The U.S. Senate, the Military, and the North Atlantic Treaty: the Struggle over America’s Cold War Alliance Strategy

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Content: 1. Introduction; 2. Approaches to Early Cold War American Foreign Policy; 3. The Truman Administration; 4. The Eisenhower Administration; 5. Conclusion.

1. American Secretary of State Dean Acheson once said that the U.S. Congress was “an unhappy, unnecessary, unconstructive evil which you have for the purpose of getting money and passing some legislation” 1. This article will argue that Acheson was mistaken: the Congress and the American military proved constructive, necessary forces in the drafting of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) and America’s Cold War alliance strategy. The article attempts to make four contributions to the scholarly literature. First, it provides the first ever comprehensive look at the significant role the Congress (primarily the Senate) and the military played in US decisions on the NAT and alliance commitments in the early Cold War. Second, the article argues that the Congress and the U.S. military improved American alliance strategy. Third, it shows how the initial battles between the Senate and the White House on the North Atlantic Treaty and the “great debate” provided the template for subsequent American alliance commitments: the US would make commitments that were very limited in formal, legal terms but would provide de facto commitments (i.e., large contingents of ground troops) to those states that it deemed critical for American national security. Finally, the article contributes to the growing literature that has begun to chip away at the conventional view of a rational, executive dominated early Cold War foreign and security policy.

Throughout the first decade of the Cold War Presidents Truman and Eisenhower and their advisers pressed for and received a globally encompassing alliance system (this system included forty six countries on four continents) 2. While the Soviet threat may have required American commitment to core states (i.e., Western Europe and Japan), it does not seem that countries such as Pakistan and New Zealand were so

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1 Robert L. Beisner, Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 313.
critical to the global balance that they had to be defended at all cost\(^3\). The global reach of the American alliance system was unnecessary and could have been quite costly. Fortunately, actors within the Congress and the military were able to counter the executive and leverage a more prudent policy. While the White House achieved a global system of alliances on paper, the Congress and the military achieved an outcome wherein virtually all of the alliances were \textit{de jure} quite limited (in terms of the American commitment). From NATO to bilateral alliances with South Korea and Taiwan, the United States’ commitments were limited by exemptions for “constitutional procedures” and/or by allowing each party to determine for itself when the alliance obligations would be activated or what support would be provided. Congress and the military only allowed the most strategically significant of the allies, such as Western Europe and Japan, to receive \textit{de facto} strong commitments in the form of American ground troops and/or joint military planning, thus counteracting the weak formal alliance treaties.

2.- The Executive dominance argument, as seen in the scholarship of those such as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., begins by noting that Presidential power ebbs and flows with times of crisis\(^4\). During wartime there has generally been widespread consensus in American society as to the nation’s objectives so the Congress and other actors defer to the White House. Proponents of the conventional view assert that during the early years of the Cold War there was widespread consensus among the public, political parties, media and interest groups on the nature and magnitude of the Soviet threat. Consequently, presidential power in cold war foreign policy reached heights only previously seen in war time\(^5\). President Truman was successful in achieving initially controversial policy objectives, such as Marshall Plan aid, the massive increase in the 1951 defense budget, and U.S. participation in the Korean War (1950-3)\(^6\). From these successes many have concluded that the White House dominated American foreign policy from the late 1940s through the 1950s\(^7\). In the pages that follow it will become apparent that the conventional view does not provide an accurate picture of early Cold War American alliance strategy.

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\(^3\) George C. Herring, \textit{From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 653.
\(^5\) Aaron Wildavsky argued that during this period there were “two presidencies” wherein the President dominated foreign policy, but was much weaker in the domestic arena. See Aaron Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies Thesis,” \textit{Transaction} 4 (1966): 7-14.
The conventional view features two forms of rationalism. The “neo-orthodox” school of American foreign policy argues that the United States acted rationally in response to an imposing Soviet Threat. It explains the early Cold War expansion by the United States as a series of appropriate responses to the aggressive moves and intentions of the Soviet Union. In this view, as the Soviets demonstrated that they would expand where and when they could (seen clearly in cases like the Czech coup of 1948) the United States took responsible, restrained, counter-measures in the forms of a series of security agreements and treaties. Alternatively, the “neo” or “moderate” revisionists argue that the United States was more assertive than the neo-orthodox approach claims. In their conception the Truman and Eisenhower administrations acted boldly in asserting American interests, but doing so made sense. These scholars assert that the United States could not know Soviet intentions and could not assume that the US’s dominance in the early post war period would continue. Consequently efforts to expand American power through alliance commitments were rational. While not all scholars of early Cold War US foreign policy claim that the American response was rational, many fit into the schools outlined above.

Alliances in Bipolarity, the Congress and the Military

In 1949 the United States found itself in a contest with only one other superpower. Because these two powers were so large (and all others so relatively small) the loss or gain of any ally was insignificant in power terms. While some have argued that allies can be important in bipolarity, they have restricted their arguments to geostrategically pivotal states (i.e. West Germany and Japan). The gain or loss of a state like New Zealand simply would not have shifted the balance of power between the US and USSR. Not only did these alliances bring little benefit in power terms, but they also carried with them potentially heavy costs. Alliances, like arms races, have a tendency to make adversaries less secure and often lead to deleterious counter measures. Moreover, extending alliance commitments can embolden allies to become aggressive (as they know they have a strong ally to back them up). Finally, it is problematic for a state to extend alliance commitments it does not intend to honor as the state’s credibility will suffer in the eyes of its adversary and in the eyes of allies it does intend to protect. Given the high costs and low benefits, a global alliance strategy in bi-polarity cannot be considered rational.

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9 The most detailed study from this perspective is Lefler, _A Preponderance of Power_. See also Walter LaFeber, _America, Russia, and the Cold War 1945-1992_, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993).

10 Two cases of those who do not fit the “rational” group are hyper-revisionists such as Gabriel Kolko (in his work the individual actors may be rational but the outcome is not the best one for the country) and those stressing the ad hoc and vacillating nature of American policy such as the more recent work of John Lewis Gaddis. See Gabriel Kolko, _The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945_ (New York, 1968), and John Lewis Gaddis, _We Now Know: rethinking Cold War history_ (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).


Scholars have increasingly contested the conventional view of White House dominance and rationality in recent years, making the case that the Congress, bureaucracy, and culture had a greater impact on American foreign and security policy in the early Cold War than previously thought. America’s early Cold War alliance strategy promises particularly fertile ground for a criticism of the conventional view given the Senate’s constitutional role in treaties and the military’s role in executing any alliance commitment. The framers of the US constitution required that the Senate provide its “advice and consent” to treaties by a two-thirds majority as a check on executive caprice, particularly given that they knew that alliance treaties could lead to war. The Senate guarded the “advice and consent” power very closely. Moreover, because alliances usually commit parties to go to war if an ally is attacked, the Congress’ power to declare war could have been compromised. Because the military’s primary purpose is to fight and win wars and its primary goal is to be able to do so effectively, it views alliances in terms of military benefits (geostrategic position, enhancement of capabilities) and costs (loss of flexibility, disjuncture between commitments and resources). Thus, we can expect the Senate and the military to be important players in the extension of new alliance commitments.

3.- Prior to 1949 American alliance strategy emphasized measured containment and continuity with America’s alliance-phobic past. George Kennan led the Policy Planning Staff during the height of this period and argued that the Soviet threat was in large part a political one. As Kennan told an audience at the National War College, “Remember... it is not Russian military power which is threatening us it is Russian political power...” Kennan advocated a political response, suggesting that the US should build confidence in politically perilous states. He thought Washington should not make commitments to every non-communist state but only to “strong points”. The idea was that “… not all parts of the world were equally vital to American security.” In Kennan’s view the Atlantic community, the Middle East and Japan

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16 Herring, From Colony to Superpower, 52-53.

17 Ibid., 42-45.

18 Ibid., 49-53.


20 The logic for and content of the Truman Doctrine aid packages to Greece and Turkey and the Marshall Plan can be seen as a significant step in the direction toward a recognition that the US should incur costs to keep states out of the adversary’s control but they do not themselves entail a commitment to put American soldiers at risk to defend those countries against attack. For recent treatments see Arnold A. Offner, Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 185-244; Beisner, Acheson, 48-79.

21 Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 40.

22 Ibid., 30.
and the Philippines deserved attention but not necessarily alliances\textsuperscript{23}. While “the U.S. had to be concerned about every nation and every region in the world, no matter how remote”, there were very different ways of expressing concern appropriate to the relative importance of the country at risk\textsuperscript{24}.

Still, the US Senate was concerned that the White House would overreact. Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, lamented that the Executive was, “shooting at the problem with a shotgun instead of a rifle”, attempting to include too much of the globe in a “so-called regional pact which neither geographically nor politically could be adequately supported by arguments”\textsuperscript{25}. Moreover, Senators were reluctant to agree to commitments that would give away their war powers\textsuperscript{26}. Yet, the Senators had lived through the World Wars and many had come to accept that the US could no longer refuse peacetime commitments just on the basis of the historical fear of entanglement\textsuperscript{27}. In the June 1948 Vandenberg Resolution (Senate Resolution 239) the Senate struck a balance between recognizing the need for allies and guaranteeing its institutional prerogatives. The Vandenberg Resolution encouraged American participation in collective security arrangements, required Congressional involvement, and confirmed that all treaties had to be undertaken with exemptions for constitutional processes\textsuperscript{28}. This document was to have a fundamental impact on every alliance formed in the next decade.

The military had two core points to contribute to the debate. First, only states crucial for geostrategic, military capabilities, or economic reasons should be granted alliance commitments\textsuperscript{29}. Western Europe was crucial as the primary strong point of most war plans, followed by Japan, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. This said, however, military leaders also had severe reservations about the gap between the commitments the State Department wanted to dole out, and the American military’s capability to defend these commitments. Assistant Secretary of War Howard Petersen declared that our goals, “are out of balance with our means”, while General Dwight D. Eisenhower, lamented the gap between our resources and, “our great bag of commitments”\textsuperscript{30}.

The North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) was and is the darling of the American alliance system. Yet, its formal commitments are quite limited. While it includes the language that an attack on one is an attack on all, it also carries a self-interpretation clause in Article 5, which allows states to determine for themselves in the event of at-
tack, to take action “... as it deems necessary...” 31 Article 11 further curtails the treaty’s commitments, stating that the provisions of the treaty, “... be carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional processes”32. In the American context this meant that in case of a Soviet attack on a West European ally, the US Congress could exercise its discretion as to whether or not to declare war and, thus, to activate the alliance commitment. As such, what made the treaty a formidable alliance was not its formal commitment but the de facto commitments that occurred after 1949 33.

The White House led effort for the NAT was based on the view that core allies were crucial to the bipolar balance of power and were vulnerable to loss to the Soviets. President Truman recalled with regard to the North Atlantic Treaty “[s]urely, if something like it had existed in 1914 and in 1939, the acts of aggression that had pushed the world into two disastrous wars would not have happened”34. The perception was that Western Europe was vulnerable to Soviet attack, either military or ideological. This perception was heightened in February 1948 with the Soviet imposition of a communist government in Czechoslovakia35. In this context, the Truman administration sought to extend an alliance commitment that would deter Soviet attack. Secretary of State Dean Acheson argued that the point of the alliance was, “…to prevent an attack; to prevent Europe from being conquered by other means; and to prevent Europe from being taken by force...”36.

While many Senators accepted the arguments of the Executive, and even cited the same historical examples of, as Senator Vandenberg put it, “the Kaiser and the Fuhrer,” they fought hard to include the self-interpretation and constitutional provisions37. As Senator Tom Connally recalled in his memoirs, “I objected strenuously to the wording of Article 5... [o]nly Congress could declare war.”38 Connally went on to describe his view that Article 11 must contain a provision for constitutional processes. Senators Robert A. Taft and Arthur Vandenberg voiced similar reservation which led to amendments to Articles 5 and 11 39. Recognizing that the administration needed two thirds of the Senate voting in favor of the treaty, Acheson sought a compromise that would “unite senators” with NATO states fearful of an overly watered down commitment 40. The Truman administration allowed the revisions despite the fact that many in the White House and State Department argued that, giv-

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Harry S. Truman, Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope (Garden City: Doubleday, 1956), 250.
36 Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 495.
37 Vandenberg’s comments may be found in Vandenberg Resolution and the North Atlantic Treaty, 10. See also FRUS, 1949, IV: 73-74, 109.
38 Tom Connally and Alfred Steinberg, My Name is Tom Connally (New York: Crowell, 1954), 333.
39 Powskki, 213.
40 Beisner, 131.
en the caveats in Articles 5 and 11, the American commitment to defend Western Europe in the treaty was virtually meaningless. Secretary of State Acheson was a most vocal opponent of the amended versions of Art. 5 and Art. 11 because of the weakened commitments they entailed.

Congressional skeptics of the NAT were a diverse group: on the left many were concerned with provoking the USSR while on the right one found a profound concern with communism but there was also skepticism about the value of Europe and the risk of bearing too much of a burden the Europeans could and should bear themselves. The article 5 and 11 amendments addressed these diverse concerns in addition to the aforementioned bipartisan concern for protecting constitutional prerogative. Because of the Senate’s critical role in revising the treaty, Senator Vandenberg referred to the North Atlantic Treaty as the first treaty in U.S. history to be “concluded with the advice and consent of the Senate.”

The military brought their perspective and prerogatives to bear in the alliance debate. They first were concerned about the capabilities gap, but eventually came to understand that the military importance of Western Europe made the commitments worthwhile. As Melvyn Leffler notes, “[m]ilitary leaders did not think they had the capabilities to support the commitments they were incurring…” Moreover, the military were concerned with the loss of flexibility the alliance would entail and stated that it would entail more political than military benefits. Yet, when asked what the United States expected to get from the NAT, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson stated, “... a growing nucleus of defensive military force on which to base our strategy in the event of a war.” However, the military did win one battle. They, in conjunction with the Congress, overrode State and required that the allies grant basing rights as reciprocity for American military support.

The Senate, the Military, and the Great Debate
The general strategy and alliance policy more specifically went through a radical shift in 1950. The Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1949 and the June 1950 outbreak of the Korean War spurred the White House to make a fundamental shift in alliance strategy. Historian Melvyn P. Leffler has summed up the post-Korea thinking of Secretary of State Dean Acheson as follows, “... he was ready for the United States to incur additional commitments if they were necessary to reassure potential
allies and to thwart neutralist tendencies”\textsuperscript{50}. At the time many argued that by defining South Korea as outside the American defense perimeter the Truman administration had invited attack\textsuperscript{51}. While the criticism may be flawed, the North Korean attack led Truman and Acheson to seek to enhance existing alliance commitments and extend new ones. Moreover, Soviet nuclear capabilities meant that they would be capable of taking greater risks to gain new allies by conquest or otherwise\textsuperscript{52}.

National Security Council Document 68 (NSC-68) presented the new alliance strategy. NSC-68, which President Truman approved in September 1950, scrapped strong point strategy in favor of “perimeter defense”. It argued that, “...any substantial further extension of the area under the domination of the Kremlin would raise the possibility that no coalition adequate to confront the Kremlin with greater strength could be assembled”\textsuperscript{53}. This meant, quite crucially, that the US would seek alliance commitments throughout the globe. Acheson himself stated that “[i]n the compact world of today, the security of the United States cannot be defined in terms of boundaries and frontiers. A serious threat to international peace and security anywhere in the world is a direct threat to this country”\textsuperscript{54}. The Korean War also contributed to the view that the US might lose Western Europe to the Soviets if it did not take action\textsuperscript{55}. The purpose of the deployment, then, was to keep the geostrategic and industrial power of Western Europe firmly in the US’s sphere of influence and to deny it to the Soviets\textsuperscript{56}.

The 1951 deployment of four American divisions to Western Europe gave way to a “great debate” in the Congress which was primarily about which branch had the constitutional power to deploy troops. President Truman said of the decision “I don’t ask their permission. I just consult them”\textsuperscript{57}. In December 1950 Acheson warned that without the four new American divisions the US risked allowing the Soviet Union to become master of “the entire Eurasian landmass” and the “vastly superior” resources that entailed\textsuperscript{58}. In making this case, Acheson was implicitly admitting that the North Atlantic Treaty was – due to the Art. 5 and Art. 11 caveats – insufficient to deter Soviet aggression and make America’s European allies feel secure. Not all were convinced that the deployment served America’s national interest. In February eighteen Republican Senators called for the withdrawal of all American troops from Europe\textsuperscript{59}. The majority of Senators came to adopt the administration’s view that Western Europe was sufficiently important for American security to require the deployment. Led by Senator Kenneth Wherry, the Senate argued that the President had no right to deploy troops, but in the end they were convinced by the strategic value of Europe and agreed to allow the deployment, declaring only that fur-

\textsuperscript{50} Leffler, \textit{Preponderance of Power}, 427.
\textsuperscript{51} Beisner, 323-337.
\textsuperscript{52} Leffler, 331.
\textsuperscript{53} Gaddis, \textit{Strategies}, 91.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1949}, IV: 244. Italics mine. See also Gaddis, \textit{Strategies}, 92.
\textsuperscript{55} Osgood, 49.
\textsuperscript{56} Leffler, 407.
\textsuperscript{57} Offner, \textit{Another Such Victory}, 434.
\textsuperscript{58} Beisner, 450. See also p. 451.
\textsuperscript{59} Beisner, 451.
ther deployments would not be allowed without Congressional permission. Things might have gone differently. Scholars of the great debate often forget to recognize that the U.S. Congress could have forced a change in policy through the power of the purse (i.e., by refusing to fund the deployment) had they been so inclined.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff urged Truman to commit more American troops to Western Europe in spring 1950. The president agreed to the JCS request only after the start of the Korean War. General Eisenhower and General Omar Bradley joined the debate on the deployment, testifying before Congress on behalf of the administration as to the crucial importance of West Europe to American Security. In short, the American military urged the troop commitment and the Congress accepted it because of the importance of Western Europe to American national interest.

Given that the 1951 deployment created a de facto commitment where the North Atlantic Treaty had only entailed a hollow one, the reader might ask how the Congress and military contributed to a more rational policy. First, the de facto commitment the US ultimately offered was rational given the strategic value of Western Europe for the bipolar struggle. Second, the caveats in Article 5 and Article 11 were good for the US because they minimized the risk that the US would be entrapped by risky behavior by an overzealous ally (and thus made such allies more likely to restrain themselves than would otherwise have been the case). Third, the four divisions made the US commitment to defend Western Europe more credible than any alliance treaty could have done to both the Soviet Union and America’s new allies. The struggle between the White House, Congress, and the military over the North Atlantic Treaty and great debate had a significant impact on subsequent alliance commitments. All subsequent American commitments entailed caveats to allow for constitutional procedures (i.e., a Congressional veto over whether the treaty would be activated in case of attack) or a clause allowing each ally to respond as it saw fit. Moreover, high value allies received a de facto commitment in the form of American troops to balance the weak formal one.

The ANZUS Commitment
In September 1951 the United States entered into an alliance with Australia and New Zealand, later termed the ANZUS treaty. The language of common interest was watered down in this treaty, in that an attack on one party would be seen by all as “dangerous to its own peace and safety.” The obligation was only to “act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes”. Efforts by the Australians to move towards common planning and the designation of particular units for service met with a cold refusal on the part of the United States.

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60 Leffler, 407.
61 Offner, 425. Offner notes the JCS promoted a “package” deal of a US supreme commander, German rearmament, and four new divisions. See also p. 431.
62 Leffler, 407.
64 Plischke, 436.
The central rationale for the alliance was its role in the post-Korea “forward” defense strategy in the Asia-Pacific. This strategy, based on expansion in the periphery to defend as much area as possible, necessitated alliances. As ANZUS expert Henry Albinski notes, “[a] reconditioned, now much more ‘forward’ US strategy in the Pacific suggested that, side by side soldiering apart, suitably located allies could also be helpful in providing basing and other facilities...” The island hopping strategies of General MacArthur in the Pacific theater of WWII seemed to enhance the perception of the strategic importance of this commitment. The treaty also served to assuage the concerns that Australia and New Zealand had regarding the peace treaty with Japan, concluded at roughly the same time. Finally, the desire for the treaty was consistent with the Truman administration’s growing strategy of expanding commitments as a means to superiority relative to the Soviets. Historian Robert Beisner summarizes that by 1949 Acheson “not only wanted the west to be strong enough to contain the Kremlin. To win the cold war, he thought the west must have superior strength”.

The White House and State department took prior Congressional reservations into account in negotiations with Australia and New Zealand, hence the Senate was less directly involved in this treaty than it had been with the NATO. However, Senator Taft did urge (with the JCS as discussed below) the limited language of the treaty because of his concern that stronger language would mean an increase in presidential power. The military were far from generous on the strategic value of the two countries, and as such resisted extending commitments to them. They, in fact, were responsible for the limited “peace and security” language of the treaty. In addition, the military fought and won on the military planning and organization aspects of the treaty. As historian Henry Brands notes, “[t]he Defense Department... believed that US resources were already stretched dangerously thin and preferred to consider ANZUS as a statement of US intentions in the event of an attack on Australia or New Zealand, but no more.” The military won this battle despite an earlier voicing by the President and Secretary of State of a preference for a NATO like arrangement with Australia and New Zealand. The JCS were so resistant to military cooperation with these countries they vetoed state’s request that an Australian military mission come to Washington. Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William Fechte-
ler expressed this view clearly: upon the suggestion that an ANZUS combined staff and liaison group be formed he declared “I can’t imagine what they would do.”

The Philippines and Japan

The security treaty with the Philippines looks very similar to the one with ANZUS, confirming that each country “would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its constitutional processes.” US forces in the Philippines provided the de facto commitment lacking in the formal language. The treaty with Japan granted the US the right to dispose its forces in Japan and to contribute to “the security of Japan against armed attack from without” but the actual formal American obligation to Japan was quite limited. Because of the optional formal commitment, Congress did not press for a constitutional procedure caveat. The large American military presence in Japan provided a firm de facto commitment justified by Japan’s importance in the global balance of power.

The White House viewed Japan and the Philippines as highly vulnerable to the Soviet Union and vital to American security. The Korean War emphasized and escalated both of these concerns. John Foster Dulles, lead negotiator of the treaty with Japan, stated with regards to that country, “[t]he Communist offensive was probably aimed at getting control over Japan, for had Korea been conquered Japan would have fallen without an open struggle.” Furthermore, because of Japan’s location and its capabilities, its vulnerability meant American vulnerability. As Dulles told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “Japan’s capabilities could be exploited to give long-range overseas striking power to the vast human and natural resources which the Soviet Communists already control in Asia.” Denial of Japan to the Soviets was a necessity. The Philippines were also both geo-strategically important to the United States and perceived to be vulnerable.

Congress, as with the ANZUS treaty, was a less important player in these treaties. As the formal commitments were low in the Philippines treaty, and in the Japanese case the US had the right but not the obligation to respond to attack, little conflict developed. During a discussion on the American deployment to Japan Senator Owen Brewer asked John Foster Dulles if in fact the troops meant a de facto commitment. Dulles responded in the affirmative, Brewer then proceeded to make clear to the secretary that this commitment should not be made public, or further

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78 Brands, 253.
79 Plischke, 444.
81 Plischke, 444.
85 Executive Session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee - Historical Series V. 4. op cit. pp. 127-128.
discussed with the full Congress. Apparently he recognized the worth of the commitment to Japan but was concerned with publicly ceding this power to the Executive. The military showed reluctance to overextend its capabilities, despite its recognition that these areas were key ones for American security. The military felt that de facto commitment at the time (US forces in the Philippines) was sufficient\(^{86}\). In the end, however, the military cooperated with the extension of security commitments to these countries\(^ {87}\). The military did, however, keep State from including (as it sought to) military planning provisions in the treaty with the Philippines\(^ {88}\).

4.- The Eisenhower Administration’s alliance policy was in many ways an exaggeration of its predecessor’s. In a confidential letter to Winston Churchill, President Eisenhower, explained the dangerous situation the western world was in, “[f]irst, we lose a potential ally. [n]ext we give to an implacable enemy another recruit. [b]eyond this, every such retreat creates in the minds of neutrals the fear that we do not mean what we say when we pledge our support…”\(^ {89}\). The general tone was one of overreaction. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, for instance, rejected the distinction between peripheral and general wars\(^ {90}\). In a debate supposedly to designate priority areas, similar to the Truman administration’s “strong points” Eisenhower lectured his advisors on his opposition to the concept of “line drawing” as it allowed the enemy to seize the initiative in the non-crucial areas.\(^ {91}\) The president’s opposition to drawing lines led directly to an alliance policy where there was, “… no free nation too humble to be forgotten”\(^ {92}\). Contributing, however, was the Eisenhower administration’s desire to cut military spending. One way to do it was to get more allies to pay more of the burden\(^ {93}\). It should be no surprise, then, that alliances were a key element of the Eisenhower “New Look” defense strategy (NSC 162/2)\(^ {94}\). As Dulles wrote in Foreign Affairs, “[t]he cornerstone of security for the free nations must be a collective system of defense… [n]o single nation can develop for itself defensive power of adequate scope and flexibility”\(^ {95}\).

The Congress continued to insist on and receive a provision making the treaty commitments contingent on “constitutional processes” and, thus, meaningless. The military were highly critical of American alliance strategy during this period: Joint Chiefs Staff (JCS) report of August 1953 declared that the United States was “over-extended”\(^ {96}\). The JCS recommended a radical reversal in American policy by mak-

\(^{86}\) FRUS, 1951, VI: 201, 239.
\(^{87}\) Leffler, Melvyn. op cit. pp. 347, 431, 432, and 465.
\(^{88}\) FRUS, 1951, VI:197, 200, 233.
\(^{89}\) Cited in Gaddis, 131.
\(^{91}\) Ibid., 127.
\(^{92}\) Ibid. in Gaddis, 130. Note that the over-extension case made here contrasts with a recent portrayal of Eisenhower’s strategy as “coherent and sustainable.” See Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 3.
\(^{93}\) Ibid., 133, 166, and Dockrill, 70.
\(^{94}\) Bowie and Immerman, Waging Peace, 189, 191, 252.
\(^{96}\) Dockrill, 38. See also Bowie and Immerman, 185-86.
ing the development of nuclear strike capability and defense of the continental U.S.
its major priorities.\footnote{Ibid., 38.}

**SEATO**
The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (SEATO) was formally similar to the
other treaties outlined above. It encouraged members to meet “common dangers”
with respect to constitutional processes.\footnote{See text in Elmer Plischke, 438-439.}
However, SEATO was no NATO. One major difference was that the treaty allowed intervention to suppress subversion.\footnote{Osgood, 81.}
At the core of the treaty was weak de facto commitment: no organization for SEATO was
planned and instead of establishing a local military force, the United States would
rely on “mobile strike power,” to fulfill its commitments.\footnote{Senate Foreign Relations, The Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, Nov. 1954, 3, 17. See also Osgood, 81.}

The SEATO treaty was signed in 1954, and came directly on the heels of the
French defeat in Vietnam at Dien Bien Phu. A tremendous sense of vulnerability to
falling dominoes and a necessity to demonstrate resolve drove the alliance.
Eisenhower developed the “domino theory” shortly following Dien Bien Phu, stating that
if Vietnam fell to the communists, “...you could have a beginning of a disintegration
that would have the most profound influences.”\footnote{LaFeber, 162. See also FRUS, 1952-1954, XII: 874.}
The administration perceived Southeast Asia to be highly vulnerable, declaring that without the alliance these
countries would pass “into the Soviet orbit.”\footnote{FRUS, 1952-1954, XII, 602. See also Brands, 263.}

The Senate participated in the formation of this treaty, confirming the “constitutional process” provision that would preserve their right to declare war.\footnote{Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, 12.}
In addition, the Congress forced Dulles to resist the efforts by other states to eliminate the
provision restricting the treaty to ‘communist aggressors’.\footnote{Dingman, 466.}
The Secretary of State was prepared to concede to the South East Asian countries on this point until he was
notified that if he did so the Senate would refuse to ratify the treaty.\footnote{Dingman, 461. See also FRUS, 1952-1954, XII: 654-6.}
Congressional restraint seems to have come from the increasing concern for “excessive involve-
ment”, as Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Alexander Wiley put it.\footnote{Senate, Foreign Relations Committee, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee - Historical Series - V. 7 January 1955, 9.}
The Pentagon made clear that they “... wanted no part of a pledge to military action there.”\footnote{FRUS, 1952-1954, XII, 602. See also Brands, 263.}
The Pentagon was successful in paring back the State department on two counts.
First, they were able to scrap State’s initial plan to include India in the treaty on the
grounds that it was a bad security risk.\footnote{Dingman, 470.} Second, the Pentagon contributed to Con-
gressional efforts to eliminate any organizational or planning efforts to implement the treaty\textsuperscript{109}.

**Korea and Taiwan**

The alliances with Korea and Taiwan included an encouragement to meet common dangers, specifically communist aggression, in accordance with constitutional processes\textsuperscript{110}. Moreover, the treaties authorized but did not require the US to station forces in their respective countries. Most important, however, was a provision, included separately as an “understanding” that made the treaties inoperative if South Korea or Taiwan took offensive action of any kind\textsuperscript{111}.

The Eisenhower administration favored these treaties (negotiated in 1953 but not ratified until 1955) to deter future aggression. During the Senate Foreign Relations hearings for the Korean treaty Secretary Dulles noted that “…as one looks at the wars of this century, it can be said with a high degree of confidence that if the aggressors had known in advance what we would do, that probably they would not have committed the acts of aggression”\textsuperscript{112}. The solution was to make open and clear commitments to allies\textsuperscript{113}. In addition, Dulles and Eisenhower believed Korea and Taiwan were vulnerable to communist aggression\textsuperscript{114}. While the Korean War drove this point home, Chinese acts culminating in the Quemoy-Matsu crisis of 1954-55, further reinforced this belief\textsuperscript{115}. The administration also viewed Korea and Taiwan as strategically important\textsuperscript{116}. Finally, the alliance to Korea was seen as a necessary concession to get it to sign the armistice treaty ending the Korean War\textsuperscript{117}.

Congress sought to confirm that these treaties included constitutional process provisions and they continued to seek general restraint on the extension of American commitments\textsuperscript{118}. It seems as if Congress played a role in the “defense only” nature of the treaty, as many of the questions during the hearings focused on potential offensive actions by Korea and Taiwan\textsuperscript{119}. In addition, concerns with Congressional power may have inspired the treaty with Taiwan. President Eisenhower had agreed to the treaty to replace his Executive order, passed during the Korean War, for the Seventh Fleet to protect Taiwan in case of attack. Eisenhower was concerned that

\textsuperscript{109} Dingman, 468.
\textsuperscript{110} Plischke, 446-450.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Senate, Foreign Relations Committee, *Mutual Defense Treaty With Korea*, January 1954, 6. For similar statements on Taiwan see *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee* V. 7, 314. See also *FRUS, 1952-1954*, XV, 1032.
\textsuperscript{113} Mutual Defense Treaty With Korea, 2, 3.
\textsuperscript{114} See ibid, 28. See also *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, V. 7, 314. See also *FRUS, 1952-1954*, XV: 548, 707 on Taiwan and pp. 1030, 1471, 1601 on Korea.
\textsuperscript{116} *FRUS, 1952-1954*, XV: 1473 on Korea. On Taiwan see pp. 548, 707.
\textsuperscript{117} *FRUS, 1952-1954*, XV: 1030, 1047, 1049, 1087-1090.
leaving the Executive order without passing the treaty could, as he put it, “lead to impeachment” as it was a denial of the Senate’s advice and consent powers. On both treaties the military expressed some befuddlement as to why the status quo was not acceptable but eventually came on board. Yet, Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens made it clear that the stationing of forces outlined in the treaty was “...a right, and not a requirement.” Finally, the Secretary of Defense pressed for an understanding with the Taiwanese that the treaty did not mean that the US would repel a PRC attack by attacking mainland China.

5.- This article has sought to demonstrate the significant role that the US Congress and military played in the revolution in American alliance strategy that occurred from 1949 to 1955. The article has also argued that interventions by the Congress and the military led to a better, more rational alliance strategy. In addressing prospective alliance commitments the Senate and military did not always see the world in a more rational light than the White House but in bringing their different perspectives and interests to the table, they produced a more rational outcome. Moreover, the article has sought to show how the weak formal commitment but strong de facto one that the Truman administration negotiated with the Congress and military for Western Europe served to as a model for other American alliances. Whereas all alliance commitments the US extended entailed caveats, those to allies deemed critical to the bipolar balance of power also received firm de facto commitments (i.e., American troops). Finally, the article has attempted to contribute to the growing literature arguing that the early Cold War US foreign policy was not as executive centered and rational as we previously thought.

121 On Korea see FRUS, 1952-1954, XV:1025, 1133, 1612. On Taiwan see pp. 552, 754, 805, 808, 815, 818.
123 FRUS, 1952-1954, XV, 808.
Abstract
Il Senato americano, l’Esercito e il Trattato del Nord Atlantico


L’Esercito statunitense enfatizzò l’utilità degli alleati in caso di guerra e ottenne il diritto per gli USA di avere basi sul loro territorio, in cambio dell’impegno di difesa da parte di Washington.

Questo articolo mostra inoltre l’impatto che il Senato e l’Esercito ebbero sui successivi impegni nell’ambito dell’Alleanza da parte delle amministrazioni Truman ed Eisenhower.

Le condizioni ottenute dal Senato e l’attenta analisi dell’Esercito in merito all’utilità degli alleati, giocarono un ruolo fondamentale in varie circostanze, dal Trattato ANZUS a quello di reciproca difesa con la Corea.