DISSENTING PARTNERS: THE NATO NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP 1965-1976

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
A Doctoral Degree of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By
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*****

The Ohio State University
2008

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Approved by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the history of the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) in NATO from its establishment through its formative and influential first decade. The current historiography, based on a limited number of primary and secondary sources, sees the NPG as an effective method of nuclear sharing in the early 1960s, as a vehicle utilized by the non-nuclear NATO members to influence United States nuclear planning. Utilizing government sources in the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, this thesis argues that the Nuclear Planning Group was an effective tool of consultation that allowed for a measure of compromise concerning concepts on nuclear war. This consultation apparatus was a significant departure from American treatment of allied concerns in the first fifteen years of NATO. It represented a method of bringing West Germany into a unique relationship that conformed to the Anglo-American views on nuclear planning while also serving to minimize the influence of other non-nuclear states. There existed limits to which the United States was willing to extend nuclear influence to its partners, and in the longer term, the NPG remained a political instrument, that was unable to resolve some of the most difficult problems of nuclear defense it faced in its first decade. This study of nuclear relations within NATO focuses on those in the highest levels of government and how NATO allies negotiated policy. Once additional documents become available, further expansion of this topic into the dramatic events of NATO’s nuclear history in the 1980s will become possible.
Dedicated to my parents,

whose love for reading undoubtedly inspired me down this path.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has helped me in my research and writing of this dissertation. Foremost, I need to thank my advisor, Professor Carole Fink, whose constant encouragement, assistance, and advice were invaluable throughout my graduate education. Also, I appreciate the comments of Professors Peter Hahn and Alan Beyerchen whose constructive criticism was quite valuable. The faculty and staff at the USMA Department of History and The Ohio State University History Department were essential in their everyday counsel and support during the entire research and writing process. MAJ William Mengal, MAJ James Guffey, and COL(ret) Dave Kerrins all assisted me during my research travels and the USMA Department of History also funded portions of my research. Professor Geri Smith also graciously assisted me in learning to translate French.

Lastly I would like to thank Soo Jin and Kurt for their help and understanding through the entire process of my graduate education. They have put up with much that I never realize and their support without a doubt carried me through.
VITA

May 25, 1974……………………………..Born – Lansing, Michigan

June 6, 1996………………………………Bachelor of Science, United States Military Academy, West Point NY

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May 2005…………………………………Completed Candidacy Exam

August 2005 -2007………………………..Instructor, Department of History, United States Military Academy

August 2007-2008………………………..Assistant Professor, Department of History, United States Military Academy

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History
Minor Field: European Diplomatic History
Minor Field: Modern European History
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<td>AAPD</td>
<td>Akten zur Auswärtiges Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (series)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABM</td>
<td>Anti-Ballistic Missile</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Allied Command Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADMs</td>
<td>Atomic Demolition Munitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANF</td>
<td>Atlantic Nuclear Force</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ASW</td>
<td>Anti-Submarine Warfare</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union (West Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCE</td>
<td>Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPC</td>
<td>Defense Planning Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRG</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)</td>
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<td>FRUS</td>
<td>Foreign Relations of the United States (series)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GDR</td>
<td>German Democratic Republic (East Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICBM</td>
<td>Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile</td>
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<td>ISA</td>
<td>International Security Affairs (OASD)</td>
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<td>LBJL</td>
<td>Lyndon B. Johnson Library</td>
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<td>MBFR</td>
<td>Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions</td>
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<td>MC</td>
<td>Military Committee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MLF</td>
<td>Multi-Lateral Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNC</td>
<td>Major NATO Commanders</td>
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<td>MOD</td>
<td>Minister of Defense</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>North Atlantic Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>NARA</td>
<td>National Archives and Records Administration (USA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDAC</td>
<td>Nuclear Defense Affairs Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIKE</td>
<td>Air defense system employed by most NATO allies in the 1960s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPG</td>
<td>Nuclear Planning Group</td>
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<td>NPT</td>
<td>Non-proliferation Treaty</td>
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<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>OASD</td>
<td>Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense</td>
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<td>OSD</td>
<td>Office of the Secretary of Defense</td>
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<td>PAAA</td>
<td>Political Archive. German Foreign Ministry</td>
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<td>Permreps</td>
<td>Permanent Representatives to NATO (ambassadors)</td>
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<td>PPGs</td>
<td>Provisional Political Guidelines for the Initial Defensive Tactical Use of Nuclear Weapons by NATO</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Records Office, National Archives (Kew, Great Britain)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAND</td>
<td>Research and Development Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACEUR</td>
<td>Supreme Allied Commander Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACLANT</td>
<td>Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SALT</td>
<td>Strategic Arms Limitation Talks</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHAPE</td>
<td>Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIOP</td>
<td>Single Integrated Operational Plan (US Plan for Strategic Nuclear use)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOZG</td>
<td>Soviet Occupation Zone Germany (ie. GDR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party (West Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
<td>Scheduled Strike Program, (SACEUR plan for nuclear use)</td>
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<td>USNATO</td>
<td>United States Mission at NATO Headquarters</td>
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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CANADA
Campbell, Ross  Canadian Ambassador to NATO, 1967-1972

FRANCE
de Gaulle, Charles  President, 1958-1969

GREAT BRITAIN
Carrington, Peter  Secretary of State for Defense, 1970-1974 (Conservative)
Heath, Edward  Prime Minister, 1970-1974, (Conservative)

ITALY
Andreotti, Guilio  Minister of Defense, 1959-1966 (Christian Democrat)
Gui, Luigi  Minister of Defense, 1968-1970 (Christian Democrat)
Tanassi, Mario  Minister of Defense, 1970-1974 (Socialist)
Tremeloni, Roberto  Minister of Defense, 1966-1968 (Socialist)

NATO
Brosio, Manlio  Secretary General, 1964-1971, (Italy)
Luns, Joseph M.A.H  Secretary General, 1971-1984 (Netherlands)
Spaak, Paul Henri  Secretary General, 1957-1961, (Belgium)
Stikker, Dirk  Secretary General, 1961-1964, (Netherlands)

NETHERLANDS
Luns, Joseph  Foreign Minister 1952-1971,
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<td>Defense Minister, 1965-1971</td>
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<td>SOVIET UNION</td>
<td>Gromyko, Andrei</td>
<td>Foreign Minister, 1957-1985</td>
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<td>Kosygin, Alexei</td>
<td>Premier, 1964-1980</td>
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<td>WEST GERMANY</td>
<td>Adenauer, Konrad</td>
<td>Chancellor, 1949-1963 (CDU)</td>
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<td>Brandt, Willy</td>
<td>Foreign Minister, 1966-1969; Chancellor 1969-1974 (SPD)</td>
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<td>Blankenhorn, Herbert</td>
<td>Ambassador to Great Britain, 1965-1970</td>
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<td>Birrenbach, Kurt</td>
<td>Bundestag Representative from North Rhine Westphalia, 1957-1976 (CDU)</td>
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<td>Erhard, Ludwig</td>
<td>Chancellor, 1963-1966 (CDU)</td>
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<td>Grewe, Wilhelm</td>
<td>Ambassador to NATO, 1962-1971</td>
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<td>von Hassel, Kai Uwe</td>
<td>Minister of Defense, 1963-1966 (CDU)</td>
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<td>Kiesinger, Kurt Georg</td>
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<td>Schmidt, Helmut</td>
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<td>Chancellor, 1974-1982 (SPD)</td>
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<td>Schröder, Gerhard</td>
<td>Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1961-1966</td>
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<td>Minister of Defense, 1966-1969 (CDU)</td>
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<td>UNITED STATES</td>
<td>Ball, George</td>
<td>Under Secretary of State, 1961-1966</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bator, Francis</td>
<td>Senior Staff Member, National Security Council, Deputy National Security Advisor, 1964-1967</td>
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<td>Bruce, David</td>
<td>Ambassador to NATO, 1974-1976</td>
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<td>Name</td>
<td>Title and Other Information</td>
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<td>Bundy, McGeorge</td>
<td>Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1961-1966</td>
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<td>Cleveland, Harlan</td>
<td>Ambassador to NATO, 1965-1971</td>
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<td>Clifford, Clark</td>
<td>Secretary of Defense, 1968-1969</td>
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<td>Admiral Crowe, William</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Navy Plans and Policy, 1973,</td>
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<td>Ellsworth, Robert</td>
<td>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1985-1989</td>
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<td>Finletter, Thomas</td>
<td>Ambassador to NATO, 1961-1965</td>
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<td>Gaffney, Dr. Henry</td>
<td>Staff member, OASD/ISA, 1966-1967,</td>
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<td>Johnson, Lyndon B.</td>
<td>President, 1963-1968 (Democrat)</td>
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<td>Keeny, Spurgeon</td>
<td>Senior Staff Member, National Security Council, 1963-1969</td>
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<td>Kennedy, David</td>
<td>Ambassador to NATO, 1972-1973</td>
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<td>Kennedy, John F.</td>
<td>President 1961-1963 (Democrat)</td>
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<td>Kissinger, Henry</td>
<td>Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1969-1975,</td>
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<td>Laird, Melvin</td>
<td>Secretary of Defense, 1969-1973</td>
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<td>Leddy, John</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, 1965-1969</td>
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<td>Lemnitzer, General Lyman</td>
<td>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, 1960-1962</td>
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<td>McCoy, John</td>
<td>High Commissioner of Germany 1949-1951</td>
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<td>McGhee, George</td>
<td>Ambassador to West Germany, 1963-1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
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<tr>
<td>McNamara Robert S.</td>
<td>Secretary of Defense, 1961-1968</td>
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<td>McNaughton, John</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs 1964-1967</td>
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<td>Nixon, Richard</td>
<td>President, 1969-1974 (Republican)</td>
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<td>Richardson, Elliot</td>
<td>Secretary of Defense, Jan-May 1973</td>
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<td>Rostow, Walt</td>
<td>Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1966-1968</td>
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<td>Rumsfeld, Donald</td>
<td>Ambassador to NATO, 1973-1974, Secretary of Defense, 1975-1977</td>
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<td>Rusk, Dean</td>
<td>Secretary of State, 1961-1968</td>
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<td>Schlesinger, James R</td>
<td>Secretary of Defense, 1973-1975</td>
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</table>
NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP CHRONOLOGY (1952-1979)

1952  Great Britain develops nuclear weapons

1955  May  West Germany joins NATO, Warsaw Pact established
       June  NATO Carte Blanche exercise

1957  April  Sputnik

1960  France develops nuclear weapons

1961  August  Berlin Divided

1962  May  DPC agrees to “Athens Guidelines”
       October  Cuban Missile Crisis

1963  May  Deputy for Nuclear Affairs established by SACEUR
       July  Nuclear Test Ban Treaty ratified
           US Assigns Three Polaris submarines, UK assigns V-bomber force
           to NATO

1964  October  China tests a nuclear device

1965  March  U.S military buildup in Vietnam begins
       April  Brussels treaty combining ESCS, EEC and Eurotom signed
       November  First meeting of the Special Committee

1966  March  France withdraws from NATO’s integrated military command

1967  April  First meeting of the Nuclear Planning Group
       June  Six Day War
       November  Britain’s second application for membership in Common Market
                rejected
       December  Harmel Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance

1968  January  Official adoption of Flexible Response (MC 14/3) by NATO
       Jan – Aug.  Prague Spring

1969  January  Richard Nixon becomes U.S. President
       October  Willy Brandt elected FRG Chancellor
       November  Provisional Political Guidelines for the Tactical Use of Nuclear
                  Weapons approved by NATO
                  SALT I negotiations begin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Non-Proliferation Treaty takes effect</td>
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<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Phase I of NPG Follow on Use study begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Four Power Agreement on Berlin signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Nixon Visits China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Vietnam War expanded into Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>SALT I signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>SALT II negotiations begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Ascension of U.K., Denmark, Ireland to EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Phase II of NPG Follow on Use study begins</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>CSCE talks begin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>MBFR talks begin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yom Kippur War</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jackson/Nunn amendment to U.S. Defense Authorization Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Georges Pompidou dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Carnation Revolution in Portugal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August</td>
<td>Willy Brandt resigns</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Greece withdraws from NATO’s integrated military command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Nixon resigns, Gerald Ford assumes office</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Fall of Saigon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Phase III of NPG Follow on Use Study begins</td>
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<td></td>
<td>August</td>
<td>Helsinki Final Act signed</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>James Carter takes office</td>
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<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Neutron bomb ‘affair’</td>
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<td>October</td>
<td>NATO High Level Group established</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>SALT II Signed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Dual Track Decision (Euromissiles) approved</td>
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“Dissatisfaction by European nations stems from the present NATO structure which forces them to rely under all circumstances upon American strategic capabilities and decision for the most basic requirements of their national security.”

--- Findley Report to Congress, 1965

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In June 1955, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization conducted a major exercise simulating a general Warsaw Pact invasion of Western Europe and the early use of tactical nuclear weapons by both sides. The exercise, labeled Carte Blanche, simulated the use of 335 nuclear weapons in Central Europe with the majority utilized on or near West German territory. Planners estimated direct casualties as a result of nuclear weapons of approximately five million West German citizens, with the longer term effects from fallout immeasurable.

One can only imagine the horror felt by the German officers who participated in this exercise, so soon after becoming members of the NATO alliance. When some of the exercise results leaked to the public, Carte Blanche created consternation in West Germany, spawning pacifist and anti-nuclear movements, and they put the issues of

\[1\] PAAA, B32, Volume 224, “Findley Report to Congress, 1965.”
nuclear defense squarely in the center of West German and NATO politics.\(^2\) Nuclear defense issues remained a top priority for the alliance for the next fifteen years, and for good reason. Although the risks of a nuclear conflict in Central Europe were thought to have decreased by the early 1960s, the stakes remained high. The issues involved were so fundamental to the survival of the people within the primary battle zone that nuclear policy remained a contentious issue even as détente and a decrease in Cold War tensions began to emerge.

NATO entered a period of instability in the 1960s when it faced a number of issues that in unison threatened the existence of the alliance. Fundamentally, Europe had changed since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. Western Europe had recovered economically, West Germany had regained its sovereignty in 1955, and the perceived danger of an immediate communist takeover had markedly diminished in the eyes of the public and many policy makers across the West. Thus, the French challenge to American dominance of NATO clearly reflected a wider European sentiment calling for reforms in decision making and alliance structure to reflect the growing strength and influence that Europe brought to the alliance. Conversely, American policy makers both in the White House and especially in Congress believed that the Europeans needed to increase their share of the defense burden now that Western Europe had fully recovered.

This is the background for the major debates among the NATO allies that evolved in the 1960s over the future of the alliance; its organization and decision making bodies; the possibility of détente with the Warsaw Pact; devising formulas for burden sharing and mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) in Europe; the impact of a growing

American commitment outside of Europe, particularly in Vietnam; and the question of nuclear non-proliferation and control. This debate also extended to future relations with the Soviet Union, especially in the latter half of the decade with the onset of détente and the signing of the non-proliferation treaty. Before any changes in East-West Cold War relations could occur, it was necessary for the NATO members to resolve their fundamental differences over the nature of the alliance and control of nuclear weapons in order to approach the Communist bloc with a united front. Although singing with different voices, NATO allies needed to use the same sheet of music and be in tune.

In 1954, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) of NATO officially adopted the strategy of massive retaliation, which Carte Blanche simulated for the first time on a large scale. It took an additional three years of complex negotiations and joint planning for the West Germans and other European nations to come to grips with the strategy of massive retaliation, but by 1958 the Federal Republic had accepted its role and NATO had adopted a defensive plan labeled MC-70. The strength of massive retaliation lay in deterrence. For Europeans, deterrence became a way of avoiding war entirely, by making any conflict in central Europe so costly to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact that no one would attempt to initiate hostilities.

However, not long after NATO adopted massive retaliation, three major events in the Cold War altered the strategic environment and prompted the United States to seek a revision to NATO’s defensive strategy. The advances in Soviet rocket technology, dramatically demonstrated by Sputnik in 1957, potentially put United States territory at risk during a war and raised concerns among Europeans that Washington might decrease

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its commitment to their defense. Moreover, the crises in Berlin in 1961 and in Cuba in 1962 demonstrated the danger of limited and local action against NATO nations, and by 1963, many defense planners saw rapid escalation of a small incident as the primary threat to peace.

In 1962, U. S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara presented NATO with an alternative defensive strategy that addressed the altered strategic situation and focused on limiting the response to local threats. Overall, this strategy would raise the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons in Europe. Years of difficult debate and negotiations followed this proposed change. The shift in U.S. policy from massive retaliation to the more nuanced flexible response aroused serious anxiety among many European governments, particularly in West Germany. Despite the decreased risks of civilian casualties with a flexible response strategy, many in Europe feared the danger of relinquishing the deterrent effects of nuclear weapons. For West Germany in particular, a conventional conflict could be as deadly and destructive as a war involving tactical nuclear weapons. The American call for flexible response also aroused fears of abandonment by implying that crisis decision making in Washington might not guarantee the defense of West Germany. Bonn continually sought concrete measures that went beyond treaties or pledges for joint defense and would commit Washington to aid West Germany against any threat from the Warsaw Pact. Thus many West Germans in the early 1960s, especially within the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) government, regarded a share in the control of nuclear weapons, the linchpin of deterrence, as insurance against Soviet aggression and a vital demonstration of the American commitment to European defense.
During the first half of the 1960s, NATO members attempted to create a system of shared control of nuclear weapons featuring different schemes of joint ownership, manning, and control of a nuclear capable force. However, these efforts all met with failure. The ongoing nuclear debate created serious divisions within the alliance, contributing to the withdrawal of France from military integration in 1966 and threatening the integrity of the alliance altogether. But by 1967, an alternative to nuclear sharing evolved in the alliance that appeared to satisfy the other NATO members. This was the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG). Formally organized and established in early 1967, the NPG became a confidential forum for nuclear consultation. West Germany, the most influential non-nuclear power in NATO, eventually accepted its role in the NPG as a substitute for national physical control over nuclear weapons.

Much of the literature on the Nuclear Planning Group has been written by contemporary historians and political scientists who based their research on published sources or interviews. The most comprehensive history of the NPG’s origins is by Helga Haftendorn, who utilizes the nuclear issue as one of three case studies concerning the overall crises NATO faced in 1966 and 1967. Haftendorn sees the group as critical to alleviating NATO’s nuclear crisis, and illustrating Europe’s success in gaining influence in U. S. nuclear policy. However, she focuses primarily on NATO’s immediate crisis and does not continue beyond 1967. This trend in the literature on the NPG has

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continued, and although Andrew Priest’s essay on the origins of the Nuclear Planning Group utilizes some of the recently declassified documents on both sides of the Atlantic to expand on this story, he again ends his analysis with the apparent resolution of the crisis within NATO by 1969. Likewise, Andreas Wenger in his recent article on the NATO crisis does much to put the establishment of the NPG into a broader context, and demonstrates how it was part of a larger effort by the United States to increase alliance partnership and respond to the French challenge during the crisis years of the late 1960s.

Moreover, German secondary sources do not extend beyond the 1960s. Matthias Küntzel in his history of West German nuclear policy gives scant attention to the NPG. Citing other secondary sources such as Paul Buteaux, he stresses its symbolic importance due to the German’s contribution to the group’s Provisional Planning Guidelines. Like American authors, Peter Mahnke identifies the Nuclear Planning Group as the eventual solution to the nuclear sharing problem. He then adds analysis that outlines many of the domestic political factors that brought the West Germans to accept it as an alternative. He stresses the personalities within the German government up to 1966 that strongly desired nuclear sharing and how the Multi-lateral Force proposal forced the West Germans to adapt politically to what was possible in the nuclear arena. But overall his

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analysis focuses on the failure of the MLF and only deals superficially with the Nuclear Planning Group.¹⁰

This thesis will analyze the Nuclear Planning Group from 1965 to 1976 using archival sources only recently made available. The broader time period for this study allows one to expand the analysis beyond the NATO crisis of the late 1960s. It provides a look at some of the inner workings of a naturally secretive but highly important political organization in NATO. NATO’s adoption of flexible response as its defensive strategy in 1967 provided an overall concept, but the equally difficult questions about where, what type, and how nuclear weapons would be used and who would control them remained unanswered. This study of the Nuclear Planning Group reveals how NATO resolved one dilemma, the West German desire for nuclear sharing and obtaining more power in the alliance, but how it failed over the long term to create consensus over Europe’s nuclear defense.

*Initial attempts at nuclear sharing*

NATO’s crisis in the 1960’s reflected a new political landscape. In addition to the American initiatives to alter the NATO defense plan, there were now two additional nuclear powers in the alliance; Great Britain had successfully tested a nuclear device in 1952, and France followed suit in 1960. Moreover, there were significant domestic political changes among the major members of NATO in the early 1960s. The new leaders in the United States, France, West Germany, and Great Britain were not only different personalities, but also represented new viewpoints, political parties, and even

generations. These new leaders reevaluated their national roles and their relationship with the NATO alliance.

For President Charles de Gaulle, the break from the past is most evident. He envisioned a Europe united in its defense, independent of superpower domination, and led by France. With recovery from World War II complete, he increasingly led France on a course independent of NATO, and especially the American dominance he saw within the alliance. De Gaulle’s unfettered nuclear strategy remained a lynchpin in his policy to achieve a form of French dominance in European relations and challenge to superpower influence. For Paris, nuclear weapons and nuclear independence were key to this concept, for most western leaders recognized nuclear deterrence as the primary defense against the Soviet Union.

West Germany became increasingly reluctant to accept American ideas for NATO strategy as well. Despite Konrad Adenauer’s history of courting American sympathies, by 1960 he looked within Europe, promoting Franco-German cooperation and more independence from Washington’s control. Although the Franco-German treaty failed to live up to Adenauer’s expectations when his own party refused to choose reliance on France over the United States, the 1963 agreement, even in its modified form, signaled a new challenge from Western Europe within NATO. Also for West Germany, nuclear proliferation created a delicate political situation. A new generation of officials in Bonn worried that NATO was becoming an unequal partnership that increasingly impaired West German status and influence. With the onset of the U.S.-Soviet negotiations over a Non-proliferation Treaty, this inequality threatened to become permanent.
The British government position was perhaps the least changed despite the assumption of power by the Labor Party in 1964 under Harold Wilson. Britain continued to seek a “special” relationship with the United States with pledges of American and British cooperation that extended publicly into nuclear defense affairs. Consequently, under Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, the United States attempted to change NATO’s strategy to reflect the increased global risks to American interests; but it found two of its three most powerful allies wealthier, more independent, and less willing to follow their benefactor from across the Atlantic.

NATO’s first attempts to create consensus on nuclear policy were contained in the guidelines adopted at the defense ministers’ meeting in Athens in May 1962. Although open to wide interpretation, the Athens Guidelines took initial steps toward a collective nuclear strategy. They stated that alliance forces would respond to an attack “with nuclear weapons on a scale appropriate for the circumstances.” In addition, NATO agreed that the United States and any other nuclear power would consult their allies prior to any use of nuclear weapons that would “threaten the integrity of the forces and territory” of its allies and, time permitting, before the use of nuclear weapons anywhere in the world.\(^\text{11}\)

This pledge of consultation was not enough to satisfy most non-nuclear states. In 1962, the British also proposed the formation of a nuclear committee within NATO to increase alliance consultation on all nuclear matters.\(^\text{12}\) Although the NATO ministers


agreed to create a nuclear committee, the result did not fulfill Britain’s or any other NATO member’s goals. Responsibility for this lies largely with the United States, which put little emphasis on the committee and treated it only as a one-way communication process in an attempt to continue to dictate nuclear policy. 13 The United States was unwilling to grant the Europeans a voice in alliance nuclear planning. Throughout the life of the nuclear committee, the U.S. delegation continued to limit communication, stating from the start that they would field no questions but just provide a briefing. None of the other delegates in the nuclear committee had access to the technical data on which the American conclusions were based, and thus were unable to question or challenge the conclusions. 14

Other incremental changes occurring within NATO promised an increased European influence in nuclear defense matters, but these failed to satisfy West German demands for equality. In 1963, following the pivotal Athens Guidelines, NATO members agreed to create a deputy for nuclear affairs on the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe’s (SACEUR) staff who would always be a non-American. The SACEUR was the highest military commander of NATO, and an American general had traditionally served in that position assisted by an internationally mixed staff. Also, Washington now allowed NATO to assign foreign officers to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) headquarters in the United States, giving them access to information on the entire American arsenal of nuclear weapons. General Lyman Lemnitzer, SACEUR at the time,

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14 PRO, DEFE 25/59, Letter from UK Delegation to NATO (Shuckburgh) to Foreign Office (Lord Hood), June 21, 1965.
underlined these efforts in his public speeches as steps towards increased allied influence in NATO and U.S. nuclear policy.\(^\text{15}\)

Nonetheless, U.S. policy makers privately recognized that the integration of Europeans onto nuclear staffs was insufficient to alleviate any of the political issues of nuclear sharing. The officers assigned to SACEUR and the foreign staffs were bound by international agreement not to pass to their capitals sensitive information to which they now had access. Although this undoubtedly occurred, any information gained in this manner was not politically usable.\(^\text{16}\) Thus, these initial steps by NATO toward greater consultation and allied involvement in nuclear defense were not encouraging and produced numerous other proposals to address nuclear inequality within the alliance.

*The Hardware Solution: The Multi-Lateral Force (MLF)*

In 1962, The Kennedy administration first formally proposed a nuclear multi-lateral force (MLF) to NATO to address the problem of enlarging allied influence over nuclear planning.\(^\text{17}\) The U.S. State Department envisioned a force consisting of nuclear weapons and delivery systems provided by the United States, France, and Great Britain, but assigned to NATO and manned jointly by NATO members. This was termed the “hardware” option. The arrangement would serve two purposes for the United States by both alleviating West German desires for nuclear independence and reining in the French


\(^{17}\) Kelleher, *Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons*, 190.
and British independent nuclear forces and putting them under NATO command.\textsuperscript{18} American policy aimed at pooling Europe’s resources to increase their political and economic effectiveness. The multilateral force was a key way to accomplish this in the important arena of nuclear defense.\textsuperscript{19} In October 1963, the official negotiations on the MLF proposal began in Paris and lasted for two years with no agreement. Nevertheless, the course and results of these negotiations were important in the education of political leaders and led directly to the establishment of the Nuclear Planning Group as a viable alternative.

The two states most supportive of the multilateral force concept were, not surprisingly, West Germany and Italy. Both were non-nuclear powers which nevertheless aspired to a larger role in alliance politics. West German leaders viewed the MLF as a means to promote equality within a group that increasingly seemed to limit German ambitions more than to serve them. The Germans also linked the multilateral force to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty talks, claiming that it would give the non-nuclear members of NATO access to weapons without independent production.\textsuperscript{20} For similar reasons, Italy supported the MLF concept, but preferred that the West Germans take the lead in the negotiations and public debate.\textsuperscript{21}

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\textsuperscript{19} PRO, PREM 13/2265, Letter from Bendall, British Embassy in Washington, March 21, 1968.
\textsuperscript{20} PAAA, B150, vol. 67, Letter from Carstens to Foreign Minister Spaak, January 10, 1966.
\end{flushright}
Despite the initial support of two European states, the MLF negotiations met with difficulties from the beginning. De Gaulle strongly opposed the plan, refusing to subordinate France’s newly achieved national nuclear force to any external control. French resistance alone did not stall the MLF talks, however. Great Britain was also wary of surrendering control of its national nuclear force and of allowing the Federal Republic a role in nuclear weapons decisions.

In addition to the political differences it raised among the principal alliance members, the MLF faced difficulties over specific details. The British cited these arguments as their primary reasons for opposing the MLF, which was politically a safer move than trying to deny German access to nuclear weapons on principle. After some time it became clear that any multilateral force would add little to NATO’s overall nuclear defense capabilities. According to the British, as the United States continually increased the tactical nuclear weapons assigned to Europe, the small number assigned to an MLF would make only a marginal difference. The costs for participants, which the United States insisted the Europeans cover almost exclusively, did not warrant the meager effect of such a small force. Military organizations recognized the futility of the MLF earlier than the political leaders in almost all nations involved. By May 1964, even the German Ministry of Defense dismissed the MLF and credited its longevity to the U.S. State Department. German military leaders insisted that only through “changes in existing political arrangements” could this essentially political problem be solved.  

There was also disagreement within NATO over the political control of nuclear forces. The West Germans sought “equality” in this area, but the United States and

Britain insisted on a veto authority over their weapons, which they withheld from the Bonn government. British Defense Minister Denis Healey expressed fears that the United States would eventually retract its veto and allow the Federal Republic more power in the MLF than Great Britain was willing to give. Probably due in part to the recent French rejection of Britain’s application to the Common Market and to Britain’s need to improve relations with France, by December 1964 it became clear that the British political position on the MLF had moved closer to those in Paris than to Washington or Bonn.23

By 1965, there was little progress in the Paris multilateral force negotiations. Adenauer’s successor Ludwig Erhard and his cabinet became alarmed over the possible abandonment of the MLF and the political and strategic consequences. In an attempt to placate them, Washington continued to endorse a nuclear sharing option and labeled the breakdown of MLF talks a “temporary hiatus.”24 But the Johnson administration was in no way unified over the preferred approach to addressing the nuclear sharing debate within NATO. The Department of State had been the initiator and primary supporter of the multilateral force concept, and assistant Secretary of State John Leddy in 1965 continued to urge an aggressive pursuit of an MLF agreement that would satisfy the West Germans.25 Henry Kissinger, in an informal independent study of the nuclear sharing

23 LBJL, NSF, International Meetings and Travel File, Ball Trip, Department of State Telegram, Paris #956, December 1, 1964.

24 LBJL, NSF, Country Files, Box 184, Germany, Department of State Telegram from Bonn to Secretary of State, #2484, January 5, 1965; FRUS, Volume XIII, Document 81, Telegram from Department of State to Embassy Germany, April 29, 1965.

issue, described the State Department as almost irrationally wedded to the idea.\footnote{LBJL, Personal Papers, Papers of Francis Bator, Box 26, Letter from Henry Kissinger to McGeorge Bundy, July 20, 1965.} On the other hand, the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the Defense Department opposed the MLF concept echoing many of the practical arguments concerning cost and relative effectiveness employed by the British.\footnote{LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 186, Germany, Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, Birrenbach, McNamara, Rusk, “Collective Nuclear Arrangements in NATO,” November 8, 1965.} A multilateral force debate also appeared to work counter to McNamara’s goal of establishing flexible response as NATO’s strategy. The MLF placed great emphasis on nuclear weapons during a time when the secretary wished to focus on increasing conventional forces in the alliance, especially among allies, in an attempt to reduce the financial burdens on the United States and increase the possible defense options available to NATO short of nuclear use.

A visit to the United States by an influential CDU member of the Bundestag, Kurt Birrenbach, only heightened German confusion over U.S. policy. In October and November 1965, Birrenbach met with American policy makers and expressed the FRG’s fears that the United States was about to abandon the MLF concept and deterrence. He received a mixed message, with McNamara arguing against the utility of nuclear sharing and the State Department pledging continued support. Accepting the latter’s assurances, Birrenbach returned to Bonn believing that U.S. policy was much more supportive of the MLF than in reality.\footnote{LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 186, Germany, Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, Birrenbach, McNamara, Rusk, “Collective Nuclear Arrangements in NATO,” November 8, 1965.} Chancellor Erhard politically committed himself further to the MLF in a speech to the Bundestag that addressed nuclear sharing. The Chancellor called
for the participation of non-nuclear states in mutual defense commensurate with their level of commitment and the threat within NATO.\textsuperscript{29} On a trip to Washington in December 1965, Erhard expected much more support for the MLF plan than President Johnson was willing to give.\textsuperscript{30} The mixed signals from Washington resulted in continued West German disappointment and distrust of American nuclear defense policy.

In the meantime, Great Britain made an alternative proposal, dubbed the Atlantic Nuclear Force (ANF), which was very similar to the MLF except it involved a combined nuclear force without mixing the crews. This proposal was not made in good faith, however, as Britain used it to help defeat nuclear sharing concepts overall and did not seriously intend the ANF as an alternative.\textsuperscript{31} Hardware solutions remained officially open for negotiation in 1966, but by this time policy makers on both sides of Atlantic saw little potential in any nuclear sharing schemes.

Despite its failure, the MLF proposal had brought nuclear sharing and control issues to the forefront of a domestic and foreign policy debate among the NATO members. It encouraged continuous negotiations on tough issues and policy clarification by all sides. The MLF debate forced many West Germans to make difficult choices about nuclear affairs.\textsuperscript{32} Instead of professing such nebulous concepts as the need for equality and attaining nuclear status, West German leaders had to determine a viable way


\textsuperscript{30} LBJL, Personal Papers, Papers of Francis Bator, Box 28, Memorandum of Conversation with Chancellor Erhard, January 18, 1966 from H.A. Kissinger, undated.


\textsuperscript{32} Kelleher, \textit{Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons}, 230.
to achieve these goals. Without a three-year effort to gain a hardware solution, it is unlikely the West German domestic proponents of nuclear sharing, such as the CDU, would have accepted consultation in nuclear planning, the software solution, as an alternative.
“The foremost problem is to give substance to the ideal of partnership. We must shift the structure of the alliance from the leader-follower basis – which was almost inevitable in 1949 – to one of true partnership.”

--- Findley Report to Congress, 1965

CHAPTER 2

The Software Solution: The Special Committee of Defense Ministers

President Johnson rightly saw the nuclear sharing issue in NATO as a political problem that went far beyond the question of who would make decisions in a time of conflict, but one that also addressed the fundamental issues of alliance equality and partnership, and particularly the position of West Germany. By the mid 1960’s there remained strong elements within the domestic German political scene that supported the “Gaullist” notions of independence from American influence. A combination of factors contributed to these perceptions among many Europeans. Sputnik, growing nuclear parity between the U.S. and USSR, and NATO inaction during the erection of the Berlin wall challenged the credibility of the American commitment to Western Europe. By 1965 America’s growing involvement in Vietnam, and its focus on Asia as the new front for the Cold War also concerned many European leaders. Thus, Johnson’s goal was as


much to keep the Germans and other Europeans from choosing a more neutral stance in the Cold War as to ensure against a German finger “on the trigger” of nuclear weapons.35 After the negotiations on a multilateral force failed, America’s task in NATO was to accommodate the German demands for equality while preserving American leadership of the alliance.

In May 1965, Secretary McNamara outlined in general terms a new way to deal with the nuclear sharing issue in NATO. He proposed the formation of a “Select” Committee of Defense Ministers to address three key issues: allied participation in nuclear planning, including strategic forces; crisis consultation; and specific communication procedures within NATO for nuclear use.36 In contrast to the weapons and delivery systems offered by the MLF, this was termed the “software” option. Similar proposals just a few years earlier had been unsuccessful in addressing these problems.37 In 1960, the United States had made a palliative gesture, recommending an increase in the number of ministerial meetings to four a year to address consultation shortcomings among the allies, but the allies had resisted.38 Three years later, NATO Secretary General Dirk Stikker recognized that the current organization of NATO was not tailored for effective political consultation in a crisis. The Standing Group, staffed by permanent

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37 As early as 1962 there were recommendations made in US-UK meetings of forming a high-level group in NATO to discuss nuclear political issues that were outside the scope of permreps. NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Bureau of European Affairs, Box 6, DEF 12 NATO, Memo from David Hopper to Mr. Tyler “Your Meeting this afternoon with Lord Hood,” November 21, 1962.

38 LBJL, NSF, International Meetings and Travel File, Ball Trip, Department of State Telegram to Berlin #397, November 12, 1964.
ambassadors to NATO and military representatives from each member, lacked the personnel or communications apparatus to handle political decisions in a crisis. A rapidly evolving crisis would require a higher level of consultation among political leaders and Stikker recommended the allies establish some mechanism to do so. Anything less would force the alliance to follow the lead of the United States unequivocally. After the failure of the nuclear committee, the British in 1965 also recommended periodic meetings of the defense ministers of the United States, Great Britain, West Germany and Italy to discuss nuclear issues. What was unique about McNamara’s proposal for the Select Committee was that it originated in the United States, the key government that would be required for its success. Nevertheless, the record of half measures and failures of the integration of NATO’s nuclear policy up to 1965 made many Europeans doubt that McNamara’s Select Committee would be much different.

Secretary McNamara, however, had a different set of goals for the Select Committee than these previous attempts. McNamara, who generally deprecated his counterparts’ level of expertise on nuclear issues, believed that if allied political leaders were exposed to the complexities and difficulties of nuclear planning, targeting, and policy they would accept the U.S. point of view on strategy. This was not a new revelation for American defense officials, who seemed to recognize and accept the growing need to inform their allies more effectively on nuclear matters. A year earlier,

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39 LBJL, NSF, International Meetings and Travel File, Box 34, Ministerial Meetings-Hague 12 May, Department of State Memorandum of Conversation between NATO Secretary General Dirk Stikker and Secretary of State, March 18, 1964.


41 LBJL, NSF, Agency File, Box 36, NATO General Volume 8, Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary General Brosio and Secretary McNamara, October 7, 1965.
the Pentagon had formed a briefing team tasked to travel to NATO capitals and educate allied policy makers on nuclear matters. Also, in May 1964, after a report outlining the limitations of nuclear information disclosure was completed, President Johnson had secured permission from Congress to provide more in-depth strategic information on U.S. nuclear weapons and policy to NATO allies. But these briefings had limited success. The information provided to the Europeans was not new or compelling and did little to change their positions on nuclear issues; like the nuclear committee, these were one-way conversations. With the problems of ignorance and mistrust among allies continuing to plague negotiations on nuclear sharing, McNamara became convinced by 1965 of the necessity of high-level consultation as an educational tool among NATO’s political leaders.

When McNamara made his first proposal in May, he was not following any official State or Defense Department policy, and U.S. policy overall on nuclear sharing remained quite fluid. The International Security Affairs office of the Pentagon initially proposed a Select Committee, whereupon McNamara hastily gained approval from President Johnson for the proposal only days before the Paris ministerial meeting and without consulting the State Department. To be sure, the idea for the committee had

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not originated with the policy planning staff in the Pentagon, but in the halls of NATO during numerous discussions over several months. Mainly due to the challenges to alliance solidarity, the British representatives at NATO and the relatively new Secretary General Manlio Brosio supported a new nuclear committee to resolve the issues of nuclear use that were plaguing alliance relations as a whole. Other NATO members added to the discussion by demanding more information from the United States on nuclear targeting because previous consultation attempts had been unsatisfactory. Much of NATO had begun to echo West Germany’s dissatisfaction with the standard American response on the topic which was essentially “don’t worry, we have it covered.”

In the spring of 1965, Secretary Brosio attempted to organize high-level meetings in NATO on nuclear strategy, but the French delegation consistently blocked these efforts. Nevertheless, the majority of NATO members were determined to overcome French objections to a German role in a consultative body, although, because of the upcoming elections in both Germany and France, they agreed to delay discussions of the U.S. proposal. When the discussions resumed, the French representatives continued their obstructionist policies, refusing to include the Secretary General in the Select Committee because this threatened to create a more permanent NATO body than the one proposed by McNamara. However, the combined weight of the rest of the NATO

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48 PRO, FO 371/184457, Telegram No. 30 from U.K. Delegation to NATO to Foreign Office, June 30, 1965; and PRO, PREM 13/479, “Note of a meeting between Signor Brosio, Secretary General of NATO, Mr. Mulley, Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh and Mr. J. Dromgoole on March 11, 1965, Paris.”

49 PRO, FO 371/184457, Telegram No. 190, UK Delegation to NATO to Foreign Office, July 19, 1965.
members overcame French efforts to stall the process of forming a committee. Even before France announced its withdrawal from the military structure of NATO in 1966, its continued intransigence on nuclear sharing issues and its unwillingness even to negotiate led to a marginalization of the French position.

Most European representatives reacted to McNamara’s proposal with some skepticism. The most important partner in the nuclear sharing issue, West Germany, insisted that a consultative body was not an effective substitute for a hardware solution to the nuclear sharing issue. Officials in Bonn feared that the formation of a Select Committee would allow Washington to jettison the ongoing negotiations over the multilateral force or, at the very least, to diminish their value. West German policy makers continued to insist on a “material bond” concerning nuclear weapons that would only come with a multilateral force that would ensure German involvement in the decision making process.\(^{50}\) Despite these suspicions, Chancellor Erhard’s administration could not refuse an American proposal to expand discussions on nuclear issues without appearing as obstructionist as the French. When forced to make a final commitment to the committee, de Gaulle predictably refused to participate.\(^{51}\) Although the rest of NATO was willing to include the French in nuclear discussions, France’s absence presumably made the talks less contentious and more amicable. Of all the NATO members, Great

\(^{50}\) PAAA, B150, vol. 67, Letter from Carstens to Foreign Minister Spaak, January 10, 1966.

\(^{51}\) FRUS, Volume XIII, Document 94, Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary McNamara and Dutch Ambassador Schurmann, July 6, 1965.
Britain, and especially Defense Minister Healey, responded most favorably and made immediate suggestions for the committee’s organization and purpose.\footnote{LBJL, Personal Papers, Papers of Francis Bator, Box 26, Memorandum of Conversation, Healey-McNaughton in London, 27 October, 1965.}

The vagueness of U.S. policy concerning the Select Committee may have assisted in gaining the Europeans’ acceptance. The United States did not offer any specifics on the committee’s procedures but let the new nuclear sharing concept develop during alliance negotiations. Between May and July 1965, permanent representatives in NATO conducted numerous bilateral and group discussions to gather responses and suggestions for the Select Committee. Secretary McNamara incorporated many of these ideas when he defined the U.S. proposal in more detail. This was a subtle change in how America attempted to address nuclear weapons in NATO. Motivated by the failure of the MLF and the atmosphere of impending crisis in NATO, the U.S. was more amenable to allied suggestions. For his part, McNamara continued to keep his proposals limited, focusing on educating allies on nuclear matters. Once the committee developed a “common background,” he believed it would be possible to study and develop plans for nuclear use, crisis consultation procedures, future force structure in the alliance, and implications for arms control.\footnote{LBJL, Personal Papers, Papers of Francis Bator, Box 26, “Nuclear Planning and Consultation, Remarks before the Select Committee of Defense Ministers on July 29, 1965 by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.”}

Most allies found this concept favorable, but from the outset the issue of membership was a serious point of contention. McNamara’s initial proposals called for a committee consisting of the most influential members of NATO. The smaller non-nuclear nations did not receive this well. Because limited membership threatened the
principle of equality that NATO was built on, they argued that no interested state should be excluded from such a vital issue in alliance defense. McNamara, unmoved by calls for open membership, threatened to withdraw his proposals to placate the allies on nuclear sharing issues and to deal with the issue bilaterally.  

But forces for compromise both within NATO and the Johnson administration seemed to continuously soften McNamara’s position. Even during its formative stages, some of those responsible for putting together the formal proposal for the Select Committee in the Pentagon considered it unviable because its inherent membership inequalities would damage NATO unity. The key NATO member that required satisfaction was West Germany. Nonetheless, every NATO member had to agree to establish the new committee. In order to break the deadlock, the Americans relented and allowed all member states to send representatives, and they dubbed the resulting organization the Special Committee. Also, in order to placate the French and others who distrusted U.S. motives for this organization, the Special Committee’s charter remained explicitly temporary, requiring constant endorsement by the Defense Planning Committee. Not until late 1965 did Bonn give its assent to an initial Special Committee meeting based on these conditions. This was the first step in the slow process of gaining approval for consultation as a substitute for nuclear sharing.

On November 27, 1965, the Special Committee for Nuclear Affairs met for the first time. Defense ministers from all the NATO countries except France, Iceland,  


Luxembourg, and Norway chose to attend. Informational briefings by Secretary McNamara and his staff dominated most of the discussion. McNamara provided detailed descriptions of the American nuclear arsenal, stockpiles, and capabilities and the current plans for their use. This constituted the first comprehensive look at Washington’s nuclear planning provided for its NATO allies at a political level and in a group setting.

European defense ministers in attendance reacted positively. According to the British delegation, the fact this information was made available, under security rules that enabled DefMins to use it in their own governments (on a "need-to-know" basis) added greatly to the sense that the formation of this Special Committee was an important moment in the life of the Alliance. It also indicated that the U.S. really intends to consult more seriously with allies on nuclear questions that affect them.\(^{56}\)

The crucial first meeting of the Special Committee assuaged some NATO members’ fears by signaling a new and significant step by the United States toward a noteworthy two-way communication.

McNamara, however, wanted more. The large size of the Special Committee failed to meet his goal of a body that discussed issues frankly and concluded decisive agreements. In November, he proposed to subdivide the Special Committee into working groups. Group I was to study methods and procedures for information exchange, group II, the specifics of NATO communications systems, and group III, nuclear planning. Groups I and II would address primarily technical issues that internal NATO staffs, both military and ambassadorial, were equipped to handle. Every member of the Special Committee had access to at least one of the first two working groups.

\(^{56}\) PRO, FO 371/184462, Telegram No. 300, From UK Delegation NATO to Foreign Office, November 27, 1965.
McNamara saw working group III as the key part of the proposal. He intended this group to mirror his original proposal for a limited membership select committee, and it consisted of Defense Ministers from the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, and Turkey.\textsuperscript{57} The first four members were the largest and most influential Special Committee representatives on nuclear matters. The fifth seat went to Turkey after a drawing of lots among the smaller non-nuclear states when no agreement could be reached on which member should represent their interests.\textsuperscript{58} Following these sometimes tough negotiations, NATO issued a communiqué announcing the creation of the three working groups and a schedule of numerous follow up meetings through 1966.\textsuperscript{59}

At this point, the process for nuclear planning began moving quickly. Only a few days later, the U.S., British, and West German ambassadors met as a steering committee to determine working group procedures.\textsuperscript{60} Within two weeks they arranged a “tripartite dinner” for the defense ministers of their governments to discuss the issues surrounding McNamara’s proposals. On that occasion, Kai Uwe von Hassel, the German Defense Minister, did not mention the hardware solution, but promised to convey the FRG’s nuclear planning concerns in a formal document. The hardware issue continued to cloud the diplomatic scene, however. The British Defense Minister, Denis Healey, worried over Washington’s steadfastness on this issue and Prime Minister Harold Wilson


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 54.

\textsuperscript{59} LBJL, NSF, Agency File, Box 39, “Secretary McNamara’s Comments on Briefings at the Special Committee of NATO Defense Ministers, November 1965,” undated.

\textsuperscript{60} PRO, FO 371/184463, Telegram No. 317 From UK Delegation to NATO to Foreign Office, December 3, 1965.
expressed alarm over Erhard’s upcoming visit to Washington, fearing some sort of commitment by the United States. Erhard still publicly demanded a hardware solution and Johnson seemed inclined to conciliate him.\textsuperscript{61} At the tripartite dinner, the three defense ministers quickly adopted the procedures for the nuclear planning working groups that their NATO ambassadors had put together, allowing for the next series of meetings and the continued study of nuclear planning issues.

Working Group III met in Washington on 17-18 February 1966 (for a list of working group and NPG meetings, see Appendix A). It received more detailed informational briefings from U.S. officials that drew increasing praise from NATO’s European members. McNamara left one session saying that he had learned more from his colleagues in three hours than in the previous five years. The five defense ministers made positive contributions to defining the working language and procedures.\textsuperscript{62} McNamara also conducted a tour of the Pentagon and Command Center to enable his colleagues to see the nuclear planning and decision making machinery within the United States firsthand.

The European defense ministers were favorably impressed with the software alternative. “The German and Italian and Turkish participants could see that British access to American minds came not so much from the dubiously relevant British nuclear force…as from the fact that Denis Healey…knew what he was talking about and was not

\textsuperscript{61} PRO, PREM 13/805, Telegram No.335 From UK Delegation to NATO to Foreign Office, December 14, 1965; and PRO, PREM 13/805, Letter from Johnson to Wilson, December 23, 1965.

\textsuperscript{62} One specific case involved von Hassel, who had emphasized that according to his government, there was no difference between strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. PAAA, B150, vol. 70, Telegram 390 from West German Embassy Washington to Bonn, February 19, 1966.
bashful about speaking up.” The primary audience for the two-day gathering, the German delegation led by von Hassel, expressed their pleasure at the progress made, despite the fact that in the final meeting the other four delegations prevented him from focusing some discussion on the hardware solution his government still espoused.

Despite all the goodwill, no concrete results came from this meeting. Each member presented a paper addressing his views on current nuclear policy and his national concerns, with the Germans focusing on issues of control and stressing the need for a hardware solution and the British and Italians on establishing nuclear release decision making procedures within NATO. This remained a first step in the process of exchanging views in a limited forum, but much of the digestion of the papers and the negotiations with allies was left for deputies and NATO ambassadors. The similar positions of Secretary McNamara and Minister Healey became readily apparent, as they agreed and supported each other fully, so much so that the Italian delegation commented “At the meeting in Washington, Mr. Healey had sometimes given the impression that he was a more fervent advocate of American strategic ideas than the Americans themselves.” And yet, the Germans were not mollified by the software solution. Chancellor Erhard continued to insist on the MLF and remained skeptical over the role of

63 Cleveland, NATO: The Transatlantic Bargain, 55.
64 PAAA, B150, vol. 70, Deutsches Memorandum für die erste Sitzung der Arbeitsgruppe in Washington am 17/18 Februar 1966; PRO, DEFE 13/885 and FO 371/190634, “NATO Nuclear Special Committee, Nuclear Planning Working Group, Record of meeting at the State Department, 9:00a.m. 17 February, 1966.”; PRO, DEFE 13/885, “Nuclear Planning Working Group, Record of Final Discussion, PM, 18 February 1966.”
65 PRO, DEFE 25/97, DS12/215/5/2, “NATO Nuclear Special Committee, Brief for meeting to be held 17/18 February 1966.”
non-nuclear states in the current working group format. Wilson, who tried to assuage his concerns, stressed the success of the Special Committee and held open the remote possibility of a hardware solution.\textsuperscript{67}

While Working Group III was making some progress, the French suddenly announced in February 1966 their intention to withdraw from military integration in the NATO alliance. This announcement heightened the efforts by the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany to overcome their differences over nuclear sharing in order to preserve the alliance and demonstrate solidarity. To be sure, the French action only indirectly affected the Special Committee and Working Group III. Already in July 1965 the French had announced that they saw no usefulness in the Special Committee and had remained aloof from its meetings. After France’s military withdrawal from NATO, it effectively divorced itself from all discussions and decisions on defense as well as nuclear planning. In general terms, the French withdrawal allowed for some progress in the discussions within other bodies in NATO. Since 1963, the United States had viewed the French as the primary force within the Standing Group that had blocked any resolution of strategy differences.\textsuperscript{68} French opposition was so great as to cause the NATO Secretary General to doubt the viability of the alliance under the current unanimity rules.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{67} PRO, PREM 13/805, “Draft Reply to Dr. Erhard from the Prime Minister” and “Draft Reply to President Johnson from the Prime Minister,” undated; PRO, PREM 13/805, “Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Sharing,” March 14, 1966.


\textsuperscript{69} LBJL, NSF, International Meetings and Travel File, Box 34, Ministerial Meetings-Hague 12 May, Department of State Memorandum of Conversation between NATO Secretary General Dirk Stikker and Secretary of State, March 18, 1964.
French intransigence on nuclear sharing issues had been one of the primary stumbling blocks for the MLF and the resolution of the nuclear sharing problem in NATO. The West German desire to placate the French in Europe had given Paris a double vote in nuclear defense issues, by instilling caution in German leadership toward alliance proposals. Bonn feared that de Gaulle would link the nuclear sharing issue with the ongoing negotiations over the European Economic Community and other wider issues in Franco-German relations.\(^{70}\) Fear of alienating Paris over nuclear sharing had instilled caution in Britain and Belgium until 1966 as well.\(^{71}\) The much discussed and looming crisis brought about by the French attitude in NATO spurred NATO representatives to find some alternative to preserve stability and cohesion in the alliance. France’s withdrawal from the military commitments of the alliance a year later became crucial to the progress of the Special Committee. It reduced the viability of the hardware alternative, galvanized the alliance towards some resolution of nuclear sharing, and removed the burden of heeding Paris’s directives. Once de Gaulle withdrew from NATO, French opinions regarding nuclear consultation became almost completely marginalized and insignificant with respect to the Special Committee. Fear of what the French might do had delayed progress in the alliance, but once de Gaulle removed that fear, NATO moved forward without France.

After the French withdrawal, the British pressed to expedite the process of creating a software solution to nuclear sharing. In March 1966, the steering committee

\(^{70}\) NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Box 8, Germany II, DEF 12 Department of Defense Memorandum, “FRG Attitude on Nuclear Sharing,” November 6, 1965.

\(^{71}\) PRO, DEFE 25/59, “Record of Meeting With Secretary of State on NATO Select Committee for Nuclear Consultation, 18 August 1965”; PRO, FO371/184461, Letter from R.E. Barclay in Brussels, November 10, 1965.
made up of the U.S., UK and FRG ambassadors to NATO continued to meet to determine the program of work and set goals for working group III. As things progressed at a more rapid pace, it became clear that the triangular relationship had become important for all three parties as a means of setting a solid foundation for NATO during the French challenge to its solidarity and existence.\textsuperscript{72}

At their second meeting in April 1966, the Defense Ministers in Working Group III focused on issues of tactical nuclear warfare. Both SACEUR and his naval counterpart gave informational briefings and the American participants described the resulting discussion as open and “spirited.”\textsuperscript{73} The members agreed on the following points: that the current nuclear arsenal in Europe was adequate; that current plans for nuclear conflict in Europe were well integrated into the U.S. nuclear war plans; that more study was needed concerning the use of nuclear weapons in a limited conflict; and, most importantly, that the lack of a permanent nuclear planning body in NATO must be corrected. The members planned to come to the next meeting in July with proposals for such a body.\textsuperscript{74} This became a turning point in the debate over a software versus a hardware solution for the nuclear sharing problem. From this point on, U.S. President Johnson became convinced that the software solution was most viable, and during the

\textsuperscript{72} PRO, DEFE 13/488, “United States Policy Towards the Federal Republic of Germany, Sir Patrick Dean to Robert Stewart, April 12, 1966.”

\textsuperscript{73} LBJL, NSF, Agency File, Box 36, NATO General volume 4, Department of State Research Memorandum, “The Special Committee, Can it Satisfy European Nuclear Aspirations?” September 22, 1966.

\textsuperscript{74} LBJL, Personal Papers, Papers of Francis Bator, Box 27, “Meeting of Nuclear Planning Working Group, NATO Special Committee of Defense Ministers, London 28-29 April 1966, Minutes.”
next three months the Erhard administration also turned away from the dubious British ANF proposal and the MLF in general.\textsuperscript{75}

West German Defense Minister von Hassel appeared pleased and welcomed the discussions in the working group meetings despite his failure to insert hardware issues in the meeting minutes.\textsuperscript{76} Von Hassel continued to stress that consultation was not the only solution to the nuclear sharing; but as a signal that Bonn was retreating from the hardware solution, he refrained from his usual references to the MLF.\textsuperscript{77} In addition, von Hassel informed U.S. Ambassador George McGhee that West Germany would give up plans for a hardware solution if the results of the Special Committee gave it adequate influence in nuclear planning for the entire nuclear arsenal, not just those assigned to Europe.\textsuperscript{78}

The July 1966 meeting of Working Group III focused primarily on the proposals for creating a permanent body called the Nuclear Planning Group. McNamara continued to insist on limited membership. He proposed a body modeled on Working Group III and his original concept of a Select Committee, consisting of defense ministers representing four permanent and one rotating member. But when the Special Committee came together and McNamara presented this proposal, the results were not encouraging.

\textsuperscript{75} PRO, PREM 13/2559, Personal Telegram from PM Wilson to President Johnson, May 26, 1966; PRO, DEFE 25/96, “Record of a meeting between the Secretary of State and Mr. McNaughton on 17 August 1966.”

\textsuperscript{76} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1585, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Bonn 3570, “London Meeting of Working Group on Nuclear Planning,” May 3, 1966 and Department of State Telegram, Paris 1280, “Nuclear Planning Working Group Meeting,” July 26, 1966.

\textsuperscript{77} LBJL, NSF, Agency File, Box 36, NATO General volume 4, Department of State Research Memorandum, “The Special Committee, Can it Satisfy European Nuclear Aspirations?” September 22, 1966.

\textsuperscript{78} LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 186, Germany, Department of State Telegram, Bonn 083, “German Attitude on Nuclear Sharing,” July 2, 1966.
defense ministers could not come to agreement on the hard details of the permanent group’s organization and purpose, primarily because of the inherent inequalities in a group of limited members. Great Britain wanted both foreign and defense ministers represented in nuclear planning (which McNamara opposed, primarily to keep his hands free), and Turkey desired at least three rotating members. Both ideas violated McNamara’s vision of a small, informal group.

Along with the conflicting visions on membership in the nuclear planning body, two other factors worked to delay immediate progress on the establishment of the new NPG. Bonn also displayed reluctance to immediately establish a planning group, fearing its formation would foreclose any future discussion of nuclear sharing. Erhard’s administration wanted to maintain the bargaining chip of the MLF/ANF as long as possible.79 Within NATO itself, there was also consternation over the chairmanship of the new group. McNamara, who up to this point had chaired the working group meetings, wanted a rotating chairmanship among the defense ministers. Secretary General Manlio Brosio, fearing his constitutional position within NATO would be weakened, insisted that he and his successors chair any permanent organization of defense ministers.

At this point US Ambassador to NATO, Harlan Cleveland, took a more direct role in the negotiations. He succeeded in modifying McNamara’s views on the Nuclear Planning Group’s organization, which led to smoother dealings with America’s allies. The membership issue continued to plague the working group staff into the fall of 1966, but the Special Committee resolved two issues at the Rome meeting. McNamara agreed

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79 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 12 NATO, Department of Defense Telegram, Paris 3005, “For Secretary McNamara from Cleveland,” September 2, 1966.
to at least two rotating members and to give the permanent chairmanship to the Secretary General. But policy differences between the Departments of State and Defense in Washington were not entirely solved by Cleveland and McNamara. In light of Erhard’s upcoming visit to Washington, the State Department stressed caution in pushing forward proposals on a software solution at the September Special Committee meeting, and McNamara appears to have agreed.\(^8^0\) However, McNamara, supported by Healey, seems to have done everything he could to push the proposals forward in order to get a consensus in the Special Committee to present to the North Atlantic Council Meeting approaching in December.\(^8^1\) Recognizing that the approval of all NATO members would be needed to establish a permanent committee, Working Group III decided to create a steering committee open to all NATO members to meet in October to determine the exact rotational scheme for membership in the Nuclear Planning Group.

With the discussion now open to all NATO members, the rotational membership plan for the Nuclear Planning Group stirred a major debate. Secretary General Brosio took the lead in attempting to find a solution. Working behind the scenes, he used numerous “corridor meetings” to reach an agreement. Opposition to only two rotating members came primarily from the Netherlands and Turkey. The Dutch, who insisted on the same rights to permanent membership as Italy, refused to be “put in the same basket” as the Belgians.\(^8^2\) Turkey still promoted its original idea of three rotational seats but

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\(^{80}\) NARA RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Box 8, Department of State Memorandum to Mr. Leddy, September 15, 1966.

\(^{81}\) NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 12 NATO, “Memorandum of Conversation, Special Committee, Nuclear Planning Working Group,” September 23, 1966.

eventually relinquished it in exchange for assurances of a seat in the initial rotation.\textsuperscript{83} Canada and Greece both expressed their desires to be initial members as well and looked to make a deal similar to Turkey’s. Of the remaining potential rotational members, Denmark and Belgium were accommodating and did not raise any problems. But with four nations vying for two seats, the resolution of the debate over rotational members did not occur until the December Minister level meetings.

The Dutch again proved the most contentious.\textsuperscript{84} Just before the ministerial meeting, Dutch Foreign Minister Joseph Luns warned Brosio that the Netherlands might stay out of the NPG altogether and also expressed his displeasure with U.S. policy in other areas such as base rights for aircraft and submarines. Luns appeared to use the NPG membership problem to interject other issues of Dutch importance and took such an extreme position in the hope of receiving an initial seat alongside Turkey.\textsuperscript{85} Only a day after his exchange with Brosio, Luns told the press that Dutch membership in the NPG was of small importance as long as “German political ambition was satisfied.”\textsuperscript{86} With its own seat assured, West Germany’s officials kept a low profile in the membership debate, which really was a test of wills between the potentially rotating members of the group and the United States. Although fully supporting the American position, the Germans did

\textsuperscript{83}NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 12 NATO, Department of Defense Telegram, Paris 3381, “Turkish Views on Nuclear Planning Group,” September 10, 1966.


\textsuperscript{85}NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 8987, “SPECOM-NPG Membership,” December 12, 1966; FRUS, Volume XIII, Document 228, “Telegram from Secretary of State Rusk to the Department of State,” December 14, 1966.

\textsuperscript{86}NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, the Hague, December 13, 1966.
not want to alienate the other non-nuclear states in NATO. On the other hand, by the
winter of 1966, once West Germany had formally abandoned the hardware solution, it
focused on a rapid resolution of membership disputes so that nuclear consultation could
go forward.\textsuperscript{87}

The United States made a final compromise on the issue of NPG membership by
allowing for three rotational members. The overwhelming demand of the rotational
members and their desires for active and frequent involvement forced the issue. By
December, McNamara had become the only strong advocate of limiting NPG
membership to six and found little support from the other permanent members. The
Germans and British were willing to compromise in order to ensure the creation of the
NPG by the December ministerial meeting in order to display a clear signal that the
alliance was strengthening its institutions in response to the French challenge.\textsuperscript{88}

In December 1966, the defense ministers formally abolished the Special
Committee and created two new organizations for nuclear planning. Subordinate to the
Defense Planning Committee in NATO, they created the Nuclear Defense Affairs
Committee (NDAC), which was open to all NATO members. (For an organization chart
of NPG committees, see Appendix B). When Norway decided to participate the total
NDAC membership reached twelve. Beneath the NDAC was the Nuclear Planning
Group, with four permanent members, the Defense Ministers of the United States, Great
Britain, West Germany, and Italy, and three rotational members, grouped by regions into


\textsuperscript{88} PRO, DEFE 25/99 and FO 371/190638, Telegram No. 10043 From Foreign Office to Washington, November 7, 1966.
pairs that would rotate every eighteen months. The first rotation consisted of Canada, the Netherlands and Turkey, with Turkey agreeing to a first rotation of only one year because of its previous involvement in Working Group III. Norway at this time appeared content to remain outside of the rotational scheme and only a member of the NDAC. Thus, after more than eighteen months of almost continuous high level meetings, the NPG was born.

Interestingly, all of the provisions for the NPG were listed in a “gentlemen’s agreement” among the Defense Ministers and not formally endorsed. The basic elements of the agreement were that despite the rotational scheme, all the members of the NPG were equal, that the exact nature of the rotational system was to be kept secret, and that the NPG would remain a politically oriented body with no institutional role for the military leaders in NATO. This less formal arrangement was the price paid for getting the rotational members to agree to their clearly inferior status in the group, and ministers generally recognized that many elements of the agreement would be subject to debate and alteration in the future.

The eight months between December 1965 and July 1966 were a turning point in the NATO debate over the hardware versus the software solution for nuclear sharing. The impetus had come mainly from the British and the American defense departments. The British finally achieved their goal of killing the hardware solution, first by proposing the ANF, a hardware alternative destined to fail, and then by dedicating their efforts to supporting the growing momentum of McNamara’s software proposal. Defense Minister Healey was just as concerned about the U.S. State Department’s policy favoring the MLF

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89 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 9384, “NDAC Meeting December 19,” December 19, 1966; PRO, FCO 41/429, Telegram No. 709 From UK Delegation to NATO to Foreign Office, December 20, 1966.
as was McNamara, and he remained an international ally of the Defense Department in this policy debate within the Johnson administration. The British also worked to eliminate any discussions of nuclear sharing outside of the special committee, which they and McNamara dominated. This included the ongoing negotiations with the Soviets over non-proliferation.\(^90\) In private discussions, Prime Minister Wilson worked to convince Johnson that consultation remained the most viable solution to the nuclear sharing problem. Nonetheless, the debate between the State and Defense Departments prevented a unified policy from Washington and a stronger stand by President Johnson towards Bonn.

For the West Germans, the acceptance of the software solution corresponded with an important shift in domestic politics. Until his defeat at the polls in 1966, Erhard continued to push for a hardware solution. But the Grand Coalition between his supporters in the CDU and the less intransigent SPD that assumed power in December was more prepared to accept a role of influence in planning and decision making over physical control of nuclear weapons.\(^91\) Contrary to the FRG’s original aims, the Special Committee and its working groups had created an alternative to the MLF/ANF and the Johnson administration and the U.S. Congress concurred.\(^92\) Few could oppose the formation of the NPG, because all agreed that the stated goals of the group, better communication and consultation, remained crucial for the alliance. The only difficult

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\(^{90}\) PRO, PREM 13/805, “Record of a meeting between the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Soviet Foreign Ministry, February 23, 1966.”


\(^{92}\) PAAA, B32, Vol. 254.
question was whether the NPG would satisfy the German desire for greater influence in NATO nuclear affairs and quench the Europeans’ desire for a hardware solution.

The Software Solution: Political Factors

As the Nuclear Planning Group concept moved forward in 1966, the U.S. Departments of State and Defense began working together towards similar goals with regard to nuclear sharing, a situation that was lacking earlier in the 1960s. Although McNamara had apparently made the proposal for a Select Committee without consulting the State Department, his deputy in the Committee and Working Group III was the U.S. Ambassador to NATO Harlan Cleveland.93 On NPG issues they communicated often, and Cleveland became the primary representative of U.S. policy in NPG matters in NATO. The deputy members conducted much of the negotiations and daily labor between the more highly visible Defense Minister meetings of Working Group III. Meeting on almost on a weekly basis as a group and engaged constantly in bilateral discussions, the deputies presented proposals and outlined national positions in an attempt to gain consensus. Cleveland made an increasing impact on the discussions and on U.S. policy as time went on.94 Although the Secretary of State Dean Rusk remained cautious throughout 1966 on the software solution, McNamara pushed his policy forward and the Special Committee forced the Departments of State and Defense to communicate more effectively to ensure its success.95 As it became clear throughout 1966 that the MLF


94 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 12 NATO, “Memorandum of Conversation, Special Committee, Nuclear Planning Working Group,” September 23, 1966.

95 NARA, RG 59, Bureau of European Affairs, Box 8, Department of State Memorandum to Mr. Leddy, September 15, 1966.
had little hope for fulfillment, the NPG increasingly became a unified policy goal in Washington.

The French role in the evolution of the Special Committee was marginal, mostly due to their abstention from direct involvement, but the Special Committee’s success contributed in at least a small way to Paris’s decision to withdraw from NATO defense. The initial success of the Special Committee’s first meeting in 1965 and the subsequent advancement of consultation early in 1966 only contributed to the French feelings of prejudicial treatment in an alliance of decreasing usefulness. After the meeting of the first Special Committee, French NATO representatives expressed their desire to gain transcripts of McNamara’s and Healey’s remarks. The response was generally “come to the meetings if you want to hear them.” Most NATO delegations supported the line that if France chose not to participate, it should not “throw stones” at what came out of the meetings and if France wished to be as forthright about its nuclear plans as the United States was becoming, it could participate. Secretary General Brosio eventually mirrored this sentiment, although he had initially acknowledged the French complaints in an attempt to preserve alliance unity.

The initial success of the Special Committee appears to have taken de Gaulle by surprise. But once it was established and the working groups met on a regular basis, the French attempts to thwart it grew more difficult. De Gaulle, who feared to display weakness before other NATO members during the crucial domestic elections of 1966, hid

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96 PRO, FO 371/184463, Telegram No. 308 From UK Delegation to NATO to Foreign Office, November 30, 1965.

97 PRO, FO 371/184464 and DEFE 25/29, Note From Cleveland to Secretaries of State and Defense, December 15, 1965.
his disgruntlement from the French public. The French based their opposition to the Special Committee on their desire to prevent the full integration of NATO forces in general, and, especially, its nuclear capabilities, and also to limit German influence on nuclear matters. But with NATO under U.S. leadership now seeming to move past French opposition to nuclear sharing, there was little incentive for de Gaulle to continue French involvement in NATO defense and this facilitated his decision to withdraw.

By initiating a crisis in NATO in 1966, de Gaulle had served as a galvanizing force that made the remaining NATO members more willing to compromise in order to maintain unity. When the French offered a competing vision for the defense of Europe that would exclude the United States, this spurred U.S. policy makers into action. In a memorandum to the President, Walter Rostow had stated “[w]e ought to accompany the NATO reorganization with as many forward-looking measures in the Atlantic as possible.” A permanent consultative body within NATO for nuclear planning and policy would certainly qualify, and served as a counter to the French challenge in the vital area of nuclear defense. President Johnson seemed to echo this sentiment in a letter to Wilson where he stated, “we cannot risk the danger of a rudderless Germany in the heart of Europe…I believe therefore that it is imperative for our three countries to stay as


101 LBJL, NSF, Agency File, Box 36, NATO General Volume 8, Memorandum to the President from Walt Rostow, “Atlantic Policy,” April 17, 1966.
close as possible to each other. On that basis Europe and the Atlantic world can be
rallied.\textsuperscript{102}

Although this riposte to the French challenge may have ensured the survival of
the NATO alliance, the French withdrawal clearly diminished the alliance’s defense
capabilities as well as its relative strength vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact. Denied any
guarantees of help from France, NATO military planners faced reduced options for the
conduct of defense in West Germany. The loss of the permanent use of French airspace
and ports created significant logistical difficulties for NATO land forces, and there
remained no explicit guarantee that NATO forces would be allowed to retreat to France if
they met initial reverses in Germany. Into 1967, continued French intransigence over
efforts to ensure military cooperation led to a movement to give NATO’s Defense
Planning Committee, from which France had withdrawn, more constitutional power in
NATO to counter French obstruction in the North Atlantic Council (NAC).\textsuperscript{103} Thus the
French withdrawal created both a year long crisis and an opportunity for the NATO
alliance to initiate reforms.

West Germany underwent a period of profound political change through the
1960s. In three stages from 1963 to 1969, the CDU party led by Konrad Adenauer,
which had led the FRG since the end of World War II, was completely replaced by two
coalition governments; the second coalition was led by the their SPD rivals and excluded
the Christian Democrats entirely. These political changes in West Germany affected the
formation of the Nuclear Planning Group and Bonn’s acceptance of a consultative

\textsuperscript{102} PRO, PREM 13/2559, Personal Telegram from PM Wilson to President Johnson, May 26,
1966.

\textsuperscript{103} PRO, FCO 41/206, Letter from Le Hardy, “Consultation in Times of Crisis,” June 23, 1967.
process as the solution for nuclear sharing issues in NATO. Nuclear policy and
negotiations with the United States held a much more important role in domestic West
German politics than the reverse, and both parties defined very different platforms for
nuclear defense. The West German position on nuclear sharing from 1963 to 1967
changed gradually and depended greatly on the personal beliefs of key individuals in the
West German defense and foreign policy establishment.

In 1963, Konrad Adenauer had supported the initial proposal for a multilateral
force armed with nuclear weapons and manned by various NATO nations. He did so to
gain a short-term tactical advantage in negotiations. In his later years as Chancellor,
Adenauer also moved toward greater cooperation both diplomatically and militarily with
Paris than with Washington.\textsuperscript{104} Indeed, as early as 1957, he had explored the possibility
of nuclear cooperation with France to build nuclear weapons on French soil; both sides
appeared close to an agreement until de Gaulle’s election altered French nuclear policy
completely.\textsuperscript{105}

Ludwig Erhard, who replaced Adenauer in 1963, held more pliable views on
nuclear defense and exercised less forceful control over Bonn’s foreign policy. But
Erhard’s principal policy makers remained wedded to the idea of a multilateral force and
the strengthening of ties to the United States long past the point in 1964 when both the
Americans and the British had all but abandoned the project. Erhard’s defense minister,
Franz Josef Strauss, although favoring close relations with France, supported any form of

\textsuperscript{104} LBIL, NSF, Files of McGeorge Bundy, Box 15, “Conversation with Former Chancellor

\textsuperscript{105} Matthias, Küntzel, \textit{Bonn and the Bomb: German Politics and the Nuclear Option}, trans. Helke
direct West German control of nuclear weapons. Strauss’s successor, Kai Uwe von Hassel, ardently supported the MLF concept, but was also committed to fostering amicable U.S. relations, which tempered Bonn’s stubbornness on nuclear issues. Moreover, while Gerhard Schröder, West German foreign minister from 1961 to 1966, promoted ties with Washington as well as the MLF, Erhard was less committed one way or the other and sought the most politically viable solution. It appears that the “Atlanticists,” Schröder and von Hassel, prevailed over the “Gaullists” within Erhard’s administration and won their chancellor’s support for a nuclear defense policy focused on NATO and not on France. What form this policy was to take and how NATO would address the West German desire for nuclear sharing remained a thorny issue for Erhard. Strauss and other Gaullists continued to argue that a European Nuclear Force should be established, but by December 1965 they were clearly a minority within the Bundestag. The French withdrawal from NATO forced the split within Erhard’s own party out in the open, because it essentially required the West Germans to take sides and support either an American led NATO or an independent European stance led by France. This split within the CDU weakened the party as it faced an increasingly popular SPD that had reformed its own foreign policy platform.

The Social Democratic Party underwent a major change in its defense policy in the early 1960s. During the first years of the Federal Republic, the party had focused on

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reunification and saw the integration of West Germany into a Western defensive alliance as preventing the resolution of the division of Germany. But by 1960 the party had taken steps that would make their defense policies into conformity with Cold War realities. The SPD became less the party of opposition and more of an advocate of gradual change. It endorsed the NATO alliance and West Germany’s crucial role within it, and under the increasingly influential leadership of Willy Brandt also advocated reducing Cold War tensions in Europe. In order to adopt this new policy, the SPD recognized that short term policies for reunification were not feasible. This did much to present the SPD as a moderate and a viable alternative to the CDU, instead of the radical opposition that once had opposed Adenauer’s policy of tying West Germany to Western Europe and the United States.

The commitment of Chancellor Erhard’s government to the MLF for two years after the British and elements of the American administration had all but abandoned it can be attributed to the individuals driving West German policy in 1965 and 1966. These leaders had hoped to gain political advantages by keeping the hardware issue alive. Erhard’s defense and foreign ministers had regarded the MLF as an effective device for gaining influence in NATO nuclear defense planning. But it had also served to keep the nuclear sharing issue open and in the forefront of allied discussions while American interest in the non-proliferation treaty had increased, and thus it was used as valuable leverage. Lastly, there were no other viable alternatives that satisfied West German

desires for participation in nuclear planning until NATO formalized the Nuclear Planning Group, and until one existed the MLF concept was necessary.\footnote{Dieter Mahnke, \textit{Nukleare Mitwirkung: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Atlantischen Allianz, 1954-1970} (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1972), 231-33.}

The end of the MLF idea and the acceptance of the Nuclear Planning Group alternative came at time of dramatic political change in the Federal Republic. It was the new West German Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger and his “Grand Coalition” who made the final step and accepted the software solution, but Erhard’s government was well on its way to doing so before it fell. During his meeting in Washington with President Johnson in September 1966, Erhard finally agreed to end the discussion of the hardware solution.\footnote{LBJL, NSF, Files of Spurgeon Keeny, Box 6, “Joint Communiqué by President Johnson and Chancellor Erhard, 27 September 1966.”} But the divisions within the Erhard government and SPD opposition to the MLF prevented him from immediately agreeing to the establishment of the Nuclear Planning Group.\footnote{LBJL, NSF, Agency File, Box 35, NATO General Volume 2, Memorandum of Conversation between US Ambassador Finletter and FRG Ambassador Grewe, December 23, 1964.} Once Erhard returned to Bonn, the doubts about the NATO alliance and German-American relations hastened his fall.\footnote{FRUS, Volume XV, Document 139, “Memorandum Prepared by John W. McCloy,” December 17, 1966.} When the SPD, whose defense policies seemed more in line with NATO allies than the Christian Democrats, entered the government in late 1966, the software solution within NATO could move forward.

As the Nuclear Planning Group took shape in 1966 and 1967, NATO policy continued to parallel political developments in West Germany. For the first time, proponents of détente such as Willy Brandt held key foreign policy positions, and the CDU Chancellor Kiesinger also supported smaller steps toward a dialogue with Eastern
Europe. NATO reflected this softening of extreme positions. The United States encouraged more dialogue within the alliance, and endorsed discussions with the Warsaw Pact when NATO approved the Harmel report. This report, endorsed by the North Atlantic Counsel in December 1967, was a critical political turning point in the alliance. It explicitly endorsed efforts at decreasing tension and fostering better relations between members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. NATO leaders believed that reducing tensions in Europe would facilitate the broader goal of deterring war and set détente as a future task of the alliance. They recognized NATO and its newfound solidarity in 1967 as a secure position from which they could negotiate with the Warsaw Pact from a position of strength.\textsuperscript{114}

Nonetheless, the transformation of Germany’s nuclear policy came gradually during the Grand Coalition. Private nuclear consultation within NATO became widely accepted as the alternative to public debates. The discussions over nuclear weapons mirrored the German as well as American emphasis on reducing tensions in Europe and transforming NATO. Consultation vital to defense that could occur in the closed forum of the NPG did not threaten efforts at détente.

\textit{The Software Solution and Non-Proliferation}

The MLF and the nuclear consultation debate had affected global policies as well. The ongoing negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union in Geneva concerning a nuclear non-proliferation treaty especially affected the West German and American positions concerning the MLF and the Special Committee. In 1965, the United States and the Soviet Union had both presented proposals in the United Nations for a

\textsuperscript{114} http://www.nato.int/archives/harmel/harmel.htm

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treaty to prevent additional nations from acquiring nuclear weapons. As France, Great Britain, and China had demonstrated, more nations were achieving a level of technology and resources necessary to independently produce nuclear weapons. The United States’ concern rested particularly with Japan, India, West Germany, Sweden, and Israel achieving nuclear status. West German leaders felt threatened by the non-proliferation negotiations and were dismayed when the United States presented a draft treaty at Geneva without consulting its NATO allies. The Soviet Union also directly linked the negotiations in Geneva over non-proliferation with the NATO proposals for a multilateral force. A major sticking point in the NPT negotiations became the “European Clause” with which the United States sought to ensure that the option of a joint nuclear force remained available in Europe without violating the treaty.

Neither its allies nor its enemies accepted the United States’ position that the non-proliferation treaty and the MLF were not contradictory. Bonn made it clear that the nuclear sharing issue had to be solved before it would consider signing any agreement on non-proliferation. Until the summer of 1966, that meant the hardware solution. On the Soviet side, the “European clause” considerably delayed the negotiations between American and Soviet envoys. To be sure, Britain, a state that had already achieved nuclear status, placed far more value on the NPT negotiations than the MLF, recognized

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115 LBJL, NSF, Files of Spurgeon Keeney, Box 6, “A Report to the President by the Committee on Nuclear Proliferation,” January 21, 1965. These were all governments enjoying relatively friendly relations with the United States at the time.

116 LBJL, White House Central Files, Confidential File, Box 74, Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, Rusk and Dobrynin, “Nuclear Sharing,” May 26, 1966.

117 LBJL, NSF, Files of McGeorge Bundy, Box 14, “Message to Prime Minister Wilson from the President,” January 17, 1966.
the incompatibility of these, and thus showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm toward nuclear hardware sharing.

The Soviets were keenly interested in the NATO discussion over nuclear sharing issues. As the debate progressed, *Pravda* reported that NATO was “on the road to another Munich” because it seemed to be surrendering to German demands.\(^{118}\) On many occasions, the Soviets expressed their disapproval of any NATO policies that threatened to give the Germans influence in nuclear matters.\(^{119}\) But unlike the MLF debate, when the Special Committee made its debut in November 1965, the Soviets did not express any opposition during the non-proliferation negotiations in Geneva.\(^{120}\) Nonetheless, for the Soviets, progress in these negotiations became dependent on NATO’s resolution of nuclear sharing issues. As the Special Committee made progress and the software solution gained traction in NATO, the Soviets became less adamant. As the Special Committee’s usefulness seemed to outlast the opposition, by the fall of 1966 Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko made it clear that a non-proliferation treaty would not include any ban on consultation, thus increasing the viability of a nuclear planning committee as an acceptable alternative to the MLF.\(^{121}\)

Of the two NATO solutions for nuclear sharing in the alliance, the software alternative remained undoubtedly the least dangerous for the Warsaw Pact. This

\(^{118}\) PRO, FO 371/184463, Letter from British Embassy Moscow, December 2, 1965.

\(^{119}\) PRO, PREM 13/805, “Record of a Meeting between the foreign secretary and the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow, at 10a.m. on 30 November, 1965.”

\(^{120}\) LBJL, NSF, Country File, Box 186, Germany, United States Mission to the United Nations, Memorandum of Conversation, Foster, Birrenbach, November 3, 1965.

\(^{121}\) *Declassified Documents Collection Vol. XXV*, 2000, doc. # 259, Department of State, memorandum of Conversation, Gromyko and Rusk, October 10, 1966.
strengthened its attractiveness to every NATO member, but especially to those directly involved in the non-proliferation negotiations, Britain and United States. Moreover, by 1967, West Germany recognized the disadvantages of delaying a non-proliferation treaty. Kiesinger declared that if the current progress on nuclear planning and consultation in the Nuclear Planning Group continued, then the FRG could support the treaty. The NPG alternative had successfully walked the tightrope between providing equality within the NATO alliance, and especially with West Germany, while not endangering the broader long term goal of détente that came to be shared by all NATO members, and the short term goal of President Johnson and Prime Minister Wilson of completing a nuclear non-proliferation treaty acceptable to most of the world and especially the Soviet Union.

*The Software Solution: The Role of Individuals*

The creation of the Nuclear Planning Group was very much dependent on personalities. Due to their limited membership, the working groups of the special committee were unlike any other in NATO. By design, the meetings were not conducted like any other, for example unlike the NATO Defense Planning Council, where ministers often read statements prepared by staffs in highly scripted gatherings. (This by the 1970s evolved into an extremely rigid system for DPC meetings. In one instance, the Secretary General gavelled a NATO minister into silence for deviating from the script and attempting a more free flowing discussion.) The regular informal dinners between the American, British, and West German Defense Ministers on the evenings prior to NPG meetings also took on even more significance. It was at many of these more informal

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123 E-mail interview with Dr. Henry Gaffney, December 2006.
trilateral gatherings that the ministers frankly discussed their national positions prior to the larger meetings. In order to foster the open discussion format between defense ministers, the NPG commissioned a special small seven-sided table for meetings that allowed for all the ministers to interact closely while their small staff contingents remained in the background. (For a photograph of an NPG meeting, see Appendix D)

Secretary McNamara made clear the commitment of the United States to the success of the committee by encouraging frank and open discussions and providing informative and comprehensive briefings on nuclear issues with details unavailable to allies in the past. His European counterparts and the press recognized McNamara’s pivotal role as the driving force behind the initial success of the Special Committee, which they dubbed “McNamara’s Committee.” In one of the few declassified records of a Special Committee Working Group III meeting, it is clear that the discussions were very free flowing, with few rehearsed comments, and were guided by McNamara who only loosely followed the established agenda. McNamara also urged the Johnson administration to release previously withheld nuclear information to NATO allies to facilitate these discussions. He had initially sought a small informal body of defense ministers that would force the allies to address the tough questions about nuclear use that the United States had been dealing with for years, with West Germany specifically as a target audience. McNamara continuously put von Hassel on the spot by trying to get the West Germans to lead studies and force the minister and his staff to come face to face

124 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 12 NATO, “Memorandum of Conversation, Special Committee, Nuclear Planning Working Group,” September 23, 1966.

with what nuclear weapons use in Europe entailed. In at least one case, these tactics were successful in forcing the Germans to define their goals and policies more clearly than they may have desired.\textsuperscript{126}

McNamara viewed the establishment of the NPG as calling his allies’ bluff, giving them what they said they wanted, more information and influence in nuclear planning, so that other NATO members would reach the same conclusions as the U.S. planners. Later he explained “there was also a great unwillingness of the others really to face these difficult issues of control, and fear that once they were faced, Pandora’s Box would be opened and the answers that would come out of it would be less agreeable to them than the answer on which the U.S. had unilaterally determined.”\textsuperscript{127} Now that Pandora’s Box was opened, it remained to be seen whether the Europeans, and especially the West Germans, would fall in line behind U.S. strategy.

Of the European members, British Defense Minister Denis Healey was the other influential member of the Special Committee. He seemed to have a more extensive grasp of nuclear issues than his European peers, probably due to Britain’s longer experience in studying the problems since fielding its first nuclear weapons a decade earlier. This advantage in experience held by the British over their European counterparts can not be overstated during the formative years of the Nuclear Planning Group. The first paper that the British delegation presented to Working Group III was the result of six years of wargaming by a full time staff of more than twenty personnel and led by a Major General

\textsuperscript{126} PAAA, B150, vol. 88, Telegram 2161 from German Delegation NATO to Bonn, November 24, 1966.

\textsuperscript{127} LBJL, Oral History Collections, Transcript, Robert S. McNamara Oral Interview I, January 8, 1975, by Walt. W. Rostow, Internet Copy.
who had studied the effects of over 6,000 different possible nuclear strikes.\textsuperscript{128} As a result of the brief and study provided to Working Group III in 1966, the Germans and British agreed to conduct joint simulation exercises, in order to build a similar level of experience in the German military establishment. Key to the success of this, and other, planning programs remained the less stringent restrictions placed on sharing the technical data concerning nuclear weapons, for without these basics, no study could be conducted on specific use effects.

Through the course of the Special Committee’s existence, from its proposed inception to its final recommendations, McNamara steered its course. However, British negotiators and nuclear experts exerted significant influence on the proceedings. From the start, the British seem to have understood thoroughly McNamara’s concept of the Special Committee and even how it had emerged without consultation with the State Department.\textsuperscript{129} The U.S. Ambassador to NATO in 1965, Thomas Finletter, appears to have had a far less complete grasp of McNamara’s intentions than the British, whose NATO ambassador occasionally took the lead in order to expedite the process.\textsuperscript{130} Healy’s biographers probably claim a greater role for the foreign secretary than he actually deserves, however.\textsuperscript{131} From the beginning, Healey’s support and knowledge


\textsuperscript{129} PRO, DEFE 25/59, Telegram No. 165, From UK Delegation to NATO to Foreign Office, June 3, 1965.

\textsuperscript{130} PRO, FO 371/184457, Letter From UK Delegation to NATO to Foreign Office, June 9, 1965.

\textsuperscript{131} Bruce Reed and Geoffrey Williams. \textit{Denis Healey and the Policies of Power} (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971), 256, 278. Reading only British sources it is easy to infer that the British proposals and recommendations to their American counterparts were more influential than in reality. In most cases early in the life of the NPG, the British prodded the Americans on a course in which McNamara
were crucial to the establishment of the NPG but should not be overstated. Healey saw the NPG as a substitute for nuclear sharing with West Germany, and the British Foreign Office worked effectively at convincing the West Germans that the software solution was superior.\textsuperscript{132} Britain’s contributions were probably more effective than the sometimes mixed messages emanating from Washington. Where the British and American conceptions matched, such as on national membership and the purpose of the committee, Healey was indispensable in gaining support from the rest of Europe. Nonetheless the lead and driving force behind the establishment of a consultative body remained the United States. As McNamara stated in his talks with Birrenbach, “America was the leader of the Alliance, and above all in nuclear questions she must lead. The only reason de Gaulle had attracted so much attention in Europe was because he filled a vacuum left by the Americans since Kennedy’s death.”\textsuperscript{133}

Rather than a long-term policy project, McNamara’s Select Committee proposal and the resulting Nuclear Planning Group evolved as a short term, ad hoc solution. Like the earlier initiatives, it could just as easily have failed to satisfy German nuclear ambitions and have led to European disgruntlement had it not gained the leadership of the Pentagon. The NPG also fit well into the general direction of President Johnson’s policy to create a genuine alliance of partners within NATO. The United States effectively achieved the greater measure of partnership called for in Congressman Findley’s report

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{132} PRO, FO371/184461, “Brief No. 2: Secretary of States Talks with Dr. Schröder, 16 November 1965.” And PRO, FO371/184462, Telegram No. 2156, from Foreign Office to Bonn, November 19, 1965 and “Brief for Defense and Overseas Policy Committee: talks with Dr. Schröder,” November 26, 1965.
\item \textsuperscript{133} PRO, FO371/184441, “Report of Conversation with Birrenbach,” October 6, 1965.
\end{itemize}
on the state of the NATO alliance in 1965, but without most of the major structural reforms urged by de Gaulle and other critics of the Johnson administration.\footnote{PAAA, B32, Vol. 254.}

The Special Committee of Defense Ministers began slowly, but quickly grew in importance for both the United States and West Germany through 1965 and 1966. Neither side foresaw the results. According to one analysis, most West German policy makers and some Americans, primarily in the State Department, saw the committee as a temporary measure that would benefit Bonn politically by removing the pressure from the MLF and creating the appearance of progress on nuclear sharing in the alliance.\footnote{LBJL, Personal Papers, Papers of Francis Bator, Box 26, Letter from Henry Kissinger to McGeorge Bundy, July 20, 1965.} One of Bonn’s goals for the MLF had been to prevent a nuclear triumvirate in NATO of the United States, France, and Great Britain that excluded the Federal Republic.\footnote{Kelleher, Germany and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons, 233-34.} The MLF was seen as insurance that West Germany would be consulted on nuclear issues. The Special Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group, which in an attenuated form gave the Federal Republic this consultative role, gradually fulfilled West Germany’s political desires. Nonetheless, the West Germans did not immediately accept this as an alternative to the MLF until the formal demise of the hardware sharing concept. By May 1967, the CIA reported that the NPG had diverted attention from nuclear sharing concepts, but West Germany’s continued reluctance to sign any non-proliferation treaty indicated that the United States had more work ahead.\footnote{LBJL, NSF, Agency File, Box 36, NATO General Volume 5, CIA Intelligence Memorandum, “NATO Looks to the Future,” May 8, 1967.}
“What horrifies me is the incredibly frivolous way in which NATO made plans for the use of nuclear weapons not so long ago, compared to the way in which we are looking at it now and thinking what in fact are going to be the consequences.”

---Denis Healey, UK Secretary of State for Defense, 1966

CHAPTER 3


The transition to NATO’s Nuclear Planning Group and NDAC system progressed relatively smoothly because the new organizations operated similarly to the Special Committee and Working Group III. NATO’s ambassadorial staffs continued in their roles as deputies to the defense ministers in the NPG. In January 1967 their work resumed where they had left off a month earlier, with two additional members, Canada and the Netherlands. Initially, the Dutch threatened the proceedings by requesting a reevaluation of all the previous work by Working Group III, but the permanent members refused in order to continue to address the pressing issues of nuclear strategy. The NPG, now a permanent NATO body with prescribed procedures, had to produce concrete results. Up to 1967, the Special Committee had served its original purpose of “educating” all the parties on the national positions and rationales for the use of nuclear

138 PRO, DEFE 25/98, “Secretary of State’s Press Briefing, 29th April 1966.”
weapons by NATO members. However, NATO still lacked specific guidelines for planning a nuclear response that reflected this new level of international participation.

At their first meeting in January 1967, the NPG’s permanent representatives agreed to an initial work plan and division of tasks. The United States prepared to brief its allies on recent developments in anti-ballistic missile systems (ABM), Turkey proposed a study on the use of atomic demolition mines (ADMs), and West Germany sought to address host country issues. The controversy also continued over national participation in the details of nuclear planning and over a system to ensure the inclusion of the views of all NATO members. These were the tougher issues of nuclear defense that would require negotiation, compromise, and consultation. From these modest beginnings, the issues of ADMs and national participation would become the primary areas of contention within the NPG.

**Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense (ABMs)**

By 1967, an anti-ballistic missile system developed by the United States appeared technologically feasible. However, debate erupted over the system’s economic viability and its impact on the arms race. Secretary McNamara and many in the Defense Department opposed the fielding of any ABM system, but the political situation within the United States put great pressure on President Johnson to do so. Since 1964, the Joint Chiefs had recommended its establishment and many in Congress supported it. In 1966, the Soviets fielded an ABM system around Leningrad known as GALOSH, and at the summit meeting in Glassboro, New Jersey in June 1967, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin had refused to enter into negotiations to limit ABMs. Finally, the Chinese had
successfully tested both ballistic missiles and hydrogen bombs, giving them the potential of an ICBM threat.\textsuperscript{139}

At the NPG’s first meeting in April 1967 in Washington, the defense ministers agreed to study the installation of anti-ballistic missile defense systems in Europe, which they immediately assigned to their deputies and staff. The NATO ambassadors agreed that Britain, as the European representative, would lead this study and receive technical assistance from the U.S. staff. The American input ensured that the “British” report was, in fact, a joint effort.

The initial discussions revealed little support for the deployment of an ABM system either in Europe or the United States. The primary criticisms of anti-ballistic missiles remained both their unreliability and the possible effects on non-proliferation and the arms race. The technology for an anti-ballistic missile system remained crude; at best, the designers could only hope to intercept a limited number of inbound warheads. Moreover, the obvious result of a continental wide deployment of ABMs in North America or Europe would be to pressure the Soviets to do the same and also to increase the number of nuclear missiles and warheads at their disposal in order to maintain their ability to flood any ABM system and thereby maintain strategic deterrence. The widespread deployment of ABMs by either side would create another potentially spiraling arms race at a time when both sides appeared ready for more amicable relations, including non-proliferation and possible force reductions. By July 1967, Washington seemed prepared to back away and allow the Europeans to come to their own conclusions.

\textsuperscript{139} Donald R. Baucom, \textit{The Origins of SDI, 1944-1983} (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 30-35.
about the feasibility of a system for Europe based on the British study that developed recommendations in line with U.S. policy.\textsuperscript{140}

The ABM issue did not create a major debate in the NPG staff. However, because of poor timing and lack of consultation on the part of Washington, it briefly grabbed a disproportionate amount of attention in the NPG and NATO at the ministerial level. After months of NPG staff study and only a week before the first meeting where ministers would discuss ABMs, McNamara suddenly announced Washington’s plans to deploy a small number of ABM systems as part of a defensive shield against China.\textsuperscript{141} Surprisingly, most of NATO accepted this announcement without a groundswell of opposition because ABM deployments would be small and focused against Asia.

Denis Healey voiced the strongest opposition when the nuclear planning group met in September. London’s criticism focused on the timing of the U.S. announcement, made on the eve of the NPG meeting where ABMs were a primary agenda item and before the allies could effectively weigh in on the decision. Only a few months earlier, at the first NPG meeting in April, McNamara had stated “that United States policy was not to act unilaterally on this issue. ABM deployment by the United States could damage American security if it led to disunity in the alliance.”\textsuperscript{142} The British also feared repercussions on the non-proliferation treaty talks ongoing in Geneva. Finally, they were alarmed over the effect on their own nuclear capability, which, comparable in size to

\textsuperscript{140} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 1064, “NPG-Study 1-ABMs,” July 20, 1967.

\textsuperscript{141} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1648, DEF 1 US, Joint State/Defense Message, “McNamara Speech on ABM,” September 13, 1967.

\textsuperscript{142} PRO, DEFE 13/886, “Nuclear Planning Group, Record of First Meeting Held in Washington on 6-7 April 1967.”
China’s, would theoretically lose its deterrent value if Moscow expanded its ABM system.

In private talks prior to the September NPG meeting, Healey reportedly “took McNamara to task” over the timing of the ABM announcement and expressed British reservations. But during the NPG meeting, Healey’s attitude was more cordial and he gained little support from the other members for a tough stand against the United States. Indeed the differences between British and American policy over the ABMs were not lasting and evidently did not reflect the personal feelings of either Healey or McNamara, who had both been forced by their chiefs to take extreme stands. McNamara was never an ardent supporter of ABM systems, and Healey’s government had induced him to take the strident position he did at the NPG meeting. Four days before the public announcement in the United States on the deployment of an ABM system, McNamara did at least inform all of the NPG Defense Ministers in a personal letter. British foreign policy continued to foster links with both the United States and Europe, but London policy makers liked to display their small differences with Washington before a European audience.

The UK so far has tried to steer clear of any risk that we might become responsible for taking the lead in rejecting any idea of a European ABM system,

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143 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1648, DEF 1 US, Department of State Telegram, London 2673, “Britain and the ABM,” October 5, 1967.


because this might reflect adversely on our European ‘Personality’ in the context of negotiations to enter the EEC.\textsuperscript{146}

The British valued their position between Europe and United States and were aware that their role in the NPG would affect their relationship with Europe. Healey’s irritation over the timing of Washington’s ABM announcement nonetheless deserves attention. After both he and McNamara had worked so hard in 1966 to gain acceptance of the Nuclear Planning Group and had made numerous pledges to create a consultative process in nuclear planning, it appears that Washington took these decisions lightly and breached the spirit of the group. Even more important to Healey, the U.S. ABM announcement seemed to violate the special consultative relationship that had recently developed between the U.S., UK, and FRG over nuclear defense matters.

After a brief flurry of public attention over the ABM deployment, the NPG worked quietly on studying their feasibility for Europe. Following extensive staff work, the NPG ministers confirmed Healey and McNamara’s initial assessment against deployment in Europe. West Germany provided the only hint of dissent, possibly in an effort to use the ABM issue as leverage in East-West relations, the non-proliferation treaty, and relations within NATO. Throughout 1967, ABMs remained an intermittent agenda item for NPG staff meetings, but by April 1968, the defense ministers expressed a consensus against deployment in Europe. They concluded that the dubious justification for the American deployment, protection against China, did not justify deployment in Europe.\textsuperscript{147} Early in the study, the Europeans objected to the deployment of ABMs


\textsuperscript{147} PRO, FCO 41/209, NPG/SG(68)D.1 and D.2, “ABM Study: Staff Analysis of the Implications of a Possible Light ABM Deployment in NATO Europe,” January 1968.
entirely under U.S. control. They therefore confined themselves to a study of the feasibility of an ABM system for Europe, controlled by the Europeans.\(^{148}\) Mainly due to geography and existing technology, even a fully functioning ABM system in Europe would provide minimal protection at great financial cost.\(^{149}\) In fact, besides the great costs of deploying an ABM system to Europe that would have to be met either by increased spending or reductions in defense in other areas, many Europeans saw ABMs as another possible way that confidence in the U.S. nuclear deterrent could be undermined.\(^{150}\) In light of all these limitations, the British did not have to overcome significant opposition to their negative conclusions from other NATO members.

ABMs became an important demonstration of the new nuclear consultative system in NATO. Over the course of three meetings in one year, the defense ministers had tasked the staff with studying a problem, conducted discussions at the ministerial level, and reached a consensus. This remained an important first step for the NPG system and was one of its first major resolutions, even if the ABM issue was not a major hurdle to overcome. Rarely would the NPG succeed in settling other issues as quickly. But the negative consensus, basically an agreement not to act, remained a concern for some NATO members, who still hoped for progress in other important areas.\(^{151}\)


\(^{150}\) PRO, DEFE 13/886, “Record of Meeting between Defense Secretary and Herr Helmut Schmidt on 4 April 1967.”

\(^{151}\) PRO, FCO 41/202, “Notes on Conversation between Secretary of State for Defense and Clark Clifford, 8 a.m. 18 April, 1968.”; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 1582, “NPG-Turkish ADM Plan,” February 5, 1968.
Atomic Demolition Mines (ADMs)

One of the most challenging tasks of the NPG in its first years was resolving the debates over Atomic Demolition Mines and their implications for NATO strategy and nuclear planning. The concept of atomic demolitions was not new to NATO in 1967 when the Turks officially began to study the issue for the Nuclear Planning Group. Throughout the 1950s, American weapons designers had increasingly scaled down nuclear devices to produce smaller yields and more limited effects and American military staffs began to study possible uses for central Europe. By 1968, these smaller nuclear devices made up a significant portion of the 7000 tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Europe. Their continuous increases throughout the 1960s had led to debates over their use, reflecting different strategic outlooks among NATO allies.

In 1958 the West Germans began to take notice of the American military plans, and when leaked to the press, these studies created a significant public controversy. The West Germans learned that American planners had initially envisioned three “belts” of ADMs in West Germany, which they planned to detonate to slow the advance of invading Warsaw Pact forces by cutting off probable attack routes and transportation centers. Significantly, the planners had spread these belts over some of the most populated areas of the Federal Republic, resulting in high civilian casualties estimates.152 In joint studies in the early 1960s, American and West German military staffs paid particular attention to the obstacle-creating effects of these smaller nuclear weapons, both in cratering and fallout, as a means to slow an invasion and allow for NATO reinforcements to arrive in Central Europe. This vital function made the ADMs an

important aspect of NATO’s defensive plans and reflected American intentions to use nuclear weapons for military purposes.

Turkish military leaders were less concerned themselves over the deployment of ADMs because they believed their northeastern border better suited for these weapons than Central Europe. Forbidding mountain ranges presented natural obstacles and small nuclear detonations in mountain passes would severely limit a potential Soviet invasion. The areas of possible use were also sparsely populated, which presented more acceptable risks of civilian deaths and casualties from radiation and fallout. As with all debates about nuclear weapons use, however, there were political aspects and implications in these military recommendations. Turkey, which did not have the dual key rights enjoyed by West Germany, Great Britain, and Italy, stood to gain politically and diplomatically by gaining access to nuclear weapons. Thus the stockpiling of ADMs would increase the Turkish government’s stature during a time when there was also a widespread public desire in Turkey for strengthening its military in light of the continuing dispute with Greece over Cyprus.

The planning for the use of ADMs, and of tactical nuclear weapons in general, went to the heart of one of the major controversies within NATO in the 1960s. This was the debate between the American-sponsored strategy of flexible response and the European supported strategy of massive retaliation. For many Europeans, the proposed shift in NATO’s defensive strategy to flexible response would only decrease deterrence and increase the risks of conflict. Emplacing ADMs as part of defense virtually ensured that the alliance would cross the nuclear threshold early in a conflict and made massive retaliation the only viable NATO strategy. The debate over emplacing ADMs in Turkey
expanded into a broader and more complicated discussion over where and when nuclear weapons should be used and who would make the decision. In their initial plans submitted to the NPG staff in February 1967, Turkish planners had relied on several assumptions that were incompatible with the concepts of flexible response, which sought to raise the threshold of use for nuclear weapons. The Turkish study assumed an early political authorization for the forward emplacement of nuclear devices, even before any political authority had made a final decision on their use and even before the onset of hostilities.\textsuperscript{153} The Turkish military envisioned putting in place the first of their ADM belts only twenty-five miles away from their border with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{154} This would force an almost immediate use once hostilities began for these nuclear weapons to be effective. Thus, a forward deployment of ADMs posed a danger to America’s interpretation of flexible response strategy, because once deployed, ADM use would be practically automatic and completely under military control. During its development in 1967, the Turkish study faced strong opposition from McNamara and Cleveland.

Washington consistently opposed policies that allowed the delegation of authority for nuclear weapons use to any field commander, no matter the nationality. The United States insisted that nuclear weapons use was, above all, a political decision. By creating a use-or-lose situation, the forward deployment of ADMs would force the hand of the U.S. President and NATO to detonate the devices at the outbreak of hostilities or allow them to be rendered ineffective or, worse, captured.

\textsuperscript{153} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 11783, “Turkish ADM Presentation,” February 9, 1967.

\textsuperscript{154} PRO, FCO 41/204, COS 1263/23/3/67, “Nuclear Planning Group Meeting 6\textsuperscript{th}-7\textsuperscript{th} April 1967, Brief for the Defense Secretary.”
Despite Turkey’s attempts to concentrate on the military quality of ADMs, the rest of the NPG staff group focused on the political aspects. The concept of predelegation, emplacement, and overall use of ADMs became a much debated and lively issue. Italy and Great Britain supported the United States’ position that only a political authority should make the decision for use, but the British also believed that the NPG through further study and the creation of war plans could reduce the time required to obtain release authority in a crisis. Bonn, on the other hand, initially supported preplanning and predesignation of ADM use with the permission of the host country.155 Like Turkey, Germany’s unique position as a border state to the Warsaw Pact, meant that avoiding war through the strongest possible deterrence was paramount to many West German military planners. Their position revealed their focus on the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons and also their desire to send a clear message to the Warsaw Pact that an invasion would result in early nuclear use. As a result of the NPG staff talks in February and March 1967, Turkey softened its assessment, abandoning a predelegation of authority, but recommending some pre-planning of ADM use.156 Despite some changes, the Turkish ADM study still rested on some questionable assumptions. For example, Turkish planners assumed that the Warsaw Pact would not regard the use of ADMs in a sparsely populated NATO territory as crossing any nuclear threshold, thus limiting the risks of conflict escalation.157

155 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 13942, “NPG Perreps Meeting 10 March,” March 10, 1967.


157 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 14783, “NPG-Turkish Presentation (revised),” March 23, 1967.
As the ADM debate developed in 1967, the Turkish press focused heavily on the issue. Some journalists reported that Turkey had demanded deployment of ADMs on its border and others went so far as to state that NATO had already emplaced ADMs and that the NPG was simply deciding on who had the authority for use.\textsuperscript{158} Although the Turkish government denied these reports, they shed light on the importance the Turkish public placed on ADMs for defense and overall prestige. The ADM issue may also have been an attempt to placate a politically influential Turkish military by the civilian government. Soviet reactions to these reports highlighted the connection between NPG proceedings and the non-proliferation treaty. Speculation in the Turkish press forced the State Department to assure Moscow that there were no plans to transfer control of nuclear weapons to Turkey.\textsuperscript{159} The NPG defense ministers meeting in April 1967 did not reach any consensus over ADM deployment in Turkey. Instead they deferred the issue for more study. Nevertheless, Turkish planners had achieved a modest success in their first NPG study in at least getting their opinions discussed and debated. Their study was forwarded to SACEUR for review and comment on the Turkish military conclusions.

Overall, despite the differences of opinion, consultation and debate on ADMs had produced a positive reaction among the defense ministers and spawned additional studies. On its own initiative in 1967, West Germany presented an ADM study to the NPG staff. Based on similar assumptions about the need for predelegation of authority, Bonn’s proposal received widespread support from Turkey, but drew opposition from Canada.

\textsuperscript{158} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Ankara 4843, “NPG and ADMs,” April 7, 1967; Paris 16724, “ADMs,” April 21, 1967.

\textsuperscript{159} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Joint State/Defense Message, 196294, “ADMs,” May 15, 1967.
and the United States. Nonetheless, the overall U.S. reaction was positive. Ambassador Cleveland contrasted its meticulous analysis with what he labeled Turkey’s tendency to see ADMs as a “panacea.”

ADMs presented the NPG with its first divisive issue. Thus, in preparation for the next ministerial meeting scheduled in Ankara in September 1967, the NPG staff held numerous preparatory meetings in order to approach a consensus. The Turks, who continuously revised their study, grew impatient over the resistance to their ideas within the NPG staff. Scheduled to relinquish its seat to Greece, the Turkish government needed a diplomatic success at the meeting scheduled in their capital later that year. Raising consternation within the U.S. delegation, the SHAPE study concerning ADM use in Turkey agreed with many of the Turkish assessments, which fed the Turks’ frustration over the political opposition. McNamara, who distrusted SHAPE’s views on nuclear planning, took steps to exclude General Lemnitzer from the NPG meeting in Ankara. This was an obvious move to ensure that the political aspects of nuclear use remained the most important when the Defense Ministers met. (General Lemnitzer would not attend a Nuclear Planning Group meeting until April 1968, after McNamara resigned)

The Nuclear Planning Group decided to endorse the broad concept of ADMs on Turkish soil but not to accept the Turkish study as written. They referred it again for more military study to draw up more concrete plans for the NPG to evaluate, and they

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160 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 20517, “NPG-FRG Presentation on ADMs,” June 21, 1967.


agreed to await the other ADM studies already in progress.\textsuperscript{163} This gave the Turks a symbolic victory, but also delayed a specific endorsement of the study’s recommendations for some time. The dispute over ADMs boiled down to whether they could be utilized while maintaining the level of political control the United States required to manage escalation of a conflict under the strategy of flexible response. American officials also cited the ability of conventional munitions to accomplish many of the tasks Turkey intended for the ADMs without the inherent escalation risks.\textsuperscript{164} Finally, the ADMs were only a portion of the tactical nuclear stockpile in Europe. The ADM study opened up larger questions about where, when, and how tactical nuclear devices would be used in a conflict and the NPG could not address all of these issues in 1967. All the defense ministers at the Ankara meeting recognized the urgency of developing concrete plans for the use of tactical nuclear weapons throughout NATO and awaited the developing West German and Italian ADM studies to enable them to formulate a broader strategy.\textsuperscript{165}

U.S. motives for broadening the ADM discussion were not only to encourage local nuclear studies, but also to educate these governments on the complexity of the political problems surrounding ADM use. An effective technique employed by
Ambassador Cleveland and others on the Nuclear Planning Group Staff made it a practice to critique European studies by posing a series of difficult questions prepared by the American staff that forced either a revision, or at least a more detailed assessment of the subject. Often times the British delegation supported these efforts and mirrored American concerns, while always ensuring they treated allied studies with respect and did not alienate the non-nuclear members of the alliance. If the non-nuclear nations, such as Turkey, Italy, and most importantly Germany, reached their own conclusions on the problems inherent in nuclear weapons use by NATO, they would be much more likely to accept the alternatives offered by the new flexible response strategy. These methods produced some results in altering the opinions of at least some allied planners. One West German staff presentation came to admit the viability of limited use of nuclear weapons in central Europe. Also, in 1968, the NPG staff group acknowledged that NATO required more conventional forces in Europe. These were two if the principal changes McNamara wanted to see in NATO strategy, changes that many European leaders had long opposed.166 Outside the NPG, some recognized this success. The U.S. ambassador to West Germany, George McGhee, credited nuclear consultation with influencing West German ideas of nuclear defense and decreasing domestic political opposition to the concepts underlying flexible response.167

However, American and British consultation tactics did not work with Turkey on the ADM issue. Despite its scheduled rotation out of the NPG, Turkey announced its

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166 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 1572, “For McNamara From Cleveland,” February 8, 1968.

167 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Bonn 3577, “German Attitudes on Nuclear Weapons,” October 2, 1967.
desire to continue participating in NPG ministerial meetings because the agenda included ADM contingency plans devised by SACEUR staff. Despite this disruptive precedent to the sensitive rotation schedule for the NPG’s non-permanent members, the State Department considered allowing it.\textsuperscript{168} A month later, however, Turkey abruptly changed course, indicating its desire to let the ADM issue die quietly and withdrawing its request to attend the Hague meeting.\textsuperscript{169} The Turkish Defense Ministry found the SACEUR plans for ADM use unacceptable. Ambassador Cleveland cited the high fiscal costs of SACEUR’s plan, uncertainty over the increased American presence in Turkey and the stationing of ADMs, and the “restive” Soviets as contributing to Turkey’s abrupt change of heart.\textsuperscript{170} Cleveland summed up the reasons ironically in a message to the State Department:

[The Turks] had not anticipated they would find themselves leaning on an unlocked door, and had evidently not thought through the relationship between the desire of the Turkish General Staff for ADMs in the Carpathian Mountains, and the fact that their Prime Minister Demirel was exchanging toasts with Kosygin in Moscow at the very time his defense minister was discussing nuclear demolitions in Ankara.\textsuperscript{171}

The Greeks immediately attempted to take advantage of their admission to the NPG by preparing and presenting their own study on the use of ADMs on their territory.

\textsuperscript{168} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 1694, NPG Permps Agenda 13 February,” February 8, 1968.

\textsuperscript{169} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2103, “NPG-Turkish ADM Plan,” March 12, 1968.

\textsuperscript{170} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, For Secretary Clifford from Ambassador Cleveland, “The Nuclear Planning Group,” April 11, 1968; PRO, FCO 41/201, Letter from British Embassy Washington, “NATO Nuclear Planning Group,” February 15, 1968.

\textsuperscript{171} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 4421, “Nuclear Planning Group: Political Psychology of the Members,” September 30, 1967.
It is clear that the Greek delegation feared that the Turks would gain significant prestige at Greek expense if they did not receive equal treatment from their NATO allies. Initially the Greeks assumed that the NPG had accepted much more of Turkey’s study than in reality and they started out by demanding the need for predelegation of nuclear release authority. However, NPG staff meetings quickly dashed Greek hopes for rapid approval of their plans. No doubt because many of the issues raised by the Greeks had been debated in detail during the Turkish study, the Greeks obtained little support from their non-nuclear colleagues.\footnote{NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1586, DEF 4 NATO, Department of State Airgram, “NPG-Greek ADM Study,” December 29, 1967.} When Ambassador Cleveland submitted a scathing assessment of the Greek ADM study, the Greek representatives proved unprepared to answer many of the tough questions concerning conventional alternatives, fallout effects, and predelegation issues that the NPG had forced Turkey to reassess.\footnote{Ibid.} Content to let the Americans incur the Greek’s disappointment, the British planned to “play it cool,” and recommended referring the Greek study to SHAPE and the Military Committee just as they did with the Turkish study.\footnote{PRO, FCO 41/201, “Greece and the NATO Nuclear Planning Group,” November 10, 1967.} The Greeks, quick learners, thoroughly revised their effort, and by their first NPG meeting in the Hague they began to present a problem for the United States potentially more serious than Turkey. The Greeks refined their plan to a point where the U.S. representatives lacked the effective technical arguments they had used against Turkey’s proposals. Greece envisioned only thirty-two sites for ADM deployment against a possible invasion by the Warsaw Pact, and these would all be
small-yield devices buried to avoid significant fallout effects.\textsuperscript{175} They were also planned for areas where conventional forces would not be as effective.

Lacking technical arguments to dissuade allies from deploying ADMs in Greece, Washington was forced to focus on the contentious issues of predelegation and overall flexible response strategy that received much less support from the other permanent members. In order to head off a potential confrontation in the Hague, the American staff informed the Greeks that they would not support the deployment of ADMs in Greece precisely because of the predelegation issue, and warned the Athens government to avoid embarrassment by not pressing the issue.\textsuperscript{176} Because of the Greek government’s desire for international recognition to redress its domestic political instability and its concern over the high financial costs of the proposed ADM deployment, Athens complied with the U.S. position agreeing that its ADM study would be integrated with all the others for further study.\textsuperscript{177}

To be sure, the ADM studies in the Nuclear Planning Group had wide implications for NATO and for East-West relations, and particularly for the ongoing negotiations over a non-proliferation treaty in Geneva. For the most part, however, the specifics of the NPT were excluded from the NPG’s agenda, and remained an issue for the NATO council as a whole.\textsuperscript{178} Nonetheless, overlap inevitably occurred, because the

\textsuperscript{175} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2213, “Greeks and NPG,” March 19, 1968.

\textsuperscript{176} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Outgoing Department of State Telegram, “Greek ADM,” April 17, 1968

\textsuperscript{177} PRO, FCO 41/202, D/DS 12/215/5/2/6, “NATO Nuclear Planning Group, Record of Third Meeting,” June 11, 1968.

\textsuperscript{178} PAAA, B150, vol. 109, Telegram 816 from Ankara to Bonn, September 29, 1967.
Geneva negotiations would affect the level of control over nuclear weapons that the United States could allow its allies. In 1967, for example, Italy demanded revisions of the draft non-proliferation treaty to allow more freedom for nuclear use on its frontiers.\textsuperscript{179} But the United States, which along with the Soviet Union opposed predelegation, intended to prevent the control of nuclear weapons from passing to a non-nuclear ally. In Geneva, the Soviets often referred to the NPG ADM discussions that Western press reported widely and compelled the American negotiators continuously to reassure them over developments within the NPG.\textsuperscript{180} The Americans were in a difficult position, however, because they had to convince Moscow that developments in the NPG and in NATO consultation would not translate into European control over nuclear weapons, all the while trying to satisfy the Europeans that they did have some influence and a measure of control through consultation and that the negotiations with allies in the NPG would be independent of the non-proliferation negotiations.\textsuperscript{181} Within the NPG, Washington continued to spar with the Europeans over tactical nuclear weapons and flexible response while also fending off Soviet efforts to use the NPT to inhibit the development of NATO nuclear planning.\textsuperscript{182}

Concurrent with the debate over ADMs and non-proliferation, NATO finally accepted the strategy of flexible response in December 1967 by adopting the plan labeled MC 14/3. Different authors attribute this agreement to a number of factors, but most

\textsuperscript{179} PAAA, B150, vol. 111, Telegram 761 from Rome to Bonn, October 24, 1967.

\textsuperscript{180} PAAA, B150, vol. 120, Letter from German Embassy Washington to NATOGerm, Brussels, February 20, 1968.


agree on the impact of the French withdrawal from NATO in 1966. Without France’s opposition and in the crisis atmosphere created by its withdrawal, the remaining NATO members were able to devise language that all could agree on. The NPG only indirectly played a role in the adoption of flexible response. The group and its staff never officially addressed MC 14/3, which was a product of a higher body, the Defense Planning Committee. Moreover, the plan was vague enough to encompass both the American view stressing conventional defense and a high threshold for nuclear weapons use and European defense views focusing on deterrence and deliberate escalation. The Germans secured a continuation of the stated goal of forward defense. That NATO would not give up ground to the Warsaw Pact but fight to defend all of its territory. Staying true to the idea of flexibility, MC 14/3 listed numerous ways to achieve this goal, stressing none over any other and stating only that it should respond on a scale “appropriate to the circumstances.” This lack of commitment in MC 14/3 to either concept of defense was essential to its acceptance, allowing each NATO member to interpret the document in its own way. It did not resolve any of the specific issues concerning nuclear use that had dominated the NPG discussions. Nonetheless, MC 14/3 brought the United States and European concepts of defense closer together, and the NPG contributed to this by providing a forum for discussion of those issues that remained a grey area in the plan.


184 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Memorandum, “The Bonn NPG Meeting,” October 16, 1968.

After Turkey presented its ADM study, NPG members recognized the need for a more comprehensive review of tactical nuclear weapons use, not limited to one region or weapons system.\textsuperscript{186} The U.S. responded promptly. Early in 1968, officials in the Departments of State and Defense produced a comprehensive plan dealing with tactical nuclear use in NATO to prevent the NPG from becoming bogged down in individual national studies.\textsuperscript{187} However, the plan was not well received by the British or Germans because it reopened many of the questions already investigated in the national studies. For the sake of momentum and morale, the British and Germans insisted that new work was needed to combine the concepts in the rapidly proliferating national studies.\textsuperscript{188}

However, six months later, the NPG had made only initial steps towards incorporating the ideas of MC14/3 and the national studies into specific nuclear planning. Although the ministers had analyzed and discussed the ADM studies of Turkey and Greece and dismissed many of their premises, they attempted to incorporate these studies into Italy’s ADM study for the southern flank and then a wider discussion of tactical nuclear weapons in general. 1969 would prove to be a pivotal year when the tactical use of nuclear weapons dominated NPG discussions in an attempt to produce concrete results.

\textsuperscript{186} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 154255, “NPG Work Program-ADM,” March 18, 1967.


\textsuperscript{188} PRO, FO1116/41, Memo from R.J. Andrew, “Nuclear Planning Group Meeting,” April 2, 1968.
From the inception of the Nuclear Planning Group, the West Germans had harbored a keen interest in what they called “host country” issues. America stored the majority of its European nuclear stockpile on West German territory and had concluded a series of bilateral agreements with every host country on storage, movement practices, and release controls. Although these arrangements between the United States and its allies remained secret, the West Germans suspected inequalities. Bonn attempted to use the NPG to make this a multilateral issue for discussion in order to address inequalities in these bilateral agreements. Bonn hoped to get the entire issue out in the open by having all host country agreements reviewed by the NPG.

This issue presents another example of defective communication between the U.S. State and Defense Departments that undermined U.S. policy toward its European allies. Late in the life of Working Group III, McNamara had encouraged the West Germans by intimating that in the future the NPG would review the host country issue. Possibly, this was a short term concession, or McNamara did not understand exactly what he had promised, but this proposal was not acceptable to the State Department, which later vetoed Bonn’s efforts to address host country issues in NPG staff meetings.\(^\text{189}\)

Undeterred, the FRG used McNamara’s verbal commitment to convince other NPG members to support the initiation of a study on host country issues. In response, the U.S. and British staffs kept a close eye on their ally to prevent a release of sensitive information. For example, the American-British agreement was much more favorable toward the British than the corresponding agreements with the rest of Europe, and public

acknowledgement of this disparity threatened to reignite the West German claims of an unequal status in NATO that McNamara hoped the NPG would alleviate. Since 1952, U.S. presidents and British prime ministers had periodically agreed that any use of nuclear weapons on or near British soil would come only after the two leaders consulted personally. With every change in the White House leadership the British had insisted on reconfirming this agreement. 190 The two governments had also agreed that those nuclear weapons stored in Britain, but assigned to other national forces, required the joint approval of both the president and prime minister for release. British policy makers were quite protective of their bilateral agreement with the United States, and not only because of sensitivity within the alliance over issues of equality. 191 There were practical reasons for not expanding the special limitations on U.S. nuclear stockpiles in the United Kingdom across the alliance. Stringent consultation rules theoretically decreased the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons if the Warsaw Pact understood that numerous consultation requirements existed prior to nuclear use by NATO. With a disproportionate amount of the nuclear stockpile stored in Germany, an agreement similar to Britain’s potentially gave Bonn great influence on nuclear use decisions.

Both American and British officials understood they had to tread carefully to avoid the appearance of an overbearing partner in dealing with the Germans and risk endangering the solidarity of the NPG. They thus worked closely to coordinate their efforts prior to every NPG staff and defense minister’s meeting. However, American


attempts to stall the host country issue were not successful. U.S. representatives were neither able to obtain a draft of the West German study prior to its release to the entire Nuclear Planning Group in March 1967 nor to block an open discussion of host country issues.\textsuperscript{192}

The German memorandum on host country issues cited some specific grievances. First was the lack of concrete knowledge of how many weapons, what types, and where the United States stored its nuclear arsenal in West Germany. The Germans also desired the dual-key method of nuclear control that Great Britain employed for the physical release of nuclear weapons during a crisis. Lastly, the memorandum listed the possible methods for nuclear decision making, ranging from leaving the decision to the U.S. President alone, to full consultation within NATO. These extremes remained unacceptable to the United States and the host countries, but the Germans presented other options including limited consultation between the United States and the host country prior to nuclear use.\textsuperscript{193} European members of the NPG staff received the German memorandum favorably, and agreed to place it on the agenda of the April 1967 meeting. What the Americans feared about open discussions now come to fruition when the German study incited the Italian delegation to admit that they enjoyed a dual key


agreement with the United States. Surprised, the West Germans now had more fuel for their appeals for similar treatment.\textsuperscript{194}

Back in Washington there was a movement afoot to give the Germans some of what they desired in view of the unlikelihood of a nuclear conflict in Europe. Both the State Department and McNamara recognized the advantages of making concessions to the FRG on the host country issue in order to appease German complaints of inequality.\textsuperscript{195} Nonetheless, neither the United States nor Britain considered the NPG as the ideal forum for these discussions, because they would only lead to similar demands from other non-nuclear allies, and they touched on one of the alliance’s rawest nerves, that of national equality.

During the deliberations in the April 1967 meeting of the NPG, the host country issue remained unresolved. West German Defense Minister Schröder, who led the discussion, did not gain much direct support from the other non-nuclear members, who seemed content to allow Germany to take the lead. Turkey came to the aid of the United States, perhaps in the hopes of a favor returned on the ADM deployments, and recommended that each nation continue to address host country issues on a bilateral level.\textsuperscript{196} This worked well for the Americans, who wanted to keep the unequal treaties secret. Once the Germans realized that McNamara was willing to address host country issues on a bilateral level and make some concessions, they used the American

\textsuperscript{194} AAAA, B150, vol. 99, Telegram 478 from NATO Paris to Bonn, March 20, 1967. Interestingly, the Italian dual key agreement came as a surprise to some of the members of the U.S. staff, even though made more than a decade earlier. (Interview with Henry Gaffney, December 2006)


\textsuperscript{196} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 17925, “NPG Meeting April 27,” April 28, 1967.

Following the April meeting, the Germans continued to push the host country issue in the NPG staff group, encouraging additional comments and input from all members. Bonn nonetheless recognized the advantages of direct talks with Washington. By June, the Germans confided to the British delegation that they were moving slowly on the host country issue until after McNamara and Schröder’s scheduled meeting in July; and they kept the host country issue open as an agenda item throughout 1967 to ensure a satisfactory outcome in Washington.\footnote{PRO, FCO 41/200, Letter from Le Hardy to Foreign Office, “Nuclear Planning Group,” June 9, 1967.}

To be sure, the Germans also recognized that bilateral talks were more realistic than an open NPG discussion which threatened the deterrence on which their national security depended. A veto on nuclear weapons authorization and a public debate over nuclear consultation only invited other European nations to intercede and demand equal treatment by the United States.\footnote{AAPD, vol. II, doc. 329, “Ministersitzung der Nuklearen Planungsgruppe der NATO in Ankara am 28. und 29. September 1967”; NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 11666, “Nuclear Planning Group-German Paper,” February 2, 1967.} But West Germany utilized the NPG as effective leverage to gain a concrete U.S. commitment for consultation prior to nuclear weapons use. After months of delay, the United States agreed to bilateral talks with allies, and these began promptly in early 1968.

The outcome was entirely favorable for the Germans, who achieved a bilateral agreement with the United States similar to that enjoyed by the British. In February and
March 1968 there were three meetings between West German and American nuclear experts on how best to incorporate West Germany into nuclear use decision making. These talks alleviated many of the existing problems, with both sides acknowledging their different views on the issue.\textsuperscript{200} President Johnson affirmed in a personal note to Chancellor Kiesinger that the United States would consult with West Germany prior to any use of nuclear weapons from, on, or near West German territory and the bilateral discussions continued through 1968.\textsuperscript{201} As a result, Bonn decided not to press the crisis consultation matter publicly, or even within the environs of the Nuclear Planning Group. The signal of German satisfaction over the new arrangements may well have been their relinquishing to Italy the position of discussion leader for the issue of national participation in nuclear planning.

The NPG staff agreed to incorporate host country issues into the discussions about procedures for national participation in nuclear planning, essentially letting the issue die as it was subsumed under another more pressing problem.\textsuperscript{202} It remained an agenda item for the NPG through 1968 at the urging of Canada and the Netherlands but garnered relatively short discussions and there were no further debates over equality in reference to the bilateral storage agreements. West German-American bilateral talks continued and were expanded to include joint studies on how best to consult effectively in a crisis. Bonn pushed for a more detailed commitment for crisis consultation at the


\textsuperscript{202} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2101, “NPG,” March 12, 1968.
Presidential/Chancellor level, the same secret commitment shared by the United States and Britain.\textsuperscript{203} This they achieved in another exchange of letters in September 1968 when, at nearly the end of his term in office, President Johnson made this commitment and Chancellor Kiesinger expressed his satisfaction.\textsuperscript{204} This also came almost immediately following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia when the West Germans may also have needed reassurances of the American commitment to European defense.

The host country agenda item evolved into a broader review of national participation in nuclear planning. This remained a primary goal of many of the non-nuclear NATO members and was the source of the initial debate over nuclear sharing. McNamara had led the effort at resolution by proposing a concrete planning scheme at the September 1967 ministerial meeting. Ambassador Cleveland lent his support and pressed the allies to discuss the details of a planning mechanism instead of issuing “vague calls for national participation.”\textsuperscript{205}

The proposed planning system involved a series of steps for the formulation of any nuclear use plan. The SACEUR military staff would first devise a specific plan and then submit it for review by any affected nations, such as the host country or target area. The draft plan with attachments from concerned nations would then proceed to the NPG for review and discussion based on political issues. The NPG would then issue

\textsuperscript{203} LBJL, NSF, Files of Spurgeon Keeny, Box 6, Memorandum for the President, “Consultation with the FRG on Nuclear Weapons Release,” July 19, 1968.

\textsuperscript{204} FRUS Volume XV, Document 286, Letter from President Johnson to Chancellor Kiesinger, 9 September 1968.

\textsuperscript{205} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 4422, “NATO Nuclear Planning Group, What Happened at Ankara,” September 30, 1967.
guidelines and return the draft to SACEUR for corrections. This could occur a number of times until the NPG reached a consensus on the plan and agreed to forward it to the NDAC and Defense Planning Committee for final approval.206

By 1968, the unlikelihood of a nuclear war in Europe had made nuclear planning a largely political endeavor dominated by American maneuvers to limit or control allied influence on nuclear planning. Although complicated and time consuming, the NPG process allowed for the most affected governments to garner the first look, and potentially the most influence, on tactical nuclear use plans, and it created a system of continuous review and consultation in order to reach the consensus necessary for any decision in NATO. The NPG decisions to forward different ADM studies to the SACEUR staff appeared to be a first attempt to exercise this system before any agreement on institutionalization. However, referring plans to SACEUR for review also delayed the political debate in the NPG and if the timing was right, as it was for Turkey’s study on ADMs, the sponsoring state for the study would rotate out of the NPG.

Secretary Brosio and many non-nuclear states presented an alternative solution for nuclear defense planning that stressed the integration of the Military Committee staff, consisting of all NATO members, earlier in nuclear planning. McNamara’s proposal had limited the Military Committee staff’s input to very late in the process, after the NPG and NDAC had completed work and approved any plans. Although at first glance this appears to be a small bureaucratic difference, some NATO members considered the timing of access to plans as crucial to establishing the greater measure of influence on planning. Theoretically, under McNamara’s system, a state like Turkey would have no

206 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 169, “NATO Tactical Nuclear Planning System,” October 20, 1967.
input into a plan for nuclear use in the European central theater during its rotation outside of the NPG until the proposal reached the NDAC. This debate remained unresolved throughout 1968 because neither side was willing to compromise and the nuclear planning system remained unformalized.

The Hague meeting in April 1968 became a turning point in the direction of the Nuclear Planning Group studies. The NPG put to rest the last of the ADM investigations and shifted its attention to the broader tactical nuclear use studies by the Germans, Italians, and Greeks along with a Canadian study on strike aircraft. In response to the numerous ADM studies, the Germans had initiated a tactical nuclear weapons study in 1968 intended to investigate the conditions and purpose for first use. As they began to look closely at nuclear weapons use, they concluded that demonstration use harbored the least risk. Their goal was to reestablish deterrence by convincing the Warsaw Pact to pause and recognize that further aggressive action risked nuclear war. One of the earliest proposals envisioned demonstration use as occurring either over the sea, or in less populated areas on the eastern side of the iron curtain, with the aim of limiting the risks of escalation. The first use of nuclear weapons outside of German soil made this plan most attractive for FRG officials. If demonstrative use failed, the Germans proposed nuclear strikes on the Warsaw Pact states.

Predictably, the primary criticisms came from the United States and the Canadians. They pointed out that the German plan skipped multiple “rungs” in the ladder of escalation. The North Americans also noted that the Germans had omitted the use of tactical nuclear weapons on NATO soil to defend against Warsaw Pact conventional
forces, along with strikes on Warsaw Pact airfields. SACEUR also opposed demonstration use, claiming that it would only underscore NATO’s lack of will. It preferred first use on a target of military value, but with limits on collateral damage. The British, although less vocal in their opposition, saw similar weaknesses in the German conceptions of nuclear use. Standing between the two sides, they saw first use as indispensable to preserving German territory, but also opposed a mere demonstration.

By 1967, the Germans had accepted the basic concepts behind NATO’s flexible response strategy, but differences in implementation remained. A year later it was evident a large gap still existed between Bonn’s conceptions of nuclear use and those of the other permanent NPG members. Despite the unlikelihood of a nuclear war, the NPG had now reached the heart of the tactical nuclear use dilemma: how to use these weapons to halt a Warsaw Pact invasion while both preserving central Europe from destruction and limiting escalation of the conflict. The talks within the NPG framework and between the military staffs, including the Anglo-German staff talks, had only reinforced these different outlooks and reached no definite resolution. The NPG permanent representatives rejected the German tactical nuclear weapon study of 1968 and it never made it to the ministerial level. Nonetheless, the seven also agreed to reconsider the German study and to incorporate portions into the political guidelines they began

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207 PRO, FO 1116/41, “Record of Meeting of Nuclear Planning Group at Permanent Representative Level, 20 June 1968, to discuss German contingency studies.”

208 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 3597, “NPG- Tac Nuc Contingency Studies,” June 21, 1968.

developing. The NPG also assured a lead role for Germany in devising the broader nuclear guidelines for NATO’s defense.

Moreover, the German initiative stirred the NPG members to confront other inconsistencies in SACEUR’s current defense plans. Several ministers immediately recognized that NATO could allocate aircraft for only one of the two options, either a conventional or a nuclear fight. Holding back aircraft for possible nuclear strikes could cause the alliance to forfeit the conventional fight and force nuclear use, but losing too many aircraft early in a conventional fight limited one of the most reliable nuclear use options. The Canadians, who assumed the role of discussion leaders behind this issue, began formalized work in 1968. The results, however, were not significantly original, and indeed matched the SHAPE study which had envisioned an increased role for conventional aircraft and a reduced prospect of nuclear strikes, reflecting the discussions between McNamara and Healey almost a year earlier. This study stirred Healey to insist that the NPG establish more concrete guidelines for NATO with which to continue more detailed planning.\(^\text{210}\)

\textit{NPG Procedural Development}

During its first two years, as the NPG developed its procedural aspects, several members challenged McNamara’s initial desire to keep it as small and as confidential as possible. Although the permanent members successfully blocked most of these efforts, the rotational members continued to push for open membership. For example, Greece tried to gain early access as an observer before its agreed upon rotation, and Secretary General Brosio attempted to gain more access for the staff of the Military Committee.

Each NPG member, along with Brosio representing NATO, was limited to five representatives at ministerial meetings. These normally included the Defense Minister, his deputy, the ambassador to NATO, and, in the U.S. case, subordinate staffers from the Departments of State and Defense and one note taker. SACEUR and Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) many times attended NPG meetings for the purpose of making presentations of plans, but defense ministers purposely reduced the military role in the NPG and did not standardize military attendance.

Secrecy and security for the NPG meetings continued to be tight, and the United States aggressively defended the policy of restricting the circulation of any staff studies until the defense ministers debated and edited them. An indication of American success was that rotational members such as Greece remained generally uninformed about NPG proceedings until they assumed their seats. The NPG released to the NDAC only the agreed minutes of its meetings, although informal contacts probably resulted in other information leaks. The agreed minutes of the NPG meetings were more informative than the public final communiqués, but they were constructed in a diplomatic language that belied the nature of the discussions.

Eventually, there were expanded forms of communication to non-nuclear governments. The United States staff began circulating guides to specific systems, such as ABMs or ADMs, to allow rotational members access to technical information that the permanent members had received in earlier briefings. However, this communication

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remained one-way, and the United States blocked Secretary Brosio’s initial attempts to gain more integration of the Military Committee staff into Nuclear Planning. McNamara cited the spirit of confidentiality vital to the NPG and defended his scheme for nuclear planning as adequate involvement for the Military Committee. But the primary motivation was more likely to prevent a further dilution of U.S. strategic concepts by its allies. The United States remained the principal guardian of the confidentiality of the NPG, always resisting attempts for more attendees or for widespread dissemination of discussions. This potentially could have led to a negative perception of the NPG in NATO, and the State Department remained sensitive to notions that Washington bullied its allies and dictated policy. In the case of the Turkey’s retreat on ADM deployment, the State Department made it very clear to its allies that the United States bore no responsibility for Turkish abandonment of the project.

Over the first two years of the NPG’s existence, the influence of the permanent representatives and the NPG staff, and hence of the foreign ministries they represented, increased within the NPG. Secretary Brosio saw the Hague meeting in April 1968 as pivotal for many reasons, but one of them was the absence of Robert McNamara, who resigned his position as U.S. Secretary of Defense a short while later. Through natural and political attrition, governments were replacing the experienced old guard defense ministers of the NPG and NATO ambassadors were gaining more influence. In the

213 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 13808, “NPG Permreps Meeting-9 March,” March 9, 1967.

214 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2103, “NPG-Turkish ADM Plan,” March 12, 1968.

215 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 1582, “NPG-Turkish ADM Plan,” February 5, 1968.
beginning, the NPG had ensured that the numerous staff meetings and negotiations prior
to defense minister meetings made no concrete conclusions or recommendations and only
forwarded lists of discussion questions with the studies.\textsuperscript{216} In March 1968, however, the
NPG staff had forwarded the ABM study with specific recommendations.\textsuperscript{217} The
difference appears minor, but they may also be indicative of how the ministers were
gradually transforming the NPG ministerial meetings into formal proceedings designed
more to approve complex staff work than to conduct the animated discussions of earlier
days.\textsuperscript{218}

The NPG staff’s growing importance to nuclear planning is also evident from the
calls by NDAC rotational members to gain access to the frequent staff meetings.\textsuperscript{219} If
rotational members could not gain access to the NPG itself, then they sought to be present
at the staff meetings where the agendas and reports were prepared and discussed prior to
the ministerial meetings. The lack of influence or access allowed to the NDAC created a
continuous push from rotational members for either increased access to NPG
proceedings, or a greater role for the NDAC itself. When the NDAC met for the first
time in December 1967, the meeting proved disappointing for the rotational members not

\textsuperscript{216} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State

\textsuperscript{217} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Joint State/Defense

\textsuperscript{218} An alternative explanation for the increased influence of the NPG staff may lie in the sources.
There are few written records of the NPG ministerial meetings. The NPG expressly forbade transcripts to
allow for candid discussion. Thus much of the records of ministerial meetings are contained in personal
reports and notes taken by the principals themselves. NATO ambassadors, however, regularly reported on
the staff work conducted between the NPG meetings to their respective capitals and received guidance on
how to conduct negotiations. This has created a detailed record of the actions of the NPG staff, which of
course emphasized their own discussions and analysis.

\textsuperscript{219} Krone, “NATO Nuclear Policy Making,” 34.
currently occupying seats in the NPG. The United States ensured that the NDAC meetings remained limited in scope to preserve the NPG’s special role and reduce public discussion of nuclear weapons policy. Washington intended NDAC meetings to take on a ceremonial quality with representatives receiving oral updates but no study results until formally approved by the NPG. 220 In fact, much of what the NPG presented to the NDAC remained a compilation of the minutes from the previous NPG meetings, and hence nothing new. 221 The resulting NDAC meetings contained no surprises and appeared quite bland and the attendance of only an assistant secretary from the United States symbolized its relative unimportance to Washington. 222

Of the three non-permanent members in the NPG its first year, Turkey had the greatest initial impact. Undoubtedly Turkey’s influence stemmed from its experience in Working Group III and its familiarity with the procedures of the staff system that had evolved there. Other rotational members quickly learned that they needed to take the initiative in areas of particular national interest. Once a government contributed a study and analysis, its defense minister and his deputy led discussion sessions in meetings and played a larger role in the NPG in general.

The Dutch also became proactive members of the NPG after its first meetings in Washington and Ankara. They volunteered to assist West Germany in a study on tactical nuclear weapons use, and, on their own initiative, they began a study of the policy of


222 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 1022, “Highlights of NDAC and DPC Meetings, December 12,” December 13, 1967. Because McNamara had announced his imminent resignation, Paul Nitze attended the NDAC meeting.
arming the NIKE/HERCULES air defense system of central Europe with nuclear warheads.\textsuperscript{223} Although the West Germans turned down the Dutch offer, the NPG eventually approved the Dutch study on the NIKE/HERCULES system in 1968 with little controversy and decided to incorporate its findings into the broader West German study.\textsuperscript{224} The Dutch work may also have affected the nature of U.S. nuclear stockpiles. The reasoning is not entirely clear, but in May 1968 the U.S. Department of Defense requested an increase of twenty nuclear warheads for the NIKE system in central Europe, not long after the NPG approved the Dutch study.\textsuperscript{225} The Dutch also asserted themselves by submitting studies for review by the staff group about the host country topic, and although the staff never approved them for ministerial level discussions, at least the Dutch aired their opinions on record.\textsuperscript{226}

The Canadian representatives remained the least assertive of the rotating NPG members, participating in only minor ways during both the ministerial and preparatory staff meetings. This was due in part to Ottawa’s own ongoing review in 1967 and 1968 of its military commitments to NATO and to the Canadian public’s general lack of support for overseas deployments. The Canadians appeared unsure of their policies concerning NATO and defense issues during the entire length of their initial rotation in the NPG.

\textsuperscript{223} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 3579, “NPG Permreps Meeting September 18-Highlights,” September 18, 1967; Department of State Telegram, Ankara 1587, “NPG Meeting-Agreed Minute,” September 29, 1967.

\textsuperscript{224} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Joint State/Defense Message, “Netherlands Memorandum of Nuclear Employment of NIKE,” February 13, 1968.


\textsuperscript{226} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 486, “NPG Draft Report to NDAC,” November 17, 1967.
To be sure, the influence of the rotating members on the NPG increased considerably in 1968 with the adoption of the “Hague Formula.” The NDAC agreed that all members would gain access to NPG staff work and meetings, which provided a window into NPG ministerial deliberations. The Hague Formula arose out of Canadian and Dutch discontent over their upcoming exit from the NPG scheduled for that summer. Both insisted that the NPG become a more open organization and criticized the lack of NDAC influence. During their eighteen-month exile to the NDAC, both countries stood to lose any gains they made the previous year in influencing nuclear planning.

The United States, supported by Britain, repeated the argument that the NPG’s success depended on its limited membership, which enabled candid, informal discussions. Cleveland issued a thinly veiled threat against the expansion of the NPG, warning of a reversion to NATO’s original organization in which Washington had rarely discussed nuclear issues with allies in such a candid manner. The West Germans also wished to preserve the exclusive nature of the Nuclear Planning Group, especially since they and the Italians benefited as the only non-nuclear, yet permanent members. Much of this debate took place at the permanent representative meetings in NATO where Grewe, the German ambassador to NATO, let the U.S. and British take the lead on membership issues.

The Canadian and Dutch challenge to the rotation scheme harkened back to the contentious meetings of the Special Committee over equality and membership. The tough and almost obstructive position of the Netherlands had changed little since then.

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227 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2427, “Informal Discussion on Future of NPG/NDAC,” April 6, 1968.

Continued Dutch complaints forced a compromise. The United States agreed to include the rotating members in NPG meetings and staff work specifically pertaining to special national interests, such as including Turkey in the ADM study they had begun. But Washington insisted this would be an exception, not a standard procedure. At the Hague meeting, the NPG formulated a compromise which allowed NDAC members unfettered access to staff meetings and input into the initial stages of studies, but excluded them from ministerial meetings until their agreed rotation.

Despite the increased involvement of the rotational members in almost every aspect of the NPG during its first two years of existence, the permanent members controlled the direction and focus of most proceedings. Even within the permanent members a more exclusive association had developed consisting of the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany. In most cases, just prior to NPG ministerial meetings, the American and British, and sometimes the West German defense ministers met informally. Ambassador Cleveland conducted more frequent private discussions with his British and German counterparts than with any other members. Because of the lengthy discussions at the staff group level, many understood the varied national positions on major issues, but the increased contacts between the defense ministers of the three nations that guided the NPG ensured more intimate knowledge of each other.

The standard agenda for NPG meetings usually began with an American-led briefing on NATO nuclear stockpiles, changes in Soviet capabilities, and any pertinent technical information. This continued to serve one of McNamara’s original purposes of the NPG, to educate his European counterparts on nuclear weapons capabilities and, more importantly, limitations. As political leadership inevitably changed in NATO
governments at irregular intervals, these briefings served to ensure some baseline of knowledge for defense ministers on nuclear issues. One clear example is the case of West Germany. Von Hassel had represented Bonn at all of the Special Committee and Working Group III meetings, but was replaced by Schröder prior to the first NPG meeting in April 1967. Defense Ministers served on average a term of about three years, giving them at most six NPG meetings in total and ensuring that at every meeting there was almost always a new face representing at least one of the seven allies. Throughout the life of the Nuclear Planning Group, these informative briefings remained highly regarded by European defense ministers.\footnote{229 Joseph Luns, interview by Edwin Newman, “NATO in the new Europe,” North Hollywood, CA: Center for Cassette Studies, 1971. Luns cites the informative briefings as the primary benefit of the NPG during his interview.}

Another significant procedural aspect of the NPG was the location of the semi-annual defense minister meetings. Hosts enjoyed a distinct home field advantage and level of public prestige, especially among rotational members. Turkey demonstrated this during the Ankara meeting when it forcefully pursued its ADM plans amidst robust press and public interest. Subsequent meeting locations always remained points of debate among the members and produced sometimes lengthy negotiations, but usually were decided by the permanent members. It became standard practice on the afternoon of the second day of ministerial meetings that the host nation offered informal tours of national sites for their guests and oftentimes family members. These tours, which in one case included an intimate dinner at Secretary McNamara’s house, created a lasting impression.
on some NPG delegates and overall increased the feelings of solidarity among the ministers.\textsuperscript{230}

In its first two years, the NPG already fulfilled one of its primary political functions of satisfying the West Germans. By increasing consultation on nuclear defense among NATO members at the highest level it served to educate and even alter some of the views of non-nuclear members, bringing them more in line with Britain and the United States. Publicly and privately, the German defense minister Schröder praised the usefulness of the group and remained engaged in many aspects of its development.\textsuperscript{231} After his first NPG meeting in Washington, Schröder expressed pleasure with the results and agreed to involve Bonn in as many studies as possible.\textsuperscript{232} Indeed, the biggest policy shift on nuclear weapons occurred in West Germany. According to its NATO ambassador, Wilhelm Grewe, West German planners became increasingly conservative the deeper they involved themselves in nuclear planning.\textsuperscript{233} Bonn’s planners recognized the dangers of massive retaliation and the immediate and automatic use of nuclear weapons and recognized the weakness of dependence on deterrence alone. Eighteen months after the inception of the NPG, members of the British NATO delegation saw a greater inclination by their German counterparts to accept nuclear weapons use beyond

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\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{230} Wilhelm G. Grewe, \textit{Ruckblenden, 1976-1951} (Frankfurt/Main: Ullstein Verlag, 1979), 630-31.
\item\textsuperscript{231} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Bonn 11950, “NPG Meeting,” April 8, 1967.
\item\textsuperscript{232} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1596, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 19475, “NPG Study No. 2,” June 1, 1967; Joint State/Defense Message, 207401, June 2, 1967.
\item\textsuperscript{233} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Paris 4421, “Nuclear Planning Group: Political Psychology of the Members,” September 30, 1967.
\end{itemize}

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just a demonstration. To be sure, this failed to completely end the domestic political debate over gaining access to hardware in Germany; but the continued success of the software alternative quieted it considerably. To be sure, a major change in American policy and personnel served to balance these encouraging signs from West Germany.

McNamara’s departure from the Defense Department had a potentially serious impact on the NPG. His replacement, Clark Clifford, appeared reluctant to move rapidly on creating nuclear guidelines and less comfortable with the level of consultation the NPG provided. Clifford expressed his concerns directly to Denis Healey over the risks of pushing forward rapidly with nuclear use guidelines. Healey proceeded to expound on the motives behind the NPG establishment and explained that an abrupt halt would dishearten their non-nuclear allies. The British, along with Secretary General Brosio, feared the US was trying to backtrack “on their readiness to discuss nuclear planning with their allies and [were] more reluctant to envisage the use of nuclear weapons in Europe in any circumstances.” British policy makers remained determined to overcome Clifford’s hesitations without pressing him too forcefully. But Healey made the production of guidelines for nuclear use that would meet the approval of the U.S. president his priority for the NPG. From these guidelines, he believed SACEUR could

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236 PRO, FCO 41/202, “Notes on Conversation between Secretary of State for Defense and Clark Clifford, 8 a.m. 18 April 1968.”

237 PRO, FCO 41/201, Telegram No. 280 from Hague to Foreign Office, April 19, 1968.
then produce politically viable contingency plans for defense of the NATO area. Clifford, who was not a prominent figure at his first NPG meeting, failed to impress his partners when he recommended further studies before launching into the guidelines. He met opposition from both Healey and Schröder, and faced with an apparent consensus against his views, Clifford relented. After the Hague meeting, the rest of the permanent members nominated the British delegation to lead discussion on establishing guidelines.

With Clifford on the sidelines, it appears that Denis Healey stepped into the void to continue the momentum of the NPG. Prior to the Bonn meeting the usual dinner gathering of the defense ministers from the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany did not take place. Instead, Healey met with each separately. Clifford anointed Healey the role of European spokesman, and Healey seemed to relish his position as the link between the United States and Germany. He and Schröder quickly agreed on the necessity to establish political guidelines for nuclear use and pledged to cooperate on the first draft and push for American approval.

This was a special moment for Great Britain, which was in the process of dismantling its overseas empire and withdrawing from the Middle East. Its role in the NPG gave London a chance to exert considerable influence in NATO. The role as a

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238 PRO, FO 1116/41, “Nuclear Planning Group Meeting at The Hague, 18-19 April 1968: Summary of Statement by United Kingdom Defense Secretary.”

239 PRO, FCO 41/202, D/DS 12/215/5/2/6, “NATO Nuclear Planning Group, Record of Third Meeting,” June 1, 1968.


bridge between Europe and the United States is one the British (and especially Denis Healey) appreciated. He promoted nuclear relations as an avenue for expanding British influence in both regions. The British did not recognize any conflict in their special relationship with the United States and their movement towards Europe in other areas such as the European Economic Community. In fact, they believed they could complement each other. In this respect, the resolution of the nuclear defense debate in NATO, where the British had publicly and privately assumed a primary role in satisfying European interests, remained important for their policy. British cooperation with the United States and the eventual subordination of British nuclear forces on continental Europe to NATO command, worked both to ensure United States involvement in Europe, and promote integration with the Europeans.\footnote{242 PAAA, B150, vol. 142, Telegram 2467 from London to Bonn, December 9, 1968.}

At the NPG meetings, the ministers also addressed one of the more critical differences between Americans and Europeans in NATO, the debate over the levels of conventional forces and how they related to nuclear forces and strategy overall. Behind Healey’s repeated calls for general political guidelines was his desire to confront this debate. When Clifford stressed the need for increased conventional forces in Europe to maintain deterrence, Healey countered by attacking the current American focus on conventional force levels and the purely military uses of tactical nuclear weapons planning coming from SACEUR. Healey saw both of these as less important for NATO’s defense than determining how best to reestablish deterrence against a Warsaw Pact invasion. Also, “speaking as a European,” Healey made veiled threats that Europe might need to form its own nuclear force if the American deterrent was no longer
viable.\textsuperscript{243} Clifford’s isolation and the force of Healey’s argument became apparent when
the NPG agreed to set political guidelines as their priority and tasked Great Britain and
West Germany to begin a joint effort.

Thus by 1968 American policy in the Nuclear Planning Group had shifted, with
the initiative now with the Europeans and McNamara’s leadership and guidance gone.
To be sure, the European Caucus that Healey had formally established remained
consistent with U.S. policy, which was to encourage the Europeans to work together on
matters of defense. The timing was significant. Having weathered the crisis initiated by
the French, NATO was responding with organizational reforms and with the Harmel
report, which provided an agreed direction for the political future of the alliance.\textsuperscript{244} The
Caucus on European Defense focused primarily on issues of cooperation in areas of
military research and weapons development, but it also had the potential of becoming a
forum for the formation of a “European” view of nuclear defense. This never developed,
and the European Caucus remained limited to consultation on conventional force
integration in an effort to increase military effectiveness. Denis Healey’s role as a
principal organizer of the Caucus served both to set limits on radical initiatives, but also
expanded Britain’s growing ties with Europe.

Despite the diminished role of the U.S. Secretary of Defense, by the end of 1968,
the prospects for the future work of the NPG remained good. The group had solved the

\textsuperscript{243} PRO, FCO 41/428, “Nuclear Planning Group: Record of the 4\textsuperscript{th} Meeting in Bonn on 10/11\textsuperscript{th}
April 1968.”

\textsuperscript{244} One of the principal conclusions of the Harmel report was that détente and NATO could
coexist, and depended on each other for success. The report reaffirmed the requirement for NATO to
ensure European security, despite détente, a notion challenged by the French withdrawal. The report also
allowed for member states to pursue independent relations with Warsaw Pact states, specifically referring
5, 2008.
short term problem of nuclear sharing, continued to satisfy the West Germans, prevented any further calls for hardware sharing, and achieved Washington’s goals of educating and shaping European attitudes towards nuclear weapons and preserving secrecy. The efforts and results of the numerous NPG staff and ministerial meetings had garnered praise from the US mission to NATO. The NPG representatives came highly prepared, and the group continued to achieve its intent of fostering candid discussion with lively debates and few “canned” speeches. The effectiveness of the NPG was also a factor in obtaining European consent for the non-proliferation treaty, because the NPG extended to America’s allies the opportunities for consultation over ongoing Soviet and American nuclear relations and arms reduction negotiations.

Overall the Nuclear Planning Group underwent significant changes from 1967 to 1968. As the group began to address more sensitive issues concerning nuclear weapons defense and use, its studies also became increasingly contentious. Ambassador Cleveland concluded in an assessment to the new Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford in 1968 that “we are giving the Europeans so much information, and so many opportunities to come forward with their ideas, their papers, and their proposals, that it is hard for them to feel, let alone complain out loud, that they are not “participating in nuclear planning.” But by 1968, the NPG had only produced two concrete accomplishments, the ABM assessment and the Dutch NIKE study. Most other studies never made it past discussion in the permanent representative or defense minister meetings.

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246 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, For Secretary Clifford from Harlan Cleveland, “The Nuclear Planning Group,” April 11, 1968.
On the more positive side, the Nuclear Planning Group indirectly affected the adoption of flexible response by creating confidence in the American plan, but the fact that two years of study resulted in no distinct political guidelines for nuclear weapons in NATO remained disconcerting for many states. In addition, the “gentlemen’s agreement” that limited membership in the NPG continued to come under fire from rotational members. The NPG had mollified the West Germans, but at the price of relegating most other NATO members to a position of inequality. The non-permanent members were successful in forcing changes in the attendance of NPG staff meetings and other procedural aspects but they still harbored discontent over the unequal system of representation.
“The Defense Secretary has on numerous occasions said that in his view the objective of the NPG should be to study possible contingencies in peacetime so that, if the alliance is ever faced with an aggression, it will have a good working knowledge of the course that events might take and the conditions under which it might be necessary to use nuclear weapons.”

--LeHardy referring to Secretary of State for Defense, Denis Healey.\(^{247}\)

“We believe that it is neither wise nor feasible to attempt to develop of single, rigid, uniform and exclusive procedure for consulting on all possible releases of nuclear weapons.”\(^{248}\)

--Guidance sent to U.S. Ambassador to NATO, October 1968

CHAPTER 4

System Output: Resolution in the NPG, 1969

1969 saw the advent of new administrations in the United States and West Germany, and although led by different parties, they did not drastically alter NPG or NATO policy immediately. As the year began, Richard Nixon assumed the U.S. Presidency and began the first Republican administration in eight years. Like his predecessors’, Nixon’s first priority was Vietnam, but with a new security policy team Nixon also began a comprehensive review of U.S. nuclear and defense strategy. Despite

\(^{247}\) PRO, FO 1116/41, “Explanation and Summary of Studies into Possible Use of Tactical Nuclear Weapons in the Southern Region of Allied Command Europe,” September 13, 1968.

\(^{248}\) PRO, FCO 41/431, “NPG Meeting – Thursday 24 October: Record of Discussion about Consultative procedures for Release of Nuclear Weapons.”
the Johnson administration’s success in convincing NATO to adopt flexible response and address the concepts of limited nuclear war in Europe, McNamara’s attempts to achieve changes in the American strategic nuclear weapons plan beyond the original massive retaliation concept remained incomplete. When the new National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, assumed a dominant role in the Nixon administration he continued McNamara’s efforts to obtain the greatest flexibility in both national and international defense planning.

The U.S. policy on flexible response in Europe did not significantly change after the Nixon administration’s review. The Americans remained focused on using nuclear weapons within Europe for military purposes and for the maintenance of a distinct threshold between conventional and nuclear conflict. However, Nixon’s aims concerning American conventional forces in Europe did not add strength to this nuclear policy. Due to congressional pressure and budgetary constraints, the president wished to withdraw significant American conventional forces from Europe. This made it difficult for his Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, to demand increases in European conventional forces. American force withdrawals, without corresponding increases in European forces, implicitly placed more emphasis on nuclear defense, requiring an even earlier use of nuclear weapons, and forcing a more inflexible response.

By 1969, after the fall of the Grand Coalition and the establishment of an SPD led government under Brandt, Ostpolitik as a formal policy began to take shape. Bonn

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remained committed to reunification of the two Germanys, but recognized this dream as not immediately achievable. Maintaining peace and prosperity for West Germany became its primary goal, and dialogue with Eastern Europe the means to do so. Moreover, West Germany had become relatively secure in NATO and the European Economic Community. This solid relationship with his Western partners, reaffirmed by the resolution of the public controversy over nuclear control, allowed Brandt to pursue his Ostpolitik boldly. Conversely, the NPG provided a venue for addressing Bonn’s nuclear concerns without disrupting Ostpolitik. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, for Brandt to open negotiations with Eastern Europe at a time when West Germany appeared aggressive and dangerous by pursuing control of nuclear weapons. The Warsaw Pact’s reaction to the MLF talks and any German physical sharing of nuclear weapons remained categorically negative and a conspicuous source of anti-West German propaganda.

Bonn’s immediate views on nuclear defense strategy did not dramatically change with a new administration any more than Washington’s. The West Germans continued to represent a European defense attitude that focused on nuclear deterrence, early use of nuclear weapons in a conflict to force the Warsaw Pact to back down, and follow-on use of nuclear weapons outside of the NATO area. More than any alterations in national policy, the political adjustments in each country affected the key members of the nuclear planning group and created staff changes during what would be a pivotal year. But the presence of these relative newcomers had only a minor impact on the NPG, which by 1969 attained a momentum of its own. Firmly established within NATO, the NPG
remained less dependent on the attitudes of any national leaders or the new defense ministers of the United States or West Germany.

In 1969, the Nuclear Planning Group faced the challenging task of forming a consensus on two difficult issues. Throughout the year, it debated the broad policy guidelines for the initial use of tactical nuclear weapons in a conflict with the Warsaw Pact concurrently with discussions on how to ensure national participation both in crisis consultation and nuclear planning. These two problems went to the heart of the NPG: the dilemma over alleviating both European desires for participation and fulfilling the American need to maintain control. After two years of increasing its depth of study and of changing attitudes among allies, the group needed to produce an agreement to forward for approval to the NDAC and the alliance as a whole. Continued disagreement over the problems of NPG membership hampered efforts, but during this period of political transition, the European members of the alliance asserted themselves to a greater degree and gained much of what they were looking for, while the United States achieved its goals and gave up nothing in the way of control during a crisis.

Provisional Political Guidelines (PPGs)

In 1969, the Nuclear Planning Group produced a set of political guidelines for the initial use of nuclear weapons stemming primarily from the Anglo-German tactical nuclear weapons study produced that year. Indeed, their joint effort on the tactical nuclear study revealed that Bonn’s view of nuclear weapons had begun to conform with American strategy from 1966 to 1969. But as the West Germans developed their detailed analysis, the results were not completely in parallel with the American vision of

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252 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, London 725, untitled, January 28, 1969.
flexible response. The Anglo-German study aimed at shortening the time necessary to gain alliance approval and, hence, increase nuclear deterrence.\textsuperscript{253} On the other hand, the United States continued to oppose efforts at specificity and worked to amend the joint study and decrease the level of detail to force more decision making during a crisis, not before. The NPG ministers approved the Anglo-German draft format for the tactical nuclear guidelines study in May 1969, but the United States forced a period of intense negotiations over reducing the level of detail addressed by the study.

The naming of the Anglo-German tactical nuclear weapons study as the Healey-Schröder Report belied the extensive American involvement in its formulation. Besides the influence the United States exerted during the normal NPG staff meetings, West German and British planners incorporated American suggestions and sent advance copies of their study to Washington. German nuclear experts consulted with members of the International Affairs Office of the Pentagon on many of the draft German studies for the Nuclear Planning Group.\textsuperscript{254} It was U.S. policy to keep the extent of its involvement a secret from the other allies, to prevent the appearance of "steamrolling."\textsuperscript{255} These lower level communications remained hidden from view, even to other members of the Nuclear Planning Group, but they were just as essential to the consultation process and to the eventual approval of the studies and memoranda. This strategy preserved the appearance

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\textsuperscript{253} Nixon Library, Senior Review Group Meeting Files, Box H-035, NSC Review, “U.S. Policy Towards NATO,” undated.

\textsuperscript{254} PAAA, B150, vol. 96, Letter from FRG Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, February 3, 1967

\textsuperscript{255} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 4485, “NPG - TacNuc Guidelines,” October 3, 1969.
of European dominance of the tactical nuclear weapons study, when in fact it was more of a joint effort of Britain and West Germany with the United States.

The debate over tactical nuclear weapons pitted American and European views concerning deterrence against each other. But instead of bringing other Europeans into the discussion, London and Bonn continued to foster a special relationship with the United States within the Nuclear Planning Group. These exclusionary policies even applied to Italy, the fourth permanent member of the NPG. West Germany, with American support, successfully blocked Italian attempts to add the conclusions from their study on ADM use in southern NATO to the broader joint Anglo-German study.256 The three leading powers of the group not only controlled the agenda and pace of discussions but were determined to produce results in the form of the Healey-Schröder Report by the end of 1969.

But compromise and the involvement of all members of the Nuclear Planning Group remained necessary for the completion of the Provisional Planning Guidelines. The Americans spearheaded the efforts at gaining this consensus and exerted the most effort on convincing the non-nuclear states of the dangers involved in a high level of detail in prewar nuclear planning. Less detail found in the guidelines provided more flexibility during crisis decision making that the United States dominated. This was the primary reason that the Americans fought hard to exclude the conclusions from the Italian ADM study, because it once again focused on predelegation and set plans for nuclear defense that could not be altered once a crisis ensued. Getting the Italians to back down from their conclusions ended one of the major stumbling blocks to approval of the

256 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2298, “NPG – Italian ADM Guidelines Paper,” May 16, 1969.
guidelines. It also served to nullify the ADM studies of the previous years by the Greeks and Turks that had presented similar conclusions.

Only one month before the November 1969 ministerial meeting, as the NPG staff made the final adjustments on the Healey-Schröder Report, the Social Democrats led by Willy Brandt assumed power in West Germany in a coalition with the Free Democrats. The new West German Defense Minister, Helmut Schmidt, with little time to review the document, quickly endorsed what became the Healey-Schmidt report. Although the immediate effect of the SPD’s assumption of power was slight in NATO, it had a major impact on East-West relations. West Germany’s newest Chancellor had campaigned for détente with the East, and his election would prove vital to the eventual West German acceptance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Despite the efforts of the Nuclear Planning Group to satisfy Bonn’s nuclear ambitions, the CDU had actively opposed the treaty and found non-proliferation difficult to accept politically. The SPD did not place as high a value on nuclear weapons or alliance equality as the CDU. Nonetheless, West Germany’s special place in the NPG remained a valuable asset for Bonn’s foreign policy towards Washington and London, as well as towards Moscow.

The West Germans, Americans, and British had worked out much of the detailed language of the Healey-Schmidt study prior to the NPG ministerial meeting in November 1969 in Washington. There the defense ministers agreed to the final product recommended by the NPG staff and dubbed it the Provisional Political Guidelines for the Initial Defensive Tactical Use of Nuclear Weapons by NATO, or PPGs for short.

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258 Küntzel, Bonn and the Bomb: German Politics and the Nuclear Option, 121.
Significantly, they agreed that the initial use of nuclear weapons would be for political purposes, to convince the Warsaw Pact that further aggression would not be worth the risks and to force a cessation of hostilities. This policy signaled a considerable U.S. compromise, because many American strategists preferred to emphasize the military use of nuclear weapons. But like MC 14/3 in 1967, the PPGs included multiple options for the initial use of nuclear weapons, including use within NATO territory and on military targets, which kept these guidelines within the boundaries of American policy.

Essentially, the defense ministers had agreed on the goals of an initial use of nuclear weapons, but not the actual methods. The Provisional Political Guidelines, even with more detail than MC 14/3, still relied on numerous options, widely varied, in order to achieve a consensus across the alliance.

The timing of the Healey-Schmidt report was critical to its acceptance by the United States as the Provisional Planning Guidelines. During the first year of Nixon’s presidency, his administration was still studying and debating its position on the flexible response strategy. The key NPG meeting in May when the British and Germans had presented their draft to the group was the new Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird’s, first. There he focused more on convincing allies they needed to increase their conventional forces than on the details of the guidelines. Indeed, the PPG’s focus on deterrence did not correspond with the direction that the Nixon administration or the Pentagon would later take in nuclear planning over the next six years. Many of the studies and guidance


emanating from the National Security Council led by Kissinger focused on the prospects of fighting a limited war and on the military uses of nuclear weapons.

Thus, the PPGs reaffirmed the American and European divisions over nuclear strategy. Although they had brought the sides closer together, it was only by maintaining enough options to satisfy each side. But as far as the West Germans were concerned, the Provisional Planning Guidelines, and the role they had exercised in their conception and approval, satisfied their desires for influence in nuclear defense.\(^{262}\) The PPGs signaled the culmination of Bonn’s almost decade-long effort to gain influence and public acknowledgement in nuclear defense planning. The term “provisional” also embodied the importance of the PPGs more than in establishing an agreed-upon strategy. It ensured, with the NPG as its vehicle, a continuous review of the assumptions and premises behind nuclear weapons use and alliance defense.\(^{263}\)

Many within and outside NATO hailed the approval of the PPGs as a triumph for the Nuclear Planning Group. Press reports at the time praised the agreement as a significant accomplishment while also overstating the level of agreement. The PPGs did not provide any “rules” for tactical nuclear weapons use as one report indicated, but simply defined some of the options and assumptions behind them.\(^{264}\) The deliberate secrecy of the actual policy guidelines remained essential for security and deterrence, but they also kept the limited nature of the agreement hidden from the public as well. Many analysts recognized that no amount of planning for tactical nuclear weapons use by


NATO would be effective without the emplacement of specific crisis management procedures that authorized timely use. The simultaneous agreement within the NPG on this issue in 1969 was also vital.

National Participation in Nuclear Planning

The Nuclear Planning Group and NATO faced three distinct problems in 1969 concerning national participation in nuclear planning, crisis consultation, and NPG membership. All the non-nuclear states, except for West Germany, which had already secured a pledge of consultation from President Johnson, remained concerned about the exact procedures for nuclear decision making in NATO during a crisis. Most non-nuclear NATO members desired some sort of institutionalized avenue for consultation in a crisis before the alliance resorted to nuclear weapons. The non-nuclear powers also saw the ‘time and circumstances permitting’ clause in the Athens’ guidelines as giving the United States too much freedom to choose when to consult with allies prior to nuclear use. These ideas threatened both the American monopoly on decisions for nuclear use and the effectiveness of deterrence by potentially lengthening crisis decision making procedures.

The Special Committee in 1966 had first attempted to tackle this issue. The “Chapman Report” submitted to the North Atlantic Council in December 1966 determined that the highest levels of consultation must occur before nuclear use and that the NAC was the logical institutional body within NATO where this could happen. Once the NAC had made a decision, it would then be forwarded to the U.S. President or the British Prime Minister (depending on the source of weapon intended for use) to gain final approval.

The political advantages of satisfying allies on the issue of crisis consultation appeared to

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carry the day in Johnson’s administration and despite some mid level opposition in the Department of Defense, McNamara and Rusk had agreed to accept the Chapman report. It is clear that U.S. and British policy makers felt that the chances that the NAC would ever exercise this option were quite remote. As long as the President and Prime Minister had the final say on the use of U.S. weapons, there was always control, and the Chapman report did not limit their ability to initiate nuclear use.266

The NPG still faced the task of implementing the policies outlined by the Chapman report and devising specific procedures for crisis decision making within the alliance. When it came to specific implementation of the policy, the United States was much less forthcoming and much more sensitive to any possible limitations on American flexibility. In 1968, America’s NATO representatives both attempted to delay and then remove themselves from the discussions altogether. When the NPG staff met to discuss crisis consultation in December, the U.S. representatives attended explicitly only as observers and the State Department refused to participate in a questionnaire distributed within NATO on the subject.267 The primary sticking point of the decision making process for nuclear use touched off a lively debate during the ministerial meetings in 1969 as well. Secretary of Defense Laird continued to argue that bilateral consultation between the nuclear weapon’s owner and the affected ally entailed enough consultation prior to decision making, while the non-nuclear states as a whole desired concrete procedures intended to ensure consultation among a wider array of NATO members.


267 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 6269, “NPG – Consultation,” December 13, 1968.
In this debate, in fact a contest between the United States and most of Europe, West Germany agreed with its neighbors that deterrence would not be significantly reduced by increased consultation.\textsuperscript{268} However, the West Germans remained relatively quiet through most of the early discussion, despite being the initiator and primary instigator of the related host country issue only two years before. Indeed, they potentially gained less from an open discussion of consultation procedures because President Johnson’s consultation pledge in 1968 had brought them into a similar consultative relationship with the United States as the British. In one of their few contributions to the debate, the West German representatives openly recognized the domestic constitutional and political problems that would prevent the United States from giving up ultimate control of nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{269} According to Bonn, there existed a limit to how many governments the United States could pledge to consult directly during a crisis. Ultimately, the non-nuclear powers agreed that the NATO Council was the best avenue for nuclear consultation because it included all NATO members and would undoubtedly be in constant session during a crisis.

As the discussion over crisis consultation gathered momentum in the NPG staff, the State Department continued to work to prevent a public debate. As in the host country issue, the U.S. attempted to address crisis consultation bilaterally and outside of the NPG forum.\textsuperscript{270} Once again the will of the many prevailed. Crisis consultation remained an agenda item through 1969, and Belgium undertook a formal study for the


\textsuperscript{269} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 6376, “NPG – Consultation,” December 20, 1968.

\textsuperscript{270} RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Outgoing Department of State Telegram, “NPG Consultation,” November 4, 1968.
Nuclear Planning Group. Britain once more acted as a mediator, trying to convince the Americans to heed the concerns of the non-nuclear states, to “play the game” and placate allies. Although British views on crisis consultation matched the Americans, the British chose to engage in the debate in the NPG and considered a resolution of the problem as an important task for the Nuclear Planning Group.

The changes in administration and the decreased emphasis on NATO and European defense in 1969 account for part of the problems with the U.S. position. U.S. intransigence also indicated how seriously Washington’s policy makers took the issue of preserving the freedom of the American president in the use of all the nuclear weapons in his stockpile. The United States may have been overly sensitive in this case. The other NPG members recognized the special role of the president, and they only desired firm procedures that would ensure that all NATO members would be informed of nuclear release requests. Ambassador Cleveland tried to convince Washington of the need for a general “declaration of principles” concerning crisis consultation and warned that too much obstruction would trigger an unnecessary and undesirable public debate.

The Belgian study, submitted to the NPG staff in the early summer of 1969, demonstrated that the “time and circumstances permitting” clause, based on the Athens Guidelines of 1962, was the major sticking point. The suggested language for revision in

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271 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2427, “NPG – Nuclear Consultation Paper,” May 23, 1969.


273 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1598, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 6269, “NPG – Consultation,” December 13, 1968.

274 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1589, DEF 4 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 0365, “The NATO Defense System,” January 25, 1968.
the Belgian study attempted to diminish America’s dominance over nuclear use. Shortly afterwards, the United States submitted its own paper on nuclear consultation that seemed to ignore many of its allies’ concerns by insisting on the American president’s ultimate decision making authority. This was not well received by allies, who regarded the U.S. study as overly blunt and allowing no room for compromise.275 Due to the sensitivity of the crisis consultation issue, Defense Secretary Laird instructed his NPG deputy, Ambassador Robert Ellsworth, to avoid discussing the Belgian study at the staff level, even as the staff actively debated the study’s recommendations.276 The American vision for nuclear consultation essentially placed the North Atlantic Council and NATO member governments in the courtesy copy line for requests from nuclear release in NATO, but the ultimate decision maker would always remain the nuclear power that built and controlled the weapon (either the U.S. or Great Britain).277 Laird’s guidance to Ellsworth indicated his desire to reserve debate over the American position for the upcoming ministerial meeting scheduled in the United States in the fall of 1969.

This strategy seemed to succeed. Before the opening of the NPG meeting in Virginia in November 1969, President Nixon warned the delegates that the United States would never give up the right of its president to make the final decision for use of American nuclear weapons in NATO.278 This clear message demonstrated U. S. resolve.

275 PRO, FCO 41/430, Telegram No. 305 from UKDEL NATO to FCO, May 23, 1969.

276 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 3842, “NPG – Consultation,” August 29, 1969.

277 PRO, FCO 41/431, Immediate Telegram No. 191645, from UKDEL NATO to MOD, May 19, 1969.

278 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Memorandum for Mr. Kent Crane, Office of the Vice President, “Presidential Breakfast for Delegates to NATO Nuclear Planning Group Meeting,” November 11, 1969.
During the meeting itself, the defense ministers worked out an agreement that clarified some procedures for crisis consultation but preserved America’s right of unilateral action. The ministers agreed that the NATO high command must pass requests from subordinate commands for nuclear release not only to the states in control of the weapons but also directly to all NATO governments and to the North Atlantic Council. The “time and circumstances permitting” clause remained for two-way consultation, but NATO had now included the NAC indirectly in the nuclear release process ensuring that, in theory at least, no member would be surprised by nuclear use.  

This clarification of the specific nuclear release details addressed at least one source of the crisis consultation problem, the ignorance of many NATO commanders about nuclear release procedures and the confusion this had created in NATO exercises. In 1964, British commanders had been forced to gain permission from the Prime Minister before nuclear use, even after SACEUR had given them the order. In this case, the national military uniform had superseded loyalty to NATO. Eventually, the British agreed to relinquish the veto over their commanders’ use of nuclear weapons and to trust that any orders from SACEUR would come as a result of political consultation between the United States and Great Britain. But this debate and agreement had been kept secret from other allies within NATO to preserve the integrity of the U.S. and

279 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Message, “NPG Ministerial Meeting,” November 15, 1969.  

280 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2687, “NPG –Consultation,” June 10, 1969.  

British special relationship.\textsuperscript{282} Thus, although the Americans and British had worked out these details, the alliance as a whole was not privy to the arrangements between the two nuclear powers. But without clear procedures for nuclear use orders that were well understood by all command levels of the various NATO members, confusion and delay would be inherent in any nuclear use order. A clear understanding of where crisis consultation would occur could free up national commanders from double checking their orders and allow them to trust in SACEUR and the North Atlantic Council. So in this way, resolution of the crisis management debate increased the alliance’s efficiency and military capability.

\textit{NPG Membership Debates in 1969}

Along with the sensitive issue of crisis consultation, the NPG faced a renewed challenge in 1969 from the rotating nations over access and membership. Although Norway had joined the Nuclear Defense Affairs Committee at its inception, it never requested a rotation into the NPG. In April 1969, Norway’s NATO ambassador suddenly warned the United States of its imminent request to assume a seat in the Nuclear Planning Group. This created an immediate challenge to the tenuous “gentlemen’s agreement” governing the rotation schedule and Washington hoped to resolve it without renewing the thorny issue of equality within the alliance. As usual, the United States faced the possibility of holding an unpopular minority opinion on issues concerning equality in the alliance. But this time, it received support from Bonn and London who also opposed increasing NPG membership. Both West Germany and Britain feared a dilution of their power in the Nuclear Planning Group by adding new members.

The United States initially proposed to rotate Norway into the group with Canada and Denmark. The Canadians immediately objected, for they expected to regain their NPG seat in 1970 and did not want to be part of rotation that allowed them less time than Turkey, Greece, Belgium or the Netherlands.\footnote{NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Outgoing Department of State Telegram, “NPG Membership,” August 22, 1969.} Predictably, the less influential and smaller NATO members used this opportunity to revive the debate over permanent and rotational membership. Canada resurrected the Dutch demands of a year earlier calling for unrestricted membership in the NPG. This forced the United States to table numerous other schemes in an attempt to maintain the original seven-member limit established in 1967. Because these schemes reduced the terms of some or all of the rotational members, the non-permanent members insisted on a complete revision of the gentlemen’s agreement.\footnote{NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 4402, “NPG Membership,” September 30, 1969.} This intransigence enabled the United States to garner the support of Italy, the Federal Republic, and Great Britain who feared to jeopardize their privileges as permanent members.

Heated discussions ensued in the NPG staff meetings when national positions were expressed and the debate essentially split the NPG between its permanent and rotational members. Secretary General Brosio emerged as a peacemaker offering a compromise, dubbed the 7.5 plan, which allowed Norway to rotate into the Nuclear Planning Group every 18 months alone. This would create a group that alternated between seven and eight members.\footnote{NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 5134, “NPG Membership Meeting, November 6,” November 7, 1969.} Because the NPG staff lacked authority to make
decisions on this knotty issue, it remained for the defense ministers to solve. But in Virginia, after another lively debate, the ministers agreed to turn the matter over to the NDAC, because a new scheme would involve all members, not just the current seven.

Dutch threats, and the danger of dissolution of the NPG that became evident at the Virginia meeting, prompted Secretary Laird, at Ellsworth’s request, to approve Secretary Brosio’s compromise and negotiate with rotational members on this basis. Fear of public controversy and the danger to the NPG system altogether dominated in Washington. Because the United States wanted an agreement at the NDAC’s annual December meeting, the NPG staff worked feverishly within NATO to gain acceptance of the compromise.\(^{286}\) The rotational members accepted Brosio’s plan and a formal pact replaced the gentleman’s agreement of 1966. Secretary Brosio, now a master of the principal procedural issues of the NPG, played an effective role as mediator in both the NPG deputy and ministerial meetings. He continuously supported the attempts of the non-nuclear states to gain access to the NPG, in keeping with his general philosophy of fostering the interests of all nations in NATO equally, regardless of their relative level of power or influence.\(^{287}\) Brosio also understood that he and his office needed to play a role in the NPG or risk remaining sidelined from a body of evolving importance.

The simultaneous debate over consultation procedures and NPG membership undoubtedly drew the attention of the rotational members away from the ongoing tactical nuclear weapons study; the membership discussions dominated the NPG staff meetings in


early November.\textsuperscript{288} As opposed to the first two years of the NPG, the rotational members led few studies in 1969 and this in part contributed to some of their unrest. Besides a Belgian initiative on crisis consultation, the November meeting featured studies involving joint efforts of the permanent members only.

\textit{1969 in Summary}

1969 proved to be an important year for the NPG. The group agreed on the major points of contention and established precedents for future NPG work. The joint Healey-Schmidt report became a model for how the NPG planned to conduct preliminary studies and eventually incorporate national views into a final document. Also, the NPG after 1969 began to conduct its study efforts in national capitals where a few members at a time committed the bulk of the effort.\textsuperscript{289} This procedure allowed a form of exclusiveness to persist within the Nuclear Planning Group study process, even after the Hague formula allowed all NDAC members access to the NPG staff. But this period also saw a decrease in the influence of the NPG staff and NATO ambassadors overall. The West Germans quietly initiated planning for the joint American/German strike aircraft study in direct communications from Bonn to Washington through the national embassies, not among NPG staff representatives or NATO ambassadors.\textsuperscript{290} As the rotational members fought for and gained more access to the NPG, the permanent members in limited cases began to rely more on direct communication outside of the forum.

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    \item \textsuperscript{288} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 5134, “NPG Membership Meeting, November 6,” November 7, 1969.
    \item \textsuperscript{289} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 5472, “NPG-Membership,” November 28, 1969.
    \item \textsuperscript{290} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Bonn 15291, “NPG-Theater Nuclear Strike Forces,” November 26, 1969.
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During the Nixon administration, the Defense Department also reasserted its authority over the Nuclear Planning Group. This may have been based on the personalities of Secretary Laird and his relationship with the ambassador to NATO, Robert Ellsworth. The departure of Ambassador Cleveland removed the last of the NPG’s American founding fathers. Cleveland had played a significant role in the early success of the Nuclear Planning Group. The nature of the US mission to NATO had given him an opportunity to influence policy and relations much more than a normal bilateral position, for it entailed daily interactions with representatives from multiple allies. Cleveland’s extensive experience in government had allowed him oftentimes to utilize the bureaucracy to his advantage and to take on a greater role in policy formation than that of a normal ambassador. Often he went Washington and used his influence in order to draft instructions to himself at NATO and hence to formulate policy.\(^{291}\) Both the Secretaries of State and Defense had supported Cleveland, and he had worked successfully with both offices, even when they appeared at cross purposes. Secretary Laird, who replaced Clark Clifford when Nixon took office, introduced new ideas and methods, maintaining tight control over his NPG deputy and staff on the issues of national participation and expansion of the NPG, strictly forbidding discussion in those areas, and establishing rigid limits on Ellsworth.\(^{292}\) The decrease in U.S. NATO staff influence, coupled with a shift of NPG studies from Brussels to its members’ capitals, signaled some erosion of NATO staff influence in the NPG.

\(^{291}\) Jordan and Bloome, *Political Leadership in NATO: A Study in Multinational Diplomacy*, 186.

Britain’s Defense Secretary Denis Healey maintained his prominent role in the entire process of creating the Provisional Planning Guidelines in 1969. He remained the only Defense Minister to hold office from the creation of the Special Committee through 1969, and with the frequent changing of American Secretaries of Defense, Healey provided crucial experience to the NPG. Moreover, Secretary Laird, who remained much less concerned with European affairs then with extricating the United States from Vietnam, played a limited role.

In the debate over crisis consultation Laird primarily offered U.S. objections to expanding the authority of the NATO council, while Healey explained the rationale for U.S. policies and worked to provide a convincing argument. The new U.S. administration had much to learn on how to deal with allies in the NPG forum to promote agreement and not simply demand compliance.

Despite some of the new U.S. administration’s difficulties, NATO as a whole allayed fears that it would dissolve in 1969 and renewed the treaty. The initial success of the Nuclear Planning Group undoubtedly contributed to a new type of NATO that emerged at the end of the decade. Consultation had become more of a reality and the United States allowed other members more influence overall. France was no longer integrated militarily, but the remaining members had agreed on a basic strategy for defense, flexible response. They had weathered the storm of the French challenge to NATO’s institutions and in the process had created additional consultation methods with the NPG and the European Caucus. Even more important politically, NATO had agreed on the Harmel Report that provided a vision for the future of the alliance and its role in the détente relations of the next decade.

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293 Henry Gaffney, e-mail interview with author, December 2006.

“Until recently it has been possible to conceal this problem behind the general terms in which the strategy [MC 14/3, flexible response] was defined. Now, however, that the NPG has gotten down to working out the detailed military implications of this strategy, the conflict between military and political requirements has begun to emerge.”

--- C.M. Rose, 2 December 1971

CHAPTER 5

System Glitches: Strategic Differences Rise Again, 1970-1973

American policy makers hoped that approval of the Provisional Political Guidelines by the Nuclear Planning Group, and its parent organization the Nuclear Defense Affairs Committee a month later, would bring a “period of relief” from allied discussion on nuclear use issues in NATO. On a political level this was indeed the case. Policy makers in Europe and the United States had already begun focusing their efforts and energy on détente with the communist bloc. The Atlantic Alliance had put its house generally in order, with an agreed defensive strategy in flexible response, guidelines for nuclear weapons use that supported this strategy, and agreement on the

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296 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Intelligence Note, “NATO’s Nuclear Planning Group Approves Tactical Nuclear Guidelines, November 14, 1969.
principles of the Harmel Report that pointed the way forward for the alliance to deal with
the Warsaw Pact through diplomacy and relaxation of tensions.

Nuclear defense did not present political problems for NATO members from 1970
to 197. In this sense the NPG had accomplished much. Most disputes were relatively
minor, created little controversy, and most importantly were not the focus of public
debate or political attention. But members of the NPG staff continued their labor in some
key areas early in the 1970s. Although the NPG had taken an important step forward
with the Provision Planning Guidelines as a statement of political purpose and unity on
nuclear strategy, these guidelines still required interpretation within the military
commands assigned to NATO as well as full incorporation into military planning. Also,
the PPGs only addressed the initial use of nuclear weapons by NATO. Thus the primary
and far more difficult task of the Nuclear Planning Group in 1970 was to devise
equivalent guidelines for the possible follow-on use of nuclear weapons.

NATO planners had envisioned that the initial use of nuclear weapons would
create a pause in the conflict and would result either in the Warsaw Pact abandoning its
effort, continuing with only conventional forces, or striking back with nuclear weapons of
its own. With this in mind, the NPG began analyzing the options for follow-on use of
nuclear weapons if either of the latter two scenarios resulted. But before work on the
follow-on use study began in earnest, four other issues dominated most of the discussions
at the NPG meeting in Venice: the Danish proposal to change some language in the
PPGs, the Theater Strike Study, a discussion of ADM guidelines, and the procedural
debate over the follow-on use study.\textsuperscript{297} The NPG dealt with the first three easily and

efficiently, while the last intensified the special relationship between the three most powerful members of NATO.

Early in 1970, the Danes submitted a study calling for the deletion of demonstration use of nuclear weapons from the guidelines altogether. Most members wished to retain this option, despite the fact that since 1967 they deprecated its utility. As a result, Denmark succeeded only in gaining some minor changes in the guidelines’ language. Although these changes had political significance, the SACEUR announced the language alteration would not affect current military plans. Denmark’s study, however, revealed how the Nuclear Planning Group took the provisional aspect of the tactical nuclear guidelines to heart, and continuously reviewed their viability as the strategic outlook in Europe changed over time. Thus, despite the fact that their changes had no impact on military planning, the Danes appeared satisfied. On the other hand, the Danish study also reflected the speed with which the permanent members of the NPG had pushed the Provisional Planning Guidelines through the approval process without reflecting every rotating member’s minor differences or allowing sufficient time for study and reflection by the smaller national staffs involved. Staff groups generally accomplished this type of minor adjustment in language during the draft approval process.299


299 It is ironic that NATO planners determined that one of the most effective uses of nuclear weapons early in a conflict in Europe was against a possible amphibious invasion of Denmark. But the Danes always refused the pre-positioning of nuclear weapons on their soil, and despite the military arguments for such, political realities prevailed and they remained nuclear weapon free. PRO, FCO 41/814, “Nuclear Planning Group: The Denmark Study,” December 16, 1971.
The Theater Strike Study remained another less controversial effort of the NPG in the early 1970s. Representatives from the United States and West Germany coauthored this study dealing with the allocations of strike aircraft at the beginning of a conflict in Europe. Initially, the American-German study did not deviate drastically from NATO’s original plans concerning aircraft allocation. However, the British now argued that with the approval of flexible response and the Provisional Planning Guidelines that envisioned limited tactical nuclear use in Europe early in a conflict, it was no longer necessary to allocate a large number of dual purpose strike aircraft for a nuclear role. Holding them in reserve from the conventional fight, where they could possibly tip the balance and prevent the need for nuclear use, was no longer logical. The debate in Venice led to a redrafting of the study by West German and American planners in conjunction with the British to incorporate these views. After two more years of study and debate within the NPG staff, the ministers finally reached a general consensus supporting the British point of view and the SACEUR staff changed their strike aircraft planning to reflect this as well.

The Atomic Demolition discussion readdressed much of the same debates of 1967 and 1968, with the Turkish delegation pushing for clear and distinct guidelines for the use of ADMs and some form of predelegation and specific planning, and the permanent members strongly opposed. Defense Minister Helmut Schmidt of West Germany, focusing on the familiar arguments against the use of ADMs on German soil because the risk of high civilian casualties and lack of political control, clearly opposed their

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Although the defense ministers agreed to charge the staff with drafting some ADM guidelines, the NPG eventually subsumed them under the study for follow-on use, just as the earlier studies over ADMs had been incorporated into the PPGs.

In addition to the ongoing, but fairly straightforward and familiar discussions over strike aircraft and ADMs, the Nuclear Planning Group’s tasks in 1970 were routine except for the study the follow-on use of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. The staff began deliberating over how to organize a process for studying and debating this complex problem. Leading up to the ministerial meeting in Venice in June 1970, many of the rotating members of the NPG expressed their dissatisfaction with the speed with which the delegations from Great Britain, West Germany, and United States had pushed through the approval process of the Provisional Planning Guidelines.  

As a result, the ambassadors remained quite involved and interested in the process for further studies. Although never acrimonious, the procedural aspects of the follow-on use study required considerable negotiation over responsibility and the manner they would be conducted.

In the end, the NPG agreed on a more formalized version of the evolution of the Provisional Planning Guidelines. These had begun with numerous national studies on ADM use, but had grown into a project by Britain and West Germany that encompassed NATO strategy as a whole and that the entire group had debated and approved. After some discussion, the ministers agreed to a similar but more formalized three-phase program for follow-on use studies. The first phase would entail national and regional

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studies. Phase II would encompass a constructive analysis and integrated study intended to incorporate the various separate projects, and in phase III the NPG staff and ministers would complete the formal political guidelines to forward to the NDAC. The group further broke down Phase I into five primary studies separated by geographic regions, which eventually grew to nine overall. The United States, Great Britain, and West Germany focused their efforts on the Central and Northern Army Group studies, while Norway, Greece and Italy agreed to produce drafts focused on nuclear use within their specific regions of the NATO area.\(^{303}\) Dividing up the studies regionally made sense in terms of efficiency and followed the precedent set in the late 1960s. But the rotational members recognized their influence in the process would remain marginal if the permanent members worked alone on the studies perceived as the most vital for NATO’s defense.

The NPG staff also determined that the national military staffs of the governments responsible for each study would complete most of the Phase I work for follow-on use. This again provided an advantage to the permanent members of the Nuclear Planning Group and especially the United States. By dividing up the studies nationally, this took the bulk of the initial effort away from Brussels where multiple views could enter into the process. Members of the International Affairs Office of the Pentagon, working trilaterally with experts from Great Britain and West Germany, could work on the most important aspects of the study for Central and Northern Europe with little or no interference from the military staff in Brussels or the other members. Using as

\(^{303}\) PRO, FCO 41/647, Annex B to Briefs for NPG Meeting in Ottawa, October 29-30, 1970.
a model the ad-hoc process for creating the Provisional Planning Guidelines, they planned to complete the separate follow-on use studies by the spring of 1971.

*System Input: Follow-on Use Study Phase I*

Phase I of the follow-on use study progressed much more slowly than initially planned. During the course of follow-on use studies the different strategic assumptions between the Americans and their European allies again emerged. At the same time, the NPG faced another challenge when the still unresolved issue of its rotating membership intensified.

The usual process called for drafts of the national studies to be circulated among the NPG members and then discussed at staff group and permanent representative levels before presentation to the Defense Ministers at one of the semi-annual meetings. This process served to temper any extreme or contrary views from the national studies before they reached the ministerial level. But, by the end of the 1970, the NPG members had completed only two studies which underwent a review by the American staff, and the NPG staff group had addressed none formally. The lack of significant progress raised alarm among American nuclear experts who feared that some national studies would not be ready for review by the NPG until the summer of 1972, more than two years after initiation.³⁰⁴

As the first national studies by Greece, Turkey, Italy, and West Germany neared completion in late 1971, American representatives to the staff group immediately took issue with the familiar aspects of political authority and the assumptions made about

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decision making and timing for nuclear release. Turkey, as in its earlier ADM studies, proposed predelegation of tactical nuclear weapons to local authorities to ensure timely use to halt an attack before nuclear weapons would lose their value or losses became irreplaceable. And, just as in 1967, the United States, unwilling to allow any predelegation, even after the initial use of nuclear weapons, argued for conventional alternatives. The American staff also identified the national studies as limited to specific scenarios, such as an amphibious assault on Turkey from the Soviet Union, where the military use of tactical nuclear weapons provided NATO with a clear advantage. But by addressing only a limited scenario, the studies avoided the political issues in favor of overwhelming arguments for nuclear use to achieve an operational level victory. Many American and British political leaders wished specifically to avoid this emphasis on purely military solutions. Thus, their criticisms of the follow-on use studies centered on the political naiveté of their premises.

The Turkish follow-on use study in particular highlighted some of the problems inherent in the alliance’s new flexible response strategy. The lack of reserves and the extreme conventional force imbalance with the Warsaw Pact on that front made the early use of nuclear weapons essential for Turkey’s defense. However, under the strategy of flexible response and the current approval procedures both within the military structure in NATO and the political approval process, an early and effective military use of nuclear weapons remained unlikely. Laird, confronted with this argument by the Turks in their portion of the phase I study, did not debate the key points but simply suggested that the

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study be incorporated into the overall nuclear strategy for the alliance. In other words, Turkey might have to be sacrificed if the use of nuclear weapons did not fit into NATO’s larger overall defense plan. It is hard to imagine Laird treating Schmidt in this way at an NPG meeting, but the West Germans also had the benefit of knowing they would have more input than Turkey into the final Phase II product.

Planners within SHAPE and the military staffs of the permanent member states also seemed more focused on the military feasibility of the tactical use of nuclear weapons than on the political implications. Even West Germany, despite or because of its precarious position, was no exception. Willy Brandt’s policy of Ostpolitik and more cordial East-West relations at the political level did not translate into any softening of West German military planners’ desire for a strong nuclear deterrent in NATO. Despite the talks concerning possible mutual force reductions, Bonn’s Ministry of Defense still worked on the assumption that the Warsaw Pact would not significantly decrease its capabilities in the early 1970s. Thus, the independent West German study supported follow-on use that entailed rapid escalation of a conflict by striking at the Warsaw Pact, or even into the Soviet Union, if a conflict in Europe continued past initial nuclear weapons use.

To be sure, West German planners placed their faith in deterrence as a means of averting war altogether. If one occurred, they hoped to use nuclear weapons outside German territory and in such a manner as to ensure that the conflict ended before the destruction of their land and population. One former chief of staff of the Bundeswehr, Ulrich de Mazière, summed up the German point of view succinctly. “Priority should not

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be given so much to the question of how Germany can be best defended, but rather to the question how deterrence can best be enhanced and thereby peace in freedom be sustained. The Germans believed that follow-on use of nuclear weapons into Warsaw Pact territory remained the only way to reestablish deterrence and halt aggression in central Europe, while ensuring the preservation of West Germany itself. But Washington, although accepting deeper strikes into the Warsaw Pact as an option for follow-on use, generally opposed this option as involving too great a risk of provoking a large scale nuclear war.

NATO members also remained concerned over the “time permitting” clause for consultation over nuclear use. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the United States, without consulting its allies, had ordered its forces worldwide to Defense Condition three, a higher than normal alert status, in response to the diplomatic crisis with the Soviet Union. Although this was not strictly a European matter, America’s allies resented Washington’s high handed and even risky behavior. NATO allies approached with caution any moves that heightened tension between the superpowers because of the immediate threat of war on their soil. Yet, the United States refused to curtail any aspect of its defense or to expand beyond the “Athens Guidelines” concerning crisis consultation in NATO, except with Great Britain and West Germany.

The United States was not alone in its resolve to remove wartime decision making from the NATO machinery. British analysts also agreed that

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[t]he lack of decision in NATO HQ during peacetime is well known and the more one goes into their crisis management and security the less confident one becomes. In particular, it is almost impossible to believe that any decisions are likely to come from the DPC [Defense Planning Committee] in time…

In order to preserve the role of the American president as the final decision making authority for NATO use of American nuclear weapons, the United States insisted that any discussion of nuclear request procedures be focused on NATO’s internal procedures and not involve political consultation. Both the U.K. and the FRG agreed, because each enjoyed bilateral political consultation agreements with the United States that every new administration in Washington had reaffirmed.

While the NPG staff actively debated the various follow-on conceptions and their military and political feasibility, delays hampered on the early phases of the study. British nuclear experts in the Ministry of Defense lamented the slowdown, blaming the American and British political leadership for the diminished focus on the NPG and on alliance nuclear issues in general. However, the Americans seemed more culpable. In 1970, the Nixon administration seemed ready to meet the challenges of finding a viable defensive strategy for NATO. The president had stated that “disagreements must be faced openly” and by working with allies within the NPG to create a strategic concept that does not merely paper over differences, they could achieve “a major contribution to the credible defense of Europe.”

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gaining a consensus on tactical nuclear weapons served to educate Washington as to what remained possible. By 1972, Washington showed little inclination to expedite the process. For the United States, the Nuclear Planning Group had become simply a way to educate and mollify allies, especially West Germany, on nuclear planning. Therefore the process and political effect of the NPG’s efforts were as important as the actual results. By the early 1970s, the NPG had accomplished America’s limited political goals. Twice a year it continued to serve as a forum for updating allies on any changes to US and Soviet nuclear arsenals and sharing some information, and the West Germans appeared content. Defense Minister Schmidt continued to voice satisfaction after the NPG ministerial meeting in October 1971, despite the meager accomplishments. By 1973, NATO strategic doctrine was not included in Nixon’s report to Congress, and the administration appeared just as intent to paper over the cracks in flexible response as its predecessors.

The Danish Minister of Defense formally complained again in 1972 about the inequality of the rotation schedule, which prompted another membership debate similar to the one three years earlier. The triumvirate, invoking the same arguments about the dangers of a less candid and open information exchange, remained opposed to any enlargement proposal. West Germany threatened to pursue bilateral nuclear agreements


with the United States if Nuclear Planning Group membership became open to all NATO members and depreciated its exclusive status. For the West Germans, this issue threatened its adherence to the Nuclear Planning Group system. To underline his country’s convictions, Brandt sent a clear message of support for the NPG’s rotational system.\textsuperscript{315} The renewed membership debate thus produced no results and diverted attention and resources away from consultations on nuclear use and planning.

The NPG made few major decisions during Phase I, because the debates occurred primarily at the staff level, and the ministers addressed each study only after extensive staff work. Once the national representatives finalized a study, the NPG conducted a discussion of its major points, but then tabled it for eventual use in Phase II. This entire process took about twice as long as originally anticipated. Overall the lack of speedy progress on Phase I of the follow on use study was due to the lack of focus and direction given by the permanent members, primarily the United States and West Germany, to the issue as a whole. The semi-annual NPG ministerial meetings now served to satisfy the needs for consultation on nuclear issues, but NATO members had ceased to regard nuclear defense as a political priority. The ministerial meetings accomplished their limited political objectives, while their governments focused on other foreign policy goals, such as Détente, ending the Vietnam War, and strategic arms limitations.

\textit{System Output: Follow on Use Study Phase II}

In 1971, in addition to the now familiar debates over political control of nuclear weapons and the implications behind strike timing and locations, the procedures for Phase II raised contention within the NPG and divided the larger and small NATO

\textsuperscript{315} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1970-1973, Box 1658, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Bonn 15332, “Danish Proposal to Enlarge NPG,” November 9, 1972.
powers. American planners and NATO representatives wished to limit the number of
governments involved in the details of constructing the phase II study, much as Britain
and West Germany had prepared the tactical use study together and presented a fairly
coherent draft for approval by the group as a whole. However, all the other NPG
members, except the U.S., Britain, and West Germany, wanted more staff involvement in
the follow-on use study and believed that the permanent members had pushed the PPGs
through the nuclear planning system without adequate review at the staff level. The
dispute over the nature of the Phase II study continued through 1971, concurrent with the
discussions over the national studies, and by January 1972 British representatives tabled
proposals to get phase II started even though the NPG had completed and discussed only
four of the nine Phase I studies.

The British proposed an American led trilateral group with themselves and West
Germany to conduct the phase II study. But this proposal, which exposed the inner group
that had formed within the NPG, prompted immediate protests from the other members.
The “non-study group members” voiced their concerns over the emerging “triumvirate”
which excluded other members from direct involvement in nuclear planning and in the
studies of greatest importance. In response, the three proposed to allow other NPG
members to submit a cover letter for the follow-on use study addressing dissenting views,
but also to restrict the study to the three principal drafting nations. These minor

316 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1970-1973, Box 1656, DEF 12 NATO,

317 Public Record Office, DEFE 4-264-5, Ministry of Defense, Chiefs of Staff Committee

318 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1970-1973, Box 1658, DEF 12 NATO,
Department of State Telegram, USNATO 1156, “NPG-Permreps Report on Phase II of Follow-on Use

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procedural compromises barely alleviated the growing sense of inequality among the NPG non-permanent members.

The triumvirate also represented what were certain realities concerning the unequal influence and power of NATO members. There was a natural tendency of the American planners to limit the influence of numerous other states in nuclear planning and this policy continued even after the founding Defense Ministers had moved on. The three major governments were fully engaged in almost all aspects of NPG studies; all had the expertise and dedicated personnel required to conduct the extensive work involved in preparing and consolidating nuclear planning studies. At first this was less true of the West Germans, but as they became more exposed to the information and built up a level of experience on nuclear issues, they acquired an appreciable amount of expertise. All three members of the triumvirate naturally entertained interests in almost every aspect of nuclear planning, whereas other NATO members had a narrow range of involvement, due to their limited resources and areas of special national interest. Turkey, for example, with its ADM studies and the Netherlands with its NIKE/HERCULES study illustrated this reality. Geography also thrust West Germany into the forefront of almost all nuclear use debates, even when concerning the other regions in NATO such as Turkey, because of the immediate repercussions on the FRG.

The NPG system thus sustained the intimate relationship among the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany that began in the 1965. At one point, West German Defense Minister Schmidt brought up a specific complaint about the communication process set up during nuclear release procedures. West Germany and the SACEUR staff eventually resolved the issue in a bilateral agreement encouraged by the United States
and concluded outside the NPG forum. Indeed, Schmidt’s replacement, Georg Leber, acquiesced to American pleas not to pursue the problem in a multilateral forum where it might attract the attention of the non-permanent members. No other government became involved in this issue, which quietly disappeared from the NPG. In another case, as Washington and Bonn continued their joint work on the theater strike study through 1970, they both provided Britain with early access to the results and stressed the need for the rapid progression of the study past the NPG staff to a ministerial meeting with few changes.

The need to satisfy the Germans in the NPG continued to guide both American and British policy makers, to the growing dissatisfaction of the other NPG members. The Italians increasingly felt marginalized, because their permanent seat did not necessarily translate into a great amount of influence in the NPG. When they inquired about the informal dinners of the defense ministers of the other permanent members that had become common prior to NPG meetings, the Italians were politely rebuffed and told they were only social occasions. It is difficult to imagine any meeting between the three highest members of the defense establishments of the United States, United Kingdom, and West Germany being strictly social in nature. Italy threw its support to the rotational

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members on a number of issues, but especially during the debate over Phase II
procedures and the inclusion of additional members in early drafts. 322

Italian support of the rotating members’ proposals for open-ended study groups in
Brussels for Phase II came to naught. 323 The triumvirate won out, and in May 1972 the
NPG agreed to have the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany take control
over preparing Phase II of the program and prepare it much in the same way as the
Healey-Schmidt report. 324 Although this was another victory for the triumvirate, it came
at a cost. The NPG only reached an agreement after a heated debate where the issues of
equality and political influence in NATO resurfaced. 325 Resistance among the rotational
members of the NPG to their continued second class status in the alliance grew.

Once the rotational members agreed to the procedures for Phase II, the study
group looked ahead to an even more daunting task. It involved taking the numerous
studies conducted by the different groups that were divided up on a geographical basis
and somehow combining them into an overall assessment. The nuclear defense experts
of the triumvirate assigned to the task chose to break down the work yet again by having
each national member of the Phase II study group take one or two major themes, such as
political control, aspects of deterrence, and timing for nuclear use, and create yet another

322 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1970-1973, Box 1658, DEF 12 NATO,
Department of State Telegram, USNATO 0744, “NPG-14 February Permreps Meeting,” February 15,
1972.

323 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1970-1973, Box 1657, DEF 12 NATO,
Department of State Telegram, USNATO 293, “NPG-17 January Staff Group Meeting,” January 19, 1972.

May 23, 1972.

325 PRO, FCO 41/980, Memo from Mr. Kerr, WOD, “Phase II of the NPG Studies on Follow-on
Tactical Use of Nuclear Weapons,” August 8, 1972.
report that outlined the combined views of all of the regional studies. They then hoped to find compromise language suitable for the American, British, and West German teams. Also, the Phase I studies had focused primarily on the military aspects of nuclear use while omitting an in-depth study of many of the political ramifications. Therefore Phase II study members needed to add much of the political analysis, which required extensive debate even among the triumvirate.

The Dutch took the lead among the non-nuclear states in questioning why the Phase II study was moving so slowly. In 1973, the Dutch delegation proposed to lead a new study on possible responses by the Warsaw Pact to an initial nuclear use by NATO, as a means of participating in the Phase II proceedings. The other rotating members supported this proposal and even though the triumvirate expressed reservations, the permanent members could not deny their allies’ involvement in planning without attracting more criticism. The British recognized the need to satisfy the growing restlessness of the NPG’s rotational members, and thought that keeping them busy with limited studies of marginal significance would be an effective antidote. For the Americans, who were perfectly content with the slow pace of the Phase II study, adding another study would both slow the process further and satisfy smaller allies.

Personnel changes within the United States presented obstacles to progress within the NPG that continued to delay the follow-on use program. President Nixon took a much more active role than his predecessor in formulating and controlling policy from

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328 PRO, FCO 41/1149, Draft Telegram from MOD to UKDEL NATO, undated.
his office. This was reflected in his choice of ambassador for NATO, Robert Ellsworth. Ellsworth, a loyal political ally, followed instructions from Washington and spent less time formulating policy than his predecessor. But when he resigned after only two years, other NATO delegations expressed consternation because they were accustomed to dealing with a well connected ambassador. After Ellsworth’s resignation, the position remained unfilled for more than six months. The American delegation had gone from a proactive and energetic ambassador in Cleveland, to a more passive but well connected Ellsworth, to a situation where there was no permanent representative for the United States. This gap undoubtedly affected the Nuclear Planning Group’s staff work. The two American permanent representatives to NATO that had served through most of the 1960s averaged four years each in office. In the first half of the 1970s, NATO saw four different U.S. representatives in that office. This high turnover may also account for the increased amount of work done at lower levels of the staff group, and the increasing dominance of the International Affairs office of the Pentagon in NPG affairs.

As the Phase II study slowly progressed, the NPG ministerial meetings remained uncontroversial overall. As the sites of the NPG’s planning studies moved to distant national capitals, its ministerial meetings in the early 1970’s took on a more routine air. There was little to discuss except the updated status of forces provided by the Americans and the limited progress of the Phase II study. None of these issues presented the NPG ministers with areas of significant contention, and until the staff completed their study there was little to argue about. In addition, a predictable result of increased national representation in the NPG staff from the “Hague formula” was a lengthening of the study

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process because all members wished to have a voice and visible influence on the proceedings. The NPG was slowly taking on the character of other NATO committees, losing its special dynamic nature, and, despite the inherent inequalities, some of the advantages of its limited membership.
“NATO’s real unifying power should not be reserved only for time of war. The zeal to defend falls and the spirit of independence rises naturally enough as a common threat appears to diminish. This can be dangerous – perhaps even fatal – because in the Nuclear Age a threat of enormous proportions can be mounted in a very brief time.”

--- Findley Report to Congress 1965

CHAPTER 6

System Glitches: The NPG and International Politics, 1973-1976

From 1973 to 1976, a number of factors contributed to the continued lack of progress on the NPG’s follow-on use study. These factors included international political changes among NATO members as a result of direct negotiations with the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union on a wide range of issues. Domestic political changes and upheaval among NPG members, not limited to the permanent members, created friction, and in some cases direct confrontation, that delayed NPG efforts. Phases II and III of the follow-on use study languished in the NPG staff level for much of this time, and when finally completed, after nearly five years of study, the defense ministers and political leadership found it wanting and in need of a complete reappraisal.

Geopolitics and Phase II

Détente gave the impression to the European public that decreased tensions diminished the need for defensive readiness and greater military expenses. This attitude

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prevailed in the United States as well, and the constant threats by Congress to reduce military commitments to Europe, embodied in the Mansfield Amendments, and the possible force reductions resulting from Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR), only made it more imperative for the Europeans to focus additional effort on conventional defense. (see Appendix E for conventional force deployments) Political leaders gave their attention to these pressing issues, while unresolved nuclear planning problems remained the purview of military experts in the defense establishments and NPG staff.

The American Secretary of Defense Elliot Richardson did not attend the nuclear planning group meeting in Ankara in May 1973; but he did not miss much. A draft for Phase II was still nowhere near completion. Richardson’s assistant delivered the standard updates on the status of U.S., Soviet, and Chinese nuclear forces, and the remaining discussions focused on MBFR and Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) negotiations. The NPG’s discussions focused on the direct implications of MBFR and SALT on the tactical nuclear planning taking place in NATO, but the members also admitted that this was not a forum to formulate a response to these negotiations. Although the NPG staff group took up the task of studying the effects of both on NATO strategies, it is clear that the negotiating process was moving faster than the NPG could oversee or control. The nuclear planning group’s deliberations had little effect on either set of negotiations, but were merely reactions and adjustments to the latest news from Vienna and Geneva.331

NATO planners had immediately recognized that SALT II and MBFR negotiations would affect the NPG. For example, MBFR delayed the completion of the follow-on use study. By 1973, as SALT II made progress and the MBFR negotiations began, there was a growing concern that ongoing NATO nuclear planning would be overwhelmed by these events. The non-nuclear members of the NPG also experienced a sense of marginalization because of their minor role in these negotiations. To be sure, the United States also found the SALT and MBFR negotiations difficult. U.S. negotiators needed to gain a unified policy from the numerous agencies in Washington and most diplomatic actions required consultation with its allies in NATO, who often found it difficult to reach immediate consensus. Much like Washington, Brussels had different committees or agencies with competing ideas and policies.

Possible conventional force reductions had a potentially profound impact on many of the areas under discussion by the NPG in the 1970s. Direct MBFR negotiations with the Warsaw Pact began in 1973, and they progressed slowly, but the various proposed changes in NATO’s force structure threatened to alter strategic assumptions. A reduction of conventional forces by NATO in Europe, despite the corresponding withdrawals by the Warsaw Pact, would possibly add to the reliance on nuclear weapons and increase the probability of early use in a conflict. Because the Warsaw Pact held a numerical advantage in conventional forces, equal reductions potentially increased this advantage, and the proximity of the Soviet Union allowed for rapid transport and reinforcement in a crisis. Many still saw nuclear weapons use as necessary for NATO to entertain any hope of halting Warsaw Pact aggression under these circumstances. In an attempt to redress

the conventional balance, the United States presented a proposal in 1975 to withdraw a number of tactical nuclear weapons from Europe in exchange for Warsaw Pact conventional force reductions. Although never agreed upon, this proposal potentially affected NATO nuclear planning and capabilities directly. The pressing issues of conventional force levels and possible reductions remained at the forefront of political leadership in NATO.

The Nixon administration pursued MBFR in part to forestall conventional force decreases among the allies and the United States. The Mansfield amendment, proposing the withdrawal of a significant number of American troops from Europe, remained a continuous threat from Congress from 1969 to 1973. Since the Johnson administration, the United States had often expressed its desire for a greater European commitment to conventional forces, but at different times NATO members had threatened to reduce their commitments even further. MBFR served two purposes for the Nixon administration. The possibility remained that through negotiation NATO might actually gain a suitable reduction plan that supported Détente, but in the meantime the White House argued with some effect that any reduction of conventional forces by the Americans and Europeans would undercut the ongoing MBFR talks. This argument served to mute a degree of Congress’ and the allies’ calls for troop reductions.

MBFR dominated the joint American and British military staff talks in 1973 as well. The American delegation attempted to argue that the mutual reduction of

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conventional forces by the Warsaw Pact and NATO could occur without making flexible response obsolete. The British argued that a reduction of conventional forces by just two divisions from NATO would force the earlier use of nuclear weapons, within possibly two to three days, and for military, not political, purposes. This violated the general intent of the provisional planning guidelines. And when the Americans countered that forward defense was just not viable with current conventional forces, the British retorted, “try telling the Germans that.” Overall the British delegation got the better of this exchange, illustrating the dilemma raised by MBFR for future NATO strategy. Any major changes in force levels, and even the proposition of conventional troop reductions in Europe, had third and fourth order political and military effects, especially for West Germany.

Conventional force level debates in NATO highlighted one of the central defense dilemmas for West Germany in the 1970’s. Every American reference to the need for increased conventional forces worried the Bonn government. They raised the threat of a reduced need for nuclear weapons, which the still Germans regarded as indispensable for deterring war. Yet an exaggerated focus on nuclear weapons led to the opposite menace, the “tripwire strategy” that was politically untenable in a socialist-led West Germany. West German politicians could never contemplate tactical nuclear use as a policy, because it would lead to the destruction of their nation. However, they could never publicly disavow the role of tactical nuclear weapons because this would disassociate them from NATO and its forward defense strategy, which relied on these weapons to halt

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the Warsaw Pact before West Germany was overrun. For West Germany, this dilemma was best left unspoken outside the halls of NATO, for there were no viable political alternatives in a public discussion on nuclear defense.

Moreover, the American demand for an increased European commitment to conventional forces remained unacceptable to the Europeans from a political and economic standpoint. No European government, especially after the economic crisis of 1973, wished to increase government spending on conventional military forces of dubious value. The only alternative left for West Germany was a mutual reduction of conventional forces by both sides, which was one of the bases for Brandt’s Ostpolitik. Because the FRG’s view on mutual conventional force reductions greatly differed from the two superpowers’, MBFR negotiations made little progress.

In the end, the MBFR negotiations never arrived at any agreement or resulted in conventional arms reductions. However, it was one of the only forums of direct negotiation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact and did much to alleviate misunderstandings and inform both sides about the positions of the other. In this regard, MBFR contributed to Détente. But from the perspective of NATO military planners engaged in studying nuclear defense, MBFR served to complicate internal negotiations and threatened to alter many planning assumptions needed to conclude effective guidelines.


337 This manifested itself clearly in the Pershing II debate of the early 1980’s. Coupled with a growing environmental and peace movement, the media and general public in West Germany, and the Netherlands especially, took up NATO nuclear defense issues again and resurrected the dilemma to the discomfort of NATO.

The SALT II negotiations, which were central to the American concepts of détente, only indirectly impacted the Nuclear Planning Group or Phase II. Consultations with allies on the progress of SALT negotiations generally occurred outside of the NPG format in the Defense Planning Committee or North Atlantic Council. Generally, because SALT II dealt with the strategic weapons employed by the two superpowers and not with the tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Europe, the United States intended to handle the negotiations bilaterally with the Soviets. One could argue, although somewhat speciously, that the SALT II talks had little to do with NATO strategy if one separated strategic and tactical forces. But in reality, the nature of the U.S. nuclear guarantee and the level of deterrence provided by strategic nuclear weapons remained a vital link for deterrence and for NATO planning. It was this link between the strategic and tactical levels that NATO members valued and why the formal updates by the American Secretary of Defense on the status of strategic forces had become standard for each Nuclear Planning Group meeting.

But in the era of détente, the SALT II negotiations created few problems for NATO. Because a reduction of strategic nuclear arms by the United States and the Soviet Union potentially made Britain’s meager nuclear force relatively stronger, the British strongly supported the SALT II negotiations. The Germans, although constantly wary that the superpowers might make a deal “above their heads” and sacrifice some position vital for European defense, also saw the value in limiting strategic weapons. As long as American diplomats at numerous levels, both inside and outside of NATO, briefed their

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allies over the ongoing negotiations, few problems existed within the NPG other than diverting some attention from Phase II.

Overall, the wider issues of détente, embodied in MBFR, SALT, and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) dominated the bilateral and trilateral meetings between defense ministers from the United States, West Germany, and Great Britain that normally occurred prior to NPG meetings. In one case, the U.S. and British ministers in bilateral talks the night before an NPG meeting did not reach a nuclear planning issue until the tenth item. Lord Carrington of the U.K. also expressed his desire to decrease the number of NPG ministerial meetings each year. Laird, who viewed the NPG meetings as essentially satisfying European needs for nuclear consultation, did not wish to do so unless as a European initiative. But Laird also admitted he saw no need to hurry to “arrive” at any conclusions in the NPG, and he only looked to make recognizable progress. In a bilateral meeting between the UK and FRG defense ministers, the discussions centered on the implications of MBFR and they reached an agreement on a negotiation strategy with the Warsaw Pact. During these talks, there was little discussion of the actual work of the NPG or the meeting scheduled for the following day. It was now obvious that other issues had become more urgent than developing a strategy for nuclear defense.

In addition to negotiations with the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union, NATO began to reexamine the role of the French nuclear force. Although the French withdrawal from

340 PRO, FCO 41/647, “Note of a Meeting between the Secretary of State and Helmut Schmidt in Ottawa on 29th September 1970.”

341 PRO, FCO 41/1435, “Record of a private discussion between the Defense Secretary and the Federal Defense Minister (Herr Leber) held during the NATO Nuclear Planning Group Meeting at Bergen on Tuesday, 11 June 1974.”
the NATO defense structure kept them out of the NPG and sidelined them for much of the critical discussions, NATO planners continuously explored and discussed the French role in NATO and in the nuclear defense of Europe. Under Georges Pompidou, the French government in 1970 limited itself to inquiries into the possible formation of a European Nuclear Force jointly with Great Britain that would be independent of the United States. Although Lord Carrington in 1972 seemed to encourage this idea, it was likely only due to Britain’s impending entry into the European Community and the prospect that economic cooperation might lead to better military cooperation.\textsuperscript{342}

Throughout the 1970s, there were limited discussions at multiple levels concerning France’s formally rejoining NATO’s defense arrangements. Planners perceived little difficulty in incorporating the French conventional defense plans for they were generally recognized as compatible NATO’s.\textsuperscript{343} But even with de Gaulle’s exit from politics, the overall French political perception of nuclear weapons had not changed by 1973. French generals were firm in their insistence that no nation would use nuclear weapons solely for the defense of another. They made it clear that France would only use its nuclear weapons when French national interests warranted. In the French view, nuclear use by an alliance simply was not realistic, for the potential risks and costs were so high that it precluded agreement.\textsuperscript{344} The French remained reluctant to fully rejoin what they continued to perceive as an American dominated NATO.


\textsuperscript{343} Karl Carstens and Dieter Mahncke. \textit{Westeuropäische Verteidigungskooperation} (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1972), 246-47.

The Nuclear Planning Group indirectly affected the wider issues of European unity. The NPG had fostered a general European position on nuclear weapons where European members tended to agree, but its greatest effect was in establishing and maintaining contact with the United States. In the area of nuclear weapons defense, there existed little incentive for establishing a common nuclear force for Europe. A European nuclear force risked allowing the United States to safely decouple from European defense and let them stand alone.\footnote{Karl Carstens and Dieter Mahncke, \textit{Westeuropäische Verteidigungscooperation}, 247.} This raised concerns for the West Germans and other non-nuclear members of NATO, in view of the impending American withdrawal from Vietnam and the resolutions by Congress to decrease defense commitments to Europe. Also, as learned during the MLF debate, the West Germans were loath to relinquish their membership in a European nuclear force. They would never give up a nuclear guarantee from the United States to replace it with a more dubious British-French nuclear force, and neither the United States nor especially the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union would allow direct German access to nuclear weapons.

Realistically, the formation of a European Nuclear Force remained impossible without radical alterations in policy by both the British and West Germans. There was little support in either country for such action. It risked the delicate gains the West Germans had made with Ostpolitik by unnecessarily rattling nuclear sabers in Western Europe. Perhaps even more importantly, the creation of a European Nuclear Force would most likely have precluded West German involvement, thereby emphasizing its inferior status as a non-nuclear power. To be sure, a European nuclear force offered the British little as well, for they saw within it a risk of separation from the American nuclear
umbrella and the loss of influence on U.S. nuclear policy. By 1969, both West Germany and Great Britain had answered the questions concerning how they would meet their security needs, and their continued involvement in the nuclear planning group only added to the sense of security that the nuclear guarantee and American commitments to NATO had provided. Joint action by Western Europe in nuclear defense was not realistic, and visions of doing so as an effective means towards establishing greater unity were never realized.

**Internal Delays to Phase II**

Besides the effects of the numerous aspects of détente, internal problems within NATO focused attention away from Phase II and the follow-on use study. The NPG staff groups began discussions early in 1974 over the implications of new technology pertaining to the nuclear arsenal and how potential advancements would affect NATO’s nuclear strategy. This technology included the cruise missile, lower-yield nuclear devices, and the neutron bomb. Greater accuracy and smaller size seemed to lend themselves to more military applications for nuclear weapons in a conflict, sentiments expressed in many of the American studies during Phase II. The American personnel tended to see inherent advantages in the new technologies. On the other hand, the British, although acknowledging the enhanced capabilities of the new technology, represented a European outlook which continued to focus on deterrence and the political use of nuclear weapons. Increasing the ability to use nuclear weapons in a limited manner threatened to decrease deterrence and therefore did not represent progress for some planners.
This debate highlighted again a fundamental difference between the United States and the Europeans. Many American nuclear experts, especially within the military, continued to view tactical nuclear devices as viable weapons that could have a specific military utility in a time of war. The British, on the other hand, joined the Europeans in focusing on the deterrence that nuclear weapons provided and on their political uses in preventing war or limiting a war once it had begun.\textsuperscript{346} Overall, the British delegation appeared much more willing to discuss issues relating to the political uses of nuclear weapons, deterrence, and the overall NATO strategy, whereas the Americans, within the Phase II discussions, focused primarily on the military aspects of nuclear use.

There was also a certain incongruence between the American studies for follow-on use and the U.S. political goals, which becomes clear during the debates over the new technology. For the military uses of nuclear weapons to be effective, no matter what the yield or delivery mechanism, they required a delegation of authority reaching down to subordinate commanders from the American president. The purposes of nuclear use defined in the \textit{Provisional Planning Guidelines}, demonstrating to the enemy the willingness to use these weapons in the hopes of reestablishing deterrence, conformed to the preservation of nuclear release authority at a political level in Washington. But the new technology presented a similar political problem in the 1970s as had the Atomic Demolition Mines in the 1960s. In order to use these weapons in a meaningful military role, decisions on use had to be made by military commanders on the ground. The follow-on use studies, as initially drafted by many American nuclear experts, focused on using nuclear weapons to affect the military more than the political outcome. The new

\footnote{\textsuperscript{346} PRO, FCO41/1149, “NPG II-Record of Bonn Meeting,” April 19, 1973.}
technology had only increased that military capability, but revived the thorny political problems of nuclear control for the Americans and the level of destruction of their territory for the Germans.

The United States arranged that any studies concerning the new technology would be incorporated into Phase II. This had the effect both of delaying Phase II even longer and excluding the rotational members of the NPG from these more sensitive deliberations on new technology. The Americans remained unconcerned over the slow progress of Phase II or the delays inherent in adding still more to the Phase II deliberations. The NPG continued to fulfill the goal of keeping NATO allies, and especially Germany content. The West Germans made little trouble, raising no major complaints over the delays through 1974. This reflected not only a political distancing from the Phase II issues, but also the German public’s lack of interest in nuclear defense. It was from the impatient rotational members that opposition arose, forcing the triumvirate to include them in a separate study of the new technology chaired by an American official.

Phase II was also delayed by mounting questions over some of the agreed fundamentals from the 1960s on nuclear weapons use. By 1974 the NPG staff revived the debate over the viability and usefulness of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. There were over 7000 tactical nuclear weapons deployed there, which many considered a more than adequate number to meet the purposes of NATO’s flexible response strategy; indeed some analysts recommended reductions to as few as 2000.\footnote{Jeffrey Record, \textit{U.S. Nuclear Weapons in Europe: Issues and Alternatives} (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1974), 69.} The debate still centered on the political implications involved in any reduction of nuclear forces in Europe. Despite détente, the Germans in particular viewed the diminution of U.S. forces, either
conventional or nuclear, as dangerous in both decreasing deterrence and signaling a decreased American commitment to European defense. The Germans, however, also recognized the benefits of reducing U.S. nuclear forces in Europe as long as they were used as leverage to gain similar reductions in Soviet tactical nuclear weapons. In this regard, the ongoing negotiations on the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions served to prevent any drastic changes in the tactical nuclear arsenal so as to maintain them as a bargaining chip.

Turkey’s invasion of Cyprus in July 1974 created a crisis within NATO that served only as a minor delay in the NPG. As a result of the invasion, the Greek government withdrew from the military commitments of the alliance in a similar manner as the French nearly a decade earlier. In doing so, Greece gave up its rotational seat in the Nuclear Planning Group. Due to its limited involvement in any of the major studies or developments that year, Greece’s exit had a minimal effect on the NPG. Rotational members moved in and out periodically, and the NPG left the wider debate on how to alleviate the crisis in Cyprus to the political leadership in the North Atlantic Council and home governments.

*Domestic Politics and Phase II*

Even before NATO had approved the Provisional Planning Guidelines, the Nixon administration had begun a broad reassessment of U.S. strategic and military policy. Ongoing from 1970 to 1974, this process culminated in the adoption of the Schlesinger Doctrine, named after the Secretary of Defense during Nixon’s second term. The strategy he labeled as “counterforce” essentially applied flexible response concepts to the

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American strategic nuclear doctrine. Schlesinger sought to limit the immediate step of massive retaliation in a conflict with the Soviet Union and focus the strategic response more on military and not civilian targets. These ideas engendered much debate within the Nixon administration and during this entire first half of the 1970s, the American staff members appeared reluctant to make any major moves in the NPG or progress too quickly with Phase II while the results of their strategic review remained in doubt. They preferred not to complete a study, present it to allies, and then ask for fundamental alterations based on a domestic strategic reassessment. In addition, the direction of the Nixon administration’s ideas towards tactical nuclear weapons went increasingly counter to the broad PPGs approved in 1969. The most divisive issue was Washington’s preference for using tactical nuclear weapons against military targets on the battlefield as late as possible in a conflict.\textsuperscript{349} The European focus on deterrence and early use of any sort remained fundamentally at odds with the Nixon administration’s broader goals of limiting escalation.\textsuperscript{350}

Political upheaval within NATO members also served to delay resolution of Phase II. An unlikely source of one delay was Portugal. An original member of the Special Committee, Portugal had remained aloof from the NPG but was a member of the NDAC since 1967. In 1969, as part of the “Hague formula,” Portuguese representatives gained access to the NPG Staff Group. In 1973, Portugal petitioned to become a rotating member of the NPG and it was scheduled to attend its first ministerial meeting in the fall of 1974. However, after the leftist military revolution in April 1974 and the appointment


\textsuperscript{350} Ibid, 36-40.
of communists to prominent positions in the Portuguese cabinet Portugal’s entire position in NATO came into question. In the culture of the Cold War, communist participation made an entire government suspect, particularly in sensitive nuclear planning discussions.

This led to a minor crisis within NATO itself when the Americans planned to exclude Portugal from the Rome NPG meeting scheduled for the fall of 1974. The Portuguese approached Secretary General Luns demanding inclusion and threatening to reassess their entire position in NATO.\textsuperscript{351} Portugal’s tactics caused a brief split within the permanent members of the NPG. In the midst of this debate, Nixon resigned as President and Gerald Ford assumed office. Ford did not immediately change any of Nixon’s foreign policies, and his administration did not alter American opposition to a Portuguese role in the NPG. The Germans, however, were willing to allow Portugal to attend, because they believed that barring them would only weaken the domestic democratic elements in Portugal.\textsuperscript{352} The British agreed. London was concerned over the domestic political situation in the United States, wanted to test the new administration on nuclear issues, and believed that the NPG’s benefits to alliance solidarity were too important to risk.\textsuperscript{353} Despite Italy’s flirtations with its own legal domestic communist party, it was one of the few states to support the Americans. Interestingly, one source of American intransigence was Henry Kissinger, who continued on as Ford’s Secretary of State and retained his influence over U.S. foreign policy


\textsuperscript{352} PRO, FCO 41/1437, Telegram No. 574 from UKDEL NATO to FCO, October 23, 1974.

\textsuperscript{353} PRO, FCO 41/1437, Telegram No. 236 from FCO to UKDEL NATO, October 23, 1974.
Inadvertently, Lisbon’s domestic politics and suspect loyalties affected the output of the NPG, delaying some simple procedures in 1974 such as the release of the draft report on Phase II’s progress. Throughout the debates that year, the American delegation forbade the inclusion of the Portuguese delegation in the Phase II process.\textsuperscript{354} For a brief period, all work in the NPG staff groups, Phase II, and the new technology study ceased because of American unwillingness to share the results. NATO postponed the fall 1974 NPG meeting until the annual ministerial meeting in December in an attempt to resolve the internal dispute. Despite the public excuse that the “press of current business in allied capitals” accounted for the postponement of the NPG meeting, the Portuguese government and public were immediately aware of the cause.\textsuperscript{355} This and other American political pressure on Portugal succeeded in making them withdraw from the upcoming NPG meetings. By the spring of 1975, the NPG ministerial and staff group meetings resumed their regular intervals. This demonstrated once again that the NPG existed only because of the support and sponsorship of the United States. The Portuguese remained members of NATO and by 1976 democratic and socialist elements prevailed, but still the Portuguese did not rejoin the NPG or directly participate in NATO exercises until 1980.

The intransigence and delays by the Americans on the issue of Portugal continued to erode some of the solidarity among the NPG permanent members. The British in particular feared the United States was using Portuguese politics to continue delaying the Phase II planning process. The British also became very concerned about the danger of


\textsuperscript{355} PRO, FCO 41/1437, Telegram No. 378 from UK Embassy Lisbon to FCO, November 4, 1974.
limiting communication in the NPG at what appeared a critical time in the of policy formation for the United States. Senator Nunn had introduced a committee amendment in 1974 for the purpose of setting limits on the number of tactical nuclear weapons assigned to Europe, and required the Pentagon to report to Congress by April 1975 on the status of nuclear forces assigned there. The Europeans feared a report that ran counter to their interests regarding nuclear planning and wanted consultation. The British remained very sensitive to the exclusion of allied consultation in American strategic planning. British planners, looking to possibly influence the internal debates within the Pentagon over nuclear policy, continued to push for a rapid conclusion of Phase II.

The resolution of the Portuguese crisis in the spring of 1975 enabled consultation on the Nunn Amendment report within the NPG. This assuaged many of the British fears that the Americans would present the report as a fait accompli. In the case of the Nunn Amendment, the Nuclear Planning Group system once again satisfied the NATO allies, who at least got a picture of what Pentagon planners envisioned, reported to their governments, and theoretically influenced some of Washington’s thinking through consultation. One recommendation found in the report that related directly related to the NPG, the call to reassess the current NATO nuclear stockpile, sparked some debate. A reassessment had the potential to lead to reductions of warheads in Europe and signal a reduction of American commitment. Most members expressed a reluctance to decrease nuclear stockpiles during the MBFR negotiations. Only the Dutch, who faced domestic

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357 PRO, FCO 41/1437, Telegram No. 242 from FCO to UKDEL NATO, November 4, 1974.

opposition from the socialists and peace activists, and the Scandinavians, who had never allowed nuclear stockpiles within their borders, supported any reduction of nuclear warheads without gaining something in return from the Warsaw Pact. All agreed that a modernization of NATO’s nuclear stockpile was necessary, as long as it avoided reigniting the arms race.

The NATO allies responded favorably to the Pentagon’s official response to the Nunn amendment. Despite the initial fears of NATO members that drastic changes might result from Schlesinger’s report to Congress, these did not materialize. The Pentagon was careful to consult allies directly and even gave them a copy of the final draft before formally presenting it to Congress. In the report, Schlesinger favorably cited the NPG and the importance of the steps taken thus far by NATO to ensure solidarity on nuclear issues, including the Provisional Planning Guidelines, the current efforts for guidelines for the follow-on use of nuclear weapons, and the new technology study.

But the Nunn Amendment impeded Phase II planning in two ways, by redirecting the attention of nuclear planners within the Pentagon to satisfying Congress’ demands, and by preventing the Americans in the Phase II staff group from agreeing to any definitive conclusions in the NPG study until the Pentagon clarified its position. Schlesinger decided to rethink the entire American defense strategy in order to satisfy

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360 These fears were in fact realized just a few years later, but due mainly to the Soviet modernization of their nuclear forces and the emplacement of SS-20 missile systems in Europe.

Congress and ensure they “got it right.” Part of this process included personnel reassignments within the Pentagon that brought new faces into the International Security Affairs office and the participants in NPG staff work. Personnel turnover create natural delays as new members needed time to gain knowledge and build working relationships. The personalities of those involved influenced the course of studies. For instance, serious divisions arose in the new technology study group made up of an American, British and West German contingent. The fourth meeting ended abruptly when the American delegation refused to even discuss or negotiate the draft, lest “they conveyed the impression that they accepted any part of it.”

These developments within the United States contributed to further delays that affected all of the ongoing studies of the NPG, pushing timelines for completion back a year in some cases.

The organization of the respective defense establishments in the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany also affected NPG progress. In all three cases, if the principal political leaders, such as the defense secretaries, would not, or could not provide clear guidance or direction for the staff and study groups, the NPG personnel either went astray or expended their efforts on discussions that led to few concrete results. Bureaucratic politics and organization within the military establishments also contributed to this slowdown, and the Americans were perhaps the least organized to engage in efficient and coordinated work.

362 PRO, FCO 41/1653, Letter from FRG MOD to Mr. Gaffney, Special Assistant to DASD, September 29, 1975.

The Pentagon coordinated American Nuclear Planning Group policy with the State Department on an as needed basis with no rigid structures in place for its development. This sometimes led to conflicts or contradicting guidance at various levels in the NPG staff and numerous study groups. This system also remained highly dependent on the personalities and relationships of key personnel within the Pentagon and to a lesser degree, the State Department, and on how these individuals interacted with each other and allies in the various levels of study group, staff group, and permanent representatives. In at least one case, British experts blamed the lack of progress with the follow-on use study on the attitude and opinions of one colonel within the Pentagon who chaired the study group, and they pursued other channels of communication to resolve the conflict. Oftentimes, the American representatives on a study or staff group were assigned to several other committees and policy groups. These members from the defense establishment came from various offices, including the International Security Affairs office, the Policy Planning office for nuclear matters, or the Policy and Plans staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Depending on the issue in question, either of these offices could take a lead role, with the ISA more often focused on the political aspects and the JCS involved themselves in early phases of studies and provided technical military input.

The British system of NPG policy formation was only slightly more streamlined. Although the British organized their coordination between various departments within the Ministry of Defense, many viewed NPG topics as “esoteric” and paid little attention to them outside the “magic circle” of experts and planners within the MOD and Foreign and Commonwealth Office.³⁶⁴ This circle coordinated and worked well together, but many

recognized their NPG work as lying outside the mainstream of defense planning. This led to a system of nuclear planning within Britain that was also increasingly dependent on the personalities in various staff positions. Like the Americans, this system allowed for experts to engage in planning that might not reflect political realities, especially as they changed over time.

Of the triumvirate, the West Germans organized and centralized their approach to NPG work most coherently, funneling all guidance and policy through one NATO desk in their Ministry of Defense. Although rigid, this process produced representatives who nearly always had sound guidance in coordination with the overall goals and were fully prepared for the various meetings.¹ With one approval authority in Bonn for all messages sent to representatives, this ensured that they followed the general direction of West German policy. Nonetheless, because the driving force behind progress in the Nuclear Planning Group remained the American and British staff members, these clear West German policy goals and preparations did not necessarily translate into efficient meetings or drafting sessions for the follow-on use or new technology studies within Phase II.

The bureaucratic organization of the American and British defense organizations required personalities focused on the issues in order to produce results. Comparing the Provisional Planning Guideline formation early in the NPG’s history to the follow-on use study demonstrates this. The PPGs had evolved out of many studies that began with the inception of the NPG, but took only one year to produce and approve once Great Britain and West Germany began their joint effort with the support of Washington. Conversely,

³⁶⁵ Ibid.
Phase I and II of the follow-on use study took four years to complete and failed to produce a viable compromise draft. British planners blamed the American lack of focus and effort. One British participant described the discussions at the first Phase II meetings as “patchy, [with] US chairmanship ineffective,” and “the Germans and the US seem quite content to let Phase II drift along.”[^366] However, the delays were due less from the lack of effort for by the working group than to a lack of attention to the NPG’s work by political leaders. The leader of the US delegation, Colonel Calloway admitted to his British colleagues that the Departments of Defense and State did not regard the current NPG’s work as important.[^367] This translated into a lack of resources, primarily in time and personnel, provided to the American delegation of the working group. Other projects received more attention and priority and there was a high rate of turnover for U.S. personnel assigned to the Phase II working group during its long life.[^368]

America’s lack of focus on the NPG continued into early 1974, when the latest committee chair allowed the British and West German delegations to conduct the most substantive discussions. This continued to frustrate the British who pressed for more U.S. involvement and faulted the Americans for failing to pull their weight during Phase II. Gradually as new members of the American delegation arrived in 1974, the Phase II study group meetings became more productive.[^369] But as discussion progressed over a possible draft report, clear divisions arose among the American delegation and their British and West German colleagues. The U.S. delegation called into question many of

[^366]: PRO, FCO 41/1158, “Phase II,” undated.
[^367]: PRO, FCO41/1149, “NPG Phase II, Third Meeting, Bonn 10-12 April 1973.”
the assumptions behind the Phase I and Phase II studies. Even after the group ironed out many of the problems and agreed on compromise language, the American representative, Colonel Calloway, remained unsure if his superiors in the Pentagon would approve.370

Despite Calloway’s doubts, the Phase II study group agreed on a draft in July 1974 that they sent to their respective capitals and defense ministries for approval. The draft attempted a compromise between both uses of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, deterrence and military effect. Compared to the PPGs of seven years earlier, it remained much more focused on the military effects than on deterrence. The Phase II draft concluded that nuclear weapons were not to be used as a last ditch effort, that earlier use in a conflict had the best chance of ensuring military success, and that there were limited cases where military uses for nuclear weapons would give NATO a clear military advantage. All of these conclusions supported concepts for an early use of nuclear weapons with specific military purposes. Despite this, the study also concluded that the ultimate purpose of follow-on use of nuclear weapons must be to reestablish deterrence and force the enemy to cease the offensive and withdraw.371 “In a situation when NATO’s initial use had failed to restore deterrence, follow on use would be designed to make the point more solidly.”372 After over five years of work on the follow-on use study, the overall political purpose behind tactical nuclear use in a conflict had not changed from the text in the Provisional Planning Guidelines for the Initial Use of Nuclear Weapons by NATO. The Phase II study also concluded that NATO’s use of its

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370 PRO, FCO 41/1433, Note for the Record, “NPG Phase II Meeting, Brussels 9/10 May.”


numerous nuclear weapons in response to a Warsaw Pact invasion would not bring a tactical advantage. The only major difference was a directive that follow-on use should have both a military and political purpose. For the Europeans, however, this was a key difference that threatened their focus on deterrence.

Before the Phase II report even made it to the level of Defense minister discussions, the NPG’s permanent representatives expressed serious reservations. The focus on military use in the follow-on use study and the apparent contradiction with political goals caused many to express dissatisfaction openly and strongly. The most vocal critic was the British Ambassador to NATO, Richard Beaumont, who described the report as, “wedded to the ‘warfighting’ approach” and called it “pious and incomprehensible.”

The military use debate dominated discussions and the British accused the study of being overly biased toward the American outlook. After the American ambassador offered a tepid defense, the majority remained unconvinced.

A number of factors all contributed to the lack of clear results after more than five years of work between 1970 and 1975. During this high era of détente, governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain had relegated nuclear planning issues to defense “experts” who were largely insulated from political developments. Moreover, the U.S. demonstrated a lack of motivation and leadership in the NPG. From the Secretary of Defense on down, the convictions that had existed in 1965 for the resolution of nuclear debates began to evaporate after 1970. Also, dissention within the Nuclear Planning Group had led to constant negotiation on procedural matters that brought minor delays.

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373 PRO, FCO 41/1651, “Phase II Report – WP (75)5,” March 27, 1975.

throughout the process. Lastly, the issues in question during the follow-on use study continued to get to the heart of the different concepts for defense between the United States and Europeans and military versus political uses for nuclear weapons. This threatened the very heart of NATO’s strategy of flexible response as the Europeans, most notably the West Germans, constantly called into question the strategy’s viability and the American commitment to the defense of Europe.  

Trying Again: Follow-on Use Study Phase III

The initiation of Phase III for the follow-on use study in the NPG did not bode well for any more rapid progress than the previous two efforts. In June 1975 the NPG ministers agreed with their permanent representatives, declaring the Phase II study unsatisfactory and that Phase III would consist of a complete review of all issues. There was, however, a crucial difference: Phase III was to include all NPG member states in the staff work. The ministers had expressed displeasure with a study dominated by the military establishments of the triumvirate and they demanded greater political influence. From the perspective of the NPG staff of the triumvirate, Phase II represented a failure for they now faced debates concerning complete revisions and not the minor changes as they anticipated nearly four years earlier. In terms of the political goals, however, the NPG still satisfied the need for consultation and kept conversations alive but private.  

Phase III predictably took considerable time to complete. The British and West Germans, along with other NPG members, slowed down the deliberations in an attempt to ensure that the military use of nuclear weapons remained a minor aspect of follow-on use. West German Defense Minister Leber made it very clear that any planned nuclear

use by NATO must include sending a clear message to the Warsaw Pact of the unlikelyhood of limited nuclear conflict in Europe and that rapid escalation to a global conflict loomed. This represented a major shift from the language of the Phase II draft.

In addition to airing these political differences, the NPG deliberations incorporated more recent developments in NATO and nuclear technology. These included aspects of the new technology study that addressed continued progress in research and development of nuclear weapons and new issues related to nuclear use and planning had come to light as a result of the recent NATO command post exercise, WINTEX. The Americans continued to focus on the military use of nuclear weapons and stressed how the smaller yields and greater accuracy possible in the near future reinforced the need to incorporate nuclear strikes with a military purpose in planning. The interrelated nature of all of these issues made it essential to create a unified analysis and approach, but obtaining any agreement required more study and hard bargaining within the NPG, simultaneous with ongoing negotiations on MBFR and SALT. All of these problems resulted in 18 months of complex study that required the NPG staff to reassess all its previous work and assumptions.

Most defense ministers agreed in 1976 that completion of the Phase III study was an important NPG task. They recognized how many of the current issues NATO faced were interlaced with the NPG work in some way. But NATO members quickly lost interest quickly in Phase III, because they continued to focus on the MBFR negotiations, the Vladivostok meeting that set the framework for SALT II, the CSCE talks in Helsinki, and the turmoil within the U.S. administration that led to three different U.S. presidents in

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PRO, FCO 41/1652, “UK Record of the 17th Meeting of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group held in Monterey on 16th-17th July 1975,” July 30, 1975.

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as many years.\footnote{E-mail interview with Henry Gaffney, December 2006.} Hence the NPG never directly addressed at the ministerial level the differences highlighted by the follow-on use study before the neutron bomb affair and Soviet deployment of SS-20 missiles in 1977 dominated alliance politics in the new Carter administration. In response to these developments, the NPG created a new organization consisting of assistant defense secretaries, dubbed the High Level Group, which they tasked specifically with determining NATO’s response to the Warsaw Pact’s SS-20 deployments.\footnote{References to follow on use studies in NPG communiqués end in 1976 and there are no public indications that Phase III was ever completed. Henry Gaffney believes that it may have been completed around 1984 but it garnered little to no attention during the Euromissile crisis and was of little import.} The follow-on use studies possibly contributed to some of the emerging Euromissiles debate that began in 1977 because many of the same staff assumed roles in the HLG staff, but the Euromissiles debate came to overshadow all other work and the NPG made no further progress on Phase III.

*Military Planning and Other NPG Achievements in the 1970s*

Despite its lack of concrete results on the follow-on use study the NPG retained an important role within NATO. Beginning in 1970, the coordinated work on the Provisional Planning Guidelines between the Nuclear Planning Group and NATO’s military staff increased the latter’s effectiveness. The NPG, in addition to educating politicians and diplomats on nuclear issues, developed effective links with the SACEUR. For the first time in January 1970, the SACEUR staff attended an NPG staff meeting and began a relationship with that body on the progression of the military staff’s planning for nuclear use scenarios.\footnote{NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1970-1973, Box 1659, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 458, “NPG-Further Studies on Follow-on Tactical Use,” February 10, 1970.} The Military Committee and the SACEUR representatives

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presented specific plans to the NPG staff which intermittently became agenda items for the defense minister meetings. The Nuclear Planning Group continued to refine specifics concerning nuclear release procedures which the military staff tested during NATO staff exercises.\footnote{380 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1970-1973, Box 1658, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2819, “NPG-3 July Staff Group Meeting,” July 5, 1972.} One concern remained the format used by military commanders for nuclear release requests and whether they contained enough information on targeting and effects, such as predicted civilian casualties, to be useful for political decision makers, but not so much information that requests would require excessive time to put together or communicate. This type of detailed work and the improvement of NATO’s procedures remain a testament to the success and purpose of the NPG in coordinating military plans and procedures that addressed political needs.

Despite the snail’s pace of the follow-on use study and the lack of political focus and leadership between 1970 and 1975, the NPG had some achievements in the arena of military planning. Nevertheless, the inevitable differences also arose. The attempts to develop the SACEUR’s Selective Employment Plans (SEP) in the 1970s based on the PPGs and MC 14/3 created friction.\footnote{381 PRO, FCO 41/1437, “Selective Employment Plans,” October 1, 1974.} The military staff, and especially the SACEUR, required well defined plans for nuclear use, but the planning and rehearsals with SACEUR for various uses of nuclear weapons threatened to reduce the amount of flexibility in the eyes of political leaders. The more NATO officials tended to ignore political concerns, the more NPG staff and ministers from Great Britain and West
Germany tended to raise them, creating a continuous push and pull relationship between military planners and political leadership.

Thus the NPG assumed the important function of forcing a continuous dialogue between the military and political authorities in NATO. As the NPG undertook more specific studies pertaining to planning, the SACEUR representatives attending the staff and ministerial meetings remained an important link to ensure complete understanding of the political intent behind the various papers and resolutions. The briefings by the SACEUR of the plans under development in SHAPE became an important aspect of the Nuclear Planning Group, which on occasion sparked some of the more free-wheeling debates that distinguished the NPG in its early years.382

The NPG also served to rein in military planners. The Central Army Group study undertaken as one of the follow-on use studies in the early 1970s is a good example. Although it was a joint study by the United States and West Germany, it appeared to endorse the early use of ADMs, which contradicted both American and West German policy at the time. Nixon had endorsed the now familiar American desire to increase the focus of European defense to conventional forces, and the Germans still opposed the “tripwire” strategy. British analysts saw this study as “reflect[ing] a tendency on the part of the military side of NATO, impelled by NATO’s failure to develop an adequate conventional capability to implement the current strategy, to move towards a modified tripwire strategy.”383 Once this study rose to the ministerial level, it met significant


383 PRO, FCO 41/814, Memo from the Western Organizations Department, MOD, “Nuclear Planning Group – Follow on Use of Nuclear Weapons” October 15, 1971.
political criticism from both Secretary of Defense Laird and Defense Minister Schmidt of West Germany for its early use of nuclear weapons. This came at a time when Laird continued to push for a greater commitment from America’s allies for conventional forces in NATO and attempted to downplay the nuclear role, while Schmidt criticized the omission of political concerns from the study and advocated more focus on mutual force reductions.\textsuperscript{384}

The exercises conducted by NATO to test defense plans also emerged as a way of ensuring their political viability and adherence to political guidelines. These exercises combined both the political and the military elements of NATO in simulated conflict scenarios. The annual WINTEX became the primary exercise for testing the highest levels of NATO and national leadership. After 1969, these took on a greater level of significance with the approval of flexible response and the provisional planning guidelines. The major participants were military leaders down to major command posts within NATO along with representatives of political leadership. However, the political play in these scenarios always contained an element of unreality because a low level staff member invariably played multiple decision-maker roles for their respective institution, such as the Defense Ministry or executive branch. Militarily, these exercises remained important as a test for plans and to determine if the command and control structure could support the political expectations placed on it during a major conflict in Europe. However, there were political dangers involved, as Carte Blanche had demonstrated in 1955, when the public joined the nuclear debate after leaks of the exercise results. These

\textsuperscript{384} PRO, DEFE 11/471, “UK Record of the Tenth Meeting of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group held in Brussels on 26-27 October 1971.”
exercises always carried the risk of creating disputes among NATO allies over the strategy of flexible response.\textsuperscript{385}

In 1971 these exercises became a topic of high-level discussion. Willy Brandt requested that a minimum number of nuclear devices be used in the NATO exercise to test request and release procedures.\textsuperscript{386} The future Nobel Peace Prize winner wished to avoid adverse publicity that might endanger Ostpolitik. In addition, General Goodpaster recommended a revision of future WINTEXes to reduce their predictability. To him they seemed to follow a ritualized course. NATO met Warsaw Pact aggression with conventional defenses that transitioned to limited and then general nuclear war. According to Goodpaster, this served to reinforce the belief that conventional defense was doomed to failure and that flexible response inevitably led to a general nuclear war, thereby sorely limiting the options of political leaders.\textsuperscript{387}

Indeed, after 1968, almost every WINTEX conducted by NATO included a request for the use of nuclear weapons, if only to test the communication system and procedures for the military authorities to gain the political decision for their utilization. From what little the few unclassified sources on these exercises reveal, it is clear that, at least by 1973, the exercise planners envisioned the selective use of nuclear weapons approximately five to six days into the exercise and they built this assumption into the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[385] In February 1973 the Soviets gave a copy of the German draft WINTEX plan to the Auswärtiges Amt., stating that it was mistakenly ‘sent them by post.’ Although the purpose of this move is unclear, it demonstrates the lack of security for any NATO operations and planning with wide dissemination to national capitals and the need for limited membership organizations to discuss sensitive military policy and planning such as the NPG. PRO, FCO 46/1064, Message to UKDEL NATO, February 21, 1973.
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scenario to test the decision making apparatus.\textsuperscript{388} As the exercise unfolded, however, subordinate commanders within NATO, such as corps level commanders, requested selective use of nuclear weapons only two days into the exercise, much earlier than expected. After the request from the Supreme Allied Commander, made five days into the exercise as planned, it took approximately twelve to fifteen hours for approval and twenty hours before use in the exercise.\textsuperscript{389} Many of the available after action reports from this exercise focus on the technical requirements and changes needed for better communication and reporting and request procedures, but there seems to have been little discussion in the NPG on the inherent differences between the military commanders’ use of nuclear weapons and the inherent political concepts. On a particularly ominous note, at the conclusion of one exercise, the SACEUR had submitted a “package” request for nuclear weapons, with the plan to utilize approximately four hundred low yield devices against a concentration of Warsaw Pact forces.\textsuperscript{390} This plan harkened back to the days of Carte Blanche and massive retaliation in 1955, but, with no leaks, it did not reach the public.

The exercises in 1973 involved some important procedural innovations that resulted from lessons learned two years previously. In an attempt to satisfy the demands of the non-nuclear states, NATO tested a procedure where it informed member capitals whenever a major national commander (MNC) requested nuclear use from the SACEUR. The exercise also tested a more comprehensive nuclear release procedure manual. These


\textsuperscript{389} PRO, FCO 46/1064, Memo from Rose to Davidson, “KILLICK/WINTEX,” March 14, 1973.

changes attempted to standardize an early warning system for national capitals and alert them when the SACEUR considered nuclear use options. They were intended to prevent nuclear use from being a complete surprise for those NATO members not directly involved in the decision making process and to allow national leaders the opportunity to prepare themselves for the act. Great Britain and West Germany remained the only two states that enjoyed guaranteed consultation before American use of nuclear weapons. West German Defense Minister Leber in particular voiced his satisfaction with the new procedures, although his reasoning is unclear.\footnote{NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1970-1973, Box 1658, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Bonn 4934, “FRG Views on Wintex Nuclear Release Procedures,” April 4, 1973; Box 1659, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, USNATO 2193, “Preliminary Observations on WINTEX 73,” May 3, 1973. One question of note is whether the exercise tested the promised process of consultation from U.S. President to West German Chancellor. This is unclear in the currently available sources.} NATO continuously made improvements as it streamlined the approval process for nuclear use. By the 1975 exercise, a British request for release took seven to ten hours instead of twenty-four for approval.\footnote{PRO, DEFE 25/318, Memo from Rear Admiral Rusby, ACDS(Ops), April 11, 1975.} These types of improvements gave further support to flexible response, providing the political and military leadership with confidence that they could delay the more drastic nuclear use decisions and still maintain effectiveness.

The WINTEX process continued to provide NATO leaders with areas of experimentation and improvement in their procedures and planning for use of nuclear weapons. These exercises also became regular topics of discussion in the NPG and were used to emphasize political control of nuclear weapons with NATO’s military establishment. But NPG officials also criticized military commanders for making their requests too “soft” and not making blunt and straightforward requests. The reigning idea
within the NPG seemed to be “ask what you want, and let the politicians figure out what you will get.” This clearly demonstrated the continuing political focus of the NPG and the vital role it filled in ensuring political control over nuclear planning.

The tendency of the NPG to stress political decision making was natural, but contained a dangerous potential for NATO. At the highest levels of NATO command were military leaders with considerable knowledge of the political implications of their actions and could provide important input to civilian leadership in a crisis. Political leadership, primarily defense ministers, also needed information from military leaders on the plans and implications of NATO nuclear use. In this regard, the NPG continued to perform the vital function of providing consultation between military and political leaders in NATO in addition to acting as an important bridge between national leadership. Both forms of consultation and communication in a crisis would be required for successful decision making and preservation of the alliance. The increased involvement of the SACEUR and the military committee in all levels of the Nuclear Planning Group beginning in 1968 and continuing into the 1970s fostered this development along with the continued interaction during and after the winter exercises. Although the NPG would have no direct role in a crisis, which members left to the NATO advisory council, the decisions made in the NAC would theoretically depend on much of the preliminary work of the NPG.

Besides exerting a measure of counsel over military planning and exercises, the NPG and staff groups in the early 1970s spent numerous hours and much effort arguing over the same issues and differences that ministers had aired in 1967 during the founding

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393 PRO, FCO 41/1652, “UK Record of the 17th Meeting of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group held in Monterey on 16th-17th July 1975,” July 30, 1975.
of the group. Although this seems to represent little progress, it was part of the constant education of political leaders that inevitably rotated in and out of the Nuclear Planning Group, but more importantly in and out of major political leadership positions such as Defense Ministers, Foreign Ministers, and NATO ambassadors. They reargued and revisited many issues as a new set of rotational members joined the NPG or when changing political leadership among the permanent members made “reeducation” necessary. It also provided the Warsaw Pact with the assurance that NATO had in place an orderly nuclear procedure and that leadership would act rationally, something necessary for deterrence to remain effective.

Education in the NPG continued to work in all directions in the 1970s. In 1972, Laird learned the lesson of wording his statements carefully after dealing with sensitive allies and their misinterpretations. In one case, he opened a meeting with remarks that focused on conventional force needs that raised alarm. In attempting to demonstrate the need for more conventional forces in Europe, Laird stated how nuclear parity amongst NATO and the Warsaw Pact served to limit the amount of options inherent in flexible response. Some Europeans heard a message of America’s unwillingness to use nuclear weapons while others feared a revival of the strategy of massive retaliation. Casual remarks such as these were often misinterpreted or given greater significance than designed by the speaker and usually required reassurances and explanation by the NPG staff. But all members usually preferred to utter these potentially damaging remarks in a closed forum among friends, rather than allow sensitive issues to reach the public forum.

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In the 1970s, the disputes over nuclear use and the results of NATO exercises remained very much behind the scenes in NATO, and there were far fewer leaks than in earlier decades. The NPG provided an important forum where West German and other political leaders could voice their opinions and speak frankly while playing a role in the planning process. Germany and the rest of the NPG’s European members did not desire nor require leaks or political grandstanding to ensure influence in nuclear planning in NATO. These tactics could only have detrimental effects on détente and relaxing tensions in Europe.

The NPG became a consultative body for more than issues between the United States and other members. In 1970, a technical issue involving the compatibility of U.S. nuclear weapons and the fielding of a new British strike aircraft forced the British to deploy some of their tactical nuclear weapons onto German soil. The British preferred to use the NPG as the forum to announce this pending change to its NATO allies because of the group’s good record in preventing leaks. Prior to this announcement, the British and Germans had worked out a bilateral storage and use agreement very similar to those with the United States, requiring direct consultation between the two heads of state. \(^{395}\) The only disagreement between London and Bonn was over secrecy, with the former insisting on it, and the latter desiring a more open announcement that would show its citizens the level of influence it had obtained over the nuclear weapons deployed on their soil.

The Nuclear Planning Group also helped to alleviate allied fears of America’s withdrawal from European defense. When President Nixon’s review of U.S. nuclear strategy alarmed allies, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Donald Rumsfeld used the NPG

\(^{395}\) PRO, DEFE 13/805, “Record of Meeting Held in the Ministry of Defence on 14 December 1970: Proposed Deployment of British Nuclear Weapons in Germany.”
Permanent Representatives meeting of February 1974 to directly respond, and Defense Secretary Schlesinger clarified America’s continued commitment to NATO and the deterrent nature of the nuclear arsenal. The NPG members appeared satisfied with these explanations. Thus the NPG served to mitigate the sting of a certain amount of posturing by its key member’s domestic politicians.

In one case, however, education of allies worked against American political goals because it threatened the tenuous consensus achieved in 1969. By 1973, the Nixon administration sought to delay progress on Phase II and prevent any significant alteration of what the Nuclear Planning Group had resolved in his first year in office. Laird expressed how the NPG staff’s diligent work at trying to define terms to foster better discussions and negotiations had only created problems at the political level. Laird wanted the terms of flexible response to remain vague, so that all parties could agree and the United States could maintain its freedom of maneuver in a crisis. Military staffs, especially within Britain, lamented the slowdown of progress and lack of specificity in the NPG and rightly placed much of the blame on American policy. But, more politically adept analysts in the British Ministry of Defense recognized the “real threat [was] of a crisis of confidence in the strategy,” referring to flexible response. Those focused on the military aspects of nuclear weapons, no matter what the country, many times desired more concrete guidelines with directives they could use to plan specific future operations,

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while political leaders desired the exact opposite. In this respect, the NPG and the delays in the follow-on use study allowed the political leadership to successfully preserve the tenuous agreement achieved by the PPGs.

In sum, the lack of dramatic or concrete results from the NPG between 1970 and 1976 was due to a number of factors and did not immediately threaten NATO or alliance relations. Politically, nuclear defense was no longer a priority in the age of détente, MBFR and SALT. America’s leadership in the NPG waned under its new leadership and as it faced a post-Vietnam domestic reassessment of its global strategy in the 1970s. The West Germans also reduced their interest in nuclear planning issues. Minister of Defense Schmidt even complained that there was too much material to read prior to NPG ministerial meetings, and that this should be reduced. This was a far cry from the detail oriented Secretary of Defense McNamara who had encouraged extensive preliminary work prior to NPG meetings so that the Defense Ministers’ discussions could benefit from detailed questions and pointed analysis. But the NPG’s accomplishments during this time period should not be ignored. The group as it continued to refine military plans and exercises and successfully kept nuclear issues out of the public sphere.

Many nuclear experts had recognized the central dilemma of NATO’s nuclear defense strategy during the flexible response approval debate in the 1960s. As one British expert explained, there really was no politically adequate solution and the only option for NATO was to continue to “paper over the crack” that it caused in NATO

399 PRO, FCO 41/815, “Advice to Mr. Stewart Arising from his Letters of 23 and 28 July,” August 11, 1971.
planning. This is exactly what the Nuclear Planning Group Staff and the follow-on use studies continued to do. The crack would be revealed for all to see just a few years later when political focus and public attention, especially in West Germany, looked again at NATO defense policy during the Euromissile crisis. Covering over the nuclear differences in NATO had been an important aspect of the PPGs in 1969, publicly quieting critics and providing the appearance of a unified front before the Warsaw Pact. But the cracks in NATO’s defense planning required constant papering and attention at the ministerial level to maintain the façade.

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400 PRO, FCO 41/980, Memo from Mr. Kerr, WOD, “Follow-on Tactical Use of Nuclear Weapons,” August 10, 1972.
“Even with a complex and many-sided decision-making process, it is comparatively easy for any government to kid itself; it is always much harder to kid foreigners.”

---Harlan Cleveland, Ambassador to NATO

CONCLUSION

As recognized by Max Krone, the Nuclear Planning Group was actually a misnomer. The actual planning for the use of nuclear weapons occurred within the NATO military staff and SHAPE. The NPG provided only political guidelines and performed the vital function of gaining at least a limited consensus on where, when, and how tactical nuclear weapons use might be politically feasible in a crisis. Up to 1965, the United States had maintained an exclusive prerogative in nuclear planning that precluded any international influence beyond a limited military level. This created a dangerous situation where NATO’s nuclear plans restricted the political choices available to its leadership, drove policy, and threatened to divide the alliance in a time of crisis. Thus, the United States decided to allow some allied influence into nuclear planning to prevent adverse reactions in a crisis. The results of the NPG’s labor to 1975 undoubtedly improved NATO’s readiness for crisis consultation and nuclear use on a political level, but actual planning remained a function of the military leadership, subject to political approval.

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401 Cleveland, NATO: The Transatlantic Bargain, 28.

The Nuclear Planning Group achieved a measure of political success in its first ten years. It served to increase the role of West Germany and nearly all NATO members in nuclear planning and contributed to an atmosphere of consultation and cooperation in the alliance. To be sure, given the lack of access to actual NATO documentation, it remains harder to gauge the effect of the Nuclear Planning Group on military planning and thinking within the alliance; but over time it appeared to have influenced planning within SHAPE and SACEUR. From the start, NATO leaders had created the NPG primarily as a political body with the primary function of strengthening political relationships. It ensured a constant dialogue among political leaders and within domestic institutions on the intractable problems of nuclear defense. The process of nuclear planning served to educate politicians and ensure communication. But being a political organization, the NPG was also vulnerable. The amount of time spent by the defense ministers on the more minute details of ADMs, ABMs, and nuclear air defense was necessary only when these issues were high on the political agendas of the member nations. Once they were not, they relegated these issues to the technicians and nuclear experts to debate in the 1970s.

In 1966, U.S. policy makers recognized that NATO’s response to the French challenge to NATO would require the cooperation and leadership of Great Britain, the United States, and West Germany. They carried this concept over into the Nuclear Planning Group, which greatly increased the cooperation between these three states on nuclear defense, but was only one of many post-1966 reforms within the alliance. NATO also replaced the International Planning Staff with the International Military Staff and

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made the new body more inclusive.\textsuperscript{404} The French challenge to NATO also forced the Johnson administration to reappraise the U.S. relationship to its allies and provided the incentive for power sharing on nuclear issues. The trilateral talks in 1966-1967 effectively solved burden sharing disputes in the short term, fostered the official adoption of flexible response as NATO’s strategy, and charted the course of the alliance in response to the French challenge.

The sometimes contentious debates over strategy and especially nuclear defense planning in NATO should not obscure the unity in overall purpose maintained by the alliance from 1965 to 1975. NATO fostered its dual purpose of defense and deterrence in the face of the Soviet threat during a time of significant political and international changes. Throughout nuclear planning debates, NPG members agreed to base their planning on estimates of Warsaw Pact capabilities, regardless of the political climate and the movement toward détente. From a military standpoint, this was logical, for political developments could change rapidly, while the facilities and military forces of the Warsaw Pact changed only gradually. Thus, the alliance needed to remain prepared for the various threats these forces entailed. In fact, during the early period of détente, the number of Soviet divisions stationed in Eastern Europe increased from 26 to 31.\textsuperscript{405} Although the specific negotiations with the Warsaw Pact did alter political estimates, they did not radically change the purpose of the alliance or its attempts to maintain a unified effort. The seminal importance of nuclear weapons in NATO defense planning ensured that the Nuclear Planning Group remained of vital importance for security

\textsuperscript{404} Andreas Wenger, “Crisis and Opportunity,” 39-40.

maintenance among military planners even as East-West relations grew more cordial in the 1970s.

Despite the varied concepts within the alliance on defense and deterrence, the NPG staff cooperated as they attempted to address the political and military ramifications of nuclear use.\textsuperscript{406} They maintained an atmosphere of businesslike collaboration, no doubt fostered by the existence of a still large and menacing Warsaw Pact. This was especially true for the national experts who worked for many years on the difficult problems of nuclear cooperation and remained more immune to the political vagaries and high turnover that characterized the highest offices of Defense Ministries.

The Nuclear Planning Group provided a vital function for NATO in keeping the discussion of nuclear issues in a closed and private forum. It effectively quelled the very public debate over nuclear sharing that had prevailed through much of the early 1960s and provided political leaders with an alternative to debates in the media. Once allied political leaders in countries such as West Germany became conversant with the complexities of nuclear weapons use, public calls for equality or a finger on the trigger ended. And when nuclear planning evolved into a smaller political priority in the 1970s, the discussions continued with little media attention. NATO communiqués from the Defense Planning Committee and North Atlantic Council usually announced the NPG’s studies of the latest nuclear issues, providing assurance that leaders were attending to the most crucial problems but never revealing any details of division.

The almost continuous efforts of the rotating members to gain more involvement provide clear evidence of the NPG’s success. Many governments saw it as providing

\textsuperscript{406} Henry Gaffney, e-mail message to author, December 2006.
influence, however marginal, on one of the critical aspects of European security and defense. Denmark and Norway, due to domestic opposition, had never allowed the stationing of nuclear weapons on their soil. Lacking any bilateral nuclear arrangements with the United States on nuclear armaments, they came to rely on the NPG to attain influence over nuclear affairs. The Netherlands, despite its stubbornness on membership issues, always supported the NPG because the Dutch saw it “largely as a vehicle for forestalling moves toward a European Nuclear Force and any West German interest in having nuclear capability.”

The Nuclear Planning Group had effectively alleviated the short-term problem of nuclear sharing in NATO during the 1960s by addressing West German concerns. But as the NPG evolved, the non-permanent members demanded a more inclusive organization that addressed all NATO members’ concerns equally. This was an unintended after-effect that the three most influential members, the United States, Britain, and West Germany opposed. The FRG, acting less as a European leader and more as an American protégé, valued its membership in an exclusive group. In this regard, the NPG probably only marginally affected the creation of a more unified Europe politically or militarily and possibly even contributed to the continent’s divisions. Although many European governments shared similar views on nuclear weapons use, the cooptation of West Germany into a unique relationship with the United States and Britain, and the French withdrawal from NATO, forestalled any completely unified effort by the Europeans on nuclear defense.

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407 NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1599, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State Telegram, Hague 12630, “NPG Membership,” September 25, 1969.
In 1966, the United States succumbed to West German demands for inclusion in nuclear planning in an attempt to change Bonn’s thinking on nuclear defense and address the immediate threat of a breakdown of the Atlantic Alliance. Attentiveness to West German calls for equality not only preserved alliance integrity but also created a stronger relationship with Bonn. West Germany was always integral to the defense of NATO, but its growing economic and military strength, coupled with the French withdrawal, increased American conventional troop withdrawals, and the distraction of the Vietnam War made Bonn’s voice even stronger in the late 1960s. But the United States also indicated the limits of control and planning influence that could be ceded to West Germany during the formulation of the PPGs in 1969, and these were never conceded.

Pressure from rotational members finally forced the end of the exclusive membership system so valued by West Germany in 1967. In 1979, NATO opened the NPG to all of its members. The triumvirate had always found it difficult to justify the unequal system and with the rise of anti-nuclear sentiment in Europe many governments needed a visible recognition of influence on nuclear defense matters. This undoubtedly changed the nature of both the staff work and the ministerial meetings by affecting the openness of debates and the level of formality in meetings, although information released to the public in communiqués and the press remained about the same. Open membership also coincided with increased European efforts at unity and signaled a decrease in the special status of West Germany within the NPG that Bonn had earlier worked hard to achieve and maintain.

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The NPG never entirely bridged the fundamental differences over intent for nuclear use between the Europeans and Americans. Consultation, intensive joint planning, studies, and negotiations could not alleviate the central strategic differences that affected NATO after 1960. The NPG never overcame the problem of different geographic and strategic positions relative to the Warsaw Pact threat and how these affected national views on defense. The United States, an ocean away, controlled the primary deterrent available to NATO in a crisis, a control it was unwilling to surrender and would undoubtedly utilize for its interests. Underlying almost all the debates over nuclear weapons use was this near absolute control of nuclear weapons and their use in Europe maintained by the United States. The United States also controlled much of the information provided to the NPG in terms of intelligence and weapons capabilities. This monopoly of control made Washington the natural leader of the NPG in its first decade, with varying degrees of input from the British and West Germans.

In the 1960s, the United States utilized the Nuclear Planning Group as a tool to keep NATO in tune with its point of view. The NPG met McNamara’s initial goals of educating allies, but this did not necessarily ensure agreement. American defense secretaries compromised in some areas, but always the maintained ultimate control of tactical nuclear weapons for the U.S. president in a crisis. The PPGs were as close as the alliance partners would come to reconciling their differences while continuing to maintain a wide array of crisis options for American decision makers. Not surprisingly, each government operated with the intent and strategic plans that provided the least risk and maximum protection for their own territory.
Britain’s concepts for nuclear strategy and policy for NATO remained remarkably consistent from 1962 to 1975. From the beginning of the debate over Kennedy’s proposal in 1962 for a more flexible NATO defense strategy, British policymakers recognized four points: first, that tactical nuclear weapons were vital for deterrence; second, that escalation of a conflict might be inevitable, but that risks would be determined by the type of nuclear weapons utilization in theater; third, that conventional “shield” forces must have nuclear capability; and fourth, a purely tripwire strategy was militarily and politically unacceptable.  

British nuclear experts insisted that tactical nuclear weapons formed an “indispensable escalatory link” between the deterrence of conventional forces in Europe and the second strike capability of the United States at the strategic level. They also regarded their nuclear force as vital not only for their defense as a deterrent against enemies but also as key to alliance relations. British nuclear weapons helped to maintain their special relationship and close cooperation with the United States on defense matters. The conventional forces (not including naval forces) dedicated by the British to NATO in the 1960s compared roughly in numbers to the Dutch. It was nuclear weapons that gave the British a special place in the NATO alliance, as manifested by the NPG and the triumvirate that arose in nuclear planning and policy. The British saw nuclear weapons as a cheap alternative to dedicating conventional forces, and they used the nuclear weapon commitment as leverage in gaining a reduction in their conventional force


410 PRO, DEFE 25/140, “Briefs for the Fourth Annual Anglo-Italian Staff talks” date unknown.

commitments to NATO.\footnote{412} Although Britain supported the United States in many areas covered by the Nuclear Planning Group, British desire to lower their conventional commitments ran counter to the American goal of increased European contributions and remained a source of tension into the 1980s. In some cases, the British appeared more concerned about their nuclear forces remaining credible to the United States than to their enemies, and by 1967 the British intended to assign all their nuclear forces to NATO, effectively limiting the independent deterrent effects of their force.\footnote{413}

West German nuclear policy goals changed over time as its foreign policy shifted to one of Ostpolitik. Nonetheless, the NPG continued to satisfy Bonn’s need for influence in the nuclear planning and decision making process. Initially, the West German government under Chancellor Erhard had sought a well defined role in the decision making process, but when this clearly failed with the MLF, Erhard’s successors settled for a key role in the planning process that the Nuclear Planning Group provided. From the start, German officials had viewed the NPG as a vehicle for slowly increasing West German influence on nuclear planning.\footnote{414} West Germany utilized the NPG to gain more access as a member of the triumvirate and became a key player in all of the large studies and debates on nuclear weapons use.

It is difficult to determine the effect of the European allies on U.S. nuclear defense policy in NATO. If one focuses on U.S. military planning, nuclear policy changed significantly in the 1960s. The \textit{Policy Planning Guidelines} departed from the


\footnote{413} PRO, DEFE 13/544, COS 1745/30/8/67, “Nuclear Policy,” August 30, 1967.

U.S. military conceptions for nuclear use in Europe, which advocated a widespread use on military targets to support the military mission. As outlined in the PPGs, limited use, with the sole purpose of reestablishing deterrence had certainly not been part of the U.S. military’s nuclear strategy in the 1950s demonstrated by Carte Blanche. Military leadership also envisioned more freedom to utilize nuclear weapons at their prerogative once authorized by political leadership. Instead, NATO established strict political control that would ensure approval of all intended uses of nuclear weapons. But the NPG also ensured the United States maintained ultimate control of its nuclear weapons, and in a time of crisis, there was no requirement for the U.S. president to heed guidelines.

To be sure, the European efforts to limit nuclear use on their soil also coincided with the changing conceptions for nuclear defense among American political leaders. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, along with McNamara, wished to limit the dependence on a nuclear response to a potential conflict in Europe and recognized the danger of a rapid escalation of a European conflict to strategic nuclear exchange. Both sides of the Atlantic strove to limit the use of nuclear weapons for different reasons, and each was able to satisfy this goal through the PPGs. Nonetheless, the change in the concept of nuclear defense that prevailed in the militaries of NATO members from to 1950s to the late 1970s remained as large a challenge with regard to the nuclear defense strategy as dealing with allies on a political level. The NPG has therefore continued to maintain alliance relations and address the issues of equality, nuclear and crisis consultation, and American hegemony.

The Nuclear Planning Group came about in a transitional period in the Cold War when European governments were attempting to exert more control over their destiny.
The post-war economic recovery of Western Europe allowed for more independent action and more assertive demands within the NATO alliance. The NPG belatedly satisfied this demand by West Germany and provided the smaller European states with more influence in nuclear planning than achievable in any bilateral relationship with the United States. Without the security of NATO and the deterrent effect that nuclear defense provided, Western Europe would have been at a disadvantage in its negotiations and relations with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This became vital during the growing movement towards détente among all of the NATO members after 1969. The eventual leader of détente in Europe, West Germany, remained secure enough in its defensive relations with NATO and the United States to take the risks involved in Ostpolitik.

Coinciding with, and integral to the rise of détente in the Cold War, was the push for arms reductions and non-proliferation. The NPG’s influence here was essential in elevating West Germany to a more important relationship with the United States, almost on the same plane as Great Britain with regard to nuclear planning. The prospect of a nuclear-armed Federal Republic had precluded significant reductions in Cold War tensions in Central Europe. The NPG allowed the West Germans to relinquish possession of a national nuclear force and also expand their international role in a non-threatening manner.

The Warsaw Pact maintained no comparable organization to the Nuclear Planning Group. Although the Soviets faced challenges from Romania and Poland during the 1960s over the Soviet domination of the alliance, the Soviets made no accommodation to other members in military planning or strategy.\footnote{Vojtech Mastny, \textit{Learning From the Enemy: NATO as a Model for the Warsaw Pact} (Zurich: Forschungsstelle für Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktanalyse, 2001), 21-31.} There exist few known cases where
the Soviet Union faced difficult questions from its allies concerning the level of nuclear
 guarantees for the Warsaw Pact nations.\textsuperscript{416} In 1968, when the NPG had garnered
 significant attention in the press, Romania and Bulgaria had inquired over gaining
 influence in nuclear defense planning. It is difficult to imagine the Soviet Union
 allowing any systematic allied intervention into its planning. As Czechoslovakia
 demonstrated in 1968, some allies were not entirely reliable. American willingness to do
 so only highlighted the disparities between the two alliance systems.

 Overall, however, the tactical nuclear problem for Moscow was quite similar in
 Europe to Washington’s. Despite Soviet rhetoric and the American assumption that the
 initial use of nuclear weapons by NATO would result in a more devastating response, it is
 hard to imagine that the Soviets would easily commit to escalating a conflict in Europe if
 it meant endangering their homeland as well. The East Germans remained just as
 unwilling to use nuclear weapons on their soil as their counterparts in the West.

 Concurrent with protests in West Germany, the GDR publicly criticized the escalation of
 Cold War tensions, and blamed both NATO and the Soviets for the Euromissile crisis.\textsuperscript{417}
 The amount of control maintained over tactical nuclear weapons by the Soviets and the
 Americans may very well have prevented the escalation of a conventional conflict in
 Europe if one had occurred.

 In the field of NATO diplomacy and military policy, personal relationships
 between Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Chancellors in the 1960’s appear to have had

 \textsuperscript{416} NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 1597, DEF 12 NATO, Department of State

 \textsuperscript{417} The GDR’s public criticism of Soviet military policy was likely due to the effects of Ostpolitik
 and the desires of both Germanys to continue with this policy despite increased superpower tension. Eric
less effect on relations. But within NATO and the NPG, the interaction of defense ministers and permanent representatives played a vital role. With NATO’s nuclear planning apparatus and Defense Planning Committee, some defense ministers met as a group at least four times a year. The defense ministries became negotiating bodies that needed to work consistently with their foreign ministries to put a unified policy in effect. The NATO alliance as a whole, but also the NPG as a negotiating and consultative body, contributed to informed and cooperative foreign and defense ministries. Many authors focus on the concept of consultation when addressing the Nuclear Planning Group. But in its early days, the NPG went beyond education and information exchange to become a negotiating body where compromise led to a limited consensus. These decisions included generalities and open assumptions, but even these minor bridges were an improvement over NATO policy before 1965.

The performance the Nuclear Planning Group in the 1960s should help revise our picture of how President Johnson’s administration dealt with European allies. Coupled with the Harmel Report on the future tasks of the alliance, the creation of the NPG “reflected Johnson’s conception of a less hierarchical and more political NATO.”\(^\text{418}\) To be sure, the group, with its unique organization, ensured a measure of hierarchy but it altered the U.S. dominance over nuclear defense issues of the 1950s. The United States also did not uniformly apply the concepts of increased power sharing and partnership as the NPG’s permanent versus rotational membership indicates. The NPG’s unofficial triumvirate remained an exclusive group that determined the direction of nuclear planning. The fears among other NATO members of a “directorate” never receded, and

continued consultation within the NPG, DPC, and the International Military Staff was necessary to bring all members of the alliance along in the process.

The education and communication process has been the most enduring legacy of the NPG. It served a function that was vital for complex issues of nuclear defense within a large multilateral alliance. Fortunately for Europe and the world, the remaining differences over nuclear weapons use by NATO were never tested in an actual conflict. However, as part of a political institution, the NPG shaped and affected NATO members through its deliberations. It achieved Secretary McNamara’s initial vision. A small group of civilian political authorities were to become personally involved with the particulars of nuclear weapons use, a highly sensitive task. In this respect, personalities and political views, especially among the defense ministers helped to determine the course and focus of the NPG over time.

Secretary of Defense McNamara and Defense Minister Healey both shaped the composition and course of the Select Committee and the evolving NPG, and with assistance from other influential personalities within NATO such as Ambassador Harlan Cleveland and Secretary General Manlio Brosio, they resolved the crisis within NATO over the proposed uses of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. But as the political focus on nuclear planning waned, this gave a disproportionate influence to the experts. The International Affairs Office of the Pentagon, where the formal proposal for a Select Committee had originated, thus became the primary source for American policy in the Nuclear Planning Group. Key individuals within this department, such as John McNaughton and Fred Wyle, were the driving forces behind the establishment of the

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NPG, and were recognized as such by NATO allies.\textsuperscript{420} Later, during the follow-on use studies, these personalities and political focus were absent, and the projects of the 1970’s suffered disputes and delays at lower staff levels within the NPG organization and the national capitals.

Détente also diminished the political importance of the NPG domestically in Germany. While Brandt negotiated with members of the Warsaw Pact over potential trade and investments, Bonn had little desire for extensive news coverage of NATO plans on the use of nuclear weapons, especially when German strategists were arguing that follow-on use of nuclear weapons should be within Eastern Europe. The resolution of the crisis in NATO over the French withdrawal, tactical nuclear planning, and burden-sharing was critical to providing the solid foundation of political and defense support that allowed Détente to be carried out in Europe. Détente in Europe, however, could not resolve the inherent difficulties in NATO planning over the use of nuclear weapons against the Warsaw Pact. These differences percolated under the surface of NATO as part of the follow-on use and new technology study and came to the fore again by 1980 and the Euromissile crisis.

Paul Schroeder, in his article “The Mirage of Empire versus the Promise of Hegemony,” examined the relative merits and possible future course of American policy with respect to exercising empire or hegemony. In his study, he defined an empire as one where final decision making authority was preserved by the imperial power and the essential function was to rule over another, whereas he defined hegemony as “the possession and exercise of clear acknowledged leadership and superior influence by one

\textsuperscript{420}PAAA, B150, vol. 71, Letter from West German Embassy to Foreign Office, March 1, 1966.
power within a community” functioning in a role as a manager.\footnote{Paul W. Schroeder, “The Mirage of Empire versus the Promise of Hegemony,” in Systems, Stability and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Europe, eds. David Wetzel, Robert Jervis and Jeck Levy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 298-99.} One interesting question is how the Nuclear Planning Group fits within these definitions and whether U.S. nuclear policy as it evolved in NATO supported the notion of either empire or hegemony for the United States and its relations with Western Europe in the Cold War.

In general, the Americans clearly used the Nuclear Planning Group as a tool of hegemony as it transitioned away from exercising imperial control over Europe’s defense. The NPG assisted the United States in maintaining its dominance over NATO nuclear defense policy, but without the outright dictation of policy that existed during the first decade of the alliance. The NPG demonstrated the use of consultation as an important method to incorporate allied ideas and opinions. Therefore the 1960’s represented a transitory period, when the United States decided to relinquish complete control over one of the most crucial aspects of NATO defense and exercised only the hegemonic control that was inherent in its role as the superpower and alliance leader.

Some interpretations of the NPG would characterize it as an organization dominated by the United States and a bureaucratic tool used to enforce the American concepts of nuclear use on its allies. One author describes “the real purpose of the NPG has been to endow nuclear policies covering NATO with an aura of NATO-wide authenticity.”\footnote{Scilla McLean, ed. How Nuclear Weapons Decisions are Made (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 231.} The strongest case for this argument would be the ultimate preservation of the decision making authority of the U.S. president in matters concerning U.S. nuclear weapons no matter where they were stationed. One power maintained the vital decision
making role for the defense of the entire alliance. Ultimately, Europeans could not
prevent use of nuclear weapons by the American president, but they did have other
resources in the nuclear arsenals of France and Great Britain. And if the American
president chose to utilize nuclear weapons, the Nuclear Planning Group system provided
both direct and indirect methods of influence. Direct limits included the West Germans
gaining the concession of automatic consultation at the national political level before the
United States utilized a nuclear device in Europe. At a military and more indirect level,
the on the shelf plans for nuclear weapons use within NATO, available to commanders
and constantly modified under the direction of SACEUR staff, required the approval of
the Nuclear Planning Group and not just American leadership. These plans already in
place for the possible use of nuclear weapons would undoubtedly have influenced
political decisions made in a time of crisis when the different pre-planned options would
be considered and one chosen as a course of action. The near constant political dialogue
fostered by the NPG on nuclear defense matters informed multiple levels of leaders
within the United States on the ideas, opinions, and goals of European allies. The
benefits to alliance cohesion and solidarity that consultation brought for nuclear defense
was perhaps the most influential achievement of the Nuclear Planning Group.
“…changed strategic conditions confront us with new problems. SALT codifies the nuclear strategic balance the Soviet Union and the United States. To put it another way: SALT neutralizes their strategic nuclear capabilities. In Europe this magnifies the significance of the disparities between East and West in nuclear tactical and conventional weapons.”

---Helmut Schmidt, October, 1977

EPILOGUE

Beginning in 1977, two controversies, the neutron bomb affair and Euromissiles, once more brought the nuclear defense of Europe to the fore, and these issues were not easily resolved by NATO or by the national political leaders. After three decades of discussion, fundamental differences remained over whether NATO was a deterrent that prevented war or a military alliance intended to fight one. The United States regarded NATO as a tool for victory over the Soviet enemy, while Europeans generally saw it as ensuring the American commitment to Europe and preventing an aggressive Soviet war. The Soviet announcement that it was upgrading its tactical nuclear missiles in Europe demanded a response from NATO, but produced competing ideas over NATO’s nuclear arsenal and a very public controversy.

The NPG’s problems and the lack of concrete achievements in the 1970s made the public Euromissile debate more difficult. To be sure, from the documents available up to this point, it is clear that the NPG apparatus limited its discussions after 1976 to modernization, especially the debate concerning updating medium range missiles. One year later, after the Soviets deployed SS-20 tactical nuclear missiles to Central Europe,

the alliance searched for a political and military response. Both NATO and the U.S., using the MBFR and SALT negotiations, failed to convince the Soviets to withdraw these missiles. Indeed, the Western powers lacked a real bargaining position, except a weak offer not to deploy similar weapons systems. Because NATO had not yet approved a new deployment, it essentially asked the Soviets to give up something in which they already invested substantial resources to emplace, for the promise that NATO would not do likewise.

By 1977, the Nuclear Planning Group appears to have been ill-prepared to handle the debate in NATO over the proper course for modernizing the nuclear weapons arsenal as a response to the Soviet deployment, probably as a result of the formal nature of the NPG meetings and the lack of political interest for so long by most of the defense ministers. One of the principal U.S. planners at the time cited problems with the NATO permanent representatives and their lack of expertise in military and nuclear affairs.\footnote{E-mail interview with Henry Gaffney, December 2006.}

An example of problems that resulted was the neutron bomb fiasco. In this case, U.S. allies opposed the Carter administration’s proposal for deployment of the neutron bomb, and the embarrassing public debates that ensued all indicated that the NPG was failing to keep the lid on alliance disagreements over nuclear weapons.\footnote{Richard Burt, “U.S. Admits it Lags on A-Data to Allies: Seeks to Improve Information Flow in Wake of Neutron Bomb Dispute Going on in Western Europe,” \textit{New York Times}, October 13, 1977}

Thus, in 1977, NATO created the High Level Group, made up of assistant defense ministers knowledgeable in nuclear defense issues, with the specific task of studying the modernization of nuclear weapons. The International Affairs Office in the Pentagon remained the central hub of this organization and held responsibility for most of its \footnote{\citenum{424} E-mail interview with Henry Gaffney, December 2006. \citenum{425} Richard Burt, “U.S. Admits it Lags on A-Data to Allies: Seeks to Improve Information Flow in Wake of Neutron Bomb Dispute Going on in Western Europe,” \textit{New York Times}, October 13, 1977}
direction and proceedings. This served to remove much of the policy making influence from the Brussels bureaucracy and elevated national and especially U.S. interests.⁴²⁶

After about two years of deliberations, the High Level Group, whose deliberations were modeled on the informal, freewheeling deliberations of the early NPG, worked out a resolution to the question of modernization. In 1979 its recommendations gained the approval of the NPG, NDAC and DPC for the deployment of the Pershing II missile system to Europe. The consensus achieved by NATO on such a controversial and complex issue in just two years appeared to be a tangible success for the consultation system. The NPG staff had begun studying modernization as early as 1974 and it is probable that its work fostered the progress of the High Level Group. However, the relatively rapid consensus achieved at the political level of NATO ignored the domestic repercussions. For Europeans who were highly sensitive to a nuclear escalation, the Pershing II deployments provoked protests and debates.

The public eruption reflected badly not only on the Nuclear Planning Group but on NATO itself. This may be in part due to how NATO came about the decision. The High Level Group had operated in an atmosphere more remote from politics than the NPG. At its third meeting the group had developed a consensus supporting modernization of Theater Nuclear Forces in Europe. This had come as a surprise to the United States which “had not been prepared for such a turn of events but was not inclined to oppose it.”⁴²⁷ The result was the opposite of the NPG’s original mandate, and a form of nuclear planning that almost ignored some of the political aspects of defense decisions


⁴²⁷ Gartoff, Détente and Confrontation, 858.
within Europe. It is incorrect to portray the deployment of Pershing II missiles as an American decision dictated to allies. The decision to modernize was not due to a lack of consultation among allies or to political pressure from the United States, which had actually been uncommitted to modernization early in 1978. The dual track decision, as it was called, emanated from a series of compromises and a consensus that included all members of the High Level Group.

It appears that the lack of political attention given to Nuclear Planning Group issues from 1970 to 1977 would affect developments in the 1980s. After a long period of inaction and delay, NATO was incapable of managing the intense Euromissile debate without inspired political leadership. Thus the United States turned again to the Nuclear Planning Group as an avenue for “intensive diplomatic lobbying with the European allies” to gain a decision. Another procedural development possibly muddied the waters of NATO policy making further. In response to European concerns that the High Level Group was moving forward too quickly with its 1979 recommendation to deploy Pershing IIs, NATO created a “Special Group” on arms control to explore the impact of these deliberations on the Soviets. This group, opposed by U.S. policy makers, and staffed primarily with diplomatic officials, served to dilute the nuclear planning effort and possibly prevented the discussion of difficult political issues at the defense minister level.


429 E-mail interview with Henry Gaffney, December 2006.

430 Gartoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 865.

The resolution of the Euromissile debate in Europe, although in favor of the NATO alliance dual track decision made in 1979, came with some longer term political costs. Although domestic support for NATO remained strong in Great Britain and West Germany, large areas of the European public believed that the United States had forced the Pershing II decision on Europe. The success and popularity of the anti-nuclear peace movements once again gained ground in Europe, and trust in American policies among Europeans, and especially West Germans, deteriorated.

A complete history of the NPG during the Cold War has yet to be written. In the first ten years of its existence, the NPG assumed a different role in the alliance than its original mandate. In 1977, it changed again with the creation of the High Level Group, and changed once more two years later when all NATO members gained access to the NPG. As NATO continues to expand and redefine its role and purpose in the post-cold war environment, nuclear weapons and planning have once again moved outside of the spotlight for the alliance, but the methods of cooperation and consultation that the NPG embodied and honed continue. Thus the future of the Nuclear Planning Group and its purpose and influence in NATO and Atlantic affairs continues to evolve.

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APPENDIX A

WORKING GROUP III AND NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP MINISTERIAL MEETINGS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-18 Feb 1966</td>
<td>Washington D.C.</td>
<td>Working Group III - United States, Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-29 Apr 1966</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>Working Group III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jul 1966</td>
<td>Paris, FRA</td>
<td>Working Group III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Sep 1966</td>
<td>Rome, ITA</td>
<td>Working Group III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7 Apr 1967</td>
<td>Washington D.C.</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey, Canada, Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-29 Sep 1967</td>
<td>Ankara, TUR</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey, Canada, Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19 Apr 1968</td>
<td>The Hague, NE</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Greece, Canada, Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11 Oct 1968</td>
<td>Bonn, FRG</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Greece, Denmark, Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-30 May 1969</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey, Denmark, Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-12 Nov 1969</td>
<td>Warrington, USA</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey, Denmark, Belgium</td>
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<td>8-9 Jun 1970</td>
<td>Venice, ITA</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey, Canada, Netherlands, Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-30 Oct 1970</td>
<td>Ottawa, CAN</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Greece, Canada, Netherlands, Norway</td>
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<td>25-26 May 1971</td>
<td>Mittenwald, FRG</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Greece, Denmark, Belgium, Norway</td>
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<td>26-27 Oct 1971</td>
<td>Brussels, BE</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Greece, Denmark, Belgium</td>
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<td>18-19 May 1972</td>
<td>Copenhagen, DK</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey Denmark, Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-27 October 1972</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey Denmark, Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Attendees</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-16 May 1973</td>
<td>Ankara, TUR</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey, Canada, Netherlands, Norway</td>
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<td>6-7 Nov 1973</td>
<td>The Hague, NE</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Greece, Canada, Netherlands, Norway</td>
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<td>11-12 June 1974</td>
<td>Bergen, FRG</td>
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<td>10 Dec 1974</td>
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<td>17 June 1975</td>
<td>Monteray, USA</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey, Denmark, Belgium</td>
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<td>21-22 Jan 1976</td>
<td>Hamburg, FRG</td>
<td>NPG Permanent Members, Turkey, Denmark, Belgium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

NUCLEAR PLANNING GROUP ORGANIZATIONAL CHART, 1967-1975
North Atlantic Council (NAC)
(15 nations)

Defense Planning Committee (DPC)
(14 nations 1966-74
13 nations 1974-79)

Military

Nuclear Defense Affairs Committee (NDAC)
(12 nations, US, UK, FRG, Italy, Neth.
Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Turkey,
Greece, Canada, Portugal-until 1974)
(meets once yearly)

Nuclear Planning Group (NPG)
(Permanent Members – US, UK, FRG, Italy
Rotational – Turkey, Greece until 1974, Canada,
Neth., Belgium, Denmark) (Norway 1970-)
(meets twice a year)

Ministers of Defense
(meets twice a year)
(7 Members 1967-70, Alternating between 7 and 8 1970-)

NATO Ambassadors (NPG Deputies)
(meets minimum once a month)
(7 Members 1967-70, Alternating between 7 and 8 1970-)

Staff Group
(meets minimum once a week)
(7 Members 1967-69, all NDAC included 1969-)

NATO Secretary General Chairs all three

Military Committee

Major NATO Commanders

SACEUR

SACLANT

Adapted from Table 5,
Krone, pg. 40.
APPENDIX C

NATO TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPON DELIVERY SYSTEMS, 1975
APPENDIX D

PHOTOGRAPHS
Figure 3: A Nuclear Planning Group Meeting in Washington D.C., 6 April 1967, held at the special table designed specifically for that purpose. NATO Online library Ref. no 5790/3

Figure 4: Defense Planning Committee Meeting of 14 December 1966, Contrast this setting with the intimacy of the NPG meeting above. NATO online library, Ref. no. 5703/2
Figure 5: The Defense Ministers meeting with President Johnson at the White House prior to the first meeting of the Nuclear Planning Group, 6 April 1967. NATO online library, Ref. no. 5790/1

Figure 6: DPC Meeting and ‘hallway discussions,’ Contrast this setting with the one above. NATO online library, Ref no. 5696/6
Figure 7: Soldiers training on the ‘Davy Crocket’ tactical nuclear weapon system mounted on the light, 120mm tripod. (www.guntruck.com/resources)

Figure 8: The ‘Honest John’ missile delivery system, which could be fitted with a tactical nuclear warhead or conventional munitions. (www.nuclearweaponarchive.org)
Figure 9: U.S. nuclear test, codenamed Swordfish, of tactical nuclear weapons use at sea, 11 May 1962.

Figure 10: U.S. nuclear test codenamed Tightrope of the NIKE/Hercules missile airburst, 4 November 1962. This weapon was intended for anti-air use.
Figure 11: The cratering effect of some nuclear weapons. The designed purpose behind many of the ADMs deployed to Europe was to slow the movement of Warsaw Pact forces by creating obstacles. NATO deployed to Europe nuclear weapons of the type pictured in figures 5-9 in the 1960s and 1970s. (www.nuclearweaponarchive.org)
APPENDIX E

CONVENTIONAL FORCE DEPLOYMENTS FOR NATO/WARSAW PACT
Figure 12: Corps Sectors of Military Responsibility in NATO’s Central Region
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