

All for One or All for All:

The UN Military Staff Committee and the Contradictions within American Internationalism

It is unusually rewarding for a historian to study a dead end of history and then to find out it might be a through road. A few years ago, when this research began, the United Nations Military Staff Committee (MSC) seemed like such a dead end. During the Persian Gulf War, however, Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev wanted the MSC to help coordinate the UN military action. More recently, intense pressure on inadequate and divided UN forces in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia have raised grave questions about the command, control, and goals of international forces, with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali calling for the revival of a permanent UN military force and an international Military Staff Committee to guide it.

This article is a reexamination of the failure of the original MSC in 1946–47, intended to illustrate some of the historical pitfalls of creating international military forces. Most scholars have assumed that the MSC failed due to increasing Cold War tensions. The inflexibility of both American and Soviet negotiators is notable, but that is only part of the story. The negotiations came to naught because the Americans, the strongest supporters of a UN military force, lacked a clear vision of the force's mission and failed to confront the central stumbling block: that all nations (including the United States) would strongly resist even a limited compromise of their right to unilateral control over their own military forces. As these factors are still operative today, it seems unlikely that the UN will activate the Military Staff Committee as envisioned by the charter.¹

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1. For more on the role of private internationalist groups, however, see Robert D. Accinelli, "Pro-U.N. Internationalists and the Early Cold War: The American Association for the United Nations and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1947–52," *Diplomatic History* 9 (Fall 1985): 347–62. On the significance of the differences among the United States and Britain, France, and China regarding the activation of the Military Staff Committee see Evan Luard, *A History of the*

Political scientist Peter Geib has argued that the MSC negotiations failed because the U.S. negotiators did not understand the Soviets' far more conservative notions of national sovereignty. But it is necessary to take the argument one step further to explain the Americans' confusion: American internationalism itself contained ambiguous and contradictory notions about the relationship between an international organization and its members. That ambiguity muddled the discussion of the purpose and configuration of Security Council military forces. The Americans who participated in the formation of the United Nations, mindful of the failure of the League of Nations, wanted a powerful and effective international organization. Most of them also wanted to preserve national prerogatives.²

A quick look back at the League of Nations reveals similar tensions. Woodrow Wilson founded a League of Nations that was designed largely to preserve the prerogatives of individual nations. As J. H. Brierly observed, "It was an association of independent but co-operating states, and its institutions were intended as means for making it as easy as possible for these states to work together. The members retained their sovereignty, but they had all agreed to do and not to do certain things in the exercise of their sovereign rights." Permeated by what one scholar has called the "spirit of voluntarism," it was, as Brierly points out, in no sense a world government.³

Wilson strongly opposed French proposals to give the league a stronger military bite, evidence of his commitment to national control over armed forces. The French, ever pursuing their quest for Anglo-American security guarantees, had pressed for an international military force under control of the league council. They had also proposed an international general staff to coordinate national military contingents. These contingents might have given the council power to inspect and verify compliance with disarmament treaties. The French proposal, which anticipated Article 43 of the UN Charter, was dismissed at the time by the British representative, Robert Cecil, as "a perfectly fatuous proposal." Due, in part, to the lack of Anglo-American support for a strong military body, the commission drafting the

United Nations, Vol. 1, *The Years of Western Dominance* (London, 1982), 99. For additional materials on the history of the MSC see Ruth B. Russell, *United Nations Experience with Military Forces: Political and Legal Aspects* (Washington, 1964); Lawrence D. Weiler and Anne P. Simons, *The United States and the United Nations: The Search for International Peace and Security* (New York, 1967), 129–37; and Leland M. Goodrich, Edward Hambro, and Anne P. Simons, *Charter of the United Nations, Commentary and Documents*, 3d ed. (New York, 1969), 317–42.

2. Peter Geib, "The Origins of the Soviet-American Conflict over United Nations Peacekeeping: 1942–1948," *Emporia State Research Studies* 22 (Winter 1974): 1–35; Alexander Dallin, *The Soviet Union at the United Nations: An Inquiry into Soviet Motives and Objectives* (New York, 1962).

On the problem of "sovereignty," see Anthony Clark Arend and Robert J. Beck, *International Law and the Use of Force* (London, 1993), 16; and Harold Laski, *The Foundations of Sovereignty and Other Essays* (New York, 1921), 17.

3. J. H. Brierly, *The Law of Nations: An Introduction to the International Law of Peace*, 6th ed. (Oxford, 1963), 105–6; F. S. Northedge, *The League of Nations* (New York, 1986), 49–52. See also F. P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (1952; reprint, Westport, 1988), 61.

League Covenant created an ineffectual advisory commission on military affairs.⁴ Wilson's efforts to prevent formation of an international military force failed, however, to satisfy his Senate critics, such as Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA). Lodge believed that the broad language of the covenant would make inroads on American sovereignty by committing the United States to open-ended and ill-defined military obligations.⁵

While at Paris, the president had carefully insisted on the preservation of autonomy for all member states. His high hopes for the league tended, however, to undermine his stress on maintaining America's freedom of action. On his famous national tour to sell the league to the American people, Wilson proclaimed that "the treaty was intended to destroy one system and substitute another." The older system was "based upon the principle that no power is obliged to respect the territorial integrity or the political independence of any other power if it has the force necessary to disregard it." Therefore, Wilson argued, the obligation to oppose "aggression" contained in Article 10 of the League Covenant "cuts at the very heart, and is the only instrument that will cut to the very heart, of the old system." With such flights of rhetoric, it is no wonder that Theodore Roosevelt had observed the year before that "the League of Nations may do a little good, but the more pompous it is and the more it pretends to do, the less it will really accomplish."⁶

Roosevelt was prescient on this point. The contradictory goals of many American internationalists – to preserve national autonomy while setting up an international organization with teeth – remains a key to understanding both the failure of the league and the inability of the Great Powers to provide the UN Security Council with military forces.

Although the league had effectively dissolved in the conflagration of World War II, Secretary of State Cordell Hull immediately began planning for a new world organization. Hull was an ardent Wilsonian internationalist for whom international organization was an integral part of a vision of world order based on free international trade. The planning process started as early as December 1939, when Hull established the State Department's Division for the Study of Problems of Peace and Reconstruction, which was to accumulate data and ideas on, among other topics, "methods of limitation of national sovereignty" and "problems of general machinery of international cooperation."⁷

Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, one of the most prominent proponents of a new international organization, commented at this early stage that "it seems clear that there must be in Europe such derogation to

4. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations*, 61; Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective* (New York, 1987), 73–79.

5. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson*, 95.

6. "A Luncheon Address to the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce," 5 September 1919, in A. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 69 vols. (Princeton, 1966–94), 63:41, Theodore Roosevelt quoted in Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson*, 86.

7. Harley A. Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation, 1939–1945* (1949; reprint, Westport, 1975), 453.

the sovereignty of states as will make for quick and decisive action” of the organization. He envisioned an executive committee on which countries would be represented by blocs. Each Great Power would be responsible for military action within its own region or sphere of influence, though without a veto on the executive committee. Welles favored a series of regional international air forces staffed and commanded by personnel from “neutral” states and located on neutral soil.⁸ His plan, in one form or another, would dominate the next wave of planning.⁹

The regionalist approach also reflected the thinking of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill (as well as that of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff [JCS]). By the 1930s, FDR had become skeptical about international organization. By the time of the Atlantic Charter Conference in 1941, he had envisioned a postwar world in which the peace would be maintained by an Anglo-American entente, not unlike that proposed by Churchill in his famous “iron curtain” speech five years later. Critics of the charter, such as John Foster Dulles, complained that “the Declaration seems to reflect primarily the conception of the old sovereignty system.” Indeed, even the advisory committee’s subcommittee on security problems, which dealt directly with the question of international military forces, believed that the questions of command and of contribution of forces and bases could only be resolved “within a new concept of ‘sovereign equality.’”¹⁰

Although there had been military representation on the security subcommittee from its inception on 15 April 1942, its deliberations did not involve the highest levels of the military for another year, when the members of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC) joined. Their sudden interest seems to have coincided with a presidential directive to decide on the best placement of air bases throughout the world for an international police force “without regard to current sovereignty.”¹¹

Despite this directive, the JSSC approached the problem from an essen-

8. “Memorandum by Hugh R. Wilson Arising From Conversations in Mr. Welles’s Office,” 1 May, 1940, in Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 458–59.

9. “Draft Constitution of International Organization” submitted by the Special Subcommittee on International Organization, 14 July 1943, Articles 3 and 10, reprinted in *ibid.*, 473, 478. This draft was actually submitted on 16 March 1943. See Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America during World War II* (New York, 1967), 114.

10. Divine, *Second Chance*, 44–45; Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 129.

11. Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 124–25. The members of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee were Lieutenant General Stanley D. Embick for the army, Vice Admiral Russell Willson for the navy, and Major General Muir S. Fairchild for the army air force. The JSSC directly advised the Joint Chiefs on international organization policy. Presidential directive quoted in JCS 183/1, 6 March 1943, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, War Plans Division, Record Group 165, OPD Decimal File 334.8 National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter RG 165, followed by decimal number).

For more on Embick, the JSSC, and its nationalist orientation see Mark A. Stolar, “From Continentalism to Globalism: General Stanley D. Embick, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, and the Military View of American Policy during the Second World War,” *Diplomatic History* 6 (Summer 1982): 303–21; and Ronald Schaeffer, “General Stanley D. Embick, Military Dissenter,” *Military Affairs* 37 (October 1973): 89–93.

tially nationalist point of view; from the beginning it wanted the greatest possible degree of unilateral national control over any international force. The survey committee discarded the term “international police force” for “international military force,” trying to tamp down any presidential interest in an international air force as the main guarantee of collective security. Speaking at a JCS meeting, Admiral Russell Willson argued that “it was better to consider air bases from a probable military or national defense point of view rather than that of an international police force,” which, he speculated, might not be formed “until years after the war, when the Axis nations had been reintegrated into the international community.”¹²

Like Welles, the Survey Committee recommended a “sphere of influence” approach, dividing responsibility for security among the three Great Powers—the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. Each region would have its own international force, with balanced naval, ground, and air components.

Under the JSSC plan, the United States would have had sole responsibility for the Americas; Europe, Africa, and the Middle East would be assigned to Great Britain and the Soviet Union. The Far Eastern Zone would have been assigned to all three powers, with some assistance from China. The committee believed that a multinational force with worldwide responsibilities would be difficult to conceive of—so they avoided any real analysis of the problem. Even the role of the USSR was questionable, as evidenced by the committee’s warning that the Allies should have “a general attitude of being on guard against post-war tendencies towards communism.”¹³

The JCS submitted the JSSC paper to the State Department with some modifications. At a subsequent meeting, the Joint Chiefs took an even harder nationalist line than the JSSC, arguing that international police forces might jeopardize U.S. security because they might be “seized by an aggressive enemy after we have lapsed into our traditional postwar pacifist politics.” They also fretted that “we have no assurance that our present military allies will remain so.” Both comments hint at a deep skepticism about the likelihood that postwar U.S.-Soviet relations would allow for successful formation of an international police force.¹⁴

There were already strong divisions on international policing when Welles’s subcommittee circulated its draft among State Department officials in the spring of 1943. FDR still seemed somewhat committed to the regionalist “Four Policemen” approach, while Hull pulled for a universal

12. Notes on the JCS 65th Meeting, 9 March 1943, RG 165, OPD 334.8.

13. “Postwar Military Problems with Particular Relation to Air Bases,” 15 March 1943, JSSC to JCS, 25 March 1943, and JCS 74th Meeting, 13 April 1943 (JCS 183/6), RG 165, 334.8.

14. “Postwar Military Problems with Particular Relation to Air Bases,” 15 March 1943, JSSC to JCS, 25 March 1943, and JCS 74th Meeting 13 April 1943 (JCS 183/6) RG 165, OPD 334.8. For a slightly different view see Michael S. Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War* (New Haven, 1978), 167.

international organization. Hull related that in this period he and his close associates would go to the White House to argue with the president about their proposed organization. Hull once asked, hinting at mild exasperation, "Aren't you at least in favor of a world secretariat? We'll need some such organization to handle international conferences." FDR, who had once talked of banishing the nettlesome organization to the Azores, replied laughing, "I'll give you the Pentagon or the Empire State Building. You can put the world secretariat there."¹⁵

Hull had been pulling hard all along for a centrist consensus on a universal international organization. The first step was to get rid of the regionalist Welles. Hull resented his nominal subordinate's privileged access to the White House. By the summer of 1943, Hull had succeeded in forcing him to resign, perhaps by encouraging rumors of Welles's homosexuality. Hull had also managed to bury the draft charter that Welles's committee had created and to establish a new UN Charter drafting committee, which produced a document more to his liking – one that preserved the preeminent role of the Great Powers but avoided the regional "spheres of influence" envisioned in the Welles plan. So dedicated was Hull to the cause of international organization that he overcame age, infirmity, and an intense fear of flying to attend the Moscow Conference in the fall of 1943. In Moscow, Hull obtained a joint declaration of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union favoring the establishment of an international organization after the war. He was triumphant over this general agreement, but agreement in principle on establishing an organization did not clarify the controversy over national prerogatives.¹⁶

Hull's planners, the State Department's Informal Political Agenda Group, began their deliberations in December 1943. By 3 February 1944, Hull had received the go-ahead from FDR to proceed with the drafting of a charter. This period of "concentrated preparation" of the U.S. position on international organization extended from early December 1943 to July 1944, when a draft charter was presented to the British and Soviets in anticipation of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference.¹⁷

By 29 April, the Informal Political Agenda Group and its successors had completed a "Possible Plan for a General International Organization" that was circulated to bipartisan panels of lawyers and senators.¹⁸ The drafts contained the broad outline of the future UN Charter provisions on the use of force by the Executive Council (later the Security Council). As soon as possible, the council would sign agreements with each member nation,

15. Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, 1948), 1643–44.

16. *Ibid.* On the "whispering campaign" against Welles, which may have led to his resignation, see Divine, *Second Chance*, 137–41. On FDR's extreme homophobia see Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York, 1992), 1:267–71.

17. Hull, *Memoirs*, 1643–44; Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 246–48.

18. Both documents are reprinted in Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 582–607.

obligating them to maintain contingents in readiness for collective action. When actually called into being, the forces would be coordinated by a Security and Armaments Commission appointed by the Executive Council.

Hull spent considerable time and energy circulating this proposal among a bipartisan committee of senators in May and June. Many of the senators worried that the new charter would compromise American autonomy. For example, Republicans like Michigan's Arthur Vandenberg, a key swing vote, feared that the new world organization might be able to commit American troops to combat without congressional approval. Hull handled such critics with finesse, explaining to the senators that the forces would not be international in character—there would be no troops in UN uniform. Most of the details about UN forces would be provided later in special agreements, which the Senate would have to ratify. Hull had adroitly postponed one of the most nettlesome of political obstacles to a United Nations Organization, but at the price of ignoring ambiguities about the nature of UN forces that would never be resolved.¹⁹ As the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks Conference opened, the United Nations was not yet an organization for world peace; it was a military alliance against the Axis powers. Its main purpose was continued collective military action against what the Soviet delegation to Dumbarton Oaks referred to as “aggression.”

The Soviets seem to have come to Dumbarton Oaks somewhat less prepared than the other delegations, which may reflect a dearth of resources or bureaucratic inefficiency as much as lack of interest or cold calculation. Rather than drafting a proposal of their own, as the British and the Americans did, their positions tended to be reactive, and perhaps tentative. They withdrew many of their initial proposals at the end of the conference. Soviet participation reflected the assessment of the Soviet leadership that membership would further their prime objective: the security of the Soviet Union and its regime. Perhaps they already felt less than a unity of purpose with their American and British allies, as reflected in their attempts to limit the new organization's role in economic and social matters and their preference for naming the new organization the “International Security Organization” rather than the “United Nations Organization.”

A magazine article, usually attributed to Soviet Assistant Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, suggests that the Soviets, like their American counterparts, considered talk of an international army “utopian.” The Dumbarton Oaks plan for special agreements, however, suited Litvinov. The Soviet official had no illusions that the special agreements would be anything more than a framework for continued cooperation between the Great Powers, so long as such cooperation was in line with what they considered to be their security interests.²⁰

19. Hull, *Memoirs*, 1662–63; Divine, *Second Chance*, 224.

20. The article originally appeared under the name “N. Malinin” in the Leningrad organ of the Union of Soviet Writers, *Zvezda* no. 4 (July 1944). Litvinov himself drew the attention of

The Soviet emphasis on security demonstrates that at the time of Dumbarton Oaks, the Soviets actually supported an organization in which the Great Powers would have the option of using joint military action to maintain the peace; they even pressed for an international air force, which they apparently believed was their best guarantee against German revanchism. Though the proposal had some support from the American air force, the other services regarded it with disdain, partly for reasons of service rivalry. The State Department, anxious to avoid any appearance of creating a “superstate,” discouraged the Soviets.

Another major Soviet proposal – that the Security Council require smaller nations to provide bases of operations for international forces – raised considerable mistrust on the part of the Anglo-Americans. It was withdrawn when the Americans explained frankly that the provision might be used to force small nations to accept the presence of foreign troops on their soil.²¹

The Dumbarton Oaks Conference almost foundered over the vexed questions of the great-power veto and the issue of which countries should be allowed to join. These questions would have to be resolved personally by FDR and Stalin at the Yalta Conference. But on the issue of military forces, the conference reached consensus after many frustrating sessions between the military representatives. The American proposals for national contingents were accepted in place of Soviet plans for an international air force.

Most important for the future negotiations on UN military forces, the conference replaced the proposed civilian security and armaments commission with a British idea: the United Nations Military Staff Committee. The MSC was supposed to be a continuation of the successful American-British Combined Chiefs of Staff, which operated during World War II. The MSC would serve as a sort of standing general staff. Yet the exact powers of the MSC to command or to appoint a supreme allied commander of all UN military forces remained unresolved.

After Dumbarton Oaks, the new secretary of state, Edward R. Stettinius, who took over from Hull in November 1944, began a well-organized campaign to promote the idea of a new international organization. This effort, coordinated by poet Archibald MacLeish, put senior State Department officials on both the radio and the rubber-chicken circuit to stump for the United Nations Organization. The State Department issued nearly two million copies of a pamphlet entitled *Questions and Answers on the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals*. According to Stettinius, the pamphlet stressed the fact that “the Security Council would have greater powers in the use of military and non-military

American officials to the article. Translation of N. Malinin, “Regarding International Security Organization,” 7 August 1944, RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org. (July 6, 1944), Sec. 1A. See also Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (Chapel Hill, 1990), 140–41.

21. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, 73, 137–58.

enforcement measures than did the League Council.” It also stressed the formation of national military contingents to be placed at the disposal of the new United Nations Organization, particularly the immediate availability of air forces “to enable urgent military measures.”²²

Questions and Answers left substantial unanswered questions about the UN’s military forces and revealed an unbridgeable contradiction in the State Department’s conception of the MSC’s function. It did not provide any serious explanation of what the forces might be used for, how large they should be, or who would command them. The new organization was contrasted with the league and was to have “greater powers” in the enforcement of peace, but at the same time, the public was told that the United States and other member nations would not be surrendering any sovereignty. In the context of widening differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, this confusion contributed to the eventual failure of the MSC negotiations.²³

At the San Francisco Conference, many nations stressed the importance of the new obligations and responsibilities of UN membership, and they understood that it might limit national autonomy. A French delegate declared that “military assistance in case of aggression ceases to be a *recommendation* made to member states; it becomes for us an *obligation* which none can shirk.” Many other governments took similar positions. The San Francisco Conference adopted only minor changes in the Dumbarton Oaks proposals for UN military forces.²⁴

After San Francisco, the main obstacle to charter ratification seemed to be Congress. Most proponents of the new organization had feared a repetition of the bitter fight over the league, but Roosevelt, Truman, Hull, and Stettinius had all worked successfully at building both a popular and a senatorial consensus in favor of the new charter.

Hull’s extremely effective strategy of postponing decisions about UN military forces by keeping the charter vague on the subject continued to fog the debate about how such forces might be used. In the summer of 1945, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, a crucial swing vote on the Foreign Relations Committee and a delegate to San Francisco, found himself “amazed” that the conference never had any serious discussion of the use of UN armed forces and predicted that the “real fight” over the UN would arise only when the Senate considered the special agreements to provide the Security Council with forces. Vandenberg was right, as the Senate ignored the

22. U.S. Department of State, *Questions and Answers on the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals*, 20 November 1944, Publication 2218, Conference Series no. 58; Stettinius quoted in Divine, *Second Chance*, 245.

23. U.S. Department of State, *Questions and Answers on the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals*, 20 November 1944, Publication 2218, Conference Series no. 58; Divine, *Second Chance*, 246.

24. *UN Conference on International Organization, Selected Documents*, San Francisco Conference, 25 April–26 June 1946 (Washington, 1946), 762–68, 797, 896–97.

armed forces problem and quickly and overwhelmingly approved the United Nations Charter.²⁵

The San Francisco Conference, therefore, did not resolve the character, status, and agenda of the Military Staff Committee and the size of UN forces. While the British military wanted the MSC to be “a high powered and effective body, capable of dealing with matters of high policy,” the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted to keep their MSC representatives on a short leash. They saw a relatively limited role for the MSC. UN military forces, in their view, would be needed only for “enforcement of political and economic sanctions and for minor operations to maintain order” not “to wage systematic campaigns against large scale resistance.” Nonetheless, some planners within the military still envisioned an organization that would deter the uncivilized elements of the world, mixing the genres of the urban crime film and the western to define their vision of UN forces. “The would-be gangster will certainly think twice before exposing himself to the official attention of a strong sheriff whom he knows to be backed up by an aroused and ready citizenry.”²⁶

By the middle of October 1945, the U.S. delegation to the UN Preparatory Committee—the body charged with the details of setting up the new organization—submitted draft instructions to the nascent Military Staff Committee. These instructions reflected the limited role that the U.S. government expected the MSC to play. Under this proposal (which was similar to one by the British) the MSC was instructed not to make a full set of contingency plans and to limit its training to “occasional combined and staff exercises,” taking care not to interfere with national military training programs. It was *not* to function as an international general staff.²⁷

There would still be a pitched battle within the JCS over the composition of the proposed UN force. Air Force Chief of Staff General Harley “Hap” Arnold had proposed a huge UN air force of thirty air groups. Air force generals, like Arnold and his staff, believed that the unique mobility of air forces made them ideal for the sort of demonstrations of power required of a UN military force. More importantly, they also saw the UN force as a way to justify larger appropriations.

Brigadier General George Lincoln of the Operations and Plans Division (OPD) of the army warned the chief of staff, General Dwight D. Eisen-

25. Vandenberg to Stettinius, 25 July 1945, RG 165, ABC 334.8 International Security Org., Sec. 2B.

26. Cornwall Jones to McFarland, 25 October 1945, JCS 1511, approved 9 October 1945, Records of the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff, RG 218, CCS 092 4-14-45, Sec. 1, National Archives; Report by Joint Post War Committee, n.d. (but soon after 23 June 1945), RG 165, ABC 334.8 International Security Org., Sec. 2A. On the importance of the frontier myth as ideological construction for understanding the politics of the 1940s see Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (New York, 1993), 349–53.

27. PC/Ex/27/Rev 1, 15 October 1945, RG 218, CCS 092 4-14-45, Sec. 1.

hower, that such a proposal might offend powerful senators such as Tom Connally (D-TX), lead to great-power domination of the UN, and seem to be a U.S. bid for dominance that “might be a blow to the organization in its infancy [from] which it would never recover.”²⁸

Admiral Chester Nimitz, the chief of naval operations, also blasted Arnold’s plan, noting that any application of force by the UN should be “careful, accurate and above all discriminate.” “These,” Nimitz continued, “are not inherent aspects of strategic air power.” The plan was quickly killed and replaced with a policy that forces should be “balanced.” The new plan envisioned a U.S. contribution of one army corps, five air force wings, one troop carrier wing, and one carrier task force group.²⁹

The new year saw plans coalesce into a functioning United Nations Organization. For the U.S. Army’s part, General Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered General Matthew B. Ridgway to London as his personal representative to the MSC. Ike considered the UN job one of the most important in the military establishment. “We must make this organization work,” he wrote in December 1945, shortly before appointing Ridgway. He also made it clear that “any officers who do not think it is going to work are subject to export.”³⁰

Of the three armed forces representatives, Ridgway had the most experience with diplomacy, though he was best known as a combat general who had parachuted into battle on D-Day. Despite his extensive political-military experience, he turned down an offer to become ambassador to Argentina in 1945. Ridgway told President Harry S. Truman that he was “not much of a diplomat,” but the president replied that Ridgway “must have had some diplomacy” or he “wouldn’t be wearing three stars.”³¹

The other top officers assigned to the MSC were tough fighters from the Pacific theater, which perhaps reflected Truman’s questionable assumption that all good flag officers were also fine diplomats. General George Kenney, a bomber general, religiously believed in the efficacy of strategic air power. Kenney hoped for the establishment of an international air force, which, he

28. Lincoln to Strategic Planning Section, 24 December 1945, RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org., Sec. 2B.

29. Nimitz to JCS, 31 December 1945. JCS 1567/28, 18 January 1946, RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org., Sec. 2B.

30. Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York, 1956), 168; Alfred D. Chandler and Louis Galambos, eds., *The Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Chief of Staff*, 13 vols. (Baltimore, 1966–91), 7:634–35. For “export” quote see Lincoln to Strategic Planning Section, 24 December 1945, RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org., Sec. 2A.

31. Interviews: Lieutenant Colonel John Blair with General Ridgway, Senior Officer’s Debriefing Program, 24 November 1971, tape 3, session 3, 1–3, and John Child with General Ridgway, 10 May 1977, 3, both at U.S. Army Military History Institute Archives (USAMHI), Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania,

believed, might get the U.S. Air Force more money from Congress. This motivation was probably not appreciated by his colleagues from the other services.

Vice Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, the third member, had been in charge of many of the major amphibious landings in the Pacific, including Tarawa, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Though one of his closest aides at the MSC thought him an “excellent negotiator,” he also admitted that Turner found diplomacy “completely frustrating” because “you fan the air, and fan a lot of papers, and get absolutely nowhere with it.”³²

Ridgway, Kenney, and Turner moved on to their new duties at the convening meeting of the Security Council in London in January 1946. Ridgway’s memoirs, uncharacteristically euphoric, reflect the buoyant optimism of the first days of the UN. “I still remember how, as the three senior military officers arrived for the first meeting there in London, the people gathered in the streets cheered and applauded. In their faces you could read their bright hope that here, in these councils, a war-sick world could find a formula for peace. I too felt that hope in my own heart.”³³

But Ridgway and the MSC faced many obstacles. One problem with the U.S. proposals was that no one, including American officials, had a clear idea of who the UN force’s potential adversaries might be. It is very difficult to design a military body with no particular threat in mind. Moreover, it was imprudent and undiplomatic to discuss openly what that threat might be. UN forces could never be used against a Great Power because the veto would prevent the Security Council from taking such action.

The Americans had a vague notion that the UN might use its armed forces to preside over decolonization and to arbitrate border disputes. However, as late as October 1947 they had no clear idea of what a UN force would actually do. To avoid the appearance of colonialism, Dean Rusk “warned” U.S. delegates to the United Nations “that it should not be assumed that action should be against a middle sized power such as Poland, Pakistan or Australia,” but cited, as an example, that UN forces might be used to threaten the Dutch if they attempted to use force to retake Indonesia. UN forces might also be used to settle the dispute over Trieste or disputes in the former Italian colonies. Both Rusk and Ridgway thought the UN might send troops into Palestine. Adding to the confusion, Rusk added that several states might be in defiance of the Security Council at one time. But such hypotheses were extraordinarily vague and casual, given the large size of the force proposed by the United States. As Rusk noted, “It was hard to say how large the forces should be to give effect to the Charter; avoid cynicism, be useful (but at the same time small enough so that the force

32. Admiral John J. Ballentine quoted in Vice Adm. George Carroll Dyer, *The Amphibians Came to Conquer: The Story of Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1972), 2:1130.

33. Ridgway, *Soldier*, 163–64.

might be shared), the congressional war-making power not be cut and resources not be overtaxed.”³⁴

The State Department was keen on the MSC because it believed that collective action would relieve some American security burdens and strengthen public support for the UN. The committee might also provide international legitimacy to military actions, especially in decolonizing areas, which U.S. officials anticipated might be in American interests.³⁵

The Soviets showed little interest in launching the Security Council forces. At a time when the United States controlled large UN majorities, they feared the committee might be used to maintain Western capitalist hegemony. Jealous of their veto power, they refused to participate until the first formal meeting of the Security Council.³⁶

Nonetheless, the first few meetings of the MSC, held in London, looked promising. The secretary of the U.S. delegation wrote the UN secretary general that the delegates had reached a compromise on rules of procedure relatively quickly. However, the Soviet delegation had no authority to negotiate even minor points without consulting Moscow, which disappointed the eager U.S. delegates. Ridgway, for example, maintained personally cordial relations with the Soviet delegates but fretted that they lacked adequate discretion to negotiate. This seems ironic, as the American delegates were minutely instructed by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) and the JCS and did not have much more discretion than their counterparts. The Soviets would not even discuss plans to move the committee from London to New York with the rest of the UN, telling the American representatives that they had “no official instructions” concerning such a move. Nonetheless, the Soviet representatives did show up in New York for MSC meetings. This pattern of Soviet reluctance, interpreted by the Americans as obstructionism, continued throughout the negotiations.³⁷

Though the Soviets remained silent, General Ridgway pressed the Military Staff Committee for the adoption of special agreements. The planners in Washington had wanted rapid action, hoping that the Security Council would set June 1946 as the “target date” for the first contributions of forces. The American MSC delegates had been closely instructed by SWNCC, which had adopted a policy paper on the matter in December 1945. This

34. Minutes of the fifteenth meeting of the U.S. Delegation to the Second Regular Session of the General Assembly, 3 October 1947, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947* (Washington, 1973), 1:675–78.

35. Minutes of the fifteenth meeting of the U.S. Delegation to the Second Regular Session of the General Assembly, 3 October 1947, *FRUS, 1947* 1:675–78.

36. Acheson to Stettinius, 11 January 1946, *FRUS, 1946* (Washington, 1972), 1:729.

37. USSC 46/MS/6, Captain Denys W. Knoll to Secretary-General re: Second and Third meetings of MSC, 15 February 1946, Records of the U.S. Mission to the UN, RG 84, National Archives; Ridgway to Lieutenant General Sir William Morgan, 5 March 1946, Ridgway MS, box 9, USAMHI.

memorandum, which, for convenience, might be called the “American plan,” would form the basic and unchanging U.S. position throughout the negotiations. It included a draft standard agreement and a stricture that “no attempt should be made” to require each nation to contribute equal land, sea, or air forces.³⁸

Much of the American plan merely reiterated the requirements of the UN Charter. Each permanent member would maintain special UN units at operational strength and in combat readiness. These forces would remain under national control until the Security Council called them into UN service. The Security Council would designate an overall commander to act under the strategic direction of the MSC.

The American plan also contained provisions for national contributions and basing of forces. Each national contingent of the UN force could be based within its own country, or any other country that agreed to accept them. Each of the Great Powers would contribute an equivalent amount of overall strength, but the components of that power, whether the land, sea, or air arms, would correspond to the relative strength of each kind of force within a member country. The principle was termed “comparable strength.” The nature of each country’s contribution would be negotiated in the MSC.

Finally, the American paper recommended that UN forces should be established as soon as practicable. The Soviets never explicitly disagreed with this precept. They sought to delay the MSC negotiations, at least until they could get better assurances that the Security Council forces would not be used to jeopardize the security of socialist governments or to put down popular revolutions in the Third World. Such assurances and guarantees might have been forthcoming if the Americans had had a clearer idea of the purpose of Security Council forces.

The Soviets had supported Article 43 at the 1945 San Francisco Conference and had enthusiastically – almost intransigently – supported the idea of an international air police at Dumbarton Oaks. Once the war was over, the Soviets ignored the MSC almost entirely – a disengagement that lasted more than three decades, until the waning days of the Cold War in 1989, when Mikhail Gorbachev called for reactivating it. In the early stages of the negotiations, public relations considerations led the Soviets, like the Americans, to avoid open disagreement, though they took no official position on the activation of the MSC until September 1946. Perhaps they would have accepted a compromise proposal – as some State Department officials had believed at the time. Officially, however, the State Department, hamstrung by the JCS, held rigidly to the American plan, never offering an alternative,

38. SWNCC 219/3, 12 December 1945, RG 218, CCS 092 4-14-45, Sec. 1. SWNCC, which was also briefly known as SANACC – the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee – was the forerunner of the National Security Council. Military Staff Committee Representatives memorandum, USMS/12/Rev 1, 15 March 1946, *FRUS, 1946* 1:759, which elaborates the American negotiating position, repeats the principles of SWNCC 219/3.

which may have tended to confirm Molotov's "hardline" view of American intentions.³⁹

In the spring and summer of 1946, the American delegation debated several innovative proposals designed to interest the Soviets in the negotiations. Because the United Nations charter provided specifically for UN air force contingents, the U.S. Air Force was particularly interested in concluding an agreement. Air power advocates fantasized that a squadron of bombers could be dispatched instantly anywhere in the world to maintain peace. The air force believed such a capability would enhance its drive for increased U.S. spending on air power. General Kenney, the often-blunt air force representative, prematurely disclosed the essence of the American plan to Robert Donovan of the *New York Herald Tribune* in March 1946. "In unofficial discussions outside the UN," Donovan wrote, "it has generally been assumed that most of the long range air and sea forces would be contributed by the United States and Great Britain, which have the most highly developed air forces and navies, while the bulk of the land forces would be supplied by Russia, China, France and other nations."⁴⁰

Kenney searched for a way to break the MSC deadlock. Shortly after his conversation with Donovan, Kenney proposed the idea of joint maneuvers with the other European Permanent Members to take place in Germany. The experience, he believed, might elicit cooperation from the Soviets and get the MSC back on track. Going so far as to engage in "informal discussions" with military delegates from other nations, Kenney claimed the idea had support from the French, the British, and the Chinese. The Soviets were noncommittal. Kenney also claimed the tentative backing of Eisenhower, who, in reality, had only agreed to defer a decision until the JSSC had studied the matter.⁴¹

General Ridgway and Admiral Turner vigorously opposed any deviation from the original American plan, and they were backed up by their bosses, General Eisenhower and Admiral Nimitz. One important army planner, Brigadier General George Lincoln, advised Eisenhower that most American officials dealing with the UN thought that Kenney's concept was "erroneous" and that "actual operations of United Nations forces should be kept somewhat in the background." Lincoln pointed to Kenney's assertions that maneuvers could make the force "a functioning entity" and "break down barriers of nationality." Lincoln believed the UN force should be largely

39. USMS/12/Rev 1, 15 March 1946, *FRUS, 1946* 1:759; "Summary of the Sequence of Events Relating to the Work of the UN MSC 12 September–18 September, 1946," *ibid.*, 914–16. See George F. Kennan, "Commentary on the 'Novikov Telegram,'" *Diplomatic History* 15 (Fall 1991): 539–43.

40. Robert Donovan, "World Air Force Expected to Be First Organized," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 27 March 1946.

41. Lincoln to Bowen, 15 May 1946, RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org. (8–9–44), Sec. 2D; Eisenhower to Nimitz, 25 May 1946, in Galambos, ed. *Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower* 7:1082–83.

symbolic. "The thing to stress," Lincoln contended, "is the *pledge* of forces to keep the peace." Moreover, he worried that "an aggressor nation" might use joint maneuvers as a "means of placing our forces in a specific area of disadvantage to us at the surprise opening of hostilities." Lincoln's anticipation of a surprise attack by the Soviets is consistent with the general tenor of postwar planning observed by Michael Sherry and may reveal one of the real reasons behind the Joint Chiefs' reluctance to modify the American plan. It is certainly one of the reasons that Kenney's idea was squelched on 7 June.⁴²

Joint maneuvers might have revealed some of the practical problems of building a UN force, thus putting the negotiations on a more concrete basis. At the very least, the flexibility shown by the Kenney proposal might have led to serious discussion of an international military force that would not threaten Soviet interests. That a four-star American general still considered the possibility of joint maneuvers with the Red Army indicates that as of May 1946 anti-Sovietism had not yet hardened into universal American dogma.⁴³

Through the summer of 1946, the Soviets continued their silence on the Security Council force. From the standpoint of the Americans, inside information on the Soviet position was so rare that the drunken party antics of Admiral V. L. Bogdenko, a Soviet MSC representative, were forwarded to the Joint Chiefs by the Joint Intelligence Committee. Some of Bogdenko's insulting bluster was hardly likely to inspire better U.S.-Soviet relations—he boasted that Soviet soldiers and sailors would show the Americans "how to die" in a future war. (He also complained that the Americans had failed to fix him up with "Negro girls in Harlem.") However, the admiral was particularly concerned about the joint U.S.-British Combined Chiefs of Staff and accused the United States and Great Britain of using it to coordinate a unified U.S.-British point of view on the MSC and thereby ganging up on the Soviets.⁴⁴

Western European nations and China did not show much greater interest than the Soviets. The Americans became frustrated at the lack of progress. In July, Admiral Turner lamented that the "U.S. delegation has been the only delegation in the entire history of the Military Staff Committee to have made any specific proposals to the Committee" except for one paper submit-

42. "Minutes, U.S. Delegation, Military Staff Committee," 1 and 6 May 1946, RG 84, box 72a; Lincoln to Bowen, 15 May 1946, Lincoln to Eisenhower, 4 June 1946, JCS 1681, 7 June 1946, RG 165, ABC 334.5, International Security Org. (8-9-44), Sec. 2D. For background on Lincoln and an analysis of the assumption of surprise attack in American war plans see Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*.

43. "Minutes, U.S. Delegation, Military Staff Committee," 1 and 6 May 1946, RG 84, box 72a.

44. Joint Intelligence Committee, "Memorandum for Information Number 218," 23 May 1946, RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org. (8-9-44), Sec. 2D.

ted by the United Kingdom. As a result, the Americans were obliged to “keep pushing the Military Staff Committee to do some work.”⁴⁵

Turner may have been less than fair to the British, who had spent the summer trying to break the cold Soviet ice with a proposal to commit the whole of each nation’s armed forces to UN service. General Kenney initially supported the proposal, but the idea infuriated American military and State Department officials, who feared that it would be “an unacceptable abrogation of sovereignty” and upset the delicate compromise that had been negotiated with the U.S. Senate. The Joint Chiefs sent Kenney’s plan to the JSSC for study and quietly killed it four months later.⁴⁶

In September, just as the U.S. delegation was considering the possibility of an international force without Soviet participation, the Soviet delegates issued a long statement at a closed MSC meeting frankly explaining some of their political difficulties with the American plan. The Soviet document would have prohibited the use of UN armed forces “for the purpose of suppressing national liberation movements or interfering in the internal affairs of a State.” They also placed time limits on the use of the forces without a further vote by the Security Council, a vote in which the Soviets would have a veto. The Soviets left the length of the proposed time limit blank, which suggests that they were willing to negotiate at least some of the proposals. Moreover, there is no logical reason to doubt that the Soviet objections were accurate statements of their objections to the plan.⁴⁷

The U.S. delegates interpreted the Soviets’ statement as further obstruction and delay rather than as an invitation to negotiate. Ridgway complained to General George C. Marshall that “the MSC has dogged along like a hound on a dusty country lane. You are sure by watching him that he has some purpose and distinction, though neither are apparent. He attracts little attention and the dust he raises quickly disappears.” Soviet objections, however, probably honestly reflected their doubts about whether the American proposals, or even the charter itself, had sufficiently considered the effects of a UN military force on national prerogatives.

By this time the Americans believed compromise was unlikely. The JCS ordered the United States’s MSC delegates to continue the talks but to reject discussion of the Soviet proposal because it was essentially political in nature and should be referred to the Security Council. In part, the JCS decision to insist that such political discussion was obstructionist, without elucidating

45. “U.S. MSC Delegation Minutes of 15th Meeting,” 12 July 1946, RG 84, box 72a.

46. Memorandum of conversation re British Proposal, 23 August 1946, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Lot 55 D 323, U.S. United Nations Files, box 11, National Archives; Norstad to acting chief of staff, 11 September 1946, Lincoln to acting chief of staff, 13 September 1946, and MacFarland to U.S. MSC Representatives, 25 November 1946, RG 165 ABC 334.8 International Security Org. (8–9-44), Sec. 2E.

47. USMS 46 U.S. MSC Representatives to JCS, 17 September 1946, *FRUS, 1946* 1:930, USMS/54/2 Enclosure “B,” 25 October 1946, excerpted in *FRUS, 1946* 1:914–16n.53; USMS/54/2 Enclosure “B,” 25 October 1946, excerpted in *FRUS 1946* 1:915n.53.

the political dimensions of its own proposals, effectively doomed the negotiations. But it was not only the intransigence of the Joint Chiefs. The Soviets and the Americans were speaking mutually incomprehensible political languages. For instance, one general asked Alger Hiss, chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Military and Security Forces, what the Soviets might mean by the words "national liberation forces." Neither Hiss nor the other committee members had an answer.⁴⁸

General Kenney made another unauthorized public statement just before leaving the UN to become the fulltime head of the U.S. Strategic Air Command. With characteristic indelicacy, he blamed the Russians for delaying the MSC negotiations, which caused considerable strain on hitherto cordial personal relations with the Soviet delegates. The American MSC delegation reprimanded Kenney and ordered him to send a disclaimer to the newspapers, and the MSC passed a measure reiterating the rule of secrecy in its deliberations. Cold War rhetoric was still publicly unacceptable, though in secret the delegation had just written the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the Soviets were "committed to a policy of obstructionism." Initially, American officers viewed the MSC negotiations as a technical problem, to which they had provided the most rational solution. Soviet insistence on rethinking the political function of the Security Council force seemed to obstruct what seemed to them a neutral and disinterested proposal by the United States. This attitude papered over the very real political difficulties with their proposals.⁴⁹

While war-weary governments in the General Assembly pressed the Great Powers for faster action on the MSC, which they hoped would let them cut defense budgets, negotiations continued for another eight months without any significant change in the position of either side. By December 1946 it was clear to all that the differences between the members were political matters, not disagreements over technical military matters. At American initiative, the debate moved to the Security Council itself in the hope that council's diplomats could resolve the differences between the American and Soviet proposals.⁵⁰

In April 1947 the MSC issued its report to the Security Council, present-

48. USMS/54/2 Enclosure "B," 25 October 1946, excerpted in *FRUS, 1946*:916; Ridgway quote in Ridgway to Marshall, 28 October 1946, Ridgway MSS, box 8a.; JCS to MSC, 8 October 1946, *FRUS, 1946*:1:950; JCS 1670/18, 24 September 1946, JCS 1670/19, 26 September 1946, JCS MSC representatives, memorandum enclosure, JCS 1670/20 8 October 1946, and Lincoln to acting chief of staff, 2 October 1946, RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org. (8-9-44), Sec. 2E. SWNCC/MS UNO Min 13, 26 September 1946, RG 59, Notter Files, "Records Relating to Misc. Policy Committee, 1940-45."

49. USMS/46, "Memo by U.S. Representatives," 17 September 1946, RG 84, box 72.

50. On the General Assembly debate see *United Nations Weekly Bulletin* 1:14, 15 (24 October, 11 November 1946). On the decision to move the talks from the MSC to the Security Council see Abbott to Blaisdell, 31 December 1946, RG 59, Lot File 55 D 323, Security Council Armed Forces.

ing alternative drafts of controversial sections. There was a huge gulf between the American and Soviet proposals. Back at the Pentagon, General Lincoln was advising his superiors to stand firm. The U.S. position also differed from its close allies—Britain, France, and China—on such fundamental matters as size of the proposed force. None of these reports addressed the purpose of the force.⁵¹

The leadership, size, and strength of the UN armed force were three points of significant difference, indicating a lack of consensus on its mission. The Americans wanted a huge force of twenty land divisions, thirty-eight hundred aircraft, three battleships, fifteen cruisers, six carriers, and eighty-four destroyers, and they were prepared to make the bulk of the naval and air contributions. France, Britain, and Chiang Kai-shek's China supported creation of much more modest naval forces. They proposed an air force of only twelve to thirteen hundred aircraft. While France thought that sixteen land divisions were necessary, Britain and China thought eight to twelve divisions sufficient, a land force half of that suggested by the U.S. delegation. The relatively shaky governments of France and China also worried about their ability to recall forces they had committed to the UN in the event of a national emergency. The divergence in proposals among governments that supported the United States in the Cold War demonstrates that Cold War divisions were not the only cause of the MSC's failure. Other nations also had their own ideas about what kind of UN force would best suit their interests.⁵²

Though the JCS seems to have fully understood that the force quotas they had approved were based on essentially political criteria and not a matter of military necessity, they refused to modify their proposals even in the face of British efforts through the summer of 1947 to bring the British and American positions into line. It was only in January 1948, when the negotiations had no possibility of success, that the Joint Chiefs agreed to try to bring U.S. force estimates into line with those of the British.⁵³

The Soviets thought that the British, French, and Chinese proposed too large a force, to say nothing of the American suggestions. However, the Soviets remained vague about the size they would prefer. Their main concern was that the Great Powers should contribute approximately equal

51. See "Report of the Military Staff Committee," [MSCR] 30 April 1947, *Security Council Official Records* (SCOR) 2d Year (1947), Special Supplement No. 1. See also Lincoln to chief of staff, 28 April 1947, RG 165, ABC 334.8 International Security Org. (8-9-44), Sec. 2G.

52. SWNCC 219/8, *FRUS, 1946* 1:769-71; "The Military Staff Committee," *Yearbook of the United Nations 1947-48* (New York, 1949), 493-96; Weiler and Simons, *The United States and the United Nations*, 122-40.

53. JCS 1670/27, 15 May 1947, and JCS 1567/32, memorandum for U.S. MSC Representatives, 19 May 1947, RG 165, ABC 334.8 International Security Org. (8-9-44), Sec. 2G; USMS/50/30, 16 July 1947, USMS 50/32, 17 July 1947, and JCS 1670/34, 6 January 1948, all in RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org. (8-9-44), Sec. 2H.

forces to the UN. The United States, in contrast, wanted *comparable* contributions based on the strength of each nation in different kinds of arms. The Americans argued that comparable contributions would make the force more effective. As the Soviets and Chinese had small air and naval forces, the principle of equality would limit the size of UN air and naval forces. The Americans envisioned a force capable of rapid intervention anywhere in the world using large American-provided naval and air contingents. From the Soviet point of view, “comparable” meant that they would be contributing more manpower than the United States, which they adamantly opposed.⁵⁴

Comparability was perhaps the biggest sticking point in the negotiations. At the time of the Security Council debate, the State Department had tried to instruct its delegation to “support compromise versions” that did not “amount to retreat from basic U.S. positions.” The French, Brazilian, and Colombian delegations also attempted to mediate. Herschel Johnson, the U.S. representative to the Security Council, believed that the USSR “was dishonest in [its] stand,” but wanted to go directly into negotiations about the size of the force without worrying about whether the forces provided fit the comparability or equality principle. His subsequent instructions from the State Department suggested that agreement with the Soviets was “unlikely” but that the United States should make enough concessions to put the Soviets in the position of having to veto the article on allocation of forces. The JCS, however, blocked any further offers of compromise on the comparability question.⁵⁵

Leadership was a thorny issue as well. The charter provided that the Security Council could appoint a Supreme Commander. The United States, Britain, France, and China wanted the commander’s power to be strictly limited; their position was that each national contingent should be commanded by its own nationals. The Soviets wanted the council to appoint intermediate commanders of land, sea, and air forces, a scheme totally unacceptable to the JCS, which wanted selection of a commander postponed until the force was called into action. Ridgway was particularly vehement on this point, later writing that “it was unthinkable that U.S. ground forces should be placed under Russian command—because of their widely different attitudes toward human life.” He would support his remarks by citing the high casualties of the Red Army in World War II, though his remark unfairly stereotypes the Soviets, who were certainly not indifferent to their great losses. It is emblematic of the mutual misperceptions that created the Cold War; even after the Cold War, the U.S.

54. *MSCR*, Art. 11; *SCOR*, 4 June 1947, 956.

55. Johnson to secretary of state, 2 July 1947, State Department to U.S. UN delegation, 9 July 1947, and JCS 1670/30, 22 July 1947, all in RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org. (8–9–44), Sec. 2H.

military has maintained its objections to placing U.S. troops under any foreign command.⁵⁶

The choice of bases for UN forces also proved a difficult issue. Both France and the Soviet Union disagreed with the United States. The United States wanted to base UN contingents in any country that agreed to their presence. The Soviets, on the other hand, fearing encirclement by the bases of an American-dominated UN, wanted UN contingents to stay at home unless needed. The Soviet position would allow U.S. bases in Germany and Japan but not in areas on the Soviets' southern flank, such as Greece or Turkey, which they apparently found more threatening.

Taking the middle ground were the French, whose plan was a compromise that would have given the Soviets an effective veto over the basing of American troops under UN auspices while allowing the French and the other old imperial powers to base UN contingents throughout their own empires. The United States was as unwilling to compromise with the French as with the Soviets. Moreover, France, like every other country involved, was attempting to deploy UN forces in a way that would cloak its own parochial interests in the mantle of internationalism.⁵⁷

Another major controversy centered around whether the United Nations could engage in extended warfare and occupation of territory. The American plan provided that the international force might continue indefinitely. The Soviets wanted tighter control by allowing an opportunity to veto further military action every one to three months.⁵⁸

In the aftermath of the Security Council vote, State Department officials from the Bureau of UN Affairs tried to breathe some life into the MSC, with varying degrees of support from their superiors. By early October 1947, Henry L. Abbott of UN Affairs argued that a unilateral American pledge of forces might facilitate the eventual creation of an alliance against potential aggressors (he probably meant the Soviets). His suggestion was seriously considered, but Acting Secretary of State Robert M. Lovett specifically instructed the U.S. delegation not to make such an offer.⁵⁹

Since the Security Council had begun consideration of MSC affairs, nothing much had happened in the committee itself. It met, approved the minutes of the prior meeting, and adjourned. Within the State Department, Henry Abbott tried to shift the U.S. position. He thought that the MSC negotiations might still be revived if the American government made a

56. Ridgway, *Soldier*; 170. Ridgway mistakenly used "Russian" and "Soviet" interchangeably. JCS 1670/1, 14 May 1946, JCS 1679/8, 11 July 1946, and Lincoln to Eisenhower 17 May 1946, all in RG 165, ABC 334.8, International Security Org. (8-9-44), Sec. 2D.

57. MSCR Art. 32-35; Gromyko speech, *SCOR*, 6 June 1947, 965. See also the "Novikov Telegram," *Diplomatic History* 15 (Fall 1991): 527-38, on the fear of capitalist encirclement.

58. MSCR Art. 20; Joseph E. Johnson, "The Soviet Union, the United States, and International Security," *International Organization* 3 (1949): 9ff.

59. Abbott memorandum, 2 October 1947, Lovett to U.S. UN delegation, 11 October 1947, RG 59, Lot 55 D 323, International Organization: Bureau of UN Affairs, Abbott files.

unilateral offer of forces to the Security Council, or even if the American proposals for force levels for the Security Council were reduced to put them in step with the British, French, and Chinese. But the JCS and JSSC resisted all State Department attempts at compromise.⁶⁰

Even one month after the start of the Berlin Blockade, Dean Rusk continued to argue for a unilateral tender of forces to the Security Council. Such a tender might be accepted by the other powers and move the negotiating process forward. If the Security Council had some military forces at its disposal, Rusk asserted, the UN might be better able to settle disputes. Rear Admiral Arthur Davis, a JCS representative on the committee, coldly replied that in his opinion “we would now be at war if forces had been made available to the Security Council.”⁶¹

By May 1948, despite the efforts of Howard Johnson and Henry Abbott, the State Department was publicly moving away from its commitment to collective security through the UN. Secretary of State Marshall, in an address entitled “Strengthening the UN,” called for a “more realistic UN” and stressed the need to strengthen U.S. and other friendly military establishments. Marshall hoped “to promote associations of like-minded states.” He was well on the way to the creation of regional security arrangements such as NATO.⁶²

By January 1949 the MSC had fallen into desuetude; the powers were preoccupied with other types of security arrangements. One U.S. member of the MSC asserted “confidentially and personally” that “he was not sure how pleased we would be if the Russians should turn around and accept” the American plan.⁶³

The British, meanwhile, complained of the expense of maintaining a high-level delegation to a do-nothing MSC. The committee, however, would remain a high-level husk for forty-five more years, perhaps because of the continuing desire of the JCS to have a listening post at the UN.⁶⁴ Ironically, when UN forces were called into action in Korea in June 1950, the MSC was completely bypassed due to fear of a Soviet veto. The American ambassador to the UN, Warren Austin, wrote Secretary of State Dean Acheson that “We oppose the use of the MSC in any form.” The British and French also thought the MSC machinery should be discarded, perhaps

60. Howard C. Johnson to Abbott, 15 December 1947, RG 59, Lot 55 D 323, International Organization: Bureau of UN Affairs, Abbott files. SWNCC 219/17 prohibited even slight concessions in order to implement Article 43.

61. Meeting minutes, SANACC Ad Hoc Committee on Military and Security Functions of the UN, 21st Meeting, 28 July 1948, RG 59, Lot 55 D 323, International Organization: Bureau of UN Affairs, Abbott files.

62. *U.S. Department of State Bulletin* 18 (16 May 1948): 623–25.

63. U.S. UN delegation staff meeting minutes, 4 January 1949, RG 59, Lot 55 D 323, International Organization: Bureau of UN Affairs, Abbott files.

64. Minutes of meeting between Howard Johnson and W. D. Allen (counselor, British embassy), 25 January 1949, RG 59, Lot 55 D 323, International Organization: Bureau of UN Affairs, Abbott files.

because they feared it would provide a mechanism for Soviet intervention into the UN command.⁶⁵

Instead, the Security Council passed a resolution on 7 July that simply recommended that all members providing military forces place those forces under U.S. command and authorized that command to fly the UN flag. President Harry S. Truman then unilaterally designated General Douglas MacArthur as UN commander, and MacArthur, in turn, established the UN command on 25 July.⁶⁶

Cold War misperceptions were partially responsible for the failure of the MSC negotiations, as acknowledged by both Soviet and American observers. U.S. representatives, believing that they selflessly represented the world's best interests, really favored the MSC because they believed it would open doors for U.S. security interests. The Soviets had a mild interest in forming a security system but feared that the United States might undermine their national autonomy or attempt to strangle socialism. Other countries, such as France and Nationalist China, made feeble attempts to save the postwar consensus, particularly the idea of a United Nations Organization with real enforcement powers, although they had their own reservations about the American plan.⁶⁷

The mistrust between the powers was not just a matter of Cold War ideology. It developed in part because the JCS and JSSC solidly opposed all attempts to allay it and because the powers never frankly discussed the nature of their common interest in a security force and how that common interest related to their national interest. As long as the purposes of such a force remained an abstraction, there could be no agreement on their use.⁶⁸

The debate over unilateralism has reawakened with the demise of the USSR. In the wake of considerable criticism of the UN intervention in Somalia, the Clinton administration proposed a compromise policy for the engagement of U.S. forces in UN operations. U.S. participation in any new operation must have support from Congress, be justified by the advancement of American interests, and limited by well-defined objectives and a clear "exit strategy." The Clinton policy, laid out in Presidential Decision Directive 25, would commit the United States to paying its share of UN assessments for peacekeeping operations and, in a controversial provision, would allow U.S. troops to serve under foreign commanders under certain

65. Austin to Acheson, 28 July, 1950, memorandum, 29 June 1950, *FRUS, 1950* (Washington, 1976), 7:211, 223–24, 244.

66. Security Council Resolution 7 July 1950, *ibid.*, 329; order establishing UN command, *ibid.*, 7:333. See also *Department of State Bulletin* 20 (17 July 1950): 83.

67. See, for example, Jacob Malik's comments in memorandum of conversation, 3 May 1951, *FRUS, 1951* (Washington, 1983), 7:401–3. See also the remarks of Alexander Parodi, the French representative in *SCOR*, 10 June 1947, 1008.

68. See Brian Urquhart, "Who Can Police The World?" *New York Review of Books* 41 (12 May 1994).

circumstances, though the president would retain paramount authority to withdraw the troops.⁶⁹

The Clinton directive firmly opposes the formation of an international army; indeed, it goes even farther by repudiating the obligation under Article 43 of the UN Charter to designate particular military units for UN service. It also seems like a repudiation of altruistic brands of internationalism, because participation in UN interventions must accord with U.S. national interest. The Republican "Contract With America" would place even greater restrictions on commitment of U.S. forces to the UN, prohibiting the deployment of American forces under the command of a foreign national unless the president certifies to Congress that foreign command is vital to national security.⁷⁰

Though Clinton administration policy continues the "realist" tradition, some internationalists seem to be talking about a moral and legalistic international order more seriously than at any time since the 1940s. Historian Kai Bird is one writer who has taken up the challenge, calling for humanitarian interventions by the UN in genocidal wars such as that in Rwanda.⁷¹ Bird retains the ambivalence of a previous generation of internationalists caught between the demands of nations jealous of their prerogatives and the hope for a more just world order. The need for an antigencide police force, Bird argues, need not push the United States into the role of "the world's supercop, risking American troops to stop tribal warfare." He acknowledges that other nations might be hesitant about deployments of a UN army if it is contrived as a fig leaf for American interests. Instead, Bird proposes "a sizable standing UN Army with troops from around the globe," which, he hopes, will be a "credible force, capable of shutting down the killing fields of a Rwanda, say, in a matter of days."⁷²

Bird seems overly sanguine about the prospects for a democratic and humane world order. Yet his call for a foreign policy opposed to genocide should not be rejected as unworkable idealism; surely an end to mass killings should be a policy goal for any global organization. The particular remedy he offers is, unfortunately, sketchy and impractical. The history of the MSC negotiations suggests that it will be a long time before nations will agree even to the limited cessions of power contemplated by the UN Charter, much less to a full-fledged international armed force. The lesson in failure to be drawn from the MSC negotiations of the forties is that one cannot wish away the complex historical processes that gave birth to nation-

69. *New York Times*, 25 April and 6 May 1994.

70. See "Republican Contract With America," n.d., available on the Internet at the address <http://www.house.gov/contract.html>.

71. For an example of renewed internationalism see Kenneth W. Thompson's discussion of Robert W. McElroy, *Morality and American Foreign Policy: The Role of Ethics in International Affairs* (Princeton, 1992), in the *Journal of American History* 81 (September, 1994): 686-87. See also Kai Bird, "The Case for a UN Army," *The Nation*, 8-15 August 1994, 160-64.

72. Bird, "The Case for a UN Army," 160.

states by getting officials to sign pieces of paper. Britain, France, and the United States became nation-states through painful and bloody conflict. Can we expect the building of an “inter-nation” to be speedier, easier, and less painful than the building of a nation?

Bird assumes that the end of the Cold War has removed the obstacles to a UN army. It has not. Many of the same problems stalemating the 1945–1949 negotiations remain in place. Moreover, the kind of intervention he is proposing is of doubtful military and political feasibility; it is still exceedingly hard to get the permanent members of the Security Council to reach a solid consensus on the use of force, as the rocky negotiations over intervention in Kuwait, Bosnia, and Haiti show. Surprisingly, Bird replies to this objection with unreconstructed Wilsonian aspirations for a UN that could become “more democratic and less an instrument of great power diplomacy.” Would he reinstitute the ineffectual pseudodemocracy of the league that Hull, himself no fan of “great power diplomacy,” tried so hard to avoid in drafting the UN charter? In any case, Great Powers are still jealous of their national prerogatives and are unlikely to commit troops to the UN without a veto. Moreover, such a democratic UN is not going to attract support from Americans wary of foreign entanglements.⁷³

Bird also assumes that a permanent UN force would rationalize the present “haphazard creation of an embryonic international army.” One of the principal flaws of the MSC in the forties was the difficulty of equipping, training, and developing a command structure for a multinational army, a logistical nightmare that has multiplied three-fold with the increase in UN membership. Planning for an international force such as Bird proposes would be virtually impossible; no one can tell in advance where and when operations might have to be conducted. Nor can one assume that such a force could bring order to troubled lands over the long term much less “within a few days,” as Bird hopes.⁷⁴ For the patchwork enforcement necessary in an increasingly fractured world, the kind of ad hoc combinations of forces we see today may be the most rational response, especially given the insistence of nation-states on retaining control over their own troops.

Despite the need for skepticism, my own sympathies are with Bird. Surely the nations of the world should commit themselves to preventing genocide. But military intervention by international forces should be a last resort. It would make more sense for foreign policy leaders to do a better job of anticipating and averting potential genocide, rather than rushing to aid the media-glamorized trouble spots of the moment. While no one expects diplomats to be prophets, and unexpected situations like the death of the president of Rwanda will arise, should it have been so hard to foresee where the nationalism of a Slobodan Milosevic would lead?

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.