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Prelude to the Skybolt Crisis: U.S. nuclear assistance to France, McNamara's Ann Arbor speech, and American attitudes to the British strategic nuclear deterrent during 1962

On 16 June 1962, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, gave one of the most famous speeches of the nuclear age when he delivered the commencement address at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The address has been remembered principally for its presentation of a controversial counterforce targeting doctrine in which McNamara, during the kind of clinical and dispassionate analysis for which he had already become synonymous, pictured a U.S.-Soviet nuclear exchange where civilian casualties might be lessened by means of a more discriminating selection of targets than simply the destruction of urban areas of population.[1] Up to this point there had never been such a detailed public statement from a senior American official regarding U.S. thinking on the conduct of nuclear war and how it could be managed. When the speech was still being drafted, McGeorge Bundy, President John F. Kennedy's Special Assistant for National Affairs, noted that it elaborated U.S. nuclear policy 'with a depth and authority that have no public precedent'.[2] The changing emphasis in U.S. nuclear targeting options outlined at Ann Arbor has tended to be the part of McNamara's address now most featured in histories of the development of nuclear strategy, but aside from the principles of counterforce, it also contained several other important themes and messages. These included strong criticism of the possession of independent, national nuclear forces by other members of the Western Alliance, forces which could undermine the planning and implementation of the kind of centrally-directed and coordinated nuclear strikes which would be necessary if the new targeting doctrine was to achieve its desired goals. For contemporary commentators, McNamara's rebuke that small nuclear forces, when operating independently, were 'dangerous', 'expensive', 'prone to obsolescence', and lacking in credibility as a deterrent, caught widespread attention because of what it seemed to reveal about the Kennedy administration's general attitude to the nuclear aspirations of its NATO allies, Britain and France.

This article will examine the background to these latter aspects of the Ann Arbor address and the ramifications the speech held for the nuclear relations between the principal members of the North Atlantic Alliance. Although he had wanted to mount a critique of a French nuclear program which was still in its formative stages and developing free from Washington's control – and perhaps also to draw a line under the debates within the Kennedy administration that had simmered over the previous few months on whether to offer nuclear assistance to France - it is clear from the evidence presented in this article that McNamara had not intended that his remarks should be taken as a U.S. attack on the British 'independent' nuclear deterrent force, which by 1962 included over 100 modern V-bomber aircraft, many already equipped with high-yield thermonuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the address created unwelcome dilemmas for the British government led by Harold Macmillan as it was forced to respond to McNamara's strictures, while attempting to show fidelity to close Anglo-American relations, as well as simultaneously asserting its nuclear independence as it attempted to lower French resistance to Britain's concurrent bid to join the European Economic Community (EEC).

The British reaction to Ann Arbor was to expose some of the contradictions that lay at the heart of the Macmillan government's position regarding the role that the UK deterrent assumed within the Western Alliance. McNamara's speech also played a key part, underplayed in some of the literature on Anglo-American nuclear relations, in fuelling later British suspicions in December 1962 that the Kennedy administration's decision to cancel the Skybolt missile program was made not on the grounds of technical problems in development and cost effectiveness, as the Department of Defense then claimed, but was the fulfilment of a premediated move to drive the British out of the nuclear business. In this way, Ann Arbor formed the essential (and unwitting) prelude to the most serious crisis to afflict Anglo-American nuclear relations in the post-war era.[3]

The Kennedy Administration and U.S. Attitudes to the Development of British and French Nuclear Forces

Swinging between acceptance of the technical aspects of U.S.-UK nuclear cooperation, which were enshrined in the July 1958 Agreement on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes, reluctant acquiescence to providing the Macmillan government with a new delivery system to equip the V-bomber force (in the form of the Skybolt air-launched ballistic missile), and deep reservations over the continuing existence of Britain's independent nuclear force, U.S. officials in the Kennedy administration frequently criticised the existence of a British nuclear program as a distraction from the more urgent priority of building conventional military capabilities in NATO, and as a goad to other European powers – such as France, but also West Germany - which might also might aspire to a similar nuclear status.[4] The French exploded their first test device in February 1960, and President Charles de Gaulle had plans to start to equip the French Air Force with nuclear-capable aircraft by 1964, and to develop an indigenous ballistic missile program.[5] To some anxious U.S. observers, unchecked French nuclear ambitions, along with the preferential treatment accorded to Britain since 1958 with the provision of valuable nuclear assistance in the warhead field, served to encourage others down the unwelcome path of proliferation, with most concern centered on the prospect that the West German government harboured desires to somehow acquire or control nuclear weapons.[6]

Growing doubts about the credibility of the U.S. nuclear guarantee to Western Europe in the late 1950s, combined with concerns over possible German nuclear ambitions, led the

Eisenhower administration to advocate a policy of nuclear sharing within the North Atlantic Alliance through the creation of a Multilateral Force (MLF). First presented to the NATO Council in December 1960, and soon adopted also by the Kennedy administration, the MLF was intended as a new European medium-range ballistic missile force, jointly financed, owned and controlled by its members. Its surface vessels, carrying its U.S.-supplied Polaris missiles, were to be crewed by mixed national contingents, ensuring that all its prospective participants - including most importantly Germany - enjoyed a share in the Alliance's nuclear capacity, planning and decision-making, and that none would enjoy exclusive 'national' control over the force. At the same time, Washington would be careful never to accede to relinquishing its veto over final nuclear use of an MLF were it to be created.[7]

The conviction of many members of the State Department by the early 1960s was that the existence of the UK strategic nuclear force acted as encouragement for the French and Germans to aspire to the same type of national capability and status, and impeded Washington's attempts to find multilateral solutions, via the MLF proposals, to NATO's nuclear dilemmas. Moreover, provision of the Skybolt air-launched ballistic missile, agreed by the Eisenhower administration in early 1960 when it was at an early stage of development - and a step seen in some quarters as a *quid pro quo* for the Macmillan government's acquiescence with the basing of the first U.S. Polaris submarines at Holy Loch in Scotland in that same year - threatened to extend the effective life of the V-bomber force for at least another decade.[8] The basic problem here was that no political strings had been attached to the UK's eventual purchase of Skybolt, so that it might be bound into some multinational system of nuclear control, while U.S. design information derived from the close nuclear collaboration established by the 1958 Agreement would assist the UK authorities in manufacturing their own warhead for the missile. With its own chain of national command and authority to launch the V-force, the British government could plausibly maintain the position that it had an independent capability which both contributed to the deterrent strength of the Western Alliance as a whole, and served as a last resort method of retaliation if national survival was at stake and the United States could not necessarily be relied upon to use its own nuclear forces to deter or defeat a Soviet attack.[9]

Open expression of doubt that the United States could be relied on in all circumstances to respond to Soviet aggression in Europe was not often heard from British ministers during this period – it would be impolitic to do so, and could weaken the impression of strong and credible Western deterrent – but privately it was recognised that there were advantages if Soviet leaders understood there was a separate means of nuclear retaliation whose political control was located in Europe.[10] As one Ministry of Defence official expressed it just a few days after the Ann Arbor speech:

> Deterrence requires the obvious will and ability to extract an unacceptable price for aggression. We do not dispute American capability to devastate the Soviet Union if necessary. We sometimes have misgivings about their "obvious will" to risk their own devastation. That is why neither we nor the French are yet willing to have to rely solely on the Americans for our nuclear protection. We intend to retain for HMG [Her Majesty's Government] the ability to take an independent decision to initiate nuclear operations that would extract an unacceptable price from an aggressor. So long as we retain this independence, it has to be taken into account in the formulation of policy and strategy in both Moscow and Washington. We consider that these advantages outweigh the risks if the deterrent should fail.[11]

The ability to inflict great damage on the Soviet Union by nationally-controlled nuclear means became a powerful marker of status within the North Atlantic Alliance. As Frank Costigliola has argued,

> Many Europeans believed that an independent nuclear force was the criterion of sovereignty and political power. Even if the French or British forces could not destroy the Soviet Union, they could, as de Gaulle put it, "tear off an arm"" or trigger a nuclear war which America would be forced to enter. Thus weapons of mass destruction, which could be used only irrationally, became assimilated into ostensibly rational political debate.[12]

Misgivings over the independent status of the UK nuclear program were evident from the early stages of the Kennedy administration.[13] In April 1961, following approval by the National Security Council, the President issued a document on policy toward the North Atlantic Alliance which laid new stress on enhancing NATO's capabilities for conventional defence. Regarding nuclear policy, it recommended that the British should be encouraged to make a clear assignment of their nuclear forces to NATO, and noted: 'Over the long run, it would be desirable if the British decided to phase out of the nuclear deterrent business. If the development of Skybolt is not warranted for U.S. purposes alone, the U.S. should not prolong the life of the V-bomber force by this or other means.'[14] The following month, in Ottawa, in front of the Canadian Parliament, Kennedy made clear the direction he wanted his administration to go by announcing U.S. intentions to commit five Polaris submarines to NATO command (as a reinforcement of the U.S. nuclear guarantee to the Alliance) and also to look toward the creation of a 'NATO sea-borne force, which would be truly multi-lateral in ownership and control, if this should be desired and found feasible by our Allies, once NATO's non-nuclear goals have been achieved.'[15]

Anything that conflicted with the objective of moving away from national deterrents was to be discouraged, which made both the French and British nuclear programs an unwelcome headache for U.S. policymakers. So, for example, in February 1962 U.S. officials objected strenuously to a passage in the annual British Defence White Paper which mentioned that the strategic nuclear deterrent made a 'significant' contribution to Western strength, would be maintained throughout the 1960s, and 'by itself [was] enough to make a potential aggressor fear that our retaliation would inflict destruction beyond any level which he would be prepared to tolerate.'[16] Kennedy wrote to Macmillan to express his 'special concern' about such statements. Alluding to the major reappraisal of NATO's nuclear policies which was then in train, and the pressures building up for independent nuclear capabilities, Kennedy thought that they 'may well have the effect of convincing de Gaulle of the rightness of his course …[and] hasten the day when Germany will pursue a national program.' Public statements, he remonstrated, should take into account such considerations, adding 'we ourselves are prepared to be as forthcoming as possible to meet our objective of finding a NATO solution to head off independent national aspirations.'[17]

Macmillan chose to reply in defensive fashion, expressing his appreciation that the President felt able to write to him in such a candid manner. The government's upcoming statement on defence to the House of Commons, Macmillan stressed, would emphasise that Britain was making a contribution to the West's deterrent as a whole. Moreover, while British possession of a force of V-bombers during the 1960s was a fact which could not be ignored, this did not 'in itself rule out a completely different organisation of the Western deterrent.' So as not to cause any misunderstanding, the Prime Minister added that he did not, however, believe it would be possible to form a NATO deterrent force on multilateral lines. As for the UK's force,

> Our contribution, important though it is, is relatively small. But I have never been persuaded that its existence necessarily encourages the French and the Germans to try to develop their own independent nuclear capacity; they will be moved or deterred by quite other factors. Indeed, I think one can argue quite plausibly that the existence of the British nuclear force gives some comfort both to those Europeans who fear that

> the United States might, in the last resort, shrink from using the nuclear deterrent for the defence of Europe, and to those who, contrariwise, are worried lest America might use it too precipitately.

There were advantages for the United States, Macmillan suggested, for being able to share nuclear responsibilities. Having thought deeply through the issues, the Prime Minister felt that in the absence of concrete measures of disarmament it would not ultimately be possible to prevent other powers from acquiring their own nuclear capabilities, however crude these might prove to be.[18]

It is quite apparent from the documentary record that Macmillan was attracted by the idea of exchanging, at some point in the future, complete ‘independence’ for the UK deterrent for fulfilment of larger policy goals.[19] He was prepared, for example, to contemplate the idea of an Anglo-French nuclear force - under shared political control - as one way to satisfy de Gaulle’s aspirations to play a leading role in Alliance affairs, and as an option, through the provision of nuclear assistance to France, which might also secure his key policy goal of UK entrance into the EEC. In April 1961, Macmillan had in fact written to Kennedy saying ‘we should be ready to go a long way to meet de Gaulle in certain fields of interest to him.’ The French program, if given technical help, could be conceived as not as an independent capability, but making a contribution to the Western deterrent as a whole, a conception which informed British views of their own deterrent force.[20]

This approach was, however, considered and rejected by Kennedy administration officials in 1961, seeing it as a course which would only stimulate German nuclear ambitions, while doubts were also present over French reliability. Kennedy’s formal reply to Macmillan explained he had come to the

> conclusion that it would be undesirable to assist France’s efforts to create a nuclear weapons capability. I am most anxious that no erroneous impressions get abroad

> regarding future U.S policy in this respect, lest they create unwarranted French expectations and serious divisions in NATO. If we were to help France acquire a nuclear weapons capability, this could not fail to have a major effect on German attitudes.

The policy of the U.S. administration would be to try to respond to French concerns over the nuclear arrangements of the Alliance, rather than to assist their national program, and the Americans would expect British support in this endeavour.[21]

Kennedy's rebuff to Macmillan's ideas did not mean the issue of nuclear assistance to France could stay off his policy agenda for very long. For one, it was apparent to many observers that the French government was determined to push forward with its nuclear program whatever actions the U.S. took, making its attainment of nuclear capability inevitable. An important advocate for U.S. nuclear assistance to France during this period was James M. Gavin, the Francophile former general who has led U.S. airborne forces with great distinction during the Second World War and had forged a good relationship with de Gaulle. In March 1961, hoping to improve Franco-American ties, Kennedy had sent Gavin to Paris as U.S. Ambassador. Over the subsequent months, according to McGeorge Bundy, Gavin 'had become deeply bothered by the gradual deterioration of Franco-American relations, and he was persuaded that the principal cause of this difficulty lay in the failure of the United States to meet the hopes of the French in the nuclear field.'[22] If this policy continued, the Ambassador feared, it would only drive France and the Federal Republic of Germany closer, and he suspected, according to his confident, *The New York Times'* Cyrus Sulzberger, that 'the French and the Germans are edging toward a secret agreement under which France would supply Germany with nuclear warheads which the U.S. refuses to give either country.'[23] But Gavin's advice on such matters did not find favor within the State Department (particularly from the Under Secretary of State, George Ball), whose officials had resented Gavin's initial appointment and believed he was too much in thrall to the French position. The danger with Gavin, as Bundy was advising the President by February 1962, was that he was 'an enthusiast for the French position' on nuclear questions. There was much press speculation that he was to be replaced, and Bundy wondered 'there is some question as to whether Jim is not a round peg in a square hole on this particular job.'[24]

Gavin's view was that it made sense to offer help to the French in the nuclear field: it would remove French irritation at the apparent double standards operating (when the Americans collaborated so closely with Britain under the 1958 Agreement); gain favour with de Gaulle; and ensure that the French did not squander their defence resources on unproductive lines of technical nuclear development. One area of possible assistance was with the supply from U.S. sources of expensive-to-produce highly enriched uranium (the French were building a uranium enrichment plant at Pierrelatte, at an estimated cost of $700 million, but it was reported to be behind schedule). A tentative request from French officials for the supply of U-235 was forwarded to Washington by Gavin on 14 November 1961, only for it to be turned down a week later in firm fashion in a message from Dean Rusk, the U.S. Secretary of State, which told Gavin – in a message reviewed and approved by the President – 'that we will undertake no action likely to result in any direct or significant aid to France in developing or securing independent nuclear warhead or effective nuclear weapon delivery capability.'[25]

At the end of December 1961, Kennedy had written to de Gaulle to convey his continued opposition to support for an independent French nuclear program. 'What troubles us, decisively, in the case of a specifically French nuclear capability,' the President tried to explain, 'is that if we should join in that effort, we would have no ground on which to resist certain and heavy pressure from the Germans for parallel treatment. Yet it is imperative that the Germans not have nuclear weapons of their own; memory is too strong, and fear too real, for that.' Expressing scepticism that a purely national program would be economically viable in view of the technical developments being made in the weapons field and the resources required to keep pace with them, Kennedy also noted that the United States had the

> same doubt about Great Britain. We have cooperated with the British on atomic energy since early in World War II, and we cannot now break a connection so long developed in mutual trust. But we do not believe that as the nuclear age advances the United Kingdom will be able to sustain an effective deterrent of a national type alone. I believe this view is shared by some of our most knowledgeable British friends. If Great Britain were today in the position of France, and if we did not have existing commitments on the exchange of information, I can assure you that our policy toward her would not differ from our present policy toward France. At present, and I believe for some time to come, the deterrent force of the United States protects Europe too. This is so because of the clarity of our commitment, the superiority of our overall force, and, if I may say so, my personal determination.

Rather than offer assistance to the French programme, Kennedy instead inquired whether France would be ready to enter into consultations over the problems connected with the nuclear defence of Europe.[26]

De Gaulle simply replied that France was not asking for American nuclear help and that he could understand why the United States was unwilling to share such secrets, even with an ally. While admitting that to create a nuclear force on a par with the Soviet Union would take enormous resources, the French President continued:

> But how can one evaluate the degree of destructive power required to constitute a deterrent? Even if your enemy is armed in such a manner that he can kill you ten times, the fact that you have the means with which to kill him once or even merely tear off his arms may give him pause. Moreover, in the West France is not alone. Its

> atomic force will certainly add something to the power of the Free World. But, when the time comes, it will doubtless be advisable to organize the combined use of Western nuclear weapons.[27]

This cool response meant there would be no immediate follow-up but U.S. officials acknowledged that the issue of possible US assistance to France was far from closed, particularly as press speculation over the subject intensified. While few in the administration backed the idea of an extensive offer of nuclear information in the area of warhead design, as was provided to the UK under the 1958 Agreement, there was interest in making an opening offer of advice with Medium Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM) technology, where French work had begun but the expense involved in developing the technology was known to be substantial.

The subject of nuclear assistance to France was examined once again by the Kennedy administration during the first few months of 1962. Gavin continued to argue during this period that a refusal to discuss cooperation in the nuclear field was a prime source of the overall discord in Franco-American relations that was by now being widely reported by the press on both sides of the Atlantic.[28] Civilian elements at the Department of Defense, moreover, were concerned to explore practical cooperation with France over such as matters as the build-up of conventional forces in Europe (as the Algerian war came to an end, so allowing the redeployment of some French forces), the defence spending burden placed on France by its nuclear program, and the prospect of French purchases in the nuclear-related field offsetting U.S. military expenditures in France, which were a drain on the balance of payments. The principal figure within the Pentagon associated with a new approach to France was Paul H. Nitze, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, but there was some support also from Roswell Gilpatric, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and from McNamara himself. A sceptic regarding the potential of European integration or multilateral schemes, Nitze preferred to focus on the importance of the bilateral relationship with France, and was prepared to see nuclear assistance extended in a similar way to that offered to the UK a few years earlier. An additional source of advocacy was General Maxwell B. Taylor, the President's personal military representative, who had visited France at the end of March 1962 and returned 'deeply impressed by the unanimity of the Frenchmen with whom he talked, in passionate commitment to development of a nuclear capability, and in passionate resentment of the refusal of the Americans to provide assistance.'[29]

But after Nitze had held tentative discussions on the subject with the French Ambassador in Washington in February, press reporting of French criticisms of American refusal to accept an independent French nuclear force, combined with strong State Department opposition, was enough to persuade Kennedy to drop any idea of a formal approach to de Gaulle.[30] At the end of February, nevertheless, Nitze suggested examination of a program for changing the nature of the nuclear relationship with France, starting with initial discussions with French officials. 'We do not today have any clear view as to what might or might not be possible in this area,' Nitze explained. 'The French have not been willing to make any worthwhile exploratory overtures to us. We have not gone very far in exploring ideas with them.' He now wanted some groundwork laid 'for an incision in the most bitter issue that now divides us and the French.'[31] The Director of Armaments in the French Ministry of Defence, General Gaston Lavaud, came to Washington from 4-16 March 1962 with a long shopping list for U.S. equipment or support, some of it connected to the French ballistic missile program. Lavaud's main point of contact at the Pentagon during his visit was Nitze, and the visit served to prompt intense discussion between the Defense and State Departments over whether help to France over areas such as ballistic missile technology would indirectly assist the French nuclear program. Strong opposition to the provision of anything which might contribute to nuclear delivery systems came from Ball and Rusk, the latter directing Nitze and Gilpatric, for example, not to open any talks which covered missile components or technology.[32]

The U.S. Secretary of State was convinced that if nuclear aid were offered to France with conditions (such as French support for an MLF, and the commitment of French nuclear forces to NATO), this would be resented by de Gaulle, while his demands for greater U.S. recognition of France's leadership in Europe were only likely to be intensified. As one State Department memorandum on the subject maintained, 'He wants aid, but he probably does not expect it, and he might respect us less – rather than more – if we showed susceptibility to pressure by granting it.' There would also be numerous negative consequences for U.S. policy as a whole to the NATO Alliance if such an initiative were taken, and the West German government would probably clamor for similar forms of assistance, which could help to encourage them in developing their own nuclear potential. [33] By this time French officials were already voicing open criticism of American refusal to accept the reality of the French nuclear program by offering to give France direct assistance in this field, and public ventilation of the issue did nothing to persuade President Kennedy to modify his views.[34] Lavaud returned home with little progress made on the equipment purchases it had been hoped might serve to alleviate the U.S. balance of payments burden caused in part by the stationing of U.S. forces in France. Gilpatric explained for Ball's benefit that, 'the French are not prepared to increase substantially their purchase of U.S. military equipment unless we are willing to relax our present policy of not assisting them in advanced weapons technology. If adhered to, this attitude means not only that the French will do nothing to improve materially the U.S. balance of payments account with France but also that they will not look to us for assistance in re-equipping their forces with modern conventional armament. As Bob [McNamara] and I said …without such help we doubt that the French divisions will, at least for an unacceptably long period of time, attain the level of combat readiness which is essential if the current planning for the use of NATO forces is to be meaningful.'[35]

Indeed, as noted above, Franco-American relations were entering a period of deep antagonism, as de Gaulle treated the U.S. administration's efforts to influence European developments, especially in the nuclear field, with profound suspicion.[36] At a meeting held on 16 April 1962, the provision of nuclear assistance to France was ruled out for the time being, and it was decided that the State Department would renew its push for the European members of NATO to form a multilateral MRBM force with U.S. support. At this gathering McNamara voiced his belief that nuclear help would probably not serve to alter de Gaulle's attitudes to the Alliance, but at the same time there was nothing that could stop the French developing a nuclear delivery capability. Nuclear assistance might, on a 'narrow military view', lessen the strain on French military budgets, improve the U.S. balance of payments position, and induce the French to be more cooperative over the formation of an MLF. In reply to McNamara's point that French nuclear development was inevitable and so it made little sense to deny assistance if it had any chance of yielding some concessions, Rusk was adamant that the U.S. should not be in the business of subsidising the costs of other powers' nuclear programs:

> in effect we should be reducing the price of entry into the nuclear field. [His] view was that we should instead seek a way to reduce our special nuclear relation to the British. The re-establishing of such nuclear sharing with the British in 1958 had been a mistake.

The other NATO allies would react very badly if the U.S. was found to be starting even tentative discussions with France, Rusk argued, and such a bilateral approach would be 'disastrous'. Kennedy agreed with the State Department's opposition to nuclear assistance to France, feeling it was 'wrong to move on this matter now.' Regarding the MRBM proposals, McNamara was extremely doubtful of their military necessity, but accepted that policy in this area had to be advanced for political reasons.[37]

One result of these deliberations was National Security Action Memorandum 148, ‘Guidance on U.S. Nuclear Assistance to France’, issued by President Kennedy on 18 April 1962. This ordered officials to ensure that in their background briefings with the press they should make it understood that the recent stories that the administration was moving to provide aid to the French MRBM and nuclear program were ‘without foundation’. Indeed, U.S. officials were told explicitly they were not to discuss the subject with their French counterparts.[38] That same day, at a presidential news conference, replying to a question about the possibility of providing nuclear assistance to France, the President reiterated that it was U.S. policy to discourage the spread or proliferation of nuclear weapons. As Bundy later recalled Kennedy saying he did not believe that de Gaulle would change his policies in return for nuclear assistance: ‘You would probably get money from him, but that’s all you’d get.’ ‘His personal responsibility for the nuclear posture of the West was never far from his mind,’ Bundy wrote of the President, ‘and he had an almost instinctive doubt that he could ease thus burden by sharing it. The path of nuclear diffusion seemed to lead away from that limitation of the atomic arms race on which he never gave up hope.’[39]

The EEC Negotiations and Anglo-French Nuclear Collaboration

The State Department’s success during April in gaining White House backing for a fresh attempt to sell the idea of a multilateral MRBM force to the European allies of the United States was ill-timed for Macmillan and his senior officials. Negotiations to enter the Common Market had stalled during the spring of 1962, and breaking down de Gaulle’s aversion to UK membership was considered essential if Britain’s was to succeed, while the

French President was known to be adamantly opposed to the whole MRBM scheme. The temptation for the Prime Minister during this period was to offer UK technical knowledge to the French nuclear program, but this could only be done with the acquiescence of the U.S. as much of the information now in the hands of British nuclear scientists was acquired as a result of collaboration with the U.S. under the 1958 Agreement, which forbade the transfer of such information to third parties.[40]

Considering the debates that had recently occurred in Washington, any British nuclear offer to France, however tentative, was not likely to be welcomed in the Kennedy administration, a fact appreciated by British Foreign Office officials. Before Macmillan's arrival in the U.S. capital for a visit in late April, Bundy advised Kennedy that 'there is nothing for us in any possible British notion that the UK might pay its entrance fee to the Common Market by providing nuclear assistance to the French. In such a case the British would be appeasing the French with our secrets, and no good would come of it for Europe or for us.'[41] Senior British officials who accompanied the Prime Minister on his trip reported that Rusk, Bundy and George Ball, had asked them whether any overtures from the French regarding nuclear cooperation were expected 'as their price for letting us into the Common Market.' When the reply was offered that such a French proposal was not anticipated, and would in any event by rejected on the British side, Rusk expressed relief, saying that it would have created problems for Washington if a bargain of this sort was floated. The United States, Rusk had confirmed, was determined not to help France with nuclear weapons technology either directly, or through the UK.[42]

During his April 1962 visit to Washington, Macmillan had once again presented to Kennedy his proposal of placing British and French nuclear forces 'in trust', serving the defence interests of Western Europe within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance. Such notions were 'vague and undeveloped', Macmillan admitted, and presented some major difficulties – such as the reluctance of either government to surrender independent control of their own nuclear forces – but he was clear that the ‘basic idea is that, when the enlarged European Community exists, the nuclear capability of the two members which have such a capability should somehow be given a European label, without withdrawing it from NATO.’[43] Kennedy had told the Prime Minister in private conversation that the proposal was premature and would only be worth considering if it could buy something ‘really spectacular like full French cooperation in NATO and elsewhere plus British entry into the European Economic Community.’ He also wanted to warn Macmillan off making any such suggestion to de Gaulle.[44] The Prime Minister must have emerged from this exchange anxious that his room for manoeuvre in the final stages of talks over EEC entry would be curtailed by the emerging trends in the U.S. approach to the nuclear problems of the Western Alliance.

Indeed, American policy, reflecting the outcome of the meeting Kennedy had held with his senior advisers on 16 April, was now ready to push forward with ideas for an MLF within the NATO Alliance, where the national role for British and French forces might eventually fade away. As Bundy noted: ‘We want the British in Europe, and we do not really see much point in the separate British nuclear deterrent, beyond our existing Skybolt commitment; we would much rather have British efforts go into conventional weapons and have the British join with the rest of NATO in accepting a single U.S.-dominated NATO force.’[45] But if London was now expected by Washington to offer support for a NATO-controlled nuclear force, this could place Britain in the difficult position of having to align itself against de Gaulle on one of the most sensitive issues of French external policy. Moreover, subscribing UK strategic nuclear forces to a multilateral scheme which would form part of a combined Western and U.S.-led targeting effort and be subject to a U.S. veto over final decisions for use – if that was what the Americans eventually hoped to see - would probably put paid to any notion of using the idea of a collaborative Anglo-French nuclear effort, held ‘in trust’ for Europe (but free of U.S. control), as a possible bargaining chip in the EEC negotiations with France.

The British position was that an MLF would be militarily unworkable, politically dangerous and unwarrantably expensive. ‘If the Americans want to help us to negotiate our way into Europe,’ one Foreign Office telegram opined, ‘they must not expect us to take up a position on this important nuclear matter which will only confirm de Gaulle’s suspicions that we are incapable of maintaining a point of view independent of the Americans on a matter of vital interest to European defence.’[46] To Philip de Zulueta, Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, and one of Macmillan’s closest advisers on foreign affairs, there was also concern that the recent tenor of U.S. policy made it doubtful that the previous close, bilateral nuclear relationship with the Americans could be maintained indefinitely, but what might replace it when the alternatives seemed to be either complete dependence on the United States, or a nebulous ‘European’ deterrent, perhaps organised around an Anglo-French core effort if Britain became a member of the European Community, was still highly uncertain. ‘We have refused to bribe the French [with offers of nuclear collaboration] to let us into the Common Market,’ de Zulueta noted, ‘so as not to jeopardise this special relationship [with the Americans] which we may now find quite useless.’[47]

McNamara and U.S. nuclear strategy: Athens and Ann Arbor

It was against this background of Anglo-American divergence over the nuclear arrangements of the Alliance and only a few days after Macmillan’s departure from Washington, that on 5 May 1962 McNamara spoke before the NATO Council in Athens in what was the first of two landmark pronouncements on U.S. nuclear strategy, in presentations which also encapsulated the Kennedy administration’s growing hostility to the existence of independent national nuclear forces. Because of their very public nature, of even greater significance than McNamara’s speech at Athens, was the unclassified version of McNamara’s remarks delivered a little over a month later, on 16 June, when the Secretary of Defense gave the commencement address at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. As he had in Athens, McNamara referred to the current controversies within NATO, including the erosion of the credibility of the U.S. nuclear guarantee to Western Europe in view of the increasing U.S. vulnerability to direct nuclear attack from the Soviet Union. This, in turn, had prompted a belief that ‘nuclear capabilities are alone relevant in the face of the growing nuclear threat, and that independent national nuclear forces are sufficient to protect the nations of Europe.’ Refuting these positions, McNamara instead maintained that interdependence and the closest coordination of defence effort between the allies were now needed. The Alliance, he argued, had the overall nuclear strength to meet any challenge it confronted, and it was strength, moreover which not only reduced the chances of a ‘major nuclear war’ but made possible a strategy ‘designed to preserve the fabric of our societies if war should occur.’ Non-nuclear forces, he was also keen to stress, could enhance deterrence. If deterrence should break down, however, basic U.S. strategy in a nuclear war should be aimed at the ‘destruction of the enemy’s military forces, not of his civilian population.’

Such a counterforce approach to targeting, made possible by anticipated improvements in the design and accuracy of nuclear weapons, held the prospect of prevailing in the event of nuclear war while limiting civilian casualties to the maximum degree possible. In this eventuality, McNamara argued, ‘relatively weak nuclear forces with enemy cities as their targets are not likely to be adequate to perform the function of deterrence.’ Instead, if they were ‘small, and perhaps vulnerable on the ground or in the air, or inaccurate, a major antagonist can take a variety of measures to counter them.’ Moreover, if such an antagonist thought there was a chance such a small force could be used independently, this might even invite pre-emptive attack. And in the case of war

> the use of such a force against the cities of a major nuclear power would be tantamount to suicide, whereas its employment against significant military targets would have a negligible effect on the outcome of the conflict. Meanwhile, the creation of a single additional national nuclear force encourages the proliferation of nuclear power with all of its attendant dangers. In short, then, limited nuclear capabilities, operating independently, are dangerous, expensive, prone to obsolescence, and lacking in credibility as a deterrent.

The emphasis in U.S. nuclear strategy had to be on ‘unity of planning, concentration of executive authority, and central direction’ so that a properly coordinated campaign could be launched to destroy the enemy’s nuclear capabilities. McNamara intoned that there must not be ‘competing and conflicting strategies’ in the event of nuclear war.[48]

The previous month, in the closed NATO session at Athens, McNamara had been a little more explicit about the problems of divided command and control of nuclear forces. A counterforce strategy would involve, ‘carefully choosing targets, pre-planning strikes, coordinating attacks, and assessing results, as well as allocating and directing follow-on attacks from the center. These call, in our view, for a greater degree of Alliance participation in formulating nuclear policies and consulting on the appropriate occasions for using these weapons. Beyond this, it is essential that we centralize the decision to use our nuclear weapons to the greatest extent possible. We would all find it intolerable to contemplate having only a part of the strategic force launched in isolation from our main striking power.’ McNamara stressed the dangers if a portion of the Alliance’s nuclear force was used in an uncoordinated fashion to launch a retaliatory attack against Soviet military targets, so ‘endangering all of us’, and that ‘equally intolerable’ would be

> one segment of the Alliance force attacking urban industrial areas while, with the bulk of our forces, we were succeeding in destroying most of the enemy's nuclear capabilities. Such a failure in coordination might lead to the destruction of our hostages – the Soviet cities – just at a time at which our strategy of coercing the Soviets into stopping their aggression was on the verge of success. Failure to achieve central control of NATO nuclear forces would mean running the risk of bringing down on us the catastrophe which we most urgently wish to avoid.[49]

It is, of course, ironic that one of McNamara's aims at both Athens and Ann Arbor was to reinforce the credibility of the U.S. nuclear guarantee to Western Europe by making the point that U.S. cities would not necessarily have to be sacrificed in the event of hostilities in a NATO-Warsaw Pact armed clash on the Central Front. Instead, however, his analysis tended to provoke concerns that the U.S. was planning to conduct the kind of controlled and confined nuclear exchange which would leave Europe a devastated nuclear battlefield, while counterforce targeting implied that disabling first strike options might become more tempting to decision-makers in Washington in the midst of a crisis where war seemed imminent. In retrospect, moreover, it is clear that the theoretical targeting options which McNamara had outlined were far ahead of what lay within the capabilities of the U.S. strategic nuclear forces then in existence. The nuclear target planning undertaken by the U.S. military authorities throughout this period, and the philosophy that underpinned it, remained wedded to a large-scale and overwhelming use of nuclear weapons against an extensive list of military, industrial and economic targets in the Soviet Union and the territories it controlled. Indeed, it would not be until the mid-1970s that the kind of selective and discriminating nuclear strikes envisaged by McNamara in 1962 would start to find their way into such targeting plans (for one, U.S. command, control and communications systems were simply not advanced enough to conduct the kind of extended and discriminating nuclear campaign postulated).[50] Marc

Trachtenberg has cast doubt on whether McNamara and the President ever really believed in such counterforce/no cities options, and that the real function of these pronouncements was political: in attacking the notion of separate national nuclear forces a further marker was delivered that the administration would do nothing to foster German nuclear ambitions.[51] It was also the case that such addresses were designed as a reminder that the Alliance had to show more commitment to the build-up of conventional forces if the general nuclear war-fighting strategies that were becoming available to Washington were never to be put into effect. Kennedy had read McNamara's Ann Arbor speech in draft form, put forward his own amendments, and had wanted the Secretary of Defense to 'repeat to the point of boredom that our general war response will come only if our allies are subjected to major attack.'[52]

For European observers there could be no mistaking the increasingly outspoken tone of hostility to national nuclear forces now coming from the administration, coupled with a new push to sell the MLF concept within the North Atlantic Alliance. In the middle of May, after McNamara's Athens address, Kennedy was asked at one of his regular news conferences about his attitudes toward independent nuclear forces, and replied: 'We do not believe in a series of national deterrents. We believe that the NATO deterrent, to which the United States had committed itself so heavily, provides very adequate protection. Once you begin, nation after nation, beginning to develop its own deterrent, or rather feeling it's necessary as an element of its independence to develop its own deterrent, it seems to me that you are moving into an increasingly dangerous situation.'[53] Just a few days before the President had delivered these remarks, Bundy had furnished Kennedy with a memorandum which attempted to summarise the convoluted evolution of views within the U.S. bureaucracy over the previous few months regarding nuclear assistance to France. Summing up the argument against providing help, he wrote that nuclear diffusion

> was a strategic nonsense; the Western nuclear deterrent was fundamentally indivisible…. There could be only one serious nuclear war against the Soviet Union – and the prevention of that war, by credible deterrence, could in no way be assisted by the addition of small, ill-controlled, vulnerable, and wholly independent national nuclear forces. Measured in terms of defense against Soviet Russia, the French force in prospect could only be a danger to all – including the French themselves.

The real purpose of the French program, as de Gaulle was reported to have admitted in private conversation, was in the bargaining power it could give him within the Western Alliance – why should the United States bolster French capabilities if this was de Gaulle's aim?[54]

White House reservations over any UK nuclear initiative involving France were compounded by the re-emergence of State Department opposition to Britain's independent nuclear status in the run-up to Ann Arbor. Towards the end of May, Rusk had received a memorandum from Foy Kohler, the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, which outlined a program of action regarding the UK independent nuclear capability and the Anglo-American nuclear relationship. Remarking that little had been done to persuade the British to 'phase out' their independent deterrent, as had been advocated in the NSC Policy Directive of April 1961, Kohler now saw the need to bring the matter to a head because of the current UK negotiations over EEC entry, which could raise the undesirable issue of UK nuclear assistance to France, but also because Macmillan had recently (in February's Defence White Paper) signalled his intention to maintain an independent deterrent throughout the 1960s. This British position, Kohler noted, stood at odds with the criticisms of weak national nuclear forces that McNamara had recently put forward during his Athens speech, and was not helpful to U.S. arguments that the conventional strength of the Alliance should be bolstered. Kohler advised that

> The heart of the matter is that we should avoid any actions to increase the degree of our special nuclear relationship with the UK. We should make clear that we are not prepared to extend that relation, notably in regard to creation of a UK Polaris missile force. The British will undoubtedly show a continuing interest in acquiring Polaris or other missile-bearing submarines, as they come closer to the end of the effective life of the V-bomber force. Even if that life is prolonged through Skybolt, the V-bomber force is a wasting asset…If the V-bombers are not replaced by a sea-borne missile force, the independent British deterrent will expire...

In view of what was to occur later, it was also pertinent that Kohler warned that while the U.S. should explore with the UK the idea of a commitment of their strategic nuclear force to NATO, this should not be done 'until we see how action to this end could be fitted in with the concept of a genuinely multilateral force. We would not want commitment of V-bombers to substitute for full UK participation in the multilateral force or to set a pattern for a multilateral force based on national contingents rather than on units under multilateral ownership, control and manning.'[55]

Within Kennedy's close circle of advisers there were renewed doubts being expressed over the nuclear relationship with the UK that had been forged in 1958, considering the difficulty it placed in the path of forming a MLF within NATO, and the friction it tended to introduce to the Franco-American relationship. Writing to the French political scientist Raymond Aron in late May 1962, Bundy confirmed that much of the U.S. feeling over offering assistance to France was that the nuclear defence of the West was 'fundamentally indivisible' and that for this reason some in the U.S. administration regretted the nuclear arrangements which existed with the UK. 'I was not in Washington in 1957 and 1958 when it was decided to reopen nuclear cooperation with the British,' Bundy told Aron, 'but my impression is that this decision grew out of the sense of political insecurity which followed

Sputnik. We were then pressing upon NATO as a whole a kind of "forward strategy" in nuclear weapons, and the reinforcement of the British in the nuclear field must have seemed a logical part of this undertaking. If we had to do it over again today, we should not encourage the British in this nuclear effort, and it is our guess that over a period of time all merely national deterrents in the hands of powers of the second rank will become uneconomic and ineffective.' In other words, the Kennedy administration was having now to deal with the unwelcome legacy of the 1958 U.S./UK Agreement bequeathed to them by their predecessors, and would lose no sleep if it were to wither away.[56]

It was against this background of internal administration debate, and with Franco-American relations running at low ebb, that McNamara made his Ann Arbor address in the middle of June 1962. McNamara was to defend the Ann Arbor address as an attempt to 'educate' America's NATO allies in the finer points of nuclear strategy, and he clearly felt that it was necessary to reinforce the message of his 'closed' speech to NATO ministers at Athens with a public declaration of U.S. thinking that would also touch on recent arguments over nuclear assistance to France. The final version of the address, it is apparent from the evidence, was toned down from the original draft.[57] Having provided an oral summary of its contents to the President, Bundy had told McNamara that Kennedy had some reservations, and that 'it might seem to be a continuation of our debate with the French and might offer the Soviet Union a hand-hold for charges of missile rattling.' The 'easy way' to handle the matter, Bundy advised Kennedy at the start of June, was 'simply to say that this is not the right time for this particular speech. Bob is a good soldier.' The harder approach – and a more 'sensitive operation' - would be to revise the speech 'with an eye on French sensibilities and Soviet propagandists.' In the latter case, Bundy vouched he would be 'glad to work with Bob's people line by line and word by word.'[58] Just over a week before its delivery, on 7 June Bundy reported to the President that McNamara had revised the speech, and that he thought it no longer constituted ‘a risk from the missile-rattling point of view,’ but the question remained of ‘whether the passage on weak national nuclear forces is desirable at this point in our messy dialogue with the French.’ Bundy was against inclusion, but McNamara had argued that it was needed ‘for a lot of people here [i.e. in Washington] and that it does not say anything directly disagreeable to the French themselves – they simply will not agree with it.’ In this instance, Kennedy chose to follow McNamara’s advice and the passage was included.[59] William Kaufmann, the RAND Corporation analyst and the principal author of McNamara’s Athens speech, was very much against the delivery of its unclassified counterpart at Ann Arbor, later recalling that in a top secret speech ‘there are a lot of things that you can say that you’re just crazy to say publicly, particularly the comments about the national nuclear deterrents of the British and the French. I thought it was just crazy.’[60]

Reactions to Ann Arbor

Kaufmann’s sense of the wider ramifications of the speech was to prove accurate, and McNamara’s very public criticisms of small national nuclear forces had a deep and long-lasting resonance. As Macmillan later recalled, McNamara’s intervention at Ann Arbor ‘could hardly have done anything more calculated to upset both his French and his British allies,’ while his ‘fervent denunciation of the dangers of the “dissemination of nuclear power” was an ill-disguised attack upon the determination both of Britain and of France to maintain, at any rate in the foreseeable future, their separate, independent nuclear forces.’[61]

The full extent of the Prime Minister’s annoyance can be appreciated by his anxiety that Washington’s approach to Alliance nuclear matters in the summer of 1962 could prejudice his overriding foreign policy objective of securing Britain’s entry into the EEC. At the start of June Macmillan had met de Gaulle at Champs in an attempt to lower French opposition to British membership.[62] Before the meeting, Macmillan had discussed with the closest advisers whether he should suggest the idea of Anglo-French defence collaboration, including future possibilities in the nuclear field. But, following the April visit to Washington, any initiative was inhibited by knowledge of likely U.S. disapproval, and ministers were also made nervous by recent press speculation that an Anglo-French nuclear deal might be in the offing. The Prime Minister had even had to instruct the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir David Ormsby Gore, to inform Kennedy that there was no validity to such news stories and that he had 'no intention of doing anything foolish at Champs.'[63] In fact, at Champs, Macmillan had shared his personal thoughts with de Gaulle on the nuclear power of Britain and France being held for the benefit of European defence within NATO: '..if a European defence became a reality there might be an arrangement by which Europe, including the Germans, would control its own nuclear deterrent.'[64]

He emerged from his meeting at Champs believing that he had made some headway, and that de Gaulle had a better idea that once Britain was in the EEC, it might, over the longer term, be possible to find a basis for some kind of nuclear collaboration. This was what made Macmillan so annoyed about McNamara's Ann Arbor speech with its attack on national nuclear forces, and the Kennedy administration's renewed diplomatic push behind the MLF proposals. According to the Prime Minister, McNamara's remarks had been 'foolish' and had 'enraged the French', putting the government in 'difficulty', which could only help the Labour Party in its attacks on the whole notion of an independent deterrent.[65]

Amongst the government's erstwhile backers at home, moreover, there was particular irritation over McNamara's Ann Arbor line that independent nuclear forces were 'dangerous, expensive and prone to obsolescence, and lacking in credibility as a deterrent'. The Conservative-supporting *Daily Mail* called it a 'crippling blow' at Britain's independent deterrent and 'marked the end of an era' for the RAF's Bomber Command as an independent national force, while the *Daily Express* stressed the obvious divisions that had now opened between McNamara and Harold Watkinson, the British Minister of Defence. There was even speculation that Watkinson might be forced to resign due to attacks which were bound to come from the Labour Party opposition on the government's nuclear policy.[66] Although more sober in its coverage, the defence correspondent of *The Times* noted that the new American counterforce strategy had as an essential corollary that

> the western nuclear effort must be unified and centrally coordinated. There is no longer room for national nuclear deterrents which, if the enemy believes that they be used independently of the western alliance as a whole, are simply an invitation to the pre-emptive strike … In this context, Britain's V-bomber force is clearly vulnerable, and the projected striking force of General de Gaulle will be even more open to such an attack in the early stages of its development.[67]

With a damaging story already current in *The New Statesman* alleging that his relations with McNamara had become deeply strained by Britain's approach to conventional defence spending, an exasperated Watkinson advised the Prime Minister that although he was 'quite sure that [the speech] was not aimed at us but at the French', he thought it was 'awkward and will be used by our critics against us.' The Minister of Defence did not propose to respond publicly and he had instructed his press department 'to do their best to calm it down.' The dilemma of taking a clear public posture towards the speech's content were plain, but his

> preference would be to side with the French and to seek to persuade the Americans to accept the French position for what, in fact, it is – that of a small highly inefficient nuclear power. I am sure that the more McNamara or any other American attacks the French deterrent the more it makes the General and those around him absolutely determined to carry on with their current deterrent policy. Do you think it would be any good saying this to the Americans and asking them if they could not manage to

> accept what is, after all, the fact? I do not necessarily believe this would encourage the Germans to do the same thing.

It was not going to be easy, Watkinson thought, to 'steer between the two conflicting policies of trying to be in agreement with the Americans and the French, particularly as I can see how much it is in our interests that we should not offend the French at this stage'. With Rusk shortly to arrive for a scheduled visit to the UK, Watkinson wanted the former to reply to the inevitable press questions 'not that we were the good boys and the French the bad … but merely that Mr McNamara's statement was on the lines of a policy that he and I had agreed together and one that we were indeed implementing because Bomber Command is targeted and integrated with Strategic Air Command.'[68]

The Minister of Defence was technically correct in this last observation: since July 1958 the two forces had operated a combined plan in the event of general nuclear war, and RAF officers had been based at Omaha with the U.S. Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff to ensure proper liaison with Strategic Air Command (SAC); there were also 60 Thor Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) based in the UK which could be launched under 'dual-key' arrangements, and were integrated after they became operational during 1959 with Anglo-American joint target planning. By 1962, the coordinated Anglo-American plan would have involved the V-bomber force and Thors in attacks against the Soviet Union on 16 cities, 44 airfields, 10 air defense control centers, and 28 IRBM sites. However, there was also in existence a UK national plan for the use of the V-bomber force alone, informed by its own criteria of target selection. The guidelines for this plan had first been promulgated by the British Chiefs of Staff in October 1957, and it was avowedly countervalue in nature, with major Soviet centers of population the only targets.[69]

In a bid to deflect further embarrassing probes, Lord Home, the Foreign Secretary, took up Watkinson's suggestion of a direct appeal to Rusk. The latter was told that the Ann

Arbor speech was likely to ‘give rise to strong attacks by the [Labour Party] Opposition on our policy of maintaining our contribution to the Western nuclear deterrent. In fact, the Opposition are likely to be elated with this opportunity.’ If criticised in the House of Commons, the Foreign Secretary warned Rusk, ministers ‘shall have to hit back and some hard things will have to be said.’ Divergences between U.S. and British approaches to deterrent policy might have to be revealed and ‘thrashed out’ in public on the floor of the House. There was ‘much to be said in our own and American interests for taking the heat out of debates on this issue if possible.’[70]

The line the British government chose to propound was that McNamara, with his criticism of independently *operating* nuclear forces, was not in fact referring to the British strategic deterrent as Bomber Command worked according to an agreed and coordinated joint target plan with SAC. The unattributed briefing material disseminated by the Foreign Office was even more explicit: the strategic role of the V-bomber force ‘in support of NATO’ was ‘fully integrated’ with that of the U.S. strategic air force and its ‘assigned targets are part of a unified plan.’ The government had ‘never conceived’ of the V-force ‘as contributing to anything in the nature of a third force’.[71] Nevertheless, critical comment continued, including a BBC television news report and commentary which Watkinson found so tendentious that he felt compelled to write a letter of protest to the BBC’s director-general, Hugh Carleton Green.[72]

McNamara had been made aware of the UK press fallout from his Ann Arbor speech very soon after its delivery. Public relations officials in the Department of Defense’s Office of International Security Affairs quickly spread the word that the Pentagon was unhappy with the interpretation being given to McNamara’s remarks, and that the phrase ‘operating independently’ clearly excluded Britain from his criticism, ‘as that country does not operate independently.’ British correspondents in Washington were said to understand the technical point, but that other interpretations were ‘difficult to stop in the political attacks which “Labour” is trying to make against Watkinson’s nuclear forces.’ Further statements from McNamara were not expected to have much effect, but might be necessary to assuage any grievance felt by Watkinson.[73] Efforts at damage limitation continued. U.S. Department of Defense spokesmen, when questioned in Washington, duly repeated the British official line, and were ready to add that ‘control’ of the force remained in the hands of the UK. [74]

This all represented an unwelcome distraction, however, from the British government’s prevailing concerns over how to lower French opposition to British entry into the European Community. Ormsby Gore took an early chance to see McNamara in Washington where he explained, as he reported to the Foreign Office, that

> in the coming weeks we would find ourselves in a very delicate situation over our negotiations to enter the Common Market. It was not therefore in our interest to have to point out all the time the differences between our position over nuclear weapons and that of France. I was afraid that on this occasion his lucidity of mind and clarity of expression had proved something of an embarrassment to us.

McNamara understood, but wanted to underline to Ormsby Gore his eagerness to undertake for the NATO allies ‘a process of education’ in the realities of the nuclear world and the choices in nuclear strategy that confronted the United States, of which his recent pronouncements had been a key part. At the close of their conversation, McNamara professed that he was ‘very sorry for any difficulties’ which his Ann Arbor speech had caused, and that he was ‘extremely anxious to maintain very good and close relations with the British Government and he hoped that the excitement would soon die down.’[75]

Unfortunately it refused to do so. In the *New York Herald Tribune,* Walter Lippmann produced a column which claimed that the UK force could never be used independently and that the last word on its employment would always lie with President Kennedy. This was story which caught the Prime Minister's eye prompting him to send a curt message to Watkinson: 'As I see it, legally, the President can use the American deterrent *without* my agreement. I can use the British deterrent without his approval. We have a gentleman's agreement to consult each other "if there is time to do so". All that is being said to the contrary is just anti-British propaganda.'[76]

In fact, Watkinson had already been busy with a further effort to kill the controversy once and for all by giving an interview to the defence correspondent of *The Times* on 22 June, where the position was affirmed that Britain had the 'unchallenged right to use its nuclear force independently or to withhold its use if the Government think it right to do so.' He explained that while Bomber Command's target plans were 'completely integrated' with those of SAC, Britain had the 'political freedom' to withdraw the force for 'national purposes,' but added his opinion that this would make 'no military sense at all in the present state of Anglo-American relations.' Watkinson went on to assure the correspondent – less than accurately - that 'all the implications' of the Ann Arbor speech had been discussed between himself and McNamara before it was made, and that the government was in full agreement with the 'broad outlines' of U.S. strategic thought. To suggest that British nuclear targets in the coordinated plans with SAC were 'centres of population' was 'quite wrong', although there 'might well be many cases where it would be difficult to distinguish between military and civilian targets.' American belief in the value of the UK force, Watkinson argued, had been demonstrated by the assurances he had recently received from McNamara that Skybolt was being developed according to plan. Nevertheless, whatever the 'official' British position, *The Times'* correspondent was adamant that the effect of the Ann Arbor speech was to bring the British nuclear force 'firmly into the centre of the political scene' and that whether he meant it or not, McNamara's comments on small independent deterrents applied 'as forcibly to the British deterrent as any other.'[77]

A day later, goaded by his interview with Ormsby Gore, McNamara issued a statement which clarified that his Ann Arbor remarks referred to the dangers of separate nuclear capabilities operating independently. As Bomber Command's aircraft were organised as part of a coordinated Anglo-American force alongside SAC, this clearly did not apply in the UK case, 'although of course their political control remains with the British Government.' He had not been referring to the British force at Ann Arbor, McNamara reiterated, adding that the U.S. 'appreciate[s] the important role' which the British force played in joint strike plans.[78]

In one further Department of Defense effort to clarify matters, Adam Yarmolinsky, who played an important role in adapting McNamara's presentation in Athens for public delivery at Ann Arbor, gave an interview to a *Washington Post* correspondent at the end of June. In Yarmolinsky's view, press reporting of the Ann Arbor speech had not given sufficient attention to its final third which made clear the U.S. would regard nuclear war as a 'wholly unprecedented disaster, even with a "no-city" strategy' and as a consequence the main emphasis of the administration was on increasing the Alliance's conventional strength. He also said that, 'We were not thinking of the British in the speech. On the other hand, we would be unhappy if the British were to fail to build-up their conventional forces on the grounds that they needed the money for their nuclear deterrent or that their nuclear deterrent was all they needed.' Asked why the administration did not offer some assistance to France in the hope that this would provide some degree of control, Yarmolinsky replied that decisions over the control of their weapons were 'too important for the French to be much influenced by whether we belatedly helped them or not. And helping them would encourage other nations to assume that they too could go ahead and then get American help.'[79]

Kennedy's 'Eight Questions': McNamara and Britain's Nuclear Independence

What was McNamara's underlying thinking at this time on the central question of independent European nuclear capabilities, and how did this relate to the Kennedy administration's earlier internal debates over the issue of possible U.S. nuclear assistance to France? Recently released documents from the U.S. side now help to provide further insight on the background to the Ann Arbor speech and these key questions. On 25 May 1962, only eight days after the press conference in which he had publicly decried the tendency toward a proliferation of national or independent deterrents, Kennedy addressed a memorandum to Rusk and McNamara which asked if several presumptions on which current U.S. policy was based should be reexamined. Kennedy went on to pose eight sets of questions which encapsulated his concerns. He asked whether, in fact, offering nuclear information to France would encourage a similar wish amongst the Germans, and if an arrangement could be made with the French which would limit German demands; whether refusing to give assistance to France would push the French towards the Germans 'thus making German possession more likely'; whether British entry into the EEC would not, in any case, bring France into 'nuclear discussions'; if the U.S. presumption that French support (perhaps post-de Gaulle) for a European deterrent could ultimately be secured now looked ever-more unlikely; since French generation of a nuclear capability now seeming inevitable, when this materialised would it mean the French have 'no obligation to us, and that we will lack the element of control that our cooperation with the British has given us'; was not the 'NATO nuclear concept … still born – really not developing in any way and no longer a likely prospect'; would helping France really stimulate demands from other countries to follow a similar path (and did refusal to offer assistance discourage proliferation); and finally, with the conventional strength of the European members of NATO still limited, was implementation of the Alliance's 'forward strategy' going to be possible, and if not, 'should we consider whether it is possible for us to reduce our forces in the European theatre'?[80]

This was an extensive list of queries and went to the heart of the debates between the so-called 'young Turks' in the State Department, led by George Ball, who saw creation of the MLF and strong moves against independent national nuclear forces as the best answer to the nuclear problems of the Western Alliance, and a more sceptical Pentagon view. It also showed the Kennedy's mind was more open to discussion within his administration on this key issue than the April meeting that had led to his NSAM 148 directives had tended to imply, and his recent press conference pronouncements, had suggested. Prepared in Nitze's office for International Security Affairs, McNamara's reply to Kennedy's 'eight questions' memorandum was provided on 16 June, the same day as he gave the Ann Arbor address. In this long paper, McNamara began by arguing that U.S. non-cooperation was not going to bring the French nuclear program to an end, which was virtually certain to be continued even after de Gaulle had left the scene. But once an initial (and minimal) French force was deployed, French ambitions should be influenced by U.S. efforts to bring them to understand the 'political and military limitations of a weak, independent nuclear force'. It should be an American aim to limit the size of the French program, and 'link it increasingly to our own U.S. nuclear forces', perhaps through coordinated planning, and eventually involvement in an MLF closely tied to NATO. Such changes in French approaches would not be easy to achieve, however, and if a shift in U.S. policy toward acceptance of a French program, or even assistance to it, were forthcoming it might stimulate unwelcome expectations in both France itself and Germany.

> In any case,' the paper maintained, 'the continuation of a vigorous, if modest, French program would undoubtedly generate pressures within Germany over time for an independent German force, unless the political unification of Europe moves faster

> than now seems likely. Moreover, an additional motive for a German program may exist as compared with the British and French; the desire to strengthen its bargaining position vis-à-vis the USSR over reunification and Berlin. The Germans might be prepared to forego nuclear independence as part of a larger deal on unification. But for this leverage to be effective they would have to have the nuclear option open to them.

Over time, it was believed, the Germans might come to regard the French and British nuclear forces as becoming the core of a new ‘European’ force, so that Bonn’s feelings of discriminatory treatment might abate, but this could not be taken for granted. An American offer of nuclear assistance to France would probably lead to cooperation in areas such as targeting. But if the French program were to receive U.S. help, it was bound to stimulate calls in the longer term (perhaps 3-5 years) for similar treatment from Germany. Feelings of discrimination could become even more acute if the U.S. and Soviet Union were to reach a non-proliferation agreement, not least as it would be seen as largely directed against Germany. If nuclear help to France were refused, the French might, McNamara conjectured, turn to Germany for financial support, with the long-term inducement of a share in French nuclear capabilities through European defence planning (it was seen as unlikely that de Gaulle would want to do anything that could lead to actual German possession of nuclear weapons).

On the question of Anglo-French nuclear relations developing onto a new plane as a result of Britain’s eventual membership of the EEC, it was felt that French opinion would find it unacceptable for there to be a differential in the U.S.-UK and French-UK nuclear relationship if the UK managed to join the Community. It was this issue that gave McNamara reason to compare the fundamental qualities of the relations that Washington enjoyed with the two West European allies:

> To us there is a clear distinction between our relationships with the UK and our relationships with France. Except for several short-lived episodes, such as the abortive Suez affair, British foreign policy for a century [sic] has rested on the proposition that it cannot afford a fundamental split with the U.S. This drawing together has become far more explicit in recent times in view of the over-riding importance the British attach to the American Alliance. The British have accepted the status of junior partner in the firm in exchange for a special relationship which they believe affords them a unique opportunity to influence U.S. policy.

The British had forged their post-war nuclear policy in this political context, and were now reaping the benefits to the revision of U.S. atomic energy legislation in 1958 that permitted the transfer of highly-sensitive U.S. weapons information to the UK authorities. This had allowed the British for ‘relatively small expenditure’ to gain nuclear warhead technology which on qualitative terms was on a level with American, while ‘The possession of the Bomber Command [sic] has seemed to the British to be an important factor in giving the British the second place in the eyes of world opinion in the councils of the Free World.’ The advantages of the 1958 deal for the UK were manifold: they could buy from the U.S. or make as much nuclear material as they could afford; there were no restrictions on the size of their technical and scientific nuclear weapons establishment, or the nature of their research program; or the number and type of nuclear systems they chose to field. Except for data on gaseous diffusion techniques for uranium enrichment, the UK was

> privy to virtually every U.S. development in the nuclear weapons field. They had the run of almost every U.S. research institution; access to a large part of U.S. intelligence data; and they could, if they chose to do so, construct almost any one of the U.S. weapon designs. In addition, they are able to exchange their surplus of plutonium for American U-235 [under a barter arrangement reached in May 1959]. That they

choose not to apply much of this sharing information to development of their own weapon systems is due to their own policy decisions and not to any control exercised by the U.S.

As for the level of independence that the British were able to enjoy, McNamara felt it would be ‘difficult to contend that the U.S. controls the British nuclear program in the sense that we make, or influence, the British to do things to which they really object. Rather, the more reasonable interpretation is that the harmonization of their nuclear policy with that of the U.S. caused them no pain, and that the atomic assistance received from the U.S. has been sheer profit.’ At the same time McNamara recognised that the UK had had to play a price for this special nuclear relationship with the U.S., including accommodating a number of American facilities on UK soil – including Polaris submarine berthing facilities at Holy Loch in Scotland - which had created occasional political problems at home, and showing cooperation over several colonial issues.

McNamara stressed the different quality of Franco-American to Anglo-American relations, and the way this influenced nuclear matters. ‘We lack the long experience of close partnership,’ he noted. ‘Not only de Gaulle’s ideas, but French ideas generally are not easily assimilable [sic] to our ideas.’ The French under de Gaulle were ‘determined to re-establish a political position they had not had for generations.’ France’s recent negative attitudes toward NATO and the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons on its soil did not auger well for the future: there was not a ‘firm and well-established foundation of mutual confidence and trust which would seem to be essential for an activity so delicate and important as nuclear sharing.’ Unlike de Gaulle, the British had been ‘willing to live within the nuclear policy favored by the U.S., and they have done so without having to sign any written commitments to this effect beyond the [1958] arrangement not to retransmit data and atomic materials. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that de Gaulle is unwilling similarly to restrict his policy options whether the pledge would be written or unwritten.' As far as McNamara was concerned, 'the British have not surrendered their independence, however little it may be worth. And the French are no more likely to. Finally, since the U.S. is the great nuclear power, the French have every incentive to seek coordination with us whether or not we assist them rather than the other way around. The problem to be overcome is de Gaulle's sense of pride.'

As to the prospect of the French eventually subscribing to a 'European' deterrent force, rather than one centered on NATO (and so subject to a U.S. veto), McNamara argued that while de Gaulle was opposed to multilateral arrangements, broader French opinion was more sympathetic. 'There is an inherent inconsistency,' it was maintained, 'in an independent French national nuclear deterrent and a European Community gaining depth in the political and economic fields.' Without giving up the right of independent action in the event of an emergency, a post-de Gaulle leadership might well find the idea of a European deterrent attractive, but this would pose difficulties for the nuclear arrangements of the NATO Alliance and bear on the nature of the U.S. commitment to Europe's defence. 'The French, and the other Europeans,' McNamara opined, 'are still in the elementary stages of learning about nuclear warfare. It would appear to be in the U.S. interest and that of the West generally that education and action make possible a NATO-wide solution to the problem rather than a division between a U.S. deterrent and a European deterrent. In the end, if we handle ourselves intelligently, Europe and the French should come out strongly in favor of close association with the U.S. on nuclear matters.'[81] McNamara's response to President Kennedy's 'eight questions' memorandum provided an essential counterpoint to his Ann Arbor address, and reflected growing scepticism within the Department of Defense that there existed immediate and worthwhile avenues for nuclear cooperation with France, especially now that the Kennedy administration was re-doubling its efforts to promote the MLF.

The Aftermath of Ann Arbor

Less than a week after Ann Arbor, Rusk had talks in Paris with de Gaulle and other senior French officials amid continuing hostile press coverage of McNamara's speech, which was being seen as 'a brutally frank restatement of the Washington belief that Europe's job in the Western alliance is to provide foot soldiers and leave the nuclear capability to the United States.'[82] The emollient French Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, told Rusk that like the British, a French nuclear force might eventually have combined targeting with the Americans but still enjoy ultimate independent control. He added, moreover, that

> In the theoretical event of the Continent being overrun by Russian conventional forces and the Americans at that point not having made use of their nuclear arms, he thought it conceivable that the British might then use theirs independently. There was no question of the French force being used independently except in the very last resort.

When asked by Rusk if this meant the *force de frappe* would be used to trigger an American nuclear response, Couve simply replied that 'they would not be so silly.[83]

Later, Rusk tried to impress on de Gaulle the point that national nuclear forces would be unnecessary under the collective cover of NATO, especially as the Alliance moved to improve its procedures over nuclear consultation. 'If there are nuclear forces within the Alliance which might move separately,' Rusk had said, 'then we are faced with a whole series of most difficult problems. Defense in NATO must be indivisible. We must act together. It is impossible for us to act separately. There are delicate problems of common action but this is fundamental.' But the French President remained profoundly unconvinced, believing that no-one could be sure what would happen in the future in the event of a Soviet attack, which could fall on a variety of different points in Europe. What Rusk pictured as 'indivisibility' between Alliance members seemed to de Gaulle to 'amount to integration which meant American control. For the French this no longer corresponded to what is necessary.'[84]

Rusk's Parisian foray did little to endear recent U.S. diplomacy to British officials. At Champs, Macmillan had tried to emphasise to de Gaulle that Britain enjoyed genuine nuclear independence from the United States, but such reassurances had been undercut by the British responses that had been issued in the wake of McNamara's Ann Arbor speech.   The clarifying statements that stressed the integration of Anglo-American nuclear forces counteracted the overall impression that the Prime Minister had set out to achieve as the backdrop to the talks over EEC entry, which were due to resume in the autumn of 1962. Press reports from London, for example, drew attention to the point that Macmillan had publicly emphasised the political importance of an independent deterrent, but then quoted 'qualified sources' as saying that the close integration of the UK force with the U.S. command and warning system meant that independent action was in practice 'virtually out of the question.'[85] From Washington, the head of the British Defence Staff thought there was a danger of the government opening itself up to the charge of 'schizophrenia' by on the one hand implying complete political independence over the UK force, but on the other emphasising 'complete operational integration.'[86]

The fact that Rusk, returning via London from his trip to Paris and other European capitals, had then tried to elicit British support for the MLF incurred further prime ministerial criticism. Macmillan complained to the Foreign Secretary in one minute:

> If we cannot persuade the Americans to keep quiet about the Common Market, I would hope that we could at least impress on Rusk the importance of leaving the nuclear question, and indeed the re-organisation of NATO, until the negotiations with the Six [EEC members] have come to a head. In the nuclear field, we have an independent deterrent and the French are going to get one; these are facts which the

> Americans cannot alter. There is therefore no point in their going on talking about them; the moment to take stock will come quite soon after our talks with the Six have ended.[87]

Having to lay stress on the integrated nature of Anglo-American nuclear planning as a retort to criticism of independent nuclear forces clearly did not help to allay de Gaulle's suspicions of Britain's enduring ties with the Americans.[88]

But the U.S. Secretary of State was unrepentant, and was now determined to pursue the MLF agenda. When passing through London on 25 June, Rusk had held meetings with Home and other senior Foreign Office officials. He told them that his main anxiety was that 'the Germans would, sooner or later, seek to have a nuclear capacity of their own unless they were offered some alternative arrangement such as the multilateral force.' There was a need, he argued, to move the talks on the MLF within NATO forward 'with all deliberate speed', and 'he was not asking [the UK] to agree with the American position but simply that we should not frustrate the exercise.' Home's response was to assure Rusk that the British would not try to prevent the issues being discussed in NATO, but he hoped that the political problems, as opposed to the military need for an MRBM force, could be reserved for later discussion.[89] Later that same day, Rusk resumed discussion with Home at the U.S. Embassy, where he turned British attention to the problem of coordinating statements to the press, and when confronted by parliamentary questions, over the position of the UK deterrent. Rusk expressed 'some concern' that a British draft statement underlined the fact that, even though this might be a remote contingency, the British deterrent was available for independent use. After some discussion of alternative language, Rusk treated British officials to his own scepticism over the whole notion of nuclear independence, saying:

> …the employment of nuclear weapons is not a path to freedom but a path to slavery. The U.S. has never had less independence than it has today in the areas affected by

> these weapons. We do not talk of the independent use of nuclear weapons because of our many Allies. The responsibility which the possession of these weapons brings inhibits our freedom of action. This is an aspect of the situation which the French tend to overlook. He thought of the U.S.-UK relationship as something which goes back to World War II. The UK nuclear capability is one of its contributions to the Alliance.

No NATO ally, Rusk said, ‘would expect to act independently’ when it came to nuclear use, and the U.S. looked on its own weapons as a contribution to the Alliance. The French attitude, by contrast, seemed to be to emphasise that a national nuclear capability was associated with non-cooperation, but ‘this was not a problem with the UK.’ His next comment touched at the raw nerves of the whole rationale for why the UK would even consider possessing an independent nuclear force: ‘the more the UK stressed its independence the more it tended to move in our independence.’ Rusk then ‘cited the theoretical problem with which Khrushchev and President Kennedy would be confronted if missiles should be fired from the UK at the Soviet Union.’[90]

Meanwhile, the government’s discomfort – this time on the parliamentary home front – continued. On 26 June several Labour MPs, reacting in part to the repeated attacks in the past by the Conservatives for their Party’s allegedly incoherent approach to Britain’s nuclear future, took the opportunity to quiz Macmillan very closely in the House of Commons on where the government’s nuclear policy now stood. The Prime Minister began with the statement that the government was ‘constitutionally free to determine upon the use of this power.’ At the same time, there had been ‘there has been joint planning between the British and American authorities against any future emergency. What may be the ultimate development of European defence is a matter for consideration with changing circumstances.’ However, Harold Wilson, Labour’s foreign affairs spokesman, for one, was not satisfied, and referred to the fact that as a result of recent clarifying pronouncements, both the British and American governments seemed to have condemned ‘the idea of independent deterrents which are capable of operating independently’, and asked whether the Prime Minister if it was still government policy to have such a force. Refuting Wilson’s interpretation, the Prime Minister ploughed on by saying,

> It is for us to decide what we are to do. We have to recognize – and do recognize – that France is now a nuclear power, and is likely to remain one. There are great problems which can be discussed as to the future. For the present, we have this independent deterrent … [and] there are very strong reasons for maintaining it, and we intend to do so.

This was not sufficient, though, to prevent further probing about how the UK force could operate independently when it was ‘integrated’ with that of the U.S. for planning purposes, and so presumably could not be used without American approval. Again, Macmillan had to try to explain that ‘although in practice the targets are discussed and arranged between us’, the force itself was under complete national control: ‘the sovereignty, the power of control, rests with Her Majesty’s Ministers for the time being, and the officers concerned would follow the instructions given to them by the Government of the day.’

Seizing on the contradictions that seemed to lie within the Prime Minister’s argument, Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour Party’s leader, then raised the inconsistency between McNamara’s recent remarks and the government’s position, saying, ‘If the British Government are free, as I understand he claims, to use the nuclear deterrent as they wish, how can this possibly be reconciled with Mr. McNamara's position?’ All Macmillan could reply was he was ‘not responsible for what Mr McNamara may have said’ and that there remained strong reasons for retaining a deterrent under national control. ‘As a matter of practice,’ the Prime Minister confirmed, ‘there is an understanding which I had with

President Eisenhower and now have with President Kennedy that neither of us in any part of the world would think of using power of this kind without consultation with each other; but that does not take away the independent right of both the American and the British Government.'[91]

Skybolt Cancellation and the Nassau Agreement

By July 1962, much to the relief of British officials, the controversy over McNamara's remarks over national deterrents began to dissipate. Ministers in London were still banking on the arrival in service of the Skybolt missile system during the second half of the 1960s to give the V-bomber force some credibility to penetrate Soviet air defences, and did not anticipate having to make difficult decisions over the provision of a successor system for the deterrent for at least another two years. That same month also saw Peter Thorneycroft replace Watkinson as British Minister of Defence, and it was Thorneycroft who travelled to the United States in September 1962 where he heard first hand complaints from McNamara over Skybolt's steadily rising costs. Yet no mention was made by the U.S. Secretary of Defense of any reconsideration of the program (despite the fact that he was by now leaning toward cancellation).[92] In a further attempt to dispel any lingering doubts following his Ann Arbor speech, McNamara made clear that the United States considered that British possession of a national deterrent force was of a different character to that of France because in the former case 'independent political control coupled with integrated targeting was tolerable to the United States because of basic identity of political outlook and aims and because we understood each other well. These could not be taken for granted by the United States in the case of France.'[93]

The upbeat report with which Thorneycroft returned from Washington might have been qualified if he had been aware of the State Department's increasingly firm conviction that positive steps should be taken to scale back the extent of Anglo-American nuclear cooperation.[94] Echoing the advice he had received from Kohler in May 1962, a few days before the Thorneycroft visit Rusk had written to McNamara to remind him of the importance of the April 1961 Policy Directive on the long-term future of the British deterrent. When the current negotiations on British EEC entry were concluded, he explained, it would be necessary to re-examine the special UK-U.S. nuclear relationship, in the context of U.S. desires 'that future European nuclear efforts are based on genuinely multilateral rather than national programs.' Before this exercise was conducted, the Secretary of State believed it was 'of the utmost importance to avoid any actions to expand the relationship. Such actions could seriously prejudice future decisions and developments and make more difficult the working out of sound multilateral arrangements.' Rusk expressed his confidence that McNamara understood any moves by the UK to acquire Polaris or similar systems as a successor to the V-bomber force were to be avoided, and that 'U.S. decisions relative to Skybolt should be made on the basis solely of U.S. interest in this missile for our own forces.'

Rusk argued that holding to this posture would be important because the UK was probably considering its future nuclear options once it had entered the EEC and that a European deterrent force would have to be based on missiles rather than manned bombers. Previous British interest in Polaris, it was conjectured, might be revived, in an effort to perpetuate a UK national force which could then be combined with the French under joint arrangements. Rusk did not see Macmillan's idea for an eventual Anglo-French nuclear deterrent, held in trust for Europe, as holding any attractions for the United States, since it would do nothing to defuse German ambitions. U.S. willingness to supply Polaris to Britain without tying it to genuinely multilateral arrangements, he felt, could influence the UK to turn in a direction inimical to the wider goals of U.S. European policy.[95]

This political advice – with the State Department maintaining that there should be no special regard for Britain's position when it came to decisions over Skybolt's future – was of obvious significance when on 7 November, with Kennedy administration officials relaxing in the afterglow of their performance during the Cuban missile crisis, McNamara came forward with the recommendation that the Skybolt program should be cancelled on cost grounds. It was recognised by senior Pentagon and White House officials that cancellation would represent a serious political blow to Macmillan's government, and possibly even lead to its fall, an eventuality which no-one wanted to see. The British would have to be informed that cancellation was likely and be given time to decide what to propose before the administration made its final recommendation on the defense budget towards the end of the month.[96]

When informed by McNamara by telephone that cancellation was under consideration, Thorneycroft made clear the seriousness of the position if the decision was to be confirmed, pointing to the vulnerability of the government to criticism from its own erstwhile backbench Conservative supporters.[97] While McNamara had seemed prepared to hint to Thorneycroft that Polaris might indeed be substituted for Skybolt, this was not a proposition that found any support in the State Department. On 24 November, in fact, Rusk wrote to McNamara to make it plain that the State Department would be adamantly opposed to any such move. Instead, Rusk put forward three alternatives: Britain to continue with Skybolt development and production (with U.S. financial and technical assistance); provision of Hound Dog missiles for use with the V-bomber force; and participation in a sea-based NATO MRBM force, with mixed-manning of surface ships. 'It seems essential,' Rusk had stressed, 'that we make quite clear to the British that there is no possibility of our helping them set up a nationally manned and owned MRBM force.'[98] What is surprising in retrospect was how little objection was made by McNamara to the State Department's position, especially as it contained no explicit mention of Polaris by name.[99]

The wider significance of McNamara's Ann Arbor speech was now to become clear, as it served to intensify and confirm British suspicions that Skybolt cancellation had more behind it than simply the Pentagon's concerns over rising costs. When McNamara finally made his way to London to meet Thorneycroft face-to-face on 11 December – having told waiting reporters on his arrival at Gatwick airport that Skybolt had serious technical problems – their meeting at the Ministry of Defence was a tense affair. Thorneycroft's response to the conditional offer of Polaris tied into an MLF package was that the two subjects should not be linked: it would be 'impossible' to combine any statement of the U.S. agreement to provide Polaris with a British commitment to join a multilateral force, as 'no-one would believe that the choice had in fact been free. The test of the independence of a nuclear deterrent was whether, like the V-bomber/Skybolt force, it would be operable entirely on its own.'[100] The U.S. record of this encounter had Thorneycroft stressing that Skybolt cancellation would be used by the government's critics to underline American unreliability, with the impression made much worse by the lingering effects of the Ann Arbor speech. The British press would say, the Minister of Defence complained, that the Skybolt decision formed part of a policy which had been formulated earlier in the year by the Kennedy administration: 'They will say that this decision is really taken to force Britain out of having an independent nuclear deterrent.'[101]

The complicated and intense negotiations that ensued at Nassau from 19-21 December 1962 eventually saw a compromise of sorts emerge.[102] With Kennedy acknowledging that the original 1960 agreement to provide Skybolt did amount to some obligation on the United States to offer a replacement, and with the President not wanting to see Macmillan's domestic political position completely undermined to Labour's advantage, the Americans agreed to supply Polaris. But the missile system was only offered in the context of an involved and ambiguous set of undertakings that it should form part of collective Alliance arrangements (both powers, it was agreed would look toward ‘the development of a multilateral NATO nuclear force in the closest consultation with our NATO allies’ and would ‘use their best endeavours to this end.’) While prepared to study the multilateral principle, Macmillan insisted that Britain must retain the right to independent use of the weapon system when ‘supreme national interests’ were invoked by the government, and this crucial clause was inserted in the final Nassau communique.[103]

The Skybolt crisis with its culmination at the Nassau Conference had served to remind U.S. officials that maintenance of some form of ‘independent’ nuclear capability – where a national firing chain could operate – was a very sensitive domestic political subject for British ministers, and that cajoling or even forcing the British into renouncing their national deterrent capability would almost certainly do fundamental damage to Anglo-American relations and so prejudice certain basic objectives in U.S. foreign and defence policy. Over the next eighteen months, much against its basic inclinations, the British government continued to express polite interest in American plans for creation of an MLF. While harbouring the deepest private reservations, they took part in discussions over the practicalities of the scheme, all the while hoping to drag out the talks so that opposition within Western Europe would develop and the Americans would lose enthusiasm.[104] In fact, within the Kennedy administration, and its successor, scepticism over the MLF was also rife, running from the White House through to the Pentagon. Only the imperative need to stifle German nuclear ambitions kept the scheme alive, while both Kennedy and later President Lyndon Johnson were insistent that it could not be introduced except with European agreement.[105]

In the meantime, of course, the contours of transatlantic and Alliance relations had been shaken by de Gaulle's veto of Britain's entry into the EEC, issued in the wake of the Nassau agreement. During his famous press conference announcement of the veto on 14 January 1963, de Gaulle had cited the Agreement as evidence that Britain was tied into a cycle of nuclear dependence on the United States and so could not be relied upon to adopt a suitably European or independent attitude to global problems.[106] In private, at the start of January, de Gaulle had in fact already rejected a parallel offer to the Nassau Agreement from Kennedy which would have involved U.S. provision of Polaris in return for subscribing French nuclear forces to an MLF.[107] This was precisely the kind of compromise that had been considered and turned down when Rusk had visited Paris in June 1962 in the days following McNamara's attack on national nuclear forces at Ann Arbor. Integration of nuclear planning, in French eyes, denoted U.S. control.

'Moments of Great National Peril': The Ambiguities of British Nuclear Independence

It was the French appreciation of the implications of joint planning that helped to create a diplomatic and public relations tangle for the British government in the immediate aftermath of the Ann Arbor speech. Keen to distance themselves from McNamara's blanket denunciation of national nuclear forces, British ministers and officials had emphasised that there was close Anglo-American integration of nuclear planning, even though ultimate national control was still exercised over the British force. But this latter aspect of the clarifications and explanations that were promulgated after Ann Arbor tended to be obscured by the admission that combined, operational nuclear planning was well-entrenched between Bomber Command and SAC. The British parliamentary exchanges in late June 1962 underlined the essential point that just when the requirements of British diplomacy toward

EEC entry demanded that ministers should assert the element of independence in nuclear policy – in order to convince de Gaulle that Britain could free itself of its close links to the U.S. - McNamara’s speech pushed them into trying to unravel, in none too convincing terms, the contradictions that seemed to lie at the heart of UK nuclear policy.

The UK certainly maintained national nuclear target planning throughout this period, but the chief emphasis of Bomber Command after 1958 had been on its combined planning with SAC. In May 1963, under the Nassau Agreement, these arrangements were changed when the entire UK V-bomber force was ‘assigned’ to the U.S. Supreme Allied Commander Europe for targeting purposes and it was SACEUR’s nuclear planning cell at Omaha – with British officers attached - that now coordinated its work with that of SAC.[108] As McNamara’s private views at the time of the Ann Arbor speech make clear, as long as UK strategic nuclear forces had joint planning arrangements which allowed them to operate alongside and in harmony with U.S. forces, he did not see a problem with providing U.S. nuclear assistance to the UK. It was nuclear forces which operated independently which were the principal cause for concern if counterforce targeting doctrine were to be implemented. Britain not only had a common Cold War outlook to the United States, he reasoned, but had clearly reconciled itself to the role of junior nuclear partner. And within these arrangements, it would seem, the Americans did not rate the capabilities of the British V-bomber force very highly. During one interview with McNamara in July 1962, Ormsby Gore, the British Ambassador, was told that on a recent visit to SAC, the U.S. Secretary of Defense had asked about the British contribution to a first strike and been informed that owing to the lower level of UK alert they ‘could only count upon eight V-bombers being certainly operational. This compared with over a thousand bombers and rockets which the Americans judged would be available to them whatever the degree of surprise.’[109] As for the UK’s national targeting plans – which after 1963 existed in parallel with the UK’s contribution to SACEUR's NATO planning – McNamara never seems to have taken them very seriously, since the contingencies in which they might come into operation were so remote as to make them irrelevant to U.S. nuclear strategy. It was recognised that along with the existence of a firing chain under ultimate national control such plans were, nevertheless, necessary for political purposes.

What is clear is that unlike both President Kennedy and McGeorge Bundy, for example, McNamara was at first surprisingly oblivious to the domestic political consequences for the Macmillan government of the loss of Skybolt, and seemed unable to link the furore that had greeted his remarks at Ann Arbor to the implications that would inevitably be drawn by an attentive press, as well as nervous British officials, that there had been a premediated political decision to end the program. Despite Kennedy's own reservations at the time over the contents of the Ann Arbor speech, McNamara had been keen to deliver a direct message to America's European allies that the U.S. nuclear guarantee was firm, but that they needed to make greater efforts to build-up NATO's conventional military strength. It is clear, however, that he also wanted to use the occasion to scold the French for their independent nuclear ambitions and – perhaps more crucially – signal to the rest of the administration, and to other potential proliferators, that the Defense Department was firmly opposed to the provision of nuclear assistance to additional nascent nuclear powers. In his rush to stake out the Pentagon's position in public McNamara overlooked the impact this would have on the domestic politics of America's closest ally, where possession of an independent nuclear force had been an area of deep contention between the Conservative and Labour Parties.

In period after his uneasy meeting with Thorneycroft on 11 December when he presented the reasons for Skybolt cancellation, McNamara seemed almost to be trying to compensate for the troubles he has helped to create. When he presented to British officials the formal State Department-inspired U.S. position that a Polaris replacement would have to be linked in some fashion with arrangements for a multilateral force he did so without enthusiasm. His constructive performance at the subsequent Nassau Conference even prompted Macmillan to single out McNamara for praise, when one might have expected opprobrium to be heaped on his head for having made the initial decision to cancel Skybolt.[110] After Nassau, McNamara was in fact keen to move ahead quickly with technical arrangements for the supply of Polaris to the UK, and had very little faith that the MLF scheme would come to fruition (although prepared to give it his backing in early 1963, he thought it has dubious military utility and should not be forced on the Europeans).[111]

Finally, it must always be recalled that Kennedy, despite some doubts, had endorsed the controversial remarks that McNamara delivered at Ann Arbor. They certainly reflected Kennedy's own beliefs that in a world where the numbers of nuclear weapons, along with their physical dispersal, was increasing enormously, there should be a high premium placed on centralised control, lest decisions on nuclear release were taken without full consideration of the consequences. At Nassau, Kennedy was willing to concede the 'supreme national interests' clause of the final communique in order to give tangible political cover to the Macmillan government's claim that the future of an independent nuclear deterrent had been secured – Polaris would be allocated its own national targeting plans by the British authorities when it finally became operational in the late 1960s. With press speculation rife over the troubled state of the Anglo-American relationship, resolution of the issues at Nassau had a great deal to do with Kennedy's fundamental desire to give Macmillan what he needed to counter his domestic political critics. At the end of December 1962, the President gave a background press briefing to reporters where he affirmed that the decision to cancel Skybolt was technical and financial, not political, in origin and that the offer of Polaris to the British 'was in keeping with both our technical and moral obligation to them, and I think that the arrangement was made in the best interest of the United States, Britain, and the Alliance, because the British will have their deterrent. It will be independent in moments of great national peril, which is really the only time you consider using nuclear weapons anyway. It will serve as a basis for a multinational or multilateral force.'[112]

As the remainder of his presidency was to show, Kennedy was however always a sceptic over the practicalities of forming an MLF, especially in the face of European doubts and opposition. In February 1963, discussing with his senior advisers his own thoughts about the creation of a NATO multilateral nuclear force, Kennedy had admitted with frank realism: 'the logical course for each country was to have its own deterrent. Anything less was illogical. By the same token, it was in the U.S. interest to retain the control it now had.'[113] It was the tension between these two positions that had been exposed as a result of McNamara's criticism of independent nuclear deterrents at Ann Arbor. As long as there was no joint Franco-American nuclear planning, and the French continued to develop their nuclear capabilities free of dependence on, or control by the United States, the *force de frappe* was not a welcome development during the 1960s. It was only when political circumstances had changed and de Gaulle had left the scene, after the Nixon administration entered office at the end of the decade, that nuclear assistance to France would eventually be forthcoming from the United States. By then attitudes to European independent nuclear forces in Washington had undergone significant shifts, not least as the prospect of Germany acquiring nuclear weapons had receded, but also as concerns over proliferation in general assumed a less salient position in official thinking.[114]

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[1] McNamara's Ann Arbor commencement address, alongside the classified version of the speech delivered over a month earlier to NATO foreign and defence ministers at Athens in May 1962, has drawn much attention from scholars of the period. For the immediate background see William W. Kaufmann, *The McNamara Strategy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 113-21; and also Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965), pp. 848-50; Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 194-8; Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 281-5; Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, 3rd ed* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. pp. 222-31; Andreas Wenger, *Living With Peril: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nuclear Weapons* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), pp. 191-6, 267-71; Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), pp. 141-5; Lawrence S. Kaplan, Ronald D. Landa, and Edward J. Drea, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Volume V: The McNamara Ascendancy, 1961-1965* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, 2006), pp. 305-9.

[2] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, 1 June 1962, Digital National Security Archive (DNSA), Document ID: 1679124656.

[3] The Skybolt crisis still lacks definitive treatment, but Richard Neustadt's updated, *Report to JFK: The Skybolt Crisis in Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999) provides a rich and detailed account. The crisis is also covered in Ian Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship: Britain's Deterrent and America, 1957-1962* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 338-72; John Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 312-20; Donette Murray, *Kennedy, Macmillan and Nuclear Weapons* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 31-80;

Nigel J. Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan, and the Cold War: The Crisis of Interdependence* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 152-70; Ken Young, 'The Skybolt Crisis of 1962: Muddle or Mischief? *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Dec. 2004), pp. 614-35; Richard Moore, *Nuclear Illusion, Nuclear Reality: Britain, the United States and Nuclear Weapons, 1958-64* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2010), pp. 166-73, 210-2; and most recently, Matthew Jones, *The Official History of the UK Strategic Nuclear Deterrent, Volume I: From the V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris, 1945-1964* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 349-72.

[4] There are numerous studies of Anglo-American nuclear relations during this period, and the significance of the UK/U.S. 1958 Agreement on nuclear cooperation. See, for example, Jan Melissen, *The Struggle for Nuclear Partnership: Britain, the United States, and the Making of an Ambiguous Alliance, 1952-59* (Groningen: Styx, 1993); Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy*, pp. 77-106; John Baylis, 'The 1958 Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement: The Search for Nuclear Interdependence,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (June 2008), pp. 425-66; and Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris,* pp. 96-149.

[5] For the French nuclear program, see Wilfrid Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Colette Barbier, 'The French Decision to Develop a Military Nuclear Programme in the 1950s,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1993), pp. 103-113; Beatrice Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949-2000* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 93-123.

[6] For a cogent expression of this view, see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 230-8, 284-6.

[7] The original and classic study covering the nuclear sharing issue in NATO – although now overtaken by the release of new documentary sources – is John D. Steinbruner, *The*

Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). See also the analysis in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, pp. 193-220, 310-14, and for a good summary, Lawrence S. Kaplan, 'The MLF Debate,' in Douglas Brinkley and Richard T. Griffiths (eds), *John F. Kennedy and Europe* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), pp. 51-65. For critical British perspectives, see Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 227-35. On German nuclear ambitions see Catherine M. Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975), and Matthias Kuntzel, *Bonn and the Bomb: German Politics and the Nuclear Option* (London: Pluto Press, 1995).

[8] See Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy*, pp. 251-96.

[9] See, e.g., Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris,* p. 207. Although the provision of a considerable number of U.S. nuclear weapons to the V-bomber force under Project E (at least up to 1962) has been seen as a strong check on operational independence because American custody was maintained over the bombs concerned at Royal Air Force bases in the UK, see Justin Bronk, 'Britain's "Independent" V-Bomber Force and U.S. Nuclear Weapons, 1957-1962,*' Journal of Strategic Studies,* Vol. 37, Nos. 6-7 (Dec. 2014), pp. 974-97.

[10] Ibid, pp. 364-6.

[11] L. J. Sabatini minute, 22 June 1962, DEFE 7/2396, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA).

[12] Frank Costigliola, 'The Failed Design: Kennedy, De Gaulle, and the Struggle for Europe,' *Diplomatic History,* Vol. 8, No. 3 (July 1984), p. 230.

[13] See, in general, Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy,* pp. 297-301.

[14] Policy Directive: NATO and the Atlantic Nations, 20 April 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, volume XIII: West Europe and Canada* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), p. 289. For further background, see Douglas Brinkley,

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Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years, 1953-71 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 117-24.

[15] Address before the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa, 17 May 1961, *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1961* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 385.

[16] Paragraph 13, Cmnd. 1639, *Statement on Defence, 1962: The Next Five Years*, February 1962, and copy in C(62)23, 'Defence White Paper, 1962', note by the Minister of Defence, 9 February 1962, CAB 129/108, TNA.

[17] Kennedy letter to Macmillan, 16 February 1962, PREM 11/3711, TNA; copy also in telegram from Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, 16 February 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, pp. 1059-61. See also Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days,* p. 849.

[18] Macmillan to Kennedy, T.79/62, 23 February 1962, PREM 11/4052, TNA. This episode is also detailed in Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy,* pp. 332-3.

[19] See, e.g., Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 241-5; for the overall subject of Anglo-U.S.-French nuclear relations in this period, indispensable is Constantine Pagedas, *Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the French Problem, 1960-1963: A Troubled Partnership* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

[20] Macmillan letter to Kennedy, T.247/61, 28 April 1961, and attached 'Memorandum' with 'Annex III: Nuclear,' PREM 11/3319, TNA. See Macmillan's own account of this episode in his memoir, *Pointing the Way, 1959-61* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 354-5.

[21] Kennedy letter to Macmillan, T.261A/61, 8 May 1961, PREM 11/3319, TNA.

[22] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, 'Action on Nuclear Assistance to France,' 7 May 1962, President's Office Files (POF), box 116A, John F. Kennedy Library (JFKL).

[23] Diary entry for 22 February 1962, C. L. Sulzberger, *The Last of the Giants* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), p847.

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[24] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, ‘Ambassador Gavin’s Visit,’ 28 February 1962, POF, box 116A, JFKL.

[25] Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in France, 29 November 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, pp. 678-9. Two months later the head of the Atomic Energy Commission, Glenn Seaborg, was given a message reminding him that denial of U.S. nuclear assistance to France was White House policy and had been given personal approval by Kennedy, see McGeorge Bundy letter to Seaborg, 8 January 1962, ‘NATO: Weapons: France’ folder, National Security File (NSF), box 225, JFKL.

[26] Kennedy letter to de Gaulle, 31 December 1961, contained in telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in France, 1 January 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XIV: Berlin Crisis, 1961-1962* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), p. 718.

[27] De Gaulle letter to Kennedy, 11 January 1962, ibid, p. 749.

[28] See, e.g., Gavin letter to Kennedy, 9 March 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, pp. 687-8; on the overall state of Franco-American relations during this period, see Erin Mahan, *Kennedy, de Gaulle and Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost: The American Experience with de Gaulle, 1958-1969* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), especially pp. 141-44.

[29] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, ‘Action on Nuclear Assistance to France,’ 7 May 1962, POF, box 116A, JFKL. According to Sulzberger, Taylor was given a positive answer when he had asked French officials if they would be prepared to cooperate with a NATO nuclear force if they were given U.S. nuclear systems, see diary entry for 20 March 1962, *Last of the Giants*, p. 859.

[30] For some of the background see John Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970), pp. 153-7; Costigliola, ‘The Failed Design,’ p. 242; Paul H.

Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), p. 211; Pascaline Winand, *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 231-2; Kaplan, et al, *McNamara Ascendancy,* pp. 371-2.

[31] Nitze memorandum for Bundy, 'The French Nuclear Problem,' 27 February 1962, folder 14, box 221, Paul H. Nitze papers, Library of Congress.

[32] See telephone message from Mr. Kohler to Messrs. Nitze and Gilpatric, 9 March 1962; Ball letter to McNamara, 10 March 1962, 'NATO: Weapons: France' folder, NSF, box 225, JFKL.

[33] Department of State memorandum for Kennedy, 'Nuclear Aid to France,' 9 March 1962, ibid.

[34] For a story that particularly irritated Kennedy, see Robert C. Doty, 'U.S. – French Strain Laid to Paris Plan for Nuclear Force,' *New York Times,* 27 February 1962; and for Kennedy's reaction to such stories emanating from French sources, see telegram from Embassy in France to Department of State, 9 March 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII,* pp. 685-6.

[35] Gilpatric letter to George Ball, 16 March 1962, 'NATO: Weapons: France' folder, NSF, box 225, JFKL.

[36] See Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace,* pp. 338-9.

[37] Minutes of meeting, 16 April 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII,* pp. 377-80; see also Kaplan, et al, *McNamara Ascendancy,* pp. 393-6, and Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy,* pp. 211-21.

[38] NSAM 148, 'Guidance on U.S. Nuclear Assistance to France,' 18 April 1962, 'NSAM 148' folder, Meetings and Memoranda series, NSF, box 336, JFKL.

[39] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, 'Action on Nuclear Assistance to France,' 7 May 1962, POF, box 116A, JFKL.

[40] For this general argument see also Pagedas, *A Troubled Partnership,* pp. 198-9, 203-5.

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[41] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, 24 April 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, p. 1069.

[42] 'Note of a conversation at luncheon at the State Department on 28th April 1962,' CAB 133/300, TNA.

[43] Evelyn Shuckburgh note of conversation, 19 April 1962, DEFE 7/2144, and in DEFE 7/2278, TNA.

[44] See Ormsby Gore letter to Macmillan, 17 May 1962, PREM 11/3712, PM(W)(62)2nd Meeting, 'Record of a Meeting held at the White House on Saturday, 28th April 1962 at 3.30pm,' CAB 133/246, TNA; 'Record of a conversation in the British Embassy, Washington, on Sunday 29th April 1962, at 11.30 a.m.,' CAB 133/300, TNA; full records can also be found in PREM 11/3722, TNA.

[45] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, 24 April 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, p. 1068.

[46] Foreign Office (FO) telegram No 4309 to Washington, 14 June 1962, and Bligh minute for Macmillan, 'MRBMs for NATO,' 15 June 1962, PREM 11/3715, TNA.

[47] De Zulueta minute for Bligh, 27 February 1962, PREM 11/3716, TNA.

[48] 'Nuclear Weapons in Western Defense: Address by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Ann Arbor, June 16, 1962,' in Richard B. Stebbins (ed), *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1962* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 230-36; excerpts can also be found in Kaufmann, *McNamara Strategy*, pp. 114-7.

[49] McNamara speech to NATO Council, Athens, 5 May 1962, reproduced in Philip Bobbitt, Lawrence Freedman, and Gregory F. Treverton (eds), *US Nuclear Strategy: A Reader* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 205-22; the speech (full version) can also be found in 'Ministerial Meetings of the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Athens, May 4-6, 1962: Volume II, Military Questions,' in PREM 11/3722, TNA.

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[50] See William Burr, ‘The Nixon Administration, the “Horror Strategy,” and the Search for Limited Nuclear Options, 1969-72: Prelude to the Schlesinger Doctrine,’ *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 34-78.

[51] See the persuasive evidence cited in Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, pp. 315-21.

[52] See Kaplan et al, *McNamara Ascendancy*, pp. 305-6. See also Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, pp. 273-87.

[53] Presidential news conference, 17 May 1962, *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1962* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 402.

[54] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, ‘Action on Nuclear Assistance to France,’ 7 May 1962, POF, box 116A, JFKL.

[55] Kohler memorandum for Rusk, 24 May 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, pp. 1073-6.

[56] Bundy letter to Raymond Aron, 24 May 1962, ‘NATO: Weapons: France: Eight Questions’ folder, NSF, box 226, JFKL.

[57] See Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy*, pp. 326-7; and Kaplan, et al, *McNamara Ascendancy*, pp. 308-9. Several writers have examined precise authorship of the speech, with Adam Yarmolinsky credited with an initial draft, and Daniel Ellsberg then responsible for further re-writing; see Shapley, *Promise and Power*, pp. 141-5; Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 285.

[58] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, 1 June 1962, DNSA, document ID: 1679124656.

[59] Bundy memorandum for Kennedy, 7 June 1962, DNSA, document ID: 1679124448.

[60] Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, interview transcript with William Kaufmann, 14 July 1986, pp. 19-20.

[61] Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day, 1961-63* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 334, 341.

[62] See, e.g., Macmillan letter to Kennedy, T.284/62, 5 June 1962, PREM 11/3775, TNA.

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[63] Macmillan message to Ormsby Gore, 29 May 1962, PREM 11/3712, TNA.

[64] ‘Extract from a Conversation between the Prime Minister and President de Gaulle which began at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday, June 3, 1962,’ PREM 11/3775, TNA. See also, Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 337-8.

[65] Diary entry, 19 June 1962, as quoted in Macmillan, *At the End of the Day*, p. 335.

[66] ‘Nuclear Shock for Britain: Kennedy’s Switch Means End of the Independent Deterrent,’ *Daily Mail*, 18 June 1962; Nils A. Lennartson memorandum for the record, 18 June 1962, DNSA, document ID: 1679127679. From the liberal side of the political spectrum, see ‘Washington Champions National Unity: Dangers of national nuclear efforts stressed,’ *The Guardian*, 18 June 1962.

[67] ‘America Sets Out Nuclear Policy Principles,’ *The Times*, 18 June 1962. British reactions are also examined in Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy*, pp. 334-7.

[68] Watkinson minute for Macmillan, ‘Nuclear Weapons,’ 18 June 1962, PREM 11/3709, TNA. See also Anthony Verrier, ‘The Watkinson Scandal,’ *New Statesman*, 8 June 1962.

[69] See Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, pp. 258-9, 433-4; Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy*, pp. 129-38; Stephen Twigge and Len Scott, *Planning Armageddon: Britain, the United States and the Command of Western Nuclear Forces, 1945-1964* (London: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), pp. 70-1; Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 51-4. The key document here on UK national policy is COS(57)224, ‘Strategic Target Policy for Bomber Command,’ 16 October 1957, AIR 8/2201, TNA.

[70] FO telegram No. 1637 to Paris, Home personal for Rusk, 19 June 1962, PREM 11/3709, TNA; and see Drew Middleton, ‘Tories Pressed on Atom Policy: Speech by McNamara Adds Fuel to Opposition Attack,’ *New York Times*, 19 June 1962.

[71] FO guidance telegram No. 245, ‘Nuclear Strategy,’ 18 June 1962, DEFE 7/2396, TNA.

[72] Watkinson letter to Carleton Green, 20 June 1962, DEFE 7/2396, TNA.

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[73] Lennartson memorandum for the record, 18 June 1962, DNSA, document ID: 1679127679; Lennartson memorandum for McNamara, 19 June 1962, DNSA, document ID: 1679111234.

[74] 'Mr McNamara Not Opposed to British Nuclear Force,' *The Times*, 20 June 1962.

[75] Washington telegram No. 1656 to Foreign Office, 22 June 1962, PREM 11/3709, TNA.

[76] Macmillan minute for Watkinson, 'British Deterrent,' M.175/62, 24 June 1962, PREM 11/3709, TNA.

[77] 'Britain's Nuclear Targets Agreed with U.S.: Minister Says Right to Act Alone is Unchallenged,' *The Times*, 23 June 1962.

[78] See Washington telegram No 1667 to FO, 23 June 1962, PREM 11/3709, TNA; 'McNamara Says U.S. and Britain Have Joint Nuclear-Strike Plans: Reveals Target Coordination as He Clarifies Intent of Ann Arbor Speech,' *New York Times*, 24 June 1962.

[79] Harold N. Margolis memorandum for Lennartson, 29 June 1962, DNSA, document ID: 1679127300.

[80] Kennedy memorandum for Rusk and McNamara, untitled, 25 May 1962, 'NATO: Weapons: France: Eight Questions' folder, NSF, box 226, JFKL.

[81] McNamara memorandum for Kennedy, 'Answers to Eight Questions re European Nuclear Matters,' 16 June 1962, folder 14, box 221, Nitze papers, Library of Congress. Another copy of this memorandum can be found in partially redacted form in the 'NATO: Weapons: France: Eight Questions' folder, NSF, box 226, JFKL. The copy in the Nitze papers has no redactions. The memorandum was actually prepared by Henry Rowen, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, under Nitze's supervision.

[82] Robert C. Doty, 'French Shrug Off U.S. Attack on Nuclear Arms,' *New York Times*, 19 June 1962.

[83] Paris telegram No. 232 Saving to FO, 22 June 1962, PREM 11/3709, TNA.

[84] Rusk telegram to Department of State, 20 June 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII,* pp. 723-4.

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[85] Drew Middleton, 'Rusk Consults Macmillan On European Atom Force,' *New York Times*, 25 June 1962.

[86] Air Chief Marshal Sir George Mills letter to Mountbatten, 6 July 1962, DEFE 7/2396, TNA.

[87] Macmillan minute for Home, M.168/62, 24 June 1962, PREM 11/3715, TNA.

[88] See Paris telegram No. 276 to FO, Dixon personal for Home, 19 June 1962, PREM 11/3709, TNA.

[89] 'Record of a Meeting held at the Foreign Office at 11 a.m. on June 25, 1962,' PREM 11/3715, TNA.

[90] Memorandum of conversation, 25 June 1962, 'Role of the UK Nuclear Deterrent,' Executive Secretariat Conference Files, 1949-1972, box 391, CF 2163 Secretary's European Trip, June 18-28, 1962 MemCons, Record Group 59, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. I am indebted to William Burr for supplying this document and the source reference.

[91] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5th series*, vol. 661, cols. 954-60, 26 June 1962; Drew Middleton, 'Macmillan Says Britain Will Keep Atom Force,' *New York Times*, 27 June 1962; and 'Britain to keep her independent deterrent,' *The Times*, 27 June 1962. See also Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, p. 325.

[92] Ministry of Defence minute, 'Minister of Defence's Visit to the United States, September 1962: Skybolt,' 19 September 1962, DEFE 13/323, TNA.

[93] Ministry of Defence minute, 'Notes on Talks during the Minister of Defence's Visit to the United States, September 1962: Nuclear Problems in Europe,' 19 September 1962, DEFE 13/323, TNA.

[94] See Watkinson minute for Macmillan, 'Visit to the United States 9th to 17th September, 1962,' 18 September 1962, DEFE 13/323, TNA.

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[95] Rusk letter to McNamara, 8 September 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, pp. 1078-80. Copies of this letter also went to Bundy and Glenn Seaborg at the Atomic Energy Commission.

[96] Kaplan et al, *McNamara Ascendancy*, pp379-81; Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 349-50.

[97] See, e.g.,Thorneycroft minute for Home, 'Skybolt,' 8 November 1962, PREM 11/3716, TNA.

[98] Rusk letter to McNamara, 24 November 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, pp. 1086-8.

[99] A point made in Kaplan, et al, *McNamara Ascendancy*, p. 382.

[100] See MM(62)30, 'Record of a Meeting between the Minister of Defence and the U.S. Secretary of Defense on Tuesday 11th December 1962,' DEFE 7/2145, TNA; and see also the analysis offered in de Zulueta letter to Ormsby Gore, 11 December 1962, PREM 11/3716, TNA. Other accounts of this meeting can be found in Solly Zuckerman, *Monkeys, Men and Missiles: An Autobiography, 1946-88* (London: Collins, 1988), pp. 249-52, and in Neustadt, *Report to JFK*, pp. 69-76.

[101] John Rubel notes, 'memcon, McNamara-Thorneycroft, 11 December 1962,' U.S. Declassified Documents online.

[102] For accounts of Nassau, see Jan Melissen, 'Pre-Summit Diplomacy: Britain, the United States and the Nassau Conference, December 1962,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (November 1996), pp. 652-87; Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy*, pp. 412-21; Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, pp. 320-6; Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 372-401.

[103] 'Record of a Meeting held at Bali-Hai, the Bahamas, at 9.50 a.m. on Wednesday, December 19, 1962,' WP2/2/G, FO 371/173292, TNA; memorandum of conversation, 19 December 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963, XIII*, pp. 1091-1101; Cmnd. 1915, 'Statement on Nuclear Defence Systems, 21 December 1962,' *Bahamas Meetings, December 1962: Texts of Joint Communiques*.

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[104] See Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 428-34, 494-531.

[105] For the MLF see Alastair Buchan, 'The Multilateral Force: A Study in Alliance Politics,' *International Affairs*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1964), pp. 619-37; David N. Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1983), pp. 82-135; Murray, *Kennedy, Macmillan and Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 124 and passim.

[106] See Neustadt, *Report to JFK*, p. 107, and the discussion in N. Piers Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain: The Six and the First UK Application to the EEC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 206-11.

[107] See Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 865-6; Winand, *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe*, pp320-3; Neustadt, *Report to JFK*, pp. 97-102.

[108] See Mountbatten memorandum for Lemnitzer, 'Assignment of V-Bombers,' 23 May 1963, DEFE 25/250, TNA; for the final communique outlining the plans for assignment of forces to SACEUR, see Ottawa telegram No. Codel NATO 42 to FO, 24 May 1963, PREM 11/4162, TNA; Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 497-8.

[109] Ormsby Gore letter to Thorneycroft, 27 July 1962, DEFE 13/336, TNA.

[110] See, for example, Nassau telegram No. Codel 44 to FO, 21 December 1962, PREM 11/4147, TNA.

[111] See Kaplan, et al, *McNamara Ascendancy*, pp. 405-20. This did not mean that after Nassau McNamara was not concerned to drive a hard bargain with the British over payment of full and proportionate R & D costs associated with supply of the latest Polaris A3 missile, an issue where he was overruled by Kennedy in January 1963 (leading to the payment of a simple 5% surcharge on the cost of each missile instead); see Jones, *V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris*, pp. 416-23.

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[112] Comments by the President at a Background Press Briefing Conference, Palm Beach, December 31, 1962, Richard P. Stebbins (ed), *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1962* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 247.

[113] Memorandum of conversation, 18 February 1963, CK2349487351, US Declassified Documents online.

[114] See Marc Trachtenberg, ‘The French Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy during the Nixon-Pompidou Period,’ in his *The Cold War and After: History, Theory and the Logic of International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 183-243; and Francis J. Gavin, ‘Nuclear Nixon: Ironies, Puzzles and the Triumph of Realpolitik,’ in Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston (eds), *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 126-45.