

Number 63

The Determination of the
United States Military Force
Posture: Political Processes
and Policy Changes

by

Harold K. Jacobson
The University of Michigan

March 1985

This paper was presented at a colloquium sponsored by the International Security Studies Program of The Wilson Center on October 3, 1984. It is not to be cited or quoted without the permission of the author.

This essay is one of a series of Working Papers being distributed by the International Security Studies Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. This series will include papers by Fellows, Guest Scholars, and interns within the Program and by members of the Program staff and of its Advisory Council, as well as work presented at, or resulting from seminars, workshops, colloquia, and conferences held under the Program's auspices. The series aims to extend the Program's discussions to a wider international community and to help authors obtain timely criticism of work in progress. Single copies of Working Papers may be obtained without charge by writing to:

Dr. Samuel F. Wells, Jr.
International Security Studies Program, Working Papers
The Wilson Center
Smithsonian Institution Building
Washington, D.C. 20560

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars was created by Congress in 1968 as a "living institution expressing the ideals and concerns of Woodrow Wilson . . . symbolizing and strengthening the fruitful relation between the world of learning and the world of public affairs."

The Wilson Center's International Security Studies Program, established in the Spring of 1977, has as its principal objective to make better use of the past in order to improve our understanding of the present and to refine our analyses and policies for the future. The initial year of the Program was devoted to exploiting the large amounts of recently declassified historical information dealing with diverse aspects of United States security policies from 1945 to 1960. Subsequent research activity and meetings will focus on contemporary security issues with special attention given to such subjects as: weapons policy, economic implications of military activity, defense budgeting, technological imperatives in defense policy, nuclear proliferation, and deterrence theory.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES PROGRAM

Samuel F. Wells, Jr., Secretary

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Alexander L. George, Chairman, Stanford University
Robert J. Art, Brandeis University
Hanna Batatu, Georgetown University
Richard N. Cooper, Harvard University
Andrew J. Goodpaster, General, USA (Ret.)
Helga Haftendorn, Freie Universitat Berlin
Pierre Hassner, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris
Paul M. Kennedy, Yale University
Philip A. Odeen, Coopers & Lybrand
Bernard Reich, George Washington University
Charles H. Townes, University of California, Berkeley

The Determination of the United States Military Force Posture:
Political Processes and Policy Changes

Harold K. Jacobson*

The University of Michigan

How does the United States determine its military force posture? How does it decide to change its force posture? Are changes in the U.S. force posture primarily determined in response, in some rough measure, to U.S. perceptions of the strength and intentions of U.S. adversaries? Or are they primarily the result of domestic factors; partisan and bureaucratic processes and struggles and attempts to manage the economy?

The Focus of the Study and Preceding Scholarship

This study analyzes how the United States military force posture has been determined in the period since the end of World War II. It seeks to understand how the United States as a large and complex polity, existing within the framework of the contemporary nation-state system, determined the level and type of military forces that it would have. It is particularly concerned with explaining changes in the U.S. force posture. Its purpose is to understand the process, not to justify or criticize the outcome of this process. Whatever one may feel about the wisdom of the outcome, understanding the process that produced it is an essential step to undertaking efforts either to modify or to perpetuate the outcome.

In his careful, thorough, and balanced analysis, The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics, first published in 1961, Samuel P. Huntington showed that many factors entered into the determination of the U.S. military force posture in the period from the end of World War II to 1960: perceptions of the magnitude and immediacy of the dangers that the U.S. faced; understandings about the possibilities offered by current and prospective technology; estimates of the impact of military spending on the immediate and long-run health of the U.S. economy; and political processes, including leadership and partisan and bureaucratic momentum and conflicts. Although Huntington's analysis devoted some attention to public attitudes and their impact, it concentrated primarily on the actions of the president and the executive departments and offices on the one hand and of congress on the other and on the interactions between these two branches of the U.S. national government.

Since the publication of Huntington's book, there have been many scholarly analyses of the determination of the U.S. military force posture or aspects of it. Many of these have sought to answer with quantitative precision the questions that he raised. Others have sought to develop general explanations of the process in the form of semi-abstract models. Some have continued his tracing of the evolution of U.S. strategic doctrine and have advanced general explanations for this evolution. Hardly any have sought to broaden the focus of analysis beyond Huntington's primary concentration on the personnel of the national government in Washington and give greater attention to other components of the American political system, such as the mass media and public opinion.

Considerable scholarly effort has been devoted to attempts to

guage precisely the extent to which there has been an interaction between the determination of the United States force posture and the determination of the Soviet force posture (For a comprehensive and convenient summary of this work see Russett: 1983). Much effort has also been devoted to detailed examinations of particular sets of decisions of the national government (e.g. Ball: 1980) or of the role of selected participants in general classes of decisions (e.g. Kanter: 1975). In addition, substantial effort has been devoted to developing general mathematical models that attempt to explain the level of the U.S. military budget (e.g. Mowery, Kamlet, and Grecine: 1980; Ostrun: 1978; and Padgett: 1980). Less but still significant effort has been devoted to analysis of the evolution of U.S. strategic doctrine; (e.g. Gaddis: 1982) one can assume that there has been an important relationship between strategic doctrine and force posture.

These studies have made useful contributions to knowledge about the determination of the United States military force posture. Taken as supplements to Huntington's analysis, they are valuable. Taken alone, however, they may appear -- perhaps unintentionally-- to have reached conclusions at variance with Huntington's. Unlike Huntington's book, most of these studies have concentrated on one or a few aspects of the process rather than on its entirety. Their partial explanations have sometimes been taken for comprehensive ones. Some studies, striving for precision and stressing quantitative analytical techniques, have produced anomalous results that ignore some of Huntington's strongly documented conclusions. Whatever the explanation, in contrast to Huntington's multifaceted and balanced explanation, the more recent studies could appear to have concluded that domestic factors -- principally partisan struggles, organizational

momentum, bureaucratic politics, and the efforts of the national government to manage the economy -- have been the dominant determinants of the U.S. force posture and that Soviet policies and military efforts have had little impact in determining the level and type of military forces that the United States has had.

This study draws from recent scholarship, but utilizes Huntington's comprehensive analytical framework and attempts to build on his multifaceted and balanced explanation. It seeks and stresses the precision of numerical analyses and uses statistical measures to test the strength or lack of strength of associations among various factors. It returns to Huntington's broad focus on U.S. political processes and goes farther by giving greater attention to components beyond the personnel of the national government in Washington. It assesses the impact of Soviet policies and military strength, not by measuring the relationship between changes in the military budgets of the two countries, but -- as Huntington did -- by assuming that the impact of Soviet policies and changes in Soviet force levels on the U.S. force posture has been conditioned by the filter of U.S. political processes.

The Evolution of The U.S. Military Force Posture, 1946 - 1984

Having a clear picture of the evolution of the U.S. Military Force Posture in the period from 1946 to 1984 is an essential prerequisite for examining the changes that have occurred. Thus the first step in the analysis is to describe this evolution in broad terms.

Annual Total Obligational Authority (TOA) of the Department of Defense (DOD) provides a convenient single measure of the overall level

of funds available for U.S. military forces. It is not a perfect measure because, even after taking inflation into account, the costs of personnel and equipment have increased over the years due to policy decisions setting pay levels at those of comparable civilian jobs and technological advances that have made possible the development of more complex and more expensive weapon systems. Because of these cost increases the number of people and the quantity of equipment that could be purchased with a given amount of budgetary authority expressed in constant dollars has declined. Nevertheless, TOA is a convenient measure for roughly assessing broad trends.

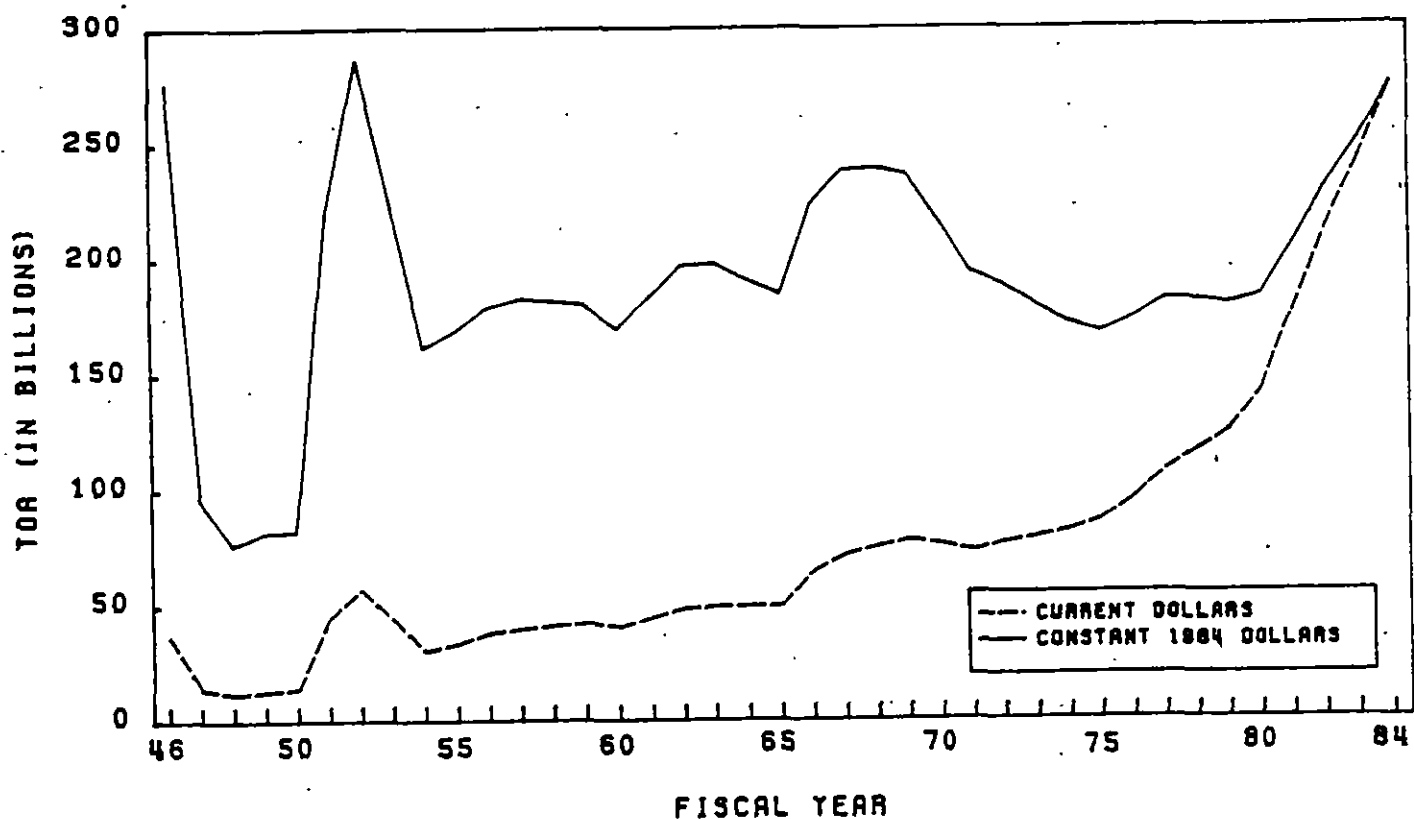
Figure 1 shows the TOA of the Department of Defense for Fiscal Years (FYs) 1946 through 1984 in both current and constant 1984 dollars. [1] The current dollar line gives the impression that DOD's TOA started to increase in FY 1950 and continued to increase virtually without interruption through FY 1984. If the effects of inflation are taken into account, the picture is considerably different. The constant dollar line is one of peaks and valleys. It shows a sharp decline in the TOA in the years immediately after World War II, significant increases and declines during the years of the U.S. involvement in and disengagement from the Korean and Vietnam wars, and finally a significant increase that started in FY 1981. There are also minor increases starting in FY 1955, FY 1961, and FY 1976. In constant dollars, only in the 1980s did the Department of Defense's TOA come near the peak of FY 1946 when the country was demobilizing after World War II and that attained in FY 1952 during the Korean War.

Figure 1 About Here

Several important conclusions can be drawn simply from the data presented in Figure 1. First, except for the U.S. military buildup that started in FY 1981, the explanation for sharp changes in level of U.S. military forces in the period from 1946 to 1984 has clearly been involvement in and disengagement from wars. Second, the United States did make an adjustment in the level of its military forces, which Huntington described, as a consequence of the policies that it adopted at the outset of the Cold War: the decisions that put the U.S. on a course of attempting to contain the Soviet Union through military deterrence and the decisions that resulted in the incorporation of nuclear weapons into the United States arsenal. This can be seen in the significant difference in the level of military forces that the United States maintained before and after the Korean War. Compare the levels of TOA in the late 1940s with those in the mid-1950s. Third, after this adjustment was made, with the exception of the years of the Vietnam War, the level of funds available for U.S. military forces was relatively constant until the military buildup of the 1980s began.

Another perspective on United States decisions about the level of funds that would be available for its military forces can be gained by examining the relationship of Department of Defense's expenditures to the total expenditures of the federal government, total public spending (i.e. federal, state, and local), and the U.S. gross national product (GNP). Figure 2 shows these relationships. [2] It is striking that after the peak that occurred during the Korean War, DOD expenditures declined steadily as a proportion of all three aggregates until the

FIGURE 1. TOTAL OBLIGATIONAL AUTHORITY
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE: FY 1946 - FY 1984



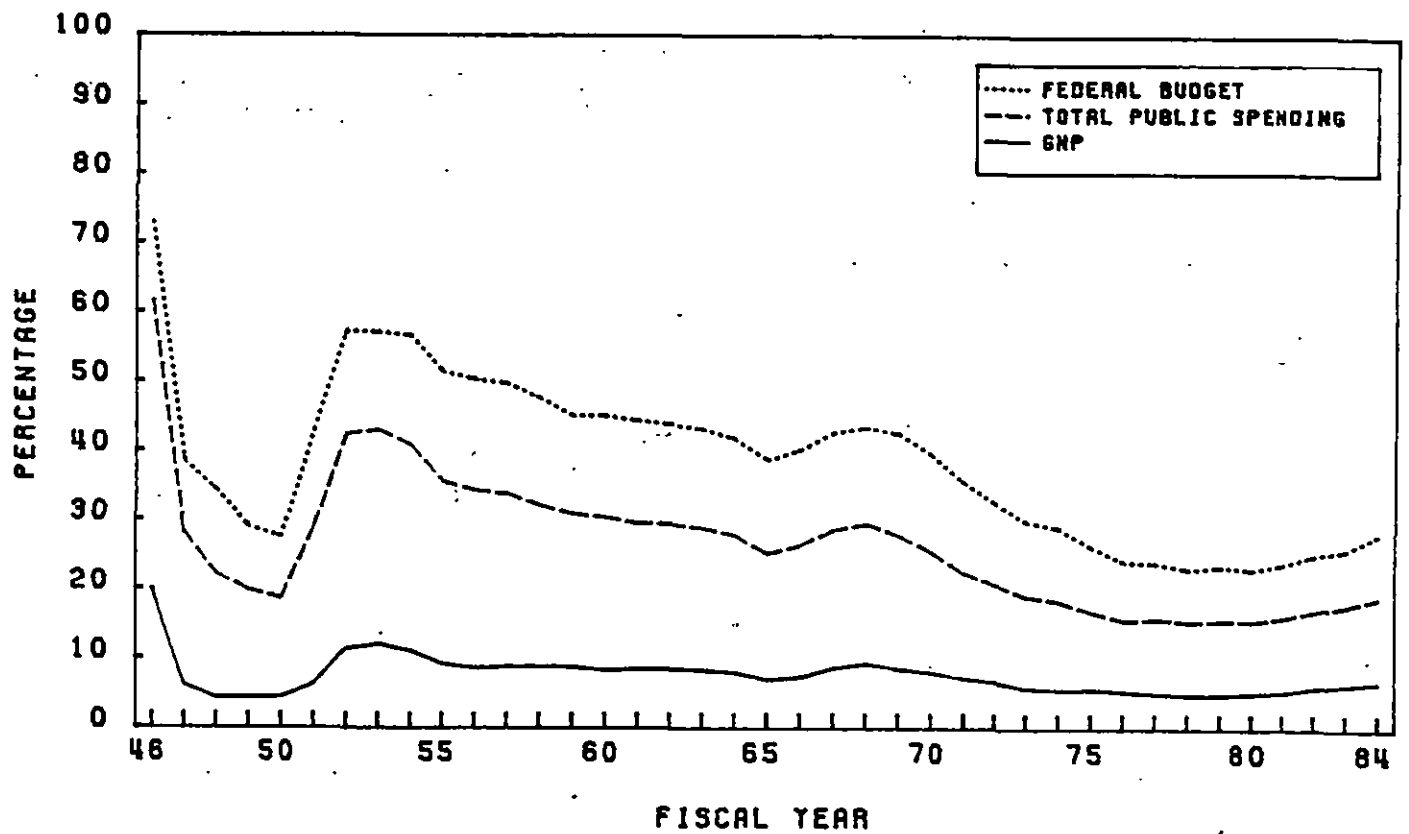
1980s with only a brief and slight interruption during the Vietnam War. In FY 1946 DOD spending constituted almost 20 percent of the U.S. GNP, during the Korean War it rose again to 12 percent, by FY 1979 it had fallen to less than 5 percent. Even the military buildup of the 1980s did not bring DOD expenditures as a proportion of U.S. GNP to the levels that existed in the period between the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Figure 2 About Here

In the years since World War II public expenditures on social welfare have increased substantially, especially starting in the mid-1960s and continuing through the 1970s. Total governmental expenditures (federal, state, and local) as a proportion of GNP, however, have risen only slightly. In 1960 government purchases of goods and services constituted 19.8 percent of the U.S. gross national product. [3] In 1980 they were only 20.4 percent of the U.S. GNP, even though during this 20 year period the non-military purchases of the federal government had increased more than 7 times. The expansion of U.S. social welfare expenditures during the 1960s and 1970s was financed primarily by reducing the relative proportion of the expenditures of the federal government devoted to military purposes rather than by increasing taxes.

The actual U.S. military force posture, as opposed to a summary indicator of this posture, consists of military personnel and equipment. The Total Obligational Authority of the Department of Defense, however, determines the number of personnel that can be supported and the amount of equipment that can be purchased and maintained; thus the actual force posture is a function of TOA.

Figure 2. DOD Expenditures as Percentages of Federal Government Expenditures, Total Public Spending, and GNP



Consequently, the evolution of the U.S. military force posture reflects the budgetary trends discussed above.

Numbers of military personnel, tanks, combat aircraft, and naval combat ships increased during the early stages and decreased during the later stages of the Korean and Vietnam Wars. As the Vietnam War wound down, these numbers dropped below those maintained before the United States became extensively involved in Vietnam and decreased further until the process began to be reversed in FY 1980 and FY 1981. [4] There has been, however, a certain stability in the number of Army and Marine Corps divisions that the United States maintained. The United States had 19 divisions prior to the Vietnam War, reduced this number to 15 in FY 1972, increased it to 16 the following Fiscal Year, and raised it again to 19 in FY 1977, where it remained throughout the period under consideration.

Trends with respect to strategic delivery vehicles and warheads are quite different from the trends with respect to the other aspects of the U.S. military force posture that have been described in the preceding paragraphs. The United States built up the number of strategic delivery vehicles in its inventory until it reached a peak of 2,350 in Fiscal Year 1965. By Fiscal Year 1971 the number fell below 2,000, and it has slowly declined since then, dropping below 1,900 in FY 1984. The number of warheads, on the other hand, rose slowly until FY 1972, and then, as a consequence of the introduction of multiple independently-targeted reentry vehicles (MIRVs), it jumped from 2,340 to 7,976 in FY 1977. It has remained above 7,000 since then.

Examining how the Department of Defense's Total Obligational Authority has been allocated can usefully supplement the description presented above of the evolution of the U.S. military force posture.

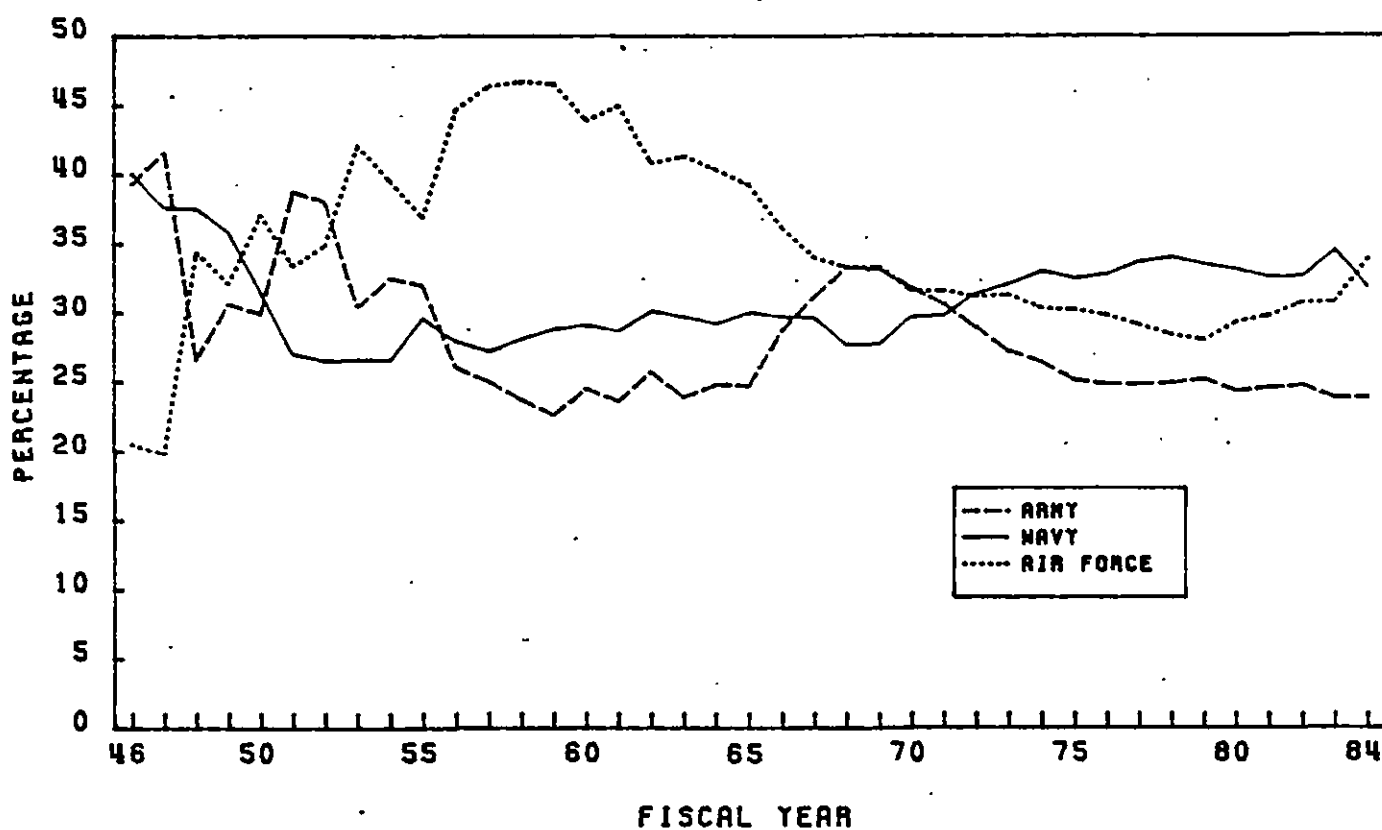
Figure 3 shows the shares of DOD's TOA allocated to the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. [5] The allocations to the three services always account for more than 90 percent of DOD's TOA. Fluctuations in the shares of TOA that the services receive reflect, among other things, changing strategic concepts.

As Figure 3 shows, the Army's share of DOD's TOA was sharply affected by the U.S. involvement in the Korean and Vietnam wars. During the height of the Korean War, FY 1951 and FY 1952, the Army received the largest share of TOA. During the Vietnam War the Army's share increased again, then as the war wound down, it fell to what appears to be a peacetime normal level of about 25 percent or less. The most striking feature of the line representing the Navy's share is the increase that started in FY 1970. From Fiscal Year 1972, when -- for the first time in 25 years -- the Navy's share reached the level that it had attained in FY 1950, through Fiscal Year 1983 the Navy received the largest share of DOD's TOA. The Air Force received the largest share from FY 1953 through FY 1967. It was during this period that nuclear weapons were being integrated into the U.S. arsenal. The Air Force did not receive the largest share again until FY 1984. Both the Navy and the Air Force regularly receive more than 30 percent of DOD's TOA.

Figure 3 About Here

The Department of Defense's Total Obligational Authority can also be disaggregated according to major force programs. Figure 4 shows the amount of funds in constant 1984 dollars allocated to 5 of the 10 categories that the DOD uses in this disaggregation: (1) Strategic

Figure 3: Army, Navy, Air Force Shares of DOD's
Total Obligational Authority



Forces; (2) General Purpose Forces; (3) Research and Development; (4) Central Supply and Maintenance; and (5) Training, Medical, and Other General Personnel Activities. [6] These 5 categories always account for more than 80 percent of DOD's TOA.

Several observations can be made concerning the data summarized in Figure 4. All five categories were affected by the Korean and Vietnam wars. General Purpose Forces have always received the largest share of DOD's TOA, even during the period when large numbers of strategic nuclear weapons were introduced into the U.S. arsenal. From FY 1961 through FY 1979 there has been a virtually steady decrease in the absolute amount of money allocated to Strategic Forces. Since the mid-1950s there has been a secular trend toward increasing the absolute amount of money allocated to Research and Development and Training, Medical, and Other General Personnel Activities.

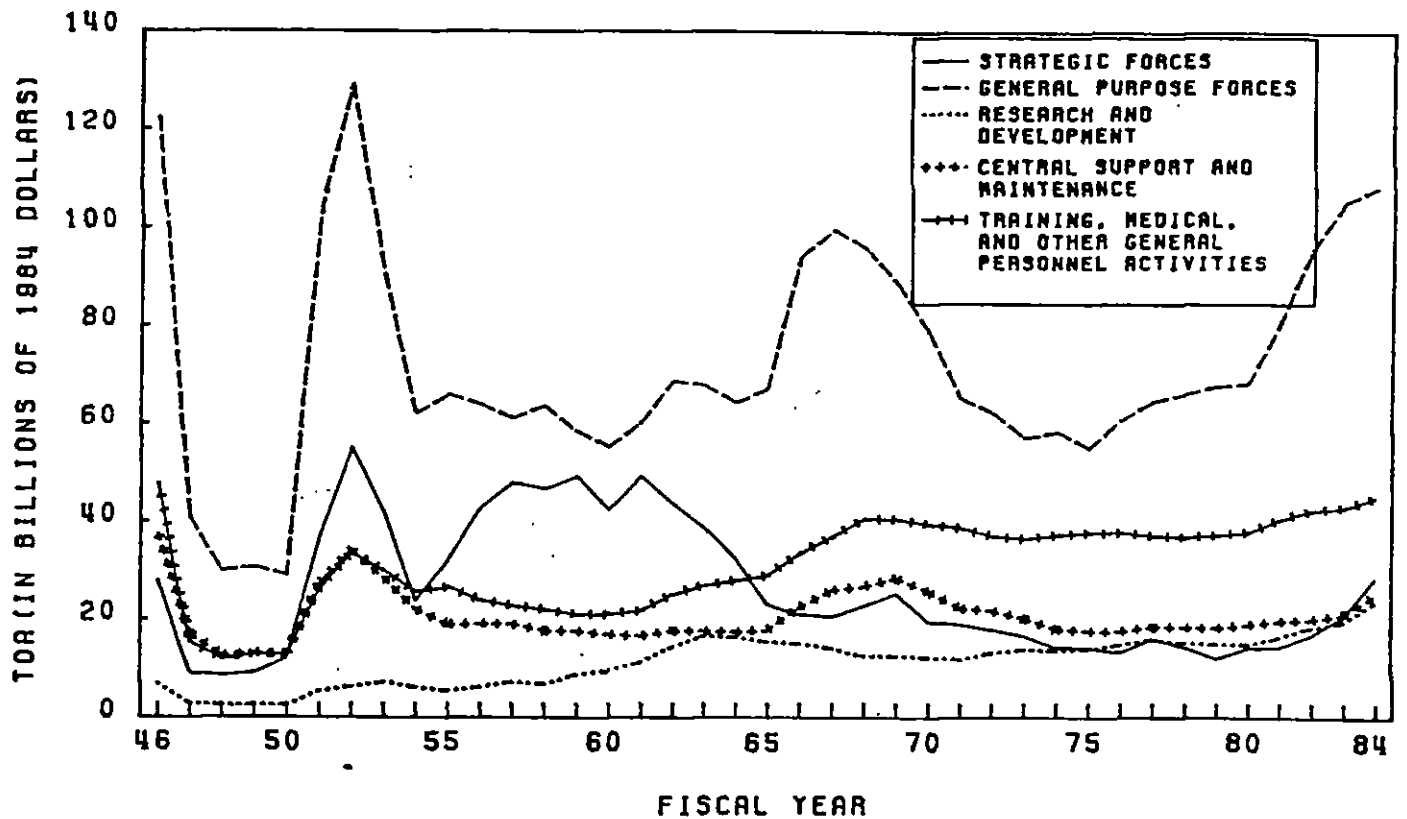
Figure 4 About Here

With this rough description of the evolution of the U.S. Military force posture in the period since 1946, we can turn to the task of attempting to explain the policy shifts that have shaped the course of the evolution.

Factors Contributing to Changes in U.S. Military Force Levels

From the preceding description it is evident that, except for the military buildup that began in Fiscal Year 1981, the most salient changes in the level of U.S. military forces have been the result of U.S. involvement in and disengagement from wars. With the exception of the military buildup of the 1980s, the pronounced changes in U.S. force

FIGURE 4. AMOUNT OF DOD'S TOTAL OBLIGATIONAL
AUTHORITY ALLOCATED TO MAJOR FORCE PROGRAMS



levels have been the decline after World War II and the increase and decrease in connection with the Korean and Vietnam wars. The other changes in force levels, the short-lived buildups that began in Fiscal Years 1955, 1961, and 1976 and the secular decline attributable to the increased real costs of personnel and equipment, are less significant. Since it is not the purpose of this analysis to explain U.S. decisions to enter into and leave wars, the most important change in force levels that needs to be explained is the military buildup that began in Fiscal Year 1981.

How did the United States decide to undertake its military buildup of the 1980s? The obvious explanation is that the 1980 election brought to office a president, Ronald Reagan, committed to pursuing a military buildup. This commitment was a central feature of Reagan's electoral campaign, and once elected, he proceeded to fulfill it, proposing and gaining the adoption of sharply increased military budgets.

The issue, however, is more complicated than this simple and basic explanation. Several questions arise immediately. What accounts for the difference between the 1980 presidential election and the preceding one in 1976 when a candidate, Jimmy Carter, who was publicly committed to decreasing the level of U.S. military forces triumphed over the other major-party candidate, Gerald R. Ford, who in contrast was publicly committed to increasing the level? Even accepting the conventional wisdom that domestic economic issues are normally far more important in determining the outcome of presidential elections than foreign and international issues, it would be unlikely that such sharply opposed positions on military spending had no impact on the elections. Furthermore, after he had been in office, President Carter

too became committed to a military buildup, so the issue in the 1980 election was not whether there should be a military buildup, but rather the pace and extent of such a buildup, with Reagan arguing that Carter's program was insufficient. What accounts for the change in Carter's view and in the position of his administration?

One underlying factor was a shift in U.S. public opinion: the public came to favor an increase in military spending and thus an increase in U.S. military force levels. Since 1950 the Gallup poll has periodically asked respondents if they felt that the United States was spending too much, too little or about the right amount on national defense. Table 1 shows the results. Although the number of observations is limited and they are not ideally distributed over time, the data clearly indicate trends. [7] One can infer that those who felt that too little was being spent on national defense would favor an increase in military spending and those who felt that too much was being spent would favor a decrease. Public revulsion toward the Vietnam war that manifested itself among other ways in a strong desire to cut military spending is obvious. Public sentiment in favor of cutting the military budget peaked in 1969, and then declined steadily until 1982 when it began to rise again. In perfect counterpoint, public sentiment for increasing military spending fell to its lowest level in 1969, then rose steadily until it reached a peak in 1981 and then dropped back. As early as 1976 sentiment favoring an increase in military spending had reached the levels that it had been at in 1953 and 1960. Different polls and different questions have produced results that, though they differ in detail, show identical trends. Throughout the 1970s there was a steady increase in public sentiment favoring an increase in military spending.

Table 1 About Here

There is a strong relationship between public sentiment in favor of increasing military spending and increases in the Total Obligational Authority of the Department of Defense. Using the public opinion data displayed in Table 1 and the current 1984 dollar TOA data used in the construction in Figure 1, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between responses favoring an increase in military spending and percentage increases over the then current year's level in DOD's TOA for the Fiscal Year immediately following the date of the poll (i.e. the TOA adopted during the period of the poll) is .67 ($n = 14$, level of significance = .01). The Pearson correlation coefficient between public sentiment favoring a decrease in military spending and percentage increases in DOD's TOA is $-.51$ ($n = 14$, level of significance = .06). In other words, over the years DOD's TOA has tended to go up when public sentiment has favored an increase and down when public sentiment favored a decrease.

The whole process of determining the Department of Defense's level of spending is sensitive to public opinion. In the 34 fiscal years for which data are available (FY 1950 through FY 1983) congress never appropriated exactly what the president and secretary of defense requested, although for Fiscal Year 1963 congress did appropriate 100 percent of the request. [8] Congress appropriated more than the request for six fiscal years (FYs 1954, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1962, and 1981) and less for the remaining fiscal years. The least that congress appropriated was 88.2 percent of the request for Fiscal Year 1953, the most was 102.6 percent for FY 1981, and the mean appropriation was 97.2

Table 1

Public Opinion Concerning Military Spending
(Percentages)

<u>Dates of Survey</u>		<u>Too Little (Increase)</u>	<u>About Right</u>	<u>Too Much (Decrease)</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
26.II - 3.III	1950	23	44	15	18
26.III - 31.III	1950	63	24	7	6
14.IX - 19.XI	1952	29	25	26	20
15.VIII - 20.VIII	1953	22	45	20	13
3.II - 7.II	1960	21	45	18	16
10.VII - 15.VII	1969	8	31	52	9
16.II - 19.II	1973	8	40	42	10
21.IX - 24.IX	1973	13	30	46	11
9.VI - 9.VI	1974	12	32	44	12
30.I - 2.II	1976	22	32	36	10
8.VII - 11.VII	1977	27	40	23	10
25.I - 28.I	1980	49	24	14	13
30.I - 3.II	1981	51	22	15	12
12.III - 15.III	1982	19	36	36	9
5.XI - 8.XI	1982	16	31	41	12

percent of the request. The Pearson correlation coefficients between congressional appropriation as a percentage of the president's total request and sentiment during the period when the appropriation would be considered in congress favoring an increase or a decrease in military spending are respectively .63 ($n = 13$, level of significance = .02) and $-.72$ ($n = 13$, level of significance = .01). When there is strong public sentiment for greater military spending the congress tends to respond by appropriating a higher percentage of the president's request, and when there is strong public sentiment against military spending congress appropriates a relatively lower percentage. The latter relationship is stronger than the former. The congressional action in appropriating 102.6 percent of the president's request for Fiscal Year 1981 illustrates one aspect of this phenomenon, that in appropriating 92.7 percent for FY 1970, the other. In January of 1980, 49 percent of the respondents in the Gallup poll felt that too little was being spent on military purposes; in August 1969, 52 percent felt that too much was being spent. Congressional action, however, does not account for the strength of the association between public opinion and the Department of Defense's spending it merely magnifies the fluctuations, because when public sentiment favors an increase the president's initial request is larger and the opposite is also true.

In view of the strong relationship between public opinion and the level of military spending, given the steady increase during the 1970s in public sentiment favoring increased military spending, one must question why the military buildup that started in Fiscal Year 1976 did not continue without interruption, instead of being aborted and then resumed again in FY 1981. In current 1984 dollars DOD's TOAs for FY 1978 and 1979 were less than for FY 1977, and that for FY 1980 was only

slightly more than 1 percent above the FY 1977 level. The Fiscal Year 1978 budget was the first one fully prepared by the Carter administration. In effect President Carter fulfilled his campaign pledge of reducing military spending, though by the time that this occurred the reduction may have been more the consequence of underestimating inflation than consciously trying to cut the military budget.

One could argue that President Carter was elected irrespective of his position on military spending, other factors were the dominant concern of the electorate, and that his administration was out of tune with public sentiment concerning this issue. There is some evidence to support such a contention, though the evidence would support a broader argument to the effect that national leaders more generally were out of tune with public sentiment. In a poll conducted in November 1978 for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations the Gallup organization asked samples of the public and of national leaders the same questions. Thirty-two percent of the public and 31 percent of the national leaders favored increasing military spending (Rielly: 1979). Of those among the public who were most informed about international affairs (the "attentive public"), 52 percent favored increasing military spending. Moreover, a much higher proportion of the national leaders than of the public favored reducing military spending, 28 percent as opposed to 16 percent. The public was more inclined than national leaders to feel that the United States was falling behind the Soviet Union militarily: 56 percent of the public but only 39 percent of the national leaders felt this way. Again the gap between the "attentive public" and national leaders was even greater: 72 percent of the attentive public felt that the United States was falling behind. The data support an

interpretation that during the early years of the Carter administration there was a difference between the views of the national leadership and at least the attentive portion of the public. They also show that the deep divisions within the national leadership (which has been thoroughly documented and analyzed by Holsti and Rosenau: 1984), were not as evident within the public.

The Carter administration, however, may not have been out of tune with the opinion of the majority of its constituents. Through the 1950s Americans who identified themselves as Democrats tended to be more favorable to military spending than those who identified themselves as Republicans, but this changed in the 1960s, and by the 1970s the situation was reversed. Table 2 shows this. Using data from most of the Gallup polls listed in Table 1, the numbers in Table 2 result from subtracting the percentage of individuals who identified themselves as Republicans taking a particular position from the number of Democrats who took the same position: a positive number indicates that more Democrats than Republicans took the position and a negative number, the opposite. In the 1970s and 1980s, Democrats have been considerably less favorable to military spending than Republicans. They have also been more deeply divided on the issue, but by January 1980 even 45 percent of Democratic respondents to the Gallup poll felt too little was being spent on the military budget. When the Carter administration did finally request a sizeable real budgetary increase for the Department of Defense, it was acting accord with its constituents' views as well as those of a broader majority. There was close to a national consensus.

Table 2 About Here

Table 2

Party Identifiers Differences Concerning Military Spending
(Percentage of Democrats Minus Percentage of Republicans)

<u>Date</u>		<u>Too Much</u>	<u>Too Little</u>
26.II	1950	-4	3
26.III	1950	-4	8
15.VIII	1953	-3	8
2.III	1960	1	9
21.XI	1973	24	-3
9.VI	1974	8	1
30.I	1976	5	1
8.VII	1977	13	-13
25.I	1980	10	-15
30.I	1981	3	-4
12.III	1982	25	-11
5.XI	1982	17	-6

Thus far the analysis has reached the unstartling conclusion that what the U.S. government has done with respect to the level of U.S. military forces has roughly been in accord with public wishes. This pushes the quest for understanding the U.S. military buildup of the 1980s to an analysis of why public sentiment toward military spending changed, especially during the 1970s.

In part, public opinion responded to changes in the Soviet military establishment. During the 1970s virtually all elements of the Soviet military establishment expanded, public sentiment in the United States favoring an increase in military spending rose as this expansion continued. Table 3 shows the Pearson product moment correlation coefficients between increases in public sentiment for more military spending and increases in various elements of the Soviet military establishment. The correlation coefficients measure changes in public sentiment and in the Soviet military establishment in the same year, but since the increase in Soviet military forces in the 1970s was monotonic the relationships remain relatively constant if a one or two year lag is built into the analysis to allow the public time to absorb the changes in the Soviet military establishment. The relationship between numbers of Soviet nuclear warheads and feelings that too little was being spent on the U.S. military establishment is the strongest (in fact, it is almost unbelievably strong), but three of the other relationships are also statistically significant. To show the importance of the relationship, taking one of the aspects of Soviet military power, personnel, a least squares regression using it as the independent variable and public sentiment favoring an increase in military spending yields an R square of .45 ($n=10$, level of

significance = .04). In other words, it explains almost half of the variance.

Table 3 About Here

As is clear from this analysis, there is not a perfect connection between respondents' views of the distribution of military power and and their feelings about military spending. While most respondents in the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations 1978 poll (69 percent) who felt that the United States was falling behind militarily felt too little was being spent on military purposes, some felt that military spending should be kept at the same level and others felt that it should be reduced. There was also a division of views among those who believed that the United States was not falling behind. The public's views about military issues, though obviously less well informed, are no less complex than those of the experts. Some members of the public would seem to belong to the minimum deterrent school of thought, either because they believe a minimum deterrent is completely adequate or because they believe that there are sufficient high priority non-military purposes to which public funds should be allocated that they are willing to bear whatever risks a minimum deterrent strategy may entail. The connection between respondents' views about the distribution of military power and their feelings about military spending became even less tight in the 1980s after the U.S military buildup had begun; in 1982 only 37 percent of those who thought that the Soviet Union was ahead militarily felt that military spending should be increased (Rielly: 1983, p. 29).

Public opinion appears to have been even more sensitive to

Table 3

Trends in Public Opinion and the Soviet Military Establishment

(n=8)

<u>Element of the Soviet Military Establishment</u>	<u>Pearson Correlation Coefficient</u>	<u>Level of Significance</u>
Personnel	.76	.03
Divisions	.85	.01
Tanks	.51	.19
Aircraft	.64	.09
Naval Vessels	.56	.15
Strategic Delivery Vehicles	.52	.19
Warheads	.99	.00

(Pearson correlation coefficients between increases in percentages of responses that too little was being spent on military purposes and increases in elements of the Soviet military establishment)

television treatment of the Soviet military establishment than to actual changes in most of the components of this establishment; it would be difficult if not impossible to achieve a statistical measure of association tighter than that shown in Table 3 between sentiment favoring increased military spending and the number of Soviet nuclear warheads. The television archive of Vanderbilt University has indexed the contents of the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news broadcasts starting in the late 1960s and continuing to the present. A least squares regression with the number of news broadcasts that indicated that the Soviet Union had a military lead over the United States as the independent variable and sentiment that too little was being spent on military purposes yields an R square of .71 ($n=10$, level of significance = .00). This regression explains more than 70 percent of the variance. If the number of meetings held at the Council on Foreign Relations devoted to discussions of the Soviet-American military balance is added as a second independent variable the R square is increased to .84 ($n=9$, level of significance = .00). This equation explains all but 16 percent of the variance. Presumably, discussions within the Council engage opinion leaders and in this way have a ripple effect on broader public opinion.

During the 1970s various interest groups--notable among them the second Committee on the Present Danger--formed to promote the cause of increased military spending (Wells: 1981). Though it is difficult to demonstrate statistically, such groups clearly had a direct and an indirect impact in rousing public concern about the Soviet military buildup. The Department of Defense also made efforts during the 1970s to improve its public image (Korb: 1979).

One possible way of viewing the United States political system

would have interest groups and prominent individuals being the first to note and become concerned about developments abroad; these groups and individuals would then stimulate the media to call attention to the developments; media treatment would lead to a change in public opinion; and the change in public opinion would lead ultimately to a change in government policy. The data presented thus far would seem to be consistent with this view of the American polity. It is impossible, however, to find a statistically significant relationship between changes in components of the Soviet military establishment and discussions on the three major networks evening news broadcasts of a Soviet military forces. One reason is that while the Soviet military buildup has been monotonic, and has continued into the 1980s, discussions of this issue on the evening news broadcasts have been sporadic, and they dropped off in the 1980s. This is also true of discussions at the Council on Foreign Relations. The activities of interest groups, like the Second Committee on the Present Danger, also dropped off in the 1980s. Many of the most important members of the committee accepted positions in the Reagan administration.

This analysis must be interpreted cautiously because it is based on a limited number of cases. Nevertheless, it strongly suggests that: (1) the level of U.S. military forces is relatively sensitive to public opinion; (2) that public opinion is sensitive to the level of Soviet military forces; and (3) that television and opinion leaders exercise a strong effect in mediating this sensitivity. The effect on public opinion and media coverage of Soviet actions in foreign affairs, as opposed to the level of Soviet military forces, has not yet been investigated. It may be that Soviet actions strongly shape the way in which television and opinion leaders play their mediating role.

As a final comment on the factors determining the level of U.S. military forces, there is no relationship between increases in the level of military spending and electoral strategy. There is no evidence to support a claim that the federal government increases military spending so as to improve economic conditions in election years.

Factors Shaping the Allocation of DOD's TOA

In determining the United States military force posture a second issue beyond how much force to have, and one that is equally important, is what type of force. If public opinion has been a major factor affecting the level of U.S. military forces, it has had a less obvious role in defining the composition of these forces. The national government, and within the national government the executive branch, appears to have had the greatest impact on the type of military forces that the United States has had.

Although in the period since the end of World War II congress has never appropriated exactly what the administration requested, the changes that it has made have hardly ever been such as to fundamentally restructure the U.S. military establishment according to its rather than the administration's vision of the type of forces that the United States should have (Korb: . 1973). There have been occasions when congressional opposition to certain major weapon systems such as the anti-ballistic missile have forced the executive to abandon elements of force that it at least at that time sought, but these represent exceptional rather than usual actions. Congress of course may have had an anticipated effect in that executive requests may have been shaped with Congressional views in mind.

The limited impact of congressional decisions is almost inherent in the relationship between the magnitude of its actions and the magnitude of changes in the Department of Defense's Total Obligational Authority. For the 34 fiscal years for which appropriate data are available the mean value of the congressional appropriation as a percentage of the president's request is 97.2 percent; that is, the average congressional action was to cut the request by 2.8 percent. The mean value of the change in DOD's TOA during these years was a 10.2 percent increase. If the years of the Korean and Vietnam wars are excluded ($n = 14$), congress on the average (mean) in the non-war years ($n = 20$) appropriated 98.0 percent of the president's request while DOD's TOA increased by an average of 2.83 percent. In about two-thirds of the years, the magnitude of the congressional action was less than the magnitude of the change in DOD's TOA. Furthermore, congressional changes are spread across the entire military budget, not concentrated in particular sections. Although congress frequently reduces procurement items, it usually does so by extending the period of purchase of particular weapon systems rather than reducing the absolute quantity to be purchased.

John L. Gaddis has noted that major changes in U.S. strategic concepts have generally come with changes in administrations (Gaddis: 1982), and one would expect changes in strategic concepts to have had an impact on the type of military forces that an administration would seek. Analysis of DOD's TOA during the period since World War II demonstrates that different administrations have in fact sought and obtained somewhat different types of military forces. The qualifying adjective "somewhat" is important because any human and technical structure as large and complex as the U.S. military force posture can

be changed only slowly. Nevertheless, administrations have sought to change and have succeeded in changing the U.S. military force posture during their tenure in office. The directions of these changes are systematically related to the party of the president. There are systematic differences between the strategic preferences of Democratic and Republican administrations.

Annual change in the Department of Defense's Total Obligational Authority provides a standard against which changes in allocations of DOD's TOA according to various disaggregations can be measured. The mean value of the annual change in DOD's TOA (calculated in constant 1984 dollars) from Fiscal Year 1946 through Fiscal Year 1983 was a 3.3 percent increase. The mean value of the change during the years when Democratic administrations were in power ($n = 22$) was a 6.7 percent increase. During the years of Republican administrations ($n = 17$) it was a 1.0 percent decrease. These averages, however, are strongly affected by the fact that the United States became involved in the Korean and Vietnam wars when Democratic administrations were in power and withdrew from these wars when Republican administrations were in power. Getting into and out of wars has had a strong impact on DOD's TOA and on allocations of the TOA, as was demonstrated in Figures 1, 3, and 4. In searching for normal tendencies it is appropriate to exclude from the analysis the fiscal years when DOD's TOA was strongly affected by World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars ($n = 17$). During the non-war fiscal years ($n = 22$) the mean change in DOD's TOA was a 3.4 percent increase. For these years the mean change during Democratic administrations ($n = 12$) was a 2.4 percent increase, while that during Republican administrations ($n = 10$) was a 4.5 percent increase. In non-war years, Republican administrations have been inclined to

increase DOD's TOA more than Democratic administrations, though both have on the average obtained increases. The mean values of changes in non-war fiscal years for the several post-World War II administrations are: Truman 3.9 percent (n = 2); Eisenhower, 2.0 percent (n = 7); Kennedy, 1.2 percent (n = 3); Johnson, -3.2 percent (n = 1); Ford, 4.3 percent (n = 2); Carter, 3.1 percent (n = 4); and Reagan, 10.3 percent (n = 3). All of the fiscal years that occurred during the Nixon administration were affected by the Vietnam war.

Table 4 shows the mean value of the annual percentage changes in allocations of TOA (in constant 1984 dollars) to the three services during non-war years under Democratic and Republican administrations. [9] Democratic administrations have given the largest percentage increases to the Army, and in terms of favorableness of treatment according to this measure they have ranked the services: Army, Air Force, Navy. Republican administrations, in contrast, have given most favorable treatment to the Air Force, and have ranked the services: Air Force, Navy, Army. As Table 5 shows, the budget preferences of the Carter and Reagan administrations have been in accord with the traditions of their parties.

Tables 4 and 5 About Here

One of the explanations for the different way in which Democratic and Republican administrations have treated the services is that they appear to have had different preferences with respect to strategic concepts. This can be seen by comparing the mean values of percentage changes in allocations of TOA to the five major force programs included in Figure 4 above: (1) Strategic Forces; (2) General Purpose Forces;

Table 4

Mean Annual Changes in Service Allocations of TOA During Non-War
Years of Democratic and Republican Administrations
(percentage change)

<u>Service</u>	Democratic	Republican
	<u>(n=12)</u>	<u>(n=10)</u>
TOA	2.4	4.5
Army	3.5	.6
Navy	1.2	5.3
Air Force	2.2	7.7

Table 5

Mean Annual Changes in Service Allocations of TOA During the
Carter and Reagan Administrations
(percentage change)

<u>Service</u>	<u>Carter (n=4)</u>	<u>Reagan (n=3)</u>
TOA	3.1	10.3
Army	3.6	9.2
Navy	2.1	9.4
Air Force	3.1	15.2

(3) Research and Development; (4) Central Supply and Maintenance; and (5) Training, Medical, and Other General Personnel Activities. Table 6 contains this comparison. [10] Democratic administrations have stressed General Purpose Forces, and even though the annual mean increase under Democratic administrations is only 4.1 percent, because these forces have always received the largest share of DOD's TOA, the absolute amount of the increase has been substantial. Republican administrations have stressed Strategic Forces. There is also a contrast between the rank order of the five programs in terms of favorableness of treatment measured by mean annual percentage change in allocation of TOA. Under Democratic administrations the rank order has been: Research and Development; General Purpose Forces; Training, Medical, and Other General Personnel Activities; Central Supply and Maintenance; and Strategic Forces. Under Republican administrations it has been: Strategic Forces; Research and Development; General Purpose Forces; Central Supply and Maintenance; and Training, Medical, and Other General Personnel Activities. Table 7 shows that Reagan administration has acted in accord with the general tendencies of Republican administrations. With the exception of its low ranking of Research and Development, the Carter administration also acted in accord with the general tendencies of Democratic administrations.

Tables 6 and 7 About Here

Various explanations suggest themselves with respect to the markedly different treatment of the allocation of the Department of Defense's Total Obligational Authority under Democratic and Republic administrations. When the Eisenhower and Nixon administrations came to

Table 6

Mean Annual Changes in Major Force Program Allocations of TOA
During Non-War Years of Democratic and Republican Administrations

(percentage changes)

	Democratic (n=12)	Republican (n=10)
<u>Major Force Program</u>		
TOA	2.4	4.5
Strategic Forces	-1.8	16.2
General Purpose Forces	4.1	3.0
Research and Development	4.3	10.9
Central Supply and Maintenance	1.6	-.2
Training, Medical, and other General Personnel Activities	3.6	-.4

Table 7

Mean Annual Changes in Major Force Program Allocations of TOA
During the Carter and Reagan Administrations

	<u>Carter (n=4)</u>	<u>Reagan (n=3)</u>
<u>Major Force Program</u>		
TOA	3.1	10.3
Strategic Forces	-2.0	25.8
General Purpose Forces	5.7	10.7
Research and Development	.8	13.0
Central Supply and Maintenance	1.6	8.5
Training, Medical, and Other General Personnel Activities	2.1	3.7

power the United States was involved in unpopular land wars in Asia. Each administration attempted to extricate the United States from the war and to reformulate U.S. strategic doctrine and the military force posture so as to minimize the potentiality of becoming involved in a similar imbroglio (Gaddis: 1982, Litwak: 1984). Emphasizing Strategic Forces -- and the Air Force and the Navy -- was a corollary of the strategic concepts that they adopted, as was stressing research and development. Stand-away deterrence is also more in accord with the foreign policy traditions of the Republican party than a strategy that could envisage extensive military involvement outside of the Western hemisphere. Both explanations raise the possibility that decisions concerning the type of military forces that the United States would have also may have been sensitive to public opinion generally and particularly to the opinion of the adherents among the public of the party in control of the executive branch, as decisions concerning the level of U.S. military forces appear to have been.

Political Processes, Policy Changes, Deterrence, and War

This analysis has suggested that the American public has played a major role in shaping the U.S. military force posture, particularly the level of U.S. forces, but perhaps the type of forces as well. It has also suggested that the changes in the U.S. military force posture, other than those that have resulted from involvement in and disengagement from wars, have been a reaction to developments abroad, particularly changes in the military capabilities of the Soviet Union and probably also Soviet actions, and that perceptions of these developments have been mediated by U.S. political processes, especially communication flows.

The evidence is strong that for the non-war years since World War II this is the dominant explanation for changes in the U.S. military force posture. Organizational and bureaucratic momentum and politics may have had an impact but they have not been the dominant factors explaining changes in the level and types of forces. Nor do the changes seem to have been driven by attempts at macro-economic management of the U.S. economy. Such factors as these may have pushed the level of forces higher than some might think it needed to be or pushed it in one direction or another with respect to the type of forces included, but they have not been the major determinants.

This is not to argue that the U.S. military force posture has been perfectly suited to U.S. security needs. It may or may not have been appropriate. There is no way that this can be determined with complete objectivity. Any judgement about the appropriateness of U.S. military forces would involve judgements about the probability of threats to U.S. interests, the importance of protecting these interests, and the likelihood of different courses of action warding off the threats, as well as determinations about willingness to take the risks involved in and bear the costs connected with these different courses of action. There is no consensus within the United States on any of these matters; all are subject to debate. At any given time, if this analysis is valid, the U.S. military force posture reflects the outcome of the debate.

The U.S. military buildup of the 1980s would seem to be a reaction sought by the American public to what the public perceived as a Soviet military buildup during the 1970s. The analysis says nothing about the factors that lead to the Soviet military buildup, though in view of the fact that, with the exception of numbers of warheads, during the 1970s

U.S. military forces declined, while Soviet forces increased, it is difficult to see how the Soviet buildup could have been a response to a U.S. buildup. It is arguable that the Soviet military buildup, particularly of strategic delivery vehicles and warheads, during the 1970s was a response to earlier U.S. actions (Ward: 1984). It is difficult, however, to extend this analysis to conventional elements of military power, and the argument cannot fully explain why the Soviet Union surpassed the number of strategic delivery vehicles that the United States had. Soviet military programs appear to have had their own momentum (Holloway: 1983). Given the general unwillingness of the U.S. public to contemplate actually using military force and engaging in war (see Rielly: 1979 and 1983) it would seem that the public views the buildup primarily in terms of enhancing deterrence rather than preparing to engage in war.

History has demonstrated, however, that military buildups, particularly those that result in intense arms races, can be dangerous. History has also demonstrated that not having military force adequate to ensure deterrence can be equally dangerous. Any effort to ensure that the current U.S. military buildup does not catastrophically spiral out of control but also to ensure that the U.S. military force posture provides adequate deterrence will have to take account of the factors that appear to shape the U.S. military force posture. The debate about the force posture is not one that engages only a narrow band of experts, or a broader group of elected and appointed officials; it is rather one that deeply engages the entire United States polity, as indeed it should.

Notes

*This paper is based on work that I did during the period from January through August 1984 when I was privileged to be a Fellow in the International Security Studies Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. I am grateful for the opportunity that the fellowship provided. Lydia Enochs, Merle Feldbaum, Todd Mathers, Barbara Opal, Michael Rothman, Constantine Sirigos, and Cindy Zimmerman all helped with the preparation of the statistical data used in the analysis. Barbara Opal also prepared the final manuscript, and Merle Feldbaum prepared the figures. I very much appreciate the assistance of each of these individuals.

1. The data used in the construction of Figure 1 are taken from: USA, Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 1984 (Washington, D.C.: DOD, March 1983), Table 6-1, pp. 58-60.

2. The data used in the construction of Figure 2 are taken from: USA, DOD, National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 1984, Table 7-8, p.98.

3. These calculations are based on data taken from: USA, Council of Economic Advisers, Economic Report of the President (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1984), Table B-1, pp. 220-221.

4. The data on U.S. and Soviet military personnel and equipment used in this analysis are taken from the annual volumes of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance (London: IISS, 1961 - 1984).

5. The data used in the construction of Figure 3 are taken from USA, DOD, National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 1984, Table 6-5, pp.

66-68.

6. The data used in the construction of Figure 4 are taken from USA, DOD, National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 1984, Table 6-3, p. 62. The other 5 categories are: (1) Intelligence and Communications; (2) Airlift and Sealift; (3) Guard and Reserve Forces; (4) Administration and Associated Activities; and (5) Support of Other Nations.

7. The data used in the construction of Table I are taken from the published reports of the Gallup polls: George H. Gallup, The Gallup Polls: Public Opinion, 1935-1971; 1972-1977; 1978; 1979; 1980; 1981 (Washington, D.C.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1972, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982).

8. The data on which the statements concerning congressional action with respect to DOD requests are based are taken from: USA, Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), "DOD Basic Budgetary Authority, President's Budget Request, Supplementary Requests, Congressional Action and Appropriation, FY 1950 through 1985," (Washington, D.C.: DOD, February 1984; FAD-809).

9. The data used in the construction of Table 4 are taken from USA, DOD, National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 1984, Table 6-5, pp. 66-68.

10. The data used in the construction of Table 6 are taken from USA, DOD, National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 1984, Table 6-3, p. 62.

References

- Ball, Desmond (1980). Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gaddis, John Lewis (1982). Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gallup, George H. (1977-1982). The Gallup Polls: Public Opinion. Washington, D.C.: Scholarly Resources Inc.
- Holloway, David (1983). The Soviet Union and the Arms Race. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Holsti, Ole R. and James N. Rosenau (1984). National Leadership in World Affairs: Vietnam and the Breakdown of Consensus. Boston: Allen and Unwin.
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1961). The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics. New York: Columbia University Press.
- International Institute for Strategic Studies (1961-1984). The Military Balance. London: IISS.
- Kanter, Arnold (1975). Defense Politics: A Budgetary Perspective. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Korb, Lawrence J. (1973). "Congressional Impact upon the Defense Budget: The Fiscal and Programmatic Hypotheses," Naval War College Review, November-December, pp. 49-62.
- Korb, Lawrence J. (1979). The Fall and Rise of the Pentagon: American Defense Policies in the 1970s. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Litwak, Robert S. (1984). Detente and the Nixon Doctrine: American

Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability, 1969-1976. New York:
Cambridge University Press.

Mowery, David C., Mark S. Kamlet, and John P. Crecine (1980).

"Presidential Management of Budgetary and Fiscal Policymaking,"
Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 95, No. 3, pp. 395-425.

Ostrum, Charles W., Jr. (1978). "A Reactive Linkage Model of the
U.S. Defense Expenditure Process," American Political Science
Review, Vol. 72, No. 4, pp. 941-957.

Padgett, John F. (1980). "Bounded Rationality in Budgetary Research,"
American Political Science Review, Vol. 74, No. 2, pp. 354-372.

Rielly, John E. (ed.) (1979). American Public Opinion and
U.S. Foreign Policy 1979. Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign
Relations.

Rielly, John E. (ed.) (1983). American Public Opinion and
U.S. Foreign Policy 1983. Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign
Relations.

Russett, Bruce (1983). "International Interactions and Processes: The
Internal vs. External Debate Revisited," pp. 541-568 in Ada
W. Finifter (ed.) Political Science: The State of the
Discipline. Washington, D.C.: American Political Science
Association.

USA, Council of Economic Advisers (1984). Economic Report of the
President. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

USA, Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of
Defense (Comptroller) (1983). National Defense Budget Estimates
for FY 1984. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense.

USA, Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of
Defense (Comptroller) (1984). "DOD Basic Budgetary Authority,

President's Budget Request, Supplementary Requests, Congressional Action and Appropriation, FY 1950 through 1985" (Washington, D.C.: DOD, FAD-809).

Ward, Michael Don (1984). "Differential Paths to Parity: A Study of the Contemporary Arms Race," American Political Science Review, Vol. 78, No. 2, pp. 297-317.

Wells, Samuel F., Jr. (1981). "The United States and the Present Danger," The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 60-70.