

Johnson and the Atlantic Alliance in 1967: Rebuilding on Three Pillars

Max Guderzo

Machiavelli Centre for Cold War Studies – University of Florence

Many articles and books have already been devoted to American foreign policy in the Johnson years.¹ The intersecting of that policy and the European construction has already been examined, too.²

· Massimiliano Guderzo is Professor of the History of International Relations and holds the Jean Monnet Chair of the History of European Unification at the University of Florence.

¹ On US foreign policy in those years see, for example, Diane B. Kunz (ed.), *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade. American Foreign Relations During the 1960s*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994; Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (eds), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World. American Foreign Policy, 1963-1968*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; H.W. Brands, *The Wages of Globalism. Lyndon Johnson and the Limits of American Power*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995; Id. (ed.), *The Foreign Policies of Lyndon Johnson. Beyond Vietnam*, College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1999. For a general assessment of the Johnson Administration, see Robert A. Divine (ed.), *The Johnson Years*, vol. 1, *Foreign Policy, the Great Society, and the White House*, vol. 2, *Vietnam, the Environment, and Science*, Lawrence (Kansas), University Press of Kansas, 1987; vol. 3, *LBJ at Home and Abroad*, *ibid.*, 1994; Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant. Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.

² See, among others, Pascaline Winand, *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993; Eckart Conze, *Die gaullistische Herausforderung. Die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen in der amerikanischen Europapolitik 1958-1963*, München, Oldenbourg, 1995; Beatrice Heuser, *Transatlantic Relations: Sharing Ideals and Costs*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996, esp. pp. 5-33, 90-104; Francis H. Heller and John R. Gillingham (eds), *The United States and the Integration of Europe. Legacies of the Postwar Era*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1996; David W. Ellwood, "L'integrazione europea e gli Stati Uniti (1957-1990)", in Romain H. Rainero (ed.), *Storia dell'integrazione europea*, vol. 2, *L'Europa dai Trattati di Roma alla caduta del muro di Berlino*, Roma, Marzorati, 1997, pp. 523-571; Geir Lundestad, "Empire" by Integration. *The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, esp. pp. 1-4, 58-82; Id. (ed.), *No End to Alliance. The United States and Western Europe: Past, Present and Future*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1998; Frances Burwell and Ivo H. Daalder (eds), *The United States and Europe in the Global Arena*, Houndmills, Basingstoke,

Research on NATO and transatlantic integration is giving more and more interesting results, also due to the declassification of new sources.³

This essay, based on a specific sample of US published and unpublished documents, analyses some events in 1967 that were particularly meaningful for the recover of the Atlantic Alliance after General Charles de Gaulle's formidable blow of March 1966, and supports three main theses. First, even if the Vietnam war absorbed too much time in the presidential agenda, as well as in day-by-day activities performed by the Departments of State, Defense, and Treasury, transatlantic relations were not neglected in 1964-68. This contributes to a second, more general assumption, also sustainable for the intersection between US foreign policy and European integration,⁴ namely, that some aspects of intra-bloc relations in those years may be considered more significative for interpreting Cold War developments and explaining détente than the patterns of inter-bloc confrontation under way. Third, the Johnson administration marked a breakthrough in those intra-bloc relations, because the long wave of American 'patience' towards

Macmillan, 1999; Douglas Brinkley and Richard T. Griffiths (eds), *John F. Kennedy and Europe*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1999; Kathleen Burk and Melwyn Stokes (eds), *The United States and the European Alliance since 1945*, Oxford-New York, Berg, 1999; Massimiliano Guderzo, *Interesse nazionale e responsabilità globale. Gli Stati Uniti, l'Alleanza atlantica e l'integrazione europea negli anni di Johnson, 1963-69*, Firenze, Aida, 2000; Hubert Zimmermann, *Money and Security. Troops, Monetary Policy, and West Germany's Relations with the United States and Britain, 1950-1971*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (in collaboration with the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC), 2002; Thomas A. Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 2003.

³ See for instance the new collection of documents on the NATO 'Harmel Study' in www.isn.ethz.ch/php/documents/collection_Harmel; and Andreas Wenger, "Crisis and Opportunity: NATO's Transformation and the Multilateralization of Détente, 1966-1968", in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2004), pp. 22-74; and the bibliography quoted there. Cf. Lawrence S. Kaplan, "The U.S. and NATO in the Johnson Years", in Divine (ed.), *The Johnson Years*, vol. 3, pp. 119-149; Id., "The MLF Debate", in Brinkley and Griffiths (eds), *John F. Kennedy*, pp. 51-65; Christoph Bluth, "Reconciling the Irreconcilable: Alliance Politics and the Paradox of Extended Deterrence in the 1960s", in *Cold War History*, vol. 1, no. 2 (January 2001).

⁴ Massimiliano Guderzo, "Johnson and European Integration: A Missed Chance for Transatlantic Power", in *Cold War History*, vol. 4, no. 2 (January 2004), pp. 89-114.

the apparent incapacity of the Western European allies to elaborate common attitudes adequately matching the US expectations gradually lost momentum in the second half of the Sixties. That change of attitude paved the way to a sort of disillusioned unilateralist temptation, in which Europe could seem just one field, not the privileged theatre of the American great game for global paramountcy.

The US approach to transatlantic integration – a functional approach, though imbued with ideals besides calculation – contributed to a power project based on the premise that a global *imperium* built by indirect means is better maintained through the step-by-step adhesion of a growing number of international actors to the fundamental values and rules set by the centre of the system. After implementing that design for two decades, Washington had to cope with the increasing commercial rivalry of the Western European allies, experienced difficulties and dilemmas in co-ordinating their policies in the financial and security domains, and faced the French attack in both the European and transatlantic integration realms in 1965-66. At the same time, forces within the administration and public opinion that had been and still were ready to support the allies' policies for long-term strategical purposes, notwithstanding the apparent fact that their post-war economic and financial recover had not elicited a proportional inclination really to share political and security burdens for protecting the West, began to lose their battle on the domestic front.

In July 1962, in his Philadelphia speech⁵, John Kennedy had offered the allies an equal partnership that implied a substantial assumption of global responsibilities through the gradual merge and possible political unification of their own forces. Proving unable to meet that call for interdependence, Western Europe did not pass the test. In the NATO arena, where the French drive to

⁵ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* (hereafter, PPP), *John F. Kennedy, 1962*, pp. 537-539; audio file in <http://www.jfklibrary.org/speeches.htm>. See Massimiliano Guderzo, "The United States and the European Economic Community: from John F. Kennedy to Lyndon B. Johnson", in Antonio Varsori (ed.), *Inside the European Community: Actors and Policies in the European Integration from the Rome Treaties to the Creation of the "Snake" (1958-1972)*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, forthcoming.

an independent trend in foreign policy had emerged as particularly disruptive, the Americans exercised their leadership to organise a sustainable future for the Alliance. This meant using what was available – single interlocutors, since the MLF *fiasco* had shown how difficult it was to get a common answer from the other side of the Atlantic when core issues were at stake. In 1966-67, they tested trilateralism with London and Bonn as a valid alternative to multilateral patterns, which were implemented at the same time for containing French deviance.

This experience, together with the gradual change of attitude towards European integration, must be taken into due consideration for interpreting the reassessment of American policies vis-à-vis Europe led by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, who deliberately used realism and the explicit protection of the US national interest as a means to reach an international environment stabler and more favourable to American objectives.

1. Post-Crisis Refurbishment

After the Alliance political and military relaunch engineered by the NATO Ministerial Meeting in December 1966,⁶ the Americans entered a new phase of both optimism and prudence in 1967. Presidential Special Assistant Walt Rostow, weighing the opportunity of a Presidential European tour, suggested Johnson to temporize and assume a low-profile attitude. Two very delicate operations were under way, since the new German Government was trying to improve relations with France and the UK was preparing preliminary diplomatic manoeuvres for a second bid to enter the Common Market. The US, wrote Rostow, “would like to see these efforts succeed”, and European difficulties might prove much easier to compose if Washington muted American presence in the following months. Diplomatic representatives, then, should confine themselves to declare that the Johnson Administration encouraged regionalism in international relations, though

⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers* (hereafter, FRUS), 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 232, tel. 9350, H. Cleveland to Department of State (DS), Paris 17.12.1966, secret.

remaining very interested in creating or maintaining ties of strong interdependence with the US.⁷

In February the 'Harmel Study' on the future of the Alliance, proposed in November 1966 by the Belgian Foreign Minister, Pierre Harmel, began to take shape. Among other research themes, the Americans suggested to consider not only European security issues but also problems outside the Treaty area, as Middle East arms and security aspects connected with the Asian food crisis.⁸ In April, the first meeting of the new Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) took place. The ministers considered issues related to strategic and tactical nuclear forces, the problem of host countries and their role "in the planning, storage and release for use of nuclear weapons".⁹ Soon after, came to an end the trilateral offset negotiations between the US, Great Britain, and the FRG, deeply interlaced with the possible partial withdrawal of British forces from Germany, in reaction to Bonn's attitude and increasing financial pressures on Her Majesty's Government.¹⁰

Concerning relations with Moscow, attention focussed on non-proliferation negotiations. An intense consultative process had succeeded in reducing harsher differences with the Allies,

⁷ Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas (hereafter, LBJL), National Security File (NSF), Name File (NF), box 7, "Rostow Memos", nos. 186-186a, memo, W.W. Rostow to L.B. Johnson, Washington 18.1.1967, secret, and encl. memo, W.W. Rostow to D. Rusk, Washington 18.1.1967, secret.

⁸ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 236, tel. 135657, D. Rusk to the Posts in the NATO Capitals, Washington 11.2.1967, circular, confidential.

⁹ Ibid., doc. 246, tel. 170596, N. deB. Katzenbach to the Mission to the NATO and European Regional Organizations, Washington 7.4.1967, secret.

¹⁰ Cf. among others Hubert Zimmermann, "...they have got to put something in the family pot!": The Burden-Sharing Problem in German-American Relations 1960-1967", in *German History*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1996), pp. 325-346; Id., "The Sour Fruits of Victory: Sterling and Security in Anglo-German Relations during the 1950s and 1960s", in *Contemporary European History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (July 2000), pp. 225-243; Harald Rosenbach, "Der Preis der Freiheit. Die deutsch-amerikanischen Verhandlungen über den Devisenausgleich (1961-1967)", in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 46, no. 4 (1998), pp. 709-746. See also Adrian W. Schertz, *Die Deutschlandpolitik Kennedys und Johnsons. Unterschiedliche Ansätze innerhalb der amerikanischen Regierung*, Köln, Böhlau, 1992; Frank Costigliola, "Lyndon B. Johnson, Germany, and 'the End of the Cold War'", in Cohen and Bernkopf Tucker (eds), *Lyndon Johnson*, pp. 173-210; Klaus Schwabe, "Atlantic Partnership and European Integration: American-European Policies and the German Problem, 1947-1966", in Lundestad (ed.), *No End*, pp. 37-80.

especially the Germans and the Italians, but areas of dissent were still there, with particular regard to the role of NATO as a forum for coordinating the policies of the Member States on East-West relations. The Allies did not share a common view on the implications of Soviet attitude towards Eastern Europe and the West as a whole. Great Britain, Canada, and Denmark pushed for dynamic approaches to the East that could improve relations on a wide variety of matters, while the US took an intermediate position, reminding Atlantic partners that the political and security sectors demanded special caution. During the weeks before the mid-June Ministerial Meeting, however, a general feeling prevailed among the Allies, namely, that NATO had metabolized the negative consequences triggered by French decisions in March 1966, reaching a new political cohesion, thanks to the creative initiatives taken in the first half of the year.¹¹

The outbreak of the Six-Day War, on 5 June, gave an extraordinary opportunity to test NATO consultation mechanisms. Providing US Permanent Representative Harlan Cleveland with the guidelines for the Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg, the Department of State instructed him “to establish clearly the major interests of NATO countries in the immediate Middle East situation and in relation to long-range stability and development of the area”; to obtain agreement regarding the “need for quiet continuing NATO consultation” on the issues at stake; and to “seek consensus on goals and methods of such consultation”.¹²

¹¹ LBJL, NSF, Country File (CF), United Kingdom (UK), box 216, “Wilson 6/2/67 Visit”, no. 34, “Background Paper: NATO Problems”, J.M. Myerson, Washington 29.5.1967, confidential. On security issues cf. for instance Ronald E. Powaski, *The Entangling Alliance. The United States and European Security, 1950-1993*, Westport (Conn.), Greenwood Press, 1994. Among other works on Moscow’s attitude towards European integration, see Vladislav M. Zubok, “The Soviet Union and European Integration from Stalin to Gorbachev”, in *Journal of European Integration History*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1996), pp. 85-98; Id., “Unwrapping the Enigma: What Was Behind the Soviet Challenge in the 1960s?”, in Kunz (ed.), *The Diplomacy*, pp. 149-182; Franco Sogliani, “L’Unione Sovietica e la CEE negli anni della distensione”, in Raffaele D’Agata (ed.), *European Integration and Cold War: A Reappraisal*, London, Lothian Foundation Press, 1996, pp. 137-156; Id., “L’integrazione europea e il blocco sovietico”, in Rainero (ed.), *Storia dell’integrazione europea*, vol. 2, pp. 573-616.

¹² FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 256, tel. 209519, D. Rusk to H. Cleveland, Washington 8.6.1967, circular, secret. Cf. Douglas Little, “Nasser Delenda Est: Lyndon Johnson, the Arabs, and the 1967 Six-Day War”, in Brands (ed.), *The*

The Department of State also highlighted the need to maintain the momentum towards the modernization of the Alliance, the essential continuity of Western policies, the ability of confronting current crises and continuing challenges of international stability on a multilateral basis, and the effort to improve East-West relations while maintaining NATO's military and political strength.¹³

As for relations with specific Allies, the German concern that Vietnam might distract the US from its engagement in Europe needed reassurance. Back in February, meeting Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Willy Brandt, Secretary of State Dean Rusk had underlined that President Lyndon Johnson spent much more time on European and Atlantic issues than on the "relatively straight-forward problem" in Vietnam.¹⁴ Discussing with the British Delegation in Luxembourg, Rusk should confirm this overall statement, while dealing again with the main themes debated during Premier Harold Wilson's visit to the US, on 2 June – Vietnam, British engagement East of Suez, and the UK application for membership in the European Community, announced on 10 May.

The three matters had widely been discussed on a bilateral basis by Johnson and Wilson in their personal correspondence,¹⁵ in Vice President Hubert Humphrey's conversations with the British

Foreign Policies, pp. 145-167; Id., "A Fool's Errand: America and the Middle East, 1961-1969", in Kunz (ed.), *The Diplomacy*, pp. 251-282; Id., "Choosing Sides: Lyndon Johnson and the Middle East", in Divine (ed.), *The Johnson Years*, vol. 3, pp. 150-197; Warren I. Cohen, "Balancing American Interests in the Middle East: Lyndon Baines Johnson vs. Gamal Abdul Nasser", in Cohen and Bernkopf Tucker (eds), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts*, pp. 279-309; Brands, *The Wages*, pp. 183-218. See also Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point. Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971, pp. 287-304.

¹³ LBJL, NSF, International Meetings and Travel File (IMTF), box 35, "NATO Ministerial Meeting – Luxembourg, June 13-15, 1967", no. 14, "Position Paper: Issues Paper", J.M. Myerson, Washington 5.6.1967, confidential.

¹⁴ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 235, memo of conversation (D. Rusk, W. Brandt *et al.*), A.C. Johnpoll, Washington 8.2.1967 (Part 4 of 10), secret.

¹⁵ See for instance LBJL, NSF, Memos to the President (MP), Walt W. Rostow (WR), box 9, vol. "PM Wilson [2/67]", no. 1, L.B. Johnson to H. Wilson, Washington 6.2.1967.

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, George Brown, in April,¹⁶ and especially by Johnson and Wilson themselves at Konrad Adenauer's funeral. Rostow had suggested the President to stress American concern over the British Cabinet's desire to announce a disengagement plan in the Far East in July, envisaging to halve forces in Malaysia and Singapore by 1970-71, and completely – at least in principle – by the mid-Seventies. Talking about full withdrawal, wrote Rostow, would be dangerous to the US, exposing it to even more domestic and international criticism for the Vietnam War.¹⁷

As Rusk noticed two days before Wilson's arrival in Washington, Great Britain seemed to have solved her long labour of redefinition of her future role in the world, choosing to balance the liquidation of what was left of her overseas commitments with a step-by-step rapprochement to Europe. The combination of these two courses, according to the Secretary of State, would gradually modify the Anglo-American relationship. The US and the UK still shared a similar *Weltanschauung*, and the British were prepared to give a constructive contribution to maintaining world order. Scarcity of resources, however, obliged them to “rely on ideas and dexterity rather than military might”. Consequently, Johnson should frankly expound his views on European affairs, with particular regard to his concern for France's obstructionism and power of influencing other US partners.¹⁸

The crisis in the Middle East, giving a dramatic background to the Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg, fostered favourable developments for non-proliferation, as everybody realised all too easily that, if the weaker side in that regional conflict had had a

¹⁶ Ibid., NSF, NF, box 4, “The Vice President, July 1, 1966, vol. II”, no. 35a, memo of conversation (H.H. Humphrey, G. Brown *et al.*), J.E. Rielly, Washington 19.4.1967.

¹⁷ Ibid., NSF, Files of Walt Rostow (FWR), box 12, “Chrono (Adenauer Funeral)”, no. 38, W.W. Rostow to L.B. Johnson, n.p. 25.4.1967. On those issues, cf. Jeremy Fielding, “Coping with Decline: US Policy toward the British Defense Reviews of 1966”, in *Diplomatic History*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Fall 1999), pp. 633-656.

¹⁸ LBJL, NSF, CF, UK, box 216, “Wilson 6/2/67 Visit”, no. 5, memo, D. Rusk to L.B. Johnson, Washington 31.5.1967, secret, and encl. “Talking Points”. See also no. 69, memo, B.H. Read to W.W. Rostow, Washington 2.5.1967, confidential.

nuclear capability, it might have resorted to its use in order to avoid defeat. Brandt and Italian Foreign Minister Amintore Fanfani, in particular, “were at pains to emphasize support, not only for principle of non-proliferation, but for a treaty”, thus showing that NPT opponents in their respective cabinets had been almost neutralized. As for East-West relations, on the contrary, Cleveland noticed that the whole Western spectrum of opinions had “discernibly moved over toward pessimism” about Soviet foreign policy and Moscow’s general motivations, even if Brandt had declared that the FRG “would persist in a policy of gradual rapprochement with the East”.¹⁹

Fanfani’s statement on non-proliferation was confirmed by President of the Republic Giuseppe Saragat during his visit in the US, in September. In a meeting with Johnson, he sang the Alliance’s praises, made cutting remarks about French attitudes, and proclaimed that Italy – unlike some other European allies – could not forget how the US had allowed her to regain freedom. Just “because of this strong friendship” between Rome and Washington, Saragat concluded, Italy would sign the NPT, though “with improvements”.²⁰ His criticism of the French could only meet with the US approval – according to a report prepared by CIA officers two weeks later, Paris still maintained the official position taken up in March 1966 vis-à-vis the Alliance and NATO, but could easily disengage from her residual obligations towards the Atlantic partners as soon as President Charles de Gaulle

¹⁹ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 258, tel. 20323, H. Cleveland to DS, Paris 17.6.1967, secret. Cf. Carlo Masala, “Deutschland, Italien und die Nukleare Frage 1963-1969. Das Problem der nuklearen Mitsprache im Rahmen der Atlantischen Allianz”, in *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, vol. 56, no. 2 (1997), pp. 431-470; Id., *Italia und Germania: die deutsch-italienischen Beziehungen, 1963-1969*, Vierow bei Greifswald, SH-Verlag, 1997.

²⁰ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 265, memo of conversation (G. Saragat, L.B. Johnson *et al.*), N. Seidenman, Washington 18.9.1967, secret; LBJL, President’s Appointment File, box 76, “Sep. 18-19, 1967. Visit of President Saragat of Italy”. On Italian attitudes towards the Alliance see among others Leopoldo Nuti, “Commitment to NATO and Domestic Politics: the Italian Case and Some Comparative Remarks”, in *Contemporary European History*, vol. 7, no. 3 (November 1998), pp. 361-377; Id., “Missiles or Socialists? The Italian Policy of the Kennedy Administration”, in Brinkley and Griffiths (eds), *John F. Kennedy*, pp. 129-147; Id., *Gli Stati Uniti e l’apertura a sinistra. Importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1999.

decided that the world situation might make a complete withdrawal from the Western bloc profitable for France.²¹

In spite of Fanfani's and Brandt's statements in favour of the NPT, the matter actually remained highly controversial during the following months, especially in the FRG. According to US Ambassador George McGhee, had negotiations with Moscow not satisfied Germany's fundamental interests, the NPT would have become an extremely dangerous threat to relations between Washington and Bonn. There was a widespread feeling in the FRG that the Treaty represented a bipolar entente to Germany's detriment, hindered German nuclear research, and might even reverse the European integration process. Some SPD representatives, including Brandt, thought the document could foster a new *Ostpolitik*, while the two main CDU-CSU wings, led by Franz Josef Strauss and Gerhard Schröder, were inclined to reject it – the former fearing that the NPT blocked the creation of a European nuclear force, considered an indispensable step towards unification, and the latter out of conviction that it weakened Atlantic relations, widening the gulf between nuclear and non-nuclear partners.²²

The fifth point of the December Ministerial Meeting Communiqué touched that issue, underlying “the importance of promoting progress in disarmament and arms control”, and specifically quoting the need for “concrete measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons”. Not by chance, the same paragraph contained a reference to balanced force reductions by the two blocs, defined “a significant step towards security in Europe”.²³ Soviet Ambassador Anatolij Dobrynin promptly took

²¹ LBJL, NSF, CF, France, box 174, vol. 14 (memos), no. 157, CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “France and the Atlantic Alliance”, Washington 6.10.1967.

²² Ibid., Germany, box 188, vol. 14 (memos), no. 152c, “Text of Cable from Ambassador McGhee (Bonn 4773)”, [W.W. Rostow] to L.B. Johnson, Washington 2.11.1967, secret (also in MP, WR, box 25, vol. 50, no. 87b). Cf. Beatrice Heuser, “The European Dream of Franz Josef Strauss”, in *Journal of European Integration History*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1998), pp. 75-103; Hubert Zimmermann, “Franz Josef Strauss und der deutsch-amerikanische Währungskonflikt”, in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 47, no. 1 (1999), pp. 57-85.

²³ NATO Archives, <http://www.nato.int>, North Atlantic Council, Final Communiqué, Bruxelles 13-14.12.1967.

the hint and proposed US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Gene Rostow, on 18 December, to go back to the idea that the US took some kind of initiative in Europe, thus inviting Moscow to follow its example. Was that NATO decision an operational one, asked Dobrynin, or just “a statement of intent”? An encouraging signal coming from the Soviet Union was obviously welcome, answered Rostow, but the US still considered the Resolution a general “statement of policy”, bound to be followed by specific operational proposals.²⁴

Then, the year came to an end on the background of possible progress in East-West relations, favoured by the satisfactory result reached in April by trilateral negotiations on the offset issue and the level of Allied forces in the FRG, and in December through multilateral decisions linked to the Harmel Study.

2. Trilateral Game

The eventual success of the trilateral negotiations was even more satisfactory if one noticed that back in January 1967, with strong British concern, Bonn had declared that it was not possible for the Government to take into consideration the early beginning of new talks. Immediately, London had tried to understand whether the Germans really meant to cancel the already-set deadlines of 9 and 21 February, since that would expose HMG to very strong pressures, triggering the partial withdrawal of British forces from the FRG. Chancellor of the Exchequer James Callaghan told the Americans on 24 January that the following day some prominent members of the Labour Party would ask for a fast recall of troops from the Continent. President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Francis Bator, whom Minister of the Economy Karl Schiller had trusted with the German budget situation, knew that the destiny of the US offset was also in the hands of the Federal Cabinet, which would debate it the following week. Everything seemed to encourage the idea of a common

²⁴ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 282, memo of conversation (A. Dobrynin, E.V. Rostow), E.V. Rostow, Washington 18.12.1967, secret.

Anglo-American pressure on Bonn, lest the Germans allow the situation to grow out of control.²⁵

At the beginning of February, in the preparatory papers for a Brandt visit, State Department officers stressed that the lengthy nuclear-sharing *querelle* had “left its scars” on Washington-Bonn relations. Though the Atlantic Alliance remained the cornerstone of German foreign policy, the attitude of the new coalition government towards US behaviour and expectations was “much less uncritical than in the past”. At that time, their position vis-à-vis the British application for entry into the Common Market was essential for the operation’s result. Wilson and Brown were at the mid-point of their six-capital tour. In Rome and Brussels they had found a satisfactory reception, while in Paris, on 24-25 January, de Gaulle had been negative. The British leaders’ visit to Bonn was fixed for 14-16 February, and the tour would finish on 8 March. The US, of course, hoped that those moves would not foster a Community crisis just before the Summer deadline set for the Kennedy-Round multilateral match.²⁶

The situation, therefore, suggested prudence in contacts with the Germans, even if McGhee was persuaded that Kurt Kiesinger was an excellent interlocutor: “a person of elegant appearance and great personal charm”, gifted for oratory, “man of the world”, in sharp contrast with that slight touch of provincialism characterizing both Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard, the new Chancellor was deeply anchored to Western values, attentive to Community developments in Europe, determined to look for French understanding and cooperation, sure that the FRG “should learn to rely on itself” – in short, a man with whom Johnson could “establish a relation of confidence”.²⁷ Waiting for that moment,

²⁵ LBJL, NSF, National Security Council Histories (NSCH), Trilateral Negotiations and NATO: 1966-67, box 50, book 2, tabs 45-52a, no. 45a, tel. 5885, W.W. Rostow [signature: Kaiser] to D. Rusk, London 24.1.1967, secret.

²⁶ Ibid., NSF, CF, Germany, box 193, vol. “Visit of Vice Chancellor Brandt”, no. 16, “Background Paper: Germany and NATO”, J.M. Myerson, Washington 6.2.1967, confidential; no. 38, “Background Paper: UK Entry into Common Market”, T.W. Fina and J.R. Tartter, Washington 6.2.1967, confidential.

²⁷ Ibid., White House Central Files (WHCF), Subject File (SF), CO 92 Germany, box 33, G.C. McGhee to L.B. Johnson, Bonn/Bad Godesberg 16.1.1967; cf. also FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 15, doc. 195.

the meeting with Brandt allowed to gain time, as hoped, with a view to the opening of new trilateral talks in March.

In order to understand the substance of the US attitude and the strategies that the Administration implemented to face the growing domestic criticism on troops deployment in Europe, one should notice what Rusk wrote back, on 21 April, to Senator Mike Mansfield, who had introduced a Resolution calling for a reduction of US forces, on 31 August 1966.²⁸ Clearly and cleverly, Rusk highlighted that any variations in overseas troop levels – and especially in Europe, the loss of which was “unthinkable” for Washington – were misunderstandable and “politically sensitive” signals. The deterrent strength developed by NATO strategy and the evolution of events in the Far East had led Moscow to use a lighter hand in Europe since 1962, but the military power of the Warsaw Pact was impressive, and growing. One could hope that the Soviets had come to the conclusion that trying to modify the *status quo* in the borders of the two blocs by unilateral initiatives, at least in Europe, was unacceptable for world peace. But could the US dismantle its defensive system on the basis of mere presumptions and hopes? And was it not necessary, in any case, to provide Soviet military preponderance in the European theatre with a counterbalance? The US, Rusk stressed, was the only NATO power able to perform that task. Furthermore, one should not underestimate the beneficial effect produced by the American presence on intra-European cooperation, taking traditional frictions, ever ready for revival, under due control.²⁹

Rusk’s letter featured some interesting clues, which went beyond the document’s specific purposes. The Secretary of State singled out a strategic concept bound to remain quite influential during the whole détente process as well as to shape the evolution of the international system even after the great upheaval triggered by Mikhail Gorbachev’s foreign policy in the second half of the Eighties. In fact, the American military presence in Europe was justifiable not only as a necessary guarantee for the development

²⁸ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 199, memo, D. MacArthur II to D. Rusk, Washington 1.9.1966, confidential; and note no. 2-3; PPP, *Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966*, pp. 998-999.

²⁹ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 248, D. Rusk to M. Mansfield, Washington 21.4.1967, secret; and note no. 2.

of détente in a protected environment, independently from Moscow's good or bad faith, or from the turnover of Soviet leadership; but also because it filled up an empty space, namely, a strong and possibly irresistible temptation for any Soviet leadership. A unified Europe taking off towards full political, economic, and finally military responsibility might have probably been the only feasible alternative for adequately filling up that space – but not even thirty more years would prove sufficient for that hypothesis, or wish, to become true.

The inner contradiction of relations between Washington and Bonn was just connected to this 'not-yet' nature of Europe as the Americans liked to imagine it. It was impossible not to support German reunification, namely, the very modification of a *status quo* the Continent had laboriously reached in the mid-Fifties. That objective, however, was justifiable only in the context of a progress towards European integration that might allow a united Germany to put her immense energies at the disposal of common, not just national, aims, within a system of crossed checks such as only the construction of the Community could effectively guarantee. There was no way to blame the Germans when they claimed to have a say in nuclear and NPT matters, but at the same time it was impossible not to exclude them from the grand détente match with Moscow, since the German voice could only sing in the European chorus, lest it revive dread of revanchism in the East. Good relations with Bonn, therefore, partly rested upon a bilaterally accepted equivocation, an *als ob* of the German situation – 'as if' Germany could do nothing but get reunification, since she had been one, 'as if' she did not have to demonstrate first of all she could reach that objective for the sake of the whole Western bloc, not just for herself.

Fundamental as they were, these issues were continuously at stake in day-by-day negotiations. Rostow, for instance, pondering upon relations to establish with Kiesinger on the occasion of Johnson's trip to Europe for Adenauer's funeral, suggested that the key problem was convincing the Chancellor that the US, notwithstanding its assumption of global responsibilities in Vietnam, was not inclined to "sell out German interests". This suspicion, according to Rostow, forced Kiesinger to adopt a basically defensive attitude for minimizing damage, in

contradiction with his awareness that Johnson's aims, as the Chancellor saw them, were not only worth of respect but even functional to the FRG's ambitions. To make "something of a partner" out of him, instead of a "defensive adversary", the President should persuade him that Washington, while negotiating the Vietnam issue, would never damage any European interests; that everything that so far had been obtained from Moscow had come only thanks to Western strength and unity; that the White House was deeply committed to block "disunity across the Atlantic and in Europe", as well as domestic isolationism, to guarantee German and European security expectations; and that only a satisfactory settlement, based on mutual trust, of such matters as the GATT Kennedy Round, the force levels, the international liquidity, and the NPT, could allow the Atlantic partners to stabilize the Alliance, preventing Moscow to take advantage of their differences for setting back their ambitions.³⁰

Rostow's proposals provided Johnson with an excellent reference point for his two main conversations with Kiesinger, which took place on 24 and 26 April. After the first meeting,³¹ the President's Special Assistant suggested a very simple and judicious *do ut des* diplomatic operation: since reunification was the key issue for Bonn, Johnson should explicitly mention and offer it, stressing that the US was the only foreign power really keen on it and capable to present Germany with it at due time (which was not completely true, since it was Moscow that could really move mountains in that matter), and ask for the most in exchange.³²

Johnson used that hint as well as Bator's suggestions on main economic, commercial, and financial issues to be debated with the Chancellor. According to his Deputy Special Assistant, the President should press the Germans to dissociate themselves from French tactics in international monetary negotiations, since Paris had been so far intolerably "playing outlaw ... to stop meaningful

³⁰ LBJL, NSF, FWR, box 12, "Chrono (Adenauer Funeral)", no. 13, W.W. Rostow to L.B. Johnson, n.p. 23.4.1967.

³¹ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 15, doc. 212, memo of conversation (L.B. Johnson, K.G. Kiesinger *et al.*), H. Obst, Chancellor's Office [Bonn] 24.4.1967, 11:30 a.m., secret.

³² *Ibid.*, doc. 213, memo, W.W. Rostow to L.B. Johnson, Bonn 24.4.1967, secret.

progress”, and to support US needs in the Kennedy Round final rush. In particular, Bonn might push EEC partners to define both their commitment to international food aid and the percentage of Community consumption reserved for non-EEC producers adequately, as well as to improve their offers of tariff reduction on largely protected items such as tobacco, fruits, vegetables, or in strategic industrial areas like the chemical sector. To balance German help, Bator commented, Johnson might give some ground on the redeployment rotation plan – “apparently very disturbing to the Germans” – that the US had proposed for its aircraft in Europe in trilateral negotiations, maybe reducing the number of planes to withdraw from the FRG. If the package included Bonn’s resignation to a NPT without a time limit, the final result would be very favourable to Washington.³³

The most important meeting with Kiesinger took place in his private residency, in the morning of 26 April. Johnson played the best card Rostow had suggested him, stating that the US supported German reunification and the Atlantic Alliance, and then cleared four main points. As for the NPT, the Americans had enriched the draft with corrections proposed by Bonn, were in constant touch with German experts, and would never sign anything without a previous round of consultation with the Allies. In the security field, the President took a personal commitment to stand by the FRG in case of Soviet aggression. At that moment of the conversation, Johnson dramatically caught Kiesinger’s hand and shook it, and the Chancellor thanked him for his promise. Regarding international monetary negotiations and the Kennedy Round, as the President underlined, Washington expected Bonn to understand US positions; and it also relied upon German cooperative behaviour about Allied force levels in the FRG. Details were not that important, cleverly declared Johnson – it was their handshake that counted.³⁴

³³ LBJL, NSF, CF, Germany, box 188, vol. 13 (memos), nos. 113 ff., memo, F.M. Bator to W.W. Rostow for L.B. Johnson, Washington 24.4.1967, secret, eyes only.

³⁴ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 15, doc. 214, memo of conversation (K.G. Kiesinger, L.B. Johnson *et al.*), Bonn 26.4.1967, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., secret; *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (AAPD), 1967, doc. 147.

The atmosphere of the meeting with de Gaulle had been very different, the day before – formally correct whereas the conversation with Kiesinger would be substantially effective. Johnson and the General, to all appearances, could only meet at funerals: the last time for Kennedy, then for Adenauer. There was little more than mutual politeness. With a touch of warmth, de Gaulle declared that he often thought of Johnson “not only in connection with the business two chiefs of state may have together but also as one man about another”, with great respect of the way the President carried his heavy burden of responsibility. Johnson reciprocated, stating that people in the US were conscious of the manner in which de Gaulle carried his own burden, a manner that had “changed the face of France and greatly contributed to changing the face of the world”.³⁵

The two leaders wasted no words, however, on basic current issues: relations with Bonn, the British application for membership in the European Community, the NPT, or the trilateral negotiations, which were about to cross the finishing line just in those days. On 26 April, Brandt informed the British and the Americans that the German Representative to the offset talks,

³⁵ LBJL, NSF, CF, Germany, box 189, vol. “Filed by the LBJL”, no. 51c, memo of conversation (C. de Gaulle, L.B. Johnson *et al.*), [E.S. Glenn] , Villa Hammerschmidt (Bonn) 25.4.1967, secret. See also Glenn’s different draft in NSF, Declassified Selected Documents from Unprocessed Files (DSDUF), box 1, President’s Trip to Germany (Adenauer’s Funeral) Briefing Book, 4/67 (box 15), no. 11a. Cf. FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 12, doc. 72. On Franco-American relations in that period cf. Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States. The Cold Alliance Since World War II*, New York, Twayne, 1992, pp. 118-159; Lloyd Gardner, “Lyndon Johnson and De Gaulle”, in Robert O. Paxton and Nicholas Wahl (eds), *De Gaulle and the United States. A Centennial Reappraisal*, Oxford, Berg, 1994, pp. 257-278; Andrew J. Pierre, “Conflicting Visions: Defense, Nuclear Weapons, and Arms Control in the Franco-American Relationship During the De Gaulle Era”, *ibid.*, pp. 279-293; Pierre Messmer, “De Gaulle’s Defense Policy and the United States from 1958-69”, *ibid.*, pp. 351-357; Charles G. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends. The United States and France Since 1940*, Westport (Conn.), Praeger, 1994, pp. 121-150; Maurice Vaisse, *La grandeur. Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle, 1958-1969*, Paris, Fayard, 1998, pp. 359-412; Pierre Mélandri, “The Troubled Friendship: France and the United States, 1945-1989”, in Lundestad (ed.), *No End*, pp. 112-133. See also the essays collected in *De Gaulle en son siècle* (Actes des Journées internationales tenues à l’Unesco, Paris, 19-24 novembre 1990, Paris, Institut Charles de Gaulle / Plon / La Documentation Française, 7 vols, 1991-1992), esp. vol. 4, *La sécurité et l’indépendance de la France*, 1992; and vol. 5, *L’Europe*, 1992.

Georg Duckwitz, would receive final instructions after the Cabinet afternoon meeting. The US Representative, John McCloy, inferred that a decisive discussion might take place on the following day, leaving time on 28 April for solving the last problems. And so it happened. The three Representatives, including George Thomson on the British side, had formally met six times – on 20-21 October, 9-10 and 28-30 November 1966; then from 27 February to 3 March, again on 20-21 March, and finally on 27-28 April 1967. They had also kept informally consulting one another many times, using the assistance of some Working Groups, which had provided specific final reports. NATO Secretary-General Manlio Brosio had participated in those sessions either personally or through a deputy. The talks had paved the way for elaborating five documents: a minute on strategy and forces, dated 9 November; one on Anglo-German financial undertakings and British forces, dated 21 March; an American *aide-mémoire* on increased US military orders and payments to the UK, dated 21 March as well; another bilateral minute on US-FRG financial arrangements and American forces, dated 28 April; and a fifth minute on “procedure in NATO and WEU”, also concluded on the last day.³⁶

Those five documents were the final point of a long, complicated route begun in August 1966, when the US had proposed to open trilateral talks to face the impending collapse of Anglo-German offset agreements, aiming at a global solution of military and financial issues connected to the presence of British and American forces in the FRG.³⁷ The negotiation approach had prevailed on unilateral temptations, showing *a contrario* the pettiness, rather than the *grandeur*, of methods adopted by de Gaulle to emphasize France’s importance, counteracting international cooperation needs, in the security field as well as for monetary collaboration.

³⁶ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 249, “Final Report on Trilateral Talks”, G. Thomson, G.F. Duckwitz, J.J. McCloy, London n.d., confidential, and encl.

³⁷ Cf. LBJL, NSF, NSCH, Trilateral Negotiations and NATO: 1966-67, box 50, book 2, tabs 72-98, no. 98a, memo, “Analysis of Major Decisions in Trilateral Talks”, n.p. n.d., secret. On the topic see also Gustav Schmidt, “Die sicherheitspolitischen und wirtschaftlichen Dimensionen der britisch-amerikanischen Beziehungen 1955-1967”, in *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 1991, no. 2, pp. 107-142; Id., “Vom anglo-amerikanischen Duopol zum Trilateralismus: Grossbritannien-USA-Bundesrepublik, 1955-1967”, in *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 1994, no. 1, pp. 73-109.

Such methods might have produced much wider results, had French energy at least been focussed, like in the past, on the attempt of organizing cooperation at an intermediate level – the European circle. The General, on the contrary, having missed the top target of exploiting that cooperation to ensure French paramountcy in the Continent, was not too motivated to fall back on solutions clashing with his heartfelt antipathy against Community methods and procedures, in order to salvage all that he could within a more congenial pattern of traditional intergovernmental negotiations. His successors, free from comparisons with themselves, would soon relaunch the latter approach, making it the corner-stone of the European construction for the next thirty years, to the obvious disillusionment of federalist movements.

3. The Harmel Study

De Gaulle's attack on NATO, in 1966, had worked as an excellent catalyst for all the Atlantic forces interested in relaunching the Alliance from a new organizational basis. In the military and strategic fields, the most important development had been the creation of the NPG, last step of a route opened in 1965 by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's Select Committee of Defense Ministers to improve and expand Allied participation in planning for the use of nuclear weapons. From the political point of view, the main French criticism, namely, that NATO was a hindrance to better East-West relations, had raised a special reaction on the Belgian side, leading to the proposal of a comprehensive study on the direction the Alliance had to go in the future – the Harmel Study.

The project was to work according to the hierarchical structure of the organization: the North Atlantic Council at the formal top; a Special Study Group, made up by the Permanent Representatives helped by senior national officials, on an intermediate level; and, on the lowest plan, fundamental for the operative development of the Study, four Sub-Groups. The first one, with Adam Watson and Klaus Schuetz as Rapporteurs, had to examine East-West relations. The second one, with Paul-Henri Spaak as Rapporteur, was supposed to work on inter-allied relations. The third Sub-Group,

with Foy Kohler as Rapporteur, had to study the general defensive policy of the Alliance. And the fourth one, with C. Patijn as Rapporteur, would deal with developments in regions outside of the Alliance.³⁸

The Watson-Schuetz unity had to study the German issue, among others, which was complicated, according to the CIA, by the “schizophrenic attitude of the European allies toward relations with Eastern Europe”, applauding to the general American readiness to détente vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, but full of fear and suspicion of bilateral deals when specific initiatives, such as the NPT or ABM negotiations, were at stake.

The establishment of the second sub-group was due to the fact that some Atlantic partners aimed to create a stronger, specifically European voice in NATO policy-making. The Belgians had proposed to form a European caucus within the North Atlantic Council just for ensuring an effective counterweight to the American dominance. Widespread scepticism surrounded the initiative, since many Europeans doubted that consensus on major issues could really emerge within such a body, and others feared that the project, if realized, would damage their relations with Washington. The Canadians, moreover, did not like the idea of being eclipsed behind the US on the American side of the Alliance. De Gaulle might have either supported the project, just to use it for the obvious objective of checking Washington’s influence by other means, or blocked it, had he considered that British and German participation in such an agreement could narrow the margin for French political manoeuvre and leadership in Europe.

The third sub-group had the delicate task of reviewing the political implications of the military strategy and force levels singled out by the NATO nuclear planning and force planning organizational units. Consensus reached by the various structures on the actual threat from the East, as well as the willingness and financial capability of member States to provide adequate force levels, were

³⁸ On Spaak cf. Michel Dumoulin, *Spaak*, Bruxelles, Racine, 1999, pp. 651-670, 678-681. About Schuetz’s role in German foreign policy cf. LBJL, NSF, CF, Germany, box 188, vol. 14 (memos), no. 136, memo, W.W. Rostow to L.B. Johnson, Washington 11.12.1967, and encl. memo, D. Rusk to L.B. Johnson, Washington 6.12.1967.

bound to affect the result of all studies dealing with NATO's military posture. The evaluation of the Soviet threat was influenced by the course of NPT negotiations, and by Moscow's acceptance or rejection of US initiatives for limiting ABM deployment and fostering mutual force reductions in Europe.

The objective of the fourth sub-group, finally, was deeply connected with the US desire to persuade its European allies that developments in areas such as Asia and the Middle East were of the utmost relevance to NATO choices. The Europeans, however, feared that strategic priorities might lead the US to abandon the Old Continent and, above all, did not want to get involved in the Vietnam morass. Hence, the sub-group had to submit a report that could at least convince Washington's European partners to show greater interest in areas outside their own continent, without undermining their confidence in the American commitment to Europe.

Beyond those analyses in the context of the Harmel Study, NATO Foreign Ministers had suggested three more studies – on NATO's role in adjusting the US-European technological gap, inter-allied consultative procedures, and new methods of fast communication. The special group working on the first issue would not go beyond the discussion of military aspects of the matter. The Defense Planning Committee, composed of representatives of the Fourteen in the North Atlantic Council without French participation, would deal with the second question. As for the third field, a revolution in inter-allied communication systems was looming on the horizon thanks to a massive US-sponsored NATO communications satellite programme. The FRG, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium had asked for a six-month delay, however, to enable their industries to contribute to the project – a clear sign of the common fear that London and Washington were aiming to reach a monopolistic position in advanced scientific technology.

In the fields of nuclear and conventional planning, projects developed without the French began to bear fruit during the last months of 1967. The NPG did not cancel all hopes of deeper nuclear 'hardware' sharing, as witnessed by an enduring reluctance in many European quarters to accept a NPT definitely ruling out such schemes as the Multilateral Force, or the Atlantic Nuclear

Force, widely debated in previous years. Furthermore, had Washington or Moscow deployed any ABM systems, the Alliance should have chosen whether to organize an ABM European network and decided how to regulate a European access to the nuclear trigger. As to conventional forces, the gradual switch from three-year to five-year strategic planning cycles was successfully under way. New procedures would include the first new political guidance for the military planners since 1956, which in turn would help the NATO Military Committee to draw a new strategic concepts guidance paper, the first since 1957.

As for the trilateral talks, however, in May CIA analysts still doubted that all major problems had come to a real solution. According to them, the Europeans would likely continue to fear that the US might scale down its substantial commitment to Europe or even sacrifice their interests, in return for Moscow's help in reaching a settlement in Vietnam. Distrust of the British willingness to maintain specified military force levels on the continent notwithstanding frequent monetary crises, moreover, had not completely disappeared. Finally, smaller partners had become even more concerned that the 'big three' might assume a dominant role in planning NATO's future too, which added a touch of suspicion to a picture already featuring old fears of German revanchism.

By December, according to the CIA, the Alliance would reach a shape likely to characterize it also during the next decade – “no drastic structural overhaul”, reconciliation of “its essentially military purposes as a shield against a Soviet threat ... with its potential as an instrument for coordinating Western efforts to ‘build bridges’ to the East”, conservation of “a place for France in the Alliance without allowing French negativism to hinder its effectiveness”. On that background, the Harmel Study would contribute to reassure the Europeans that German ambitions were containable and controllable within the structure of the Alliance, to persuade Bonn that the FRG's well-being had its best guarantee in fully adhering to the West's common goals, and to imbue US allies with the perception – contradictory, one may remark, but psychologically essential – of participating with equal status in a

collective enterprise mainly based on their confidence in “the full commitment of the dominant power”.³⁹

The year before, 1966, had really been a turning point for the West – suffice it to recall the Luxembourg Compromise and the relaunch of British application for entry into the European integration process;⁴⁰ the NATO-France dispute and the restructuration of Atlantic relations;⁴¹ the changing of the guard in Bonn and the first signs of *Ostpolitik* that Brandt, becoming Chancellor in September 1969, would widely develop. On 11 August 1967, aware of all these changes, McCloy wrote Rostow a letter full of suggestions for Johnson, meant to prepare the President to the impending talks with Kiesinger. The emerging Soviet influence in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, according to McCloy, was radically altering the balance of power in the European theatre, while the 1969 twenty-year deadline might coincide with a French withdrawal from the Atlantic Alliance. The US, therefore, should not miss the opportunity of exploiting the decline of de Gaulle’s prestige to lock Bonn in a much less ambiguous partnership with Washington. German disenchantment with the French attitude and proposals was much deeper than a superficial analysis could disclose, and attacking Kiesinger for the reduction of his forward military budget, or, even worse, using that issue “as a new excuse to move in” on US troop levels in the FRG,

³⁹ LBJL, NSF, Agency File (AF), NATO, General, box 36, vol. 5, no. 17, CIA Intelligence Memorandum no. 1110/67, “NATO Looks to the Future”, Washington 8.5.1967.

⁴⁰ Cf. for example N. Piers Ludlow, “Challenging French Leadership in Europe: Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the Outbreak of the Empty Chair Crisis of 1965-1966”, in *Contemporary European History*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1999), pp. 231-248.

⁴¹ See Frédéric Bozo, *La France et l’OTAN. De la guerre froide au nouvel ordre européen*, Paris, Masson, 1991, pp. 65-91; Id., “De Gaulle, l’Amérique et l’Alliance atlantique: une relecture de la crise de 1966”, in *Vingtième Siècle*, 1994, 43, pp. 55-68; Id., *Deux stratégies pour l’Europe: De Gaulle, les Etats-Unis et l’Alliance atlantique, 1958-1969*, Paris, Plon, 1996; Georges-Henri Soutou, *L’alliance incertaine. Les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands 1954-1996*, Paris, Fayard, 1996, pp. 241-280; Maurice Vaïsse, Pierre Mélandri et Frédéric Bozo (eds), *La France et l’OTAN, 1949-1996*, Actes du colloque tenu à l’Ecole militaire, 8, 9 et 10 février 1996, à Paris, Paris, Complexe, 1996; Frank Costigliola, “Not ‘A Normal French Government’: The U.S. Reaction to the France’s Withdrawal from NATO”, in Guido Müller (ed.), *Deutschland und der Westen. Internationale Beziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Klaus Schwabe zum 65. Geburtstag*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1998, pp. 307-312.

might prove a bad mistake. The Chancellor, wrote McCloy, should leave Washington fully persuaded that, in spite of the Vietnam tragedy and its consequent domestic problems, the Americans were ready to consider their future relations with Europe very seriously and to ask for mutual preparedness on Bonn's side. "Neither Europe nor we can afford these days to be provincial in our thinking", brilliantly concluded McCloy.⁴²

The summit with Kiesinger took place against this background, on 15 August. About the central issue of US troops in Europe, Johnson declared he wanted to resist all pressures on the Administration and to maintain already-set force levels in Europe. If the Chancellor had to make a reduction, however, the White House "would be forced to make a proportionate reduction" because of public opinion and the Congress. Johnson stressed the need for mutual "frank and full consultation" between "the men at the top" in Washington and Bonn, "as between two brothers running a business jointly". Due to Kiesinger's initiative, the conversation focussed on de Gaulle. During recent meetings in the FRG, the General had seemed as stubborn as ever on the issue of British membership of the Common Market, but "less harsh than expected" on certain aspect of relations with the US. Paris and Washington, he had declared, were connected by an old, durable friendship, which France meant to preserve as well as her link to the Atlantic Alliance, at least "until such time as the relationship with the Soviet Union had *completely* changed". This statement, according to Kiesinger, implied that de Gaulle did not want to

⁴² FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 15, doc. 223, J.J. McCloy to W.W. Rostow, New York 11.8.1967. Among essays and books on these matters, cf. Gustav Schmidt, "Introduction", in *Contemporary European History*, vol. 7, no. 3 (November 1998), pp. 287-309; Andreas Wilkens, "Ostpolitik Allemande et commerce avec l'Est – Objectifs politiques et enjeux économiques d'Adenauer à Brandt (1949-1974)", in *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique*, vol. 113 (1999), pp. 205-241; Noel D. Cary, "Reassessing Germany's *Ostpolitik*. Part 1: From Détente to Refreeze", in *Central European History*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 235-262; Gottfried Niedhart, "Ostpolitik: The Role of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Process of Détente", in Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker (eds), *1968: The World Transformed*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (and Washington, German Historical Institute), 1998, pp. 173-192; Id., "The Federal Republic's Ostpolitik and the United States: Initiatives and Constraints", in Burk and Stokes (eds), *The United States*, pp. 289-311. On McCloy, see Thomas A. Schwartz, *America's Germany. John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1991.

support French withdrawal from the Alliance in 1969. Privately, the General had even added that the presence of American forces in the FRG was not only tolerable but “desirable”. The German Government had made clear to Wilson, and again at the Rome meeting, that the FRG supported both the British application to enter the EEC and the idea of a meeting of the Chiefs of the six governments, at the end of the year, to debate the issue. Nothing more could be done by Bonn, stressed the Chancellor, since acting like “a bulldozer” he would only strengthen the Elysée’s negativism. Johnson took the opportunity to tell Kiesinger how patiently, “whenever he was being hit by the General”, he had turned the other cheek, not to add “seeds of dissension” in the European arena; but, since de Gaulle might not imagine how the President respected him and his people, maybe the Chancellor could work “as a sort of mediator” between the US and France – a proposal and a role that Kiesinger willingly accepted.⁴³

State Department’s officials took into due consideration the output of the Johnson-Kiesinger summit when, three weeks later, at the beginning of September, they began to evaluate the results reached by the four Harmel Study sub-groups. It was time for weighing the pros and cons of the long exercise, since the Rapporteurs’ meeting, scheduled on 12-13 October, was to produce the main section of a general paper for ministerial approval, in December. The final public document had to include a short summary of the various issues examined by the sub-groups, an explicit declaration supporting the indefinite continuation of the Alliance, and a proposal on its future tasks, based on each of the four reports.⁴⁴

During the delicate transition phase from sub-group reporting to the final document for the Special Group, State Department Counselor Robert Bowie gave an important contribution. Informally involved by the Rapporteurs, he prepared a résumé

⁴³ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 263, memo of conversation (K. Kiesinger, L.B. Johnson *et al.*), H. Obst, Washington 15.8.1967, noon, secret. Cf. also vol. 15, doc. 226, 227, 228; AAPD, 1967, doc. 301. See Bator’s opinion about the meeting, in LBJL, NSF, CF, Germany, box 193, vol. “Visit of Chancellor Kiesinger (II)”, no. 88, memo, F.M. Bator to L.B. Johnson, Washington 16.8.1967.

⁴⁴ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 264, tel. 32570, D. Rusk to the Embassy in France, Washington 6.9.1967, confidential.

that, enriched with some modifications, was approved during their meeting at Ditchley Park on 11-12 October. On the whole, as Bowie remarked in a memorandum to Rusk, the study took “a balanced view of ... Soviet attitudes and military strength”, reaffirmed “the continuing need for the Alliance”, and showed that the Europeans considered “the US commitment and capacity” to be the main “source of their security”. This obviously implied a “disparity in power and influence between the US and the European allies”. Most of them recognized that only “European unity in some form” could provide an effective alternative to that situation, but they varied “widely in assessing prospects for achieving it” – as usual.⁴⁵

The Special Group meeting, organized in Brussels on 7-8 November, catalysed consensus among the Fourteen on the Harmel Study’s substantial and procedure issues. The French, isolated, accepted *ob torto collo* to go along with the approach chosen by the partners, but declared they would raise “every kind of difficulty ... to torpedo or drastically water down the outcome” of the Study, as noted in the report sent to Rusk by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the State Department. It had been clear, however, that they tended to yield when they understood they had reached as much as they reasonably could, in terms of concessions during a single meeting. That was an important lesson for the Fourteen – had they maintained unity, probably Paris would not have tried to kill the Study on the finishing line. Needless to say, France was inclined to hamper the partners’ decisions; but, according to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, if they resisted her efforts, NATO would play a prominent role in 1968, both for détente and the negotiation of disarmament and arms control.⁴⁶ Harmel’s initiative, therefore, gradually overcoming the stumbling-blocks inherent in a consensus-reaching multilateral process, was effectively contributing to innovate and relaunch the Alliance, which was

⁴⁵ Ibid., doc. 270, memo, R.R. Bowie to D. Rusk, Washington 16.10.1967, confidential.

⁴⁶ Ibid., doc. 275, “Intelligence Note No. 904”, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, T.L. Hughes to D. Rusk, Washington 9.11.1967, secret. On the issue cf. among others Frédéric Bozo, “Détente versus Alliance: France, the United States and the Politics of the Harmel Report”, in *Contemporary European History*, vol. 7, no. 3 (November 1998), pp. 343-360.

approaching its first twenty-year deadline of existence in a system of global relations very, but not yet radically, different from 1949.

When the Special Group met in Brussels, on 22 November, Cleveland remarked that sub-group consensus on key issues was beginning to become Alliance doctrine, closing an exercise that had “evidently been a soul-searching experience” for at least half of the Member States. The emerging Report, according to the US Permanent Representative, would probably be a public document, thanks to Danish and Norwegian pressures, supported by Canada, Belgium, and even by London and Washington, mainly because of a widespread perception that it was necessary to educate public opinion in Member States, above all the youth, to share the Alliance’s fundamental values. And the American Delegation took “a good deal of leadership behind the scenes”, as Cleveland concluded with pleasure in his report to the Department of State.⁴⁷

General consensus, though not flattened to the lowest common denominator of French cooperativeness as it would have probably happened in the EEC context, did not imply total overcoming of conflictual incompatibility and divergences that had emerged during the exercise. After twelve hours of hard work, the Special Group prepared a document rich in alternative wordings to respond to French Representative François Seydoux’ criticism of the main statements. According to the CIA, much less enthusiastic than Cleveland, in December France was going to win most battles during the ministerial approval of semantic options – which would not prevent the final report to get over the *mauvais pas* in good health, free from major alterations. The real test, therefore, once the partners overcame procedural obstacles, would be their ability to implement the proposals and lines of action implicitly or explicitly advocated by the Study.⁴⁸

Confirming expectations, the Fortieth North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting, held in Brussels on 12-14 December, raised deep discussions and negotiations, but differences between France

⁴⁷ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 277, tel. 594, H. Cleveland to DS, Bruxelles 23.11.1967, confidential.

⁴⁸ LBJL, NSF, AF, NATO, General, box 36, vol. 5, no. 4, CIA Intelligence Memorandum no. 1680/67, “The Harmel Study: NATO Looks to Its Future”, Washington 7.12.1967.

and the Fourteen on the Harmel Study, or between Bonn and Washington on strategic issues, did not create an *impasse* such as to jeopardize American tactics and goals. The Council reached full agreement on the Study. The US, as well as other Members, would have certainly preferred that the final text reflected in more detail the issues analysed by single Rapporteurs, but by and large the operation objectives had been attained.

As Rusk wrote in a secret telegram sent from Brussels to the Department of State, France had likely chosen not to add a new Paris-Fourteen *querelle* to the current clash with her five partners in the EEC. On 27 November, in fact, de Gaulle had officially stated French opposition to the British application for membership in the Community – a head-on collision with the favourable advice the Commission had expressed two months before. It was necessary, then, as the telegram remarked, to implement the political programme described by the Study. Everything had to be invented or organized – “methods, timing and order of priorities for followup work” as between the great issues of East-West relations, arms control and disarmament, Mediterranean security, and global issues, not to mention possible additional matters Italy might raise in the Permanent Council.⁴⁹ The Allies had put many irons in the fire: the new shape taken by the Vietnam issue, in 1968, and the impact of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia on European and American perceptions of détente limits were bound to impose very different ‘cooking-times’ from what the Ministers had imagined, feared, or wished in Brussels.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ FRUS, 1964-68, vol. 13, doc. 281, tel. 1056, D. Rusk to DS, Bruxelles 14.12.1967, secret.

⁵⁰ Cf. for instance George C. Herring, “Tet and the Crisis of Hegemony”, in Fink, Gassert and Junker (eds), 1968, pp. 31-53; Diane B. Kunz, “The American Economic Consequences of 1968”, *ibid.*, pp. 83-110; Mark Kramer, “The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine”, *ibid.*, pp. 111-171; John Prados, “Prague Spring and SALT: Arms Limitation Setbacks in 1968”, in Brands (ed.), *The Foreign Policies*, pp. 19-36; Hans-Peter Schwarz, “Die Regierung Kiesinger und die Krise der CSSR 1968”, in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 47, no. 2 (1999), pp. 159-186. See also Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1998, esp. pp. 584-675.

Some days before Nixon took office, on 8 January 1969, Cleveland wrote Johnson that the Atlantic Alliance had been deeply challenged during the previous years, but it had stood firm. Johnson's leadership and commitment, and the expertise of his cabinet and aides, had helped NATO to overcome the French military withdrawal in 1966, to improve relations with Moscow and its bloc in 1967, and to react to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in the right way, in 1968. The Alliance had shown talents of adaptability to difficult circumstances, and the US government had protected American interests within it. Flexibility would prove to be a key factor for the future, Cleveland predicted – NATO, after testing its own strength as a “cooperative political endeavor”, was ready to enter the new decade, maybe even to use its power out of the Treaty area.⁵¹

Johnson, indeed, was leaving the White House with a key issue still unresolved, Vietnam, but had built a satisfactory record in the European and Atlantic domain. A good guardian of the *status quo*, he had decided to oppose and contain the French attack without retaliating, and to rebuild the core of NATO on three pillars – or fourteen, where possible and useful – aiming to preserve the cohesion of the Alliance at all costs. No really innovative design had emerged, also because of the behaviour of his European counterparts, but the Democrat administration left a decent legacy to its successors, who would get the best chances for negotiating détente from a position of strength.

⁵¹ LBJL, NSF, AF, NATO, box 10, vol. “Filed by the LBJL”, no. 17a, H. Cleveland to L.B. Johnson, Bruxelles 8.1.1969; see also *ibid.*, Oral History Interviews, Harlan Cleveland, 13.8.1969.