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The Pentagon negotiations March 1948: the launching of the North Atlantic Treaty*

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> Actions of the Soviet government in the field of foreign affairs leave us no alternative other than to assume that the USSR has aggressive intentions. It seems clear that there can be no question of 'deals or arrangements' with the USSR. That method was tried once with Hitler and the lessons of that effort are fresh in our minds.[1]

By the signing on 4 April 1949 of the North Atlantic Treaty by their respective secretaries of state for foreign affairs, twelve Western nations agreed that an armed attack against one or more of them would be considered an armed attack against them all. In the event of such an armed attack every nation that had signed the treaty would '. . . assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic Area'.[2] In practice this mutual assistance pledge meant that the United States promised to come to the assistance of the West European signatories to the treaty in the event of an armed attack by the Soviet Union on one or more of them. Now, thirty-four years later, this agreement is still the formal basis of Western defence.

According to official NATO historiography, the negotiations that led to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty started on 6 July 1948 in Washington.[3] However, for a few years it has been known that negotiations on a security treaty between the United States and West European nations had already been conducted before that date. Those negotiations took place at the end of March 1948 in utmost secrecy between the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada at the Pentagon in Washington. One of the participants in those secret deliberations refers to 'the crucial (and secret) "Pentagon" talks in March 1948 during which the North Atlantic Treaty was effectively conceived'.[4] The purpose of this contribution is to supplement

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1. John D. Hickerson, quoted in Daniel Yergin, *Shattered peace: the origins of the cold war and the national security state* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978) p. 257.

2. See for the complete wording of Article 5, and the rest of the North Atlantic Treaty, *United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 34* (New York: United Nations Organization, 1949), pp. 243–55.

3. 'Preliminary talks opened in Washington on July 6, 1948, between the State Department and the Ambassadors of Canada and of the Western Union Powers'. See *NATO Facts and Figures* (Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1981), p. 21.

4. Lord Gladwyn, review of Escott Reid, *Time of fear and hope* in International Journal, Winter 1977/78, Vol. 33, No. 1, p. 248. Reid, who was himself closely involved with the Pentagon negotiations,

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the official NATO historiography by showing that as early as March 1948 there was a fairly substantial consensus of opinion between representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada on the wording of the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed a year later. First the previous history of the Pentagon negotiations is briefly reviewed, followed by an outline of the plans and ideas of the three delegations before they went to Washington. After that the actual negotiations in Washington are described, with special attention to four crucial issues: namely, the mutual assistance pledge; indirect aggression; the territorial scope of the treaty; and membership. To conclude, we show why, in spite of the fairly substantial consensus of opinion between three of the principal signatories to the treaty and in spite of the sense of urgency which was felt by the three delegations, it took another three months before, on 6 July 1948, the official negotiations started.

Preliminary developments

On 15 December 1947 the Council of Foreign Ministers, the periodical conference of the 'big four' (the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France), broke down, it having proved to be impossible in London to reach agreement on a joint policy for Germany. It was to be the last such conference for the time being.

This rupture between the three Western states on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other had in fact been in the offing ever since the Potsdam Conference of July–August 1945. Earlier in 1947 the declaration of the Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan by the United States and the formation of the Cominform and its own aid programme for the Eastern European states by the Soviet Union had already split Europe into two camps. The fact that no agreement was possible on Germany, the most crucial issue in Europe, proved that the rupture between East and West was complete.

On the same day that the Council of Foreign Ministers broke down, Ernest Bevin, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, proposed to his American colleague George Marshall 'the formation of some form of union, formal or informal in character, in Western Europe backed by the United States and the Dominions'.[5] It was not the first time that someone had put forward such a scheme. During the Second World War the Norwegian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (later Secretary-General of the United Nations) Trygve Lie had pressed for an Atlantic alliance.[6] Winston Churchill, in his famous Fulton speech on 5 March 1946, had already proposed an association of the English-speaking peoples, and the Canadian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Louis St Laurent suggested in his speech to the General Assembly of the UN on 17 September 1947 'an association of democratic and peaceloving states willing to accept more specific international

maintains that the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada 'drafted the general outlines of the treaty in very secret three-power talks at the end of March, 1948'. See Escott Reid, *Time of fear and hope: the making of the North Atlantic Treaty 1947–1949* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 11.

5. Theodore C. Achilles, unpublished draft memoirs, 1975, p. 412G. On 17 December 1947 Bevin expressed himself in similar terms to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Georges Bidault. Foreign Office—General Correspondence, Political (henceforth *FO 371*), File 67674, Z11010/25/17G, Minute of Conversation Bevin–Bidault, 17/12/1947 (Kew: Public Record Office (henceforth PRO). All quotations from documents in the PRO appear by permission of the Controller, HMSO.)

6. See for Lie's ideas Olav Riste, 'The genesis of North Atlantic defence co-operation: Norway's "Atlantic policy" 1940–1945', *NATO Review*, April 1981, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 22–9.

obligations in return for a greater measure of national security'.[7] However, prior to December 1947 these schemes for an alliance between Western nations had not been elaborated. Bevin used the failure of the Council of Foreign Ministers to propagate the idea of such an alliance with renewed vigour.[8]

Marshall's response to Bevin's propositions was cautious. He was very anxious not to endanger the appropriation by Congress of the Marshall funds (the European Recovery Program). But despite this lukewarm American reaction, plans for an alliance now went ahead. On 13 January 1948 Bevin sent a memorandum to Marshall in which he informed him of his intentions to conclude treaties of alliance with the Benelux countries. That would be the first step on the road leading to a Western alliance supported by the United States and the British Dominions.

On 22 January 1948 Bevin disclosed his intentions to the public in a speech in the House of Commons:

> The time has come to think of ways and means of developing our relations with the Benelux countries, to begin talks with these countries in close concord with our French ally. Yesterday our representatives in Brussels, the Hague, and Luxembourg were instructed to propose such talks. I hope treaties will be signed with the Benelux countries making, with our treaty with France, an important nucleus in Western Europe.[9]

The negotiations on Bevin's proposals started on 4 March and on 17 March 1948 the Treaty of Brussels was signed by the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.[10]

In the meantime the British Foreign Office continued pressing the American State Department to conclude an alliance, but the Americans would not commit themselves to anything more than verbal support for the plans. Events in Czechoslovakia then played into the Foreign Office's hands. The communist takeover in Prague on 25 February led to a period of increased tension. Bevin broached anew his ideas about an alliance. On 11 March he submitted three proposals to the State Department and the Canadian Department of External Affairs (DEA):

(i) the United Kingdom–France–Benelux system with United States backing;
(ii) a scheme of Atlantic security, with which the United States would be even more closely concerned;

7. For Churchill's Fulton speech see *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Mar. 9–16, 1946, pp. 7770–2. For the passage from St Laurent's speech see Reid, *Time of fear and hope*, p. 33.

8. It appears from the contacts between the State Department (John Hickerson, director of the Office of European Affairs) and the Canadian Ambassador to Washington, Hume Wrong, that at the end of October 1947 the Americans expected very little of the Council of Foreign Ministers: '. . . he (Hickerson) expected failure'. The plans for an alternative security system had to wait on this failure. See *Escott Reid Papers*, MG 31 E 46 (henceforth Reid Papers) Vol. 6, File 12, Wrong to Reid, 27/10/1947 (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada (henceforth PAC)).

9. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, Jan. 24–31, 1948, p. 9062. The treaty with France to which Bevin refers is the Treaty of Dunkirk of 4 March 1947. Simultaneously with Bevin's memorandum to Marshall, Attlee sent an identical memorandum to Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister. See PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Attlee to King, 14/01/1948.

10. See for the complete wording of the Treaty for Collaboration in Economic, Social and Cultural Matters and for Collective Self-Defence, known as the Treaty of Brussels: *United Nations Treaty Series*, Vol. 19 (New York: United Nations Organization, 1948), pp. 51–63. The core article of the Treaty is Article IV: 'If any of the High Contracting Parties should be the object of an armed attack in Europe, the other High Contracting Parties will, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, afford the Party so attacked *all the military and other aid and assistance in their power*'.

(iii) a Mediterranean security system, which would particularly affect Italy.[11]

Bevin suggested that negotiations on these proposals be started at the soonest possible date.

This time both Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, and Marshall reacted favourably. The latter proposed starting negotiations in Washington as soon as possible. This positive attitude on the part of the American administration was reinforced by a speech made to Congress by President Truman on the day the Treaty of Brussels was signed in which he said:

> I am confident that the United States will, by appropriate means, extend to the free nations the support which the situation requires. I am sure that the determination of the free countries of Europe to protect themselves will be matched by an equal determination on our part to help them to protect themselves.[12]

The various options

Agreement to start negotiations on an alliance did not, however, mean that the three countries concerned were in agreement as regards the form and substance of such an alliance. The Canadian delegation brought the most elaborate ideas to Washington. From as far back as the summer of 1947 the DEA had been working on an alternative security system, alongside the United Nations. That is apparent from, *inter alia*, the speech of St Laurent to the General Assembly and from the text of the draft 'Treaty for Greater National Security', prepared as a result of this speech by Escott Reid, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs.[13]

In consequence of Bevin's proposals of 11 March Reid redrafted this treaty into a new one, intended for Lester B. Pearson (Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs), who was to be the Canadian representative in Washington. From the attached memorandum it is clear that Reid was an advocate of a worldwide treaty. For example, he was in favour of the accession of Finland and all British Dominions to the new treaty. Pearson rejected this view; he maintained that the Soviet Union 'would be more impressed by a quick business-like arrangement between UK–US–Canada cum France and the Western Union . . . than by an amorphous conglomeration which included Finland, Italy, Portugal and Pakistan.[14] Such an 'arrangement', then, was what Pearson wanted to accomplish in Washington.

From the end of 1947 onwards the main aim of the Foreign Office was to tie the security of the United States to the security of Western Europe. The Treaty of Brussels was simply a first step in that direction.[15] The sought-for tie could be accomplished by US accession to the Treaty of Brussels or the creation of a new

11. *Record Group 59*, General Files of the Department of State (henceforth *RG59*), Confidential File 1945–1949, Box C–509, 840.20/3–1148, Bevin to Marshall, 11/03/1948 (Washington, DC: National Archives (henceforth NA)); PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Attlee to King, 10/03/1948.

12. Harry S. Truman, *Years of trial and hope 1946–1952* (New York: Doubleday, 1965) p. 279.

13. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Treaty for Greater National Security to Supplement the Charter of the United Nations, 04/11/1947. The State Department, through John Hickerson, and Under-Secretary of State Gladwyn Jebb on behalf of the Foreign Office reacted with approval to St Laurent's speech. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Wrong to Reid, 27/10/1947, and Ignatieff to Reid, 22/11/1947.

14. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Reid to Pearson, 18/03/1948 plus attached memorandum by Pearson.

15. Lord Gladwyn (Jebb) called the Treaty of Brussels an attempt '. . . to encourage Hercules to come to the help of those who were prepared to help themselves'. Lord Gladwyn, review of Reid, p. 251.

Atlantic alliance. This course of action is reflected both in Bevin's proposals of 11 March and in the instructions to Gladwyn Jebb, the principal British negotiator in Washington. First of all, Jebb had to ascertain the extent of the State Department's willingness to support the Treaty of Brussels—Bevin's proposal (i)—or even to accede to the Treaty. But what the British were really aiming for was a new Atlantic treaty of alliance—Bevin's proposal (ii)—with accession confined to states bordering the Atlantic. This was apparent on the one hand from the omission of Luxembourg and Italy from the list of possible members of the new alliance and on the other hand from Bevin's proposal (iii) for a separate Mediterranean security system.[16]

At the end of 1947 the State Department too was thinking about an alternative security system, as is apparent from certain remarks of John Hickerson and Dean Rusk (Director of the Office of United Nations Affairs) in conversations with Canadian diplomats.[17] However, divisions within the State Department on the issue prevented further elaboration of plans at this stage. These divisions were reflected in the reactions of Hickerson and George Kennan (Director of the Policy Planning Staff in the State Department) to Bevin's proposals of 13 January. Hickerson supported Bevin's ideas and wanted the United States to participate in a new alliance while Kennan rejected US involvement.[18] The same division surfaced again in the different reactions in the State Department to Bevin's 11 March proposals. Rusk's UN section appeared to be in favour of a 'treaty of reciprocal military assistance' based on Article 51 of the UN Charter. Hickerson's European section supported a 'North Atlantic–Mediterranean regional defense arrangement' based on Articles 51 and 52 of the Charter. The National Security Council (NSC) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) both advocated a unilateral guarantee by the United States to the states who were party to the Brussels Treaty.[19]

In spite of this division concerning the most desirable policy on the eve of the negotiations, the American delegation did represent a certain tendency in the State Department. Hickerson and Theodore Achilles (Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs)—both avowed advocates of an Atlantic security treaty—were both members of the American delegation and their position was reinforced by a Policy Planning Staff (PPS) report of 23 March 1948. In this report the PPS opted for an extension of the Treaty of Brussels with some selected European countries and the creation of a new security treaty to which the United States should adhere. This report laid down future American policy. Kennan was at this moment in Japan; in his memoirs he expressed his discontent at this report of his PPS, in which recommendations were made which Kennan himself had always opposed.[20]

16. PRO, *FO 371*/68067, AN 1196/1195/45G, Sargent to Bevin, 15/03/1948. That separate Mediterranean system for Italy is dropped in the instructions to Jebb in favour of a possible Italian accession to the Brussels Treaty. See also PAC, *Hume Wrong Papers*, MG 30 E 101 (henceforth *Wrong Papers*), Vol. 4, File 25, Reid to Wrong, 14/03/1948 and *Brooke Claxton Papers*, MG 32 B 5, Vol. 111, File Washington Meeting March 1948 + Western Europe, Vol. I, Pearson to St Laurent, 22/03/1948.

17. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Wrong to Reid, 27/10/1947 and Ignatieff to Reid, 22/11/1947.

18. NA, *RG 59*, Confidential File 1945–1949, Box C–507, 840.00/1–1948, Memorandum John D. Hickerson, 19/01/1948 and 840.00/1–2048, Memorandum George F. Kennan, 20/01/1948.

19. NA, *RG 59*, Confidential File 1945–1949, Box C–507, 840.00/3–1948, Memorandum George Butler, 19/03/1948. Also PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Pearson to Prime Minister, 27/03/1948 and *Wrong Papers*, Vol. 4, File 25, Wrong to Pearson, 13/03/1948 and Memorandum Hume Wrong, 18/03/1948. Copies of the treaty texts proposed by the UN section and the European section can be found in NA, *RG 59*, Records of Harley A. Notter, Box 10.

20. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 409. For the discussions leading up to PPS 27 see NA, *RG 59*, Policy Planning Staff Files, Box 32 and Records of Harley A. Notter, Box 10.

The Pentagon negotiations

The negotiations between the delegations of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada started on Monday 22 March 1948 and continued until Thursday 1 April. The American delegation was headed by the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Lewis Douglas. Their main spokesman was John Hickerson; other members of the American delegation were Achilles and Alfred Gruenther (Director of the Joint Staff, JCS). The British delegation was headed by the British Ambassador to the United States, Lord Inverchapel, with Gladwyn Jebb as main spokesman. Other participants on the British side were Donald Maclean and Robert Cecil. The Canadian delegation was headed by Lester Pearson during the first four meetings and thereafter by the Canadian Ambassador to the United States, Hume Wrong.

France did not participate in the Washington discussions. On 15 March it seemed likely that the French would be invited to participate,[21] but the invitation was blocked by the American delegation, which declared that the French required consideration as a security risk.[22] The argument advanced by Jebb in his memoirs seems more plausible. He maintains that the State Department did not want French participation because 'the French had not been seeing eye to eye of late with the "Anglo-Saxons", more especially as regards Germany, and that it might therefore be better at least to get some sort of understanding with the British on general policy before tackling them'.[23]

The negotiations themselves consisted of six meetings, which can be divided into two stages. The first stage comprised four meetings between 22 and 25 March. At the first of these the delegations discussed the three possibilities for a Western alliance: extension of the Brussels Treaty with the United States and Canada; a new Atlantic alliance; and a worldwide treaty.[24] At the second meeting the first and third of these propositions were dropped, as was the idea of a guarantee to the Brussels signatories by means of a unilateral US presidential declaration; and the decision to create a new 'Western Mutual Defense Pact' was taken.

It was then decided that for the third meeting each delegation should draft a working paper covering the steps necessary to effect such a pact, and discussions continued at the third meeting on the basis of these three working papers. Subsequently Achilles, Jebb and Pearson drew up a joint draft paper, the purpose of which was 'to recommend a course of action adequate to give effect to the declaration of March 17 by the President of the United States of support for the free nations of Europe'.[25] The first stage of the discussions was concluded with a plenary discussion of the draft paper on 25 March, whereupon it was decided that the respective national capitals should be consulted.

Six days later, on 31 March, the second stage of the negotiations started. The American delegation was alone in proposing extensive alterations to the draft paper agreed on 24 March; Hickerson rewrote the draft twice. The final version, the so-

21. Reid, *Time of fear and hope*, p. 53. Hickerson thought at that moment that it would be difficult to keep France out of the conversations; see PAC, *Wrong Papers*, Vol. 4, File 25, Wrong to Pearson, 15/03/1948.

22. NA, *RG 59*, Confidential File 1945–1949, Box C–509, 840.20/3–3148, Minutes of the First Meeting of the US–UK–Canada Security Conversations, 22/03/1948.

23. Lord Gladwyn, *The memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972) p. 215.

24. By this last possibility was meant a new collective security pact, based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, to which every state could accede.

25. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Draft of Pentagon Paper, 24/03/1948.

called Pentagon Paper, was endorsed by the three delegations on 1 April 1948.[26] The negotiators agreed that the Pentagon Paper was to be considered an American document; Pearson commented that, if the document should leak out, 'it will not appear to other governments as having already been discussed with two other governments. It was felt that this was important in order to meet the sensitiveness of the French and possible others'.[27]

The Pentagon Paper listed eight items which the new treaty must cover. Among these were such non-controversial issues as the preamble, a reference to the UN Charter and the duration of the treaty. Three of these items, however, led to many disagreements both at this and subsequent stages, and it is to these, along with the question of prospective membership of the treaty, that attention will now be given. They are: the mutual assistance pledge; indirect aggression; and the territorial scope of the treaty.

The mutual assistance pledge

The crucial article in the North Atlantic Treaty is Article 5 (as cited in the introduction), the mutual assistance pledge. During all of the negotiations this was the issue which caused most of the differences of opinion, the Pentagon negotiations being no exception. These differences were apparent at the outset in the three working papers discussed at the third meeting. The British were prepared to make the most binding mutual assistance pledge. They proposed 'some wording based on Article IV of the Treaty of Brussels', which amounts to an obligation to give military and all other aid in the event of an armed attack. The Canadian proposal was somewhat more cautious, namely Article 3 of the Rio Inter-American Treaty, which compels every party to the treaty to come to the assistance of a member state under attack in order to help it resist that attack. The American delegation was even more cautious, suggesting the phrase 'to take armed action' in the event of an armed attack on one of the member states, on the condition that every nation may determine for itself whether an attack really constitutes an armed attack.[28] This condition was omitted from the joint proposal in the draft paper. The three delegations agreed on the formula that in the event of an armed attack on one of the parties to the treaty every other party would give 'all the military, economic, and other aid and assistance in its power' to the party so attacked.[29] During the plenary discussion on 25 March Douglas raised some objections. He wanted either a definition in the text of the treaty of 'armed aggression' or that it should be made explicit that every party would determine for itself whether an attack was an armed attack to be covered by the mutual assistance pledge.[30] At the same time he asked whether every nation would be obliged to send troops to the location where the attack took place.

26. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (henceforth *FRUS*) 1948, Vol. III, Western Europe (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1974) pp. 72–5.

27. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Pearson to Prime Minister, 27/03/1948.

28. See for the desired mutual assistance pledge: PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, United Kingdom Draft 23/03/1948; Canadian Draft 23/03/1948; and United States Draft 23/03/1948. The Rio Treaty, from which the Canadian delegation wanted to adopt the mutual assistance pledge, is the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance between the United States and all the Latin American states except for Nicaragua and Ecuador, signed at Rio de Janeiro on 2 September 1947.

29. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Draft of Pentagon Paper, 24/03/1948.

30. NA, *RG 59*, Confidential File 1945–1949, Box C–509, 840.20/3–3148, Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the US–UK–Canada Security Conversations, 25/03/1948 and PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Pearson to Prime Minister, 27/03/1948.

In the ensuing discussions it became evident that the other delegations were reluctant to make definitions, feeling that to do so would play into the hands of a potential aggressor. However, all delegations agreed that each party could determine for itself whether an attack constituted an armed attack to be covered by the mutual assistance pledge. Douglas was also reassured as regards the obligation to send troops, in that every nation is to be free to determine for itself what sort of aid and assistance it will provide. Pearson gave this example:

> If, for example, there were an attack on Belgium, Canada's assistance to Belgium might conceivably take the form of moving troops to Fort Churchill [at the Hudson Bay] in the first instance, and, in the long run, might take the form of concentrating on industrial production.[31]

Nevertheless, Inverchapel reported to London after this plenary meeting that the draft paper 'will on reflexion be considered to be too potent a draught, which, even though swallowed, may have to be watered down very considerably'.[32] His fears proved to be correct: at the fifth meeting Hickerson propounded a fundamental change in the mutual assistance pledge which had been agreed upon. In his new proposal every nation was to determine for itself 'whether there has occurred an armed attack within the meaning of the agreement' and what kind of aid will be provided. Hickerson declared that this change was the result of the suggestions made by Douglas at the last meeting and of 'indirect soundings concerning the probable attitude of Congressional leaders'.[33]

In spite of the reassuring words of Pearson and Jebb to Douglas during the discussion on the draft paper, it appeared that the State Department still wanted an explicit reference to the fact that every nation may determine for itself whether an attack is an armed attack under the terms of the agreement and what kind of aid is to be provided. Jebb commented that this amendment was a 'considerable watering-down of obligations under the proposed Atlantic treaty', but the British and Canadians were compelled, reluctantly, to concur.[34] As they were asking the Americans for help, they were in no position to make demands. In fact, both delegations agreed with the Americans, but would have preferred the treaty to remain vague on these issues. Pearson commented: 'I realize that the determination of whether an armed attack has in fact taken place is the right of the individual signatories but surely that can be left implicit rather than be made explicit'.[35] The State Department, however, insisted, and the text of the mutual assistance pledge in the Pentagon Paper fully reflects the American standpoint:

> Provision that each Party shall regard any action in the area covered by the agreement, which it considers an armed attack, against any other Party, as an

31. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Pearson to Prime Minister, 27/03/1948.

32. PRO, *FO 371*/68067, AN 1326/1195/45G, Inverchapel to Bevin, 25/03/1948.

33. NA, *RG 59*, Confidential File 1945–1949, Box C–509, 840.20/3–3148, Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the US–UK–Canada Security Conversations, 31/03/1948 and PRO, *FO 371*/68068A, AN 1411/1195/45G, Jebb to Bevin, 31/03/1948 and Prime Minister's Office—Correspondence and Papers (henceforth *PREM 8*) File 788, PM/48/38, Minute by Jebb, 06/04/1948.

34. PRO, *FO 371*/68068A, AN 1411/1195/45G, Jebb to Bevin, 31/03/1948.

35. PAC, *Wrong Papers*, Vol. 4, File 25, Pearson to Wrong, 01/04/1948. Bevin held the same view concerning the mutual assistance pledge. He pointed for example to Article IV of the Brussels Treaty and stated that 'the determination whether such an armed attack has in fact taken place—in other words the determination of the *casus foederis*—is ultimately left to the individual judgement of each signatory though this of course is not expressly stated'. See PRO, *PREM 8*/788, PM/48/38, Bevin to Attlee, 06/04/1948.

> armed attack against itself and that each Party accordingly undertakes to assist in meeting the attack in the exercise of the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter.[36]

Indirect aggression

In the draft paper of 24 March 1948 there is a paragraph concerning consultation if one of the parties feels a threat to its political independence or territorial integrity. Behind this wording lies the hidden struggle between the British delegation on one side and the American and Canadian delegations on the other about the incorporation of 'indirect aggression' in the text of the treaty.

From the working papers of 23 March it appears that the State Department wanted provision for consultation in the event of 'indirect aggression', defined as: 'an internal *coup d'état* or political change favourable to an aggressor, or the use of force within the territory of a State against its Government by any persons under direction or instigation of another Government or external agency other than the United Nations'.[37] The resistance against the incorporation of 'indirect aggression' in the text of the treaty came from the British delegation. They had not incorporated this term in their working paper, and in response to the American proposal to come to a definition of the concept and incorporate it in the text of the treaty, Inverchapel suggested that this could be considered to be an interference in the internal affairs of other states. He pointed to the fact that

> we had great difficulty in dissuading the Americans from introducing a long and elaborate provision defining indirect aggression, and it was only on our informing them that the French were violently opposed during the earlier stages of the Brussels negotiations to any such thing on the grounds that it would tend to reconstitute a 'holy alliance' that they abandoned their proposal and were content with the reference to indirect aggression as it now appears.[38]

British resistance led to the above-mentioned general wording of the paragraph on consultation in the draft paper. However, the struggle had not been won by the British delegation: it can be seen from the Pentagon Paper that the State Department, through Hickerson, carried the day. The wording of the relevant paragraph reads: 'Provision for consultation between all the Parties in the event of any Party considering that its territorial integrity or political independence is threatened by armed attack or indirect aggression in any part of the world'.[39] In this wording, consultation is—in principle—always possible.

The territorial scope of the treaty

The draft paper of 24 March mentions a 'Security Pact for the North Atlantic Area'. This last word 'area' was added in order to enlarge the territorial scope and to make the accession of countries like Italy and Switzerland possible, whereas in his original

36. *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. III, p. 74. From this it appears clear that every state now decides for itself whether an armed attack has occurred ('which it considers an armed attack') and that there is no longer any obligation to give armed support ('assist in meeting the attack').

37. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, United States Draft, 23/03/1948. This wording is adopted almost entirely from the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Molotov, who proposed this wording in 1939 during negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom on a Treaty of Mutual Assistance. See PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Pearson to Prime Minister, 27/03/1948. With this wording the activities of the parties linked in the Cominform also fall under the consultation paragraph.

38. PRO, *FO 371*/68067, AN 1315/1195/45G, Inverchapel to Bevin, 24/03/1948.

39. *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. III, p. 74.

proposal Bevin had wanted only states which bordered the Atlantic Ocean to be eligible.[40] A specific territorial delimitation was, however, absent from the draft paper and on 25 March Douglas proposed to specify the terms of eligibility. The British and Canadian delegations objected, again arguing that specific delimitation plays into the hands of a potential aggressor. At this meeting the subject was dropped and Inverchapel reported to London that 'It is the intention, however, not (repeat not) to define the geographical area in the instrument by reference to lines of latitude or to States possessing an Atlantic seaboard'.[41] However, on 31 March, at the fifth meeting, the discussions returned to this subject. Again it was not possible to reach agreement, although all three delegations agreed that Alaska and Greenland should be covered by the mutual assistance pledge. In the Pentagon Paper the issue was finally resolved by the stipulation that the mutual assistance pledge should cover 'the continental territory in Europe and North America of any Party and the islands in the North Atlantic whether sovereign or belonging to any Party. (This would include Spitzbergen and other Norwegian Islands, Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland and Alaska.)'[42]

Owing to the range of the American strategic bombers of that time, the islands between North America and Western Europe (the so-called 'stepping stones') had to be included under the auspices of the treaty. The limitation of the proposed area to be covered appears to have been introduced in order to meet the wishes of the small states, because it was expected that they 'would be hesitant about signing an agreement which would automatically involve them in war if there were trouble between the Great Powers in Asia'.[43] Between the three delegations there exists however the tacit agreement that if a war did start between the great powers in Asia, the agreement would be certain to come into operation, as attacks in the North Atlantic area would inevitably take place. The three delegations also agreed that even if Iceland and Portugal did not become parties to the treaty, the agreement should nevertheless come into operation in the case of an armed attack on one of them, owing to their very important strategic position.

Membership

As we have seen, Bevin's idea of an alliance restricted to states bordering the Atlantic Ocean was dropped. There was rapid consensus on the accession of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Ireland to the 'Security Pact for the North Atlantic Area'; problems, however, arose over the possible accession of Switzerland, Portugal, Spain and Italy.

The British delegation was opposed to an invitation to Switzerland, being convinced that the Swiss were certain to insist on remaining neutral. The British stated that: 'The utmost we can expect from Switzerland is continued participation in ERP and we do not wish to scare her off that'.[44] In the case of Portugal, Pearson pointed to the disadvantage of the accession of this country 'from the ideological point of view but it was felt that this disadvantage was more than neutralized by the

40. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Pearson to Prime Minister, 27/03/1948.
41. PRO, *FO 371*/68067, AN 1315/1195/45G, Inverchapel to Bevin, 24/03/1948.
42. *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. III, p. 74.
43. PAC, *Wrong Papers*, Vol. 4, File 25, Wrong to Pearson, 02/04/1948.
44. PRO, *FO 371*/68067, AN 1315/1195/45G, Bevin to Inverchapel, 25/03/1948.

strategic advantage of Portugal's membership in the Pact'.[45] Switzerland and Portugal were nevertheless incorporated in the list of possible member-states, as was Italy, although the British and Canadian delegations were strictly speaking against Italian participation. Bevin wrote: 'I am doubtful regarding the propriety of including this Mediterranean country in an "Atlantic" system. I should prefer to deal with Italy after the elections and to restrict her participation to the Brussels Treaty'.[46] However, the situation in Italy was regarded as too unstable, owing to the strong position of the Communist Party, to keep it outside the new treaty. The British and Canadian delegations succeeded only in preventing—on account of ideological considerations—an invitation to Spain, of which the Pentagon was in favour.[47]

With regard to Switzerland, the British delegation stuck to its guns and as a result of British pressure it was decided on 31 March not to invite Switzerland. Instead, the Swiss government was to be told informally that the country could accede on its own initiative.

Two further things are worth mentioning. The delegations remained in favour of extending an invitation to Sweden, although no delegation expected that Sweden would accept. It is also noteworthy that Canada alone among the participants proposed to include in the treaty text an accession clause through which 'among others, Western Germany and Western Austria might join'.[48] This proposal was adopted in the Pentagon Paper on the strictest condition that it remain absolutely secret.

The delay

In spite of all the disagreements, on 1 April 1948 the three delegations agreed unanimously on the recommendations in the Pentagon Paper. At the same time they drafted a tight timetable for the implementation of these recommendations, by which the negotiations on the new 'Security Pact for the North Atlantic Area' were to start in May 1948.[49] The 'tightness of the timetable and the need for quick results' were, according to Wrong, the most important reasons for drawing the Pentagon negotiations to a close even though the delegations had not reached agreement on all items.[50] Despite this aim, however, the next round of negotiations did not start until 6 July 1948. We consider the most important reasons for this delay to have been the internal differences of opinion within the State Department and the efforts to unite Congress behind the plans. For instance, Inverchapel mentions on 31 March 1948 that 'there were signs that Hickerson had been encountering resistance to his idea of a Pact during soundings of his colleagues in State Department'.[51] Bevin was aware of these difficulties and on 6 April 1948 wrote to Attlee that 'the

45. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Pearson to Prime Minister, 27/03/1948.

46. PRO, *FO 371*/68067, AN 1315/1195/45G, Bevin to Inverchapel, 25/03/1948. The Italian elections to which Bevin refers were held on 18 April 1948.

47. 'We had some difficulty with the Americans here since they are under the strongest possible pressure from Forrestal and their Service Chiefs to make provision for the admission of Spain here and now in any community of Western Nations'. See PRO, *FO 371*/68067, AN 1315/1195/45G, Inverchapel to Bevin, 24/03/1948.

48. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Canadian Draft 23/03/1948.

49. PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Memorandum Collective Defense Agreement for the North Atlantic Area, 01/06/1948.

50. PAC, *Wrong Papers*, Vol. 4, File 25, Wrong to Pearson, 02/04/1948.

51. PRO, *FO 371*/68068A, AN 1412/1195/45G, Inverchapel to Bevin, 31/03/1948.

chances of eventual agreement by the U.S. Government on proposals for a Treaty are now reckoned as little better than fifty-fifty', and further that 'we shall be lucky if the President and the American senatorial leaders pronounce in favour of a Treaty binding the United States for the first time in history to accept positive obligations in the way of the defence of her natural associates and friends'.[52]

As stated above, the three delegations agreed to regard the Pentagon Paper as a purely American paper. The State Department was to take the initiative in implementing the recommendations. Hickerson stated at the last meeting that in order to accomplish the objectives of the Pentagon Paper, the approval of Under-Secretary of State Robert Lovett, Marshall, the NSC, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, Truman and the Congress (especially Senator Vandenberg) would be required.[53] Hickerson added to this that the British and Canadian delegations 'could by no means assume that the idea of a Pact would be approved by the authorities mentioned'. He warned Jebb and Pearson that 'we must realize that some Presidential declaration might in practice be all that the Americans would have to offer. Much would depend on whether some fresh Soviet action maintained the present tense atmosphere. If complete calm prevailed it would be so much more difficult to sell the idea of a pact to the Senatorial leaders'.[54]

Lovett, who was not present in Washington during the Pentagon negotiations, was doubtful about the desirability of an Atlantic Security Pact. Inverchapel, for instance, reported on 31 March 1948 to London that 'even Lovett himself is not altogether convinced of the necessity for a treaty'.[55] Lovett's doubts were increased by the resistance of Kennan and Charles Bohlen (Counsellor of the State Department) to such an alliance. Kennan had already shown himself to be opposed to an alliance before the start of the Pentagon negotiations and Bohlen maintained the same position. Neither considered an alliance necessary and opted instead for arms deliveries to the West European countries—a military Marshall plan.[56] Their main opponents in the State Department were Hickerson and Achilles. Ever since the first proposals made by Bevin in January they had strongly supported an Atlantic alliance. This struggle was only decided in favour of Hickerson and Achilles in the summer of 1948, when Kennan abandoned his resistance and Bohlen was sent to Paris as adviser of the American delegation at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

There was also resistance within the National Security Council to an alliance such as that proposed in the Pentagon Paper. The Joint Chiefs of Staff maintained that a pact of this kind could provoke the Soviet Union to an attack and were in favour rather of negotiations with the Brussels powers on defence coordination. On this point they had their way and in July 1948 the American services started to participate in the military talks of the Brussels signatories in London. Their

52. PRO, *PREM 8*/788, PM/48/38, Bevin to Attlee, 06/04/1948.

53. NA, *RG 59*, Confidential File 1945–1949, Box C–509, 840.20/3–3148, Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the US–UK–Canada Security Conversations, 01/04/48. Vandenberg had to be approached for that reason owing to his chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

54. PRO, *FO 371*/68068A, AN 1431/1195/45G, Jebb to Bevin, 01/04/1948 and PAC, *Wrong Papers*, Vol. 4, File 25, Wrong to Pearson, 02/04/1948.

55. PRO, *FO 371*/68068A, AN 1412/1195/45G, Inverchapel to Bevin, 31/03/1948.

56. Bohlen maintained: 'the mere presence of United States troops in Germany, pledged to remain there indefinitely, already ensured that the United States would automatically become involved as a belligerent if the Soviets were to make an aggressive thrust towards the West'. See PAC, *Reid Papers*, Vol. 6, File 12, Wrong to Pearson, 08/05/1948.

resistance to an alliance, however, proved ineffective, and on 25 June the NSC decided that: 'the U.S. Government should discuss with the parties to the Brussels Treaty some form of association by the U.S., and if possible Canada, with them along the line recommended in the Senate Resolution'.[57]

The Senate Resolution referred to here is Resolution 239, better known as the Vandenberg Resolution. This resolution transpired during several talks which Lovett held with Vandenberg at the beginning of April 1948. The object of these talks was to get Vandenberg behind the idea of an Atlantic alliance. The core of the resolution, which was adopted on 11 June 1948 in the US Senate by sixty-four votes against four, was the following recommendation: 'Association of the United States, by constitutional process, with such regional and other collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, and as affect its national security'.[58] Although it is generally postulated that this resolution cleared the way for the negotiations on the Atlantic Treaty,[59] it is more correct, in view of the Pentagon negotiations, to state that it merely aimed at lining up Congress behind a State Department policy which had already been decided on in March 1948. In this way the State Department was securing an *ex post facto* legitimation of the results of the Pentagon negotiations.[60]

At the end of June 1948 the situation was as follows: the resistance within the State Department to an Atlantic alliance had almost vanished, the NSC was unanimously in favour and the Vandenberg Resolution meant that the American administration could safely start negotiations on an Atlantic alliance. These negotiations started on 6 July 1948 under the leadership of Lovett, and now with the additional participation of France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Epilogue

The Pentagon negotiations were held in the deepest secrecy. The Western allies who in July 1948 participated in the later negotiations were not informed of their existence, nor of that of the Pentagon Paper.

It is worth mentioning that the Soviet Union, against which the Atlantic alliance was directed, must have been fully informed of the events in Washington in March 1948. A member of the British delegation was the late Donald Maclean, who in 1951, after spying for years for the Soviet Union, defected to Moscow. Therefore it is probably not a coincidence that on 4 April 1948 the Polish newspaper *Zycie Warszavy* published an article on the 'Sojusz pólnokno-atlantycki' (North Atlantic Alliance) containing a description of possible Anglo-American plans.[61] It is hardly surprising that a Foreign Office internal memorandum comments that the Polish article 'did sail pretty near the wind'.[62]

57. *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. III, p. 141.
58. *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 135–6.
59. See, for example Alfred Grosser, *The Western Alliance: European–American relations since 1945* (London, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), p. 85 and Stephen E. Ambrose, *Rise to globalism: American foreign policy 1938–1980* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 148.
60. Reid, *Time of fear and hope*, p. 70.
61. PRO, *FO 371*/68068A, AN 1730/1195/45G, Warsaw Chancery to Foreign Office, 23/04/1948. To speculate a little further: the Polish article mentions twice the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Mr Mayhew. It is interesting to note that at the beginning of 1948 one of Mr Mayhew's assistants was Guy Burgess, another Soviet spy. See Lyn Smith, 'Covert British propaganda: the Information Research Department 1947–1977', *Millennium*, Spring 1980, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 80.
62. PRO, *FO 371*/71504, N 4605/2710/30G, Henderson to Foreign Office, 07/04/1948.