East countries"¹².

The Greek case presents some differences from the Turkish one, especially if the internal situation is considered, but offers substantial analogies in relation to the framework within which Greece was included in the making of American foreign policy. As far as the Greek internal situation is concerned, the British aim (and substantially the objective of the American diplomats on the

spot) was directed at the restoration of parliamentary democracy, to sponsor the formation of coalition governments having their backbone in the centre parties. But their weakness and, moreover, the acute strains among the Greek political parties undermined the programme. The British military presence and the frequent British intervention in domestic affairs actually could not stop the process of acute polarization that opposed the Greek Communist Party to the moderate and right-wing parties and to the institutional apparatus. The last act of this process was the communist decision to resort to civil war. Actually it was the acute polarization of the political spectrum that made the Greek government into the bulwark of resistance to the communist guerrilla campaign. In parallel, the interpretive framework suggested by Kennan produced the perception that the collapse of the bulwark would mean the fall of Greece into an Eastern European context¹³.

A policy statement prepared by the Department of State declared "that the paramount factor in the Greek political scene is the international rivalry and that all other questions are subsumed and assimilated to this larger question". Articulating this point, a memorandum of the Office of Near East and African Affairs warned that the USSR was "using Greece as an important stepping stone for a further expansion of Soviet power", while conversely stating that "Greece and Turkey form the sole obstacle to Soviet domination of the Eastern Mediterranean".

The core of the problem was the "capitulation of Greece to Soviet domination through lack of adequate support from the United States and Great Britain". Such an event "might eventually result" - Acheson wrote to Secretary of State Marshall in February 1947 - "in the loss of the whole Near and Middle East and North Africa. It would consolidate the position of communist minorities in many other countries where their aggressive tactics are seriously hampering the development of middle-of-the-road governments"¹⁴.

The decision to take over British responsibilities in Greece and Turkey, embodied in the Truman Doctrine, was implicit in that

background of analysis and was made on American much more than on British terms.

The Turkish and Greek cases in 1946 and 1947 give evidence of how containment began taking shape in the Mediterranean context and allow the identification of its constituent and interconnected elements. First of all, in 1946 and 1947, the division of Europe was an assumption, firmly established on the basis of the perceived Soviet experience in Eastern Europe: no distinction existed between spheres of influence and areas of domination of the USSR, and concomitantly bipolarism emerged as the main characteristic of East-West relations. Secondly, the counterforce concept was intimately linked to the design of blocking a chain reaction that, it was feared, would spread from the periphery of the Soviet Union: it was the first manifestation of the domino theory, a theory applied by Kennan with regard to Greece and Turkey¹⁵. Consequently, in the third place, a psychological dimension of containment was working: the American decision regarding Greece and Turkey was considered also in relation to its impact and to the revealing effect of American aims in the countries directly affected as well as outside them. Containment in Greece and Turkey was not a policy considered on its own terms, or relating to strictly defined interests. A fourth aspect concerns the military implications of that policy. During 1946 the American naval presence in the Mediterranean greatly expanded. Indeed the new size of the Mediterranean fleet aimed at affirming a postwar role for the US Navy; but from this point of view it was much more an aspect of the debate between the armed services on the reorganization issue and the reduced military budgets than of foreign policy making. However, the outcome was the so-called gunboat diplomacy, which, unlike the classic 19th century version, intended to 'show the flag' without connecting it to pre-established objectives, but generally conveying - it has been observed - "ideas to Russia about America's interest in the Middle East but without precision or commitment"¹⁶. More recently the development of American policy in the late 1940s, as far as both the Turkish case and the general dimension is concerned, has been

explained in relation to imperatives arising from military planning. They envisaged Turkey as a bulwark, whose function was to delay a Soviet invasion of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean as an area to be denied to Soviet control and as a base from which to conduct operations against Soviet targets. The strategic value of Turkey was thus conditional upon a hypothesis: "should war erupt", "in the event of war", "with regard to a prospective war". But such a hypothesis, and the related concept of total security, was not the orienting factor of American foreign policy. Still in April 1948 the Joint Strategic Plans Committee declared that "the implications of the situation in the Mediterranean and Middle East area primarily concern the political and diplomatic agencies of the government rather than the Military Establishment"¹⁷.

We have already seen that the decision to give military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey established a linkage between those countries and western Europe as a whole. Although not clearly defined in the Truman Doctrine itself, that linkage began taking shape after the failure of the Moscow meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (April 1947) to reach agreement on Germany and the subsequent launching of the Marshall Plan. Even though Greece and Turkey were included in the European Recovery Program, a peculiar version of containment was applied in the Mediterranean theatre as compared to the one working in the ERP context, which basically focused on restoring the balance of power, on economic aid designed to strengthen - to use Kennan's expression - "the natural forces of resistance"¹⁸.

In the Mediterranean, through 1947 and early 1948, the basic, peculiar element of the policy of containment still remained counterforce against indirect Soviet pressure. Greece, Turkey and, to a certain extent, Italy were the countries involved; in the Adriatic the Anglo-American presence in Zone A of the Free Territory of Trieste played a similar role¹⁹.

The main source of inspiration for such a policy can be identified in Kennan's article in the July 1947 issue of 'Foreign Affairs' and in the first reports of the Policy Planning Staff

relating to the Northern Mediterranean countries (incidentally, between 1947 and 1949, Kennan acted as a source of both inspiration and rationalization for American foreign policy²⁰).

On the one hand, even though Kennan later attributed a fault in his theory to lack of a more precise definition of counterforce²¹, this concept undoubtedly appeared as a cornerstone in his vision of containment expounded in Mr. X's article. In Kennan's words, the containment could work "by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and manoeuvres of Soviet policy but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence"; a counterforce "at every point where they [USSR] show signs of encroaching upon the interests of peaceful and stable world"²².

On the other hand, if Mr. X's article outlined a general pattern for American foreign policy (Soviet encroachment-American counterforce) the PPS reports on Greece and Italy perceived Soviet encroachment as an actual threat. In this regard various scenarios were considered: that the 'Free Greek Government' created in the guerrilla-controlled areas would be recognized by USSR and the communist bordering countries, thus transforming the Greek civil war from domestic into an international military confrontation; that the Greek government would collapse under the pressure of communist guerrilla action; that - in Italy - the Communist Party could rise to power through legal means, that it could decide to resort to force, that the Kremlin might "order the Communist Parties in France and Italy to resort to virtual civil war in those countries as soon as our right to have troops there expires".

In outlining the repercussions of such events the domino theory was currently used: the fall of the Greek domino would provoke, on the one side, the fall of Italy, France, French North Africa and "a loss of prestige throughout the Mediterranean" and, on the other, the loss of Turkey and Iran, as well as cause vulnerability to communist penetration throughout the whole Middle East. The rising to power of communists in Italy would have

unfavourable repercussions in western Europe and even in South America and "nullify the achievement of US objectives in Greece and Turkey"²³.

In other words, it was feared that, due to the pressure perceived against Italy and Greece, a merely western European concept of containment (the reconstruction of the economy in order to secure social and political stability) might not work in those countries. Consequently the PPS reports envisaged the use of military means in implementing counterforce, whose psychological impact on the whole western European area was concurrently emphasized. In February 1948 Kennan put forward proposals as to how the military dimension of counterforce could concretely operate. Kennan recognized that "the Soviet chances for disrupting the unity of Western Europe and forcing a political entry into that area [had] been deteriorating in Northern Europe"; but they were "holding their own, if not actually increasing in the South along the shores of the Mediterranean". Even though Kennan considered that containment could not be implemented on a world scale - in an earlier document he had written that the bipolarity was beyond American resources²⁴ - he conveyed the idea of how the counterforce had to work. The American naval presence in the Mediterranean, the discussions on the use of American troops in Greece, the statement - released after the Anglo-American forces withdrew from Italy in December 1947 - that Italian territorial integrity would be defended were to demonstrate that "(a) the reduction of Communist threat will lead to our military withdrawal from the area; but that (b) further Communist pressure will only have the effect of involving us more deeply in a military sense". The intent was to strain the relations between the USSR and the communist parties, one of the aims of containment policy in Kennan's view²⁵.

Kennan was thus not adamantly opposed to a military dimension of counterforce. But the Joint Chiefs of Staff used the discussion on the military intervention in Greece in order to reverse the set of priorities in the containment policy, to give higher priority to rearmament²⁶. The JCS assumed that the USSR had a wide range of

options including war, contending that American policy was basically a response to challenges and aimed at reversing that relationship: the appeal was to "a world-wide counter-offensive against Soviet-directed world communism", to "first of all strengthening the military potential of the United States, and secondly, mobilizing and strengthening the potential of the non-Soviet world"²⁷.

In June 1948, in a report to the National Security Council, Kennan rejected the basic argument of the JCS, who considered that the USSR's unreconcilable antagonism towards the western world made war unavoidable. Even though he did not deny that for the Soviet Union bipolarity was not the foundation of the international order, he considered that the USSR pursued her objectives "by political means accompanied - of course - by the factor of military intimidation". Therefore, acting in a mediating capacity, he supported the need of military preparedness, but did not confine it merely to serving military ends. On the contrary, it had to be "a source of encouragement to nations endeavoring to resist Soviet political aggression", it was aimed at removing "the paralysing effect on the will to resist in Western Europe", and finally it was intended "as a means of waging war successfully as a result of an accident or miscalculation or any other cause"²⁸.

Moving further in this direction a report of the State Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee identified military aid as an instrument of containment designed to prevent an internal, indirect threat, exerted by political means, by strengthening the internal forces of resistance; as to external, direct threat in the form of military aggression, it should be deterred by strengthening the determination as well as, to a certain extent, the ability to resist²⁹. The approach linked two processes: on the one hand the restoration of social and political stability through economic aid and the economic integration; on the other the process put in motion by the countries adhering to the Brussels Pact, as well as by domestic factors, towards an American guarantee of European security, in other words towards the North Atlantic Pact and the Mutual Defence Assistance Program. The

objective was to integrate the various aspects of the strategy of containment and to establish a kind of relationship between economic recovery, political stability and security, between political-psychological and military-strategic dimensions of containment³⁰.

However, an 'intricate link' (to use Kaplan's definition) existed between those dimensions much more than a clear-cut relationship, in which the relative weight of the single components was precisely established, as a consequence of the fact that the Soviet threat, and conversely what to deter, was not clearly defined. This uncertainty was reflected in the report of the NSC to Truman, NSC 20/4, of November 1948, that had to serve as the basic document of American foreign policy until 1950. Here the aim of containment was unambiguously stated. It was designed to produce "a basic change in the theory and the practice of international relations" by the USSR, in other words to force it to accept the bipolar reality as an immutable character of the world order and to deter the possibility of a Soviet attack through an unspecified combination of economic, political-psychological and military means³¹.

Shifting our attention again towards the Mediterranean context, the uncertainty of the functions which the North Atlantic Pact was called on to perform in the framework of containment policy, which is a substantial part in the very first history of the NAP and the Mutual Defence Assistance Program, was clearly reflected in the discussions on the geographical limits of the alliance. This did not produce an integrating impulse in American policy towards the northern shore of the Mediterranean. Italy, Greece and Turkey, which had been subjected to the unifying vision of counterforce from 1946 to early 1948, were considered from different perspectives. The point is not only that while Italy was invited to join the North Atlantic Pact, Greece and Turkey were not. The major interest lies in the arguments used to include and exclude those countries respectively; the curious fact is that, while both were elements of the concept of containment, they played different roles.

Basically the reason favouring Italian membership of the alliance was internal stability. It was the director of the Office of Western European Affairs, Hickerson, who most resolutely warned that Italy's exclusion would produce a weakening of resistance to communism: "It would be a tragedy", he wrote, "if after winning the first round in the March [sic] elections we should now lose the second". Hickerson's argument won the support of the JCS and was reinforced by the clear inclination to ask for accession to the North Atlantic Pact which the Italian government made manifest from the beginning of 1949, even though the Italian contribution to mutual defence was considered of relative value³². On the other hand, the concept of mutual defence was the key factor in the decision not to offer membership to Greece and Turkey. In October 1948 the director of the Office of Near East and African Affairs, Satterthwaite, proposed this rationale in order to draw a line between those countries to be included into military alliances and those not to be included: "in the first case we are entering into arrangements which will produce defensive power, which will increase the overall military strength of the participants, whereas in the second case the weakness, remoteness of lack of productive power of the foreign countries concerned would mean that no overall increase in military strength could be expected from a mutual defense arrangement"³³. One month later the JCS refined the argument asserting that US military aid was designed to guarantee internal security in Greece and "to insure continued resistance to Soviet pressure in Turkey" or to delay a Soviet aggression against the Middle East: therefore, they concluded, no contribution stemmed from Greece and Turkey to the overall military strength of western Europe³⁴. But - it must be added - the argument of internal stability, in other words the psychological dimension of containment policy, was not completely dismissed. While rejecting Greek and Turkish membership in the North Atlantic Pact, Satterthwaite considered it 'imperative' to state publicly the American determination "to go to the assistance of those states in the event of attack"³⁵, which Secretary of State Acheson did in March 1949, though in more general terms, and

which Truman repeated on the very day the North Atlantic Pact was signed (later military aid to Greece and Turkey would be encompassed within MDAP)³⁶.

In the last analysis, the strategy of containment envisaged after the creation of the North Atlantic Pact, with the confused relationship between economic recovery, internal stability, sense of security, mutual military aid, defence commitments and later rearmaments, did not represent a unifying factor in American policy towards the countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean. Basically the unsettled problem was on which ground to found the security of Greece and Turkey, and a report of the Policy Planning Staff put it squarely in June 1949: "our task of supporting the integrity of the three northern [in respect to the Middle East] countries of Greece, Turkey and Iran will be that of holding an arch which lacks foundations"³⁷. Actually the foundations had to be laid in the Near East. This kind of relationship was not a new one; in fact, the first exercise in domino theory had already established a link between Greece and Turkey on the one side and the Near and Middle East on the other. This problem draws our attention to American policy in the Mediterranean areas so far ignored, namely Near East and North Africa.

II

Until 1945 North Africa and the Near and Middle East represented peripheral interests of American foreign policy. The only exception was Saudi Arabia, whose oil resources became a matter of growing interest during World War II. From the end of 1943 the objective firmly rooted in State Department thinking was to develop Saudi Arabia oil production in order both to reduce the drain on western hemisphere resources and to assure economic benefits favouring social developments in the whole Middle East. In implementing that policy, after agreement with Great Britain met resistance from domestic interests, in 1945 the Department of

State shifted in the direction of support to private initiatives and to broader participation in marketing Arabian oil³⁸.

In a wider context during World War II, in the course of a long debate with the British on the future of the colonial world, the American position appeared to favour the parallel development of the economy and of democratic institutions. More than towards anticolonialism in the strict sense, the American tendency was in the direction of self-government, of international trusteeship as the first step in the process of independence. Those views were embodied in Chapters XI and XII of the United Nations Charter³⁹.

The American approach implied that France and Great Britain would bear the major burden in carrying out the policies agreed at UNO. Therefore, while during the war the debate on the principles of decolonization had widely involved the planning and decisional levels of both the State Department and the military branches of the government (and sometimes the Presidency itself), after the war most of the problems of dependent or formerly dependent areas were entrusted to the almost exclusive responsibility of the American missions on the spot and of the regional offices in the State Department. Indeed, it was from those spheres, in Summer 1945, that the invitation originated to follow a more active policy: to support the movement towards independence in the Arab countries, to improve economic conditions, to encourage political development, to avoid the inclusion of those countries into spheres of influence; in short, to take the lead in orienting the Arab countries towards the western world in order to check a tendency "in the direction of some form of autocracy, of totalitarianism". Surely the intention was not to convey the idea that the Arab countries were facing a dilemma, for, it was added, Soviet policy "had largely paralleled our own"⁴⁰. The alternative was completely potential and it reflected bureaucratic exigencies, not at all the need to confront initiatives threatening American interests. Therefore the call 'to play a leading role' did not materialize in the conduct of foreign policy.

In fact, the only country in the whole Arab world where American policy partially interacted with the Soviet one was the

former Italian colony of Libya. The basic reason for this was of an institutional nature. The future of Libya was under discussion in the sessions of the Council of Foreign Ministers, in the Paris Peace Conference and later at UNO. In 1945 and 1946 the American position on Libya was substantially a reflection - with tactical adjustments - of general principles related to the process of decolonization: international trusteeship and subsequently, in a timespan to be defined, independence. Actually Libya became a deadlocked matter in Paris, and the only agreement was to the maintenance of the status quo with Great Britain as administering authority pending a final decision by the UNO. To a certain extent the status quo was more than just diplomatic manoeuvring to put an end to negotiations in which conflicting points of view were present. It secured British strategic interests in Cyrenaica, while substantially keeping the path open towards the process of decolonization, on which agreement was eventually reached at UNO, providing for independence by 1 January 1952⁴¹. Undoubtedly there is a risk of oversimplification in outlining in such a way the development of American policy towards Libya. However, the main point to stress is the fact that there was no challenge-response pattern to rationalize American policy. Although in State Department and military papers occasional reference was made to threats of Soviet infiltration and aggression, the course of Soviet policy in itself dismissed them. Actually, its basic character was instrumentality: from Molotov's demand for trusteeship over Tripolitania (London, September 1945) to the diplomatic note suggesting Italian trusteeship over her former colonies, released on the eve of the crucial electoral campaign in Italy in spring 1948.

Basic similarities can be recognized in the American initiatives regarding French North Africa. In that case too the orienting factor was the idea of self-government. In the first post-war phase lack of evolution in this direction was considered to give space to communist activities, to communist tendencies to support nationalist aspirations towards autonomy and independence. Communist activities in French North Africa were not perceived as

a threat in themselves; in 1946 a real communist threat against it was envisaged only as a consequence of the Community Party's rising to power in France⁴². Later, in 1948 and 1949, especially during the North African Conferences of the American diplomatic representatives on the spot, a widely shared assumption was that no intrinsic connection existed between nationalism and communism (which was, moreover, a weak force); that their only common path was in fostering the advance towards self-government. In this direction, in 1947 and 1948, American diplomats in the field envisaged a series of steps to be taken by French authorities. But, how concretely "to break down the traditional French inertia in colonial thinking", how concretely to produce "a general entente leading to political stability in the area" remained basically unanswered questions⁴³. Thus, self-government was indeed the term of reference in American analysis of the internal situation in French North Africa, but it tended to become a void expression.

Where to trace the main reason for this sort of American non-policy? In the first place, the idea of self-government had no relation to the main source of inspiration of American foreign policy, the policy of containment. Actually no substantial threat was arising from the internal context and there was no external threat either. There was, therefore, no general perspective to which any American initiative in French North Africa could be anchored: from the policy of containment no impulse came towards implementing self-government. Moreover, a further obstacle to the development of American initiatives towards self-government was given by the emergence of strategic interests in the last months of 1947. On the basis of the strategic concept tried out during World War II and still alive in American strategic thinking, especially in the formulation of emergency war plans⁴⁴, American security interests required that French North Africa would continue to remain in 'friendly hands'. From this point of view American strategic interests were substantially indirect, and French control of the area was designed to secure them. On the other hand the conflict opposing nationalist aspirations towards

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self-government and independence to the resistance exerted by the colonial administration or mandatory power made the French position there substantially unstable in the State Department's view. In order to secure American strategic interests, policy statements recommended reconciliation of the antagonistic tendencies⁴⁵, which virtually meant the continuation of non-policy towards French North Africa.

Lack of relationship of the problems of the area to the general context of American foreign policy and perceptions of indirect strategic interests were the main features of American foreign policy thinking in regard to French North Africa. Basically the same features can be identified in the American interest towards the Near East, with a difference however: here the United States did follow a policy. Just as in French North Africa American security interests were entrusted to France, so in the Near East it was Great Britain that had to perform a similar role. The American paper presented at the Pentagon talks of October-November 1947 with the British stated that "the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and of the Middle East is vital to the security of the United States". It added that it "would ne jeopardized if the Soviet Union should succeed in its efforts to obtain control of any one of the following countries: Italy, Greece, Turkey or Iran", but requested that Great Britain should keep "their strong strategical, political and economic position in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean". A contemporary memorandum for internal use reaffirmed that defence of that area was a British 'primary responsibility', resting on a system of bases and requiring, in turn, "that the British should have mutually satisfactory political and economic relations of a long-term nature with the countries of the area, as a foundation for their military position"⁴⁶.

In the American paper a clear distinction was drawn between defence of the Northern Tier and defence of the Near and Middle East. This fact helps to clarify the exact meaning of the statement according to which the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East was vital to the United States

(a statement so often reiterated that it became a compulsory introductory remark in the policy statements regarding the area). In the first case (the Northern Tier) communism was a threat of endogenous nature or resulting from an external direct pressure by the USSR; in the second case "Communism", it was stated, "was not widespread and the Moslem religion was not favorable to it"⁴⁷. Therefore, in the context of containment policy, here the communist threat could materialize only as a consequence of the falling of the dominoes in the Northern Tier. The concept of containment envisaged a first line of resistance, to the security of which an American commitment was requested (and where containment was also a dimension of domestic policy). On the other hand, direct responsibility to the defence of what lay behind the first line was not necessary: the American strategic interest was indirect as in the case of French North Africa.

As with French North Africa, the internal problems of the Near East - substantially the Palestine question - played no role in the overall context of containment; as Kennan wrote in 1948: "the Palestine question has no direct relation to our national security"⁴⁸. But unlike the problem of self-government in French North Africa, the Palestine issue and the related problem of how to deal with the survivors of the holocaust did have a powerful impact on American public opinion and on the government itself producing strong divisions within both.

From 1945 throughout 1948 advocates of different policies - to establish a Jewish state or not being the basic issue - fought each other in order to win Truman's support for their respective positions, and usually the moment one position appeared to prevail the opposition would start to undercut it. Truman was substantially open to pressures coming from both within and without the government, and consequently the process of decision-making resulted from the interplay of competing views and pressures. Therefore inconsistency and lack of clear direction were the main features of American policy towards the Palestinian and the Jewish refugee issues. The American position wandered from adoption of the recommendations of the Anglo-American committee of

enquiry, favouring the creation of a binational state of Arabs and Jews (spring 1946) to the support of partition, endorsed by Truman's Yom Kippur declaration (October 1946), and subsequently, in the first half of 1947, to waiting on events. In the crucial days before the final UN Resolution in November 1947 different American policies coexisted, and lobbying by Zionist supporters substantially contributed to the General Assembly vote in favour of partition of Palestine into an Israeli and an Arab state. In this framework the two direct interlocutors carried a very different relative weight: Jewish reactions in the USA had a powerful impact on domestic policy and often reached Truman directly, while Arab reaction was mainly channeled through the State Department, whose influence in the crucial phases of policy-making was considerably weaker than that of the Presidency between 1945 and 1948.

If a common character can be identified in American policy towards the Palestine issue, it was the strong determination not become directly involved, politically and militarily, in Palestine, and later in implementing the UN Resolution of November 1947 endorsing partition of Palestine. Early in 1948 the State Department assumed that partition would not be workable and suggested as an alternative UN trusteeship. But contrary to that assumption the expansion of the Jewish-held area by means of military operations in April and May 1948 and later the creation of the State of Israel demonstrated that de facto partition was working, even if in a troubled way (Arab-Israeli hostilities continued until early 1949, interrupted by short ceasefires). The decision to recognize de facto the State of Israel, the realistic approach, as White House aide Clifford called it, was the obvious outcome. It had a domestic value as well, signalling "to the antipartition forces that American policy favored Jewish statehood"⁴⁹.

Due to the way in which the process of decision-making took shape, American policy failed to support British strategic interests in the Near East. The two pillars on which British Foreign Secretary Bevin had founded his grand imperial strategy in

the Middle East - Arab cooperation and American support - completely collapsed. The British decision of February 1947 to submit the Palestine issue to the UN and in September to withdraw troops from Palestine was a patent admission of failure. It stiffened, in turn, the British attitude regarding military bases in the Middle East, which became a source of further strain, especially in British relations with Egypt. In fact, throughout the late 1940s, Britain's intention to withdraw troops from the Cairo-Suez area, announced in May 1946, turned out to be a deadlocked matter⁵⁰.

At this point the problem of Middle Eastern oil must be taken into account, especially considering that it has often been referred to as the key to American interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Contrary to this point of view, in the late 1940s defence of the oil fields in the Middle East was considered unfeasible in the event of war; therefore British military presence in the Near East and American commitments to Northern Tier security were not mainly intended to furnish a shield to the oil-producing countries in a military sense. Moreover, Middle Eastern oil played no role in the making of American policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean area. The Palestinian issue did not substantially affect American foreign oil policy. Undoubtedly crucial decision, namely support of partition and recognition of the State of Israel, ran counter to the coalition of interests created by oil policy and consisting, on the American side, of the State and Defence Departments besides the oil companies and, on the Middle Eastern side, of Saudi Arabia. However, oil policy suffered only temporary setbacks, owing substantially to the fact that oil companies maintained a low profile on that issue. On the whole, American interests in Middle Eastern oil were not jeopardized by the conduct of American policy towards the Palestinian issue, even though the two policies proceeded along paths with no point of contact.

In the second half of 1948 an attempt was made to reconcile those policies on the assumption that Middle Eastern oil was vital both to European recovery and to the producing countries, where

increasing revenues would bring about economic development and stability, curbing the spread of communist tendencies⁵¹. Even though eventually the coalition of interests established on oil policy had Saudi Arabia as the single interlocutor in the Middle East, during 1948 and 1949 the terms of reference for American policy regarding the Near and Middle East often reflected that view. A healthy economy was regarded as the basic factor in security; stability would foster resistance to Soviet penetration, and so on. But the same policy statements endorsing those terms of reference took into consideration other aspects of the internal situation of the Near Eastern countries, conflicting with the assumption that a precise link existed between instability and Soviet or communist internal threat. This is why, as with French North Africa, those aims did not become the guiding principle of American policy towards the Near East. On the one side, even though an increase in communist penetration was observed in Egypt and within the Arab refugees, American diplomats in the field realized that communist movements were under control 'by most governments through police and other repressive measures'. Therefore the source of instability in the Near Eastern countries was not considered as rising from an internal communist threat. On the contrary it sprang from the enduring Arab-Israeli tensions which focused on the refugee issue at that time. Moreover, further strains on internal economic and social conditions were expected to be produced by the defensive exigencies compelling both the Arab countries and Israel to maintain a fully mobilized military establishment. The major resistance to movement in the direction of economic development, stability and eradication of communist tendencies, was therefore rooted in Arab-Israeli confrontation and, conversely, reconciliation was seen as the first step to be taken in order to reverse the trend towards instability⁵². As in the case of French North Africa, the basic issue was an internal one and not a reflex of Cold War issues.

In 1950, as it was widely recognized that "communist [was] potential rather than actual danger", the weakness (if not lack) of "natural deterrents to communist exploitation" was not

perceived as a threat to US security, to US vital interests. In short no Soviet challenge was actually taking shape and conversely no response was urged. Once it was established that the basic issue for Israel and the Arab states was not their relations with the Soviet Union but their mutual relationship, once it was agreed that "the creation of a regional [defensive] arrangement, pure and simple, of the Near Eastern countries offers not solution" to the problems arising from their mutual suspicions and hostilities⁵³, any tie with the policy of containment was absolutely missing and American policy towards the Near East remained blocked, oil policy excepted, by the impasse in Israeli-Arab relations. The Near East neither offered a base nor demanded security arrangements as they were intended from the American point of view. An example of the diverging concepts of security can be offered by the Arab reaction to the Tripartite Declaration on arms shipments to the Near East issued by the United States, Great Britain and France in May 1950. The Declaration recognized the need of a certain level of armaments to be sent to the Near Eastern countries in order to assure internal security and self-defence. But the fact that security of the whole area was linked to the acceptance of the status quo in terms of frontiers and armistice lines produced strong resentment within the Arab countries⁵⁴.

In the last analysis, in the late 1940s, the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean were substantially recognized as areas of secondary, indirect interest to American foreign policy. It was current opinion that American security interests were entrusted to France and Great Britain, but American policies towards those areas were not integrated with that assumption, if not indeed conflicting with it. In the second place, the approach to the problems of both areas was regionally defined and lacked substantial connections with the Cold War patterns.

A primary political and strategical interest had actually emerged towards the northern shore of the Mediterranean since 1946. But in the late 1940s the American approach lacked a unifying factor. Only Italy organically fitted into the framework of containment; Greece and Turkey were connected to it halfway;

after the split between the Cominform and Yugoslavia, the American policy "keeping Tito afloat" just began to find a way towards integrating Yugoslavia, to a certain extent, into a European security framework. Finally, no alternative course was envisaged than virtually accepting Spain's isolation from the outside world, to which idealistic motives rooted in American and especially in western European public opinion had contributed⁵⁵.

III

During 1949, after the signing of the North Atlantic Pact and the launching of MDAP, the concept of containment still prevalent was that aimed at improving the internal security situation and deterring the external threat through a combined use of economic, political and military means. However, the combination of those elements tended to become more and more unstable, diametrically opposed views being held by the Policy Planning Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The former's thinking was in terms of the cold war as an 'essentially political problem', while the latter emphasized the increasing danger of war⁵⁶. During 1949 the antithesis between the two perspectives, which could be commonly defined as the Cold War approach and the Hot War approach, tended progressively to disappear. It was the first Soviet atomic bomb test which eventually produced the integration of those perspectives, even though the decision to develop the hydrogen bomb still also relied on a psychological dimension of containment, emphasizing its repercussions on western Europe. The terms of reference were "military frustration of our Western European allies" and conversely "evidence of our intent to increase our military strength for security of all"⁵⁷. At the end of 1949, during a discussion between Policy Planning Staff and State Department officials, the cold-war approach and the hot-war approach were not considered as antithetical views but as interrelated stages of a single process. In Thompson's opinion to win the cold war was the short-term aim, to prepare for the hot

war, assuming that war was unavoidable, was the long-term one. To restore internal stability was not only a response to a perceived Soviet political threat; it was also the premise of a policy whose basic aim was to deter Soviet aggression through military means⁵⁸. A new balance between the component parts of the strategy of containment was required; and in this process Secretary of State Acheson gave the final impulse at the end of 1949.

In all the documents preceding and preparing NSC 68 and in NSC 68 itself, the report to the National Security Council designed to codify the concept of containment in the early 1950s, the basic issue, explicitly or implicitly to be reassessed, was the implications of the atomic bomb for Soviet strategy. The reply did not take into account the final aims of Soviet policy as seen widely (the weakening of the world power position of the USA, the defeat of the USA, Soviet world domination). On the contrary, it focused on the means at the USSR's disposal, and the view more commonly held was that the availability of the atomic bomb would give the USSR maximum flexibility. The basic objective of Soviet policy Policy Planning Staff director, Nitze wrote in February 1950, on the one hand "holds out for the USSR the possibility that it can achieve success over the US without resorting to an all-out military assault. On the other hand, it leaves open the possibility of a quick Soviet decision to resort to military action, locally or generally"⁵⁹. This argument, later embodied in NSC 68, rested on what has been defined as circular logic: had the Soviet Union developed an atomic arsenal, it would use it unless it could secure its objectives through other means. In the last analysis, if deterrence based on the American nuclear monopoly test (and after intelligence estimates predicted that the USSR would develop a nuclear arsenal in a short span of years) the only limit to Soviet strategy was expediency (and it was for the USSR to establish the degree of expediency of any action).

This perception was the core of the new concept of containment. It relied on an assessment much more of Soviet intentions than of Soviet capabilities. No point of contact existed between the views of Kennan and Nitze, the major

antagonists. All the arguments, all the factual evidence Kennan brought out to defend the thesis that the atomic bomb's possession on the Soviet side did not imply a basic change in Soviet strategy, were simply ignored by Nitze: "historical precedents", he objected, "may have become inaccurate as criteria by which to judge the degree of probability"⁶⁰. The attention was completely shifting in the direction of Soviet capabilities, as there was no limit to verify Soviet intentions⁶¹.

The consequence was that any distinction between cold war and hot war completely disappeared. Soviet expansionism became the interpretive category within which to consider any possible form of aggression by the USSR and any threat to the balance of power: humiliation and loss of credibility, subversion, combination of intimidation and infiltration, piecemeal aggression beginning from the soft spots on the Soviet periphery, total war. Although within the Truman administration the debate continued on such topics as 'is war inevitable?' or 'has the Soviet Union a blueprint for world domination?', the previous distinction between military and non-military means at the disposal of Soviet foreign policy tended to disappear. A rigid bipolarity in its full sense was perceived as the main characteristic of the world order; the response was symmetry, in other words to define interests in function of threats. Thus the perception of threats became the current concern in American foreign policy thinking. Moreover, in NSC 68's view, wherever American interests were considered to be jeopardized, the Soviet Union was expected to take direct advantage even though it was not the direct source of threat. In response to Soviet flexibility, US strategy was called upon to develop a parallel degree of flexibility in order to have a wider range of options than merely capitulation or, vice versa, precipitating a global war. The call for a military build-up of big proportions and for a world-wide defence system were the immediate implications. Although NSC 68 did not suddenly generate a broad, irrevocable consensus within the Truman administration, it did succeed in drawing up a framework within which organically to include the

outbreak of hostilities in Korea or, to use S. Well's formula, "in sounding the tocsin just before the fire"⁶².

Actually, the first reaction to the Korean war relied on the concept of Soviet flexibility. The first assessment of Soviet policy after the Korean attack, the National Security Council report NSC 73/4 of August 1950, listed the options open to the USSR: global war, isolated attacks "not designed to bring on global war", Soviet-inspired attacks using satellite-country forces, non-military moves (subversive actions and tactical manoeuvres in the peace offensive "to test out firmness and to split the free world").

In the same connection there was also broad consensus on the countermeasures the United States had to take: the military build-up designed "to support US foreign policy, to deter Soviet aggression and to form the basis for fighting a global war should war prove unavoidable", designed to serve, in other words, both the cold-war exigencies and the hot-war ones⁶³.

Western Europe was the area where this concept of containment began to work. In a message whose purpose was to give the European governments an outline of the new American approach Secretary of State Acheson confirmed that in the short run economic recovery held the first place in the list of priorities. At the same time, he added, the US did "not regard military strength as a different objective in conflict with these constructive purposes but ... an essential element in their achievement"⁶⁴. Therefore military build-up, a process launched at the end of 1950 by the decision to commit American troops to the defence of western Europe and to create an integrated military structure, would serve the purposes both of furnishing a link between European and American security and of giving a political-psychological response. Strengthening the internal forces of resistance had more than merely a domestic value; it was also the basis on which to build deterrence on military terms. The objective was "to prevent the dangerous trend toward a fear and resignation psychosis that could in the last analysis through loss of confidence and of political strength result in destroying the moral tissue without which there can be

no security effort"⁶⁵. The fear of neutralism was another outcome of the new concept of containment (it was NSC 68 itself which drew attention to it): in the bipolar structure of containment, neutralism was perceived as a factor weakening the internal forces of resistance and exposing a country to the threat of Soviet intimidation and eventually aggression. A complete alignment between domestic and foreign policy was requested in the countries towards which the policy of containment was directed.

As far as the Mediterranean is concerned, the new concept of containment acted as a rationalizing factor in American foreign policy. The new perception of Soviet threat, materializing in the fear that the Korean experience could be repeated in Europe against Greece and Yugoslavia (and, in another theatre, against Germany⁶⁶), encouraged the finding of an outlet to the pressure coming from Turkey. But first the decision to associate Greece and Turkey with the phases of NATO planning concerning the Mediterranean, taken by the North Atlantic Council in September 1950, was linked to pre-Korean arguments⁶⁷. It was a response to subjective security needs. Turkey wanted to obtain NATO membership - Acheson wrote - because "that would deter Soviet aggression". Under this approach the rejection of Turkish initiative was ruled out because a weakening of internal forces of resistance would result. But in the same way full membership was refused because, by revealing that no American intervention in support of Greece and Turkey was considered feasible in the event of a Soviet attack, it would imply a similar risk. Similarly, the American chargé in Athens warned that exclusion of Greece from NATO could "swell the ranks of opportunists and defeatists"⁶⁸. The major element in the thinking of the State and Defence Departments reflected the internal stability needs of the two countries; no substantial consideration seems to have been given to the military strengthening of both the individual countries and the whole alliance.

The movement towards peripheral defence took a more definite shape from the end of 1950. From the point of view of the State Department, after the process of transformation of the North

Atlantic Pact into a military alliance was put in motion (although not without obstacles and stopping points), deterrence based on cold-war and hot-war approaches began to work. On the contrary, outside the NATO area the situation was different, and the call for a more active policy, originating in the regional office of the State Department, did not reflect merely bureaucratic exigencies, as had been the case since 1945.

Lack of defence arrangements in the area covering both Greece and Turkey and the Near Eastern countries Assistant Secretary of State, McGhee, warned was producing "political disaffection and deterioration", whose outcome would be a swinging away from the West, towards neutralism, even towards the USSR⁶⁹. If the last expression seems to reflect a bureaucratic overstatement, in the conceptual framework of NSC 68 the weakening of internal resistance clearly appeared to jeopardize the capability of deterring a Soviet attack and in some way virtually to invite it. Moreover, the fact that Greece was considered as "a target of Soviet ambitions" and the perception that "an attack against Greece involving satellite and/or Soviet forces would indicate that general war is probably imminent"⁷⁰ represented the basic argument for reversing the trend of policy towards Greece and, consequently, Turkey and the Near East.

During a meeting between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and State Department officials Nitze defined the core of the question: "it seems to us that the most serious threat of future Soviet action is in this area which we have been dismissing. The real deterrent to such a Soviet move can only be, it seems to us, the possibility of our reaction to a Soviet move in this area"⁷¹. In this framework, defence arrangements would play the role of strengthening the internal forces of resistance, curbing tendencies in favour of neutralism and, at the same time, deterring a Soviet or Soviet-inspired attack.

Full Greek membership in NATO was the obvious outcome⁷². The problem of Turkey was less clear-cut. "Turkey", a NSC report stated, "is a bulwark of the area now embraced by the North Atlantic Treaty" and, at the same time, "a protective screen

behind which the defensive strength of the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East can be developed"⁷³.

At this point the problem of defence arrangements in the Near East intertwined with both the process of NATO command organization in the southern flank and Mediterranean and with British strategical interests⁷⁴. In December 1950 NATO's military committee decided to replace the three European planning groups with two separate command organizations for western Europe and the Italian front, supported by two naval commands (Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean) directly responsible to the Standing Group⁷⁵. The Mediterranean was subjected to the different power of attraction exerted by the major areas of American and, conversely, British commitment. On the American side the naval forces were to be linked to SHAPE (and under this arrangement the Allied Command, Southern Europe, was set up in June 1951⁷⁶). The British, on the other hand, viewed the Mediterranean Command as depending on a planned Middle East Command with the membership of the United States, Great Britain and France. Initially a balance substantially existed between the two approaches and Turkey was to act as a hinge between the two defensive systems. In those terms agreement was reached at the Ottawa meeting of the North Atlantic Council in September 1951. Greece and Turkey were offered full membership of NATO and at the same time it was proposed that Turkey take part in the Middle East Command, so as to be able to exert a power of attraction on the other countries in the area⁷⁷. But, as we shall see, of the two perspectives only one came to prevail, the one having power of attraction because of its very existence.

Greek and Turkish security, whose foundations could not be laid in the Near East, were thus linked to the western European context and NATO membership was finally decided on at the Lisbon meeting of the North Atlantic Council in February 1952. Although it has been observed that NATO Mediterranean strategy was still in course of definition, Greece and Turkey's inclusion on its right flank harmonized with a perspective drawn up by Admiral Carney, who stressed in early 1951 as "vitally important that military,

political, economic and psychological strength be built on the flanks [of Saceur]"⁷⁸. Carney's view reflected not only a merely military interest; it also encompassed both political-psychological and military-strategical aspects, both the cold-war and the hot-war approaches.

The early 1950s version of containment policy brought together in a single context the countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean. The case of Greece and Turkey has just been examined. As far as Italy is concerned, at the end of 1950 a revision of the military provisions contemplated by the peace treaty was considered and later agreed in order that Italy could carry on the tasks relating to the defence of the Adriatic decided by the Southern European planning group⁷⁹. Italy's contribution to NATO was not merely in terms of internal stability (as in 1949, when the problem of Italian membership had been raised); it was also based on mutual defence, on military terms. In the context of containment Yugoslavia was also included, though partially. The policy of 'keeping Tito afloat', followed by the United States and Great Britain after the split between Tito and the Cominform in June 1948, corresponded to a more general objective of strengthening the internal forces of resistance to a Soviet threat. From 1950 the military aid linked Yugoslavia's security to that of Greece and Italy. Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey were defined as "a formidable bastion against aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean area". However, Greece's realignment to Yugoslavia went in that direction and eventually a Balkan pact to which Turkey also adhered was signed in February 1953, although it did not become a regional security instrument. On the other hand the unsettled problem of Trieste represented a stumbling block in Italian-Yugoslav relations⁸⁰. From 1950 the process of including Spain in such a context was opened. Still in 1949 Spanish participation in European defence arrangements, in order to meet military demands for bases there, was opposed in consideration of the unfavourable repercussions it would have in French and generally in European public opinion⁸¹. Again, in July 1950, Acheson asserted that pressure to bring Spain into NATO would

produce "dissension and controversy among our allies thus weakening rather than strengthening the collective effort". Acheson drew attention especially to the political implications of European security⁸². Later, on the contrary, as a consequence of a clear emerging of a sound military component in the policy of containment, of a vital link between cold war and hot war, the path was opened "to increase the military value of Spain in a manner which will contribute to the development of strength in the NATO area". Such a statement did not originate in the military sphere but in the State Department. The memorandum suggested the drawing up of plans for the use of Spanish facilities for the defence of western Europe and the North Atlantic area, thus putting in motion a process in which Spanish-US relations provided the alternative to NATO membership, eventually resulting in the signing of the Madrid Pact in September 1945⁸³.

To sum up, from the end of 1950 American policy towards the northern shore of the Mediterranean found a common source of inspiration that helped remove the discrepancies produced by the creation of the North Atlantic Pact. American policy towards the northern shore of the Mediterranean was in large measure homogeneous to that carried out in respect to western Europe.

Its foundations are to be traced, besides NSC 68, in a report by the National Security Council of October 1951 which put an end to a phase of intense debate within the Truman administration after the outbreak of the Korean War regarding the relations between American and Soviet foreign policy, between challenges and responses. NSC 114/2 reflected full awareness that the Soviet Union perceived containment as a threat to its own security and that the interaction between the challenge ('we will resist any further encroachment on the area of the free world') and the response ('the Kremlin's efforts to thwart it') could produce "the continuing and real danger of World War III". Consequently it was a widely held view that the terms of American-Soviet interaction - challenge and response - were completely interchangeable (and were actually interchanged in the report). What one perceived as resistance to pressure could at the same time be seen by the other

as pressure to beat down resistance. However, NSC 114/2 did suggest how to find a way out from a situation in which danger of World War III would become a permanent aspect of the Soviet-American relationship: "Where our vital interests overlap what Soviet rulers regard as vital interests of their own there will be a grave risk of Soviet action unless [emphasis added] our ability to defend our basic position is clearly equal or superior to the Soviet ability to challenge it".

That was a substantial amplification of the concept of containment as defined in NSC 68. Perception of interests continued to be a function of Soviet ability to challenge them. Moreover, the fact that Soviet American confrontation affected, in the first instance, the area of potential overlapping of interests underlined the prominence of peripheral defence in the concept of containment (incidentally, American foreign policy appeared not to definitely accept bipolarity as the basis of the world order)⁸⁴.

In this framework concerns at provoking the USSR, still alive in April 1951 regarding the entry of Turkey into NATO⁸⁵, tended to disappear. This approach would enable the overcoming of neutralist tendencies, which the USSR was considered to nourish throughout the 'peace campaigns'. That was clearly stated by Nitze, and the context is also important: the advisability of entering into military arrangements with Spain. "The question of provoking the Soviet Union", said Nitze, "is directly connected with the problem of neutralism. [It] stems out from the fear that the free world is not strong enough to defeat Communism. If we can convince ourselves and our friends that the situation is not hopeless, neutralism will decline"⁸⁶.

In the last analysis the concept of perimeter defence furnished American policy towards the northern shore of the Mediterranean with homogeneity of inspiration. But it also established, or better, strengthened a clear-cut divide in American policy if the whole Mediterranean area is taken into account. Policy towards the countries along the perimeter and policy towards the countries beyond it (the southern and eastern Mediterranean) lacked substantial connections at the level of

implementation. However, the impact of the Korean War on the Near East tended to produce a unifying impulse in the American approach towards the Mediterranean area. At the end of 1950 Assistant Secretary of State McGhee called for "a more positive US political and military action"⁸⁷. Even though McGhee recognized that the major threat to a pro-Western orientation by the Near Eastern countries came from the activity of the 'ultranationalist' organizations he added: "the diminution of direct Soviet pressure against the Near Eastern states together with the increasingly sharp criticism of the West is undoubtedly a Soviet tactic to wean the Near East from the West. The Soviet Union may well believe that, without making a maximum effort, conditions in the Near East are such as to favor the ultimate attainment of its objectives, namely to bring about abandonment of the area's pro-Western orientation and replacement of governments now in power by governments amenable to Soviet influence"⁸⁸.

In other words, while no direct Soviet challenge was perceived against the Near East countries, Moscow could indirectly benefit from the internal trend of events in the area. To clarify that assumption a corollary argument was later developed by the State Department. It attributed to the 'increasing belief' in the Near Eastern countries that the US were in no way committed to the defence and security of the area, the spreading of "disaffection and deterioration", the threat of a "swing away from the free world toward neutrality and even toward the USSR"⁸⁹.

Therefore the call was for US military action and the March 1951 policy statement, approved by Truman, actually envisaged a series of steps of a military character, according to the principle leading to the creation of the North Atlantic Pact (a pre-Korean argument, however) that US guarantees of internal security would serve "to build stability and determination to resist aggression". However, the adoption of the European patterns of containment in the Near East was not based on a similarity of challenge-response patterns, and the State Department's approach, whether instrumental or not in winning JCS support, bore within itself the seeds of failure. The military assistance, called for

by the State Department, was aimed at strengthening the internal forces of resistance in order to meet a Soviet indirect threat; but resistance to movement in that direction actually came from within.

The reason lies in the fact that the Joint Chiefs of Staff, while accepting the State Department's call for a more positive policy, did not reject the argument that the Near East was an area of British primary responsibility⁹⁰. Therefore the US military programme of assistance centred around the issue of the Middle East Command. In the British view this structure would play a fundamental role in settling the controversy with Egypt, which in November 1950 virtually denounced the 1936 treaty and requested that British troops in the Canal zone be withdrawn immediately, and one year later demanded abrogation of the treaties of 1899 and 1936⁹¹. The fact that the proposal for the Middle East Command came to a standstill because of Egyptian obstruction clearly revealed that the basic issue in the Near East was not containment of a Soviet indirect threat by way of strengthening the internal forces of resistance through a military alliance. On the contrary, a more common view was that the major threats to western interests in the Middle East stemmed from "Arab-Israeli animosity", nationalist hostility towards the western world, "deterioration in the British system of alliances", and growing tendencies towards neutralism. At the end of 1951 the Policy Planning Staff area expert, Villard, identified the requisite capable of bringing about stability in the Middle Eastern area: "in the short term the West depends greatly on [the present ruling] groups for the maintenance of stability in the area"; and the further warning not to "deliberately sacrifice important short-term interests because of our view as to what constitutes the desirable long-term course of development" clearly established the relative weight carried by short-term objectives in comparison with long-term ones⁹².

Indeed, stability as a synonym of western orientation and resistance to the "appeal of communism" was the key factor in American oil policy regarding Saudi Arabia. In 1950 the State Department feared that denial of dollar oil to the sterling area

(as a consequence of British devaluation) could slow expansion programmes in that country, thus endangering the interconnected goals of political stability and the development of oil resources. Moreover, the fact that Saudi Arabia was considered to exert a stabilizing influence throughout the Middle Eastern region, an environment at that time highly sensitive to the appeal of nationalization, represented the additional reason for the fifty-fifty profit-sharing agreement of December 1950⁹³.

In the case of French North Africa as well stability appears to have become the substantial term of reference. In 1950 the colonial regime, although it was bluntly termed an anachronistic phenomenon on the pattern of "imperialism of the old school", appeared capable of ensuring stability, though largely through repressive means. Conversely, instability was perceived to be the consequence "if the Arab nationalists were to attain power". After 1950 stability tended to become a synonym for the defence of American strategic interests. In October 1952 this concept was clearly defined within the State Department: "our policy in North Africa, which is governed basically by vital strategic concepts, decidedly does not aim at the French departure from the area"⁹⁴.

The American approach towards French North Africa and the Near East was thus shifting in a new direction by comparison to that followed during the late 1940s. Until 1950 American policy had consciously accepted the risk of remaining deadlocked, on one side by the conflict between nationalism and colonialism, and on the other by Arab-Israeli tensions. Concomitantly, since no real threat was perceived against either area, the problem of identifying (and consequently strengthening) the internal forces of resistance basically did not exist. On the contrary, the NSC 68 code of containment sensitized American foreign policy to perception of threats in order to define interests. In French North Africa and the Near East threats did not come from Soviet initiatives: the application to the latter of the pattern of containment based on peripheral defence, of the challenge-response pattern, proved to be unworkable. The abortive issue of the Middle East Command clearly demonstrated this. However, internal factors

were perceived to be capable of jeopardizing American security interests: stalemate in social and economic development, the enduring tensions between nationalism and colonialism and between Arab states and the State of Israel, failed to produce alignment with regard to the East-West confrontation. In the rigid bipolar view of world order, typical of the NSC 68 containment policy, the threat to 'western orientation' was not a generic formula; it was actually the term of reference for defining American interests.

However, if perception of the threat was clear, American response was not, and in the last phase of the Truman administration no final choice was made between short-term and long-term perspectives. On the one side the search for stability implied that a link should be established with French colonial domination or the ruling groups in the Near Eastern countries; but in this direction no organic initiative appears to have taken place. On the other side the expectation was not completely dropped that, to a certain extent, the nationalist movements could be won over by "giving satisfaction of at least some nationalist aspirations", or, as Acheson put it, by placing nationalism "in constructive channels"⁹⁵. In this framework the new oil agreement with Saudi Arabia was reached in December 1950, and in a wider context the expectation that the general trend towards fifty-fifty agreements would give the Near and Middle Eastern governments the chance "to minimize the incidence of poverty, disease, ignorance and despair and consequently the spread of Communism, revolution and political murder"⁹⁶. American support for the Egyptian revolution of 1952 seems to fall into the same perspective⁹⁷. However, in general terms, American policy towards the Near East and French North Africa seems to be characterized more by inaction than by positive acts. The last basic statement produced by the Truman administration regarding American foreign policy left substantially undefined the problem of selecting "effective counter measures" against "serious internal instability in many areas, caused in varying degrees by the activity of indigenous communist parties, rabid nationalism, economic and political backwardness and defeatist neutralism, stimulated by aggressive

Soviet and satellite propaganda directed chiefly against the United States"⁹⁸.

In the last analysis the concept of containment embraced by the Truman administration after the outbreak of the Korean War proved to furnish a unifying perspective of the American approach to the Mediterranean area: the perception of threats in order to define American interests. But the unifying perspective did not produce a unified policy. Threats to American interests originated from different sources. On the northern shore of the Mediterranean they were organically linked to the global Soviet challenges; on the eastern and southern shore, however, they basically sprung from factors of a domestic nature. Correspondingly, while in the former case American responses found a rationalization in the context of containment policy, especially in the concept of peripheral defence, in the latter they lacked an agreed direction. The gap of the late 1940s in American policy towards the Mediterranean was only partially filled; absence of an integrating factor basically continued to exist.

Florence, June 1986

NOTES

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2. John L. Gaddis, 'The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War', in Diplomatic History, 3 (1983), 171-190; J. Samuel Walker, 'Historians and Cold War Origins: The New Consensus', in G.K. Haines and J.S. Walker (eds), American Foreign Relations. A Historiographical Review (Westport Conn., 1981), 207-236.

3. Both the term and the concept are borrowed from John L. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy (New York, 1982), viii-ix.

4. On Roosevelt's approach to foreign policy see Daniel Yergin, Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State (Boston, 1977), ch. 2; John L. Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-1947 (New York, 1972), ch. 2, 3 and 5. On American military strategy in Europe see Mark Stoler, The Politics of the Second Front. American Military Planning in Coalition Warfare (Westport Conn., 1977). On spheres of influence in American policy see John L. Gaddis, 'The United States and the Question of a Sphere of Influence in Europe, 1945-1949' in Olav Riste (ed), Western Security. The Formative Years. European and Atlantic Defense 1947-1953 (Oslo-New York, 1985), 60-65. On American attitudes towards a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe see Eduard Mark, 'American Policy Towards Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation', Journal of American History, 2 (1981), 313-336; Warren Kimball, 'Naked Reverse Right: Roosevelt, Churchill and Eastern Europe from Tolstoy to Yalta - and a Little Beyond', Diplomatic History, 1 (1985), 1-24; Thomas G. Paterson, On Every Front. The Making of the Cold War (New York, 1979), ch. 3.

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7. Robert L. Messer, 'Paths not Taken: the US State Department and Alternatives to Containment 1945-1946', Diplomatic History, 1 (1979), 297-319; D. Yergin, Shattered Peace, 143-147.

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9. Kennan to Secretary of State, 22 February 1946, 20 March 1946, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1946, 6, 696-709, 721-723. On Kennan's previous views on Eastern Europe see David Mayers, 'Soviet War Aims and the Grant [sic] Alliance: George Kennan's Views, 1944-1946', Journal of Contemporary History, 1 (1986), 65-69; J. Gaddis, 'The United States and the Question of a Sphere of Influence in Europe', 60-61.

10. B. Kuniholm, The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East, 255-270, 355-359. See also Barry Rubin, The Great Powers in the Middle East 1941-1947. The Road to Cold War (London, 1980), 191-222; Anthony De Luca, 'Soviet-American Politics and the Turkish Straits', Political Science Quarterly, 3 (1977), 510-521.

11. Soviet note to Turkish government, 7 August 1946; Memorandum by State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee for Truman, 15 August 1946; Acheson to Wilson, Ambassador to Turkey, FRUS, 1946, 7, 827-829, 840-842, 843-844. See also B. Kuniholm, The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East, 359-364.

12. Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Forrestal and Patterson, 23 August 1946; Memorandum by Clayton, 12 September 1946; Memorandum by Henderson, 21 October 1946, FRUS, 1946, 7, 209-213, 857-860, 894-897; Memorandum by JCS for Patterson, 13 March 1947, FRUS, 1947, 5, 110-111.

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14. State Department's Policy Paper, quoted in L. Wittner, op. cit., 53; Memorandum by Henderson for Byrnes, 21 October 1946, FRUS, 1946, 7, 240-245; Acheson to Marshall, 21 February 1947, FRUS, 1947, 5, 29-31.

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exercises in domino theory see B. Kuniholm, The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East, 375 ff.

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19. On the problem of Trieste, see Giampaolo Valdevit, La questione di Trieste 1941-1954. Politica internazionale e contesto locale (Milan, 1986), 163 ff.

20. J. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 55.

21. G. Kennan, Memoirs, 354. See also J. Gaddis, 'Containment: A Reassessment', 877-878. On the contradictions in Kennan's thinking see Charles Gati, 'Mr. X Reassessed. The Making of Containment', in C. Gati (ed), Caging the Bear (Indianapolis-New York, 1974), 40-53.

22. X (G. Kennan), 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', Foreign Affairs, July 1947, 566-582.

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Policy Planning Staff Records 1947-1949 (New York-London 1983), vol. I, 91-101; PPS 13, 6 November 1947, FRUS, 1947, 1, 770-777; Report by the Executive Secretary to NSC, NSC 5, 6 January 1948, FRUS, 1948, 1, 2 ff.; Report of the NSC, NSC 1/3, 8 March 1948, FRUS, 1948, 3, 775 ff. See also G. Kennan, Memoirs, 320.

24. PPS 13, 6 November 1947, cit.

25. Report of the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 23, 24 February 1948, FRUS, 1948, 1, 510 ff.

26. The intention is explicitly stated in relation to Greece: see Memorandum by Forrestal, NSC 5/3, Annex, 19 April 1948, 1, 564-567.

27. Report to the NSC by the Executive Secretary, NSC 7, 30 March 1948, FRUS, 1948, 1, 545-550.

28. PPS 33 (NSC 20/2), 25 August 1948, FRUS, 1948, 1, 616-624. On Kennan's thinking see J. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 36-40 and G. Herken, The Winning Weapon, 275-278.

29. SANACC 360/11, 18 August 1948, FRUS, 1949, 1, 259 ff.

30. Lawrence Kaplan, The United States and NATO. The Formative Years (Lexington, 1984), 40-41, 79; idem, A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program 1948-1951 (Washington DC, 1980), 20-22; J. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 63; Timothy Ireland, Creating the Entangling Alliance, 121-137.

31. Report by the National Security Council to the President, NSC 20/4, 23 November 1948, FRUS, 1948, 1, 662-669. On the debate between the Policy Planning Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff see G. Herken, The Winning Weapon, 270-280.

32. The point is widely articulated by E. Timothy Smith, 'The Fear of Subversion: The United States and the Inclusion of Italy in the North Atlantic Treaty', Diplomatic History, 2 (1983), 148-155, and idem, 'U.S. Security and Italy: The Extension of NATO to the Mediterranean 1945-1949', in L. Kaplan, R. Clawson, R. Luraghi (eds), NATO and the Mediterranean (Wilmington DE, 1985), 137-156. On the Italian side see Antonio Varsori, 'La scelta occidentale dell'Italia (1948-1949)', Storia delle relazioni internazionali, 2 (1985), 336 ff. Kennan himself, while not a supporter of the North Atlantic Pact recognized, once the path had been opened in that direction, that exclusion of Italy would "affect in unfortunatley ways the delicate balance of domestic political struggle within that country" (Memoirs, 412-413).

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37. Memorandum by Merriam (PPS), 13 June 1949, FRUS, 1949, 6, 31-39.

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41. William Roger Louis, The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951. Arab Nationalism, the United States and Postwar Imperialism (Oxford, 1984), 267, 269-270, 277-280, 295-296, 301-302, 305.

42. Acheson, Acting Secretary of State, to the Consul at Rabat, 11 July 1946; Caffery to Secretary of State, 26 July 1946, FRUS, 1946, 7, 51-53; 54-56; Alling, Consul at Tangier to Secretary of State, 30 January 1947, FRUS, 1947, 5, 673-674.

43. Reports of North African Conferences, Paris, September 1947, FRUS, 1947, 5, 690-698; Paris, May 1948, FRUS, 1948, 3, 694-713; Tunis, June 1949, FRUS, 1949, 6, 1780-1788.

44. G. Herken, The Winning Weapon, chs. 11 and 12.

45. State Department Memorandum in preparation of Pentagon talks, n.d., FRUS, 1947, 5, 521 ff.; PPS 25 (Villard), 22 March 1948, FRUS, 3, 682-689.

46. American paper, n.d. [November 1947], Memorandum in preparation of the Pentagon Talks, n.d., FRUS, 1947, 5, 575 ff., 511 ff.

47. Statement by American and British groups (Pentagon Talks), n.d. [November 1947]], FRUS, 1947, 5, 610-612.

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54. R. Stookey, America and the Arab States, 129-131.

55. On Yugoslavia, see the Report by the National Security Council to the President, NSC 18/4, 17 November 1949, FRUS, 1950, 4, 1341-1348. The basic documents regarding the shift of American policy towards Yugoslavia are PPS 35, 30 June 1948, FRUS, 1948, 4, 1079-1081; PPS 60, 12 September 1949, FRUS, 1949, 5, 947 ff. See also Lorraine Lees, 'The American Decision to Help Tito 1948-1949', Diplomatic History, 4 (1978), 407-422; David Larson, United States Foreign Policy Towards Yugoslavia 1943-1963 (Washington, 1979), ch. 6. With regard to Spain, from the end of 1947 American policy dismissed any expectation of 'kicking Franco out' by means of international pressure, even if it did not desist from the effort to push the Spanish government, privately or publicly, towards "an orderly and peaceful evolution" of internal political life (see Lovett to Culbertson, 18 December

1947, FRUS, 1947, 3, 1096-1097; Achilles to Culbertson, chargé to Spain, 5 January 1948, FRUS, 1948, 3, 1017-1020).

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59. Report by Nitze, 8 February 1950, FRUS, 1, 145.

60. Nitze's statement at PPS meeting, 1 February 1950, FRUS, 1950, 1, 142-143. For Kennan's views see his memoranda, 6 January and 17 February 1950, ibid., 127-128, 160-167.

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62. Report by the National Security Council to the President, NSC 68, 14 April 1950, FRUS, 1950, 1, 235-292. On NSC 68 and the resulting shift in American foreign policy see Samuel F. Wells, 'Sounding the Tocsin: NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat', International Security, 2 (1979), 124-141; J. Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 89-106; G. Herken, The Winning Weapon, 329-332.

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67. L. Kaplan, A Community of Interests, 118 ff.

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71. Nitze's statement, 30 January 1951, ibid., 35.

72. Statement of policy proposed by the National Security Council, NSC 103/1, 14 February 1951, ibid., 463-466.

73. Statement of policy proposed by the National Security Council, 24 May 1951, ibid., 1148-1151.

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75. Report by the North Atlantic Military committee to the N.A. Defence Committee, 12 December 1950, FRUS, 1950, 3, 548-562.

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87. See note 69.

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89. See note 69.

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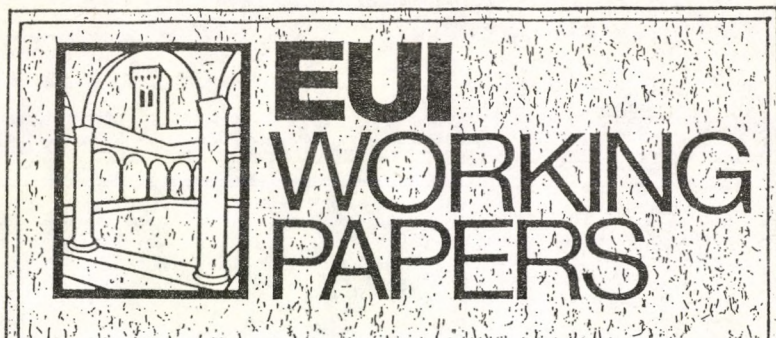
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