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## CABINET

## NATO NUCLEAR FORCE: MIXED-MANNED COMPONENT

MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The purpose of this paper is to set out for my colleagues the political factors which must govern any consideration of the mixed-manned (multilateral) arm which the United States proposes should be part of the nuclear force of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The Minister of Defence is discussing the military implications in a separate paper (C. (63) 96). The essence of the matter is that the Germans are not content to remain indefinitely in the position of a second-class Power. United States diplomacy and the French *force de frappe* have stimulated the Germans into this mood, but I am convinced that they will not for very much longer be content to have no share in the control of nuclear weapons. It is to meet this problem in a way that does not give the Germans an independent nuclear capacity that the United States have proposed the multilateral force. Theoretically it is not the only answer to the German problem. But we now have to face the fact that the Germans have adopted it and that most of the leading German politicians of both parties are personally committed to it. Equally the prestige of the United States Administration is deeply involved and the multilateral force has become an important part of their policy towards Europe and the organisation of the Western Alliance.

2. Accordingly in judging our response to the multilateral force proposal we have to give full weight to its effect upon our relations with the United States on the one hand and with Europe on the other, particularly the Germans and the Italians.

## I

3. If Germany is not to be inferior to the United Kingdom or France this means bringing Germans into the nuclear business. The question is whether this is to be under national control or in some wider alliance grouping. The Germans (and this is true of Erhard and Schroeder) profess to prefer the latter. It may be of course that some of them secretly harbour hopes that it can be converted into the former. On this no one can be certain. It is in our interest and our policy that any German nuclear capacity (and there is already a significant amount) should be firmly tied in to an Atlantic Alliance structure and kept that way, rather than developing on national lines or in close association with the French *force de frappe*. The question is how this can best be achieved.

4. Whatever the position may have been at Nassau, things have now moved further and faster. The problem now boils down to a choice between (a) joining the multilateral force and controlling the Germans from inside it or (b) standing aloof from it in the hope that it will be stillborn and that the Germans will not acquire nuclear weapons in other ways; or that it will come into being, but that it will not lead to a German national capacity or be detrimental to us in other ways. The United States are convinced that participation in the mixed-manned force will satisfy German nuclear ambitions for the foreseeable future (10 or 20 years). If there is to be a multilateral force all the other countries in NATO (with the exception of France which is sceptical of the whole idea) are very anxious that we should take a part in its management and control.

5. Consequently the importance of the multilateral force lies mainly in the political field. The motives for establishing it are at the lowest respectable and at the highest imaginative, namely preventing the spread of nuclear weapons on a national basis and creating an arm which is international in the fullest sense.

## II

6. If we could be reasonably certain that by standing aloof from the force we could kill it and retain the *status quo* and not suffer grave consequences there might be something to be said for this course. But I now believe it to be certain that the force will come into being shortly, even if we take no part in it. The Germans and the United States have already reached agreement and they require only one other partner to go ahead. It seems very likely any Italian Government will join and so will the Greeks and Turks. Failing this the United States although reluctant to do so, would I believe go ahead with Germany alone. In either case, German influence would be strong and in time might come to dominate the force.

7. Moreover, if by any chance the multilateral force fails to come into being, the United States have plainly said that they see no alternative but to meet the German demand by the establishment of a NATO medium-range ballistic missile force and by increasing nuclear weapons under German command on German soil or in German ships, with the warheads under United States custody. This contains obvious dangers.

8. Clearly if there is to be a multilateral force we stand a much better chance of controlling its development and preventing the Germans from acquiring a national nuclear capability if we are in it rather than outside it.

9. To sum up, from the foreign policy point of view a United Kingdom contribution to the multilateral force is clearly of the first importance.

- (a) in the context of Anglo-American relations: if we are not in it the Germans will increase their influence at Washington at our expense;
- (b) in the context of our European policy and our relations with both major political parties in Germany, each of whom supports the force;
- (c) to ensure that we ourselves maintain adequate control through the unanimity rule over the nuclear forces in which Germany participates.

There are thus not only powerful foreign policy reasons for going into the force; there are also powerful foreign policy disadvantages if we do not. One of the arguments by which we have justified the retention of our own independent nuclear arm is that it will ensure that we take our place by right in all discussions in bodies concerned with nuclear matters. If we are absent from the Board of the multilateral force this argument will no longer hold.

## III

10. I think that the Minister of Defence feels that militarily speaking the multilateral force is a luxury. I accept that the multilateral force would have in his view a low priority on grounds of military desirability. But I must qualify this by saying that if this force does not materialise, the demand will quickly be renewed for medium-range ballistic missiles. The multilateral force must be looked at as an alternative.

11. I also understand that our Chiefs of Staff, while unenthusiastic, consider that if it were politically necessary a mixed-manned fleet could be made to be militarily feasible, at least so far as surface vessels are concerned. The talks with Admiral Ricketts the United States Vice-Chief of Naval Operations, will help to clarify this aspect of the matter.

## IV

12. Of course we should need to look carefully at the terms of an agreement establishing the multilateral force and we should not finally have to commit ourselves until we could see them in their entirety. Attached at Annex I is a statement approved by the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Rusk, setting out exactly what the Americans are asking of us now. In fact we are at present in an unusually strong bargaining position which should enable us to obtain favourable terms,

and terms notably better than those which the United States and Germany would enjoy as contributors to the force. In conversation with the United States in Ottawa and elsewhere they have indicated to us a number of ways in which they would be prepared to offer assistance advantageous to us both financially and in terms of control over the force.

13. These include:

- (a) contracts for shipbuilding and repairing;
- (b) the establishment of a new base in the United Kingdom; and, if we supply warheads,
- (c) contracts for making, servicing and replacing the warheads; and
- (d) the provision for the warheads of U-235 (which the United States can make much more cheaply than ourselves) on generous terms.

Of these (c) and (d) would be non-starters if it proves too difficult for us to supply warheads, but (a) and (b) could be advantageous both politically and economically.

14. In addition to these United States inducements, we should naturally have *desiderata* of our own on which we could undoubtedly insist if we now agreed to join in drafting a charter for the multilateral force. These include on the military side undertakings by the United States not to support the establishment of the NATO medium-range ballistic missile force and on the political side to provide that any change in the unanimity rule should itself be made by unanimity.

15. The problem therefore boils down to this: whether it is worthwhile paying the financial price for a project which is politically of the highest importance but militarily not a high priority; and if so how to present our position to Parliament.

16. The latter problem can be considerably eased by:

- (a) pointing out that we are not accepting a financial obligation which is open-ended: a formula for this can, I feel sure, be agreed;
- (b) stressing that no foreign exchange commitment is involved;
- (c) explaining that the greater part of our contribution could be made from surplus capacity, *e.g.*, orders for ships from our shipyards.

In short we could probably show that there would be little if any drain on the economy as a whole. Thus we should be getting at a bargain price an important political advantage.

17. We could explain quite frankly to Parliament what this is. The political motive behind the multilateral force is sensible and respectable, even high-minded, and can be presented as such. It helps to integrate Europe and the United States. It helps to maintain our influence in the Western Alliance and particularly with the United States. It helps to contain German ambitions and to prevent the spread of these dangerous weapons. It is true that no one can guarantee that the latter will be achieved but much the best chance of doing so is to integrate the German military machine into that of NATO. I think that, before we go into the drafting group on the lines which the United States propose, it would be useful if we can, to have a further multilateral examination of the idea of mixed-manning. The United States may not like the idea of proceeding in two stages, but I attach at Annex II a possible approach to the United States designed to achieve a real examination by ourselves and interested allies. If the matter was handled in this way, I believe it would help the public presentation quite a lot.

H.

*Foreign Office, S.W. 1,  
27th May, 1963.*

E.R.

