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Joseph M. Siracusa

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Was it "one of the great documents in our history? [Was nothing else] anywhere equal to the analysis of this paper in terms of American survival in the world?" Or was it "the most ponderous expression of elementary ideas not very coherently expressed?" Was it something else or was it both? The subject is NSC 68, described elsewhere as "a policy in search of an opportunity." Was Korea that opportunity, as seems widely believed or, as this paper argues, was Korea an opportunity in search of such a policy as represented by NSC 68?

NSC 68: A REAPPRAISAL

by

Joseph M. Siracusa

On 31 January 1950, several months after America's atomic monopoly had been broken and in line with the President's decision to determine the technical feasibility of a thermonuclear weapon, Harry S. Truman directed Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson "to undertake a re-examination of our objectives in peace and war and of the effect of these objectives on our strategic plans, in the light of the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear capability of the Soviet Union."¹ Moreover, the terms of reference continued,²

It must be considered whether a decision to proceed with a program directed toward feasibility pre-judges the more fundamental decision (a) as to whether, in the event that a test of thermonuclear weapon proves successful, such weapons should be stockpiled, or (b) if stockpiled, the conditions under which they might be used in war.

Truman, acutely sensitive of the potential pressure to produce and stockpile such weapons in the event that tests proved affirmative, regarded the question of "use policy" in the broadest possible terms. Specifically, the President noted, "The question of our policy can be adequately assessed only as part of a general re-examination of this country's strategic plans and its objectives in peace and war," a proposition that also took into consideration the incipient arms race with the U.S.S.R. as well as the various social, psychological, and political questions involved in the problem.

None could doubt the gravity of the exercise. "The outcome," concluded Truman, "would have a crucial bearing on the further question as to whether there should be a revision in the nature of the agreements, including the international control of atomic energy, which we have been seeking to reach with the U.S.S.R." The final joint State-Defense report, "United States Objectives and Programs for National

Security," was submitted to the President on 7 April 1950. Five days later, on 12 April, Truman referred the document to the National Security Council for consideration, with the additional request that the NSC provide him "with further information on the implications of the conclusions contained therein."³ Thus was born Policy Paper Number 68 of the National Security Council—NSC 68.

Since then, and well beyond its declassification in early 1975,⁴ NSC 68 has continued to attract the attention of historians, political scientists, and scholarly commentators of every political persuasion. The net effect has been the elevation of NSC 68 to a position of landmark significance in the annals of modern American foreign policy, though there was by no means a total consensus of what that significance was supposed to be.⁵

Policymakers of the period most intimately concerned with the composition and implementation of NSC 68 similarly reflect a divergence of views. Paul H. Nitze, the principal author of the document and George F. Kennan's successor as Director of State's Policy Planning Staff, has contended that while it is true that the ostensible object of the exercise was to provide an argument for lifting the budget ceiling for the Defense Establishment, which had been set at \$13½ billion for Fiscal Year 1950, it is also true that the primary objective was to provide a solid argument for the production and stockpiling of thermonuclear weapons in the event they proved feasible.⁶ At other times Nitze's meaning was less clear.⁷ Much the same applies to Dean Acheson. During the course of a historical seminar arranged at Princeton in 1953 for his former colleagues, the Secretary of State appeared unequivocal about the meaning and significance of NSC 68:

[It is] one of the great documents in our history. I don't believe that

there is going to be one that will stand up to it. I don't think what John Adams and other people produced about the Monroe Doctrine, or anything else, is going to be anywhere equal to the analysis of this paper in terms of American survival in the world.⁸

In his memoirs, a number of years later, Acheson remembered it differently. What had been "one of the great documents in our history" had now been relegated to the lesser status of "a formidable document," the purpose of which was merely "to so bludgeon the mass mind of 'top government' that not only could the President make a decision but that the decision could be carried out."⁹ Charles E. Bohlen, State's other leading Sovietologist, failed even to mention NSC 68 in his memoirs except to say that he did not have an opportunity to study it fully until he returned from Paris to Washington in 1951.¹⁰ Along these same lines Averell Harriman had no particular recollection of NSC 68, despite Acheson's personal briefing on the matter.¹¹

Relative to policymakers' differing perceptions of what NSC 68 was supposed to accomplish is the equally intriguing question of the relationship of the document and its final implementation to the outbreak of the Korean war itself. For, it should be recalled, it was not until 30 September 1950, several months after the North Korean invasion of South Korea, at the 68th Meeting of the National Security Council, that President Truman finally "approved the Conclusions of NSC 68 in a statement of policy to be followed over the next four or five years, and directed their implementation by all appropriate executive departments and agencies of the U.S. Government."¹² Nor was it until 14 December 1950, several weeks after the introduction of Chinese "volunteers" into the conflict, and at the 75th Meeting of the NSC, that the President approved a number of

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measures aimed at realizing the broad goals of NSC 68 "as a working guide for the urgent purpose of making an immediate start."¹³ In this and in other ways, a close examination of materials declassified during the past several years cast a somewhat different light on this key cold war document.

Herbert Feis, for example, entertained deep-seated doubts about how far NSC 68 would have gone without the outbreak of the Korean war. Feis, who personally regarded the document, in his words, as "the most ponderous expression of elementary ideas not very coherently expressed," recalled at Acheson's Princeton seminar:

I don't think it [NSC 68] would have gotten very far without the attack, in Korea, despite the fact that it was signed, [sic], just because it was being . . . nibbled to death by the ducks . . . the people in budget were curting at it, people who were responsible for raising tax money were cutting at it. . . .¹⁴

Atomic physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, also troubled by this relationship, asked the seminar pointblank, "Whar would have happened to it if the attack had not occurred in Korea?" No answer was forthcoming until one State official concerned with "selling" NSC 68 to the public conceded that "We were sweating over it, and then . . . thank God Korea came along." Acheson was compelled to agree. Korea, he admitted, had absolutely nothing to do with NSC 68 "except to prove our thesis," creating "the structure which made action." None of the other participants, including Nitzze, who has since had second thoughts on the subject,¹⁵ disagreed at the time.

Such evidence, in the face of it, seriously challenges the traditional image of NSC 68 in the literature of the subject, the bulk of which until very recently portrayed the acceptance of the premises of NSC 68 as almost "instantaneous and complete," a

veritable blueprint for waging the cold war, "a policy in search of an opportunity."¹⁶ Within this framework, then, this discussion will attempt to suggest NSC 68's actual place in the foreign policy debate that informed the first phase of what Walt Rostow once referred to as "the American diplomatic revolution" that occurred in Washington in the late 1940s and whose consequences are still so much with us today.¹⁷

To begin with, the origin of NSC 68 may best be traced back to the nation's first and, up till now, unheralded postwar national security review—the National Security Council 20 Series proposed by Secretary of Defense James Forrestal in July 1948. Against the background of budget preparations for Fiscal Year 1950, in the midst of a growing interservice rivalry for limited funds, and assuming the Soviet Union to be the most likely enemy of the United States for some time to come, Forrestal minuted Truman that

Since the entire reason for the maintenance of military power in this country is the safeguarding of our national security, their size, character, and composition should turn upon a careful analysis of existing and potential dangers to our security and upon decisions as to the methods by which such dangers can best be met within the limitations of our resources.¹⁸

Forrestal contended that the Soviet threat should be faced squarely. Pursuant to this request the nation's first Secretary of Defense suggested that the initial statement of this character be prepared by State as a point of departure for further discussion within the National Security Council. While waiting to hear from the President, Forrestal passed on the memorandum, "Appraisal of the Degree and Character of Military Preparedness Required by the World Situation," to the NSC for its information and for preliminary

consideration; it was then distributed to members of the Council on 12 July 1948, and took on the designation of NSC 20.¹⁹

Truman responded to Forrestal, first, in a brief note dated 13 July with the observation that while he thought his memorandum most interesting, "It seems to me that the proper thing for you to do is to get the Army, Navy and Air people together and establish a program within the budget limits which have been allowed. It seems to me that is your responsibility."²⁰ Two days later, this time in the form of a letter, the President again responded to his Secretary's proposal of a national security review. Though personally approving of such a study, which had in fact been placed on the NSC agenda for 15 July, Truman did not feel that the preparation of the initial 1950 budget estimates could be delayed or based wholly on this particular effort.²¹ Within 1 month the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State complied with Forrestal's request and produced a paper, "United States Objectives with Respect to Russia," and submitted it to the NSC for its information. Largely the work of George F. Kennan, NSC 20/1, as it came to be called, was the first of four papers that, taken together, comprised the country's first significant postwar national security review.

Subtle, tough-minded, and cerebral, NSC 20/1 was pure Kennan. In an analysis devoted to the inner workings of the Kremlin, Kennan perceived America's basic objective with regard to Soviet Russia as twofold: first, *"to reduce the power and influence of Moscow to limits in which they [sic] will no longer constitute a threat to the peace and stability of international society"*; and, second, *"to bring about a basic change in the theory and practice of international relations observed by the government in power in Russia."*²²

If these objectives were realized,

Kennan argued, then the problem that the United States faced in its relations with the Soviet Union would be reduced to more normal dimensions. The father of containment, so-called, was not hopeful, however. For, according to Kennan, so long as Soviet leaders continued to be "animated by the concepts of the theory and practice of international relations which are not only radically opposed to our own but are clearly inconsistent with any peaceful and mutually profitable development of relations between that government and other members of the international community," little, if anything, could be expected from them.²³ In fact, given "the relationship of antagonism," he added pessimistically, "war is an ever-present possibility and *no* course which this Government might adopt would appreciably diminish this danger."²⁴

The second paper in the NSC 20 Series was submitted to the National Security Council by Kennan's Policy Planning Staff on 25 August 1948. Briefer and less philosophical than its predecessor, NSC 20/2 sought, essentially,

to clarify the factors bearing on the question as to the nature which the U.S. defense effort should assume in the light of Soviet policies and attitudes (with particular relation to the question whether U.S. defense preparation should be pointed to meet an expected conflict at a given probable time or whether they should be planned on a basis which could and would be permanently maintained).²⁵

Within this context the report dealt at length with an analysis of the various factors militating *for* and *against* the likelihood of direct Soviet military action in the immediate period ahead.

A second major aspect of NSC 20/2, and one perhaps that sheds the greatest light on NSC 68, examined the extent to which Soviet intentions were apt to be

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influenced by the successful development of an atomic capability. Significantly, Kennan's Policy Planning Staff argued at the time that political factors alone would probably "militate against use of the atomic weapon by the Soviet Government against major urban and industrial areas in other countries, *except by way of retaliation for attacks made on Russia.*"²⁶ According to estimates, it was thought doubtful that the Soviet Union would choose to resort to atomic warfare in Western Europe, its basic aim principally being that of a concealed political domination over the area rather than its destruction. Echoing the theme of deterrence discussed in the President's Air Policy Commission Study (the Fineletter Report) released earlier in the year, NSC 20/2 maintained persuasively that "If the Soviet leaders felt that there would be a strong profitability of retaliation, this would be an important factor in dissuading them from taking the initiative in the use of atomic weapons against western cities."²⁷

From another level, however, the report added, the mere existence of America's atomic monopoly had heretofore probably been the principal contributing factor in continued Soviet intransigence in the field of international control of atomic energy and other related matters. The reason and remedy—in contrast to the grimmer picture yet to be painted in NSC 68—bear repeating in full:

To the Soviet mind it is unthinkable that we, [the United States] enjoying this factor of military superiority, are not taking it into account in our plans and attempting to exploit it for political purposes. They therefore must assume that our international positions, particularly in matters of the control of atomic energy, are predicated on this superiority and contain a margin of excessive demand which would not be there

if a better balance existed in the power of disposal over the weapon. *For this reason, they may actually prove to be more tractable in negotiation when they have gained some measure of disposal over the weapon, and no longer feel that they are negotiating at so great a disadvantage.*²⁸

In this sense, then, reasoned Kennan, "It is *not* probable that the pattern of Soviet intentions... would be appreciably altered in the direction of greater aggressiveness by the development of the atomic weapon in Russia."²⁹

In any event, NSC 20/2 recommended a high level of American readiness—military and mental—as the only safeguard against potential Soviet hostilities. It could hardly be otherwise. For, according to the prevailing American cold war paradigm, "In dealing with a Government so highly centralized, so incorrigibly conspiratorial in its methods, so hostile traditionally towards its world environment, and so unpredictable in foreign affairs, it is necessary that we keep ourselves in a state of unvacillating mental [and military] preparedness." And nothing in the foreseeable period ahead appeared likely to alter the situation.³⁰

Prepared by the staff of the National Security Council with the advice and assistance of representatives of State, Army, Navy, Air Force, the National Security Resources Board, and the Central Intelligence Agency, the third and last paper in the NSC 20 Series was submitted to the National Security Council for its consideration on 2 November 1948. Titled "U.S. Objectives with Respect to the U.S.S.R. to Counter Soviet Threats to U.S. Security," NSC 20/3 contained a summary of observations and conclusions flowing from the analyses prepared beforehand. At its 27th meeting on 23 November 1948, the NSC adopted the report with minor

amendments—thus creating NSC 20/4—and recommended “the Conclusions contained therein and direct that the report be disseminated to all appropriate officials of the U.S. Government for their information and guidance”; the President responded favorably the following day and on 24 November 1948, NSC 20/4 with its doctrine of containment writ large became the official policy of the Truman administration.³¹ The assumptions that underlay the final analysis again clearly revealed the hand of Kennan and the Policy Planning Staff. “The will and ability of the leaders of the U.S.S.R. to pursue policies which threaten the security of the United States,” NSC 20/4 began, continued to “constitute the greatest single danger to the U.S. within the foreseeable future,” the ultimate objective of the Kremlin being nothing less than “the domination of the world.”³² Though the immediate goal of Soviet leaders appeared to be the political conquest of Western Europe, the Soviet Union would not feel secure until the noncommunist nations had been so reduced in strength and numbers that communist influence was dominant throughout the world. Seen in this light, both the immediate purpose and the ultimate objective of the Soviet leaders were seen to be basically inimical to the safety of the United States and would continue to be so indefinitely. Militarily, the Soviet ability to wage war grew unabated. “In present circumstances,” warned NSC 20/4 ominously, “the capabilities of the U.S.S.R. to threaten U.S. security by the use of armed power are dangerous and immediate.”³³ Though not in a position to deliver a decisive blow either against the United States or the Western Hemisphere, the Soviet Union was nevertheless thought fully capable of serious submarine warfare and of a limited number of one-way bomb sorties. Within a matter of years, it was estimated, the Soviet war machine

would be in a better position from which to attack the United States. “Present estimates indicate,” the top secret document averred,

that the current Soviet capabilities... will progressively increase and that by no later than 1955 the U.S.S.R. will probably be capable of serious air attacks against the United States with atomic, biological and chemical weapons, of more extensive submarine operations (including the launching of short-range guided missiles), and of airborne operations to seize advance bases.³⁴

Theorizing the year of maximum danger, so much in vogue today, was one thing. What could not be assessed with any degree of certainty was whether or not or when the Kremlin’s present political strategy would in point of fact shift to that of armed conflict. In any case, it would remain the task of NSC 68, in the words of its main author Paul H. Nitze, “in getting from general objectives [of the NSC 20 Series] to the details of what the problem was and how to get from where you were to where you wanted to go.”³⁵

That Nitze drew heavily on the analysis of his predecessor on the Policy Planning Staff of the Soviet political and military threat contained in the NSC 20 Series is not open to question. The Soviet threat was still perceived to be that “of the same character as that described in NSC 20/4.”³⁶ What had radically altered in a period of approximately 1 year was Washington’s perception of “the immediacy of the danger.” In particular, and especially in view of the Soviet acquisition of the atomic bomb, NSC 68 “estimated that, within the next four years, the U.S.S.R. will attain the capability of seriously damaging vital centers of the United States, *provided it strikes a first blow* and provided further that the blow is opposed by no more effective opposition than we now have programmed.”³⁷

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Interestingly, and generally overlooked by students of NSC 68, who for some reason prefer to concentrate on Nitze's putative feud with Bohlen and Kennan over the fundamental design of the Kremlin,³⁸ is the almost casual manner in which the new Presidential review of national security replaced Kennan's previous assumption that it was "not probable that the pattern of Soviet intentions... would be appreciably altered in the direction of greater aggressiveness by the development of the atomic weapon in Russia" with Nitze's presumption of a Soviet first-strike mentality. Moreover, though Nitze persisted in the belief that the present American atomic retaliatory capability was probably adequate to deter the Soviets from launching a direct military attack against the United States, he warned that the time was fast approaching when it would not be so. "When it calculates," wrote Nitze of the Soviet Union, "that it has a sufficient atomic capability to make a surprise attack on us, nullifying our atomic superiority and creating a military situation decisively in its favor, the Kremlin might be tempted to strike swiftly and with stealth."³⁹ Apparently taking a page straight out of Pierrepont B. Noyes' prophetic story of a once-great civilization destroyed by atomic weapons, first published in 1927,⁴⁰ Nitze contended that the mere existence of more than one superpower was in itself inherently destabilizing. "The existence of two large atomic capabilities in such a relationship," observed the future co-founder of the influential Committee on the Present Danger pessimistically, "might well act, therefore, not as a deterrent," as generally thought, "but as an incitement to war."⁴¹ Put another way, Nitze had come to fear Soviet fear. In these circumstances—and here surely is the rationale behind NSC 68—the United States had little choice but to increase both its atomic and, if feasible, its

thermonuclear capabilities⁴² as rapidly as possible.

In the area of international control of atomic energy, Nitze perceived the prospect of improvement as negligible. Nitze, an expert on strategic bombing and already a keen student of nuclear strategy, held serious doubts that any kind of international control agreement could really prevent the production and employment of atomic weapons in a prolonged war. Equally important and years before satellite surveillance, it was doubted whether any system could be designed that would give certainty of notice of violation in the absence of good faith. "Finally," NSC 68 observed on the virtue of what has come to be called linkage, "the absence of good faith on the part of the U.S.S.R. must be assumed until there is concrete evidence that there has been a decisive change in Soviet policies."⁴³ And even here it was highly problematical whether such a change could take place without a change first in the nature of the Soviet system itself.

The Soviet possession of atomic weapons, reasoned Nitze furthermore, had the dual effect not only of putting a premium on a more violent and ruthless prosecution of the Kremlin's design of world conquest, "especially if the Kremlin is sufficiently objective to realize the improbability of our prosecuting a preventive war," but also of putting "a premium on piecemeal aggression against others, counting on our unwillingness to engage in atomic war unless we are directly attacked."⁴⁴ Thus what advantages that had presumably accrued to America's "atomic diplomacy" had now been dissipated; the Soviets, too, could play the game.

As is well-known, NSC 68 distinguished four possible courses of action open to the United States: (a) continuation of current policies, with current and currently projected programs for carrying out these

policies; (b) isolation; (c) "preventive" war; or (d) a rapid buildup of political, economic, and military strength in the free world. Confident that the United States had a large unactualized military capability, though persuaded it alone could not provide the resources, Nitze made the case for "A more rapid buildup of political, economic, and military strength and thereby of confidence in the free world than is now contemplated... the only course which is consistent with our fundamental purpose."⁴⁵ Only such a program, concluded NSC 68 hopefully, could "postpone and avert the disastrous situation which, in light of the Soviet Union's probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability, might arise in 1954 on a continuation of our present programs"; accordingly, "by acting promptly and vigorously in such a way that this date is, so to speak, pushed into the future, we would permit time for the process of accommodation, withdrawal and frustration to produce the necessary changes in the Soviet system."⁴⁶ Thus ended the Presidential reexamination of American objectives in peace and war. The only question remaining was how best to implement it.

Contrary to the widely held belief that President Truman and the National Security Council officially "approved"⁴⁷ the document for implementation in April 1950, in spite of Dean Acheson's well-known victory over the objections of Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson,⁴⁸ and shrouded in secrecy,⁴⁹ NSC 68 had yet a long road to travel. Only the North Korean invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950 ultimately solved the problem of how best to sell NSC 68. Without the Communist attack, which was not altogether unanticipated,⁵⁰ it is probably safe to conclude, along with Herbert Feis, that the proposed rearmament program would have been nibbled to death by the bureaucratic ducks.

In summary, an examination of recently declassified archival materials suggests that the basic American strategic position taken toward the U.S.S.R. in NSC 68 in 1950 had, with minor modifications, remained relatively unchanged since that taken in late 1948 in the wake of the Berlin crisis. The only appreciable, though a most dramatic, change in those years—if the NSC 20 Series may serve as a guide—was the Truman administration's shift in perception toward the meaning of the Soviet acquisition of the atomic bomb, which, with its presumed first-strike character, led in its turn to the decision to pursue further the feasibility of a thermonuclear bomb. Equally significant, the available evidence indicates that the case for the direct relationship between the recommendations contained in NSC 68 and the final U.S. commitment to the U.N. police action in Korea is, at best, tenuous. The views of policymakers such as Truman, Gen. Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Adm. Forrest P. Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations, on the origins of the decision to draw the line against perceived Soviet imperialism make it arguable that Korea was more likely an opportunity

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Joseph M. Siracusa was educated at the University of Denver, University of Vienna, and the University of Colorado, receiving the Ph.D. degree from the latter. He is the author or coauthor of several books, including the

forthcoming *The Crucial Years: Major Themes in Twentieth-Century America*, articles, and reviews. He has taught history at the University of Colorado and is now Senior Lecturer in American diplomatic history at the University of Queensland, Australia.

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in search of a policy rather than vice versa.⁵¹ Those who argue what might be called the "action significance"⁵² of NSC 68 tend to fall into the classical historical trap of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. Finally, much of the confusion surrounding NSC 68, it would seem, stems from the shroud of secrecy that for so long enveloped it and from the

historian's tendency—albeit many times justified—of attributing to this or that document an importance that is inversely related to its nonaccessibility. The early disclosure of NSC 68, which had in fact been written with that specific eventuality in mind, would doubtless have better served history as well as its practitioners.

NOTES

1. NSC 68, A Report to the National Security Council, "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," 14 April 1950, p. 3, President's Secretary's File (PSF), Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri (hereafter cited as NSC 68). Also see, Harry S. Truman, *The Memoirs of Harry S. Truman: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1953* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956), v. II, p. 326; and "Report by the Special Committee of the National Security Council to the President," 31 January 1950, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1950* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1977), pp. 513-23.

2. The "Terms of Reference" were, in fact, framed by the then Director of the Department of State's Policy Planning Staff, Paul H. Nitze, Interview with Paul H. Nitze, Center for National Security Research, Arlington, Virginia, 29 April 1977.

3. NSC 68/1. The National Security Council met again on 20 April and agreed that an *ad hoc* committee should be constituted to prepare a response to the President's directive. Minutes of the 55th Meeting of the National Security Council, PSF, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library.

4. NSC 68 was subsequently declassified by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in his capacity as Assistant to the President for National Security on 27 February 1975. An official text of NSC 68—minus its terms of reference—was published shortly thereafter in *Naval War College Review*, May-June 1975, pp. 53-108.

5. For various assessments of NSC 68, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 47-64; Paul Y. Hammond, "NSC 68: Prologue to Rearmament," in Warner R. Schilling, et al., eds., *Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 314; Cabell Phillips, *The Truman Presidency: The History of a Triumphant Succession* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 308; Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1966*, 1st ed. (New York: Wiley, 1967), pp. 90-91, and *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1975*, 3rd ed. (New York: Wiley, 1976), p. 97; Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p. 401; Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 383; Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Alan Tonelson, "Nitze's World," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1975, p. 80; and, most recently, Samuel F. Wells, Jr., "Sounding the Tocsin: NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat," *International Security*, Fall 1979, pp. 132, 138-139.

6. Interview with Paul H. Nitze, 29 April 1977. For background on the decision to accelerate the development of the thermonuclear weapon consult Richard G. Hewlett and Francis Duncan, *Atomic Shield: 1947-1952* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1969); Herbert F. York, *The Advisers: Oppenheimer, Teller, and the Superbomb* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1976); George H. Quester, *Nuclear Diplomacy, The First Twenty-Five Years*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dunellen, 1973), p. 69; Warner R. Schilling, "The H-Bomb Decision: How to Decide without Really Chosing," *Political Science Quarterly*, March 1961, pp. 24-26; and David Alan Rosenberg, "American Atomic Strategy and the Hydrogen Bomb Decision," *Journal of American History*, June 1979, pp. 62-87.

7. See, especially, Nitze's "U.S. Foreign Policy, 1945-1955," Foreign Policy Association, *Headline Series*, March-April 1956, pp. 3-55; and "The Evolution of National Security Policy and the Vietnam War," in W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell, eds., *The Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1977), pp. 2-7.

8. Princeton Seminars, 1 October 1953 (evening session), Copy 1, Folder 1, Papers of Dean Acheson, Truman Library (hereafter cited as Princeton Seminar).

9. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 488-489. Acheson's biographer, William R. Bundy, who was assigned NSC duties (for the Central

Intelligence Agency) in the summer of 1952 to work on a national security paper that picked up where the NSC 68 Series left off, believes that Acheson was nearer the truth of the matter in his memoir than he was in 1953. Letter from William P. Bundy to the author, 30 November 1978.

10. Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 307-308.

11. Interview with W. Averell Harriman, Georgetown, Washington, D.C., 25 April 1977; and Memo of Conversations between Acheson and Harriman, 28 April 1950, Papers of Dean Acheson, Box No. 65, Truman Library.

12. NSC 68/2, A Report to the National Security Council, "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," 30 September 1950, attached note by the Executive Secretary to the NSC, PSF, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library (hereafter cited as NSC 68/2).

13. NSC 68/4, A Report to the President by the National Security Council, "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," attached note by the Executive Secretary to the NSC, 14 December 1950, *ibid.* (hereafter cited as NSC 68/4).

14. Princeton Seminar, 11 October 1953.

15. Nitze has subsequently discussed the influence that Alexander Sachs of Lehman Brothers had on his own thinking with regard to this analysis in early 1950 that the Soviets would most likely encourage the North Koreans to attack South Korea by June or July of that year. Nitze, "The Evolution of National Security Policy and the Vietnam War," p. 4; and Interview with Paul H. Nitze, 29 April 1977.

16. See particularly Yergin, p. 403; and La Feber, p. 100.

17. W. W. Rostow, *The American Diplomatic Revolution* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1946).

18. NSC 20, A Report to the National Security Council, "Appraisal of the Degree and Character of Military Preparedness Required by the World Situation," 12 July 1948, National Security Council Files (NSCF), Modern Military Records Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

19. Note by the Executive Secretary to the National Security Council, 12 July 1948, *ibid.*

20. Memorandum for Forrestal from Truman, 13 July 1948, PSF, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library.

21. Letter from Truman to Forrestal, 15 July 1948, *ibid.*

22. NSC 20/1, A Report to the National Security Council, "United States Objectives with Respect to Russia," 18 August 1948, p. 5, NSCF, Modern Military Records Division, National Archives (Kennan's italics).

23. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 19 (Kennan's italics).

25. NSC 20/2, A Report to the National Security Council, "Factors Affecting the Nature of the U.S. Defense Arrangements in the Light of Soviet Policies," 25 August 1948, p. ii, NSCF, Modern Military Records Division, National Archives. (Hereafter quoted as NSC 20/2). Also see, Central Intelligence Agency Estimates, "Possibility of Direct Soviet Military Action during 1948," 2 April 1948; and "Possibility of Direct Soviet Military Action during 1948-1949," 16 September 1948, Central Intelligence Agency Files, Modern Military Records Division.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 5 (author's italics).

27. *Ibid.* See *Survival in the Air Age, A Report by the President's Air Policy Commission* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1948), pp. 10-23.

28. *Ibid.* (author's italics).

29. *Ibid.* (author's italics).

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

31. Memorandum from Executive Secretary to the President, 23 November 1948, PSC, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library.

32. NSC 20/4, A Report to the President by the National Security Council, "U.S. Objectives with Respect to the U.S.S.R. to Counter Soviet Threats to U.S. Security," 23 November 1948, p. 1, PSF, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Truman Library.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 5. For a program of specific measures intended to implement NSC 20/4 see the ill-fated "Measures Required to Achieve U.S. Objectives with respect to Russia," 30 March 1949, Department of State, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1949* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1976), I, pp. 271-77; and for State's objections and subsequent removal of "Measures..." from the NSC agenda, *ibid.*, pp. 282-84, 296-98. Another attempt to study the implications of NSC 20/4, in terms of establishing the forces and logistical requirements necessary to fulfill its broad outlines, is found in Anthony Cave Brown, ed., *Drop Shot: The U.S. Plan for War with the Soviet Union in 1957* (New York: Dial Press, 1978).

35. Nitze, "The Evolution of National Security Policy and the Vietnam War," p. 3.

36. NSC 68, pp. 10, 60.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 37 (author's italics).

38. For example, see Hammond, pp. 309-310; and Wells, p. 136.

39. NSC 68, p. 38.

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40. Pierrepont B. Noyes, *The Pallid Giant* (New York: Revell, 1927), reissued in 1946 under the title *Gentlemen: You are Mad*. Nitze recently observed that Noyes' essay is still the classic description of the nuclear arms race and the kind of mentality it breeds. Interview with Paul H. Nitze, 29 April 1977.

41. NSC 68, p. 38. Also see, Rosenberg, pp. 84-85.

42. In many respects, according to Nitze, the rationale and analysis of NSC 68 flow directly from the following passage: "It appears to follow from the above that we should produce and stockpile thermonuclear weapons in the event they prove feasible and would add significantly to our net capability." *Ibid.*, p. 39.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 42. For a different perspective on this problem, see Richard J. Barnett's *Who Wants Disarmament?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960).

44. NSC 68, p. 35. For a candid discussion on atomic use policy, which was calculated in the most cautious manner, see NSC 30, A Report to the National Security Council, "United States Policy on Atomic Warfare," 10 September 1948, NSCF, Modern Military Records Division, National Archives.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

47. Repeated most recently in Yergin, p. 403.

48. Acheson, pp. 486-97.

49. Nitze has himself estimated that only a single paragraph in NSC 68—the American intelligence community's crude 4-year projection of the Soviet Union's fission bomb production capability—fell into the category of "secure information"; and even here Oppenheimer doubted that it was "a cardinal one percent." Interview with Paul H. Nitze, 29 April 1977. For the exchange between Oppenheimer and Nitze consult Princeton Seminar, 11 October 1953.

50. NSC 8/1, A Report to the National Security Council. "The Position of the United States with Respect to Korea," 16 March 1949, NSCF, Modern Military Records Division, National Archives.

51. Memoranda of Conversations held at Blair House, 25 June 1950, pp. 2-3; and 27 1950, p. 6, Papers of Dean Acheson, Truman Library. These views are also confirmed in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers: 1950* (v. VII, pp. 125-270).

52. Suggested by William P. Bundy to the author, 30 November 1978. See Paul H. Nitze, "Atoms, Strategy and Policy," *Foreign Affairs* January 1956, p. 187.

