The Revolution will not be Telegraphed;
What Kennan, Roosevelt and Acheson can tell us about America’s Position in Europe

David Raymond Skorski
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone (717) 756-8697
davidskorski@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper presents Kennan, Roosevelt and Acheson each as representing a different school of American Foreign Policy towards Europe during the late 1940’s, with Kennan promoting an independent Europe, Roosevelt planning a divided Europe to be ignored by the United States and Acheson creating the United States as a European power. The last view served as the ideological impetus for American support of NATO during the Cold War. Since the end of the Cold War, greater policy innovation has been made possible by the decline in tension and expanding reach of supranational institutions on the European Continent. However, the United States still keeps substantial forces in Europe. This paper seeks to explain the basis for the US commitment to Europe in the post-Cold War in context of these three viewpoints. The final section deals with the argument and its implications for the Obama Administration.
Introduction

Despite the passing of six decades since the end of the Second World War and two since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States retains substantial forces in Europe. Why is this so? Surely, if the European environment has not fully changed to a postmodern realm of security, it is much closer than any other continent, perhaps aside from North America (Kagan 2002). The sheer length of time during which the American commitment to Europe has persevered denotes the incredible vitality and importance of the ideological basis that created that commitment in the first place. While the great thinkers of antiquity or the Founding Fathers could provide the raw materials to establish discrete lines of thought and profitable points of view for explaining current trends, this paper looks to the period of time shortly before the creation of the commitment itself. It is here, beginning during the depths of the Second World War and ending with the formation of NATO that we look to investigate three grand lines of American thought on the role of the United States vis-à-vis Europe.

These three schools of thought progress chronologically, with FDR’s view of Europe dominant from mid-1943 to his death followed by George F. Kennan and finally Dean Acheson using their positions in the State Department to promote specific relationships with the United States in Europe. The intellectual investment given during the years of the German question was intense and created perspectives that have relevance today in the evolution of US-EU relations. Harper establishes that these schools are epitomized by Roosevelt’s weak and atomized Europe, the robust structure of Kennan’s independent super Europe or what became Acheson’s design of America as a European power (1994). Considering the US accession to NATO and the continuing presence of American forces in Europe, it appears that Acheson’s model is closer to today’s reality. Nevertheless, it is still worthwhile to explore the three different schools of
thought because the other two present articulated strategies can contextualize the actions that the United States has taken towards Europe in an intellectually profitable manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School of Thought</th>
<th>Prescription for Europe</th>
<th>Number of Germanys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rooseveltianism</td>
<td>A weak, atomized Continental Europe, dominated by outside forces</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennanism</td>
<td>A strong Europe, capable even of resisting the United States</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achesonianism</td>
<td>America as European Power, Europe useful but not independent of US control</td>
<td>Two</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As well as context, in this paper we seek to evaluate how these three perspectives can be used to identify departures from what became the established Achesonian consensus. As Schlesinger put it “the conduct of policy is subject to cyclical fluctuations of withdrawal and return…American concepts of foreign policy respond to the old argument between experiment and destiny” (1986, 51). For us, the three perspectives act as different destinies for the United States and experiments are the mechanisms to move towards or away from these given visions of the United States. Of particular interest are several recent developments in Eastern and Central Europe which are dealt with towards the end of the paper.

Under the original Rooseveltian vision, the United States did not have a long-term military or other engagement with Europe. However, this year marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the presence of US forces in Germany. Thus, the process that led the United States to radically switch policy must be examined for the lines of thought that provided the foundation that held stable until the end of the Cold War. This paper seeks to tease out the resilient lines of
thought that have acted as grooves, providing frameworks for understanding American policy in Europe since the end of the Cold War.

**Notes on the Use of the Three Perspectives as Discrete Opinions**

The historical record is not settled with regards to the differences between the three different viewpoints explained by this paper. Most of this resides within the division between Acheson and Kennan. Roosevelt died before Kennan or Acheson came to positions of real power in the State Department, and his views are much different than the other two. However, considering that Acheson was Kennan’s boss for some of the time discussed in this paper, it is important to establish that the two perspectives are different enough to provoke meaningful comparisons.

For instance, the harshest language McAllister wrote in his work on “The German Question” is directed at the historical ‘lumpers’ who characterize the American Foreign Policy establishment of the post-War era as a “triumph of liberal internationalism over the dark forces of nationalistic isolation” as “simplistic” (McAllister 2002, 247). This seems directed at theorists such as Jack Snyder, who identifies Acheson as the most important of the Internationalists pushing for the US to become a European power. While he correctly identifies the prescription as heading off a Soviet threat and engaging the United States in the internal workings of European security, he errs by attributing it to too many doctors (Snyder 1991, 225). For instance, Snyder’s identification of Kennan’s focus on West Germany’s industrial strength to oppose the growing Soviet menace does indicate that Kennan saw the future security of the United States as resting in a specific vision of Europe (Snyder 1991, 258). However, Snyder misses the important but subtle point that this vision was not the same as Acheson’s. Kennan
repeatedly voiced his opinion that perceptions of a US occupation could encourage the nationalistic elements of Germany that had led to Hitlerism (Harper 1994, 211). Opposing this view, Acheson laid the groundwork for the physical commitment of US forces in Germany that has lasted till the present day. Snyder’s reading of the time period unconditionally places these two individuals on the same team despite their hugely different perception of the role of the US in Europe. Simply put, his analysis under-represents the diversity of opinions regarding the proper US role in Europe between the most stalwart of Europhile elites, especially those who feared the United States becoming a European power.

In another case of historical lumping, Layne has presented the conclusion that Kennan’s “‘independent power’ meant power independent of Moscow but subservient to Washington” (2004, 67). If this were true, it would present a major problem in presenting three discrete points of view if the difference between Acheson and Kennan’s viewpoints were too trivial to foster serious scholarship. Layne has a point in that it would make little sense for the United States to willingly construct allies that would immediately seek to turn on them. However, Kennan saw the presence of Western European power as forming an essential part of the “natural barriers to Russian power, [including] the British Empire [and] Germany” (Harper 1994, 194). Considering that the Western Europeans were the ones most directly confronted by Soviet power during the mid-1940s, in Kennan’s eyes the Europeans would have little space to oppose the United States for the foreseeable future. Additionally, Jervis makes the point that “it is the exception rather than the rule for states to stay on the path of moderation when others do not force them to do so” (2009, 11). Thus, it is very reasonable to propose that Kennan wanted an independent Europe that would free the United States from an unneeded commitment in Central Europe that would distract resources from the “adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of
constantly shifting geographical and political points” called for in the Sources of Soviet Conduct (Kennan 1946, Part 3 Para 1). The fact that some of the side effects of his prescription could have become problematic in the long run is no reason to doubt his enthusiasm for the point of view he espoused.

**Rooseveltianism**

The grand question was how would the United States be able to prevent the next war from happening with the same players? Rooseveltianism’s answer is and was a system of balkanization and isolation that would promote inefficiencies and make forming a viable military machine impossible. This was seen as the only way of “[saving] Europe from its destructive impulses and [preventing] its conflicts from engulfing the rest of the world,” a policy of economically limiting Germany was called for (Harper 2004, 23).

The main way Roosevelt considered this was by shattering of Germany into around five or more states based upon “religious, dynastic, linguistic, and cultural divisions” (FRUS 1943, 3: 21-22). The fact that such a proposal was practical at the time underscores the incredible fluidity of the time period. However, despite the power the United States held at the end of the war over Germany, the trouble would be making the reversal of Bismarck’s hard-fought work permanent. Roosevelt held that the allies “should encourage the differences and ambitions that will spring up within Germany [and] even if that spontaneous desire [should] not spring up…Germany must be divided into several states” (Harper 1994, 92). In one example, Bavaria was to be reborn with the identity of a solidly Catholic country, creating a halfway point between Austria and the other states of Germany. Similarly, Alsace-Lorraine would form part of an agglomeration of the Low Countries after being removed from the claims of both France and Germany (FRUS 1943,
In short, the number of new nations that the Rooseveltian prescription called was around five to seven, an incredible division of German power (Eisenberg 1996, 24).

Roosevelt knew that these divisions work would require more than mere political divisions. The very idea of German unity was to be attacked on both a linguistic and philosophical level, with a goal of “not to leave in the German mind the concept of the Reich” with the term “stricken from the language” (FRUS, Conference at Tehran, 510). Roosevelt received support from this issue from Stalin who agreed about the necessity to prevent the formation of “large frameworks within which the Germans could operate” (FRUS, Conference at Tehran, 603). Harper considers the evaluation of Stalin’s beliefs by Charles Bohlen to be similar to those of Roosevelt, in that “Germany is to be broken up and kept broken up” without recourse to “federations or associations” that could potentially break the attempted balkanization (1994, 93). So restricted, it would be inevitable that Germany and Europe generally, would be incapable of the dynamism that had made it so dangerous during the two World Wars.

This impotence would reduce the need for US interventions on the continent. Additionally, the UK and USSR were meant to be the first responders to prevent aggression, and be the only powers to commit troops to such an intervention. In any case, Roosevelt thought it unlikely that the US would bother itself to commit anything more than “American planes and ships” in the case of European emergency (FRUS Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 531). Thus, the vast majority of forces (and an outsize proportion of casualties) would inevitably come from the UK and USSR who would be forced to deploy troops, while the United States remained aloof. As the Manhattan Project unfolded, Roosevelt postulated that this difference in forces and level of commitment would be more than compensated for by the American nuclear monopoly and the resulting increase in potency for American airpower (Harper 1994, 109). However, even
before the acquisition of the atomic bomb by the USSR, the Rooseveltian prescription had begun to run into some serious difficulties.

**Rooseveltian Plans for the Post-War Era**

Before the end of the Second World War, the United States had given serious consideration to what the post-war economic landscape would resemble. Its main proponent in the Roosevelt Administration was Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, after whom the plan was named. Thus, the Morgenthau plan was a prime example of the Rooseveltian mindset specifically applied to Germany. This harsh plan included reparations of goods and machinery (primarily to the USSR) as repayment for wartime devastation (Wettig 2008, 34). Germany would be forced to return to an agricultural economy as part of an internal shift that would break its dominance of European heavy industry in keeping with Roosevelt’s idea of a weak Europe (Wettig 2008, 34). Thus limited, Germany would be economically incapable of rising to fight the powers of Europe again, freeing American forces from a long occupation period or having to martially rebalance the continent every generation.

The mechanism for ensuring that Europe’s power base decayed centered on Germany’s industrial capabilities. Morgenthau’s plan intended to solve the issue by preventing the “building up of Europe” and returning Germany into a pastoral landscape for all time (Eisenberg 1996, 66). Indeed, he stipulated that the actions of the US Zone Commander were not to “foster the rehabilitation of German Industry or to increase the dependence of other countries upon the German economy” (Eisenberg 1996, 66). In short, the Rooseveltians saw the German aggression as a constant force that would inevitably lead to additional wars if Germany was ever allowed to recover its position in the European economy. The effect of a destroyed Germany on the wider
European economy was not addressed, though this would quickly raise doubts about the feasibility of the plan.

For Roosevelt, this mindset broke down into a number of different motivations. First, the United States would be able to remove itself relatively quickly from Europe, which fit quite nicely with what had been a near perennial American distain for foreign intervention (Thomas, 326). Part of the attractiveness of the practical Rooseveltian prescription was that its acceptance peaked during the violence of the Second World War. Indeed, the allied leaders were passionate enough to willingly describe themselves as “bloodthirsty” (Eisenberg 1996, 57). The same Secretaries of War, Treasury and State who discussed managing Post-War Germany at lunch had been discussing destroying the capabilities of wartime Germany at breakfast and would again at dinner. It should be unsurprising then that in the heady days of the war a level of intellectual continuity emerged.

The ideological justification for the Rooseveltian prescription for Germany was the experience of the Holocaust. Aside from influencing several of the policy-makers personally, it served to dehumanize the German citizens who would shortly be under the purview of the allied powers. In Roosevelt’s eyes it was clear that the “German nation as a whole must have it driven home to them that [they have] been engaged in a lawless conspiracy against the decencies of civilization” (Eisenberg 1996, 36). Thus framed, Rooseveltianism captures a theme of original sin specific to Europe that contrasted with an intrinsic decency of the United States, whose responsibility would be ensuring that this sort of thing would never happen again. The United States did not just want to economically limit Germany and stifle European recovery, but the logic of the argument dictated that this was the only responsible thing to do.
Despite the fact that Kennan was in Moscow at the time and was not privy to these conversations, the Rooseveltian perspective was already under major assault in Washington. One of the sharpest critics of the Rooseveltian plan in the Administration was Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, who realized that condemning a population of “seventy million educated, efficient and imaginative people [to] such a low level of subsistence” as Roosevelt prescribed would inevitably lead to conflict (Stimson and Bundy 1948, 578). Additionally, Stimson feared (as Kennan did later) that the United States’ role as jailor of Germany would not allow speedy troop reductions and could prove to be unstable and dehumanizing commitment (Eisenberg 1996, 82). However, he did not nearly go as far as Kennan or Acheson in desiring or planning for a new Germany to lead Europe back to health. His path to a peaceful Germany involved a limited industrial capacity and middle-class existence that would allow Germany to resist extremist ideologies.

At its most basic level, Rooseveltianism encapsulates a rejection of Europe as the central fault line for global politics. Rather than peace coming about through internationalization or the union of European power, this theory of American policy is to break the bases and forces of European consolidation to dilute power potential and thus create a subservient continent that would be incapable of resisting or threatening the United States ever again. This divided continent would be squeezed between the United Kingdom and the USSR under the ‘Four Policemen’ strategy espoused by Roosevelt, with the result being a continually anemic Europe. The cooperation of both was to be bought with US agreement on Russia’s position on the status of the Baltic States and the continuation of the Imperial Preference system. With the “cooperating gendarmes” keeping Europe from ascendancy, the United States would be free to
refocus on South American and other commercial ventures in a post-colonial world (Harper 1994, 81).

**Rooseveltian’s Prescription Fails to Outlast its Progenitor**

The greatest defeat to Morgenthau and his supporters came with the death of President Roosevelt shortly before the end of hostilities with Germany. President Truman was less inclined towards enforcing a harsh peace on Germany and fired Morgenthau before the negotiations to determine the post-war order at Potsdam even began (Eisenberg 1996, 91). This change left the executive branch without many of its harsh peace supporters, but their impact on American policy lingered. For instance, Morgenthau influenced the development of the white paper JCS 1067, which dictated the terms of a constrictive occupation. The paper eventually became the basis for negotiation at the Potsdam conference and created a harsher occupation than would likely have been the case (Eisenberg 1996, 118). Unfortunately, this continuity did not reflect the changes that the State Department and other moderate factions were successfully propagating, thus resulting in an agreement that did not fit the needs or desires of the US Military Government in Germany.

Because of the changing realities of governing a civilian population, the Military Administration quickly began to act independently as it saw necessary. The situation was not improved as it became increasingly clear that the objectives of the occupation were both vague and contradictory. For example, when the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee tried to introduce practical guidelines for the document they could only come up with three unordered goals. These were “to disarm Germany economically and demilitarize her” and “to exact from Germany a proper amount and character of reparations within a fixed period of time...in a way
which will permit Germany ultimately to sustain a peace economy without outside assistance” (Eisenberg 1996, 117). The fact that even a panel of committed experts could not divine rules, hierarchy or even conditions for success opened the door for a new school of thought to arise.

It is important to note that this confusion was not merely due to the diverging interests of the United States, United Kingdom and the USSR, however. It was in part due to old divisions within the US delegation. While the rhetoric of the Yalta conference in 1945 bordered on the psychotic, these passions had faded when confronted with the realities of subjugating and sustaining the German population. Specifically, the US was aware that while its Allies would require aid, levels of food would be delivered to Germany. Simply put, now that Eisenhower was running a third of Germany, he was responsible for the survival and well-being of its denizens.

**Kennanism**

There were three major differences between Kennan’s perspective and the earlier Rooseveltian view. The first of these was the formation of a Europe that could hold its own when pressed from the East by Russia. Second was the mechanism to create this entity. He held that the best way to do this would be for the western sections of a divided Germany (and similarly divided Austria) to join with “Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy and France,” thereby creating a solid bloc of Continental power (Harper 1994, 187). While Kennan was enthusiastic about accepting a divided Germany into his European alliance, it is important to note that he generally favored the expansion of German power, and would have much preferred to have a full western-influenced Germany in his Club of Continentals than only West Germany. The final and most important facet of this view is the fact that the English and Americans were supposed to externally support this structure rather than becoming entangled.
Kennan deeply believed that it was in the interest of the United States to facilitate the growth of the western democracies. He thought of the industrialized regions of Europe and East Asia as the “natural [barriers] to Russian power, [namely] the British Empire, Germany and Japan” (Harper 1994, 194). However, the American commitment of resources were meant to be temporary commitments so that the United States could more forcefully present itself in other parts of the world and also invest more in making the country stronger internally, both of which integral to Kennan’s plan for the Cold War. Thus, it was ultimately the responsibility of the Europeans to “solve their own problems,” given the backdrop of American reassurance (Harper 1994, 191). The appropriate American response to address the predicament of the western powers of Europe would be to deliver both patient advice and support.

The immediate need for economic support would eventually lead to Kennan playing an instrumental role in the shift towards the Marshall Plan. Kennan saw the initiative as “[breaking] through the confusion of wartime pro-sovietism, wishful thinking, Anglo-phobia and self-righteous punitivism in which our occupational policies in Germany had thus far been enveloped” (Harper 1994, 197). As Harper describes, “the purpose of the plan, as Kennan saw it was not to divide Europe but hasten its reunification, not to entangle the United States but to allow it to go home” (Harper 1994, 199). The reduction of US physical support for Europe would allow the United States to have the freedom to choose when and where to oppose the Soviet Union while the USSR would have to exhaust itself opposing a strong Europe.

Indeed, the symbolic effects of the plan were just as important as the economic ones. One of the major benefits of the Marshall Plan in Kennan’s eyes was the destigmatization of a strong and rich Germany. This removal of one of the main ideological impediments to integration he thought would prove to be vital because Kennan’s central thought about the
relationship between the United States and Germany (and Western Europe generally) was that the US’s role was to remain outside of Europe, especially given Europe’s traditional strength vis-à-vis Eastern Bloc (Harper 1994, 201). Freedom from having to defend Europe would grant the United States maximum strategic flexibility while tying down Russia in what he saw as an over-expansionist and unstable posture across what would become the Warsaw Pact.

Kennan’s view of Germany indicates that he saw its natural and desirable path towards a leading role in Europe’s future. However, his view was significantly more nuanced, as he described in January of 1948. First, he accepted the danger of an over-strong and improperly balanced or restrained Germany that would lead to conflict. The second fear that he discussed was a Germany too weak to oppose the USSR. However, there is substantial evidence that Kennan did not take this scenario as seriously as the previous one. For example, the level of commitment that Kennan had to German unification was not so much tied to any one prescription than it was directionally oriented. Put simply, he wanted to get as much centralization for Germany as was practicable given the foreign policy debate at the given time in the United States. He had held pro-German sentiments for some time, even claiming during 1940 that “regardless of what happened to Hitler German unity was ‘a fact’” (Harper 1994, 207). Even his acceptance of the division of Europe shows an appetite for claiming as much as possible before the Soviets could. Clearly, with regards to Germany’s potential power, Kennan feared too little as opposed to too much.

Kennan desired a Germany securely tethered to her neighbors with her formerly destructive impulses channeled towards greater European integration and stability. Indeed, without this German keystone, there was little point in ever attempting to create a strong European regional organization as it would not fulfill what Kennan saw as its primary objective,
that of yoking Germany to Europe. Kennan’s belief was that this would mitigate Germany’s “defiant nationalism” and give the country a new avenue to vent its energies (FRUS 1948, 1: 510-29). However, it is important to note that within this framework the role of the United States would be extremely limited, with an emphasis on “[forcing] the German to take responsibility” (FRUS 1948, 1:510-29). Kennan thought that the idea of German independence would help Europe to integrate. This made sense to him because the other western powers would have to make the institutions to guide and constrain Germany as German strength reasserted itself. The promise of responsibility was for him simply a tool to put even more pressure on the Europeans to institutionally bind Germany into a pattern of acceptable behavior.

While a divided Germany was at odds with Kennan’s worldview that called for a strong base for the distraction of Soviet power, he did adjust his formulation for solving the German problem accordingly. Specifically, he saw the loss of farmland in the east to be a threat to the integrity of Western German and a potential source of Soviet power. Until other Europeans could provide for Germany, the US would have no recourse but to “rescue the Western zones of Germany by walling them off against eastern penetration” (FRUS 1946, 5:519). Kennan saw that if a Germany that was to resist Russia was to arise, it would have to be free from dependence on the Eastern bloc for basic supplies, such as foodstuffs.

Additional insight into Kennan’s thought processes came from his response to his critics who thought that Europe was at best unready to become an integrated center of power. Of course, much of this resistance came from European Governments themselves, who consider themselves exhausted. In any case, that they uncertain that they were destined to become a third power center from which to both bulwark the West and restrain any haphazard ambitions of the United States in Europe. On some level, he was aware that a line of thought existed within
different European Governments that wanted US forces to remain in Europe. Both perceptions and some measure of reality indicated that after years of war, Europe was unable to bring itself together alone. Kennan was definitely cognizant of the fact that the same support provided by the United States to enable integration was also disincentivizing the Europeans out of providing for themselves. He saw this road as leading to a dependency that would prove taxing to the United States despite some European government’s benign acceptance. He raged that it was “Europe’s pathetic weakness, and Europe’s consciousness of that weakness” that was preventing France, Britain and the Nordic countries from taking the psychological initiative towards building a unified Europe (Harper 1994, 201). The reason that this course of events was doubly damning in his eyes was that it presented both the shirking of the European duty to digest Germany and presented a bleeding ulcer that dimmed strength for US endeavors elsewhere.

By 1948, Kennan had become irritated with the Western Europeans at the slow pace they had taken in forming the institutional structure to house Germany. He decided the process needed to be kick started by forming a state that would simply have to be dealt with. During the period from 1946-48 Kennan vacillated between different tactical proposals designed primarily to put the Soviets off balance and prevent them from comfortably digesting Eastern Europe, while maintaining western Germany in an American dominated orbit. He saw the US’s position as more tenable and amenable to the domestic forces of West Germany than the situation that presented the USSR in East Germany. Accordingly, he stressed the inevitability of both US and Soviet retreat from central Europe, proclaiming that “someday Germany must again become a sovereign and independent entity” (FRUS 1948, 2:1287-1297 –Cited in Harper 207). Specifically, this was to be done with the “withdrawal of foreign troops to seaside garrison area, free elections for Germany and the creation of a central government” (Harper 1994, 207). It was
his thought that political will on the part of the other Europeans would flow from these indications that Germany was regaining her autonomy, leading to faster integration. However, this prompted an unfavorable European response, since several the continental countries, notably France, found the idea of a resurgent Germany unacceptable. In Kennan’s view these concerns were subsidiary to the needs of programs to remove Soviet control from Central and Eastern Europe. Kennan himself portrayed this dichotomy as a “choice of whether we should do things which we think in the long run will undermine the power of Western Europe or things that would cause us to depart from the company of our allies” (Harper 1994, 208). While the US might lose popularity and influence in Europe, acting like a politician was simply unacceptable. Kennan, after all, was a professional (Kennan 1967, 413-414).

But not only did Kennan view a strengthened Germany as a prerequisite for a strong Europe, but the idea of a strong Germany was needed to end the atrophy of Germany’s leaders. Without having responsibility “thrust upon them” by the United States, it was unlikely that Germany could serve as Kennan’s visions demanded (Kennan 1967, 432). This would have to be a done with a greater level of independence for Germany. Indeed, Harper notes the almost personal offense that Kennan took to what he saw as the stifling embarrassment of the Allied occupation forces (1994, 211). The current situation was untenable and Kennan firmly “believed [Germans] needed physical and psychic space in which to express themselves and vent their extraordinary energies” (Harper 1994, 215). In his own words, Kennan endeavored “to create something larger…to which German loyalties and attention would be attracted” (Minutes of PPS meeting, 1949- Cited in Harper 1994, 215).

The late spring of 1949 brought these issues to a head with the run up to what eventually would become the NATO charter. Privately Kennan said that “I am afraid that while we cannot
say so, what we have to do is to persuade the Europeans to find a way to permit Germany’s leadership to become manifest without involving military and political controls of a nationalist Germany over the other countries of Europe” (Note on PPS discussion of May 20, 1949 - Cited in McAllister 2002, 177). Indeed, Kennan saw his role in shaping Europe as attempting to undo the damage of 1914 when Europe had shifted away from Germany peaceably becoming a regionally hegemonic power (Harper 1994, 201). Kennan would have realized a Bonn (Berlin preferred) led federation enabled Europe to both defend her interests from the USSR and to give the United States the freedom to choose new realms to compete against the Soviet Union.

Achesonism

Acheson, as opposed to Kennan, did not see the emergence of a third pole to arise in challenge of the United States as either a desirable or practicable outcome during the early Cold War period. What he endeavored towards instead was a pragmatic framework of integration that could address the discrete issues that were preventing the United States from arraying her allies against the USSR. This new environment would hopefully enable both the rise of an independent Germany and a federalized Europe. To this end, he called for “the earliest possible decisions by the Europeans as to objectives and commitments among them on a timetable for the creation of supra-national institutions” (FRUS 1949, 4:472 – Cited in Harper 1994, 287). The main difference between him and Kennan was that Acheson rejected Kennan’s assumption that the Russian’s capabilities to dominate Europe were insufficient to pose real danger in the short term. The basis of his views was that:

“during the period of crisis and present weakness, the United States has to stay in Europe and will stay. In this sense our presence in Germany operates as a shield behind which
the health of Free Europe can return. When that health has been restored, the community of these 6 [ERP] nations will inevitably be bound together in a much closer union or association. …A natural balance in Europe would begin to emerge” (Harper 1994, 278).

The vital difference between Kennan and Acheson is their competing perceptions of how to best guide Europe. While Kennan generally moved towards using the threat of Germany as the impetus for creating a European power, Acheson admitted that “we have deferred to our friends” who were asking for American security guarantees (Harper 1994, 280). Acheson continually tried to reach a middle position between the differing European powers, and was thus drawn into Europe by their demands. However, as was evidenced by his Senate testimony with Senator Bourke Hooper, on some level he did not believe or want the deployment of US forward units to endure indefinitely. Hooper asked if these actions meant America would “be expected to send substantial numbers of troops over there as a more or less permanent contribution of the development of these countries capacity to resist?” (Acheson 1969, 285). Acheson replied “the answer to that question, Senator is a clear and absolute NO” (Acheson 1969, 285). While the rhetoric surrounding the development of the security agreement was occasionally mixed, the ability of the United States to promote European security apparatus by issuing guarantees would quickly prove to be futile.

Further compounding the problem of establishing a European identity was the fact that negotiations were proceeding in the classic bilateral format. These extensive individual contacts undermined the idea of a unified Europe, as the different states vied for influence with the United States. In part because of his unfamiliarity with Europe, Acheson thought it was best to let major issues be “guided” by those closest to the Germany issue (Harper 1994, 280). However, instead
of facilitating common agreements, the presence of US reassurances removed incentives to cooperate faster than obstacles.

Interestingly, he genuinely counted the Germans as part of the solution and their concerns as legitimate. Germany was to be included in the new security structure in order to prove to France that the wild energies on her eastern frontiers could be tamed (Harper 1994, 280). Of particular notice is the conference between Adenauer and Acheson on November 13, 1949 when Acheson decided to trust Adenauer (Harper 1994, 290). There were several immediate consequences and changes to Acheson’s European perspective provided by this meeting, the first being the need to keep Adenauer as a partner. As a result, Adenauer’s appraisal of the situation with Russia was endorsed by Acheson. Adenauer argued that the removal of industrial plant was making his position as Chancellor untenable. By accepting Acheauer’s complaint, Acheson also sealed the division of Germany. This was seen to be necessary in an environment where Russia could veto any other possibility that would be more in the interests of the United States or the integrationist stream of thought than the current reality. Even before this meeting however, the new Chancellor had redefined the relationship with the United States by presenting a representative voice to which Acheson would listen.

While Acheson endorsed Adenauer’s belief that any reunification must be conducted on the terms of West Germany, he began to comprehend that as the United States would be unwilling to leave West Germany, so too would be the Soviets in Eastern Germany. In both cases, the Superpowers had decided to be content with the bird in the hand and to let the other parts of Germany lie. Regardless, the time for dramatic unilateral withdrawals had passed (if it had ever existed) and both sides were stuck with their existing commitments. The benefit was that the fear of a unified, fully autonomous “Germany bought at the price of military insecurity
in Europe—or paralyzed politically and economically by Soviet” power could finally be put to rest with the creation of two different Germanys (Acheson 1969, 291).

The common West German-US anxiety over Russia disarmed the threat of West Germany in Acheson. This was flavored by Kennan’s influence over Acheson, whereby the Secretary believed in the malfeasance of Soviet intentions, but he rejected Kennan’s caveat that the Russian capabilities to attack were insufficient to pose real danger. Thus, he categorically feared a behaving West Germany less than almost any other American observer and continually sought to normalize them within the context of an American-guided European integration scheme (Harper 1994, 296).

The decision to create NATO for the US to sponsor Europe came from the desire of the Western Europeans to have a living US guarantee, backed up by substantial physical commitments. Thus assuaged, proposals such as the French initiative to create the European Coal and Steel Community became possible (Harper 1994, 296). However, Achesonian pro-integrationists had some major unease when discussing the European entry into continental security policy.

The debate surrounding the European Defense Community (EDC) was greeted with enthusiasm by Acheson (Acheson 1969, 551). Though the effort failed to be ratified by the French Senate, it would have created a combined Continental European army with German soldiers under international command. Despite his outward acceptance of the EDC, Acheson did not want the organization to become the dominant force in European security. Indeed, he was very insistent that the overall scheme of European territorial defense remain part of NATO’s
oversight. He sent the following message to the US Embassy in France during the summer of 1951.

“We favor [the formation of the EDC] as a long term approach to [the] problem of Eur[opean] defense as long as it is clearly a part of and under [the] NATO umbrella. We must look forward to a future in which one manner or another tension between East and West will be at least temporarily ameliorated. From such long term view point it is probably neither practical nor in best interests Eur[ope] or US that there sh[ou]ld be a US Commander in Eur[ope] or substantial numbers of US forces on [the] Continent. We w[ou]ld, however, regret to see concept of internat[iona]l forces that is now accepted ever disintegrate to [the] point where nothing w[ou]ld remain on [the] Continent except nat[iona]l forces solely under nat[iona]l control. This is particularly important as regards Germany” (FRUS 3 1951, 802- Cited McAllister 2002, 260).

There are several important points in this telegram. The first is that Acheson clearly describes a future where the resurgent uncontrollability of Germany would become the primary reason for a US presence in Europe. He sees the EDC as a helpful step, but one that did not have the ironclad force behind it that was explicit in the United States’ NATO commitments. Simply put, Germany or France could dissolve an EDC treaty as equals but as a superpower with stable commitments, the United States could readily keep the Europeans in line. Indeed, Acheson saw the EDC and its benefits as being more likely under a situation where the US was engaged with NATO.

While the influences and initiatives the three statesmen espoused may or may not have had the effects that they wanted and their opinions may have changed as time and circumstance
dictated. However, each of the three viewpoints had an integral element, Roosevelt his desire to unmake Bismarck’s Germany, Kennan his lack of faith in the US’s ability to become a European power and Acheson’s acceptance of the European nations’ protestations that they could not lead themselves without being led by the United States. Each of these three elements presents a recurring theme in the United State’s foreign policy towards Europe and provides a context upon which to compare the foreign policy of the United States, especially in the post-Cold War period up to the present day.

Acheson, Ambivalence and the forming of the George H. W. Bush-Clinton Consensus

The international situation was extremely fluid in the days after the Cold War and like “the policymakers and strategists of the 1940s, American Planners in the 1990s had to contend with structural changes so unique that neither theory nor history offered very much useful guidance” (McAllister 2002, 261). As the George H. W. Bush administration took office, it was far from clear what exactly the United States wanted out of both Germany and a wider Europe. Despite Bush the elder’s proclamation of an end to “a historical ambivalence towards a more united Europe,” the uncertainty of the Maastricht Treaty belied any truly Kennanesque sentiments from becoming set within his administration (Bush 2008, 41). Indeed, ‘ambivalent’ would quickly become one of the most popular buzzwords to describe the United State’s attitude toward the idea of European integration.

Ambivalence means having simultaneous, conflicting attitudes towards a subject, and the darker side of this presented itself as a recurring insecurity about the future of US-European relations. To some it appeared that division between the United States and Europe was likely because of the fading of “the Soviet threat,…America’s economic stake in Europe…. [and] a
generation of European and American elites [who were] strongly committed to the idea of an Atlantic Community” (Walt 1998, Why Para 3). So framed, it appeared inevitable that the United States and Europe would slowly drift apart without the unifying factors that had sustained the alliance throughout the Cold War era. To the Bush (and later Clinton Achesonians) this flexibility could bring nothing good without firm US leadership in Europe.

Indeed, now that Kennan’s powerful Europe was possible without a Soviet Union for it to balance against; the whole idea of an independent Europe was a bit scary. One example of the connection between this fear and policy creation is the March 1992 release on the “strategy to ensure no rivals develop,” which identified deterring a European power as one of the primary roles of US grand strategy in the early post Cold War period (Tyler 1992, 1). This fear created a bipartisan consensus on the issue that presented “a very clear answer to the question of when all US military forces can safely be returned from Europe: Never” (McAllister 2002, 245-6). Thus was created the odd situation where “the [European Community] was poised to begin its most dynamic decade since the 1950s, [but] with the fading of the early postwar generation, [including Kennan and allies like-minded] there was no longer an influential segment of US opinion supporting the idea of ‘a great power bloc’” (Harper 2004, 28). Thus, it appears that Acheson’s fears of an absence of a supranational or international security framework over Europe continued into the post Cold War period and contributed to a paralysis preventing US policy from evolving away from its Achesonian roots.

The mechanism for this would be NATO, which would “[continue] to be Europe’s indispensable pacifier and organizer,” especially in security matters (Harper 2004, 28). The underlying motivations could have been written by Acheson himself. Specifically, Bush and Clinton used NATO to propagate “a power arrangement on the Continent which does not
threaten us and with which we can work in close harmony,” just as Acheson described to Truman (FRUS 1951, 3:850). If the removal of US forces could lead to a loss of control, the Achesonian school of thought proclaims change is probably not worth the risk. Thus, finding new missions to engage the Alliance and keep it fresh were needed. These were quickly found in the eastern expansion of NATO. As a side benefit, the accession of the former Warsaw Pact members gave Europe more to digest, at the least delaying the effort to make a tighter European Union. The creed became ‘out of area or out of business’ as the US tried to establish the primacy of the institution above its potential European competitors. This was formally established in the Rome Declaration, which proclaimed that NATO remained the “essential forum for consultation among its members and the venue for agreement on policies bearing on the security and defence commitments of Allies under the Washington Treaty” (Rome Declaration, Section 6). NATO’s de jure rule over European integration efforts established an American veto over European defense initiatives, assuaging Achesonian fears of a European threat in the early 1990s.

With the entrance of the Clinton administration, it appeared that the Achesonian consensus of the Bush 41 days was finished. Early on, Clinton himself “blamed British and French [cowardice] for America’s failure to take a more assertive stand on Bosnia” (Economist, How America Sees the World). Similarly, his Secretary of State Warren Christopher denounced the previous administration’s focus on Europe, declaring “Western Europe is no longer the dominant area of the world” (Economist, How America Sees the World). Alas, this breath of independence was not to be. By the middle of the decade, Richard Holbrooke was proclaiming the United States to be a European Power just as the Bush administration had before them (1995, 209).
The recurring troubles in the Balkans brought the attention of the United States back to Europe and provided important lessons that reinforced the Clinton Administration’s Achesonian leanings. While at first, the US was an unenthusiastic player in the region, existing Achesonian tenets such as safeguarding “the future of NATO [and] US leadership in Europe” demanded action (Nation 1998, 24). The image of the United States as “the indispensable nation,” as Clinton described and Secretary of State Madeline Albright frequently repeated lent credence to a strategy of interventionism in Southeastern Europe, which included close cooperation with the European nations (Albright 2003, 506). Another lesson was that the Europeans could not be counted upon to fulfill missions even on their own doorstep (Nation 1998, 23). Thus, the inability of the Clinton administration to disengage from Europe continued the existing trend that the United States was and would continue to operate by Acheson’s playbook through the 1990s.

This absence of innovation in the US relationship with the NATO allies is the cost of stabilizing the transatlantic relationship. Indeed, to some commentators it appears little has changed over the past ten years as Bacevich refers to changing the substance of the relationship with the Europeans “unthinkable,” comparing it to major watersheds in American foreign relations (2010, 2). Specifically, he calls for the reduction of the US role in NATO to the point that its existing framework passes to European ownership. This view of the relationship is seasoned by the awareness that these views on the permanence of the American presence persisted despite the “strong desire to get American troops out of Europe at the earliest possible moment” (McAllister 2002, 247).

Despite the potential usefulness of removing troops to promote security maturity, he sees this progression as nearly impossible. In part this is because of the established durability of the US commitment and how its ability to weather challenges. In one example, in the aftermath of
the Vietnam war, Enthoven identified three specific concerns, namely “that [the US] must reorient national priorities to domestic human concerns, that our European allies aren’t doing their fair share and that our military spending in Europe causes an insupportable drain on our international balance of payments” (1977, 518). These specific factors are still present to some extent, as are the commitment of forces that prompted the creation of the article. For our purposes, it is important to note that the support for US forces in Europe was not monolithic, even during the Cold War, but that the Achesonian consensus that developed was never seriously challenged. In short, it can appear that US forces in Europe are nearly inviolate because of the conventional wisdom that declares remaining in Europe as the sensible thing to do in a world of uncertainty. Therefore, we present the basic condition of the United States as using an Achesonian policy that ends up prolonging European defense dependency.

McAllister’s work is illustrative because it postulates that the United States did not trust either Germany or Europe during the years of the Bush-Achesonian consensus (2002, 263). Thus, for at least the first decade of the post-Cold War period, he saw the actions of the United States reliably imposing its view of security on the Europeans, potentially stifling what he saw as the natural evolution towards independence for a unifying Europe. Echoing Kennan, he calls for “taking [out] the O from NATO,” thus freeing the United States from its commitments in Europe and possibly spurring European-level integration (McAllister 2002, 264). However, there is no guarantee that an end of the US commitment in Germany would necessarily create an integrated European power and that at best the chances for further integration are about 50-50 (McAllister 2002, 262). Still, it appears the chances of greater integration are likely to improve as the US reduces its commitment. However, the US has instead hedged by extending commitments to the Europeans while encouraging the development of security resources in Europe within the NATO
framework. This trend goes back to Acheson’s complex problem of having to use methods that inherently reduced the desire of the European powers to cooperate while trying to encourage them to cooperate (Harper 1994, 280).

**The G.W. Bush Administration’s Resistance to the Bush-Clinton Achesonism**

However, encouraging the Europeans to cooperate was not continued into the new George W. Bush Administration, which was far more Rooseveltian in its practice of international relations. Indeed, before Bush even took office, Condoleezza Rice promoted a clear break with the policies of the previous two administrations, saying that the United States needed to “define its ‘national interest’ in the absence of Soviet power” (Rice 2002, 45). The clear comparison was with the Clinton administration, who had let itself be beset, “crisis by crisis, day by day” into a strategic vacuum (Rice 2000, 46). Instead, the Bush administration would prevent itself from being bogged down if NATO “[was] no longer military capable and…unclear about its mission” (Rice 2000, 54).

Rather than embracing the idea of the United States and an integrated European structure cooperating in ways beyond the Transatlantic connection, the Bush administration decried any sort of new relationship as detrimental (Rice 2000, 54). Therefore, it was also endangering the special relationships that the United States has built with many of its European partners, notably Great Britain. McNamara develops this line of thinking and postulates that “America’s endorsement of a separate, independent defense identity would represent the greatest geopolitical shift in the transatlantic alliance since the end of the Second World War” (2008, Value the NATO Para 2). This line of thinking seems to suggest that the United States already cooperates in all the ways that it sees as possible or beneficial through NATO, thus any shift towards
identifying and encouraging the European Union to become a more active participant in security, at best would reduce the bandwidth that the US has to push issues at NATO. While proponents of a strong Europe as envisioned by Kennan would see these changes as a welcome development, Rooseveltians sniff that the current level of European-only defense integration “not only [threaten] to decouple America from Europe but has also spectacularly failed to increase European defense spending” (McNamra 2008, Value the NATO Para 1). Thus, the question becomes not only can the United States promote European defense integration, but will the substance of that integration necessarily damage the US’s bilateral relations.

These bilateral relations formed the basis of George W. Bush’s Rooseveltian base of power with the “Coalition of the Willing,” in which all “nations…will be able [to] choose whether or not they want to participate” (King 2002). About the same time the Administration published the United States’ 2002 Security Strategy that proclaimed that “while United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense” (National Security Strategy 2002, 6). However, as Kagan notes, “the Bush Administration viewed NATO’s historic decision to aid the United States under Article V less as a boon than as a booby trap” (2002, 28). While the United States was alright with nations that signed onto US initiatives and who would take unquestioning orders, there was precious little tolerance for anything that could be constructed as undermining the United States’ ability to exercise power.

In short, the Bush administration took something similar to the Rooseveltian rhetoric that characterized the start of the Clinton administration and stuck with it. The case made for the US’s 2003 invasion of Iraq is the best example of this. An anonymous ex-National Security Council staffer put it best, that “Europe allowed the United States to split it along the former Iron
Curtain – New Europe versus Old. How could [they] allow themselves to be played like such fools?” (Ellenbogen 2009, Para 6). The fact that the Bush administration was determined to do what it wanted without being constrained by the niceties of allies necessarily produced “collateral damage…. [on] the alliance” (Dunn 2006, 27). Thus, the Bush administration was trying to create a version of the Rooseveltian prescription that called for “strategic [irrelevancy]” of Europe (Kagan 2002, 21).

**Obama, an unlikely Kennan for the 21st Century?**

The tremendous excitement present in Europe with the election of Obama in 2008 gave hopes for a new age in European relations based on mutual respect and multilateralism. This has somewhat been realized in adoring crowds and the Swedish-based Nobel Peace prize. Some observers have even hailed the new “Barack Von Metternich” with his “cosmopolitan approach to diplomacy and his constant invocation of ‘common interests’” who would reinstate a golden age of diplomacy (De Las Casas 2009, 28). But as the Obama administration has become more established, it appears that the hype may have been premature. In a busy world, it appears that Europe’s position has slipped. For instance, the EU desk at the State Department has been “treated as a political hot potato [and for some time was] being handled as an additional duty by the Balkans Director” (Joyner 2009, Para 3). This is hardly a symbol of a renewed strategic commitment. The first year of the Obama administration has undoubtedly produced mixed signals, but first, Obama must be placed within the historical perspective.

Mead presents Obama as a member of the Jeffersonian tradition, which for our purposes is akin to the Kennanist theory of international relations espoused by this paper. Indeed, Mead refers Kennan’s post-War strategies as one of the most important applications of practical Jeffersonianism (2010, 5). This interpretation proclaims that “the strategic goal of [Obama’s]
foreign policy is to reduce America’s costs and risks overseas wherever possible” (2010, 2). The rebalancing of US forces towards a more passive role in the world would be a major shift from the Bush administration if that shift is meant to enable the establishment of independent security resources that “substitute regional balance-of-power arrangements for massive unilateral US force commitments all over the globe” (Mead 2010, 2). However, reducing foreign commitments will be a complicated affair, given the “vast set of interlocking political, economic, and military commitments” in part set up by Achesonianism (Mead 2010, 4).

There are some subtle suggestions that this pullback is occurring rhetorically as well. James Baker promised in 1989 that “the United States is and will remain a European power” (Harper 2004, 28). More recently, Richard Holbrooke’s Achesonian opinion that the United States is a European power is no longer widely repeated by State Department officials (1995, 209). Recent rhetoric is somewhat more Kennanesque. For example, during her speech at L’Ecole Militaire, Secretary Clinton proclaimed that “security in Europe must be indivisible….There are not many Europes; there is only one Europe. And it is a Europe that includes the United States as its partner. And it is a Europe that includes Russia” (2010, 2). The fact that Russia was privileged as a component of Europe while the United States was struck with a modifier is a demotion from its historical Achesonian perch as European power. Obviously, by no means does this signal an immediate, massive shift in US relations, but the language is tailored de-naturalizes the role of the United States somewhat. This is especially true because of the direct comparison with Russia whose presence in Europe is naturalized by the final sentence. The complexities of US-Russia relations are far beyond the purview of this paper, but the fact that the United States has come to the point where it is rhetorically pulling Russia into Europe while remaining separate is an interesting state of affairs.
However, the one issue that the United States has remained consistent on is potential challengers to NATO. Specifically, Layne cites Albright’s “three D’s: [European-only defense initiatives] must not diminish NATO’s role, duplicate NATO’s capabilities, or discriminate NATO members not belonging to the EU” as providing a framework for NATO-ESDP relations (2004). It appears little has changed as Secretary of State Clinton recently answered a question on European defense initiatives by saying that “the US view is that we would not want to see anything supplant NATO” but that “[supplementing] NATO” would be acceptable (Clinton 2010, 6). These rules greatly limit the ability of the Europeans to develop an independent capacity as they remove both practical and ideological capacity to provide security. This change takes more importance in part because American rhetoric towards the European partners has a tendency to over-emphasize the commitment of the United States to Europe, as the next case demonstrates.

The depth of the US commitment to Europe should matter. Indeed, the physical presence of US forces is what has historically given NATO what Walt calls “fundamental credibility” (1998, No Threat… Para 4). However, US forces have been leaving (and returning to) Europe since the end of the Cold War. In fact, US forces normally stationed in Europe were used extensively during both Iraq Wars and the invasion of Afghanistan (US European Command… 2010, Para 17-18). While the number of ‘boots on the ground’ changes depending on tactical military needs, the overall strategic view of US forces in Europe has been one of steady decline. The largest reduction in US forces came in the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm, when many units rotated back to the United States, with personnel levels in Europe falling from 350,000 in the 1980’s to fewer than 120,000 for most of the 1990’s (US European Command… 2010, Para 12 & 15).
The current round of reduction in US forces in Europe was announced by President George W. Bush during his 2004 reelection campaign. Specifically, he made plans to reduce the American commitment in Germany by two Army divisions, with further cuts continuing well into what became the Obama administration (Allen and White 2004, Para 3). The rhetoric surrounding the pronouncement fits with a non-Achesonian prescription in that it called for a “more agile and flexible force, which means that more of our troops will be stationed and deployed from here at home” (NYT 2004, 5). Being able to utilize US forces without simultaneously managing the political considerations of a host government is one step closer to the “adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points” proposed by Kennan in the long telegram (1946, Part 3 Para 1). It also largely fits with Roosevelt’s desire to remove forces from Europe (FRUS Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 531). The current transfer of forces will reach its next stage with the reassignment of the 1st Armored Division to Fort Bliss, Texas from Germany in 2011, with the final result of around 32,000 soldiers in 2015 (King 2010, Para 7). While the newest reduction in forces is significant, it continues a longstanding, yet underreported trend in US policy towards Europe.

One would think that moving closer to a Kennanesque relationship with Europe with regard to troop numbers would lead towards more initiative being taken by the Europeans. However, it may be that in the absence of an actual shooting war, the number of US troops in Europe does not really matter. Instead, the fact that a commitment exists with troops as collateral may be the important factor. Most of the commentators quoted above could have made the same arguments describing their Kennanesque incredulity that X number of US soldiers were still in Europe without being influenced by the actual value of X. The question turns to the
purpose of keeping these soldiers who will stay in Europe. Clinton articulated first the ideological “proof of the American commitment” to a peaceful Europe (2010, 3). The second purpose she stated was the more practical reason that “American troops in Europe [serve] both to deter attacks and respond quickly if they occur” (2010, 3). The second component is obviously weakened by the loss of US forces, assuming that more soldiers will fight and prevent attacks better than fewer soldiers. The actual fighting efficiency of the American forces in Europe is beyond the scope of this paper. What is relevant is whether the reduction in US forces has endangered the perception of the American commitment in the eyes of the European partners.

The question then becomes when will the US presence in Europe fallen below the minimum threshold for the European allies to start to want to provide for their own security? Very likely, this would depend on the individual country, with Western Europeans being more comfortable and Easterners being more ill at ease. What is certain is that the reduction of troop levels underscores the loss of strategic importance that Europe has seen since the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the War on Terror.

The argument then turns to the response of the European allies in a world with a smaller US presence. McAllister estimated there was a nearly equal possibility of integration or dissolution from outright removal of US forces (McAllister 2002, 262). This danger likely precludes the possibility of working to remove itself from Europe. It is more likely that change in the European security environment will come from a slow evolution towards independence that the United States will hopefully be able to manage. While causes for the slow reduction of US forces in Europe. As is the case with Acheson, American officials have demonstrated their ability to be co-opted by the perception of European weakness, but there are some signs that the actions of the Obama Administration have started to redress this trend.
The focus of the Obama administration with regard to NATO has been in the eastern half of the alliance. This makes sense as “more European members will [inevitably] mean a consolidation of NATO more as a regional security organization than as a trans-Atlantic one” (Webber et al 2004, 13). It seems likely that if there is to be a new motor for producing defense integration in Europe it will emerge from the East, as these nations have also tended to support the United States more readily than their western counterparts and several of them have been interested in specific bilateral agreements with the United States. This enthusiasm be considered as an attempt to move beyond NATO, where despite having gained membership, some of the former Warsaw Pact members “[have not] overcome the fear that there is still a very real risk of becoming yet again a victim of East-West realpolitik” (Lorenz 2009, 51). President Bush sought to reassure these nations by reinforcing the bilateral US connections, most visibly with the placement of anti-missile technology in both the Czech Republic and Poland. However, the reassuring force of those US bilateral agreements will likely have reduce the pressure on these governments to seek non-American security agreements, within or outside of NATO.

One example is the Obama Administration’s canceling the planned deployment of anti-missile technology to Poland and the Czech Republic. The communication of the new American intent was unusually blunt with regard to the Eastern NATO allies. As one Polish observer put it “waking Czech Prime-Minister Fisher at midnight European time, and calling President Lech Kaczynski and Prime-Minister Tusk -- who refused to take the call -- 70 years to the day that Russia invaded Poland – is politically inept and very offensive” (Ellenbogen 2009, Para 8). No matter how deliberate or accidental the miscommunication, to a Kennanesque perspective its effects were beneficial for the United States.
Further promoting the idea of a break in the budding bilateral relationships with the Eastern NATO powers is the issue of Patriot missile launchers. While the Obama administration has publicly stated that the deal will happen, there are signs that it will be weaker than expected (Baker 2009). As Senator Session asked “I [have] [seen] one report, June 12th, that those [Patriot batteries] are not going to be armed. What is that about?” (Senate Armed Services Committee 2009, 28). General Cartwright, former commander of US Strategic Command, responded “the first deployment would be a training deployment….in the first two years” (Senate Armed Services Committee 2009, 28). Thus while launchers will be present as promised, the missiles will not. Thus for the near future, the scope of the tangible US commitment to Eastern Europe will be roughly equivalent to an expensive array of empty tubes. This hardly earns a passing grade for what Adam Rotfeld, the former Foreign Minister of Poland calls the “test of American credibility” in the former Warsaw Pact region (Lorenz 2009, 60).

The end result is that the Central and Eastern Europeans who were interested in bilateral relations with the United States have been returned to the NATO base within Europe. In other words, it is moving the US’s relationship with the Europe closer to a Kennanesque ideal. While Kagan was correct that most of Europe is operating off of a post-modern view of the world, this does not hold as true for the Central and Eastern European allies, who in the wake of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war have been rediscovering that their environment is much closer to Martian rust than a Venusian yellow (2002). However, with the US indicating that Europe no longer tops its list of critical regions, these countries should seek to become more active in promoting security integration on the European side. There is some indication that this is occurring, as a recent poll indicated that “the most important way to improve Polish security is for Warsaw to strengthen its position within the EU” while “a stronger alliance with the United States comes in
a distant third” (Lornez 2009, 61). A similar current is visible with the decision to make concrete plans for the defense of the Baltic nations.

President Obama called for new NATO planning to protect all NATO members via contingency plans in place to deal with new threats, wherever they may come from (Remarks by President Obama… 2009, Para 18). However, it was only this January that new details came out surrounding the commitment of the NATO allies to protect the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These details mentioned that the main supporter for this plan was Poland, showing signs of becoming a new motor in the formation of security policy in Europe (Border Controls 2010, Para 4). This should be seen as a major victory Kennanists who are excited by the idea of a reduction of the US commitment in Europe. This is the case because the NATO members who worry about territorial sovereignty have the ability to both badger their less concerned counterparts, but European ones will be able to raise the issue within the existing EU structure. It is unlikely that they would ask for ‘too much security,’ so much so that it leads to the instability or even a Western European threat, as was prophesized by the early 1990s threat assessment on European power (Tyler 1992). Put simply, the Central and Eastern European want to feel secure around a Russia that shows signs of becoming more aggressive, and if the US moves back from reassuring them in bilaterally they will look to Europe (either through NATO or not) to increase their security, either by placating potential rivals or getting larger commitments out of allies. The end result should be an increase in overall security for the EU and the NATO allies with a lesser burden upon the United States.

While slightly counter-intuitive, this fits with Mancur Olsen’s group theory. If an organization is dominated by a hegemonic figure, the smaller members will have an incentive to free ride, as their basic concerns are met simply by being a member and their individual
contribution will be marginal at best (Oneal, 1994). However, for the hegemon, the aggregate sum of all the smaller members contributing or free riding is important. However, it is hard to force smaller members to increase their commitments. One of the few ways the US can do this is by ‘contractually obligating’ European partners to specific plans of action in the event of a given crisis. As a result, when the new plans are implemented, the US will actually be reducing its forces as a percentage of the whole that would be pledged to defend the Baltic States, who are widely perceived to be the most vulnerable of the NATO partners (Border Controls 2010).

These developments suggest that Obama administration has subtly been reframing the US commitment to European defense. As the hegemon, the United States underwrites the majority of NATO’s security in both tangible and symbolic ways. By weakening some levels of bilateral support for specific allies, such as the Czech Republic and Poland, the United States is directing them towards an integrated future with Europe. Thus reoriented, the US should seek to encourage the security-conscious Easterners to use their political capital within the EU and NATO to press for further reform.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to establish why the United States has acted on Europe by analyzing what destinies, to recall Schlesinger, the United States has wanted for that region. For George H.W. Bush and William Clinton, this eventually became a continent “whole and free,” (Bush 2008, 51). For them, this version of Europe was best realized by the United States as a *primus inter pares* of European powers. For George W. Bush, Europeans at best represented a dilution of focus for the United States, and at worst willful adversaries. It is therefore unsurprising that Roosevelt’s Europe, divided and weak was closer to their ideal state. While his Administration
is still young, this paper posits that under Barack Obama the United States wants a Europe that can deliver forces for western initiatives and largely stands on its own. It seems likely that this will lead to a greater freedom for Europe to make its own way as prescribed by Kennan.

It is important to note that all three of the different prescriptions required different roles for the European partners to play, and those partners have some ability to determine how the United States treats them. However, there are a number of growing factors with the relationship with Europe that privilege one school above the others. Specifically, the diminution of the US presence in Europe as well as the ongoing EU integration of the Eastern members of NATO will provide more fertile ground for Kennanesque visions of Europe. Additionally, as China’s rise continues and the Middle East remains unsettled, it seems likely that the attention of the United States will be pulled farther and farther from Europe. Thus, while Kennan and the Soviet Union may be dead, the framework he established to destroy that state and create an independent Continent will become more relevant as Europe becomes what he wanted it to be.
List of References


http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/02/22/let_europe_be_europe?page=0,1.


http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/02/01/remarks_on_the_future_of_european_security?page=0,0.


DeWayne Wickham. Afghanistan not just our fight, but NATO's, too. *USA Today*.


doi:10.1080/07036330801959457.


doi:10.1080/09592290500531472.


doi:nepsa_proceeding_25705.PDF.

http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1943v01

http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1943v03

Foreign Relations of the United States. 1946. The British Commonwealth, Western and Central Europe. Volume V.
http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1946v05

http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1947v03

http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1948v01p2

http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1949v03

http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1949v04

http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1951v03p1


Longhurst, Kerry, and Alister Miskimmon. 2007. Same Challenges, Diverging Responses: Germany, the UK and European Security. *German Politics* 16, no. 1 (March): 79-94. doi:10.1080/09644000601157442.


Note on PPS discussion of May 20, 1949, PPS Records, Box 32, RG 59, NA. – Cited in McAllister 2002, 177.


