

---

---

## The 2015 George C. Marshall Lecture in Military History

### George C. Marshall and the “Europe-First” Strategy, 1939–1951: A Study in Diplomatic as well as Military History



Mark A. Stoler\*

---

---

#### Abstract

As Army chief of staff, secretary of state, and secretary of defense, George C. Marshall played a major role in creating, implementing, and defending the multilateral “Europe-First” global strategy that guided U.S. foreign and military policies through World War II and the Cold War. This lecture explores how and why he did so, emphasizing the decision to defeat Germany before Japan, the postwar European Recovery Program that bears Marshall’s name, and the relief of General Douglas MacArthur during the Korean War for his refusal to accept this grand strategy. In the process it analyzes the complex relationship that exists between diplomatic and military history.

The completion this year of the seventh and final volume of *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall* makes this an appropriate time for a Marshall lecture that focuses on Marshall himself, specifically on the diplomatic as well as the military components of one of his fundamental strategic concepts. As a diplomatic as well as

\*This is a revised and expanded version of the Marshall lecture I delivered on 4 January 2015 at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in New York. I am deeply grateful to Professors Melvyn Leffler, Barry Machado, and Allan Millett both for reading an earlier draft of this paper and for their suggestions for improvement. Final responsibility for its contents, however, rests solely with the author.

---

Mark A. Stoler is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Vermont and editor of *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, with volume 6 published in 2013. He is the author of *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (2000), which won the 2002 SMH Outstanding Book Award. He has served on the SMH Board of Trustees and as president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.

---

*The Journal of Military History* 79 (April 2015): 293–316.

Copyright © 2015 by *The Society for Military History*, all rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing from the Editor, *Journal of Military History*, George C. Marshall Library, Virginia Military Institute, P.O. Drawer 1600, Lexington, VA 24450. Authorization to photocopy items for internal and personal use is granted by the copyright holder for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 121 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923 USA ([www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com)), provided the appropriate fee is paid to the CCC.

a military historian, I have in many if not most of my writings emphasized the fusion of these two fields of historical study, citing Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is an instrument of policy as well as Churchill's later statement that "It is not possible in a major war to divide military from political affairs. At the summit they are one."<sup>1</sup>

Ten years ago, I tried to explain to members of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) the relevance of military history to their work.<sup>2</sup> Here I would like to try to explain to military historians the relevance of international relations history to their work. Consequently I have chosen in this lecture to analyze a specific aspect of Marshall's career that illustrates the fusion of these two fields: his support and implementation of a global strategy for the United States—a grand strategy, or national security policy if you will—in which Europe and European allies were the top priority, be it by military or diplomatic means.

No such commitment to Europe and allies, in fact no U.S. global strategy whatsoever, existed when Marshall was sworn in as the new Army chief of staff on 1 September 1939, the day World War II began with Adolf Hitler's invasion of Poland. Indeed, the U.S. armed forces as well as the country as a whole were deeply divided as to the proper course of action for the United States in this conflict. The different possibilities were obvious if one simply looked at the standard Mercator map of the world that was in common use at that time, one that placed the Western Hemisphere in the center (rather than to the far left as is more common today): isolation and unilateral defense of North America if attacked by any or all three of the Axis Powers; this combined with defense of U.S. interests in the Western Pacific (most notably defense of the Philippines); unilateral defense of the entire Western Hemisphere as per the Monroe Doctrine; alliance with Great Britain and France as in World War I and offensive operations with them against Germany and Italy while temporarily assuming a strategic defensive position against Berlin's Japanese ally; or alliance with and support of Britain and France against Germany but projection of U.S. offensive power to the Pacific against Japan so as to protect U.S. Far Eastern as well as Pacific interests—most notably the Open Door in China along with the Philippines—while the British and French allies handled Germany on their own.

All five of these options had advocates within the armed forces and were to be explored in the five RAINBOW war plans that the Joint Army-Navy Board had ordered prepared in late 1938–early 1939. And by the spring of 1941, both the armed forces and President Franklin D. Roosevelt had agreed to adopt in RAINBOW 5 the fourth option, a "Germany-first" strategy in conjunction with European allies with a strategic defensive against Japan in the Pacific.

That agreement was not preordained. Indeed, neither Marshall and his staff nor the Navy supported this approach until late 1940. Instead the Navy had favored a "Pacific-first" strategy against Japan (the old War Plan ORANGE), while the Army had favored a unilateral defense of North America or the Western

1. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 3, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 28.

2. See my SHAFR Presidential Address, "War and Diplomacy: Or, Clausewitz for Diplomatic Historians," *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 1 (January 2005): 1–26.

Hemisphere over aid to France and Britain. As the then Major Walter Bedell Smith informed Marshall (as well as Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau and presidential military aide Major General Edwin "Pa" Watson) on 11 June 1940, in regard to an Allied request to purchase 500 75 mm. guns and ammunition, "if we were required to mobilize after having released guns necessary for this mobilization and were found to be short in artillery materiel . . . everyone who was a party to the deal might hope to be found hanging from a lamp post."<sup>3</sup>

What apparently changed Marshall's mind were three key events: presidential orders to sell the British military equipment, clear signs that Britain would survive at least through 1940, and finally an important strategic reassessment initiated by Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold R. Stark in November of 1940. In that reassessment, commonly known as the "Plan Dog" memorandum, Stark called for an Atlantic/Europe-first national security policy in alliance with Great Britain designed to defeat Germany before Japan, "with mutually supporting diplomatic and military aspects," should the United States find itself at war with all three Axis Powers. He had selected this approach (listed fourth as "D" or "Dog" in naval parlance) over three alternative approaches: A) hemispheric defense; B) a Pacific-first strategy against Japan; or C) maximum aid to allies in both theaters. These he rejected on the grounds that they were incapable of achieving what he asserted to be the most basic and important national policies: preservation of the "territorial, economic and ideological integrity" of the United States and the rest of the Western Hemisphere, which he openly linked for the first time to the European balance of power and with it British fortunes.<sup>4</sup>

Marshall had simultaneously been emphasizing the importance of the Atlantic and with his staff concurred with the basic points in Stark's assessment, which was then revised and forwarded to Roosevelt as a Joint Army-Navy Planning Committee document in December 1940, at which time it received informal presidential concurrence. Secret Anglo-American staff talks consequently ensued in Washington, culminating in the March ABC-1 agreement on a combined "Germany-first" strategy in the event of U.S. entry into the war, and a revised RAINBOW 5 plan in the following month—which went into effect once the United States officially joined the war in December 1941. As Louis Morton aptly concluded more than a half century ago, Plan Dog was "perhaps the most important single document in the development of World War II strategy."<sup>5</sup> It was also the first major armed forces statement to recognize the centrality of the European balance of power to American security.

3. Mark S. Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, United States Army in World War II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 312. See also David G. Haglund, "George C. Marshall and the Question of Military Aid to England, May-June 1940," *Journal of Contemporary History* 15 (October 1980): 745-60.

4. Both the 4 November and the 12 November 1940 versions of Stark's memorandum are reproduced in Steven T. Ross, ed., *American War Plans, 1919-1941*, 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1992), 3:225-74.

5. Louis Morton, "Germany First: The Basic Concept of Allied Strategy in World War

Yet this Germany-first approach did not come out of the blue. It had a previous history that could be traced back, ironically, to the RED-ORANGE plan of the 1920s for war against a Great Britain still aligned with Japan that had called for a focus on defeating the British first, and to Army War College studies of the 1930s that called for concentration on defeating Germany before Japan in alliance with Britain in any war against all the Axis Powers.<sup>6</sup>

In both cases, the focus was on the potential European adversary, be it Britain or Germany, for numerous reasons. First, each was much more powerful than Japan industrially (and thus in terms of what military planners labeled “munitioning capacity”) and therefore more of a threat. Second, the Atlantic was much narrower than the Pacific, making any European power a much closer threat than Japan. Furthermore, U.S. defense industries were at this time concentrated in the Northeastern states and thus vulnerable to a European attack. So was the Caribbean because of the political instability in a region that might be labeled our “soft underbelly.” In reaching his conclusions, Stark was also echoing David Lewis Einstein of the State Department (and to an extent Alfred Thayer Mahan and a few other early Realist thinkers) who had argued before the outbreak of World War I that a hegemonic Germany in Europe would be a serious threat to the United States because of its ensuing ability to harness Europe’s greater population and industry, and that U.S. security was thus dependent on the British fleet and British maintenance of the European balance of power.<sup>7</sup> Without them but facing instead a hostile hegemonic power in Europe, the United States could survive only as a garrison state, if at all. Now in 1940 those conclusions were being echoed not only by the armed forces, but also by many others in light of the German conquest of Europe. And interestingly, they would be echoed again soon after World War II ended, this time against the Soviet Union rather than Germany, during the ensuing Cold War.

---

II,” in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 11–47, quote on 35. The Joint Army-Navy Planning Committee document, ABC-1, and the revised RAINBOW 5 are reproduced in Ross, *American War Plans*, 3:279–300; 4:3–66; and 5:3–43. For detailed analysis see Mark M. Lowenthal’s “The Stark Memorandum and American National Security Process,” in *Changing Interpretations and New Sources in Naval History: Papers from the Third United States Naval Academy Symposium*, ed. Robert William Love, Jr. (New York: Garland, 1980), 352–59; and Lowenthal’s *Leadership and Indecision: American War Planning and Policy Process, 1937–1942*, 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1988), 1:408–14; as well as my *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 29–40; and Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941–1942*, a volume in *United States Army in World War II* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953), 25–48.

6. Morton, “Germany First,” 16–18; and Henry G. Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934–1940* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2002); the RED-ORANGE War Plan is reproduced in Ross, *American War Plans*, 2:343–412. Great Britain and Japan had been formal allies from 1902 to 1923.

7. Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and Self Interest in America’s Foreign Relations The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 98–100, 125–26.

Indeed, this concept was the basis of Stark's conclusions in his Plan Dog memorandum. As he argued in that document, only a strategic focus on defeating Germany first in alliance with Britain could preserve the most important U.S. national policies. Preservation of the "territorial, economic and ideological integrity" of the United States and the rest of the hemisphere, he maintained, had previously and still depended on a European balance of power and thus the British Navy and Empire to preclude invasion by a hostile continental power and keep open the "profitable foreign trade . . . particularly with Europe," without which the U.S. economy could not support the heavy armaments needed for defense. The nation also had an interest in a Far Eastern balance of power, Stark admitted, and thus a "diminution" in Japanese military power; but not its destruction. Restoration of a European balance of power, on the other hand, would require "the complete, or at least, the partial collapse of the German Reich"—something the British could not accomplish on their own. Stark therefore recommended acceptance of Plan D and the immediate initiation of detailed staff talks with the British, Canadians, and Dutch.<sup>8</sup> Such reasoning was, quite obviously, anything *but* a "purely military" strategic assessment!

Marshall's staff and advisers were by no means unified on this approach, as many previously had favored and continued to favor unilateral continental or hemispheric defense.<sup>9</sup> But if Marshall himself maintained any doubts in 1940–41 about the wisdom of Stark's recommended strategy, they were buried by his experiences after the United States became a full belligerent in December of 1941. Unlike many Americans both at the time and during the ensuing Cold War years, Marshall was well aware of the fact that the United States did not, indeed could not, defeat Germany alone and that its victory in 1945 had been a true coalition victory. He completely understood in this regard the importance of the British contribution and the creation during the war of a "special relationship" between the two nations, with the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) running their global strategy and the "unity of command" principle leaving a single commander in each theater directing the ground, naval, and air forces of both. He also understood the vital importance of the Soviet Union in both holding down and destroying the bulk of the German Army.<sup>10</sup> Without the enormous Soviet war effort, the decision to

8. Ross, *American War Plans*, 3:225–74, quotes on 227, 229, and 243.

9. See, for example, my *Allies and Adversaries*, 10–15; and "From Continentalism to Globalism: General Stanley D. Embick, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, and the Military View of American National Policy during the Second World War," *Diplomatic History* 6 (Summer 1982): 303–8.

10. According to the figures used by John Ellis in *World War II: A Statistical Survey* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 255–56, the Eastern front accounted for approximately 97 percent of all German combat dead from June 1941 to June 1944 and approximately 92 percent by war's end, though other sources place the latter percentage at approximately 77. Russell D. Buhite in *Yalta: An Appraisal of Summit Diplomacy* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1986), xv–xvi, notes that from June to September of 1944 the Germans suffered nearly 900,000 casualties on the Eastern front, a number that exceeded by 200,000 the total number of German troops facing Allied forces in the West during those months.

create only ninety U.S. divisions<sup>11</sup> while focusing on a massive expansion of American industrial production, and the ensuing ability by 1944 to pursue simultaneous major offensives against Germany and Japan while sending Lend-Lease supplies to America's allies, would not have been possible. Marshall thus told the Overseas Press Club in this regard on 1 March 1945 that "the evident solidarity coming out of" the February Yalta Conference had been "a blow of tremendous magnitude to the Germans. They have always planned on a split of the Allies. They never for one moment calculated that the Allies could continue to conduct combined operations with complete understanding and good faith."<sup>12</sup> In early April he told British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill that "Our greatest triumph lies in the fact that we achieved the impossible, Allied military unity of action."<sup>13</sup> And in his September 1945 biennial report to the nation, three of the seven key military events in the German defeat that he listed as perceived by captured members of the German High Command did not involve the United States in any way, while the other four involved British and Canadian as well as U.S. forces.<sup>14</sup>

Marshall reiterated the importance of both the "special relationship" and the Soviet war effort in an address at Oxford on 11 November 1947: "never before in history have two great nations developed so successful and far reaching a mutual coordination of their total strength" as had the United States and Great Britain, he said.

Never before has there been such a complete fusion of the resources in men and materiel of two world powers. Considering deep national prejudices and pride, jealousies and different customs of procedure, the manner and success of the unification of our war efforts was the major contribution to the victory, aside, of course, from the courage and selfless sacrifice of the individual, and the great campaigns of the Soviet Union. It was a triumph of democracy at work, a lesson for the future.<sup>15</sup>

11. See Maurice Matloff, "The 90 Division Gamble," in Greenfield, *Command Decisions*, 365–81. Actually eighty-nine active divisions existed by war's end as a result of the deactivation of one cavalry division in early 1944.

12. Notes for Speech to the Overseas Press Club, 1 March 1945, in *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945–January 7, 1947, ed. Larry I. Bland (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 67–68.

13. Marshall to Wilson for Churchill, 3 April 1945, *ibid.*, 113.

14. *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1943–June 30, 1945, to the Secretary of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), 2–3. The three totally non-U.S. events were the German failure to invade Great Britain in 1940, and the 1941 and 1942 German failures against the U.S.S.R.; the other four (the invasions of North Africa and Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, and the crossing of the Rhine) involved British and Canadian as well as U.S. forces. In sharp contrast to the Allies, Marshall also noted in this report the inability of the Axis Powers "to coordinate their plans and resources." *Ibid.*, 3.

15. "Outline of Remarks" at the University of Oxford, 22 November 1947, in *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 6, "The Whole World Hangs in the Balance," January 8, 1947–September 30, 1949, ed. Larry I. Bland and Mark A. Stoler (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013): 270–71.



And both the special U.S.-U.K. relationship and the Grand Alliance as a whole were in turn based upon the "Germany-first" strategy. It was the lowest common denominator linking its three major members, and no alliance could have existed without it.

The Europe-first approach with allies also built upon Marshall's World War I experiences with the French—which were diplomatic as well as military in nature and which involved daily contact and negotiation. General Fox Conner, under whom Marshall had served in the G-3 section of General John J. Pershing's American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) headquarters during the war, told his young protégé Dwight D. Eisenhower in Panama during the 1920s to get an assignment with Marshall if at all possible, for in the future "we will have to fight beside allies and George Marshall knows more about the techniques of arranging Allied commands than any man I know. He is nothing short of a genius."<sup>16</sup>

Not all Americans accepted the Europe-first approach during World War II. Certainly General Douglas MacArthur did not in the Southwest Pacific. Nor did large segments of the American public. Dating back to the turn of the century if not earlier, the "Open Door" policy regarding China reflected an old American belief that Asia was the land of the future and Europe the land of the past. Furthermore, it was Japan that had attacked the United States on 7 December 1941—not Germany. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson warned Churchill in the summer of 1943 that "only by an intellectual effort" had the American people "been convinced that Germany was their most dangerous enemy and should be disposed of before Japan"; the enemy they "really hated, if they hated anyone," was the one that had "dealt them a foul blow" at Pearl Harbor.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the war, Marshall as well as Roosevelt remained aware of this, and with it the fact that public patience was not limitless: victory over Germany had to come quickly or public pressure, supported by the Navy as well as MacArthur, might force a dramatic shift in U.S. global strategy. Indeed, throughout 1942, more U.S. forces were deployed against Japan than against Germany, despite continued formal agreement to the Europe-first approach.<sup>18</sup>

These facts in turn played an important role in a major dispute with the British during the war regarding *how* to defeat Germany first—direct cross-Channel vs. peripheral North African and Mediterranean operations. Marshall and his planners would forcefully argue that the Mediterranean theater was indecisive and that a focus on it would delay decisive cross-Channel operations so long that the Soviets would either collapse or leave the war, making total victory over Germany impossible, while the public would tire of the endless European conflict and demand a shift to the Pacific. To avoid this, Marshall even joined Navy Chief Admiral Ernest

16. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell To Friends* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), 192.

17. Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 429–30.

18. See Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940–1943*, a volume in *United States Army in World War II* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 662.

J. King in proposing in July of 1942 to turn to the Pacific if the British insisted on invading French North Africa in 1942 instead of crossing the Channel (partially on the grounds that it would aid the Soviets more than North Africa by removing the possibility of a Japanese attack on the Soviet rear in Siberia), though FDR concluded he was bluffing and Marshall later stated that indeed he had been.<sup>19</sup>

More relevant to this analysis of the intersection of diplomatic with military factors during World War II, Marshall and his staff realized at a very early date that Soviet demands for cross-Channel operations, motivated by a desire to relieve the pressure on them, force the Germans into a two-front war, and preclude a possible Anglo-American separate peace with Germany via a major commitment in blood on the continent, made this strategic dispute with the British a key diplomatic as well as a military issue. As the chief of the Army's War Plans Division, the then Brigadier General Dwight Eisenhower, put it in first proposing cross-Channel operations to Marshall on 28 February 1942, such operations had political as well as military significance in that they had to prevent a Soviet willingness to end the war as well as make it militarily feasible for them to continue fighting by diverting "sizable portions of the German Army" from the Eastern front. Such operations therefore had to be "so conceived and so presented to the Russians," Eisenhower emphasized, "that they will recognize the importance of the support rendered."<sup>20</sup> Very clearly and emphatically, Eisenhower and Marshall recognized the huge political/diplomatic aspects of this strategic dispute. So did Josef Stalin and his Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, who during his May/June visits to London and Washington asserted first to the British that the issue of establishing a "second front" in northern France "was a political one, and discussion of it should be conducted on political lines with Great Britain and the United States" and then to the Americans that "though the problem of the second front was both military and political, it was predominantly political."<sup>21</sup>

Marshall's adherence to the Europe-first approach was reinforced during the war by the political as well as the military problems and failures that he and General Joseph Stilwell encountered in China, problems that had led to numerous controversies and to Stilwell's recall in 1944. They were further reinforced soon after the war by Marshall's own failed mission to China and the ensuing return to civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang Nationalists and Mao Tse-tung's Communists. Both failures led Marshall to recognize that events in that part of the world were beyond U.S. power to control. Indeed, half of his first congressional

19. It is by no means certain, however, that Marshall was bluffing. See my analysis of this episode in *Allies and Adversaries*, 79–97.

20. Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., ed., *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years*, 5 vols. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 1:151. Emphasis in original.

21. J. R. M. Butler and J. M. A. Gwyer, *Grand Strategy*, vol. 3, *June 1941–August 1942*, in *History of the Second World War*, United Kingdom Military Series, ed. J. R. M. Butler (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1964), 593; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [hereafter cited as *FRUS*], 1942, 7 vols. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1956–1963), 3:576.



testimony as secretary of state in 1947 focused on China, and he made clear what he considered the severe limits of American power in the area.<sup>22</sup> He did so again a year later, warning that Chiang might lose the civil war and that the United States neither could nor should assume direct responsibility for trying to save his military forces or economy. The present pressure to do so Marshall compared to similar pressures to act in China and the Southwest Pacific during World War II rather than give first priority to Europe. "[W]e cannot afford," he maintained, "economically or militarily, to take over the continued failures of the present Chinese Government to the dissipation of our strength in more vital regions"—specifically Europe.<sup>23</sup>

Marshall's appointments as first special presidential emissary to China and then secretary of state also illustrated the inseparability of diplomatic from military issues. In both appointments Marshall was of course a diplomat rather than a soldier. But he had actually been a diplomat as well as a soldier during both world wars, negotiating on a daily basis with the French during the first and with his British colleagues on the CCS as well as Churchill and Stalin during the second. As General Walter Bedell Smith aptly noted, "his whole service had been a preparatory course for high-level negotiations."<sup>24</sup> And contrary to what are still all-too-common beliefs, Marshall was far from naïve about political matters during World War II. "Nothing could be more mistaken than to believe that General Marshall's mind was a military mind in the sense that it was dominated by military considerations, that is, considerations relating to the use of force," wrote Dean Acheson, Marshall's first deputy secretary of state and then successor as secretary; "when he thought about military problems, nonmilitary factors played a controlling part." As evidence for this conclusion, Acheson would cite Marshall's postwar comments to him regarding the political aspects of the cross-Channel-Mediterranean debate.<sup>25</sup> And as Marshall told his authorized biographer, Forrest C. Pogue, regarding the wartime Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), with the exception of the landing craft shortage nothing

came to our minds more frequently than the political factors. But we were very careful, exceedingly careful, never to discuss them with the British, and from that they took the count that we didn't observe those things at all. But we observed them constantly, with great frequency, and particular solicitude, so there is no foundation in that. We didn't discuss it with them because we were not in any way putting our necks out as to political factors which were the business of the head of the state—the president—who happened also to be the commander in chief.<sup>26</sup>

22. Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:34–43.

23. *Ibid.*, 371–82, quote on 378.

24. Walter Bedell Smith, *My Three Years in Moscow* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1950), 216.

25. Dean Acheson, *Sketches From Life of Men I have Known* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 163–64.

26. Larry I. Bland, ed., *George C. Marshall Interviews and Reminiscences for Forrest C. Pogue*, rev. ed. (Lexington, Va.: George C. Marshall Research Foundation, 1991), 415.

The problem Marshall faced in Europe when he became secretary of state in January 1947 was somewhat similar to the problem he had faced as Army chief of staff in 1940–41, albeit with a political rather than a military focus. Whereas the fear in 1940–41 had been of the German *Wehrmacht* conquering Britain and Russia and thereby controlling all of Europe, the fear in 1947 was not so much of Red Army conquest as it was of local Communist parties, perceived as tools of the Soviet Union, obtaining control in Western and Central Europe as the population, in economic chaos and psychological despair after the war with no economic recovery in sight, elected them or allowed them to seize power. One needs to remember in this regard the enormous power of these local Communist parties as a result of both their active resistance to German occupation (after, of course, the German attack on the U.S.S.R. in June of 1941) and the lack of economic recovery—a lack many attributed to the continued failure of capitalism that had begun in 1929. In 1946 elections the Communists received the largest number and percentage of votes by any single French party (29 percent), and in Italy they and a “collaborating Socialist Party” received nearly 40 percent of the vote. As German Military Governor General Lucius D. Clay noted, “There is no choice between becoming a Communist on 1,500 calories a day and a believer in democracy on 1,000.”<sup>27</sup>

Marshall concluded after the failure of the March–April 1947 Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference to reach Allied agreement on Germany that Stalin was waiting for Europe to collapse and that immediate action was necessary to prevent such a collapse. As he announced on 28 April, “the patient is sinking while the doctors deliberate.”<sup>28</sup> He consequently pushed forward the date for the activation of his new Policy Planning Staff (PPS) within the State Department and called back from the National War College the individual he had chosen to head this staff, George F. Kennan, with orders to address this European crisis immediately as his first order of business and to “Avoid Trivia.”<sup>29</sup>

What Kennan as well as numerous other State Department officials recommended was use of the greatest U.S. strength as well as the most appropriate tool given the nature of the problem, American economic and financial rather than military power, to help rebuild the European economies and Europeans’ faith in themselves.<sup>30</sup> The result would be Marshall’s 5 June 1947 offer of aid at the Harvard Commencement exercises and the congressional passage in early 1948 of the European Recovery Program (ERP), better known as the Marshall Plan, preceded in late 1947 by passage of an interim aid package.

27. Greg Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Time When America Helped Save Europe* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 29.

28. Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:121.

29. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), 326.

30. Marshall later noted sardonically that while many had been urging him “to give the Russians hell” at this time, his “facilities” for doing so consisted of “1 1/3 divisions over the entire United States. That is quite a proposition when you deal with somebody with over 260 and you have 1 1/3.” (Robert H. Ferrell, *George C. Marshall*, vol. 15 in *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell and Samuel Flagg Bemis [New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966], 72–73.)

As numerous diplomatic historians have noted, the ERP had multiple goals that related to, indeed formed the basis of, a new U.S. global strategy.<sup>31</sup> The immediate aim was to halt European despair and defeatism by showing that the United States was willing to help. As British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin stated, Marshall's Harvard Address, lasting only twelve minutes, was like "a lifeline to sinking men."<sup>32</sup> That lifeline would consist of economic and financial aid not only to feed those "sinking men" and restore their confidence and economies so that they would not let Communists take power, but also to enable their nations to eventually re-emerge as alternative power centers in what was then a bipolar world—to recreate a European balance of power so that the United States would not be the only nation attempting to contain the Soviet Union. As John Gaddis has noted, Kennan as the author of the Containment policy would state in this regard that there were "only five centers of industrial and military power in the world which are important to us from the standpoint of national security: the United States, Great Britain, Germany and Central Europe, the Soviet Union, and Japan." With only one of these at that moment in hostile hands, the U.S. aim should be to make certain the others did not fall to the Soviets.<sup>33</sup> That would require the rebuilding of not only Britain and France, but also the three Western zones of occupied Germany, and moves to link them to the West rather than the Soviet Union—a possibility Melvyn Leffler has labeled the "strategic nightmare" of Marshall and other U.S. policy makers. "Unless western Germany during coming year is effectively associated with Western European nations, first through economic arrangements, and ultimately perhaps in some political way," Marshall warned in this regard on 19 February 1948, "there is a real danger that the whole of Germany will be drawn into eastern orbit, with obvious dire consequences for all of us."<sup>34</sup>

But how could this be done without creating the potential for a powerful German military force that could start a third world war as it had the first two? And given this fear, how could the United States possibly obtain French support for German

31. See in particular John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 24–86; Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947–1952* (New York: Cambridge, 1987); Melvyn P. Leffler, "The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan," *Diplomatic History* 12 (1988): 277–306; and Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), esp. 157–218.

32. Quoted in Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure*, 3.

33. Kennan lecture as cited by Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 29. While one cannot and should not assume that Marshall shared all of Kennan's beliefs, he probably did on this point. See, for example, the revised version of Kennan's November 1947 "Resume of the World Situation" (PPS/13) that Marshall read to Truman and the Cabinet in a "re-arranged and somewhat altered" form and subsequently sent to Truman at the president's request (Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:238–45).

34. Leffler, "Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan," 282 (see also 287, 289, and 297–99); and *FRUS, 1948*, 9 vols. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972–1976), 2:70–71.

economic recovery? The key method, and another aim of the Marshall Plan, was to integrate not only the German economy but all the economies of the participating European nations as a way both to produce greater wealth for all and to make less likely future intra-European wars into which the United States might once again get sucked, as it had in 1917 and 1941. Such wars would be highly unlikely, indeed nearly impossible, if these separate economies were in effect dependent upon each other and if Europeans learned to negotiate their differences. As Michael Hogan aptly described it, the American ERP planners sought to “transform political problems” that previously had and could again lead to war “into technical ones that were solvable, they said, when Old European ways of conducting business and old habits of class conflict gave way to American methods of scientific management and corporative collaboration.”<sup>35</sup> Linked to this was the insistence that the Europeans themselves, in collaboration with each other, come up with an integrated plan that would then be subject to negotiations with the Americans.

Marshall had announced that U.S. aid would be directed not at the Soviet Union or any specific country, but instead at “hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos,” and both the Soviets and their East European satellites were invited to join.<sup>36</sup> Stalin sent Molotov to the first meeting, but he withdrew, forced the East European nations that had expressed interest to do likewise, and denounced the plan once he and Stalin realized its multilateral aspects and consequences. Whereas a Germany aligned with the Soviet Union may have been Marshall’s “strategic nightmare,” rebuilding Germany and placing it in the U.S. economic orbit was Stalin’s. He also interpreted the plan, correctly, as an effort to take away his East European empire by linking its economies to the West and an American global economic system.<sup>37</sup> His strong reaction involved not only denunciation of the plan and refusal to allow his East European satellites to participate, but also, as Kennan had predicted, a clampdown that ended the remaining coalition governments in Eastern Europe, including Czechoslovakia, which fell to a Communist coup in February of 1948.<sup>38</sup> Then in June Stalin instituted a full blockade of the Western zones of Berlin, which lay totally within the Soviet occupation zone of Germany as a whole, in an effort to halt the creation of a West Germany currency and state.

Marshall was hospitalized when the blockade began and thus did not participate in the original decision to supply the city by airlift. But he insisted on postponing major surgery in order to deal with the crisis, and he played a major role in forming and maintaining an Anglo-American-French “united front” against the Soviets—even when it involved giving way on specific preferred U.S. diplomatic strategies. As he, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Arthur Vandenberg, and Army Secretary Kenneth Royall agreed on 11 September, “on balance

35. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 19.

36. Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:148.

37. Leffler, “Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan,” 283.

38. Kennan had predicted this consequence in his November 1947 resume cited above in note 33 that Marshall read to Truman and the Cabinet.

the importance of maintaining tripartite unity is the controlling factor and while profoundly disturbed by the dangers of the British and French type approach, we will reluctantly go along for that reason."<sup>39</sup> On 5 October 1948, Marshall also told the Argentinian foreign minister that "We had to build up the Western European situation first and thus prevent the spread of Communism and the complete disintegration of Europe. . . . My primary concern these days was maintaining a solid front between Britain, France, other Western European countries, and ourselves. . . . It was obviously the objective of the Soviets to break this solid front."<sup>40</sup>

Marshall also supported at this time U. S. military aid to the European nations that had recently formed the Western Union and, indeed, a U.S. military commitment to them. He also insisted that such military aid as well as economic assistance should be the top U.S. priority.<sup>41</sup> That fall he discussed these matters in Paris with Bevin and French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, as well as the Berlin crisis and the developing idea of what would become the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Marshall supported the idea and U.S. membership, as well as the Vandenberg resolution in Congress calling for U.S. adherence to such a military alliance. He also emphasized to both Bevin and Schuman "the importance of the atomic bomb as a barrier against war" and consequently the "vital importance" of no weakening in the Western position on atomic weapons in United Nations General Assembly discussions. The bomb, he told Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, was "the principal deterrent to Soviet military aggression now" and served as a "cover force" behind which Western Europeans could construct an effective "holding force."<sup>42</sup> Again and again he spoke of the need to use both the atomic bomb and the ERP to "buy time" to build up Europe and force the Soviets to back away—and thus prevent a world war.

Marshall also faced throughout his tenure as secretary of state congressional demands for more aid to the Nationalist Government in China and calls for U.S. military intervention to prevent the collapse of Chiang's regime—calls that he strongly resisted and that he compared to similar calls during World War II. As he noted in a 18 November 1948 conversation with French Prime Minister Henry Queuille, there was a "striking similarity" between basic U.S. strategy in World War II and in the present. Notwithstanding the success of this Europe-first strategy in the war, 'our present day similar decision is meeting with opposition from various quarters advocating more substantial help to China.'<sup>43</sup> Marshall also rejected efforts by Chiang's congressional

39. *FRUS, 1948*, 2:1147–49. For details on Marshall's abandonment of his desired diplomatic tactics in order to maintain the united front with Britain and France, see Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:551–52 and 561–62.

40. Memorandum of Conversation, 5 October 1948, excerpted in Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:569–70.

41. Marshall to Royal, 23 August 1948, in *ibid.*, 526–27; *FRUS, 1948*, 1:601–2 and 615.

42. Memorandum of Conversation, 4 October 1948, excerpted in Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:568–69. See also Leffler, "Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan," 290–93.

43. Memorandum of Conversation, 18 November 1948, excerpted in Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:624–25. See also 371–82 as previously quoted and cited in note 23.

supporters to link greater aid for China to the Marshall Plan and to equate the situation in that country with the situation in Greece, where the United States was actively engaged in helping the Greek armed forces suppress Communist guerrillas.<sup>44</sup>

Marshall also emphasized the importance of a coalition military strategy against the Soviets, calling upon France to focus on the development of ground forces “and avoid wasting its limited means by trying to create modern air and naval forces” which the United States, Britain, and Canada “already had anyway.” What they lacked was manpower, and in the event of an emergency it would be one to one and a half years before substantial American troops could be sent to France.<sup>45</sup> In the meantime, however, the two U.S. divisions already in Germany for occupation purposes would be placed under the command of the Western Union in the event of war. As Leffler has noted, this “meant that for the first time plans were considered for American troops to make a stand at the Rhine rather than withdraw from continental Europe in the event of a Soviet attack,” as had been expected in the first U.S. contingency plans for war with the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup>

Marshall’s emphasis on Europe was by no means absolute. Furthermore, his definition of what constituted Europe expanded substantially while he was secretary of state so as to include such Mediterranean nations as Greece, Italy, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. During World War II, he and his planners as well as his JCS colleagues had opposed British calls for military operations in these areas, arguing that they would further delay decisive cross-Channel military operations and that, in effect, the Mediterranean did not constitute part of the primary European theater. As Andrew Buchanan has recently shown, neither Roosevelt nor the State Department had agreed with the JCS dismissal of this area during the war;<sup>47</sup> and as secretary of state, Marshall was deeply involved in military as well as diplomatic support of the Greek and Turkish governments, economic support of the Italian government through the ERP, and aid to Marshal Tito’s Communist Yugoslavia after it had broken with Stalin and been expelled from the Cominform.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, as Leffler has explained, the economic recovery of Western European nations led to U.S. support for their continued (albeit somewhat reformed) control of certain colonies in their overseas empires, such as French Indochina, which consequently received Marshall Plan aid both directly and indirectly.<sup>49</sup> In addition, Kennan had listed Japan as one of the major

44. *Ibid.*, 370 and 395–96. “I was endeavoring to convince both the Latin Americans and the Chinese that European recovery was essential to their own well-being,” he stated on 15 July 1948, “whereas sums spent on them would be ineffective in the absence of European recovery.” *Ibid.*, 500–501.

45. *Ibid.*, 624–25.

46. Leffler, “Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan,” 293. For those first plans, see Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1945–1950* (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 25–108.

47. Andrew Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

48. See the extensive documentation on these subjects in Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, vol. 6.

49. Leffler, “Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan,” 302–4; and Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, 164–67.



"centers of industrial and military power" that the United States could not allow to fall into hostile hands.<sup>50</sup> That in turn led to increased interest in Korea. Indeed, Marshall at first opposed the withdrawal of U.S. forces from southern Korea that Secretary of War Robert Patterson had favored and supported aid to the South.<sup>51</sup>

China also remained a major consideration for Marshall as secretary of state, despite the failure of his 1946 mission there and the primacy of Europe. While he strongly opposed any U.S. military involvement in the ensuing civil war and efforts to equate the situation in China with the one in Greece, he continued to support aid to Chiang Kai-shek, even after his eventual defeat became apparent in late 1948. Partially this was the price he had to pay for Republican support of the ERP. Indeed, the China Aid Bill of 1948 was being debated and voted on in Congress at virtually the same time as the ERP. Furthermore, as he stated in rejecting PPS advice to publicly attack and blame Chiang's regime in November for its looming collapse, "He felt this would administer the final coup de grace to Chiang's government and this, he felt, we could not do."<sup>52</sup>

In December of 1948 Marshall underwent major surgery for the removal of one of his kidneys and used this as an excuse to resign and begin a long-delayed and much desired retirement.<sup>53</sup> But when the Korean War began in late June 1950, the Harry S. Truman Administration once again turned to him, first for strategic advice and then for a good deal more. "On about an hour's notice," he confidentially informed Vandenberg, Acheson, special presidential assistant W. Averell Harriman, and State Department officials Kennan and Charles Bohlen drove out to his Leesburg, Virginia, home and "stayed for lunch. You can imagine the character of the discussion." Then Bernard Baruch flew in and stayed until the following afternoon, after which "the President telephoned he wanted me for lunch" on July 5 with Eisenhower and General Omar Bradley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Then on the morning of July 4, Truman called again "before we had gotten up . . . and asked if he might

50. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 29. Kennan also made clear that the United States had strong security interests in other areas as well, such as the Philippines, Central and South America north of the Brazilian bulge, Morocco and the West African coast down to the African bulge, and the "countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East as far east and including Iran." *Ibid.*, 29.

51. Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, 167–68; James Matray, "Fighting the Problem: George C. Marshall and Korea," in *George C. Marshall: Servant of the American Nation*, ed. Charles F. Brower (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 88–95. While he remained a supporter of economic aid to the South, Marshall did shift and by late 1947 favored withdrawal of U.S. military forces.

52. Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking Press, 1951), 534; Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:630–31. See also 472–73, 478–79, and 548–49.

53. Interestingly Marshall agreed to host Madame Chiang Kai-shek at his home while he was undergoing this surgery but rejected the pleas she made at his hospital bedside immediately before and after the surgery for a U.S. military mission headed by "an outstanding American soldier . . . who could be 'the spark plug' of whatever was done." (Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:633–35 and 638–40).

come down which he did arriving at 9:30 our time with Margaret," his daughter, and staying until "about noon." During that visit Army Secretary Frank Pace called and asked Marshall to come to his office on July 5 as well in order to be briefed.<sup>54</sup>

According to Kennan, Acheson after a pessimistic intelligence briefing on the morning of 1 July had

suggested that he, Averell Harriman, Chip Bohlen and myself go out to Leesburg and talk to General Marshall. A phone call was put through to the General, and it was arranged that we should come for lunch. We departed immediately and got out there soon after one o'clock. The General was in fine form. We sat on the lawn under the trees and had our business talk then and there, over our events of the week and the position in which we found ourselves today. The General listened very attentively and silently, as he always does when a problem is being exposed before him, and then gave us his views vigorously and without hesitation.<sup>55</sup>

Those views clearly revealed the extent to which Marshall remained committed to a Europe-first strategy with NATO allies. "Pointing out that all of his statements were based on the very scanty information which the Secretary had just been able to give him and not on any detailed background of fact," Kennan wrote, "he said that there could be no doubt about the proper course for us to pursue. We had begun this thing; now we had to go through with it. *His greatest worry had been that for the sake of Korea we might have risked an alienation of public opinion in Western Europe, which was the area of the greatest real strategic importance. What we had told him had relieved his fears on this point,*" though he was "deeply disturbed" over the conflicts between the State Department and the Defense Department under its secretary, Louis Johnson. As for Korea, Marshall

did not feel that we needed to send more in the way of military support to MacArthur. It was a common failing of commanders in the field to ask for more than they needed, and MacArthur was far from being an exception to this rule. He should be told to do this job with what he had. He could do it if he applied himself to it. The depletion of the forces on Japan was not dangerous. Any amphibious action against Japan would be a great undertaking, and a very risky one in the face of any sizeable air and naval defense. He was particularly concerned about the initial tendency of the Air Force to think that they could do this all alone. That, he said, was the same old thing. The Air Force and the Navy were full of ideas about how

54. Marshall to Vandenberg, 7 July 1950, General, Pentagon Office File, George C. Marshall Papers, George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia (GCMRL). This and all documents from the unpublished Marshall papers quoted and cited below will be reproduced in the forthcoming seventh and final volume of *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*.

55. Frank Costigliola, ed., *The Kennan Diaries* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2014), 257–58. I am deeply indebted to Frank Costigliola for bringing this 1 July 1950 diary entry to my attention before the publication of his edited version of the diaries.

they could do things, and their functions were indeed tremendously important; but when it came down to the last analysis, you could never get along without the "little fellow in the mud."<sup>56</sup>

On the drive back to Washington, the four officials agreed that Marshall should "state his views to the President in the very near future," and Harriman agreed "to get into touch with the President and to make the suggestion." That led to Truman's call and request that Marshall join him, Eisenhower, and Bradley for lunch on 5 July. The purpose of the President's sudden, surprise, and secret visit to Marshall on the 4 July holiday (it was not even recorded in his daily calendar) was to ascertain if Marshall was both physically able and willing to replace Johnson, whom Truman had decided to fire, as secretary of defense. Marshall confided to his goddaughter Rose Page Wilson later that month that "Most confidentially, I have been trembling on the edge of being called again to public service in this crisis . . . I hope I get by unmolested, but when the President motors down and sits under our oaks and tells me of his difficulties, he has me at a disadvantage."<sup>57</sup>

As secretary of defense Marshall would join with Acheson and the JCS to defend and maintain the Europe-first approach despite the existing war in Korea and the massive Communist Chinese military intervention there in November of 1950. Indeed, the North Korean invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950 had convinced the British and French as well as the Americans that, in Acheson's words, "the USSR was prepared to use force" and that a major expansion of NATO military forces was therefore necessary to deter them in Europe. Consequently Marshall would press French Defense Minister Jules Moch in September and October of 1950 to agree to German rearmament within a NATO army. He would also agree with Paul Nitze, who had replaced Kennan as head of the Policy Planning Staff, that "the successful defense of Europe was an integral part of the defense of the United States" and that if a beachhead on the European continent could not be maintained, "a successful outcome of a global war would be hard to foresee."<sup>58</sup>

Another key reason to maintain the Europe-first approach and emphasis on German rearmament despite the war in Korea, indeed ironically because of that war, was a key belief Marshall shared with other administration and military officials: that the massive Chinese military intervention in November of 1950 was a Soviet ploy to suck the United States into an expanded war in Asia so that the Red Army could roll across Western Europe. During a 28 November meeting Marshall

56. *Ibid.*, 258–59, emphasis added.

57. Marshall to Wilson, 24 July 1950, handwritten, J. Page Wilson Collection, GCMRL. See also Robert Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 192–93.

58. *FRUS, 1950*, 7 vols. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976–1980), 3:341, 364–66, 1392–93; memoranda of conversations by Lemnitzer, 13 October 1950, and by Beebe, 16 October 1950, both in CD Memorandum of Conversation, 1950, Record Group (RG) 330 [Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD)], National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland. See also Marshall's Remarks to NATO Defense Ministers, 28 October 1950, Speeches and Statements, Secretary of Defense, Marshall Papers, GCMRL.

and the service secretaries referred to the possibility of a general war with China as “a carefully laid Russian trap” and called instead for a “more rapid buildup” in Western Europe.<sup>59</sup> In line with such thinking, Marshall on the following day strongly supported emergency food aid for Yugoslavia in order to keep “militarily effective and friendly” its army of thirty divisions, “the largest armed force in Europe outside the USSR.”<sup>60</sup> On December 1 Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Lovett stated that there was “a consensus” among Acheson, Marshall, the JCS, Central Intelligence Agency Director Walter Bedell Smith, and him that “Korea is not a decisive area for us,” and that while its loss might lead to the loss of Japan, “Western Europe was our prime concern and we would rather see that result than lose in Western Europe.”<sup>61</sup> Their primary focus thus remained on deterring a Soviet attack on Western Europe by creating a viable NATO military force.

As secretary of defense Marshall continued to view military issues in their broader political context. Acheson later noted in this regard that Marshall did not give “the slightest support to the absurd but prevalent notion that problems of our relations with foreign states had ‘purely military’ aspects and ‘purely political’ or ‘purely economic’ aspects which could be separated in the intellectual equivalent of a cream separator.” To the contrary, while Marshall was in office, “For the first time and, perhaps, though I am not sure, the last, the Secretaries of State and Defense, with their top advisers, met with the Chiefs of Staff in their map room and discussed common problems together.” During one such meeting, Acheson and General Bradley agreed to exclude the phrases “from a military point of view” and “from a political point of view” from their discussions. “No such dichotomy existed,” Acheson noted. “Each of us had our tactical and strategic problems, but they were interconnected, not separate.”<sup>62</sup>

The continued emphasis on Europe did not mean abandonment of Korea. On 4 December, Marshall compared the present situation there to the one the United States had faced in the Philippines after Pearl Harbor and, according to Kennan, “cited this as an example of the virtue of hanging on doggedly for reasons of prestige and morale.”<sup>63</sup> But “our entire international position depended on strengthening western Europe,” Marshall noted according to Truman during a 11 December National Security Council meeting.<sup>64</sup> That required a viable NATO military force, to be based on German rearmament, the appointment of Eisenhower as NATO

59. Jessup memorandum on NSC meeting, 28 November 1950, *FRUS, 1950*, 7:1243; memorandum by service secretaries, 28 November 1950, CD 092, Classified, Central File, RG 330, NARA.

60. Marshall to Connally, 29 November 1950, SD 091 Yugoslavia 1950, Central File, RG 330, NARA.

61. Minutes of meeting, 1 December 1950, *FRUS, 1950*, 7:1279.

62. Acheson, *Sketches From Life*, 162–63; and Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1969), 441.

63. Costigliola, *Kennan Diaries*, 275.

64. Harry S Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1956), 419.

military commander, and the commitment of four additional U.S. divisions to Europe to supplement the two already there.<sup>65</sup>

As had been the case in 1947–48, this Europe-first strategy was by no means limited to the European continent. In light of major Viet Minh victories in the fall, Marshall on 13 October 1950 told French Defense Minister Moch that sending military equipment to Indochina was a "top priority." That included B-26 light bombers that the French desperately desired and that Marshall agreed to have taken "from the pipeline" and shipped as soon as possible. This decision was not altered by the Chinese intervention in Korea the following month, and in early January 1951 Marshall received the personal thanks of French Prime Minister René Pleven for expediting the shipment of these aircraft to Indochina.<sup>66</sup> With the Eighth Army committed to Korea, Marshall also expressed serious concern for the defense of Japan, whose present military weakness, he told Pleven on 29 January, "would be very dangerous if the USSR started a general war."<sup>67</sup> He consequently agreed to send two National Guard divisions there.<sup>68</sup> His primary focus, however, remained NATO; he expressed concern on numerous occasions, for example, about the "drain on training personnel needed in France, which is occurring in Indochina."<sup>69</sup>

Marshall linked these moves to his simultaneous push to get Congress to accept Universal Military Training (UMT), arguing that having a huge force of trained men via this system would act as a deterrent to the Soviets. It was also, he argued, the only way the United States could afford the large armed force needed in light of the commitment to defend Europe militarily and pursue the global commitments to military containment enunciated in NSC-68, as well as the only proper military policy for a democratic society. In this regard, despite his agreement to the huge military spending proposed in NSC-68, Marshall was by nature a fiscal conservative (at least in his own personal affairs) who viewed such spending as dangerous and UMT as a way to lessen it. And while UMT was an old pet idea of his

65. The new NATO military commander, Eisenhower, would assert at a 31 January 1951 cabinet meeting an additional reason for the Europe-first approach: "Western Europe is the seat of our culture and our civilization. Our literature, our art, our religions, our system of government and our ideas of justice and democracy all come from Western Europe." Memorandum, "Meeting of General Eisenhower with the President and the Cabinet," 31 January 1951, available online at ([http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/nato/large/documents/pdfs/1-4.pdf](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/nato/large/documents/pdfs/1-4.pdf))

66. See 13 and 16 October 1950 minutes of meetings cited in note 58 above; *FRUS, 1950*, 3:1427–28; *FRUS, 1950*, 6:899–901; memorandum of conversation by Murdaugh, 5 January 1951, CD Memorandum of Conversation, 1951, RG 330, NARA; Bonnet to Marshall, 2 January 1951, and telegram, DEF-36867, Marshall to Pleven, 6 January 1951, Number Indexed, M200-7-43, Correspondence, Secretary of Defense, Marshall Papers, GCMRL.

67. *FRUS, 1951*, 7 vols. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977–1985), 4:309.

68. Memorandum, Lovett to Bradley, 23 February 1951, Chronological, Director, ExecOffice (Marshall S. Carter), 1950–1952, Correspondence, Secretary of Defense, Marshall Papers, GCMRL.

69. *FRUS, 1951*, 4:319.

and his friend John Macauley Palmer, Marshall now linked it to the present situation by attaching it to the extension of the 1948 draft in the so-called Universal Military Service and Training Act (UMST), arguing before Congress that UMT would deter the Soviets in Europe and that had it existed previously it would have deterred the Communists from attacking South Korea.<sup>70</sup>

In light of this Europe-first strategy and these beliefs, Marshall and the JCS refused to agree with General MacArthur's proposals to bomb Chinese "sanctuaries" in Manchuria and to use Nationalist Chinese troops on Formosa against them. Soviet aircraft in Manchuria would in turn bomb U.S. "sanctuaries" in South Korea and Japan, which Marshall made clear were much more concentrated and vulnerable than those in Manchuria. Furthermore, Formosa would be defenseless if Nationalist troops went to Korea; and those troops would be defeated if they attempted to land on the mainland, as they had been just a few years earlier.

MacArthur's refusal to accept this Europe-first global strategy, or to keep his mouth shut regarding his disagreement with it, would lead to his relief in April of 1951 and an uproar in the United States, one that fused with pre-existing political opposition in Congress to the Europe-first approach and the commitment of U.S. ground forces to NATO. On 20 December 1950, former President Herbert Hoover had publicly proposed instead a "Western Hemisphere Gibraltar" policy based on unilateral defense of the Western Hemisphere and its Atlantic and Pacific approaches with air and sea power. He would be joined by numerous former isolationists and by those who favored an "Asia-first" policy and who had bitterly accused the Truman Administration, including Marshall, of "losing" China to the Communists. The result would be the so-called "Great Debate" over sending troops to NATO and the importance of Europe versus Asia versus the Western Hemisphere, as well as the power of the president to send troops to NATO without congressional sanction.<sup>71</sup>

70. See, for example, Marshall's 10 January 1951 Senate testimony in Senate Committee on Armed Services, Preparedness Subcommittee, *Universal Military Training and Service Act of 1951: Hearings . . .*, 82nd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1951); and his 23 January House testimony in House Committee on Armed Services, *Universal Military Training: Hearings . . .*, 82nd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 8–41. Although Congress passed this bill, it did so with a series of provisos regarding UMT, and the program was never implemented.

71. See Doris M. Condit, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: The Test of War, 1950–1953* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 339; Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 488–93; and John W. Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1965), 151–64. Marshall would play a major role in taking "the wind out of the sails of the opposition" when he revealed in Senate testimony that only four additional divisions would be sent to Europe. He also linked this decision to previous Senate passage of the ERP as well as the Vandenberg Resolution and NATO, and he made clear that while the number of U.S. divisions being committed was small, they would make "a tremendous morale contribution to the effectiveness and build up of the projected ground forces" the other NATO nations were then "undertaking to develop under General Eisenhower's direction and command." See his 15 February 1951 statement before the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees in *Speeches and Statements, Secretary of Defense, Marshall Papers, GCMRL*.



All of this would result in special hearings after MacArthur's relief, during which Marshall was the first and main spokesperson for the Europe-first approach. He would be forced to testify for twenty-eight hours over seven days in early May 1951, testimony that would take up more than 400 printed pages (and 1,100 of typescript) in addition to many more pages of classified statements. The official history of the Office of the Secretary of Defense has accurately described these days as "long, tiring and repetitious because he had to answer the same questions over and over," but noted that Marshall "effectively countered MacArthur's call for victory at any cost and set the stage for the Joint Chiefs, Acheson, and others who had yet to testify."<sup>72</sup>

Marshall in his testimony consistently emphasized that MacArthur's proposals would lead not to victory but to a world war in which the Soviets could overrun Western Europe. There was "no question" in his mind that the Soviet aim was "to have us bled white in Korea. . . .—to have us more completely engaged there than we can afford to be, in view of the situation, the vulnerability of Western Europe." While admitting that Korea was of strategic importance to the United States, he added the proviso if "we can afford, and find it possible to maintain it," for "it is not absolutely vital." Furthermore, bombing the Communist "sanctuaries" in Manchuria as MacArthur proposed would free them to bomb the more concentrated and vulnerable American "sanctuaries" in Pusan and Japan. It could also easily result in a world war since, as he revealed in classified testimony, Soviet pilots and technicians had been operating MIG fighters in Manchuria while Soviet personnel were involved in the laying of mines and the antiaircraft system around the North Korean capitol of Pyongyang. European military contributions in Korea were small, he stated in classified response to a question, because the JCS preferred NATO members to strengthen their still-weak forces in Europe first.<sup>73</sup>

Marshall also used the hearings as an opportunity (via leading questions from Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson and others) to emphasize the importance of passing the UMST bill. He further emphasized this bill and the Europe-first approach in his late June and early July testimony before a House committee on the 1951 Mutual Security Act, with NATO countries to receive the bulk of the military aid provided in that bill. In his testimony Marshall directly linked this military aid to the economic aid that the ERP had provided since 1948, stating that "As the reviving economies of Europe diminished the threat of internal subversion,

72. Condit, *The Test of War*, 108.

73. The unclassified portions of Marshall's Senate testimony from 7 to 14 May 1951 can be found in Senate Committee on Armed Services and Committee on Foreign Relations, *Military Situation in the Far East: Hearings . . . to Conduct an Inquiry into the Military Situation in the Far East and the Facts Surrounding the Relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur from His Assignments to That Area*, 82nd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 321–723. The classified portions were declassified in 1975. They are described in John E. Wiltz, "The MacArthur Hearings of 1951: The Secret Testimony," *Military Affairs* 39 (December 1975): 167–72, and are in Records of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, RG 46, NARA. Volume 7 of the Marshall Papers will contain Marshall's complete opening statement and a daily summary of his replies to Senate questions, including all of the quotes used above.

the fear of external aggression became the great menace to the stability of our common effort." The Mutual Defense Act of 1949, for which he had previously testified while in retirement, had recognized this and now had to be updated and expanded substantially. Although the act had sent military equipment to numerous parts of the world, two-thirds of it had gone to Western Europe. Building up European military forces remained the most important purpose in the new act. "Is it not a fact that this is the pay-off vote on the big debate," asked Representative Jacob Javits of New York. "In other words, we are asked to decide whether we are to go it alone or have allies, and the Mutual Security Program represents saying that we want allies?" "That is correct, sir," Marshall responded. And when Asia-firster Walter Judd of Minnesota asked Marshall if he thought that "the independence of Asia is essential to the independence and security of Europe," Marshall responded negatively. The loss of Asia would have an "adverse effect" on the defense of Europe, he admitted, but "I do not think it would be fatal" to that defense. He also reiterated his previously expressed belief "that we should not become involved in fighting on the mainland of Asia" and added that "We should not lessen our efforts for the defense of Europe because of the Pacific."<sup>74</sup>

In his late July 1951 testimony on this bill before the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, Marshall also reiterated the essential point that had undergirded the entire Europe-first approach since 1940, if not earlier. In response to a question regarding the impact on the United States should Europe "fall," Marshall warned that "there would be built up under the Soviets' domination a productive power that would exceed ours, which would very markedly change our position in the world. We would have the Atlantic dominated on the far side by governments hostile to our purpose. That would extend into the Mediterranean. Our whole position would be one of isolation which we could only successfully defend by a tremendous military buildup." In addition, "We would be affected economically in other ways than those I just referred to. It would put us in an extremely perilous position, I feel, and our national existence would be threatened."<sup>75</sup>

With the commitment of U.S. ground forces to NATO, the passage of both the UMST bill and the 1951 Mutual Security Bill, the completion of the peace treaty with Japan, and the simultaneous beginning of armistice negotiations in Korea, Marshall resigned as secretary of defense in September 1951 and began his richly reserved retirement.

\* \* \*

74. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The Mutual Security Program: Hearings* . . . , 82nd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 81–124, quotes from 81, 94, and 118. For Marshall's testimony on the 1949 Mutual Assistance Act, see Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:341–43.

75. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Committee on Armed Services, *Mutual Security Act of 1951: Hearings* . . . , 82nd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 43–45.

Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, all U.S. military and diplomatic initiatives stemmed from the basic premises, first enunciated by military planners in the interwar years and then expanded in 1940–41, that America's vital interests lay in the Atlantic and with European allies rather than in Asia and the Pacific, and that either the Western Hemisphere could not be successfully defended against a hostile power dominating all of Europe because of that continent's greater industry and population, or such an effort would turn the nation into a garrison state. Although at first attracted to the continental/hemispheric school of thought, Marshall played a key role in the development and acceptance of these ideas by the Army in late 1940 and 1941, and consequently in the creation of basic Anglo-American war plans for a Germany-first strategy. He also played a key role in the creation after Pearl Harbor of the key concepts and machinery for Anglo-American cooperation—most notably unity of command and the CCS—and with his close friend Field Marshal Sir John Dill, in the expansion and success of that body.<sup>76</sup> The lessons he learned from these experiences carried over into the postwar years, most notably in the ERP—which was as much a strategy as any major military move. So was the formation of a solid Anglo-American-French front against the Soviets during the Berlin blockade crisis of 1948–49, and his willingness to give way on specific diplomatic tactics in order to maintain this front. So was his support for an American transatlantic military commitment that led to the formation of NATO, and his insistence as secretary of state that the rebuilding and defense of Western Europe was the top U.S. priority.

Marshall aptly summarized the relationship between his wartime and postwar policies in this regard in a public address after his retirement as secretary of state, stating on 18 May 1949 that "As Secretary of State I found the problems from the viewpoint of geographical location and of pressures to be almost identical in many respects with those of the war years. There was the same problem between the East and the West. There were the same limitations as to our capabilities. There were the same pressures at home and abroad in regard to various areas. And there was the same necessity for a very steady and determined stand in regard to these various problems."<sup>77</sup>

As he had during World War II, Marshall as secretary of state provided that "very steady and determined stand." He did so again as secretary of defense in 1950–51 in the face of two of the most serious threats to the postwar policy

76. See Alex Danchev, *Very Special Relationship: Field-Marshal Sir John Dill and the Anglo-American Alliance, 1941–1944* (London: Brassey's, 1986).

77. Address to National Institute of Social Sciences, 5 May 1948, in Bland and Stoler, *Marshall Papers*, 6:711. In retirement Marshall reiterated this point by warning during a 13 May 1953 address at the University of Louisville that "we must not spread ourselves too thinly over troubled areas of the world. We, in effect, must put our finger in the dike at one place while we first accomplish great things in another, though each region has its special pleaders in our midst. Our great trouble during the war was that the public and much Congressional pressure was to do everything at once. Which would have meant doing nothing effectively anywhere and very probably being defeated by an enemy who concentrated." (Speeches and Statements, Retirement, Marshall Papers, GCMRL).

of Europe-first and alliance with West European nations: the Chinese Communist intervention in Korea and the refusal of MacArthur to accept this global strategy—a refusal which also constituted one of, if not the most serious threats to civilian control of the military in U.S. history. In the process, Marshall emphasized what Americans tend to forget: that diplomacy and war are always linked, that power is always limited, and that choices always need to be made and priorities established so as to create an appropriate relationship between desired ends and available means. That is, after all, what strategic planning is all about.