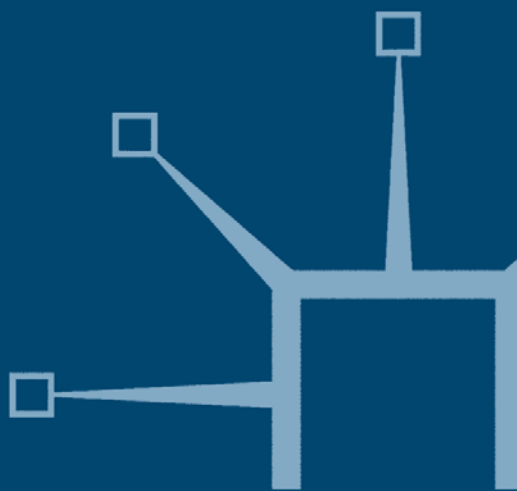


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The United States, Britain and the Transatlantic Crisis

Rising to the Gaullist Challenge, 1963–68

James Ellison



Global Conflict and Security since 1945

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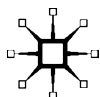
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For Maggie

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Canterbury
January 2007

Abbreviations

In the text

AFCENT	Allied Forces Central Europe, NATO
ANF	Atlantic Nuclear Force
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency, US
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DEA	Department of Economic Affairs, UK
DPC	Defence Planning Committee, NATO
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FO	Foreign Office, UK
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GITA	Going It Alone
MP	Member of Parliament
MLF	Multilateral Force
MoD	Ministry of Defence, UK
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NAFTA	North Atlantic Free Trade Area
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDAC	Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee, NATO
NPG	Nuclear Planning Group, NATO
NPWG	Nuclear Planning Working Group, NATO
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSAM	National Security Action Memorandum
NSC	National Security Council, US
OPD	Defence and Oversea Policy Committee
PM	Prime Minister
POL	Petrol, Oil and Lubricants
PPC	Policy Planning Council, Department of State, US
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe, NATO
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation

SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, NATO
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WEU	Western European Union

In the notes

AAPD	<i>Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik des Bundesrepublik Deutschland</i>
BLPES/HP	British Library of Political and Economic Science, London, Papers of Alistair Hetherington
BP	Bator Papers, LBJL
CAB	Cabinet Papers
CF	Country or Chronological File
Cmnd	Command Papers
DAFR	<i>Documents on American Foreign Relations</i>
DEFE	Ministry of Defence File
DoS	Department of State
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FFP	<i>French Foreign Policy</i> (La Documentation Franc[.,]aise)
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
HCD	<i>House of Commons Debates</i>
HSC	Head of State Correspondence File, LBJL
IntelMemo	Intelligence Memorandum
IntelNote	Intelligence Note
JFKL	John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, US
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
JP	Johnson Papers, LBJL
KP	Kennedy Papers, JFKL
LBJL	Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, US
Memcon	Memorandum of Conversation
Mempres	Memorandum for the President
Memsec	Memorandum for the Secretary of State, US
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NARA	National Archives, US
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSAM	National Security Action Memorandum
NSF	National Security File
OHT	Oral History Transcript, LBJL

OPD	Defence and Oversea Policy Committee
PM	Prime Minister
POF	President's Office File
PREM	Prime Minister's Office File
PUS	Permanent Under-Secretary, Foreign Office
RG	Record Group, National Archives, US
RoC	Record of a Conversation
RoM	Record of a Meeting
SF	Subject File
SoS	Secretary of State
TNA	The National Archives, UK
u/a	Unauthored document
u/d	Undated document
UKDB	UK Delegation to the European Communities, Brussels
UKDN	UK Delegation to NATO
USMEC	US Mission to the European Communities
USMN	US Mission to NATO

Introduction

The greatest threat to Western unity in the Cold War world of the 1960s was not that of a communist enemy but of an ally, France, and in particular its leader General Charles de Gaulle. As president of the Fifth French Republic from 1958 to 1969, de Gaulle pursued a policy which sought to return his country to its former state of *grandeur*. In doing so he was compelled to confront those whom he called *les Anglo-Saxons*, namely the Americans and the British. De Gaulle's unhappy wartime experience of being slighted and insulted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, along with his resentment of the exclusivity of the special Anglo-American relationship, strongly informed his foreign policy in the ensuing decades. From 1958 onwards, as he worked to restore France's front-rank power status, de Gaulle increasingly challenged the largely US built and UK backed international order.¹ The Gaullist challenge took many forms but symbolic of its general trajectory was de Gaulle's intent to liberate France from subordination to military integration in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), hence to the dictates of the Americans and the British whose domination of the organisation he had long criticised. For de Gaulle, NATO was a vehicle by which the United States (US) exercised 'hegemony disguised as Atlantic solidarity', an unendurable state as America was Europe's 'daughter' not its master.² This was a condition which de Gaulle did not believe that the British understood as they had associated themselves, to their detriment, so closely with the US from the wartime period onwards. In conversation with the United Kingdom (UK) ambassador to Paris in 1964, de Gaulle spoke politely but pointedly 'as a "philosopher"' of the path followed by Britain after 1945. The British, in his opinion, 'had not been sufficiently "[them]selves"' and had been 'too prone after the

war to lean on the Americans'.³ This was a course that de Gaulle could not accept for his country, hence his attempt to return France to greatness and remould the Western alliance, defying its leading proponents, the Americans and the British, in the process.

De Gaulle's challenge reached its apogee between 1963 and 1968 and it is upon these years that this book focuses. Such was the extent of his politico-diplomatic assault on American and British foreign policies that many in Washington and London came to regard him as an enemy as much as an ally. Of all the 'outstanding features of the international scene as viewed from the British standpoint' at the beginning of 1965, one senior British diplomat later recalled, it was not 'the change of government in London ... nor the substitution of Brezhnev for Khrushchev in Moscow, nor the crisis in the Congo, not Vietnam, not the uncertainties over Sukarno's health, not the revolution in the Sudan, not even the appalling weakness of sterling' that stood out. What was most troubling was 'the dominance of de Gaulle'.⁴ The nature of the conflict between de Gaulle, the Americans and the British in the 1960s was discernible in outline in September 1958, just three months after his return to the Elysée. In representations to President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, the General proposed an Anglo-American-French directorate to oversee the defence of the free world.⁵ Underlying this démarche was the French leader's absolute conviction that France had a right to equality with the US and UK in the counsels of the West, the more so as his country stood on the brink of becoming the world's fourth nuclear power. The subsequent Anglo-American rebuttal of his proposal – in 1957 Eisenhower and Macmillan had signed exclusive agreements on nuclear defence – was possibly what de Gaulle had hoped for inasmuch as it gave him grounds to reconfigure France's relationship with NATO.⁶ De Gaulle was realistic enough to recognise that full-blown divorce between the United States and Western Europe was neither in the interests of France nor of its European partners since only US military power could provide an adequate Cold War shield, but by the same token he saw no reason why the United States should enjoy excessive influence in other areas of European concern.

The exercise of control over an independent Western Europe was critical to de Gaulle's plans. Since 1950 French governments had seen European integration as the means of restoring French economic and political strength and controlling the development of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). De Gaulle built on these foundations by making the European Economic Community (EEC) the institutional

foundation of his policy of a European Europe free from American influence. In his vision of a new French-led Europe his country's national greatness would be renewed while Franco-German rapprochement would insure against a revival of old enmities. More than this, the Europeans, responding to French guidance, would shatter the bipolarity of the Cold War by negotiating directly with Moscow and the Soviet bloc in order to bring about détente in Europe. De Gaulle planned to use the Community to set up 'a concert of European states' and in so doing prevent 'certain others, in particular Great Britain, from dragging the West into an Atlantic system which would be totally incompatible with a European Europe'.⁷ This was de Gaulle's grand design, an ambitious concept which faced many difficulties chief among which was the fact the Americans and the British had their own versions.⁸

Since the early Cold War, in face of the Soviet threat, US governments had sought to bind the West with Germany safely embraced inside of it, through Atlantic partnership and European unity. This policy was consistently and energetically pursued throughout the 1950s even at the cost of trade discrimination by the embryonic EEC against the US economy, a negative impact which was neutralised by the promise of political stability produced by a supranational Europe within the Western alliance.⁹ During the presidency of John F. Kennedy, this policy reached a highpoint as a group of leading officials within the State Department led by Under Secretary of State George Ball, known as the Europeanists or Theologians, promoted European unity as the solution to the major objectives of US economic, defence and foreign policies in the Atlantic and European arenas. The clearest expression of Kennedy's policy came in his 4 July 1962 Philadelphia speech which outlined his grand design for an Atlantic Community. There would be equality and interdependence between America and a unified Western Europe, he pledged, if Britain became a member of the EEC, if trade discrimination between the Community and the US and the rest of the free world was eradicated, and if Western nuclear defence was given over to a Multilateral Force (MLF). The MLF proposal was partly predicated on giving a maturing West Germany – presently debarred from manufacturing or possessing nuclear weapons – a legitimate if controlled say in NATO nuclear strategy. It also held not-so-hidden agendas of depriving the British and the French of their nuclear independence and, as such, it reflected the views of the Europeanists in the US government who maintained that America's allies should be placed on an equal footing under US leadership.¹⁰ Equality, though, was not what the British, or the French for that matter, wanted.

Harold Macmillan had his own grand design for Western relations. Composed over Christmas and New Year 1960–61, Macmillan's vision was influenced first by his belated realisation that the UK relationship with the US, which had been the mainstay of his foreign policy over the past four years, was less interdependent than he had wished, and secondly by the spectacle of a waning Commonwealth and a waxing EEC. In the late 1950s Britain had attempted to come to terms with the EEC by complementing it with a wider European free trade area but this idea fell foul of de Gaulle in December 1958 as he exercised the first of a hat-trick of vetoes of British European initiatives. The creation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1959 proved to be no substitute to membership of Western Europe's premier economic and political institution and Macmillan's way out was to try to get in.¹¹ As for the Americans, in the late 1940s the Truman administration had forged an alliance with the British that took advantage of the UK's global network of economic and military interests as the Cold War deepened. At the same time, however, Washington sought to attenuate Anglo-American exclusivity by promoting Atlantic partnership and European unity. The special relationship between the US and UK, as well as Britain's close Commonwealth connections, were not 'incompatible with close association in a European framework', the Truman administration averred in 1950. 'In fact, the close US-UK relation and the Commonwealth today find their significance in their ability to contribute to the attaining of other ends, including the strengthening of Western Europe and resistance to Soviet expansion everywhere'.¹² For the remainder of the decade, the Truman and then Eisenhower administrations held back from pressing the UK to join a federal Europe, but the Kennedy administration was much more forceful.¹³ Indeed it was partly in response to JFK's encouraging impulse that Britain made its first EEC application in July 1961. At another level Macmillan saw Community membership as a 'hedge against the unreliability of British influence over the United States'.¹⁴ It was not that Britain's foreign policy foundations shifted with the first application; on the contrary, Macmillan's government remained as committed as ever to the Anglo-American relationship. But what the British did seek was a degree of independence in its dealings with Washington, and this could only be found, Macmillan judged, through enhanced influence in and over Western Europe.¹⁵ EEC entry also held out a cure for many of the difficulties besetting Britain as a result of decolonisation and the Commonwealth's changing nature and, most especially, the imbalance between UK international obligations and economic

resources. What it could not do necessarily was counteract the reduction in status of the Anglo-American relationship inherent in Kennedy's grand design or neutralise the threat that the MLF posed to Britain's independent nuclear deterrent.

The question of national nuclear defence was one that united the British and French – de Gaulle was just as opposed as Macmillan to the MLF – but it was by no means the only point of Anglo-French congruity in the early 1960s. Britain, no less than France, saw the EEC as a means of restoring national power and independence, but the difference was that France was already in it and the UK was not. And this is how de Gaulle wanted it to stay. Apart from the unwelcome prospect of a powerful rival for leadership of the EEC, de Gaulle was convinced that an Atlanticist Britain in the Community would act as a politico-economic vector for the United States and thereby destroy European independence, his own grand design and the economic advantages that France had hitherto secured in the Community.¹⁶ Macmillan attempted to overcome de Gaulle's opposition in various ways, including an offer of Anglo-French nuclear collaboration, but was signally unsuccessful. Then, at the Nassau conference of December 1962, Kennedy compromised his grand design for the sake of the special Anglo-American defence relationship and reached agreement with Macmillan to sell American Polaris nuclear missiles to Britain. The impact on Britain's EEC prospects was immediate and devastating. It is widely accepted that de Gaulle had decided on economic and political grounds to block Britain's EEC application before these developments but they only confirmed his convictions and gave him reason to intervene. On 14 January 1963 de Gaulle vetoed both Kennedy's grand design and Macmillan's EEC application.¹⁷

The challenge to the Americans and the British had begun in earnest and it is with the fall-out from the double *non* that this book begins its analysis. In the months that followed, though London and Washington gradually came to appreciate the scale of the Gaullist threat, the General's actions turned out to be weakening preliminaries to his full-scale assault beginning in mid-1965 and carrying on into late 1967. In June 1965 de Gaulle endeavoured to impose his will on the EEC by boycotting Community institutions for six months, giving rise to fears that the momentum of European integration would be lost. With the EEC crisis settled in January 1966, two months later de Gaulle finally acted upon his frequent criticisms of NATO by announcing the withdrawal of France from the organisation's integrated military command structure and the expulsion of NATO personnel, plant and materials

from French territory. Shortly afterwards, in June 1966, de Gaulle flew to Moscow to begin what he hoped would be a dialogue with the Soviets to bring about a relaxation in East-West tensions. Over the subsequent 18 months de Gaulle stepped up his challenge as he threatened to block NATO's landmark review, the Harmel Exercise, confirmed widely held suspicions of intent by vetoing Britain's second application for EEC membership, and consistently contested the dominance of the dollar in the international monetary system. In all of these areas, de Gaulle was at odds with America, Britain and the majority of the other NATO and EEC states. As this book will show, the threat he posed to Western unity, Atlantic partnership and European integration, when combined with his ambition to foster détente with the Soviet Union, served to endanger the Western alliance at a time of great international uncertainty and at a point when US-European relations were already under strain due to events in Vietnam.¹⁸ Yet by 1968 the Atlantic Alliance had been renewed, European integration was on the brink of significant evolution and de Gaulle's attempts to broker détente with Moscow had foundered. Western unity had emerged intact and de Gaulle's challenge had been contained.

To date, this story has mainly been recounted as a Franco-American struggle with specific emphasis given to the conflict over NATO and taking in the MLF, French withdrawal and the Harmel Exercise.¹⁹ While de Gaulle's challenge was undoubtedly directed primarily at the United States, and while events in NATO were absolutely crucial, it also affected all of France's allies and covered not just Atlantic Alliance politics but also European unity and East-West relations.²⁰ Yet, despite its obvious historical importance and contemporary relevance, the history of how the West responded to and ultimately overcame de Gaulle's challenge remains an open subject for research.²¹ Although much attention has been paid to de Gaulle's policy and diplomacy and to Franco-American relations in specific areas, so far only one book has examined the discrete role of the United States in combating the Gaullist challenge.²² Moreover, despite the fact that de Gaulle clearly directed his challenge at those he described as *les Anglo-Saxons*, there has been no focused study of Britain's response or of Anglo-American collaboration.²³ The impoverished state of research on the post-1963 period is in marked contrast to the sizeable historical literature dealing with de Gaulle and Western relations in the period before 1963.²⁴ Historians have possibly failed to invest the 'galling years' after 1963 with the same importance because of the perception that the French president simply played out established positions and that allies

responded in kind.²⁵ One authority has also suggested that there was a finality about the 'political system' of the Western alliance which 'fell into place' in 1963 and then endured throughout the Cold War.²⁶ Such assumptions require reconsideration. Not only were the years 1963 to 1968 significant in and of themselves but they represent the period when de Gaulle's challenge was at its most intense and potent. Fearing that the foundations of the Western alliance were under threat of French reconstruction, France's allies were forced to develop policies and tactics to thwart de Gaulle's ambition and resolve many issues in Atlantic and European relations which had not been settled by 1963.

Set within this context, this book revolves around two key questions: what roles did the Americans and the British play, separately and in partnership, in repelling the Gaullist challenge; and what impact did Atlantic and European affairs have on the development of the Anglo-American relationship in the 1960s? In answering these questions it examines the convergence between London and Washington as the Americans and the British were joined in a common purpose to contain de Gaulle's challenge, but also the divergence between them over key issues in Alliance politics in the 1960s, not least the questions of the MLF and nuclear sharing, the role of Germany and the pursuit of détente. The book also depicts how Atlantic and European developments, especially Britain's 1967 decisions to apply for EEC membership and withdraw from east of Suez, affected the evolution of the Anglo-American relationship as it passed through its 'years of transition'.²⁷

There are numerous historiographical areas of enquiry to which this book seeks to contribute. Given that it is, first and foremost, a study of American and British foreign policies and diplomacy and, to the extent that they overlapped (which was often) Anglo-American relations, it has particular relevance to the historiography on these subjects. In terms of American foreign relations, although there is an established literature on Kennedy's Atlantic and European policies there has been surprisingly little recent research published on those of his successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ).²⁸ The attempt by Thomas Schwartz to rectify this omission has been both necessary and valuable and his work is doubly important in that he helps revise the view that Vietnam entirely dominated LBJ's foreign policy by confirming the existence of a rich European policy.²⁹ Moreover, Schwartz's foremost judgement that the survival of the Western alliance in the 1960s had much to do with LBJ's statesmanship is complemented by the present study's analysis of US policies, especially towards relations with Britain. If Schwartz is a lone voice in terms of detailed treatment of American

policy, there is no comparable British voice at all. Despite the existence of wide-ranging analyses of Britain's policies towards the Atlantic Alliance and Europe in the early Cold War, the field of enquiry for the 1950s and 1960s has been dominated by studies of Britain's response to the development of European unity.³⁰ This is of course an imperative subject and has produced noteworthy research, but while EEC-focused studies of Britain's European policies are essential in light of the significance of that institution to British interests after 1957, they are by design limited in scope.³¹ This book, however, seeks to meld the EEC with other matters of concern to Britain's foreign policies in Europe, principally the Atlantic Alliance, NATO and détente. In so doing, it also interacts with those works on British foreign policy in the 1960s that concentrate on related developments in the British economy and in adjustments made to British defence policy leading to the decision to withdraw from east of Suez.³²

Alongside its consideration of UK and US policies, this book also contributes to the well-established literature on the historiography of the Anglo-American relationship and develops arguments which are consistent with what has been called the functional approach. This school of thought explains the exclusivity of US-UK relations with reference to mutual 'interest in defeating or containing' common opponents, a view which is borne out by analysis of Atlantic affairs and European integration, issues which have until now largely escaped scrutiny.³³ This is particularly true of the literature on the Johnson-Wilson era. In light of the relatively close Kennedy-Macmillan partnership and the clear evidence of the growing asymmetry between superpower and declining power throughout the 1960s, early analyses depicted a drifting or weakening relationship. Dominated by the Wilson government's refusal to offer a token British force to fight in Vietnam, the chronic problems of sterling (culminating in the November 1967 devaluation), and the acceleration of withdrawals from east of Suez, historians' accounts initially described the shrinking importance of the UK in US eyes.³⁴ The relationship underwent transition as one of its bases, Britain's global strength, passed, a situation unassisted by the lack of rapport between the two leaders and because of the impression that in Johnson's view of the world, 'England figure[d] about as large as North Dakota'.³⁵

A second wave of scholarship has begun to question this picture in a number of ways. For example, while not disputing the undoubted negative effect of Britain's decline on US perceptions of the UK's value as an ally, it is now suggested that the Johnson-Wilson summits were not as barren of achievement as once thought and that there was a

significant degree of understanding in Washington of the difficulties facing Britain, not least in economics and defence.³⁶ For all its diminished state, Britain was still America's leading ally and there was a degree of 'mutual dependence' between the UK and US under Johnson and Wilson.³⁷ Indeed the 1964–68 period can be seen as more of a continuum than a departure from the normal pattern of Anglo-American relations if the preceding Kennedy-Macmillan era is viewed as one in which the concept of 'interdependence' generated tensions between London and Washington that led Macmillan to doubt the reliability of the US as an ally.³⁸ Transcending relations between individual leaders or particular administrations in London and Washington, a tentative historiographical consensus is emerging which suggests that, on the one hand, the importance of the special relationship was reduced *pari passu* with Britain's contraction as a major global power, yet on the other hand a closeness and mutual respect endured which was bolstered by recent shared history and an on-going practice of cooperation.³⁹ This book adds to this consensual view by singling out for consideration Atlantic and European affairs. While this subject has received all but no attention, one authority has suggested that regardless of 'the many setbacks suffered by the Wilson government' in its relations with the US 'Britain was able to exert influence in NATO in the years 1964–70'.⁴⁰ Beyond this view, there has been virtually no analysis of the Johnson administration's policies towards the EEC or towards Britain's second EEC application and, with the exception of one recent doctoral thesis, almost no focus on Britain's détente policies.⁴¹ Accordingly, this book's exploration of American and British responses to de Gaulle's challenge charts historical terrain and deploys an array of primary source material neglected by other historians thus making it an original piece of scholarship. Its attempt to do this by examining matters of defence, détente and integration and the nexus between them adds to its innovation. Moreover, with its focus upon the Johnson administration's UK policies and Britain's move towards Europe against the backdrop of withdrawal from east of Suez, it offers an important case-study of the broader economic, diplomatic and political shifts taking place in the Anglo-American relationship in the 1960s. In doing so, given its analysis of events in the Atlantic Alliance, NATO and the EEC, it also seeks to engage with the historiography of those subjects.⁴² On the question of Anglo-American reactions to de Gaulle's challenge, however, the book is deliberately selective. That challenge took many shapes, and while its most important manifestations are dealt with in the pages that follow, some aspects – the

diplomacy in the Kennedy Round negotiations, the General's campaign for reform of the international monetary system, and France's wider Cold War policies – are only dealt with parenthetically and often through the work of other experts.⁴³ The constraints of time and publishing being what they are, a methodology in which the key features of the Gaullist challenge are graded in importance of historical originality in terms of Anglo-American relations is inescapable. So too is the sidelining of the domestic political and public debates aroused in the UK and US by the subject-matter of this book in order to give full value to the international politico-diplomatic dimension.⁴⁴

To recapitulate, this book begins on 14 January 1963, the day that marked the full launch of de Gaulle's diplomatic assault, and ends in 1968 with his challenge contained, Western unity stabilised and the US-UK relationship in transition. It has at its core two main themes. First, the parts played by the Americans and the British, singly and jointly, in dealing with de Gaulle's challenge both to their interests and to the Western alliance. Second, the effect that Atlantic and European affairs had on the Anglo-American relationship from 1963 to 1968. In exploring them, it develops arguments which have relevance to our understanding of the history of Atlantic-European and Anglo-American relations in the 1960s and beyond. As we will see, the UK and US clearly cooperated to defeat de Gaulle's challenge and stabilise the Western alliance but while they shared this overarching interest, they also differed on significant issues. Nevertheless, when the Anglo-American relationship was called into question for wider reasons on both sides in a way that it had not been before, de Gaulle's divergent diplomacy reinforced that relationship in one important international arena. The stability of the Atlantic Alliance and Europe was vital to the Americans as the war raged on in Vietnam and in achieving it, the British were indispensable and trustworthy allies. In turn, playing the roles that the Americans wanted them to play in Atlantic and European diplomacy gave the British opportunity to begin the renewal of the Anglo-American relationship when they were increasingly unable to meet the demands placed on them by Washington in other regions of the world. As this book explains, in dealing with the problem of de Gaulle, UK and US policy-makers would be given plenty of cause to reflect ruefully on the famous remark of another French General, Napoleon Bonaparte – 'Give me allies to fight against' – but they would also realise that de Gaulle helped as much as he hindered their causes as well as the Western alliance that he challenged.

1

Facing de Gaulle's Challenge, 1963 to 1965

Introduction

On 14 January 1963, in perhaps his most infamous press conference, General de Gaulle delivered his double vetoes of John F. Kennedy's Grand Design for an Atlantic Community and Britain's first application for EEC membership. Linking the Americans and the British in an Anglo-Saxon challenge to Europe, he declined British entry to the EEC on the grounds that it would hasten a 'colossal Atlantic Community under US direction and leadership' which would 'quickly absorb the European Communities'. Establishing political themes that he would pursue throughout the 1960s, de Gaulle made a blatant reference to NATO in declaring that 'alliances do not have absolute virtues' and described a Western Europe free of American influence which would play a role in bringing détente with the East.¹ It was his purpose to realise these ambitions and in doing so, restore lost grandeur to France. On the same day, Kennedy gave his State of the Union address. Ignoring the General's rejection of his Grand Design and the MLF, he told the American people of the nuclear agreement he had recently reached with the British prime minister at Nassau and how it would 'assist the wider task of framing a common nuclear defense for the whole alliance'.² In private, however, Kennedy was embittered by the French president's actions and wrote a message of solace and solidarity to Harold Macmillan which was heavy in its anti-de Gaulle Anglo-Americanism:

You will know without my saying so that we are with you in feeling and in purpose in this time of de Gaulle's effort to test the chances for his dream world. Neither of us must forget for a moment that

reality is what rules and the central reality is that he is wrong and Europe knows he is wrong. ... Moreover I count on you to let me know whenever you think we can strike a blow. And if this is an unmentionable special relationship, so much the better.³

Neither man would ever 'strike a blow'. Before the year was out Macmillan had resigned the premiership due to ill health and Kennedy was dead. Indeed, it would be two years before an appropriate opportunity arose for the Americans and the British to prepare a counter-offensive. While London and Washington had drawn similar lessons from their shared experience in January 1963 and maintained a united interest in seeing de Gaulle's challenge deterred, in the two arenas where combined intent might have worked towards that objective there were barriers to early action. With Britain's EEC application defeated and the British dejected, there was no immediate possibility that a renewed application could become, as the first had been, 'the single most important element in strengthening the Atlantic framework'.⁴ Instead, the Americans focused their attention on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Kennedy Round negotiations to reduce EEC trade discrimination against the US. In the politico-military field, the Kennedy administration placed greater emphasis on the MLF to promote Atlantic convergence but this nuclear blueprint was always explosive politically and the discord that it caused between London and Washington meant that it could not become a rearguard in which UK and US diplomatic forces were combined. De Gaulle had, it seemed, gained the advantage on 14 January 1963 and left the Americans reeling and the British overpowered. It would take the escalation of his challenge in 1965 to enable them to strike back.

This chapter explores these events and provides the essential background to the book's central focus on 1966 and 1967. It begins by examining the response of the UK and the US to the vetoes of January 1963 and then considers how the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and the Conservative and Labour governments viewed the problem of de Gaulle from 1963 to 1965. The chapter goes on to explain how it was only when de Gaulle stepped up his challenge in dramatic fashion from mid-1965 – first, by pitching the EEC into crisis with a boycott of Community institutions for six months from June 1965 and second, by increasing his threats to NATO at his 9 September 1965 press conference – that the UK and US found sufficient common ground on which to resist him. Finally, the chapter puts this anti-de Gaulle diplomacy within the context of the wider Anglo-American rela-

tionship to give it its appropriate place in the ongoing development of US-UK relations in the 1960s.

Fallout

In a telephone conversation on 19 January 1963 Kennedy agreed with Macmillan's view that de Gaulle had 'gone crazy ... Absolutely crazy' and suggested isolating the French president by making 'him appear to be really taking us all back 20 years'.⁵ This objective was immediately rendered more difficult when, on 22 January, de Gaulle signed a Franco-German Treaty of Friendship with Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. Ostensibly, the Germans had signalled their allegiance in the new struggle between de Gaulle, the Americans and the British though time would demonstrate that they were firmly Atlanticist.⁶ In the immediate aftermath in January 1963, however, the Franco-German treaty magnified the impact of de Gaulle's press conference. The reactions in London varied from the exasperation of the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office (FO), Sir Harold Caccia, ('The Cross of Lorraine we can bear without too much burden, the double cross I find less tolerable') to the depressed defeatism of Macmillan ('All our policies at home and abroad are in ruins').⁷ In Washington, an angry President Kennedy told the National Security Council that the United States 'should look now at the possibility that de Gaulle had concluded that he would make a deal with the Russians, break up NATO and push the U.S. out of Europe'.⁸ Once tempers had cooled, however, a consensus emerged between the Americans and the British on how best to prevent France from causing further damage to their interests.

Clearly stunned by de Gaulle's actions, the Kennedy administration asked itself whether its policies towards the Atlantic Alliance and Europe ought to be revised. After a period of introspection, it concluded that the fundamentals of Kennedy's Grand Design remained apposite. There was nothing wrong with the objectives of Atlantic partnership and European unity, it was simply that de Gaulle stood in the way of them and that America's allies would need to be convinced of Washington's commitment to Europe. Kennedy was advised that while the Cuban missile crisis had 'increased our stature', it had additionally 'increased the fear that by our own local action we might quite literally bring an end to Europe. These questions are spoken only by our opponent de Gaulle, but they are felt among our friends'.⁹ Short-run tactics were adapted post-veto to work around the French president as the

administration followed Arthur Schlesinger's counsel: 'recrimination does no good: de Gaulle is a natural force, and there is no point in reviling a tornado'.¹⁰ Washington would rise above the General's assault, avoid a 'public attack on de Gaulle or French policies' and continue its support for the EEC without involving itself in its internal politics. This meant that the US would refrain from '[s]trong expressions' in favour of British EEC entry and instead adopt a 'passive but watchful' role. It would nevertheless seek '[f]ull Common Market [c]ommitment' to the Kennedy Round negotiations. Otherwise, 'the major instrument of United States policy' was the MLF, the means of dealing with 'the crucial nuclear question' and linking European nations and the US. It alone was also 'the most effective means of involving Germany in Atlantic programs' which was vital as the Federal Republic was 'the key to the continental European problem'.¹¹

It was this point – the centrality of the MLF, especially in tying Germany to the Western alliance – that became a problem for Anglo-American relations. To begin with, the shared experience of being on the receiving end of de Gaulle's diplomacy led to a renewal of close US-UK ties, a fact (as well as a hope) that Macmillan expressed to Kennedy the day after the press conference: 'By a curious paradox de Gaulle's attitude is cementing that very Anglo-Saxon alliance which he professes to dislike'.¹² Yet cracks would show quite quickly. On 18 January, Walt W. Rostow, the Chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council (PPC) who would go on to become National Security Adviser to President Johnson, reviewed the state of affairs with Michael Cary, the Acting Cabinet Secretary in the British government.¹³ While Cary raised the question of a possible link between the EEC and EFTA as a solution to Britain's predicament, Rostow stressed that resolution of trade issues would 'evade the real problem which was whether politically we – who had fought two bloody wars over Germany – would abandon the Germans to DeGaulle [sic] politically'.¹⁴ Arguably the major issue emanating from de Gaulle's 14 January declarations was the question of Germany's loyalty to and status within the Atlantic Alliance. The British, no less than the Americans, felt keen concern on this score; after all, counter-balancing German power had been one of the political determinants of the 1961 EEC bid and London was fully cognisant of the danger that the Federal Republic might join with France in seeking independence in the Western alliance.¹⁵ Yet the equally pressing question for Britain after the failure of the Brussels negotiations was what to do about British trade and Britain's place in Europe. And although London recognised Washington's MLF logic in

terms of constraining de Gaulle's ambitions, it did not help that Britain shared France's view of the MLF while at the same time seeking to maintain strong US-UK relations as a key facet of its post-veto policies.

As Macmillan wrote in his diary on 4 February 1963, the 'great question' for Britain in light of de Gaulle's veto was "'What is the alternative?" to the European Community' and the answer he gave was 'If we are honest, we must say that there is none'.¹⁶ EEC entry had become Britain's major foreign policy initiative after 1960 to deal with the threat of the Community's economic and potentially political might and to provide an independent power base for the British in their relations with the US. The first application was, quite simply, the way out of Britain's unique predicament and de Gaulle had blocked it. In the circumstances, without any chance that France's Five EEC partners or Washington would attempt to compel the French president to allow Britain in, London had no choice but to adopt a waiting policy. As the Foreign Office explained to the US embassy in London in early February 1963, the Macmillan government was in complete accord with the Kennedy administration 'in seeking ways to further [the] common "grand design"' and would pursue four objectives: to 'maintain and develop cooperation in all fields with the "friendly Five"'; to 'make [the] Kennedy Round [a] success'; to 'promote [the] multilateral force in NATO' and to 'prevent any defection from EFTA'.¹⁷ In the post-veto environment, however, there was little progress to be made with the Five given de Gaulle's intransigence although the Germans did manage to ensure quarterly UK-Six ministerial meetings in the Western European Union (WEU) on the grounds that they would not be used to renew Britain's application.¹⁸ The British would seek to play their role in the Kennedy Round negotiations partly to ensure that the Commonwealth was not subject to trade discrimination by the EEC and also to achieve liberalisation of trade between the EEC and the rest of the world which would ease eventual British entry to the Community.¹⁹ In relation to both the EEC and the Kennedy Round, Britain would also seek to prevent any centrifugal forces in EFTA, the 'half a loaf' of 1959 which was now all that Britain had to live off.²⁰ In Washington, however, for all Britain's proposed activities towards the EEC, EFTA and the Kennedy Round, the real contribution which the British could make in the campaign to counter de Gaulle's influence was to support the MLF, but that was something they would not do.

Time and again throughout 1963, Kennedy pressed Macmillan for a British commitment to the MLF.²¹ Ahead of his all important visit to

Europe in June 1963 where he would describe himself as a Berliner to vie with de Gaulle for German allegiance, the president asked again for a Cabinet decision in favour of the MLF as a 'major step forward in our joint effort to bind the alliance safely and strongly together, in the face of General de Gaulle's opposite course'.²² Privately, the Americans believed that the British failed to comprehend 'the critical importance of [the MLF in] keeping the Germans on board if de Gaulle is not to win out'.²³ While the Foreign Office saw political benefits in finding some way to respond to Kennedy's request, largely in furthering the Anglo-American alliance, the Ministry of Defence was opposed on military grounds.²⁴ Ultimately, Britain's reluctance to sacrifice its independent nuclear deterrent to the MLF meant that Macmillan did not give Kennedy the answer he wanted when they met in June 1963 and that the issue then remained a running sore in Anglo-American relations which would fester into 1966.²⁵ The one matter upon which Macmillan did want to collaborate wholeheartedly with Kennedy was their attempt to secure a Soviet signature on a Limited Test Ban Treaty which they accomplished on 5 August 1963. Yet even in this, their last achievement, Kennedy and Macmillan faced de Gaulle's antipathy; he refused to sign the treaty amid what Kennedy described as 'mounting evidence of the General's unfriendliness'.²⁶ There would be much more to come.

Troubled allies

At times it must have been hard for policy-makers in London and Washington to conceive of de Gaulle as any kind of ally at all. Leaving aside his European machinations, in January 1964 the French leader established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, a decision that dismayed Washington given Beijing's support for North Vietnam. Later, de Gaulle would attempt to undermine US policy in Vietnam still further by calling for American withdrawal and the possible neutralisation of South Vietnam.²⁷ In March the General snubbed Johnson by not visiting Washington after a trip to Mexico and in April he delivered a speech denouncing 'the two hegemonies', the American and the Soviet, which were trying to divide and rule the world. That same month de Gaulle fixed his sights on NATO when French naval officers were withdrawn from inter-allied naval commands, extending France's piecemeal abandonment of military integration which had begun with the removal of France's Mediterranean fleet in 1959 and its Atlantic fleet in 1960. On 6 June 1964 de Gaulle slighted the 20th anniversary ceremonies of the Normandy landings and in July, the

Chief of the French General Staff, General Charles Ailleret, rejected the American-inspired NATO doctrine of Flexible Response. In November, responding to criticisms of his NATO policies by the new Chancellor of the Federal Republic, Ludwig Erhard, de Gaulle made a speech calling on Germany to join France in creating a European Europe.²⁸ Actually, this was an empty gesture, the French president having already decided that Erhard's government was essentially Atlanticist. In fact his speech was more important for its attack on the MLF, and for hints – which turned out to be expressions of firm intent – that France might yet leave NATO.²⁹ Moreover, within the EEC, the restraint of France's Five partners towards de Gaulle's unilateralism which had seen the crisis of January 1963 surmounted had begun to weaken as the General's attempt to control the Community's development moved it towards another crisis.³⁰

This was the troubled diplomatic environment which confronted Lyndon Johnson as president from 22 November 1963. He later recalled his meeting with de Gaulle at John F. Kennedy's funeral and remarked that in the face of the French leader's constant criticism of his administration, 'I made a rule for myself and for the U.S. government simply to ignore President de Gaulle's attacks on our policies and the doubts he had raised about the value of our pledges'.³¹ Ignoring de Gaulle publicly masked the Johnson administration's great preoccupation with the potential threat he posed to American conceptions of US-European relations. There were 'two constraints' on Johnson's policies towards the Atlantic Alliance and Europe which endured throughout his presidency – the Cold War division of Europe and the obstacle of de Gaulle – and there is now an emerging view that he dealt with both effectively.³² Such a judgment confirms the opinion of his former Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Francis Bator, that Johnson's expertise as 'a master of politics and of power' in the domestic arena made him 'shrewd and wise in coping with the cluster of overlapping, interconnected problems we faced in Europe'.³³ This is not to say that he was 'a foreign policy innovator', rather an adept executor of the policies he adopted from Kennedy and a skilful director of those policies put to him by foreign policy experts in his own administration.³⁴ Two themes did emerge in response to the two constraints that he faced. The first was his attachment to 'bridge-building' with the East, an ambition which he made the focus of a prominent speech on 23 May 1964 and which would go on to become central to his Atlantic-European policies after 1966.³⁵ The second was restraint in the face of de Gaulle. Washington's policies were 'to avoid an open

confrontation over NATO powers and functions with the French' as nothing could be gained 'by exacerbating relations with France' and 'to support the idea of European unity and welcome progress which would strengthen trans-Atlantic ties'.³⁶ Johnson thus sustained the American formula for Atlantic partnership and European integration as the foundation of the Western alliance as his predecessors had done. In doing so, however, Johnson faced a severe policy problem which he believed to threaten his presidency within a year of taking office.

In the post-January 1963 review of US strategy, the two major instruments of policy that Washington pursued towards its unchanged objectives were the Kennedy Round and the MLF. The trade negotiations faced complications in 1964 but it was the MLF which presented the most acute difficulties. It became an issue of crisis proportions in October/November 1964 after de Gaulle had made France's opposition to the plan absolutely clear, believing it to be an attempt by the US government to construct an axis with Germany and thus prevent a Western Europe free of American influence. France's position, combined with continued British prevarication, endangered the Johnson administration's principle aim of tying Germany to the Western alliance and protecting NATO in the face of the French challenge. As the Americans prepared themselves for Wilson's first visit as prime minister to Washington on 7–8 December 1964, Johnson became fully engaged in the formulation of US policy in his inimitable style. Under pressure from the State Department and its luminaries, especially Acheson and Ball, to force Wilson to accept the MLF (they would continue with this line through to 1966), Johnson applied the logic of domestic politics that Bator has described as his strength. Noting the swelling opposition to the MLF at home and abroad, Johnson said that

I worked like hell to get to be President and I don't want to set it off all at once. ... If we're inciting the Russians, if we've set De Gaulle on fire ... if we're forcing the British and not satisfying the Germans, and only getting 30 votes in the Senate – then the hell with it.³⁷

Not for the first time in their relationship as president and prime minister, Johnson would turn to Wilson to assist him in the dispatch of US foreign policy in Europe. On this occasion, what Wilson offered to the MLF impasse was what Johnson wanted, a way out.

In his first major foreign policy speech as prime minister, Wilson proclaimed that 'We are a world power, and a world influence, or we are nothing' and thus dedicated his government to maintaining

Britain's global status.³⁸ As committed as Macmillan had been to the Anglo-American relationship as a British foreign policy priority, it was problematic for Wilson that the Labour election manifesto had proposed the 're-negotiation of the Nassau agreement' that the Conservative prime minister had signed with Kennedy to secure Polaris, the symbol of world power.³⁹ It was yet more troublesome that Nassau obligated Britain to the MLF which Wilson had always found objectionable because of the access it would give Germany to nuclear weaponry and because it would be 'provocative to [the] Soviets', points which he would sustain during the nuclear sharing debate until its eventual resolution in 1966/67.⁴⁰ During the election campaign, Wilson had managed to sidestep the Nassau renegotiation issue but retreating from the MLF required more than swift political footwork. What it entailed, in reality, was a full blown British alternative to the MLF, the Atlantic Nuclear Force (ANF). Although the ANF would have a mixed-manned element, its key difference from the MLF was that it included US and UK Polaris submarines which would remain under national control.⁴¹ It is generally accepted that the ANF was not simply a British ploy to sink the MLF before it was afloat but was an attempt to solve the MLF problem by satisfying the Americans and the Germans, and possibly including the French, while mollifying the Soviets with plans for nuclear non-proliferation.⁴² What it ensured in the short-term was that there was no Anglo-American crisis over the MLF at the December 1964 Washington meetings.

Had it not been for the ANF, the first Johnson-Wilson summit might have damaged the Anglo-American relationship at the beginning of the Labour government's term in office. Instead, it yielded a productive encounter not least because the ANF transferred the responsibility for the ongoing MLF debate to Britain as the Johnson administration agreed that the Wilson government would discuss its proposal with the Germans and other Europeans.⁴³ It also solved an internal problem for the president by giving him 'effective command of a major issue of foreign policy' and thus control over the MLF-oriented State Department, a tactical achievement which would pay dividends in the future when State officials would lobby once more for the MLF as the nuclear sharing issue continued to bother the Atlantic Alliance.⁴⁴ The December meetings were also a success for Wilson who had gone to Washington to convince Johnson of Britain's world responsibilities which comprised of its independent nuclear deterrent, its European role and its presence east of Suez. He also wanted to persuade the president that 'by worldwide collaboration' they would 'preserve, unspoken, the

“special relationship”’.⁴⁵ Specialness was in the eye of the beholder and before the summit Johnson did not seem to see much of it when he ‘strongly expressed ... doubts’ to McGeorge Bundy, his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, ‘about the value of having Harold Wilson’ in Washington.⁴⁶ The value was that Wilson and Britain’s ANF deflected the heat of the MLF question and while it did not guarantee a solution, it promised to remove the president and the US from the firing line. American objectives had not been altered, but the difficulty of achieving them had been potentially eased with the relief palpable as Wilson was ‘astounded and jubilant’ at how the Americans had received his plan.⁴⁷ However, for the Wilson government to benefit over the longer term from this initial boost to its policy of strong ties with Washington, it would have to convert the ANF in to diplomatic profit.

Making real progress with the ANF was a problem for the Wilson government not least because the proposal had always in part been seen as ‘a time-buying exercise’ to enable Britain to circumvent American pressure to say yes to the MLF.⁴⁸ The British did nevertheless try to gain international support for their new initiative in early 1965 but they faced intractable difficulties as the MLF had done. The Germans were critical of the ANF’s association with a non-proliferation agreement which they believed would discriminate against the non-nuclear powers and in January 1965 Erhard told Wilson that no decision could be taken until after the German elections in September. With Soviet opposition also clearly stated, and French resistance, this meant that the ANF went nowhere fast. Britain would remain committed to the ANF but Germany would continue to be dissatisfied and the US government would begin to divide between the steadfast supporters of the MLF and those, such as the Defense Secretary, Robert S. McNamara, who began to explore alternative outcomes in NATO based on a software solution to nuclear sharing involving multilateral consultation, rather than a hardware solution, such as the MLF/ANF, based on nuclear weaponry.⁴⁹ But the fundamental problem persisted, adding all the while to de Gaulle’s growing criticisms of the Atlantic Alliance. And for Britain, the all too apparent lack of progress with the ANF exposed the continuing reduction of its influence in Atlantic-European affairs that had begun with de Gaulle’s vetoes in January 1963.

In spring 1964, the Foreign Office in London started to contemplate diplomatic action to counter the ill effects of de Gaulle on Britain’s foreign policies. Officials were spurred on by Britain’s Ambassador in

Paris, Sir Pierson Dixon, who reported throughout the year of de Gaulle's hostility towards British and Western interests. On 12 March, for example, he warned that it ought to be 'anticipated that France in the coming period will be found to be moving in the opposite direction to that which her Western Allies wish to take' and recommended full cooperation between Britain, the United States and European allies to inhibit de Gaulle from blocking progress in NATO and the Kennedy Round trade negotiations.⁵⁰ On 22 April, he urged London to inform France's EEC partners and the Americans of French duplicity, especially in their policy towards the United States, a recommendation which by early summer became policy.⁵¹ The Foreign Secretary, R. A. Butler, warned the Cabinet on 12 May that 'in dealing with President de Gaulle we have to weather a storm which should gradually subside after he disappears' but in the meantime 'we must prevent him having his way with the Western alliance while avoiding, if at all possible, a head-on clash with him'.⁵² The British government would not give the impression that it was 'conducting a vendetta against de Gaulle or the French' but there was no reason in the Foreign Office's view to be 'mealy-mouthed about saying what we think to our friends about French policy whenever we find it, or its manner, objectionable' and UK ambassadors in the EEC capitals and Washington were instructed accordingly.⁵³

By spring 1965, one year on from Dixon's attempts to invigorate British policy towards de Gaulle, the Atlantic Alliance and Europe, the head of the Foreign Office Planning Staff who would go on to become Wilson's foreign policy private secretary in 1966, Michael Palliser, took up the task. In a bleak assessment which spoke of de Gaulle's successful exploitation of the crisis in leadership of the Atlantic Alliance, Palliser warned of the immediate danger of Britain's 'growing irrelevance' to American and European allies. His conclusions, as he admitted, were unoriginal and reminiscent of those reached in papers on British foreign policy since 1956: 'unless [the British government] can soon evolve a more effective relationship with Western Europe and the United States within the Atlantic framework Britain will cease to be a world power'. The difference in 1965, however, was that this increasingly long-held conviction had been 'obscured by our own economic difficulties and our commitments east of Suez'. In light of the strains on the British exchequer and on maintaining commitments globally, Palliser urged a 'genuine reappraisal' of 'Britain's role within Europe and the Atlantic Alliance' which would be seen as such by the outside world. If the government embraced this idea, what Palliser believed to

be 'the current reluctance of the United States to take the lead in Western affairs could give Britain the opportunity to reassert both her own importance in the Atlantic field and the sort of policies which are at present going by default and being undermined by General de Gaulle'. This did not mean that Britain could "'lead" the Atlantic world' (Palliser added that 'Only the United States can do this'), it meant Britain indicating by its actions 'the kind of Atlantic association the Americans will want to lead'. In essence, Palliser was urging 'a more robust approach to de Gaulle'.⁵⁴

Where Dixon had failed, Palliser succeeded. With the Foreign Office increasingly concerned about Britain's 'growing isolation from Europe', the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, agreed to submit a memorandum to the prime minister on 3 March 1965 which went to Cabinet later that month.⁵⁵ Stewart made the case for an invigorated policy towards 'the right sort of Europe' within an Atlantic framework but Wilson's own priorities did not chime with those of the FO. The prime minister's commitment to the commercial revival of the Commonwealth and his instinctive caution towards the EEC – both made clear on coming to power in October 1964 – led him to reject a new European policy and instead continue with the policy of improving links between the EEC and EFTA.⁵⁶ While the FO had recommended the building up of EFTA as part of a reinvigorated European policy, this course could not singly halt Britain's isolation and de Gaulle's progress. Moreover, the ANF had not provided the British government with any compensating diplomatic prestige. As such, Britain was increasingly marginalised and Wilson knew it because although he did not embrace a new policy towards the EEC in spring 1965, neither did he prevent the Foreign Office from active diplomacy in the Atlantic Alliance, especially alongside the US, when in the second half of 1965 de Gaulle's challenge escalated.

Preparing to confront de Gaulle

In his State of the Union address on 4 January 1965, Johnson upheld the Atlantic Community as his country's continuing objective, avowing to pursue the 'goal of twenty years – a Europe growing in strength, unity, and cooperation with America'.⁵⁷ This was the same goal that de Gaulle had denounced on 14 January 1963 and while his resistance to it had continued in 1964, there was an ominous acceleration in his rhetoric and actions during 1965 which Dean Acheson put down to the General's acceptance of his own mortality: 'As de Gaulle was not likely to have nine

lives, which were given only to cats and Konrad Adenauer, he would see his last period of absolute power coming'.⁵⁸ On 4 February 1965, de Gaulle used another of his press conferences to signal the intensification of his challenge to American dominance in the West. He called for the reform of the international monetary system and an end to the gold exchange standard which, in his view, privileged the Americans and the British as the dollar and the pound were the world's major reserve currencies. This was the beginning of a campaign to undermine Washington's monetary supremacy which would continue throughout the 1960s and cause the Johnson administration frequent concern.⁵⁹ So too would de Gaulle's consistent criticism of American involvement in Vietnam and his attempts to foster Franco-Soviet relations, evidence of which in February and April 1965, alongside his growing detachment from NATO, suggested that his ultimate objective was to break the Cold War alliance system.⁶⁰ Disquiet at such a prospect escalated from May 1965 when the Americans and the British received warnings from government sources in France that the French president was arranging a radical adjustment in his country's relationship with NATO in 1966.

In May 1965 the US embassy in Paris reported increasing signs that de Gaulle planned to withdraw France from military integration in NATO, expel US men and materials from French soil and 'substitute a looser, classical defense arrangement for NATO after 1969'.⁶¹ On 14 May Rusk and Stewart discussed the possibility that 'an urgent problem might arise with President de Gaulle' as the Americans suspected that he may 'as a political demonstration ... ask the United States Government in the near future to remove certain unimportant facilities from France'.⁶² Shortly afterwards, the British Secretary of State for Defence, Denis Healey, was informed by his French counterpart, Pierre Messmer, that after the French elections in December and probably sometime in early spring 1966, France would 'propose [the] abolition of NATO'.⁶³ Healey immediately conveyed this information to Washington and suggested Anglo-American contingency planning, an idea which the Foreign Office in London also recommended.⁶⁴ These early indications of de Gaulle's ambition were remarkably accurate as in spring 1966, he would indeed withdraw France from NATO's integrated military command structures, evict NATO (including US) facilities and personnel from France and propel the Atlantic Alliance into crisis. Given the French president's penchant for smoke and mirrors, however, there was no guarantee that the intelligence gained in May 1965 portended actual French policy. That said, it was enough to lead both the American and British governments to review their policies towards the Atlantic Alliance,

Europe and de Gaulle's France, especially after July 1965 when the French president brought crisis to the EEC.

On 1 July 1965, France began the empty chair crisis, a six month boycott of Community institutions which threw the EEC into a period of intense uncertainty as the French confronted their partners over critical questions concerning the Community's future. This stand-off between Paris, which feared losses for France due to the European Commission's proposals for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and the Five, led by Germany, who had decided to contest de Gaulle's dominance in the Community, especially in light of his wider diplomatic actions in the West, threatened to bring European integration to a halt. In retrospect, as one authority has put it, the empty chair crisis was 'a careful confrontation' which saw both sides work towards compromise and the continuation of the EEC.⁶⁵ Yet at the time, especially to onlookers such as the Americans and the British, de Gaulle's EEC hostilities provided more evidence of his divisiveness. The crisis came just as government agencies across Washington completed a report on Europe and US policy initiated by the White House in May after the news of de Gaulle's NATO intentions became known. It reflected growing frustration in the Johnson administration:

The stature and capacity of General de Gaulle cannot be allowed to blind us to the divisive nature of his views and their baneful effects on our own interests. De Gaulle is not indulging in petty tactics but is dedicated to the national ambitions of a single state. The ultimate purpose of the present French Government is to establish the position of France as clearly superior to its European neighbours and freed of all commitments that limit France's ability to maneuver as De Gaulle wishes...⁶⁶

Despite its exasperation, the US government had no means to intervene in the EEC crisis; in fact, its policy from January 1963 had been to maintain its support for European unity but not involve itself in EEC affairs, concentrating instead on the Kennedy Round negotiations which, due to de Gaulle's EEC diplomacy, would be stalled until 1966. Nevertheless, this did not lead the Americans to a policy of inaction. Prior to the outbreak of the EEC crisis, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had already concluded that

The ingredients for a confrontation of the Five with De Gaulle over the future shape of Europe are already present in the debate on EEC

agricultural and financial regulations. This cannot, of course, be influenced directly by the US, but in a real political sense, these problems are closely related to the coming confrontation with France in the Atlantic alliance. In the absence of some accommodation between France and the other NATO members on defense arrangements, it is difficult to see how European unity can proceed much beyond the economic sphere where it has achieved such notable success. Nor does it seem very likely that the question of Britain's role in an economically united Europe can be settled unless there is also some settlement of its defense role – and that of the US.⁶⁷

As 1965 progressed, Washington judged that de Gaulle's EEC and NATO policies and aims were linked and had to be faced in the same time period and that a solution would involve settling what became known as the France-NATO problem and encouraging the British towards a new European policy.

From June 1965, the Americans began a process of collaboration with the British which would endure after de Gaulle's anticipated move against NATO became a reality in March 1966. On 3 June, Rusk suggested to Britain's Ambassador in Washington, Patrick Dean, that the US and UK governments hold preliminary discussions 'on a discreet basis' about how to deal with the question of France and NATO before the American position became firm.⁶⁸ This coincided with British interest in such information exchange; the day before Rusk suggested US-UK talks, the British embassy in Paris gave its American opposite number details of a review produced in the Foreign Office in London which concluded that the 'proper course ... is to plan ahead for an "orderly confrontation"' with de Gaulle after the December elections, the moment when his move against NATO was expected, 'to carry the "5" along with the UK and the US ... to preserve the essence of the Alliance'.⁶⁹ It was this strategy which the Americans and the British discussed in Washington on 15/16 June. The talks 'disclosed broad agreement' between the two on de Gaulle's intentions and on the need to use the rest of the year to prepare steps in response. They also revealed two points of difference. The British emphasised that their policy towards the upcoming crisis was to do nothing to incite de Gaulle, who 'was not immortal', because there 'was nothing to gain by bringing matters to a boil'.⁷⁰ This was not a view that the State Department shared and it would attempt to put a more robust line into US policy. The meetings also revealed that the Americans did not want to be seen working openly with the British. Private planning was

acceptable, but public alliance would feed de Gaulle's suspicion about an Anglo-Saxon conglomerate at the heart of NATO and insert an unwelcome imbalance into the nascent tripartite US-UK-FRG relationship that the Johnson administration was keen to nurture in the resolution of the France-NATO problem.⁷¹

As Rusk initiated 'discreet' discussions with the British on policy towards France and NATO, he was also aware of German anxieties about American policy towards Europe. In a discussion with Dean Acheson on 3 June, the German Foreign Minister, Gerhard Schröder, agreed with the suggestion that early preparations ahead of action by de Gaulle were necessary and stressed that what was 'missing in Europe' was 'a clear concept of the stand of the US on these matters'. In terms which must have brought a chill to Washington, Schröder added that there 'was a mixture of resignation and hopelessness [in Europe]. De Gaulle's ideas offered no healthy substitute ... The US should throw its full weight into the scales, despite its commitments in other parts of the world'.⁷² Amid the atmosphere of uncertainty largely created by de Gaulle but, as exemplified by Schröder's final comment, also influenced by American involvement in Vietnam, the Johnson administration was very sensitive to any signs of dissatisfaction in Bonn, not least because of the unsolved nuclear sharing question. As the State Department and other Washington agencies developed US policy towards France, NATO and Europe in the second half of 1965, they began to see the possibility of positive outcomes to a crisis initiated by de Gaulle. One was the creation of a new Anglo-American-German relationship at the heart of the Alliance. In July the State Department argued that in meeting the French challenge, the 'existing special relationship with the UK and a deepening and separate special [US] bilateral relationship with Germany' could be surpassed as 'these three great members of the West can work more intimately together and with Italy and other European nations for the common good'. As part of the process, the primary US goal of incorporating 'Germany in the evolving European and Western framework' would be achieved, thus preventing a Cold War horror: 'Finding an equal and adequate place for Germany in the Western structure is of crucial importance if a frustrated Germany is not to turn East in its search for an end to its partition'.⁷³ From the Policy Planning Council, Rostow argued the same point. For him, 'the most promising point of attack [was] the UK': 'If the UK, U.S., and Germany can come together in constructive ventures ... they may be able to overcome current divisive concerns'. Failing that, '...the revived nationalism we have feared since 1945

may ... threaten European and Atlantic cohesion sooner than we thought'. The spectre that Rostow conjured up was the prospect that an unsettled German government would follow one of two courses both equally disagreeable to American objectives: a strengthened and widened Franco-German rapprochement or an independent approach to the Soviets, with both intended to settle the questions which perturbed the Germans above all, a European security arrangement and reunification with the East.⁷⁴

The new US-UK-FRG relationship was also seen as a way to solve problems related to Britain. In the State Department's ambitious opinion, talks between the three powers either late in 1965 or in 1966 could be used to obtain German agreement in principle to participate in long-term financial support for the pound (which was suffering chronic weakness) and to settle the issue of British military expenditure in Germany, a vexed question which involved almost habitual complaints from British governments about short-falls in the support payments made by Bonn to London to cover the foreign exchange costs of British forces stationed in Germany.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the tripartite talks would be used to create an Anglo-American-German position on the France-NATO problem and in doing so, work towards a solution to the ongoing MLF/ANF deadlock.⁷⁶ As the State Department formulated these plans, it also briefed Johnson on the probability of an assault by de Gaulle on NATO and the president thus agreed to the suggestion that Ball should deliver a message from him whilst in Paris as 'a shot across the bow'.⁷⁷ At his meeting with de Gaulle on 31 August, Ball reaffirmed his country's fundamental belief in NATO's form and purpose only to listen to the French president criticise NATO's suitability in the modern era and reject military integration. De Gaulle also questioned the under secretary's defence of NATO nuclear sharing by reminding him of the German invasions France had suffered ('France could not forget the past') and that German involvement in nuclear defence 'would certainly ruin any possible contacts with Soviet Russia or Eastern Europe'.⁷⁸ Nine days after his meeting with Ball, de Gaulle gave the clearest indication to date that the warnings of an impending French move against NATO were, in fact, genuine.

On 9 September 1965, the French president used his second bi-annual press conference of the year to expound in unprecedented terms his long-held criticisms of NATO by stating that 'by 1969 at the latest, the subordination called "integration" that NATO entails and which puts our destiny under foreign authority, will cease as far as we are concerned'.⁷⁹ This statement, although hazy on the specific timing

of action, was nevertheless full of portent for the Atlantic Alliance. Just over a week later, Washington received confirmation from a respected high level source in the Quai d'Orsay that de Gaulle intended to denounce the North Atlantic Treaty in 1968 with effect in 1969 and that he would act in 1966 to extract France from NATO's military command and to expel NATO from France. Moreover, the French would not take part in the Special Committee created by McNamara in NATO to explore consultative solutions to nuclear sharing, a prediction which proved accurate in November 1965 when France did indeed refuse membership.⁸⁰ De Gaulle's September press conference compounded State Department frustration as Washington's policy in preparation for the France-NATO crisis reached maturity. A meeting on 8 October comprising the Departments of Defense and State, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the White House national security advisers saw Bundy stamp Johnson's authority on the tactics for dealing with de Gaulle. The president was 'determined that France should not be allowed to push the US around, but he will want to play the large cards with France himself; particularly he will want to control what is said to the French and when'.⁸¹ This quelling of a more incendiary State Department approach ensured that the US would not give de Gaulle the confrontation he wanted over NATO, but instead await his initiative and leave the responsibility for the crisis on his shoulders. Sustaining the strategy adopted since January 1963 of not 'reviling a tornado', Johnson controlled the State Department as he would do again in steering NATO through its 1966 crisis.⁸² The president, who already had a real war of far greater proportions to fight in Southeast Asia, did not want another of the diplomatic kind in Europe. He thus met de Gaulle's increasing unfriendliness with friendliness. When the new French ambassador to Washington, Charles Lucet, presented his credentials at the White House on 15 December 1965, Johnson said he was convinced that de Gaulle was not anti-American and 'was sure that "when the chips were down" France would be with us as, indeed, had been the case in the past'.⁸³

As US policy developed during 1965, the France-NATO problem, tripartite US-UK-FRG relations, and the nuclear sharing question tended to converge. This nexus was the subject of talks between Rusk and Stewart on 11 October. The British foreign secretary proposed that in the absence of certainty about de Gaulle's plans, the UK and US should compare studies on France and NATO and then confer with the Germans and other allies. Reflecting as it did the tactical approach evolving in Washington, Stewart's suggestion found agreement with

Rusk noting that American and British views were 'close together'.⁸⁴ Views were not so close together, however, on the specific issue of nuclear sharing with both sides simply restating their positions. Rusk reiterated the State Department line that 'at a minimum collective arrangements must leave open the possible inclusion of [nuclear] hardware' and, in reply, Stewart reaffirmed that Britain still supported the ANF.⁸⁵ The only common ground was that between Rusk's recommendation for Anglo-American-German talks and Stewart's statement on 'the desirability of placing the UK and Germany on a basis of equality within NATO'. The foreign secretary's words were formulated for their American audience but they also reflected British acceptance of the need to work with the Germans. Indeed, improved Anglo-German relations were one important component of the policy evolving in London over 1965 which sought to counter the effects of de Gaulle's policies on Britain's conception of Atlantic and European relations and its place in the world.

It was the Foreign Office which attempted to push the British government towards a more active policy in response to de Gaulle in 1965. This was, as we have seen, an endeavour which began with the Paris Embassy's repeated accounts of de Gaulle's plans and prejudices against the Americans and the British from 1964 but it was the escalation of the French president's challenge during the following year which galvanised matters in London. While the EEC's empty chair crisis had been seen as one of the elements of the rising French challenge, it did not lead immediately to a reappraisal of Britain's post-January 1963 policy of postponing the question of EEC membership while seeking closer EEC-EFTA relations. That policy had been embraced by the Labour government which had no enthusiasm for a renewed EEC application, not least because its prime minister 'was not a natural European'.⁸⁶ Thus London met the Community's travails with official remorse, wished it well, and decided neither to intervene nor seek profit from the divisions among the Six.⁸⁷ When the empty chair crisis was matched by growing evidence of de Gaulle's intentions towards the Atlantic Alliance and NATO in the summer of 1965, however, the FO began to reconsider its view of Britain's European policies.

As seen above, Stewart had attempted to urge Wilson towards 'the right sort of Europe', one set within an Atlantic framework, in March 1965 and while the prime minister had agreed to a Foreign Office Cabinet paper on these lines, policy remained unchanged.⁸⁸ Wilson's scepticism had led him to wonder 'what is the right sort of Europe? Unless it was genuinely outward looking and not autarkic it must be

inimical to Atlantic and Commonwealth links'.⁸⁹ As an Atlanticist whose government was committed to the revival of Commonwealth trade, Wilson saw no reason in spring 1965 to reconsider EEC policies. Nevertheless, Stewart and the FO continued to urge the government to recognise that Britain's influence in the Atlantic Alliance and Europe and thus in United States was being jeopardised by exclusion from the EEC, difficulties over nuclear sharing in NATO and de Gaulle's disruption to the stability of both institutions. Stewart attempted to bring the potentialities to the Cabinet's attention again in August 1965 in a memorandum on policy towards Germany. The fear of ever-decreasing British power and impending crisis in the Atlantic Alliance ran throughout its paragraphs. Unless Anglo-American-German cooperation in NATO was promoted to settle the problem of nuclear sharing and resist de Gaulle, Britain's relationship with the US could be weakened by new special American-German relations. Close ties with Germany over the EEC was the only way that Britain could help shape Western Europe's future along lines acceptable to the UK, and given Bonn's authority in Washington and NATO, any British initiative towards détente would need German support. Moreover, Britain's economic weakness and German economic strength made the friendship of Germany vital. These points were significant in and of themselves, but in combination they were formidable and were made all the more so by Stewart's closing point that 'General de Gaulle's nationalistic policies are striking an echo throughout Europe with inevitable consequences in Germany'.⁹⁰ Once again, however, the prime minister was not inclined towards a policy involving a new emphasis on the EEC.

Now committed to reviving Britain's EEC policies, the FO continued to confront the prime minister's resistance. In the closing months of 1965, the question of Britain's relations with the EEC became 'a pressing issue' for the first time since January 1963.⁹¹ Public debate in the UK and conjecture that one of the possible outcomes of the EEC's empty chair crisis would be a sustained French boycott and pressure for Britain 'to take the French seat' largely accounted for this.⁹² Indeed there were those in the Foreign Office who would see France's departure from the EEC as an opportunity for Britain. However, given that London's governing policy towards de Gaulle was to do nothing precipitate, especially in relation to the imminent crisis in NATO, Britain did not seek to profit from the disruption caused by France.⁹³ Stewart nevertheless used de Gaulle's activities to lobby Wilson yet again. On 10 December 1965 he made his most strident case so far by arguing that the EEC crisis rendered a policy of 'inaction ... dangerous'. Stewart

predicted that matters in the Community would be settled on French terms to Britain's disadvantage and thus called for a new policy. His recommendation was that the government issue a declaration of readiness to negotiate for EEC entry which would be mainly designed to thwart the French 'by stiffening the Five and offering an alternative option to Europe'.⁹⁴ Britain would finally take a stand against de Gaulle.

Wilson was not convinced that a declaration of intent to join the EEC was in Britain's interests. He blocked the circulation of Stewart's paper on the grounds that it held within it 'a lot' that he found 'hard to swallow'. In truth, the PM shared many of de Gaulle's objections to the Community: 'Why should we find the acceptance of French conditions "dangerous" since they reject supranationality, play down the Commission and oppose majority voting? These ought to help us and also minimise the dangers of an exclusively European foreign policy and ultimately a European deterrent.' He also questioned whether it was in Britain's economic interest to be inside the Community.⁹⁵ As we shall see, Wilson's EEC inertia would stand in marked contrast to his approach to de Gaulle's threat to NATO when it finally manifested itself in spring 1966. If Wilson was instinctively close to the French leader on the Community, he was at odds with him on NATO. Prior to visiting de Gaulle in April 1965, the prime minister was adamant that 'if de Gaulle wanted us to join his anti-American front, he would be wasting his time. We weren't going to play on that'.⁹⁶

There were those in the US government who, like Stewart and the FO, saw a connection between the EEC and NATO and a British role in both to prevent de Gaulle's predominance. John C. Tuthill, the US Ambassador to the European Communities and one of the State Department's Europeanists, believed that France's diplomacy in the Community could 'only be viewed in the context of de Gaulle's related objectives – in NATO and elsewhere' and described an 'almost unanimous recognition' in Europe 'that the EEC and NATO crises are not only interrelated but simply different aspects of the same crisis'. De Gaulle's aim was 'to break France out from [the] "yoke" of [the] whole system of European and Atlantic cooperation built up since World War II'. To tackle this sedition, the US could do little more than reaffirm its established policies but if 'Britain were to make it plain that it was prepared to "enter Europe" the Five would be greatly encouraged to stand up to de Gaulle and his view of Europe'. Consequently, Tuthill recommended that it should be US policy 'to encourage Wilson and the Labor Government to be prepared to take this position ... some time in early 1966'.⁹⁷

The opportunity for the US government to act upon Tuthill's advice presented itself during Wilson's visit to Washington on 16/18 December 1965 but it did not take it. The president was briefed by the State Department on matters related to Britain, France, the EEC and NATO in preparation for Wilson's arrival. State's hardline towards de Gaulle's expected actions in NATO expressed itself in Ball's comment that while the American and British positions were close on the general problem, 'we may find the British more willing to temporise than we would wish or than would be prudent' when the crisis began.⁹⁸ This prediction proved inaccurate as the British would be enthusiastic defenders of NATO; conversely, the judgement of the Labour government's EEC policy was more accurate. Rusk informed the president that the question of British membership was now an issue of debate with pro-European sentiment rising in Britain although Wilson's position remained 'ambiguous'.⁹⁹ Wilson's disinclination to accept his foreign secretary's advice on the EEC and the fact that he had greater priorities to discuss with Johnson, priorities which the president shared, ensured that the EEC and NATO were not subjects of any prominence during the December meetings. Germany and the ANF were briefly discussed but the agendas were dominated by the Rhodesian problem, Britain's defence review, its commitment to remain east of Suez, and Britain's continuing support for American policy in Vietnam.¹⁰⁰ To a president and an administration whose foreign policy priority was a war in Southeast Asia, having political backing from a British Labour government and a British military presence in the region of conflict were the principal issues in the Anglo-American relationship, especially at the top. Wilson's assurances in both areas ensured that the December meetings went off well; even the question of the MLF/ANF did not cause argument despite the fact that little or no progress had been made in the year since Wilson had brought Britain's new initiative to Washington.¹⁰¹

That Atlantic and European matters were not of such significance, or such mutual interest, as to warrant discussion between the president and the prime minister in December 1965 did not mean, however, that they were not pressing issues for the American and British governments or that they would not, in time, become prominent in the Johnson-Wilson relationship. Indeed, as the two leaders met in Washington, their administrations were ready to respond to de Gaulle in a manner that they had not been since his press conference of January 1963. During 1964 and 1965 they had watched and waited as de Gaulle condemned US predominance, marginalised Britain, dis-

rupted the EEC, threatened NATO and attempted to secure a European voice in East-West détente, unsettling the Germans on all points. His challenge could no longer be dealt with by inaction and thus the Johnson administration and the Wilson government had prepared, separately and in conjunction, to meet it. What they waited for was the chance to begin the strike back and it came in spring 1966, as predicted, when de Gaulle brought crisis to NATO.

2

Turning a Crisis into an Opportunity: Anglo-American Collaboration and French Withdrawal from NATO, January to June 1966

Introduction

De Gaulle was a man for the grand gesture. His 14 January 1963 press conference was one example but another of competing proportions arrived in the Oval Office on 7 March 1966. At 12:50 p.m., President Lyndon Johnson was warned by Francis Bator that he would receive within an hour a letter from the French president taking 'a very hard line'.¹ France, de Gaulle declared, intended to act 'to recover the entire exercise of her sovereignty over her territory, ... to terminate her participation in "integrated" commands and no longer to place her forces at the disposal of NATO'.² It was a notice to quit and it triggered 'the most traumatic moment in NATO's history'.³ Since his return to power in 1958 the General had issued a stream of criticisms of NATO, but now he finally matched words with deeds. He threw the organisation into turmoil just three months before travelling to Moscow for talks with the Soviet leadership to secure a leading voice in European détente. Having challenged one pillar of the West, the EEC, de Gaulle had turned his sights on the other, NATO, and produced a crisis in which, Ludwig Erhard prophesied, 'the world could go apart'.⁴

In retrospect, Erhard's words appear hyperbolic. The world, even the world of NATO, did not 'go apart'. On the contrary, the emerging historiographical consensus is that the crisis, though intense, was short lived and was used as an opportunity by France's allies to settle long-standing problems in the Atlantic Alliance, including those posed by Paris. President Johnson's personal contribution to this outcome has recently won specific praise for its restrained and deft handling of de Gaulle.⁵ The present chapter will second this positive appraisal but at the same time, it will subject US and UK policymaking and coopera-

tion to a level of scrutiny absent from previous accounts.⁶ This more probing approach reveals, *inter alia*, the full extent of Anglo-American collaboration in holding France's fourteen NATO partners together in the face of de Gaulle's assault. The chapter begins by considering the onset of the NATO crisis and then examines how London and Washington cooperated to contain de Gaulle's challenge. It moves on to analyse how the Atlantic and European policies of the Johnson administration and Wilson government evolved in reaction to the crisis to depict a convergence in interests and diplomacy. It then extends its analysis in two areas. The first concerns the way that the Americans and the British worked in concert, while sharing different intentions, to maintain the loyalty of the Federal Republic of Germany to Western institutions and to ally with the Germans to lead NATO through its crisis. The second examines the revitalisation of the question of Britain's future relationship with the EEC and how pressure developed within the British government, and also in the US government, over what one British official described as 'the NATO-E.E.C. complex', a term which implied that Britain could take advantage of the widespread ill-feeling towards de Gaulle in Western Europe by moving towards a new EEC policy.⁷ The chapter closes by explaining how by June 1966, at the NATO ministerial meeting in Brussels, the crisis instigated by de Gaulle was quietened and a *modus vivendi* of sorts was agreed between the fourteen and France.

De Gaulle's challenge to NATO

In January 1966, speculation was rife that a major French NATO initiative was imminent. De Gaulle's re-election as president in December 1965 for a second seven-year term and the likely end to the EEC's empty chair crisis, which came in the Luxembourg compromise between France and its Five partners on 30 January, raised expectations that he would make his much-expected move.⁸ On 28 January, Dean Rusk warned American embassies that the French, seeing an interrelationship between the EEC empty chair crisis and NATO, were probably calculating that the settlement of the former problem on favourable terms (notably the weakening of the German position) would free the way 'to restructure [the] alliance system more to their liking'.⁹ In London, Michael Stewart argued along similar lines in a memorandum to cabinet. Although there was 'considerable uncertainty in any forecast of French policy', Stewart predicted that 'some further step will be taken early in 1966 to start the withdrawal of France from the

integrated command arrangements in NATO'.¹⁰ The Americans and the British were right to see a link between the Luxembourg compromise and de Gaulle's strategy towards NATO. The French president had no wish to be embroiled in two crises in two major foreign policy arenas simultaneously and thus with the EEC settled by its marriage of convenience, he soon began divorce proceedings between France and NATO.¹¹ The decree absolute would come on 7 March but on 21 February it was preceded by the decree nisi in one of the press conferences that de Gaulle revelled in as tools of diplomacy. The French leader reiterated that 'France is going – between now and the final date of her obligations, which is April 4, 1969 – to continue to modify successively the measures currently practiced'; this would include re-establishing 'a normal situation of sovereignty, in which that which is French as regards soil, sky, sea and forces, and any foreign element that would be in France, will in the future be under French command alone. That is to say that it in no way means a rupture, but a necessary adaptation'.¹²

Few American or British observers read into the General's remarks any immediate intent to act in a dramatic fashion.¹³ As recently as January, de Gaulle had assured the US Ambassador to France, 'Chip' Bohlen, that he would 'do nothing precipitate ... nothing suddenly', a bluff which led Bohlen to admit that he had been 'fooled by de Gaulle'.¹⁴ A high level source from the Quai d'Orsay informed the US embassy on 25 February that there had been 'a sudden and abrupt change' in de Gaulle's 'policy and tactics', a report confirmed by Bohlen's 27 February round of golf with the French Foreign Minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, news of which the ambassador conveyed to his British counterpart.¹⁵ Final warning came on 2 March at a luncheon of NATO permanent representatives when the French delegate recounted his recent meeting with de Gaulle and outlined in detail the measures that France would soon take, the details of which were immediately leaked to the press.¹⁶ Although the crisis would not begin until de Gaulle's letter arrived, and nothing was certain until then, the diplomatic hostilities between France and its allies had commenced. Instantly, the centrality of Germany to French actions was clear as several NATO ambassadors 'stressed the grave danger that Germany would either become too weighty in the alliance or would be driven into dangerous isolation' as a result of French withdrawal.¹⁷ This led to expressions of hope that, as in 1954 at the time of the crisis caused by the failure of the European Defence Community, Britain would 'take some initiative to save the alliance from disintegration'.¹⁸ Such appeals

would recur and the British would readily respond in an attempt to turn widespread disfavour with France to their advantage.

On Monday 7 March 1966 the crisis formally began when Johnson was informed that Bohlen had received 'a two and one-half page handwritten letter on NATO from de Gaulle to you'.¹⁹ The General's letter began by attesting that France intended to remain party to the North Atlantic Treaty. However, because of a variety of developments since 1949, it was no longer possible to justify 'the arrangements of a military nature adopted after the conclusion of the alliance, whether in common under the form of multilateral conventions, or whether by special agreement between the French Government and the American Government'. France therefore proposed to 'recover the entire exercise of her sovereignty over her territory', to 'terminate her participation in "integrated" commands and no longer to place her forces at the disposal of NATO'. Thus France stood ready to negotiate practical alternative measures with allied governments, especially the US, and was 'disposed to have understandings with them as to military facilities to be mutually accorded in the case of a conflict in which she would be engaged at their sides and as to the conditions for the cooperation of her forces and theirs in the event of a common action, especially in Germany'.²⁰ Johnson's infamous response to this letter was not to respond, publicly at least, and instead simply to comply. His memoirs offer a much-quoted depiction: 'As I told Bob McNamara, when a man asks you to leave his house, you don't argue, you get your hat and go'.²¹ In practice, it would take time to react to de Gaulle's plan to take 'everything French out of NATO and everything NATO – especially everything American – out of France'.²² For the moment, Johnson contented himself with a three-line reply which, despite its brevity, made two points of weighty importance: first, the crisis initiated by the General was not a bilateral Franco-American affair but a NATO-wide issue and the US intended immediately to consult with the other NATO powers; second, de Gaulle's actions raised 'grave questions regarding the whole relationship between the responsibilities and benefits of the Alliance'.²³

The withdrawal of French forces from NATO's integrated command structure had in fact been taking place in piecemeal fashion since 1959 when France's Mediterranean fleet was returned to national control. Now, as the French government made clear in an aide-mémoire of 10/11 March, it planned to remove air and land units in Germany from the control of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and from Central European Command jurisdiction.²⁴ Instead these forces

would come under sole French control and remain stationed in Germany under legal agreements dating from 1954. In parallel with the extraction of forces from SACEUR, there was to be a general French withdrawal from all NATO commands, including Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, NATO (SHAPE). France's status in NATO bodies like the Military Committee and the Standing Group was to be renegotiated and its participation in NATO's infrastructure programmes left open. As for the organisation's chief political body, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the French insisted on maintaining full membership and made no reference to its relocation from France. This stood in marked contrast to French plans for NATO military institutions located in and around Paris which were given notice to quit by 1 April 1967 at the latest, and there was even suggestion that France might restrict or prohibit NATO overflights over its territory.²⁵ All of these rearrangements had particular significance for Canada and the US, the only NATO powers with large numbers of military personnel based in France. The Canadians, with just two bases, would suffer relatively limited disturbance, but the US would have to relocate extensive military holdings including its European command headquarters at Saint-Germain and Army European communications zone headquarters at Orleans as well as major supply depots in east and west France, nine active and standby airfields dotted across France, and the flagship of the US Navy's Sixth Fleet docked at Villefranche.²⁶ Leaving aside all other considerations, this sheer physical dislocation makes the Johnson administration's initial response to de Gaulle's bombshell appear a model of restraint.

However, restraint should not be confused with inaction. On the contrary, the US government, with the aid of key allies, principally Britain, sought to isolate de Gaulle from the rest of NATO in the hope of cauterising the wound he had inflicted on the organisation. The chief American concern was to prevent the implosion of NATO. Although de Gaulle was adamant that France would remain a party to the North Atlantic Treaty, and thus by extension a member of the Atlantic Alliance, it was no secret that he wished to see that Alliance fundamentally remodelled. Indeed the General's 7 March letter merely confirmed analyses depicting a link between the Luxembourg compromise, a French withdrawal from NATO, de Gaulle's planned visit to Moscow in June 1966 and an attempt by him to reach 'the commanding heights of east-west diplomacy'.²⁷ Despite French rebuttals of such a correlation, to the Americans it seemed as though Kennedy's 1963 prediction that de Gaulle would 'make a deal with the Russians, break up NATO and push the U.S. out of Europe' was coming true.²⁸ While

doubting de Gaulle's ability to achieve his goals, American policy-makers nonetheless feared that even a failed attempt to de-Americanise West European security and pursue an independent European political vision would have a seriously damaging impact on Western unity, impair the cohesion of the Atlantic community and threaten the future of European integration. Of especial concern was the Bonn government's reaction given its existing dissatisfaction over NATO nuclear sharing, its fear of an East-West agreement on reunification arrived at over its head, and its desire to maintain the momentum of Franco-German rapprochement. And in narrow Cold War terms, what would the USSR make of de Gaulle's initiative? The answer to this last question came quickly: mischief.

On 17 March, the Soviet Ambassador to Paris, Valerian Zorin, declared that his country would be happy to consider either a treaty of alliance or a non-aggression pact with France, adding that a 'relaxation of NATO could have as a corollary a relaxation of the Warsaw Pact'. Next, on 29 March, Leonid Brezhnev, Secretary-General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), noting the improvement in Franco-Soviet relations, issued a public call for an international conference on European security.²⁹ This Soviet move came only four days after Germany had issued a Peace Note to those European governments with which it had diplomatic relations, as well as to the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee. The Peace Note will be considered in detail later; for now it is sufficient to register its contribution to heightened expectations in Europe of a breakthrough on détente – expectations that de Gaulle had set out deliberately to fan.³⁰ Notwithstanding the hopes of European public opinion, at governmental level in London and Washington, while there was little optimism that real progress would be made in easing East-West tensions, there was concern that the Soviets would seek to augment whatever divisive impact de Gaulle had on Western relations. And it was also not absolutely impossible that de Gaulle might set France on a neutralist trajectory to win points in Moscow. These were troubling and portentous matters, especially when set against the backdrop of Western European doubts about American actions in Vietnam and American disgruntlement at those doubts. In short, the unity of West might be in danger.

Anticipating the general

As we saw in Chapter 1, the Americans and the British had begun preparations in 1965 for an 'orderly confrontation' with de Gaulle in

NATO.³¹ When crisis came, their reaction was informed by three premises: to accept the General's withdrawal, meet it with public regret and resolve, but not anger, and to engage in diplomatic alchemy to turn the NATO crisis into an opportunity. In this connection the Johnson administration was already arranging its thoughts in advance of de Gaulle's *démarche*. Five days before de Gaulle's letter, the State Department issued instructions to US embassies in Europe that 'in spite of President de Gaulle's views, we should lean over backward to be polite and friendly to France, to President de Gaulle personally, and to all French government officials. Backbiting, recriminations ... cannot be effective, will only irritate President de Gaulle and make him more difficult to deal with, and are likely to cause French public opinion to rally to his side against the US'.³² The Americans would not get into a fight with de Gaulle – to do so would allow him to shift blame for his actions to Washington – but seek instead to convince French opinion of their friendly intentions and to anticipate the happy day when de Gaulle would lose power. Integral to this US strategy was collaboration with NATO allies. The Johnson administration was well aware that de Gaulle's problem was with perceived American hegemony within the West, but the crisis created by him was not to be dealt with as such. It was vital that any French action against the US should be seen as a challenge to the organisation overall, thus upholding the Atlantic Alliance and isolating de Gaulle in a fourteen/one split.³³ The solidarity of the fourteen would be the key to ensuring that NATO withstood whatever de Gaulle threw at it.

The Wilson government, no less than its US counterpart, was also preparing for the NATO crisis. On 28 January 1966 the foreign secretary warned the cabinet that 'we are for the present dealing with a régime under the control of a man whose attitude and intentions are in most cases hostile to our own' and counselled that Britain must try to 'prevent or limit the damage which France can do to the cohesion of the Western world, while keeping a chair for France against the day when she will ... be willing to resume co-operation with us and our allies'.³⁴ On 4 March, after receiving Dean's report on the US position, the Foreign Office prepared four telegrams for despatch to the UK NATO delegation outlining the government's response to any French attempt to undermine the organisation; approved by Wilson, Stewart and Healey on 6 March and despatched that day, the telegrams anticipated de Gaulle's initiative by 24-hours.³⁵ On the question of French NATO withdrawal, the FO, while generally mirroring the US view on the need for restraint, recommended the issuing of a declaration by the

'fourteen loyal allies' reaffirming their faith in the continued validity of NATO; in addition, machinery should be established, possibly through the NATO Planning Group, to handle the consequences of the French move. Pending prior American assent, these procedures would be announced in a specially convened meeting of NATO foreign ministers immediately after de Gaulle made his move.

While the Americans and the British had been in broad agreement since 1965 on the problems France posed to NATO, the Johnson administration had always placed limits on the extent of overt US-UK cooperation lest this pander to de Gaulle's views on Anglo-Saxonism. As George Ball put it at the end of January 1966, the 'extreme sensitivity of the French and their disposition to use for their own ends any appearance of a US/UK initiative' made it 'unwise to push bilateral planning now, at least until French actions seem clearer', though the under secretary of state had no objection to 'invisible discussions'.³⁶ By the start of March, by which time de Gaulle's plans were approaching crystalline clarity, the Departments of Defense and State still balked at the idea of 'a special US-UK approach'.³⁷ On 7 March, however, in the kind of 'invisible discussions' that the administration found acceptable, Patrick Dean was told by Rusk that the president fully accepted the Foreign Office's idea of a declaration by the fourteen. The following day Rusk informed Cleveland, the US NATO representative, 'of our strong desire to let the British take the lead on this question' and that the administration was 'prepared to accept the declaration as it stands'.³⁸ So began a process of *sotto voce* US-UK cooperation that would last for the duration of the crisis. Outwardly, the Johnson administration kept in close touch with all its allies, particularly the Germans, but in private it was the British who were recognised as the primary crisis managers.³⁹ The UK became, in effect, the US proxy. It helped that a number of the European NATO powers looked to the UK to play a prominent role and if, as a result of the crisis, Anglo-European relations were enhanced, then a long-standing US policy aim would be achieved. But the Wilson government, as will be seen, was itself quick to grasp the opportunity afforded by de Gaulle both to underline its status as America's most important ally and to claim the role of leading European power within the Atlantic Alliance.

Between 9 and 18 March, the day on which the NATO declaration was issued, the Americans and the British worked closely in Washington (where Dean and Rusk consulted), at NATO headquarters (where the US and UK representatives met regularly), and in Paris (where the two embassies were in frequent contact).⁴⁰ As a result of

these discussions, the British modified their proposal for a special meeting of the fourteen foreign ministers to consider the declaration – the Americans were concerned about potential ‘soft spots’, namely the Canadians, the Germans, the Norwegians and the Portuguese, all of whom were expected to hold up the declaration by pressing their national positions – and settled instead on agreement by NATO permanent representatives. Published on 18 March, the declaration linked the effectiveness of NATO as ‘an instrument of defence and deterrence’ to the ‘maintenance in peacetime of an integrated and interdependent military organisation, in which, as in no previous alliance in history, the efforts and resources of each are combined for the common security of all’. This organisation was ‘essential and will continue’ and no system of bilateral arrangements could be an effective ‘substitute’. The British, uniquely among the fourteen, issued a simultaneous communiqué underscoring their continued interest in good relations with France. ‘We are glad that General de Gaulle has made clear that he intends to remain the ally of his allies, for we should deeply regret any severance of the ties which bind France to this country and to her other partners in the North Atlantic Area’, the communiqué stated. ‘At the same time those of us believe in the need for an integrated defence organisation, which has already proved its worth as a deterrent to aggression, are determined that it shall continue’.⁴¹

Although the Wilson government had acted with Washington’s blessing in coordinating the NATO response, at least one senior American diplomat was uneasy. From London, the US Ambassador, David Bruce, wrote that ‘I am sorry we have permitted the British to go so far as to create the impression that they are representing us as intermediaries in a situation where our interests are paramount and our leadership is expected’. Bruce feared that existing European ‘assumptions about US preoccupation with the Far East at the expense of Europe’ would be strengthened; in addition he questioned Britain’s qualifications for a leadership role given anti-German statements made during the recent general election campaign. The remedy, the ambassador suggested, was to ‘give ample evidence’ to US allies – through private diplomacy, and ideally through presidential correspondence – ‘that we are actively engaged and deeply concerned’.⁴² Despite being at odds with US crisis strategy, Bruce’s telegram achieved that rarest of results: it prompted a presidential intervention in European affairs. George Ball later recalled that European policy formulation and execution was largely devolved to him by an administration, and a president, preoccupied by the war in Vietnam, but recent research shows

that Johnson was not as removed from the European scene as Ball has suggested.⁴³ The Bruce telegram is a case in point. Most unusually, Johnson annotated the telegram in his own hand, underlining the phrase 'give ample evidence' and adding 'I agree'.⁴⁴ As we shall see, though Anglo-American cooperation would continue, at the end of March 1966 LBJ would personally enter the fray to reaffirm his administration's support for NATO and its commitment to a multilateral solution to the French problem.

Advantage Britain

London and Washington had little difficulty agreeing on an immediate tactical response to de Gaulle – they simply turned the other cheek, in public at any rate. As Bator explained to Johnson on 8 March, de Gaulle had 'no real cards' to play: 'If we play our hand skilfully, we can manage to carry on with NATO without him. In many ways, he is like a lightweight jujitsu artist. All his leverage comes from our over exertion'.⁴⁵ The FO similarly argued that 'our line should be sorrow rather than anger, confidence rather than panic' but it also needed to be made clear 'that if France broke with NATO it was by her own choice, that the damages to French interests had been done by General de Gaulle and that threats should not be used which could rally French opinion behind him'.⁴⁶ When it came to giving a practical as opposed to rhetorical demonstration of continuing NATO solidarity, however, there was potential for US-UK divergence; while the Americans evidently favoured a 'move quickly towards settling arrangements in the nuclear field', the British questioned whether this was in keeping with the idea of playing 'the French decision as long and cool as possible'.⁴⁷ On reflection, however, the British accepted that there was 'certain political and psychological advantage in taking some action of a positive kind' – though not in regard to nuclear sharing – which would show that, 'so far from allowing the Alliance to be fragmented by the French demarche, we intend to make it an even more coherent and integrated entity'.⁴⁸ The Wilson government was aware that the US administration, having refused to rule out a hardware solution to nuclear sharing with the Germans, might use the opening provided by de Gaulle to settle this issue definitively in a manner that the UK would find unacceptable. There was thus much to be said for the British taking the initiative in shaping the agenda of the Atlantic Alliance in the early stages of the NATO crisis in ways that restrained

any tendency on the part of the Americans to compensate for French desertion by paying a nuclear price for enhanced US-FRG relations.

Interestingly, the NATO crisis heightened the debate in Whitehall simmering since 1965 on British policy towards Europe. Oliver Wright, the prime minister's private secretary, represented one side of it and in a series of minutes to the Wilson, he took exception to the FO's call for a new European initiative and to its overtly pro-FRG and anti-French bias.⁴⁹ It was 'lunatic', he argued, 'to base a European policy on sucking up to the Germans and doing down the French' in the pursuit of 'going into Europe at all costs, which seems to be the basis of Foreign Office thinking'. With the Labour government committed to remaining east of Suez, the FO argument that 'friendship with the Germans was a pre-requisite with good relations with the Americans' was 'no longer self-evidently so true' since the UK was 'far more valuable to the Americans than the Germans'. The French, Wright conceded, were 'tiresome allies', but they were also 'the only ones worth having on the Continent of Europe'. French interest in East-West détente and their views on supranationalism in the EEC chimed with those of Britain, while de Gaulle's objections to NATO were 'not really so very important, since the NATO area is no longer a point of crisis or conflict' (and in any event the main stumbling bloc to close Anglo-French relations was not NATO *per se* but French hostility towards the United States). Wright thus called for a European policy based on 'a more sensible relationship with France', one that ruled out EEC entry unless Britain 'failed' in Rhodesia and this led in turn to 'a revulsion from world responsibilities and a switch to Little England attitudes'; he was 'strongly, even passionately in favour of going into the right sort of Europe' but only at 'the right time [and] on the right terms'. At this point, January–February 1966, such views clearly made a greater impression on a prime minister whose heart, when it came to Europe, 'was never in it', than those of the FO wherein the strength of feeling in support of the EEC was matched only by hostility to de Gaulle's France.⁵⁰

In a further minute to Wilson on 11 March, Wright accepted that the French president was 'very unco-operative and his methods could be very dangerous' but he maintained that 'not all of his ideas are wrong'.⁵¹ It was hard to gainsay, for example, the General's view that there would be no war in Europe, that NATO ought to consider ways of promoting détente, including reducing armaments on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and that the Alliance ought to reflect on its present and future role.⁵² If the current crisis led to a full consideration of these important issues, it could yet turn out to be a blessing in disguise,

though Wright warned against a nuclear hardware solution for Germany and alerted the PM to 'the danger of being pressed to over-compensate for the defection of France by exaggerated concern for German feelings'. Wilson was clearly impressed with Wright's line of argument, especially his thinking on the utility of *détente*, and replicated much of it in a note to Stewart on 15 March.⁵³ Deploring de Gaulle's 'nationalism, his anti-American motivation and his rogue elephant tactics', the prime minister nevertheless supported the French president's pursuit of East-West rapprochement and asked, rhetorically, 'What have we armed for if not to parley?' Wilson also raised the possibility of an East-West non-aggression pact and solicited the views of relevant ministers and officials 'as a matter of urgency'. It might be that a re-examination of the UK's basic policies would conclude that the country should 'go on precisely as before', Wilson reflected, 'but I doubt it'. Healey declared impolitic any promotion of NATO force reductions or opposition to a hardware solution but by the time Wilson had received these views, events had moved on.⁵⁴

On 16 March, Patrick Dean reported from Washington on a meeting with Dean Acheson who had been asked by the US government to chair the interagency working party set up to coordinate American policy and tactics during the crisis.⁵⁵ Once again, while there was general Anglo-American agreement on most issues, nuclear sharing retained its divisive potential. In Acheson's view the time was ripe 'to move ahead rapidly with new nuclear sharing arrangements in NATO' and the 'key' to progress 'was in the United Kingdom's hands'. Dean already knew that Rusk and Ball considered the problem of nuclear sharing the foremost of the issues requiring attention and though Acheson had been vague about how matters might develop, the ambassador thought it safe to assume that 'it is something more than the Special Committee' that was being championed by McNamara. Reacting to Dean's report, and concerned that US policy might be hardening, Wright urged the PM to make his views known urgently and preferably via a message to the Johnson 'giving very general "haute politics" outlines of the future of NATO' on the lines of his 15 March note to Stewart. Wilson agreed and sent Johnson a holding message on 21 March emphasising that the 'General's action both poses a threat and offers an opportunity' to renew NATO, work towards *détente* and avoid a hardware solution to nuclear sharing.⁵⁶

Wilson's more considered reflections were sent to Johnson on 29 March; ostensibly the product of consultation with the FO and Washington embassy, they largely reflected Wright's thought process.⁵⁷

The PM's principal theme was that the NATO crisis should be managed in a way that produced dividends for the Alliance but that this required, in the first instance, *a priori* acceptance that not all of de Gaulle's ideas were 'wrong-headed'. De Gaulle's threat to NATO might yet prove to be an opportunity to grasp and resolve a number of vexed issues which, before the General's intervention, had been left to fester. Indeed it was possible that a regenerated, hence a stronger and more cohesive NATO, might emerge phoenix-like from the crisis. Wilson went on to identify a number of areas that required remedial attention. NATO's structure, force levels and financial arrangements all needed 'radical examination'. Germany needed to be encouraged to seek reunification from within the Alliance through a 'gradual process of détente' and thus Bonn must give up on a hardware solution and settle for a consultative role in NATO nuclear policy. Above all, in reforming NATO, Wilson insisted that all the countries concerned 'keep our eyes on the importance of an eventual détente with the East'. This juxtaposing of a progressive approach to détente with negative line on nuclear hardware appears, at first sight, to be a tactical ploy – an attempt to give LBJ something he wanted (détente) in return for jettisoning something Wilson did not want (German access to nuclear weapons). Such a reading is supported by Wilson's hitherto intermittent interest in détente.⁵⁸ However, as the documentary record of the Wilson government's NATO diplomacy makes clear, the British, including the PM, genuinely discerned a linkage between the NATO crisis and détente.

On 1 April, ministers on the Cabinet's Defence and Oversea Policy Committee (OPD) considered a report prompted by the crisis.⁵⁹ Three UK priorities were articulated. The first was the establishment of political stability and military security in Europe as the necessary prerequisite to global agreements on détente and, in Europe itself, to 'a settlement or at any rate an amelioration of East-West tensions'. The second was the exercise of as much influence as possible on US and FRG policy both to obviate 'American-German cooperation at British expense' and insure against the twin dangers of 'independent American action with the Russians detrimental to Europe's interests' and 'independent German action, which might endanger world peace'. The OPD saw the NATO crisis as an 'opportunity to re-fashion the alliance on a more efficient and more economical basis and to go on from there to try to build a firmer foundation for East-West relations in Europe'. But unlike de Gaulle, UK policy-makers believed that détente could be best achieved through a strong NATO and, in present circumstances, through a NATO united in opposition to French wrecking

tactics. Amplifying this OPD conclusion, Cabinet Secretary Burke Trend contended that there would be no headway on détente until Moscow was persuaded of the United States' abiding commitment to European defence and of the politico-military resilience of Western Europe in the teeth of the Gaullist challenge.⁶⁰ The third priority was the achievement of satisfactory economic relationships with the UK's allies, 'including the option for Britain to join the Common Market on acceptable terms'. The NATO crisis thus provided Britain with an opening to strengthen its position in Europe *in toto*; as Michael Palliser put it, de Gaulle's actions had created a 'gap' in Europe which France's EEC partners would possibly like to see 'filled by a stronger British influence in Europe'.⁶¹ The OPD report, in hindsight, provides an accurate gauge of what, ultimately, the Wilson government sought to achieve from the crisis, namely a politically stable (if necessarily France-less) NATO as a springboard from which to launch European détente initiatives and, more generally, an improved status for Britain in Western Europe. It follows that the emphasis on détente in Wilson's letter to Johnson of 29 March 1966 was no mere tactical manoeuvre but reflected a genuine, if still developing, policy departure.

Containment or confrontation? LBJ and crisis management

The prime minister's messages of 21 and 29 March arrived in a Washington that Ambassador Dean described as 'buzzing with ideas' and 'pet schemes both for dealing with the French situation and for overhauling NATO'.⁶² But it was also a Washington riven behind the scenes by arguments between elements in the State Department and the president's White House staff. On 16 March, Bator alerted Johnson to the possibility that the State Department would seize on the crisis to promote an arrangement as close as possible to the MLF blueprint. In Bator's view, nothing would 'increase de Gaulle's support more, throughout Europe (Germany included) than an American initiative to push some kind of a hardware solution down reluctant European throats'.⁶³ Bator's fellow national security adviser, Robert W. Komer, seconded this view. The Bonn government might be reassured by 'a finger on the nuclear trigger, or at least a greater sense of nuclear participation', he wrote to Johnson, but the increase in Germany's status at a time when that of France was declining could only alarm the rest of NATO. A nuclear role for the FRG might even bring about the strategic nightmare of a Franco-Soviet partnership in opposition to Germany. All in all the US was presently in no position to win a 'war'

with de Gaulle; not only was the General right about the reduced prospect of major conflict with the USSR, but he had 'a receptive European audience for his mischievous contention that we might drag NATO into a larger war emerging from Vietnam'. Johnson should therefore resist any State Department 'clarion call' to do battle with de Gaulle and instead seek to 'outwait' the French leader while 'limiting the damage he can do' in the short term. 'Counsels of caution need not be those of cowardice', Komer reminded a president who he doubtless knew was obsessed with not looking weak.⁶⁴

The State Department position was put to Johnson by Rusk on 21 March. The Secretary was clearly angered by the 'implication' in Wilson's communication of the same day that the US and UK should impose a non-hardware nuclear settlement on Bonn and argued that the administration should 'scotch the idea before the Prime Minister strays too far off the reservation'.⁶⁵ Ball, meanwhile, drew up a presidential reply to Wilson suggesting that a nuclear hardware scheme was necessary 'to keep the Germans under control and hold the Alliance together'.⁶⁶ Johnson, though, rejected the Ball draft, partly because he wished to maintain Anglo-American harmony in the midst of the crisis and, as such, did not want to pre-empt Wilson's promised second message, and partly because however much the State Department believed in the necessity of a hardware agreement, this was by no means the majority view in official Washington. In fact it was hardly the view in the Oval Office: though Johnson was a constant proponent of giving the Germans 'a place in the sun', he was also a realist who recognised how potentially damaging the nuclear issue was for Alliance unity.⁶⁷ LBJ thus preferred Bator's emollient, though anodyne, alternative response which stressed the need for the US and the UK 'to work with the Germans in a meaningful partnership' and 'avoid the rankling discrimination that has caused so much grief in the past'.⁶⁸ When Wilson's second message arrived on 29 March, Bator acknowledged that it held 'implications for the full range of our policies *vis-à-vis* Europe and the Soviets' and that, consequently, any reply would require 'some careful work'; it also demanded a 'Presidential decision on how to handle the German nuclear sharing problem'.⁶⁹ The British had clearly succeeded in asserting their views before US policy crystallised and, as a corollary, they gave the White House national security staff additional arguments to deploy in their contest with the State Department.

In late March, at the same time as he gravitated towards his White House staff's thinking on the FRG and nuclear hardware question,

Johnson also accepted the advice of Bator and Komer to avoid a 'a full-blown war with De Gaulle', especially as he was already fighting a real war in Southeast Asia.⁷⁰ On 22 March, the president finally got around to a formal reply to de Gaulle's 7 March letter; a steadfast defence of NATO and a warning about encouraging those who 'draw hope from Western disunity' ended with the gracious offer to 'our old friend an ally' of a place in the NATO fold whenever France 'decides to resume her leading role'.⁷¹ Over the next fortnight Johnson made a number of public statements referring directly or indirectly to the NATO crisis; on 23 March, in the latter category, he extolled the importance of the relationship between peace, the Atlantic community, NATO, reconciliation between the peoples of Western and Eastern Europe, and 'the preservation of human solidarity'; on 4 April, in the former category, he reaffirmed NATO's original purpose ('We decided that if we didn't hang together, we would hang separately'), celebrated the '17 years of peace' it had brought to 'the peoples of the Atlantic community', and spoke of the 'resolve' of the fourteen 'to carry on, to strengthen and perfect our NATO system' while looking forward to 'the day when unity of action in the Western family is fully re-established'.⁷²

Thomas Schwartz has rightly given the president credit for his statesmanship in resisting both 'the temptation to exploit the French action for his own short-term political gains' and State Department pressure for a more assertive response.⁷³ But Johnson's actions also sprang from sharp political calculation; possibly containing his own personal desire to give de Gaulle what he wanted, namely a fight, LBJ followed the Bator-Komer line to contain the crisis, prioritise US-West European political stabilisation, and address constructively the NATO issues that de Gaulle had raised (not least because the British and the other NATO allies demanded as much).⁷⁴ Beyond this, with Johnson deeply resentful of the way in which that 'bitch of a war' in Vietnam was distracting attention from 'the woman I really loved', the Great Society, the last thing he wanted was a European distraction as well, hence his preference for dealing with de Gaulle through containment rather than confrontation.⁷⁵

For US policy-makers, de Gaulle's NATO diplomacy threw up many problematic issues. One, the question of NATO reform, both as an end in itself and as a means of countering de Gaulle's wider challenge to the Atlantic organisation and fostering East-West détente, has already been mentioned. Of the remainder, two assumed priority status in Washington. The first was France's plan to retain troops on FRG territory outside of NATO command which clearly called into question

French allegiance to Article V of the NATO treaty; on 4 April, activating suggestions circulating since mid-1965, the Departments of Defense and State agreed that the US, UK and FRG governments needed to reach a common position on this concern through tripartite discussions.⁷⁶ The second issue was nuclear sharing. On 12 April Rusk sent Johnson a memorandum in which State's hitherto dogmatic adherence to a hardware solution seemed to have been relaxed. At any rate the secretary suggested talks with the British (who had been 'playing a game') and the Germans (who had been 'uncertain as to how far they might safely claim a nuclear role without antagonizing others, especially France') at which, instead of positing a direct choice between hardware or software – between, that is, possession of nuclear weapons and a political stake-holding role in nuclear strategy – the United States should strive to broker a compromise. Importantly, however, any such compromise had not only to win Bonn's approval, but also the sanction of a US Congress wherein fears existed that German involvement in the nuclear business might 'fracture rather than cement the Alliance'. Nor could the USSR be expected to make a positive move in the direction of non-proliferation while the prospect of FRG nuclear access remained a live one.⁷⁷

To judge from Rusk's memorandum, the State Department had been badly stung by Johnson's rejection of their tough response to Wilson's letter of 21 March letter, although McNamara's arguments in favour of his Special Committee in NATO – which was showing some promise of solving the nuclear sharing problem – must also have had an impact.⁷⁸ But so, too, did Walt Rostow, who had recently replaced Bundy as LBJ's special assistant for national security affairs. On 17 April, in his first memorandum to Johnson on 'Atlantic policy', Rostow expressed support for the State Department view that with the political base of NATO now 'under French attack', the UK and FRG needed to be brought 'closer together'.⁷⁹ But he also concurred with Rusk that tripartite talks could be used to resolve the nuclear sharing question, and went on to extol the virtues of a 'lively nuclear consultation club, hardware or no hardware', an astonishing volte-face by a long-time champion of the MLF.⁸⁰ Nor was Rostow finished. NATO reorganisation, he insisted, should be accompanied by as many 'forward-looking measures in the Atlantic as possible', including internal cooperation on finance, technology and political consultation as well as external links with the Soviet bloc through enhanced East-West bridge-building in areas like trade and cultural contacts. Until raised by Harold Wilson in his letter to Johnson of 29 March, the idea of adding détente to

NATO's otherwise defence-dominated remit had been given only periodic and cursory consideration in Washington. Rostow now took it up with *élan*. The immediate problems like moving NATO and the status of French troops in Germany should not get in the way of giving the whole NATO enterprise 'a new forward look' by emphasising its potential in the pursuit of *détente*. But, Rostow entreated, Johnson had to accord this aim 'a priority equal to other matters', not least because it might yet 'determine how positively European parliaments and public opinion react to the new NATO package as a whole'. The same could well be true of the United States, Rostow added; the 'town needs your guidance'.⁸¹

Five days later, on 22 April, Johnson delivered that guidance in signing off National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 345. Echoing Rostow, the action memorandum called for interagency studies of hardware and non-hardware solutions to nuclear planning in NATO and solicited 'forward-looking proposals' that would not only increase NATO cohesion and develop military and non-military co-operation, but also include 'political, diplomatic and economic initiatives addressed to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union'.⁸² Here was precisely the priority status for *détente* that Rostow had argued for, although, in retrospect, he was pushing at an open Oval Office door. As we have seen, *détente* as an end in itself had appealed to Johnson since at least 1964, and by 1966 it had acquired additional value insofar as improved US-Soviet relations stood to have a potentially beneficial impact in Vietnam given Moscow's political and military support for the Hanoi government.⁸³ As for Europe, LBJ saw *détente* as a way for America to lead from the front in bolstering relations with its NATO partners (not least Anglo-American relations). Above all, it would mute de Gaulle's thunder, preventing him from claiming that US domination of NATO was an obstacle to *détente*. How, it might be asked, could the General sustain his view that NATO was an obstacle to *détente* if the president of the United States showed, through word and deed, that the opposite was the case? Hence, from this point onwards, the promotion of European *détente* would be a major theme in US foreign policy, one that Johnson was pleased to be publicly associated with in order to demonstrate that his presidency was not solely defined by Vietnam.⁸⁴

However, no man, still less a president, is an island, and while Johnson could congratulate himself on some effective crisis management at the strategic level – on his quiet yet effective handling of de Gaulle, on the continued cohesion of the fourteen, and on the

prospect of a détente initiative that promised manifold dividends – he relied on others, and in particular his Department of State, to implement strategy at ground level. In this connection, Johnson was rendered apoplectic when the press carried reports on anti-French statements by Acheson, Ball, Bohlen and Rusk which were depicted as ‘merely the opening guns in an all-out offensive by the Johnson Administration against General de Gaulle’. Acheson was portrayed as the anti-French ring-master, while the president was said to be ‘a lone voice advocating a calm and cool approach to de Gaulle’.⁸⁵ On 4 May, in a brusque note to Rusk (and McNamara), LBJ said he would be ‘grateful if you would make it known that I wish the articulation of our position with respect to NATO to be in constructive terms’. He continued:

I see no benefit to ourselves or to our allies in debating the position of the French government. That government has made known its position. Our task is to rebuild NATO outside of France as promptly, economically, and effectively as possible. In so doing, we should develop (as outlined in NSAM 345) proposals which would bind the Atlantic nations closer together; support, as best we can, the long term movement towards unity in Western Europe; and exploit the possibilities for easing East-West tensions. Our discussions of the NATO problem should focus on the positive lines of action in which we are engaged.⁸⁶

De Gaulle had certainly stirred up much bitterness among senior State Department figures angry and annoyed at his disloyalty and the president could be forgiven for privately approving of criticism of France even if, publicly, he was committed to an ameliorative approach.⁸⁷ That this was very far from the case is clear from Johnson’s contribution to a meeting in the White House cabinet room on 19 May at which all of the key figures on NATO crisis management were present: Acheson, Ball, Bator, Bruce, McNamara, Moyers, Rostow and Rusk.⁸⁸ Briefing LBJ in advance of the meeting, Rostow and Bator described Acheson and Ball in particular as ‘a bit shell-shocked’ by the press reports ‘suggesting that they are at odds with you. This was a bad business for us and makes the Europeans, particularly the Germans, uneasy. You giving them a day in court, and then your personal guidance, should permit us to be – and appear to be – a united a purposeful government’.⁸⁹ At the meeting, Johnson’s ‘personal guidance’ turned out to be, as Bruce recorded, ‘a wholly intemperate attack on United

States officials who had assailed President de Gaulle for his NATO stance'. Basing himself on newspapers reports, Johnson gave Ball a particularly rough ride for allegedly 'attacking' de Gaulle but this ignited 'the Acheson powder magazine' and 'set off an explosion' that was only contained by interventions from Rusk and McNamara. For the rest of the meeting, however, 'Acheson visibly seethed in silence' while 'LBJ looked like a human thundercloud'.⁹⁰

The president's difficulties in working with the East Coast Ivy League foreign policy elite are well documented; as Kearns has shown, in 'many ways Johnson felt uneasy with men like this, sensitive to any sign of their contempt or condescension toward this crude Texan. Nevertheless, he relied on them. ... In dealing with foreign policy...he was insecure, fearful, his touch unsure. ... He felt that so long as his policies were approved by those men who represented the established wisdom, he was, at least, insured against appearing foolish or incompetent'.⁹¹ However, two points need to be emphasised: first, when it came to dealing with de Gaulle in the NATO crisis, Johnson was not in the least insecure and dependent on the wisdom of others – he had made his mind up; second, it is true, as Kearns observes, that out of necessity LBJ relied on Acheson and foreign policy experts, but in spring 1966 he felt they had let him down personally and, in the process, shown disrespect for the office of Chief Executive.⁹² But now the president had spoken, there would be only one policy, his policy. To LBJ's great satisfaction, it received the approval of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 25 May. 'In the conduct of our relations with France, our manner should be firm but correct', argued Senator Frank Church, one of the committee's leading lights. 'In no case should we disparage the greatness of France, our oldest ally, or engage in any sort of political guerrilla war against the French Government; such tactics should be reserved for our enemies'.⁹³ Johnson could not have put it better himself.

Notwithstanding the internecine squabble over how best to handle de Gaulle, a broad consensus was emerging within the US government on the correct approach to the major issues radiating out of the NATO crisis. On nuclear sharing, Rostow and Bator reported to Johnson in early May that for the 'first time in the long history of this issue, the entire town is pulling together to prepare the relevant choices for your review and decision', and by the middle of the month they were able to lay before the president a range of worked out positions.⁹⁴ Among the priority objectives of US policy were defending NATO, minimising the 'strain on German politics', and imposing a 'price' on de Gaulle

(while leaving an empty chair round the NATO table pending a French return). De Gaulle's ultimate goal – be it neutralism outside of NATO or a 'diluted' NATO in which France cooperated in all but the integrated commands – remained uncertain and in any event probably hinged on what he 'gets or doesn't get in Moscow, and on the unity of the Fourteen'. In the latter connection, much depended on how sensitively the US handled France; 'discussion and statements of our differences should be precise and temperate', Rostow and Bator argued, and carefully calibrated to place NATO 'in a position where it can live and operate with or without France'. If negotiations with France came to nothing then it would be necessary to make 'clear to the world that de Gaulle alone is responsible for the breakdown – that the monkey is on his back'. Summing up, LBJ's national security team recommended he persist in avoiding a Franco-American confrontation, insulate NATO and the FRG from corrosive French actions, and generally seek to marginalise de Gaulle and his influence.⁹⁵ After the air-clearing meeting of 19 May, this was precisely the line that Johnson and his administration followed.

NSAM-345, in advancing the general proposition that the NATO fourteen needed to hold together to ward off de Gaulle's attack, argued for specific action on NATO reform, most notably in the realm of nuclear sharing and 'forward looking' measures. In a joint memorandum on 28 May, McNamara and Rusk mapped out a plan for progress on the nuclear issue, beginning with tripartite US-UK-FRG talks at foreign and defence minister level and proceeding to a wider allied agreement to a consultative arrangement in NATO.⁹⁶ On 9 June, the Acheson Group presented Johnson with a conservative memorandum which simply underlined the continued importance of current policies for embedding Germany in the Atlantic Alliance and supporting the European Community 'as a vital constructive force in Europe'.⁹⁷ Moreover, Acheson was negative about what could be achieved in solving the German problem or in relaxing tensions with the East; the best he could come up with was a vague suggestion for improving the 'environment' for discussions inside NATO on Germany and outside NATO on East-West relations. Bator, for one, wondered whether mere 'atmosphere improvement' would be satisfactory to the Europeans.⁹⁸

It was also questionable whether this limited approach would be acceptable to the Wilson government. This is a point of more than academic merit since the Johnson administration's crisis diplomacy retained an important Anglo-American dimension. On 19 May – the day LBJ impersonated a 'human thundercloud' – he received a report

from the PPC. 'The present crisis in Atlantic and European affairs is as crucial as that of 1947–1950', the planners declared. 'How it is handled will be just as decisive for future peace and stability'. To this end, the US and UK held 'the keys' although, in the final analysis, the British role would be most 'crucial'. The Wilson government needed to make 'crystal clear' its intention to become a full member of Europe as soon as practicable, but in so doing it would have to accept the principle of 'ultimate equality' alongside France and Germany. The planners urged the president to set this policy in motion both by writing directly to Wilson and by delivering a speech assuring 'European opinion as a whole' that America's 'concern in this crisis is not with answering de Gaulle but with a constructive purpose that we and the Europeans share'. In the speech, Johnson was advised to play the *détente* card by declaring America's continued support for European unity and a greater Western European role in Atlantic partnership as 'the best way to East-West reconciliation and ultimate German unity'. The president would, by this means, point to a 'middle way between Gaullist nationalism and US dominance' by linking European unity, Atlantic partnership and *détente* with healing the division of Europe in general and the division of Germany in particular.⁹⁹ At one level, the stress placed by the PPC on the UK adopting a constructive European policy, and the likely benefits to accrue from such a policy, resembled arguments from the 1950s which had most recently been articulated by Europeanists in the Kennedy administration. But the planners also offered something new in their espousal of 'a middle way' which, in turn, spoke to how pivotal the UK had become to US strategy for resolving the Atlantic crisis and reconfiguring US Cold War relations with Europe. In effect, in the short-term, American policy goals could only be fully realised by British diplomacy; in the medium term, the PPC implied that there would have to be a readjustment in Anglo-American relations as Britain surrendered its special relationship with the United States and accepted equality of status with France and Germany inside the European Community, a notion which would have specific relevance in 1967 when Britain's second application coincided with its decision to retreat from east of Suez.

George Ball, meanwhile, also requested a presidential missive to Wilson, though he had a specific objective in mind: Germany. Ball believed that the Germans were 'feeling exposed, and will be especially sensitive to new shocks', and with Wilson due to meet Erhard on 23 May he was worried that on current form the prime minister could well 'seriously intensify German concerns' by talking about possible

troop reductions in Europe or Bonn's abandonment of its nuclear hardware ambitions.¹⁰⁰ Johnson, with his acute sensitivity to the German situation, responded promptly to Ball's impulse and wrote to Wilson on 21 May using a toned-down version of the under secretary's draft letter.¹⁰¹ The president chose as his text the danger of revived German nationalism in response to the French defection from NATO. Would the Bonn government look to follow suit? Would the growing German sense of 'uncertainty and insecurity' lead to the fragmentation of European and Atlantic relations? Could Britain, any more than America, 'risk the danger of a rudderless Germany in the heart of Europe'? LBJ thought not. Finally coming to the point, Johnson posited US-UK-FRG cooperation as the vehicle by which all of these worrying consequences could be negated. But in this tripartite arrangement, it was vital that Bonn was accorded equality. Invoking the Nazi past as proof positive of the kind of consequences that would flow from any attempt to impose second class status on Germany, Johnson then reconnected with the present and Wilson's forthcoming meeting with Erhard. 'I am sure ... that it would not serve our common interests now to try to press the Chancellor to accept a nuclear solution that he might consider at variance with the concept of equality'. What was at stake was 'Germany's relations with the West'. Despite French efforts to destabilise NATO and European integration, it was imperative that the principle of political and military unity be upheld so that any German 'latent nationalistic drives can be submerged'. LBJ ended by telling Wilson that 'you and your country' held 'the key to this possibility ... you can play a role of great leadership in Europe. When all is said and done, no one has come up with a better formula than that of European unity and Atlantic partnership, and I doubt that anyone will'.¹⁰² Johnson was genuinely troubled by the possibility of the Bonn government emerging from the cocoon of politico-military constraints imposed on it since 1949 and the British were central to his plans to ensure that the Federal Republic's Atlanticist identity remained as strong as its German identity.

Winning Germany

The preoccupation of US policy-makers dealing with the NATO crisis, up to and including the president, was the future of Germany as much as the future of NATO. As *The Economist* put it on 19 March, the 'first result' of French withdrawal was likely to be the 'greatly increased importance of Germany as the major ally of the United States in

Europe', a development that France, like many NATO powers, would hardly welcome.¹⁰³ In Washington, where it was felt that European anxieties regarding a recrudescence of German nationalism were not without foundation, the US government wondered how it would 'take care of Europe's fears, real or imaginary, about Germany's role in Europe'.¹⁰⁴ It was against this backdrop that Johnson wrote to Wilson on 21 May recounting the German-specific dangers in the current crisis and calling on the UK to provide a lead in resolving the German problem, hence the NATO crisis itself.¹⁰⁵ The British might hold the key to the problem, but the president's letter had also been motivated by Washington's concern that they could actually inflame it.

As the NATO crisis began, Johnson assured Erhard that America would 'stand shoulder to shoulder' with Germany.¹⁰⁶ His parallel message to Wilson emphasised the need for Britain to play its part in maintaining good relations with the FRG and expressed the hope that in the current British general election campaign both Labour and Tories would refrain from any anti-German comments lest they 'give aid and comfort to the General in his attack upon the great post-war structure of defense that we have all built together'.¹⁰⁷ Wilson had forewarned Johnson on 27 February that he might take 'a slightly anti-German tone' in the election campaign in response to the way the Christian Democrats had 'quite unscrupulously attacked me in their last election as a means of discrediting the S.P.D'.¹⁰⁸ Worse, on 5 March, the prime minister told LBJ that he was 'totally opposed to the Germans having access to [nuclear] hardware' and 'might even get near to saying this during the election period'.¹⁰⁹ As it happened, the UK government was fully alive to the supreme importance of keeping the FRG anchored in the Alliance even if, on occasion, and especially in the pressure-cooker of a general election, Wilson let his prejudices get the better of him. At the same time there was no disguising British concern that Germany might benefit from the NATO crisis to Britain's disadvantage. On 10 March, the Cabinet reflected that one possible long-term effect of the French rejection of NATO might be a 'disquieting increase' in the importance and status of Germany within the Atlantic Alliance.¹¹⁰ Of equal concern was the prospect of increasingly close US-FRG relations within NATO. As the British ambassador to Bonn, Frank Roberts, observed on 23 March, regardless of what American leaders 'may say ... about German tiresomeness or inadequacies, our experience in recent years suggests that, when the chips are down, the Americans pay the closest attention to German interests and views and are all the more disposed to accept our own views if they feel

that we are doing the same'. This 'basic American tendency' was expected to strengthen 'as a result of France's defection'.¹¹¹ Two issues could exacerbate Britain's relations with Germany and, perhaps, beget closer US-FRG relations. The first was nuclear sharing where Wilson's uncompromising line won few points in Washington even if the administration accepted his basic logic that the MLF/ANF solution was no longer feasible. The second, looming on the horizon, was the matter of payments made by the Federal Republic to Britain and the US to offset the foreign exchange costs of their troops stationed in Germany. This 'constant irritant to Anglo-German relations', ministers concluded, would need careful watching and would make its disruptive return as the Wilson government sought defence economies later in 1966.¹¹²

By May 1966, then, it was becoming clear that the Johnson administration was tending to equate the longer-term health of Anglo-American relations with the short-term health of Anglo-German relations, not least because the latter was viewed in Washington as the central support for NATO in its hour of need. The British, too, recognised the importance of effective Anglo-German relations if they were to emerge from the NATO crisis with enhanced European credentials and with their relationship with the US intact. Ironically, the British felt that de Gaulle had assisted their plight by posing the 'dreaded dilemma' to the Germans: the choice between Paris and Washington. As they were expected to choose Washington, Britain would thus have to compete less with France for Germany's favour. Furthermore, with the Five wary of de Gaulle and the 'lesser countries' loath to accept German leadership, the UK's position stood to be enhanced by the fact that much of Western Europe seemed ready to accept Anglo-German leadership as an alternative. In turn, this was expected to strengthen Britain's relations with the US. In the Foreign Office, John Barnes noted that while the Americans 'clearly thought it necessary to build up Germany as a counter-weight to France,' there was also evidence that 'one of the things which alarms the [European] governments concerned is the risk of German power within NATO being built up. It is not just a question of German influence. It is the sheer fact that if France is taken out of the pool the German fish looms proportionately larger'.¹¹³ The Americans did envisage a greater German role in the West due principally to events in NATO but also because of developments in the EEC. The empty chair crisis had left the Community in stasis where it was expected to remain as long as de Gaulle was in power. Thus, if the policy of rooting the Federal Republic in the

Western system was to continue, the focus would have to be on the Atlantic Alliance.¹¹⁴ This was all the more important given the 'deep distrust of Germany' throughout Europe identified by Ambassador McGhee, a mood that would be exacerbated if the FRG turned 'more actively' towards the goal of reunification at the very moment when European unity seemed 'increasingly less attainable'. While the March 1966 German Peace Note had been about the promotion of goals, rather than concrete steps towards them, in practice the initiative appeared to be an attempt by the Federal Republic to act independently in defining its relationship with the Eastern bloc, including the German Democratic Republic (GDR).¹¹⁵ For the Johnson administration the immediate issue was not reunification but the fortification of Germany's pro-Western connexions, hence LBJ's attempt to prevent Wilson unsettling Bonn on nuclear sharing and to encourage London to embrace cooperation with the US and FRG as a means both of enlarging the German role in the Atlantic Alliance and simultaneously containing the more worrying consequences of Germany's rise to prominence.

Washington was also aware that the reinforcement of Bonn's pro-Western instincts depended on the safe handling of the future status of French forces in the Federal Republic once they had been withdrawn from NATO's integrated military structures – 'the hottest issue in terms of German and European politics', as Bator reminded Rostow.¹¹⁶ Paris had proposed that French air and ground forces in Germany, hitherto under NATO control, would be retained after 1 July under independent French authority in accordance with the provisions of the October 1954 Paris Conventions.¹¹⁷ These plans raised thorny political problems. For Bonn, French troops on its territory outside of the NATO structure might 'smell of occupation', Rostow opined, and impugn the FRG's coveted sovereignty.¹¹⁸ Moreover, it was not entirely certain that France had the right to invoke the 1954 agreements which were based on all forces being under SACEUR's command, and, even if the French insisted on the legality, would they return their troops to NATO control if a member state called on Article V of the treaty?¹¹⁹

In the State Department's view, the loss of '2 and 1/2 under strength [French] divisions' to NATO would not be a strategic calamity, but of greater moment was the political symbolism attached to those forces.¹²⁰ Withdrawal would impact negatively on Franco-German relations and European unity and remove a barrier to 'the possible renaissance of German nationalism and militarism' which, in turn, could signal problems for the West's relations with the USSR. At the

very least, the troop issue seemed certain to be 'an important element in the bargaining involved in the total relationship to be worked out between France and NATO'.¹²¹ The Americans thus saw merit in allowing the continuation of the French military presence as this would keep alive the French element in Allied policy on Berlin and the German question and so deny the Soviets wedge-driving opportunities. This view was shared in London and also in Bonn.¹²² From the FRG standpoint, Erhard was keen for some guarantee that French troops, once free of NATO shackles, would not just 'run around on their own'.¹²³ Also clear was the German interest in US-UK-FRG cooperation and on 6 April, Bonn invited the Americans and the British to join with them in trilateral talks as hoped by both London and Washington.¹²⁴

At the first round of talks on 15/16 April, John J. McCloy, the former US High Commissioner in Germany, adopted a bullish attitude stating that America would stand by its allies 'to oppose and frustrate General de Gaulle's intentions'. In response, the Germans made it clear that 'important though Germany's relationship was with France, the maintenance of a strong NATO was more important and would always have priority'.¹²⁵ Although this pledge was what the Americans and the British wanted to hear, McCloy's vehemence went beyond the Johnson administration's measured policy which sought to avoid forcing the French out of Germany. Curtailing the State Department's assertiveness, the White House team argued that the US must not appear 'unreasonable', a view shared in London, and consequently, the president intervened with a moderate assurance of support for 'any position taken by the FRG [that] provided an adequate response to the French'.¹²⁶ And there the question of French forces in Germany rested pending further discussion at the next scheduled meeting of the North Atlantic Council in June.¹²⁷

Indeterminate as these initial deliberations were, they nevertheless produced exactly the kind of Anglo-American-German tripartite collaboration that the Johnson administration saw as central to the resolution of the NATO crisis and to long-term US interests in Europe. The British were also satisfied; as well as contributing to ending the crisis, trilateralism potentially buttressed its position in Western Europe and insured against an exclusive US-FRG relationship. However, conflict-ridden issues remained, primarily nuclear sharing, hence Johnson's impassioned letter to Wilson of 21 May which counselled against pressing Erhard to accept a nuclear settlement that the chancellor might consider to be 'at variance with the concept of equality'.¹²⁸ In

the event, LBJ was worrying himself unnecessarily since Wilson – pragmatic and wily – had latched on to what might be termed the NATO crisis ‘dividend’ and was now just as desirous as Johnson of friendly relations with the Germans.¹²⁹ The Erhard-Wilson talks of 23–24 May saw the German chancellor play his part in uniting his country with the UK and the US. The meetings took place in an atmosphere of distinct warmth and friendliness and it was symbolic that the nuclear issue was left to foreign ministers who merely agreed that dealing with the NATO crisis was the immediate priority.¹³⁰ All the signs were that the Federal Republic’s allegiance to the Atlantic Alliance had been strengthened rather than weakened. Afterwards Wilson wrote to Johnson of ‘a high-point in our relations with Germany’ and how nuclear sharing was considered a ‘secondary issue’.¹³¹ A relieved LBJ replied to Wilson saying that it was ‘really good and strengthening to know that your meeting with Erhard went well’. He also noted that the meeting had included ‘a good talk about your EEC situation’.¹³² As will be seen, this was no coincidence; the NATO crisis and UK EEC policy were becoming intimately connected.

The NATO-EEC complex

An important corollary of the NATO crisis was the resuscitation of the question of Britain’s future membership of the EEC. As explained in chapter one, since de Gaulle’s veto of the first application, the British had shown no enthusiasm for a renewed bid, not least because of the General’s continuing opposition. However, in 1965, eager to see Britain reclaim status in Europe, the FO urged the prime minister to review EEC policy. Such lobbying culminated in Stewart’s 10 December minute which led Wilson to reveal his intrinsic scepticism about the Community, a position supported by his economic adviser, Thomas Balogh.¹³³ The PM nevertheless agreed in January 1966 to a major Whitehall study of the economic implications of EEC membership under Sir Eric Roll, Permanent Under Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA). Encouragement from Roll’s minister, the spirited George Brown, a cabinet heavyweight and proponent of closer Anglo-European ties, may have led Wilson to this decision and it is also probable that he saw advantage in showing interest given the Tory party’s pro-EEC policies and the upcoming general election.¹³⁴ Explaining Wilson’s new interest, Parr has concluded in her study of EEC policy-making that ‘it was Atlanticism, not Europeanism’ that ‘spurred’ him on.¹³⁵ This is a fair judgement but to understand exactly

why Atlanticism produced this convenient conversion, and its extent, it is necessary to examine how a move towards the EEC grew out of the NATO crisis. Doing so also helps to clarify the 'contradictions' which surround 'Wilson's attitude to EEC issues'.¹³⁶ The crisis, as Palliser put it, created 'the NATO-E.E.C. complex', an opportunity for the British to reply, finally, to de Gaulle's deleterious influence over Britain by capitalising on doubts about France and thus winning influence in the EEC, Europe more generally and in Washington.¹³⁷ As the NATO crisis played out it was not only British interest in EEC entry that increased but Western European and American interest as well; indeed the Johnson administration came to invest UK membership with panacean powers for easing many of NATO's and Europe's politico-military ills. In sum, the NATO crisis was contingent to the development of British European policy which in May 1967 led to the second application for EEC membership.

In his 28 January 1966 Cabinet memorandum, Stewart envisaged that in the pursuit of an 'entirely French-dominated Community', Paris might institute a permanent veto on new members. In recommending that Britain seek to limit the damage to Western unity by any French move against NATO, the foreign secretary did not, therefore, urge a new British EEC initiative.¹³⁸ Publicly, the UK continued to state its desire for eventual membership if, or when, the Community was prepared to accommodate its interests, although there was no sign that de Gaulle's resistance had weakened.¹³⁹ This was a view shared in the State Department where it was expected, erroneously, that UK accession would 'drop off' the European agenda as a result of France's hardening diplomacy.¹⁴⁰ In relation to the EEC, Washington's immediate aim as de Gaulle's 7 March letter arrived was to encourage the Five to shield the Community from events in NATO lest either France or 'possibly one or more of the Five at some point may attempt to use the European Communities as a hostage in [the] evolving NATO crisis' or in case the work of the EEC, and with it the Kennedy Round negotiations, suffered delay.¹⁴¹ Thus the Johnson administration's 'prime objective' was 'to maintain the unity of the fourteen in the face of the French assault and to try to limit [the] spillover to the European Communities', a view which found support among the Five and the EEC's European Commission.¹⁴² Yet as the NATO crisis unfolded, there was one area of 'spillover' that the Americans encouraged.

From the onset of the crisis there had been calls from NATO allies for Britain to intervene as it had done in 1954 to strengthen the Alliance; even in France there was, according to Ambassador Reilly, a general

sentiment that Britain should now 'take her rightful place in Europe and thus give Europe a new impulsion' to compensate for the recent 'blow' to the Alliance and 'restore a proper balance within it'.¹⁴³ On 20 April, the Belgian government, anxious to establish a united front in the face of French pressures, asked for a British minister to be sent to all NATO capitals 'to try to establish a common political line by which experts working on the practical effects of de Gaulle's moves could be guided'.¹⁴⁴ The Wilson government, as we will see, responded positively, but it should be noted the British had been asked to take a lead on the NATO crisis, not to re-examine their policy towards the Community. There is little evidence that the Five intended that one would bring the other but it is not impossible that they hoped for synergy.¹⁴⁵

Oddly enough, it was the French who raised Britain's relationship with the EEC. On 15 March Jean de Broglie, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 'intervened unexpectedly' in a WEU debate to say that France was 'involved in the construction of the Common Market which she earnestly hoped that Britain would join'.¹⁴⁶ A subsequent disclaimer from Paris corrected the impression of an advance in the French position but Stewart still seized on de Broglie's disingenuous statement to gain political advantage over the Tories in the British general election.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the result was that the UK's EEC pretensions were once again being talked about at home and abroad; moreover, in Whitehall, membership was an 'active policy issue' for the first time since January 1963.¹⁴⁸ This was not least because in spring 1966, Michael Palliser replaced Wright as the prime minister's private secretary for foreign affairs. As we saw in Chapter 1, Palliser had argued for a pro-active European policy when head of the FO Planning Staff and he remained a proponent of EEC entry, a fact which he made clear to Wilson on taking up his post at No.10.¹⁴⁹ While Palliser saw the NATO crisis as Britain's immediate priority, he also strongly advised that London seize the opportunity provided by it to improve Britain's position in Europe and thus enhance its chances of future Community membership.¹⁵⁰ This view was supported in the OPD's 1 April paper discussed above and by the Roll report on 'Future Relations with Europe', completed coincidentally on the same day that the OPD considered its report on NATO.¹⁵¹ The NATO crisis had created an opening in Europe, Roll argued, which France's five partners and certain political circles in France wished to see the UK act swiftly to fill. Now was the moment for Britain to recover the ground lost in Europe in 1963.

Wilson was eager to respond to Belgium's invitation for a British minister to tour NATO capitals and appointed George Thomson, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, to the task.¹⁵² Thomson's mission was, primarily, conceived in relation to the NATO crisis but the PM told the Commons it would also 'probe in a very positive sense, the terms on which we would be able to enter the European Economic Community and its related organizations' though it would still be 'some time' before serious negotiations on an application became possible.¹⁵³ Wilson, too, despite what he said in the Commons, wanted Thomson to go about his assignment with subtlety and to put listening ahead of talking on the EEC.¹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, as a further sign of the increased seriousness with which the UK government now looked on the Community, the prime minister set up a new cabinet committee on Europe. Chaired by Wilson himself, the committee's first meeting on 9 May considered the Roll report and a joint submission by Brown and Thomson on possible next moves on the EEC front.¹⁵⁵ Three days earlier, Brown had delivered a speech at the Socialist International Congress at Stockholm in which he confirmed that Britain stood ready politically to join the EEC if its essential interests remained safeguarded; together with a speech by Wilson in Bristol on 18 March and the nascent Thomson mission, Brown's statement underlined the government's publicly declared enthusiasm for the EEC.¹⁵⁶ In private, however, the Europe committee accepted that the NATO crisis remained the priority and that EEC policy must perforce develop at its own – probably measured – pace. To Wilson, this seemed to be good politics, as in the past 'we had appeared to be dragging our feet about possible membership of EEC; now it might be said that we were tending to go a little too far in the opposite direction'.¹⁵⁷ As will be seen, it would take the sterling crisis of July 1966 and its implications to persuade Wilson fully of the necessity for an active approach to the EEC. The pressure for it began in April, nevertheless, as part of the NATO crisis although it must be remembered that NATO was the main concern at that stage. Little progress could be made on the EEC while in the NATO arena Britain's diplomatic dynamism troubled Anglo-French relations as evinced by Couve's complaint that the 'whole [NATO] crisis was simply a wicked Anglo-American plot'.¹⁵⁸ If Britain was to gain plaudits and status in leading NATO, it was best that it was done first before adding any EEC complication. This assessment, combined with Wilson's innate reluctance to move on the EEC question, thus ensured that early development in EEC policy from spring 1966 was restrained, but it was nevertheless an advance.

In Washington policymakers were keen to see Britain move towards the EEC. Realistically, however, they understood that French objections remained a major obstacle and that the immediate priorities were safely to navigate the NATO crisis, protect the EEC from collateral damage, and preserve the Kennedy Round.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, preventing any impediment to progress in the Kennedy Round was a principal US interest in regards to relations with Western Europe after setbacks in 1964 and 1965, especially when the EEC's empty chair crisis had blocked talks.¹⁶⁰ A British EEC application would most certainly add a complication and one which the French, or the EEC, might use to postpone yet further progress in the GATT. Nevertheless, all signs of a more positive UK approach to the EEC were welcomed by the Johnson administration, and the British were happy to provide them.¹⁶¹ In talks with US ambassador-at-large Averell Harriman in May, Wilson described a 'big move psychologically [in the UK] towards joining the Common Market' and emphasised that his government would 'probe for openings all the time'.¹⁶² Shortly afterwards, Wilson nevertheless told Senator Church that 'his Government's loyalties lay first and foremost to Britain's Atlantic relationship' and that entering Europe was a secondary matter.¹⁶³ When George Thomson arrived in Washington for the American leg of his NATO tour it became clear that there were those in the US government who thought Europe should be Britain's priority.

Thomson had spent the first half of May touring Western Europe, arguing for the importance of unity among the Fourteen, discussing the future Franco-NATO relationship, and gently probing continental attitudes towards another UK EEC bid.¹⁶⁴ On 16 May, he met Acheson, Ball and Bruce who attempted to convince him of the benefits of a British EEC initiative. Since 1963, Ball said, the French had set out to isolate Britain and dominate Western Europe while groping for a Franco-Soviet understanding based on 'the permanent subjugation of Germany'. Now, as a result of de Gaulle's NATO ultimatum, the US had been drawn into a closer bilateral relationship with the FRG to secure its commitment to the Alliance but this in turn had sown 'bitterness and disquiet among ... European countries'. If Britain could play 'a much more prominent part in Europe ... as primarily a European Power' this trend could be reversed and the British could then realise their 'full potential *vis-à-vis* the United States'.¹⁶⁵ Expressing views that reflected the widening consensus in London, Thomson 'very largely agreed' with Ball's thesis and pointed to a number of recent steps undertaken by the Wilson government that evinced its 'large interest in Europe'.

Attractive as the NATO-EEC complex was to the State Department as a means of solving many extant European problems, it was yet again – as with nuclear sharing and the handling of de Gaulle – out of line with the White House. On 17 May, LBJ's national security advisers made no attempt to press Thomson on the EEC but instead confined themselves to conveying Johnson's hope that the NATO crisis could be made the springboard for strengthened US-European ties, the development of European unity as a basis of the Atlantic community, and new East-West initiatives.¹⁶⁶ While Rostow and Bator would not have rejected State's basic policy, their priorities lay elsewhere. They concentrated on imminent NATO crisis issues: preparing the ground for a successful Erhard-Wilson meeting and beginning work with the British on their document that would form the basis for the Brussels ministerial meeting.¹⁶⁷ And in his communication with Wilson after Erhard's visit to London on 23 May, Johnson did not respond to pressure from the State Department to drive the EEC matter on.¹⁶⁸ What he did emphasise was the necessity that 'three of us [the US, UK and FRG] must lean in and stay together'. 'Our next test,' he wrote, 'and it is clearly critical – is Brussels'.

The Brussels ministerial council meeting, 6–8 June 1966

The unity of the Fourteen at the NATO ministerial meeting of 6–8 June 1966 was vital if NATO's credibility was to be maintained and if de Gaulle was not to fly to Moscow later in the month, with his diplomacy vindicated, as *de facto* leader of Western Europe. As we have already seen, the Fourteen's solidarity had first been manifest in their approval of the UK-inspired declaration of 18 March 1966 defending NATO's function and purpose. Since then, they had begun studies on a range of issues which the Brussels meeting would concentrate upon alongside its consideration of the wider question of the contribution NATO might make to Cold War détente.¹⁶⁹ The British were asked by their NATO partners to prepare a paper for the Council reflecting agreed positions, particularly on two main themes: the redefinition of the purposes of the Alliance and the minimum conditions on which France would remain in the Alliance, with particular reference to her commitments under Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty.¹⁷⁰ This task fell to George Thomson who subsequently spoke with European foreign ministers and with the representatives of the Fourteen in Paris before preparing a draft paper for discussion with the Americans. In Washington in mid-May he received US endorsement of his proposal

that a committee of five, drawn from the Fourteen, should be authorised to negotiate with France on French forces in Germany. It was further agreed that the US, UK and FRG should each approve a final draft of his report before they sought to 'bring the rest of the 14 into line for Brussels'.¹⁷¹ Anglo-American agreement soon led to tripartite agreement with the Germans when, on their visit to London on 23 May, Erhard and Schröder approved the Thomson paper.¹⁷² Anglo-American efforts to keep the Germans on course did not end there. On the same day, Rusk wrote to Schröder, imploring him to join with him at the Brussels meeting 'to demonstrate publicly ... that NATO has an equal concern in moving towards improvements of relation with the East'. The Secretary's motivation, as the State Department informed Ambassador Dean in confidence, was that de Gaulle had to be prevented from being 'in a position to claim a monopoly in East-West relations', a subject about which 'the President is said to be personally interested'.¹⁷³ The American and British ambassadors to Bonn raised this issue again with Schröder on 4 June and received his assurance of support for Rusk. They also pressed the German foreign minister not to accept a French invitation for bilateral negotiations concerning their forces stationed in the Federal Republic.¹⁷⁴

As the Brussels meeting approached, there was concern, ultimately proven mistaken, that the Canadians, Danes and Italians might jeopardize the Fourteen-power unity if they sought to maintain good relations with France by seeking compromise in NATO.¹⁷⁵ Concurrently, the French position hardened when in a speech on 19 May de Gaulle put unmistakable pressure on Bonn to confer bilaterally with France over French forces in Germany rather than *via* NATO.¹⁷⁶ From Paris, Reilly remarked on growing confidence both in Gaullist and non-Gaullist political circles about France's NATO diplomacy and the belief that 'the French trumpet had only to sound for the walls of Jericho to fall'.¹⁷⁷ This, then, was the backdrop to the Brussels North Atlantic Council. Given the resilience of the French – seemingly confirmed by reports that de Gaulle was so persuaded of his power over NATO that he did not plan to apply himself to the subject until his return from Moscow – the meeting was set to be a tense occasion.¹⁷⁸

The united position achieved by the Fourteen foreign ministers on 6 June in advance of their meeting with their French colleague on the 7th was a good start. The Fourteen were committed to a NATO committee of five as the vehicle for negotiations with France; to the relocation of NATO military headquarters to Belgium; to some simplification of the NATO command structure and to the abolition and replacement of

the Standing Group. The North Atlantic Council, of which France was expected to remain a member, would be moved to Belgium if Brussels so agreed.¹⁷⁹ Rusk happily reported to Johnson that “‘the family of 14’ remains together’ and that, in public relations terms, ‘the 14 have had a good day in making decisions with genuine solidarity’. In handling the press, Rusk attempted to win the public battle with France as he ‘strongly emphasized that our job is to do what is good for NATO and not engage in retaliation or a vendetta against de Gaulle’.¹⁸⁰ On 7 June, NATO’s fourteen became fifteen with the return of the French *brebis galeuse*. Couve de Murville surprised his colleagues by accepting the Fourteen’s line ‘virtually without a demur’ and said that if the Council wished to stay in Paris ‘the French would agree, if not they wished it luck in its new home’.¹⁸¹ A ‘demur’ did, however, arise as Couve rejected the committee of five procedure for negotiations on French forces in Germany in favour of bilateral Franco-German talks, but the Fourteen ‘stuck together past the point of breaking’ and to avoid stalemate, NATO’s Permanent Council was charged with consideration of the troop issue.¹⁸² Although the Fourteen had surrendered their maximalist position they still had the satisfaction that NATO multilateralism had withstood a serious test. It also survived discussions at Brussels on the other issue of substance, the part that NATO could play in developing East-West détente. Here agreement was reached that the permanent representatives should begin work on a report for consideration at a future Council, a decision that satisfied the American desire for something to emerge from Brussels that would dent de Gaulle’s self-proclaimed monopoly on détente. Exactly what NATO could bring to the détente process remained to be seen and all eyes were focused on the French president’s upcoming Moscow visit. In this connection, although Couve approved the communiqué’s references to NATO’s new focus on East-West relations he was ‘at pains to agree to nothing which could jeopardise General de Gaulle’s freedom of manoeuvre with the Russians’.¹⁸³

The Brussels meeting thus ended in a draw. The unity of the Fourteen had been preserved and publicly asserted, NATO had been set on the path to reorganisation and redefinition, and France’s isolation had been maintained. As Harlan Cleveland, the US NATO representative reflected, this outcome was the result of the ‘considerable effort’ on both sides, the French as much as the Fourteen, in dealing with ‘a ticklish meeting’.¹⁸⁴ The Gaullist propaganda machine depicted a different outcome but the ongoing solidarity of the Fourteen gave the lie to its verdict that NATO ‘emerged permanently shaken from...Brussels’.¹⁸⁵

American and British diplomacy (with support from the Germans) had ensured, as Rusk told Wilson on 10 June, that things had 'gone as well as they could have expected' adding that 'the Germans in particular had proved sound'.¹⁸⁶ Rusk also spoke optimistically about the retention of French forces in Germany; if they stayed, then in addition to removing one of the irritations in the NATO crisis, their symbolic value in terms of France's continued relationship with NATO and Franco-German rapprochement could be sustained. As time would quickly show, it was not the issue of French troops in the FRG but rather the possible withdrawal of British and even US forces that would expose Anglo-American and US-UK-FRG relations to considerable strain.

In May 1966, as the Americans and the British grappled with the NATO crisis, the Foreign Office and the US embassy in London both produced evaluations of the state of US-UK relations independently of one another. The FO paper was produced by the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Paul Gore-Booth. 'The day to day conduct of relations between the two Governments has rarely, if ever, been more intimate', Gore-Booth asserted, with relations between Wilson and Johnson in particular described as 'excellent'. The 'greatest advantage to the United States' was that when 'allies previously thought reliable by the Americans (e.g. France) have tended to "defect"', the British, while 'by no means uncritical of individual American acts and policies', nevertheless generally remained 'in close agreement with general American world objectives'. As Americans realised that 'they cannot manage the world by themselves', interdependence 'even with a country much less strong than [the US]' was considered necessary. Gore-Booth then specified three areas of especial significance to Anglo-American relations: the Far East and Southeast Asia, economic strength, and Europe. With regard to the latter, the focus of this book, the Americans were thought to 'welcome effective British activity in the promotion of European inter-dependence – even if their own interventions are not always exactly what we want'.¹⁸⁷

The US embassy offered a similarly positive appreciation of relations. 'Why ... do we continue to regard close relations with the British as an important policy objective? Are we overestimating the importance to us of the British?' The embassy answered its own questions in unequivocal style:

The simple, hardly debatable, answer to these questions for the short-term, we believe, is that we need the support and sympathy of the British. If they are unable to go it alone, in their relative

weakness, neither can we everywhere. We touch one another at too many points and are still affected by what the other does in too many situations to be able to dispense with mutual support of some kind. We consult together more frequently and extensively than with any third countries. On many matters and in widely different circumstances our policies are made to fit agreed lines of action. They tend more to interlock than to conflict on major international issues, regardless of the character or propensities of the British or the American governments of the day. They do not perfectly match one another, but, again, the main contemporary answer to the question of whether US-UK policies broadly harmonize is that they do.

On the issue of Britain and Europe, the embassy noted 'some promising changes' in the British attitude towards EEC membership. As for the NATO crisis, the 'British government sees the issues of NATO as clearly as we do. It regards them as far more immediate priorities for action than getting into the EEC. There are few fundamental policy differences between us on approaches to salvage and improve the alliance, if we are allowed the chance'.¹⁸⁸

What makes these evaluations noteworthy is the degree to which they are at variance with the view that US-UK relations were eroded during the Johnson-Wilson era.¹⁸⁹ The striking degree of Anglo-American cooperation in seeking a resolution of the 1966 NATO crisis provides a cautionary tale about over-generalisation. Ironically, given his well chronicled animus towards the Anglo-Americans, de Gaulle created the conditions in which US-UK cooperation was able to flourish. For the US government, the General was a threat to the established bases of US-West European relations, namely, Atlantic partnership and European integration, and in seeking to defend these principles the Americans not only sought British assistance but also encouraged the UK to play the larger role in European affairs that US governments had desired since the 1950s. The Wilson government responded positively to American exhortations not least because it also prized multilateralism and interdependence. But the British also acted to capitalise on French unpopularity in the wake of de Gaulle's NATO bombshell in order to increase their influence in Europe. While the prime minister or the Cabinet had yet to accept a revived EEC policy, there were those in the government, especially in the DEA and the FO, who saw it as the obvious next step, a view also held in the State Department. American and British diplomacy and interests thus exhibited a degree of mutuality in mid-1966 over Atlantic and European affairs.

It would be naive, however, to suggest that the NATO crisis is a corrective to historiographical assertions about the general state of Anglo-American relations under LBJ and Wilson. Protecting NATO was vital for the two leaders and their governments but the significance of their collaboration has to be put in context; there were other vital issues which had less positive effects on their relationship in mid-1966, especially Vietnam as we will shortly see. Also, cooperation over the NATO crisis in the first six months of 1966 did not an enduring relationship make, even if it did indicate that the two allies shared interests and worked towards objectives in unison. Furthermore, as this chapter has shown, while the Americans and the British pursued policies in NATO and towards the Gaullist challenge which certainly chimed, they were not always perfectly in tune. Despite de Gaulle's accusations to the contrary, the British were not simply in the shadow of Washington. They were as desirous as he was of a powerful voice in Western diplomacy. The difference was that they tried to make theirs heard from within rather than outside of the West's premier Cold War institution. And, as we will see, what they had to say was not always to Washington's liking.

3

Crisis Defused: Anglo-American Cooperation and Divergence in Atlantic-European Affairs, June to December 1966

Introduction

One thing that Lyndon Johnson and Harold Wilson shared in June and July 1966 was a lack of sleep. In Washington, the president sought sanctuary at night in the White House Situation Room in the hope that 'people, light, and talk' would distract his mind from the nightmares he suffered as he gave the order for the bombing of areas surrounding Hanoi and Haiphong in the knowledge that this could trigger a general war with China.¹ In London, the prime minister endured exceptional fatigue as another sterling crisis drained the country's economic lifeblood and threatened the unity of his Cabinet. In other circumstances the two leaders might have traded woes, but Wilson's public distancing of the UK from the escalation in the US air war against North Vietnam had earned him 'the frozen mitt' from LBJ.² This was hardly an encouraging prelude to the prime minister's scheduled visit to Washington at the end of July. Moreover, as his trip neared, the pressure on Wilson only mounted; on 20 July, he had to contend with threats of resignation from George Brown in protest at the government's handling of the sterling crisis just as he was preparing to go before parliament to unveil a range of stringent measures designed to save the pound.³ Arguably Wilson's only escape from the political turmoil engulfing him in the week before he left for Washington was 'an hour or two off ... to open the rebuilt Cavern Club' of Beatles fame.⁴ The prime minister's interest in The Beatles was almost certainly a public relations exercise, though as he returned to London to face what was always going to be a bruising Commons debate on the economy he could be forgiven for humming the tune to 'A hard day's night' or, more appropriately still, 'Help!'. On 28 July a 'desperately tired' Wilson headed to Washington with little

expectation that LBJ would act as a ministering angel. Yet, to his unalloyed pleasure, he quickly discovered that Johnson's 'frozen mitt' had thawed.

In mid-1966 the war in Vietnam was the priority for the US just as the economy was for Britain and this was reflected in the agenda for the Anglo-American talks. Atlantic-European affairs also featured prominently as the UK and US governments continued to frame their response to de Gaulle's challenge and move towards a resolution of the NATO crisis by the end of the year. The cooperation and divergence that resulted between the Americans and the British is the subject of this chapter. It begins by examining the attitudes in London and Washington towards Britain's future role in Europe as the NATO-EEC complex continued to have its effect. It then considers the July Johnson-Wilson meetings and how the president responded to State Department recommendations to push the prime minister towards an EEC initiative. Thereafter, it deals with Anglo-American tensions as the cash-strapped British endangered UK-US-FRG relations and NATO just months after de Gaulle's demarche by threatening to withdraw troops stationed in Germany if Bonn did not make full offset payments for them to the British exchequer. The chapter then proceeds to analyse the British Cabinet's October 1966 decision to probe for membership of the EEC and depicts the positive response in Washington. While there was accord on this issue, there was, as the chapter goes on to show, discord over the pursuit of European détente just as this objective was given unprecedented prominence in a crucial presidential speech. Thus, as we will see in the final section of the chapter, by the December 1966 North Atlantic Council meeting, Anglo-American relations were not entirely at one on all matters Atlantic and European as NATO commenced the next stage in its response to de Gaulle.

The Johnson administration and Britain's future in Europe

The drive behind an evolution in Britain's EEC policy that had begun in spring accelerated in the second half of 1966. During the early troubling days of the NATO crisis it had been feared that the internal stability of the Community might be jeopardised by events in NATO and thus it was broadly agreed that spillover between the two institutions was in no one's interests. This complied with Wilson's personal reservations about the EEC. His hesitancy was apparent as he had consented to the new studies of Britain's policy towards European integration and ensured that the EEC was a secondary issue in Thomson's tour of NATO

capitals. He had accepted that there might be something in the NATO-EEC complex but he was cautious about over-extending Britain's policy and profile. This was understood in Washington and accepted there as the administration's priorities in dealing with the crisis in NATO were keeping Anglo-German relations on track and creating Fourteen-power solidarity at the June Brussels meeting. The State Department shared these objectives but its habitual interest in British EEC entry had led it to urge Thomson on 16 May and President Johnson thereafter to induce Wilson to think anew about the Community. These efforts had no effect but as 1966 proceeded and the NATO crisis quietened, circumstances changed. In July, ahead of Wilson's visit to Washington, the State Department, and Ball in particular, implored the president once more to push the prime minister on the EEC. Although Johnson remained reluctant to force the issue while NATO was still in flux, in the end his reservations proved academic as in autumn 1966 the Wilson government, its mind focused by the need to prevent economic meltdown, finally gave in to the 'no alternative' argument that had convinced Harold Macmillan that for Britain, it was the EEC or bust.⁵

Wilson had come to power in 1964 amidst one sterling crisis and had successfully weathered several others before, in July 1966, his government faced its severest economic challenge. The seamen's strike, deteriorating reserves and poor trade figures not only placed huge stress on the pound but also threatened the government's developing EEC strategy.⁶ At the start of July a 'high French source' quoted in the *Financial Times* suggested that a UK in a seemingly permanent state of financial crisis was hardly a strong candidate for EEC accession and that devaluation might be an 'unavoidable' prerequisite to membership. This report contributed to a downturn in confidence in the pound and, indirectly, to Wilson's Commons announcement on damage-limitation deflationary measures.⁷ In the event sterling was steadied but the crisis proved to be a scarring experience for Wilson and his ministers, so much so that the Cabinet eventually concluded that economic salvation lay in joining the EEC.

The idea that EEC membership could act as economic insurance for Britain had evolved gradually over the summer of 1966. Among the first to posit the connection was George Ball when he visited London. Addressing a private audience at Chatham House on 25 July, Ball suggested that if Britain was willing both to join the EEC without conditions and to give up its independent nuclear deterrent, the US in return would underwrite sterling and assist the UK in its negotiations with the Six.⁸ Ball repeated his proposal the next day in a meeting with senior FO

figures, though when asked whether the president shared his perspective he was somewhat evasive (with good reason, as we will see).⁹ On 27 July, Ball and the US Treasury Secretary, Henry H. Fowler, met with Wilson and James Callaghan, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Their discussion began with Callaghan congratulating Fowler on his tactics at the Group of Ten meeting at The Hague on 25–26 July where the United States continued its struggle with France on international liquidity. On the matter of de Gaulle's attempt to force the reform of the international monetary system, the Americans and the British were at one in defence of the dollar and the pound. Ball then indicated where there was difference between them, in his view. Both the US and UK were 'groping for some definition of their roles in the new world', Ball observed, and it was the president's view that Britain's 'should be one of leadership in Europe'. Wilson countered that, insofar as this required UK membership of the EEC, Britain 'did not want to be corralled into an inward-looking Europe' and as long as Gaullism existed in France the admission price 'might well be a complete break in our association with the United States – which was, of course, unthinkable to us'. Ball was less direct on the UK nuclear deterrent than he had been at Chatham House, confining himself to the comment that 'willingness on the part of Britain to envisage nuclear co-operation in Europe might help' its campaign for entry. At this point Wilson snapped; leaving aside his EEC agnosticism, the PM was clearly still smarting from the political pummelling he had taken over the previous week, worn out by lack of sleep, and irritated to find that, in an abuse of Chatham House rules, Ball's views on Britain and Europe were splashed in that morning's *Times*.¹⁰ He duly put Ball in his place by bluntly asserting that 'the French were against co-operation' and by asking his guest 'if he was suggesting that Britain should enter the Community and become as Gaullist as de Gaulle'. Ball rather lamely – and as it would turn out disingenuously – suggested that he was just airing 'passing thoughts'.¹¹

Wilson's comment about French opposition to cooperation merits further consideration. The lead taken by the British in effecting a solution to the NATO crisis had brought London into conflict with Paris and the ensuing cooling of Anglo-French relations seemed certain to prejudice the UK's EEC prospects. As Ambassador Reilly reported in June, when the NATO crisis had erupted in March the French government 'were at pains to present the differences in NATO as an argument between France and the United States' but now the talk was of 'the Americans' reasonableness and the intransigence of the British, whom they regard as more tied to the Americans as ever'.¹² The following

month, in briefing British correspondents in Paris on his forthcoming visit to London in company with French Prime Minister Georges Pompidou, Couve subjected recent UK policy towards France to a 'sustained hostility which must surely be unparalleled in a Foreign Minister about to pay a friendly visit to the capital of an ally'.¹³ Small wonder that the FO predicted the Couve-Pompidou meetings would be 'something less than a love-feast'.¹⁴

In preparing for the French ministerial visit, the British had flatly rejected any idea of relaxing the pressure on France over NATO in the hope that this would somehow help clear the UK's path to the EEC. Preservation of the Atlantic Alliance remained the priority.¹⁵ As it turned out, neither Couve nor Pompidou expatiated on the NATO-EEC convergence but concentrated instead on the economic obstacles to UK accession, particularly the weakness of sterling. Wilson, for his part, set about asking straight questions. If Britain 'remained close to the United States and continued to base our defence on NATO', would this be 'a bar to our entry'? Would Britain have to 'choose between the United States and Europe?' The basic issue, he argued, 'was whether we should at the end of a further negotiation be told that, because of our foreign policy, we were back in a Rambouillet/Nassau situation'. Pompidou and Couve were straight in return: 'both said that this would not be the case'.¹⁶ Wilson took away from this encounter the impression that the French would only reluctantly veto a future second UK application because of the wide support it would enjoy elsewhere in Europe. But the French government was the French government and de Gaulle was de Gaulle, a truism that even Couve conceded in observing that the General's position remained unchanged: in order to gain entry to the EEC, the UK had to accept *in toto* the 1957 Treaties of Rome and all of the Six's subsequent agreements.¹⁷

De Gaulle was reported as having expressed in Cabinet his satisfaction with the London talks and his contentment probably rested on the clarity with which his ministers had described the strictness of the conditions that France would place on a future British application (especially in relation to the British economy), the prevarication they had deployed in response to Wilson's question about British foreign policy harming Britain's chances of joining the EEC and the coolness they showed towards Britain's suggestions for a series of bilateral exploratory talks between the UK and the Six on the EEC.¹⁸ Wilson's retrospective judgement that Couve and Pompidou left for home 'in an atmosphere of goodwill, even on the Common Market', is an overstatement.¹⁹ Brown's view was that the talks 'had got absolutely nowhere'.²⁰ At best,

the Anglo-French encounter only confirmed the distance between the two countries on key issues and informed Wilson's reply to Ball on 27 July when the American urged the prime minister to get in to the EEC and to do it quickly. The British had concluded that 'the French attitude, if nothing else, makes early negotiations for British entry into the Common Market impossible. In these circumstances, statements (like those of Mr. George Ball) that Britain should "join Europe" as a panacea for all her ills are simply unrealistic'.²¹ However, Wilson's discovery on arrival in the United States on 29 July that Ball did not speak for President Johnson was just one example of how his trip turned out far better than he could have hoped.

Vietnam rather than the EEC was the principal reason why Wilson approached the Washington talks with some trepidation. On 28–29 June the US government's air war against North Vietnam was taken to a new level of violence by the decision to bomb petrol, oil and lubricants (POL) facilities in and around Hanoi and Haiphong. Notwithstanding the military value of this action, Johnson was troubled by the prospect of high civilian casualties, international condemnation, and an unpredictable but possibly dangerous reaction from Beijing.²² LBJ needed his allies to stand by him at this difficult time and resist any domestic political pressures to criticise US policy; this applied particularly to Wilson who, in the past, had justified sometimes lukewarm UK support for American efforts on the ground that his freedom of manoeuvre was constrained by parliamentary difficulties.²³ Johnson had never fully accepted this explanation and, as the POL decision loomed, Ambassador Dean felt that he retained the suspicion that the Wilson government might 'cut the ground away from under his feet'.²⁴ If this happened, Dean warned, the damage to Anglo-American relations would be great and long-lasting.²⁵ When the bombs actually began to fall, Wilson produced a carefully crafted response which managed to dissociate his government from this specific incident (thereby quieting his domestic critics) while expressing such general support for American policy that the edge was taken off Johnson's ire.²⁶

In preparing for Washington, J. A. Thomson, head of the FO Planning Staff, kept in regular contact with US officials. One of his most prized contacts was Francis Bator, Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs and a recognised friend of the UK. Bator claimed that he 'knew the President's mind' and warned Thomson on 20 July that Johnson had lately been questioning the worth of the Anglo-American relationship in light of disagreements over Vietnam.

The PM would have his work cut out 'to restore the President's shaken confidence in the reliability of Britain as an ally'.²⁷ In this regard, the FO hoped that the UK's staunch support for the Atlantic Alliance in recent months could be invoked to good effect and, for this reason, it sought to place NATO affairs high on the agenda.²⁸ Dean, though, was less certain that this tactic would have the desired effect. 'The problems of France and NATO' had aroused 'only tepid emotions' in the administration, with the State Department 'left very much alone to carry the baby' in the absence of 'a strong lead from the White House'. Playing the NATO card was therefore unlikely to trump Johnson's disaffection with Britain on Vietnam; compared to 'the dangers which the U.S. is facing in South East Asia, and the daily casualties, what is happening in Europe looks more like a complicated minuet than a political crisis of the first magnitude involving the national security'.²⁹ Dean was right in arguing that Vietnam was the president's overwhelming preoccupation and that consequently State had taken the lead on NATO and Europe. Yet, as we have seen, the president and his White House aides had made a number of important interventions both before and during the NATO crisis; their attention to matters European may not have been constant but their line was consistent.

The Johnson-Wilson Talks, July 1966

When Wilson last visited Washington in December 1965 Johnson had 'expected a petitioner for Britain but had found a counsellor for the alliance'. In other words, the prime minister's refusal to put narrow national interests ahead of the common good had clearly impressed.³⁰ Six months on, with the sterling crisis raging, Wilson arguably had even greater cause to petition the White House but chose again to present himself a team player and ideal ally. On 29 July, the first day of the talks, he began by reviewing his recent visit to the USSR and outlining the measures he had introduced to deal with the UK's economic problems. This factual discourse then gave way to a sequence of statements in which the prime minister – mindful of the need to restore American confidence – stressed the UK's abiding ties to the US, its acceptance of future EEC membership, and its determination to maintain its global presence, especially its commitments east of Suez in the Persian Gulf and the Far East:

There were those in the United Kingdom and perhaps even a majority of the British Press, who would prefer us to give up our world-

wide role and to concentrate on securing entry into the European Economic Community, even if this meant accepting terms dictated by the French Government. In principle accession to the Community might be to our advantage; and it was a step which we wished to take – but only on terms that took proper account of British and Commonwealth interests. We were not prepared to accept the French terms, which would imply both the end of our present relationship with the United States and the surrender of our world-wide role. We were not prepared to endorse the concept of a merely inward-looking European role for Britain, with no Atlantic or Pacific part to play; it would be better to wait until the operation of the ordinary laws of mortality removed the French obstacle to our entering the European Community on acceptable terms.³¹

Wilson evidently hit the mark. At a reception afterwards LBJ radiated bonhomie for a man whose 'firmness and ... leadership have impressed the people of the world deeply in the tradition of the great men of Britain'. The president went on to lavish paeans of praise on the Anglo-American relationship, speaking of 'the unbreakable link between our two nations that is our permanent interest'; Rusk, for one, was 'rather surprised' at the 'warmth' in Johnson's statements.³² Wilson, returning the compliments, again underscored Britain's Atlanticist predispositions and its determination, even as it moved closer to Europe, to maintain its 'Pacific loyalties', a quote from one of LBJ's speeches used to affirm Britain's role east of Suez.³³ If Johnson could not have Britain in Vietnam, he could at least draw comfort from Britain's presence in other parts of Southeast Asia. Wilson was behaving as America's first ally ought to behave.

The absence of any pressure from Johnson for British entry to the EEC should not be taken to mean that he had discarded this policy objective, only that he did not see it as an immediate priority. In the State Department, however, it remained very much a live issue as did the hope that the president could be persuaded to apply leverage to Britain to get the EEC application process under way as soon as possible. Ahead of Wilson's visit in July, State officials presented a substantial report to the White House which elaborated in depth on the theme of a 'Presidential Push on Wilson toward U.K. Membership in the Common Market'. The report judged that

In the long run the political gains from U.K. membership in the European Communities are in our interest. As in the short run, an

unequivocal British willingness to join the Communities would significantly strengthen the Five in dealing with Gaullist France and indirectly help the fourteen hold NATO together, whatever the French do.³⁴

Three days later, in the memorandum for Johnson from which Ball spoke so freely when in London, the under-secretary used Britain's economic weakness to argue once again for a redefinition of the 'so-called "special relationship"' (it was 'basically unhealthy to encourage the United Kingdom to continue as America's poor relation') and a reorientation of Britain towards Europe.³⁵ Going further, he suggested that as the British themselves were 'unlikely to adjust to the facts of a new world environment quickly enough to check a developing imbalance in European affairs that can be dangerous for all of us,' they would need the 'pressure of a determined American policy'. To convince LBJ, Ball then depicted the outcomes of British EEC membership which were at best ambitious. Europe's difficulties would be relieved by a new British European policy in which the British would take up the leadership of a uniting Western Europe, a leadership that had been 'rejected' by de Gaulle and which 'Germany obviously cannot assume'. Furthermore, Britain's economic problems would be alleviated by the financial stability that would accrue from Community membership and from giving up its independent nuclear deterrent. To bring this about, Ball recommended that the Americans relax their demands for a British role east of Suez, terminate financial support for sterling and instead fund a financial arrangement to prepare the British economy for EEC entry. Concurrently, they would assist and, if necessary, compel the British to phase out their nuclear deterrent. It was to be a revolution from above and it had the support of Rusk who matched Ball's memorandum with a *précisé* version to the president two days later.³⁶

However, State faced competition for the president's ear from a familiar source, namely Johnson's national security advisers whom he had often favoured in the past over Rusk and his team. And so it was to prove on this occasion. Deterred by the scale of the barrier represented by de Gaulle, both Bator and Rostow advised a slower, more measured line of attack, knowing that for LBJ it was Britain's global role via sterling and its presence east of Suez that mattered, not so much its European role, yet. As a first step, the UK government might issue statements – backed up where possible by actions – which 'signalled to the Continental Europeans persuasively that Britain had decided to move towards Europe'.³⁷ As the Bator-Rostow approach ultimately won LBJ's

approval, the EEC was only raised in perfunctory form in the Johnson-Wilson meeting on 29 July. The president nevertheless did have the issue broached separately in a meeting between Palliser and Rostow in which Rostow carefully distanced Johnson from the 'extreme ideas George Ball had been advancing in Europe' and simultaneously insisted that the US government remained keen that the UK maintain its EEC momentum and not simply 'wait for de Gaulle to disappear'.³⁸ The more Britain prepared itself for entry 'by a continuing demonstration of political will', Rostow suggested, the more the pressure would build-up among the Six 'to work for British membership'.³⁹ This plan of advance was much more acceptable to Wilson than the Ball variant and in many respects codified what the UK was already doing.

While Europe, the EEC, even the NATO crisis, did not figure prominently in the Washington talks, the discussions that did take place on these matters left the British satisfied that Anglo-American thought processes were developing in parallel. Indeed the Wilson visit had so completely confounded the earlier gloomy Vietnam-generated predictions that Dean, for one, wondered what, apart from 'instinctive friendliness', had prompted President Johnson to make 'such an exceptional effort to turn the visit into a major political and personal event?' The ambassador supposed that the White House wished to restore 'international confidence' in Wilson and sterling and to uphold 'the only other Western country which exercises genuine worldwide responsibility'. He also speculated that Johnson, notwithstanding anger at aspects of the UK position on Vietnam, had belatedly realised the value to America of even general British backing and was consequently keen to maintain it. There was probably 'a good deal of American self-interest' behind Johnson's 'fair words', Dean concluded, as well as an appreciation 'that both the Americans and ourselves badly need each other'.⁴⁰ July 1966 undoubtedly marked one of the peaks of the Johnson-Wilson relationship.⁴¹ But for there to be peaks there must be troughs and one shortly followed of divisive proportions as London and Washington struggled to prevent their embryonic relationship with Bonn, and with it the Atlantic Alliance, from falling apart.

Anglo-American-German agonies

In April 1966, the Americans, the British and the Germans held trilateral talks, conceived of an American interest in promoting US-UK-FRG collaboration, a British desire to solve NATO's problems but also to inhibit a special US-FRG relationship, and a German eagerness to

promote Atlanticism. These talks were a success and while it was too early and too sensitive politically to describe this trilateralism as the new core of NATO, there was the promise of it. Until, that is, the problem of money cropped up. From July 1966, largely but not only as a result of the woes of the British economy, the Americans, the British and the Germans became caught in a sometimes bitter and often desperate wrangle over the question of payments by the Federal Republic to the United Kingdom and the United States to offset the foreign exchange costs associated with UK and US troops stationed in Germany. To safeguard the fledgling US-UK-FRG alliance, the Johnson administration revived the cooperation of the spring and suggested a set of high level trilateral talks to resolve the foreign exchange problem. The potential for disaster in these negotiations (which began in October 1966 and would end in April 1967) was dangerously high, involving as they did a US government under Congressional pressure to reduce forces in Europe, a British government compelled by economic weakness into threats of troop withdrawals and an often intransigent negotiating position and German governments reluctant to increase offset payments due to economic and political imperatives. The risks were additionally magnified in relation to the NATO crisis; reductions in forces in Europe for financial reasons would, as Francis Bator warned Johnson, 'confirm the impression that NATO is falling apart, that de Gaulle is right in saying that the British and Americans are unreliable and care more for their pocketbooks than for the safety of Europe'.⁴² Consequently, the Johnson administration worked hard to prevent a further rift in the Alliance and to protect it not from its chief detractor, but from its foremost allies.⁴³

It was in May 1966 that Wilson raised this 'constant irritant to Anglo-German relations' with Chancellor Erhard; the current Anglo-German agreement had less than a year to run and the Germans were asked to increase their payments from part to full compensation in and after 1967. Opposed on principle to bankrolling forces whose duty was to defend not just Germany but Western Europe as a whole, and with his own domestic economic difficulties to contend with, Erhard only agreed under duress to the establishment of an Anglo-German Mixed Commission to study the matter.⁴⁴ By the time that the Commission got down to work in July, however, Britain was in the grip of the sterling crisis and Wilson had announced cuts in overseas expenditure to the tune of £100 million and had targeted the financial burden of the UK military presence in Germany for specific remedy.⁴⁵ Privately Bonn was informed that the continued absence of agreement on a new cost-

ings regimen would lead to the withdrawal of large numbers of UK forces.⁴⁶ But this threat – for threat it was – hardened German opposition and provoked a warning that any failure to maintain UK force levels would not only undermine the credibility of NATO's forward defence strategy but also prejudice the future prospects of mutual force reductions with the USSR.⁴⁷ After some reflection Wilson agreed to postpone further consideration of withdrawals pending the completion of the Mixed Commission's report. But he put Bonn on notice that if the report, due in September, did not make provision for an 'adequate contribution' to the British exchequer, troop reductions would occur.

In August, working on the assumption that the Commission's report would be unsatisfactory, ministers on the OPD committee rejected officials' recommendations to await the Mixed Commission's report (now planned for mid-October), before invoking NATO and WEU procedures either to find savings or reduce forces; instead a declaration would be made immediately stating Britain's hope for solutions in the report but also its expectations that troop withdrawals would be necessary by 1 April 1967 to save some £10 million.⁴⁸ Worried that matters were beginning to spiral out of control, the cabinet secretary reminded Wilson of the corrosive impact of withdrawals on Britain's position in NATO and in Europe, to say nothing of how poorly such action would be received in Washington.⁴⁹ But Trend's call for restraint was in vain: acting on OPD instructions, in mid-August the FO notified the UK NATO delegation and British embassies in Bonn, Brussels and Washington of the government's determination to raise force disengagement in NATO and the WEU in the very near future.⁵⁰ Yet where Trend failed the Americans succeeded. When Wilson had met Johnson in July the president had been sympathetic to the UK's economic plight and even suggested that increased American purchases from the UK would assist Britain's foreign exchange predicament. Moreover, at the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense McNamara evidently had little problem with the idea of troop reductions in Germany given that modern warfare technology was now able to provide even modest sized contingents with tremendous firepower. The obstacle, however, was the 'deplorable ignorance' of the West Europeans, including the Germans, when it came to the 'fundamentals of military power'.⁵¹ The defense secretary was renowned for the cold logic he brought to his analyses of security issues, but for much of the rest of the Johnson administration there was an acceptance that, illogical as it might seem, appearances tended to equal reality. Put simply, it did not matter how often and how convincingly the British argued that their force

reductions in Germany were consistent with strategic modernisation, to most West Europeans the withdrawals would be viewed as an act of betrayal.⁵² Under pressure from Washington, therefore, the British issued a watered-down statement to NATO and the WEU on 19 August which spoke only of 'far-reaching measures' should the Mixed Commission fail to resolve matters.⁵³

Offset difficulties were not limited to Britain. The Americans, too, were concerned about payments for their own troops, although unlike the British they received full offset under an agreement which was due to expire in June 1967.⁵⁴ While not as economically disadvantaged as the British, the Americans were nonetheless keen to negotiate a new arrangement for the post-1967 period if only to contain public and political pressure (not wholly born of the burden of Vietnam) to follow the UK's example and consider reducing troop levels.⁵⁵ On 24 August, the president accepted the combined advice of his national security staff and the State Department that US-UK-FRG talks should be convened as a matter of urgency to neutralise the British threat of redeployment and thereafter effect a solution of the offset difficulty. As Bator put it, unless the British were deflected from their course there would be 'an unravelling process in NATO' followed by 'domestic pressure on us to follow suit'.⁵⁶ Towards the end of August LBJ duly wrote to both the British and German leaders.⁵⁷

In his message to Wilson, Johnson urged – much as he had in May at the height of the NATO crisis – the primacy of the collective interests of the Alliance over narrow national ambitions. The NATO situation could 'easily get out of hand', he warned, with the UK's need to save foreign exchange in Germany, Erhard's own budgetary and political difficulties, and 'my problems with our German offset and with the Congress on troops in Europe', combining to threaten 'serious damage to the security arrangements we have worked so hard to construct during the last 20 years'. Leaving aside de Gaulle's continued mischief-making and the 'possible political consequences, especially in Germany', Johnson considered it 'foolish to run down our assets *vis-à-vis* Moscow without some quid-pro-quo', a reference to the Alliance's bargaining position in any future détente negotiations with the USSR.⁵⁸ Wilson had no desire to be cast as the wrecker of NATO and he readily agreed to Johnson's proposal for trilateral talks. Still glowing from the warmth of LBJ's praise during their recent encounter, the prime minister assumed that there would be US backing for the UK position against the FRG; at any rate, in his reply on 28 August, he warned against 'the risk of the Germans playing us off against each other'.⁵⁹ Johnson had

no intention of falling for such a gambit, but he was also opposed to placing the US-UK relationship ahead of good US-FRG relations. LBJ was under additional pressure to get a result from the talks; on 31 August the long-simmering political agitation for a reappraisal of the US commitment to European security boiled over in the form of the Mansfield resolution calling for substantial reductions in American forces on the continent.⁶⁰

Erhard, meanwhile, had taken much longer than Wilson to respond to Johnson's proposal – nearly a fortnight – and even then he merely suggested that consideration of the trilateral idea could be deferred until a scheduled US-FRG summit in Washington at the end of September.⁶¹ Irritation at Bonn's apparent lack of urgency was not confined to the White House; in the State Department Ball decried an 'appalling lack of understanding' of the seriousness of the problems likely to radiate from a UK move to dismantle the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), including 'enormous pressure on the United States to make corresponding withdrawals' which would lead to 'a process of unravelling' in NATO. Despite the efforts of Ambassador McGhee in Bonn to persuade Erhard to face up to these facts, the chancellor refused to be drawn.⁶² The reasons for Erhard's dilatoriness can only be speculated upon; under political pressure at home, he may have believed he was likely to get a better offset deal through bilateral US-FRG negotiations than through the trilateral process. In the end, though, all that his strategy achieved was a diminution of American goodwill.⁶³

When Erhard finally met Johnson in Washington on 26 September, he attempted to recover lost ground by informing the president that the political battle in the FRG over nuclear sharing had now been won by those in favour of consultation on nuclear strategy; proponents of a 'hardware solution' had been worsted.⁶⁴ Johnson, however, was far from assuaged. When Erhard confirmed that Germany would not be able to fulfil its financial obligations regarding American and British forces, LBJ expressed his 'disappointment about a German commitment not being truly honored' and complained that whereas in the past 'he had been able to always completely count on the German word', now the chancellor was 'putting him in deep trouble'. It was 'bitter', Erhard replied, to hear this criticism and he promised that the 'agreement would be honored to the last penny' – eventually. The chancellor returned to Bonn dejected and disappointed while Johnson wrote to Wilson recounting a 'strenuous but useful' meeting and confirming German agreement that the trilaterals should begin 'promptly'.

Johnson added, pointedly, that the British must on all account avoid 'public commitment to troop cuts and drawdown of stocks' until the trilateral talks had been given a chance, although in recognition of the UK's pressing economic situation he hoped that a resolution could be found as early as mid-January. If, however, that deadline came and went, Johnson was 'afraid that we are in for serious trouble'.⁶⁵ This was no overstatement. Unless the trilaterals produced agreement, the convergence of domestic political pressures in the US, Britain and Germany could destroy the US-UK-FRG alliance and with it the cohesion of NATO that all three had worked so hard to maintain in the face of de Gaulle's challenge.

In London, Wilson and his ministers remained resolute about reducing forces if necessary but also saw the potential benefits of going along with the trilateral talks even though they presented a dilemma. As Callaghan explained to Wilson, Britain was already committed publicly to troop withdrawals if full payments were not forthcoming and the talks could not be used to delay decisions on such withdrawals. Conversely, the talks held out the 'faint possibility' of producing further relief for Britain or of making the case for withdrawals. The British would thus proceed with the talks on the basis that they were completed by the end of November in time to report to the December NATO Council meeting, not by mid-January as Johnson proposed, so that savings could be put in place immediately for 1967-68. Also, working on the assumption that the report of the Mixed Commission would be a dead letter, contingency planning for force withdrawals would continue. Wilson did not inform Johnson of such planning in his note of 7 October which announced London's preference for a November cut-off, a schedule which rather contradicted accompanying protestation that his government was as 'determined as you are to play our part in holding NATO together and, as you put it, reconsolidating the Alliance for the longer pull'. Nor was Wilson prepared to accede to Johnson's call for a moratorium on public references to troop cuts until the trilaterals had concluded.⁶⁶ This was hard-ball diplomacy born of economic desperation.

On 13 October the – delayed – report of the Anglo-German Mixed Commission was finally completed: the FRG offered DM340million to the UK for the year beginning 1 April 1967 as opposed to the DM860million that the British had demanded to cover the full foreign exchange costs. Clearly this was much less than the Wilson government had hoped for, but Callaghan, in responding to the Germans, held back from mentioning retaliatory troop cuts though he did stress

that the situation was now 'serious' and would require 'urgent' attention.⁶⁷ The following day, George Brown, who had succeeded Stewart as foreign secretary in August, held talks in Washington during which he emphasised the importance of an early result from the trilateral negotiations. Johnson took the point. The British, he agreed, 'could not hold up doing something about the military side of their payments deficit beyond the end of the year'.⁶⁸ On his return to London, Brown, clearly boosted by LBJ's remarks, told the OPD that there was 'a real prospect that the trilateral talks can be brought to a satisfactory conclusion'.⁶⁹ More than this, Brown suggested that the trilaterals could be converted into a forum within which a new NATO strategy could be mapped out. Not only were conventional force reductions in Western Europe 'financially inevitable' in the current economic climate, they were also 'militarily justifiable' given advances in modern defence technology and the changing nature of the Soviet threat. The NATO secretary-general had already indicated his desire to discuss these issues at the December Council meeting, while McNamara, as recently as July, had conceded the logic of UK force cuts *pari passu* with developments in nuclear weaponry. Significantly, the influential state secretary of the German Foreign Ministry and the man who would lead the FRG delegation at the trilaterals, Karl Carstens, was believed to share this viewpoint. To Brown, therefore, the UK-US-FRG negotiations were not just a vehicle for ensuring British satisfaction on offset, they were a springboard from which a full-scale reappraisal of NATO strategy could be launched. The foreign secretary admitted that the British would have to 'drive ahead' if they were to get an agreement in the trilaterals before December, but this was about the only note of caution he sounded in regaling colleagues with his ambitious design. It may be that Brown had not yet read himself in to the details of recent Anglo-German diplomacy on the offset question. If he had, his optimism that a satisfactory conclusion was in sight would surely have been tempered. As it was, it barely survived the opening of the trilaterals.

The first round of talks took place in Bonn on 20/21 October, with a second round in Washington on 9/10 November. From the very start it was clear that the prospects for an Anglo-German compromise were poor. But worse still from a UK standpoint, the talks served to open up a pronounced divide between the UK on one side and the US and FRG on the other on the related issues of force reductions and estimates of the Soviet threat; in this last regard, the British were a lone voice, not just in the trilaterals but, as it turned out, in NATO itself, in arguing that conventional forces could safely be reduced because of the now

moderate risk of general war. Before a third round of talks – or arguments – could take place the governing coalition in Germany collapsed and Erhard resigned as chancellor. Such was the political turmoil in Bonn that it took until 1 December – beyond the date at which the UK had hoped for a definitive outcome in the trilaterals – for a new government to be formed.⁷⁰ Even before then it had become clear that the British approach had been based on misjudgements: first, that those elements in Washington and Bonn which inclined to the UK viewpoint on conventional force reductions – McNamara and Carstens respectively – would prove to be representative of governmental attitudes; second, that the Americans would back the UK on offset against the Germans; and third, that such complex issues could be worked through in such a short time frame (essentially six weeks). What would the British now do given the variance between their pressing need to find savings and their commitment to trilateralism with the Americans and Germans and multilateralism in NATO? An announcement of troop withdrawals from Germany would frustrate relations with the US and poison relations with the new Grand Coalition of Kurt-Georg Kiesinger in Bonn. It would also be viewed with opprobrium as an anti-European move just as the Wilson government had taken decisions in autumn 1966 which would lead to a renewed EEC application as we will shortly see.

On 15 November, as the Wilson government pondered the potential wreck of its diplomacy amid the hiatus in the trilaterals, Johnson wrote to ask for the prime minister's forbearance for the good of relations with Germany.⁷¹ But whereas in October the president had offered nothing in return for British patience while the Germans delayed the Mixed Commission report, now he asked whether it would help the British economy 'if I placed in the United Kingdom in the near future \$35million in orders beyond those already agreed to?' This sum would in effect underwrite Britain's troops in Germany for another six months, buying time for the trilaterals to succeed. It was no act of philanthropy but instead a means of maintaining the US-UK-FRG alliance. The terms specified by LBJ show as much: the UK would have to commit itself to the trilateral process and make no alteration in its force levels in Germany until the talks had been completed and thereafter the Americans would expect the British to 'concert with us on any changes'. The president's offer was also contingent on Britain retaining its position east of Suez. 'Your presence in Germany,' he wrote, 'is as important to us as your presence in the East, which I assume remains as we last discussed it'. With the US ever more mired in Vietnam, LBJ

attached great importance to British assistance in policing the rest of Southeast Asia. As recently as July, when he had visited Washington, Wilson had given Johnson an east of Suez pledge, but four months on the president felt the need to keep the British up to the mark.

For Wilson, acceptance of the \$35million would mean surrendering Britain's right to make decisions about its troop deployments, an unpalatable prospect not least because his government had begun the process which would lead in 1967 to a decision to withdraw from east of Suez.⁷² In his reply, therefore, on 18 November, Wilson was suitably grateful to Johnson for the offer but he also sought additional explanation of the terms – the precise nature of the orders, for example, as well as their timing and whether they would be in addition to existing undertakings (the purchase of the F111 fighter jet, for example).⁷³ The PM thought the whole matter might be usefully discussed with Gene Rostow, the newly appointed US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (and brother of the president's national security adviser), when he visited London the following week. LBJ replied swiftly. The \$35 million would be additional to existing orders and the payments would be made to the UK before 31 December 1967. The president also approved discussions with Rostow, but added that if the UK had accepted his offer then Congressional approval would have to be sought.⁷⁴ Rostow met Wilson on 21 November and immediately launched into a monologue on the necessity of 'Anglo-American solidarity at this point'. Wilson, who had been around long enough to know that when Americans spoke in such terms they usually wanted something from the British, made the necessary reciprocal noises before stating the terms on which he would accept the offer. First, the UK would not agree to a US veto on British actions on troop reductions after the conclusion of the trilaterals; second, Britain expected those talks to be completed within six months would accept nothing less than 100 percent payments from Germany to cover its foreign exchange costs; finally, the orders placed by the US should not relate to petroleum (since import costs would degrade the financial benefit to Britain) and that they might even create employment.⁷⁵ In effect, Wilson told the Americans that if he took their money it would be on his terms not theirs. After all, it was not only troop levels in Germany that the government was being asked to freeze but, as Rostow made clear, its whole position east of Suez.

On 25 November, ministers on the OPD committee considered a report by officials recommending acceptance of the US offer. The report explained that even with the \$35 million American investment

alongside the DM340million put on the table by the FRG in October, plus savings that the government could achieve from its own efforts, there would still be a shortfall of £48million in foreign expenditure which would have to be recouped from somewhere. Nevertheless, officials argued that, financially, the US offer represented a real as opposed to projected dividend and, politically, there were 'the clearest reasons for accepting it in relation to our interests in the North Atlantic Alliance'.⁷⁶ Persuaded by this argument, the OPD recommended that Wilson accept the \$35 million but on the terms he had conveyed to Rostow four days earlier. Wilson did so, confirming UK agreement while insisting that compliance on troop withdrawals and east of Suez commitments held good for only six months. Johnson, in reply, agreed June 1967 as the termination date for the moratorium.⁷⁷

From the US standpoint, the money was well spent: a breathing space had been won during which the UK would not take action damaging to the US-UK-FRG relationship, hence to NATO generally, the German government would be given time to bed itself in, and a satisfactory long-term solution to offset could be hammered out.⁷⁸ There was, though, one adjunct of the US offer that caused the British disquiet. Thus far the \$35 million investment had been kept secret from the FRG and the rest of NATO, but now that the issue had been finalised the Americans insisted on full disclosure. On 8 December the Cabinet discussed the matter and agreed that a statement could not be avoided. In public the government's line would be that the US offer was consistent with its position that troops in Germany would not be withdrawn as long as foreign exchange costs were met. At the same time, any optimism that the trilaterals, once freed from the pressure of an unrealistic schedule, would produce the result that the UK wanted had been checked by the outcome of the third round of talks on 28–30 November. An 'as yet an unbridgeable gap' remained between the UK on one side and the US and FRG on the other on the level of conventional forces needed in Europe as the British sought – with little success – to justify future reductions in the BAOR by reference to the enhanced strategic importance of non-conventional military power. Though Thomson hoped that the new year would resolve these differences, the prospects were poor given US-German unity on the issue.⁷⁹ And as the new year brought the greatest advance in British diplomacy towards EEC membership since 14 January 1963, not only was the US-UK-FRG alliance and NATO at stake, but also Britain's future in Europe.

Taking the plunge: the Wilson government and the Chequers EEC decision

After Wilson's visit to Washington in July 1966, there was no significant advance in Britain's EEC policy until 22 October. On that day, a Cabinet meeting held at Chequers reached an agreement which marked the first real British step towards the Community since de Gaulle's 1963 veto. Ministers decided on a probe of the EEC in which Wilson and Brown would visit the capitals of the Six to determine whether British membership was feasible. The prime minister's sponsorship of this idea necessitates some explanation given what the US embassy in London described as the 'great scepticism' which emanated 'from the Prime Minister's Office and immediate entourage'.⁸⁰ Parr's recent account of the line running from the sterling crisis to the Chequers decision adds valuable clarity to the view that Wilson turned to the EEC as a way out of the post-July economic malaise. The prime minister, she argues, 'harnessed himself firmly to Britain's EEC policy' because of the failure of Labour's National Plan and because of external pressures, including doubts about long-term American support for the pound and the struggle to match resources with commitments in Britain's global defence role.⁸¹ There were also determining political pressures inside the government. As Hennessy notes, Wilson was 'the first premier to experience serious Cabinet trouble' over Europe with the sterling crisis exposing a split between pro-marketeers led by Brown (who wished for early entry and saw no alternative for Britain if it wished to remain a world power) and the anti-marketeers such as Barbara Castle and Richard Crossman (who believed that a 'Little England' approach with a sustained international role outside of the EEC was the right course).⁸² Viewed in this context the probe possessed a dual value for Wilson: on the domestic political level it was progressive enough to please the pro-EEC lobby but sufficiently non-committal to appease the anti-marketeers; and in terms of national and international opinion it indicated that the government was serious about a membership bid if conditions were propitious. While historians are agreed on such analysis, what has not been considered is the Anglo-American dimension to Wilson's probe decision. It was present in the way that Britain's relationship with the US was central to the discussions and decisions on the EEC and also in how the Wilson government informed the Johnson administration of its decision and how Washington responded.

It was an axiom of British foreign policy in the mid-1960s that irrespective of how difficult the Americans could sometimes be to deal

with, the UK-US relationship had to be sustained. No major British move on the world stage – including an EEC application – could be taken without weighing its implications for Anglo-American relations. By the same token, this axiom also encouraged the British to follow policies with likely US approval in mind. This principle underpinned Foreign Office encouragement for Wilson to take a dynamic line in the NATO crisis which was confirmed again in July 1966 when two FO studies put the policy towards the Atlantic Alliance in an equation with a possible initiative on the EEC to forecast any conflict between them. No conflict was foreseen as long as the two elements could be kept separate – thus preventing de Gaulle linking the two – and, in fact, Britain's actions in NATO were expected to improve its influence generally among the Five EEC powers and in Washington. Moreover, membership of the EEC would only serve to renew Britain's power base and its world role rather than indicate any retreat.⁸³ In October, as the Cabinet prepared to debate the merits of an initiative in Europe, Brown and Stewart sought to strengthen the pro-EEC case by issuing a warning of the negative consequences of staying outside the EEC. Isolated, the influence that Britain enjoyed 'over a wide range of Atlantic and European issues' would be handed to Germany; moreover, the US would end up dealing with the EEC 'as the effective power centre of Europe' with the UK 'by-passed within the Alliance' and sentenced to be a 'declining influence without having the economic strength to assert [itself] as America's indispensable ally in the Far East'. The Commonwealth connection would not stave off Britain's descent into 'an off shore island of what will be the weakest of the new "Big Four"', the EEC, China, the US and the USSR.⁸⁴

Although there was nothing new to these arguments, the economic imperative that drove them after July 1966 was. And it was having another major effect on British foreign policy. On the day that Cabinet discussed Britain's EEC policies at Chequers, 'a handful of ministers' also held meetings about the future of British defence policy. The sterling crisis had led the chancellor to call for further significant savings beyond those contemplated in the February 1966 Defence Review Programme. While no conclusions were reached on 22 October, the possibility of making adjustments in Britain's military commitments in Europe and/or east of Suez was aired and defence expenditure studies were commenced which would report in mid-1967.⁸⁵ While the defence and EEC discussions were independent of each other at the October Chequers meetings, the relationship between them, at the political level, was about the future trajectory of Britain in the world. It

was an emerging question of historic proportions and one which, as we will see, dominated the Wilson government, and Anglo-American relations, in 1967.

There was no sense at Chequers that ministers were contemplating wholesale reorientation of Britain's global posture from east of Suez to Europe, not least because that would have removed one of the foremost contributions that the British could make to the Anglo-American relationship from which had they had received, in turn, financial support.⁸⁶ Instead, the discussions were predicated on the basis that a move towards the EEC would offer a new way to underpin British international strength. The anti-EEC lobby, meanwhile, though no less sensitive to economic dictates, fretted that EEC entry would deprive the government of the political autonomy necessary to pursue 'successful socialist planning'.⁸⁷ The one thing on which pro- and anti-marketeers had little problem agreeing was the importance of maintaining healthy UK-US relations; to this end, anti-marketeers in the Cabinet succeeded in winning approval that the EEC probe should be accompanied by further studies of a possible alternative courses, namely a North Atlantic Free Trade Area (NAFTA – an idea which had the support of Balogh, the PM's economic adviser) or of 'Going It Alone' (GITA) outside of the EEC.⁸⁸ In light of long-held British hopes that a European initiative would win the Johnson administration's gratitude and goodwill it is curious that Wilson did not make more of his government's accelerated and accentuated EEC policy in his correspondence with LBJ in autumn 1966. There is no evidence in American or British archives of any prime ministerial communication with Johnson in the run up to or immediately after the 22 October meetings and in the end Wilson only informed LBJ officially on 11 November.⁸⁹ The delay is explained by the British desire to avoid injuring 'French and continental sensitivities' as the FO put it when asking the US embassy in London to keep matters under wraps until the Commons announcement on 10 November.⁹⁰ Should political leakage from UK-US correspondence have made the probe an open secret before that date, the diplomatic impact of Britain's plan may have been dented if it appeared that London was somehow acting in collusion with Washington.

Whatever the reason for the delay, Wilson's letter to LBJ demonstrates how central the Anglo-American factor was in Wilson's calculations. Reiterating what he had said in Washington in July, the prime minister emphasised that Community membership would not alter the UK's essentially Atlanticist outlook, its commitment to a global role,

and its hopes for mutual strengthening of Britain, the European Community and 'the West as a whole'. To be sure, de Gaulle remained a serious obstacle. But Wilson refused to work on the *a priori* assumption that a second application was bound to go the way of the first. On the contrary, there was a presumption of success in his assurance to Johnson that, on entry to the EEC, there would be 'no change in the fundamental relationship between our countries and in our own basic loyalty to and belief in the Atlantic concept'. Compatibility between Britain's roles in the EEC and the Atlantic Alliance was central to Wilson's vision of the UK's European future.⁹¹

Given that the British initiative pointed towards the final realisation of a long-standing goal of American policy in Europe, it comes as no surprise that the US government's reaction was positive; Rusk publicly applauded the decision while privately the State Department anticipated the dawn of a 'new and highly significant phase of post-war Atlantic history'.⁹² Simultaneously, officials at State remained impressed by de Gaulle's capacity for obstruction. During a press conference on 28 October the General had been 'manifestly cool and discouraging' about UK entry, and on 10 November he told Ambassador Bohlen that 'it had always been up to the English to meet the requirements of joining the Common Market' but that 'at the present time it would be a more drastic step for England to join than it would have been four years ago'.⁹³ The State Department was right to interpret these utterances in a negative manner although in an important sense this did not really matter. What mattered was that the British had decided to move towards the Community and display their interest in joining. In the battle with de Gaulle, these were constructive actions in and of themselves, regardless of whether they led to early British membership of the EEC.

Ordinarily the British government's new EEC momentum would probably have produced one of those rare peaks of Anglo-American closeness and policy convergence – such as occurred in Washington in July 1966 – in the otherwise troubled history of relations in the Johnson-Wilson years. Unfortunately for Wilson, the decision to launch the EEC probe was taken in the midst of the tense negotiations over offset payments from Germany and against the backdrop of his government's threats to withdraw troops. Therefore, though pleased at the probe decision, the Johnson administration was privately dismayed, and indeed angered, at British stubbornness on offset which, to American minds, risked undermining NATO at just the moment when the organisation needed to be united in the face of the Gaullist chal-

lenge. Whereas for Wilson, EEC entry was primarily a national imperative, for Johnson it was merely a means to a greater end, namely the consolidation of the whole alliance system in Western Europe and the North Atlantic. Consequently the British attempt to move closer to the EEC whilst simultaneously holding NATO to ransom was never going to impress the White House. On 15 November LBJ replied to the prime minister's letter in which he had detailed recent developments in his government's EEC thinking. That LBJ chose to spend just one short paragraph commending the probe (he was, he said, 'immensely heartened by your courageous announcement about joining the EEC') before devoting eight paragraphs to impressing upon Wilson the absolute imperative of reaching a solution in the trilaterals to the FRG offset problem, is wholly indicative of American priorities.⁹⁴

On 16 November, in an important despatch, Dean précised current US thinking. The British, he wrote, 'their closest Allies, have let the side down by proposing, at a most inconvenient time from the point of view of the Alliance, to withdraw substantial forces from Germany and, in any case, to take measures which put the last nail in the coffin of American aspirations for NATO defence strategy'. The Germans also came in for criticism in Washington but in the final analysis it did not matter who was to blame for the impasse – Bonn or London – only that the forces of reappraisal were able to use it to strengthen their position. The danger, therefore, was that the Americans would 'come to regard NATO, at least in its present form, as expendable and to think increasingly in terms of dealing directly with the Soviet Union over European issues when the time seems ripe'. For the moment the Americans still wanted a united Europe which would provide its own 'counterweight to the Soviet Union'. But the US would not wait around for the Europeans to acquire a collective voice, hence a say in their own 'destiny', but would likely settle major issues of great moment for Europe through an independent arrangement with the USSR. As to the future of Anglo-American relations, Dean felt that British EEC entry was crucial: 'The Americans value our special relationship, but they are not prepared to make special efforts to foster it; in fact, they would be ready to see it diluted, if its continuation were to represent a barrier to the achievement of the major objective of European reunification.' Dean judged that in the long run, US interest in European unity might prove 'more durable' than US interest in the Atlantic Alliance insofar as integration in Europe would secure 'most of the objectives which inspired the United States in helping to create NATO'. Many Americans were becoming 'increasingly disenchanted with NATO and some of its

larger members'. The US attitude towards the organisation was 'silently but gradually changing' to such a degree that 'the Atlantic "mystique" has largely evaporated'.⁹⁵

Dean's analysis, when judged against the internal record of US decision-making at this time, was highly perceptive. In 1966 the Johnson administration clearly wished to provide leadership to Europe, protecting NATO from de Gaulle while encouraging its allies to integrate more closely and contribute, as a cohesive collective entity, towards détente. In this constellation of objectives, the British were meant to be the brightest star. US leadership in Europe could be exercised through and with the UK. It was to Britain that the Americans looked to hold the NATO structure together. And it was the Wilson government which, through its efforts in both of these areas, could ensure the cohesion in Western Europe necessary to approach negotiations with the USSR from a position of strength. In October–November 1966, the British star appeared to be burning brightly with the decision on an EEC probe pointing to a possible second application which was all that Washington could have hoped for. Yet, as astronomers will confirm, a star is often at its brightest just before it explodes. And so it was with Britain. Any kudos that Wilson hoped to gain in Washington via his EEC initiative was in process of being lost by his inflexible approach to offset. Worse still from the UK standpoint, that loss only continued to mount in the last months of 1966 as détente produced new Anglo-American tensions.

Anglo-American differences over détente

Any consideration of détente in 1966 must begin, not with the Americans or British or Germans, but with Charles de Gaulle. On 20 June, as he arrived in Moscow for his much anticipated trip to the Soviet Union, he declared that now was 'the opportunity *par excellence* for our two peoples not only to strengthen their economic, cultural and scientific relations ... and, I hope, to concert their actions with a view to promoting the union and the security of our continent, as well as the equilibrium, progress and peace of the entire world'.⁹⁶ This was *the* moment in de Gaulle's personal attempt to bring East-West reconciliation in search of what has been described as his 'neat and misty formula': *détente, entente, coopération*.⁹⁷ To the Johnson administration, the Franco-Soviet summit, coming on top of de Gaulle's actions in NATO, represented a full-scale French challenge to America's leadership of the West and to the US desire to control with a tight rein all

moves in the direction of East-West rapprochement. In an effort to reassert American primacy in both areas, on 7 October Johnson delivered the key speech of his presidency on his administration's Atlantic-European policies. LBJ did not utter the words, *détente*, *entente*, *coopération*, but to all intents and purposes he sought to appropriate them from de Gaulle in an attempt to deprive the French president of his leadership on this vital Cold War issue.

Johnson himself was privately and publicly committed to *détente* in the mid-1960s and while his October speech may have become 'an unheralded yet significant milestone in the pursuit of *détente*', as Schwartz suggests, its primary objectives were located in the short-term and the prominence given to *détente* in Johnson's foreign policies at that time was largely tactical.⁹⁸ *Détente*, for the Americans, was a long game in which NATO could only play a small part. Yet talking *détente* was vital both in West-West relations, to repel de Gaulle's challenge, and in East-West relations, to fight the Cold War. The principle American objective in meeting the Gaullist challenge, therefore, was the maintenance of 'the US conception of the political order' as Haftendorn has put it.⁹⁹ While the British did not want to go as far as de Gaulle in reforming this political order, they wished to have some influence over it and their pursuit of European *détente* initiatives from June 1966 and their optimism about relations with the Soviets led to some disharmony in Anglo-American relations. The Wilson government shared Johnson's aim and upheld the principles of multilateralism and interdependence above the bilateralism and independence in international affairs that de Gaulle personified in his search for *détente*. Where they differed with the Americans, however, was on how to cultivate *détente* and how feasible a relaxation of tensions really was.

Having been to the brink of nuclear war over Cuba in October 1962, the Americans and Soviets focused afresh on *détente* with the August 1963 Limited Test-Ban Treaty the most tangible legacy of the missile crisis. Kennedy had personally identified himself with moves towards *détente* in the last year of his life – most famously with his June 1963 'we are all mortal' speech – but there were initial doubts about the commitment of his successor to carrying on his policies.¹⁰⁰ LBJ's May 1964 advocacy of 'bridge building' did much to put these to rest but thereafter progress on *détente* was stymied by US sponsorship of the MLF (to which the Soviets had profound objections), by Moscow's support for Hanoi as the Vietnam War escalated, and by the failure of the UN Disarmament Committee to reach agreement on nuclear non-proliferation.¹⁰¹ De Gaulle's June 1966 Moscow visit was thus designed

to re-energise détente by breaking the American monopoly over the West's negotiating position. But to the US and UK governments, which were now pre-programmed to interpret in negative terms just about everything the General essayed on the international scene, the initiative was an object of suspicion. The same went for Germans who feared that the French president might be seeking 'a protectorate of the Soviet Union and France over Germany'.¹⁰² FRG anxieties were understandable. Whichever way it was viewed, détente in Europe hinged on a settlement of the German question via a peace treaty and possibly reunification. As we saw in the previous chapter, Bonn had tried to secure some say over its destiny in March 1966 by issuing a 'Peace Note' but as Schröder admitted to Stewart, this was 'primarily a public relations exercise'.¹⁰³ Yet for all Bonn's efforts, in Europe it was de Gaulle who continued to set the détente agenda.

What de Gaulle would actually achieve in Moscow remained the great imponderable. Bohlen, for one, did not expect him to 'get much satisfaction' and, given the nature of de Gaulle, 'he might do another switch and begin to pursue a more anti-Soviet policy'.¹⁰⁴ In London, however, the Joint Intelligence Committee expected the General to continue to promote 'an increasing convergence of French and Soviet positions over a variety of questions, particularly European ones'. A new Franco-Soviet treaty could not be ruled out, 'even if this means further weakening of Franco-German links and increasing German resentment'. If nothing else, the 'main implication of this policy for our own interests is that it is designed to cause confusion and division within the Western Alliance' which in turn could 'complicate' the achievement of that fundamental improvement in East-West relations that was de Gaulle's professed goal.¹⁰⁵ A similar view was held in Washington: when French Ambassador Charles Lucet claimed that de Gaulle was not going to 'negotiate bilaterally', only 'explore bilaterally, as others had done', few in the Johnson administration believed him.¹⁰⁶

De Gaulle spent ten days in Moscow, from 20 to 30 June, his visit culminating in a joint Franco-Soviet declaration of common purpose.¹⁰⁷ In early July, Wilson probed for inside information when Pompidou and Couve were in London (the latter had accompanied the General to Russia). The French obliged, describing the Soviets as 'genuinely afraid of the consequences of certain American policies' and just as interested as France in a 'step by step' process towards relaxed tensions. That said, there had been differences on the vexed German question; the Soviet solution involved recognition of the GDR and of post-war borders; the French solution did not.¹⁰⁸ Reviewing de Gaulle's activities, the British

embassy in Paris felt that, on balance, he had got much of what he wanted from the visit, certainly in terms of symbolism, with the Soviets declaring publicly that 'the new relationship with France was not a temporary expedient to be set aside when the Soviet dialogue with Washington was resumed, but something permanent between two leading European powers'. The General himself apparently felt that the Kremlin was 'persuaded that a solution of the European problem can be found through dealings with France rather than exclusively with the United States'. From a wider perspective, Reilly suspected that de Gaulle now understood that his Soviet policy carried 'risks' and this realisation made it unlikely that he would convert rejection of NATO's military authority into rejection of NATO *per se*. Beyond this, the Moscow visit had only reinforced de Gaulle's determination to forge a 'new European system based on equilibrium between France, seconded by the Federal German Republic, and the Soviet Union, in which the United States would feature only as France's partner in a military alliance of the classical kind and in which only a subordinate role, if any, would devolve upon the United Kingdom'.¹⁰⁹ In Washington, the CIA had similarly concluded that de Gaulle had demonstrated that détente could be led by Europeans.¹¹⁰

De Gaulle's effect on détente seemed to have been felt within a week of his Moscow visit. On 6 July the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact issued a declaration on the 'Strengthening of Peace and Security in Europe' which called for increased contacts between the countries of Europe, regardless of their social systems; the abolition of NATO and the Warsaw Pact (or, as a start, the disbanding of their military organisations); the elimination of foreign bases and reduction of force in the two Germanys along with their conversion into nuclear free zones; the denial of FRG access to nuclear weapons; the recognition of all existing frontiers as inviolable; the peaceful settlement of the German question by international recognition of the two states as the prelude to FRG-GDR rapprochement and ultimately reunification; and the convening of a European security conference with a view to agreeing a European declaration on cooperation.¹¹¹ Analysing these proposals, the British ambassador to Moscow, Sir Geoffrey Harrison, felt they reflected a general view now prevailing in the Soviet bloc that the time was ripe to seek détente. He also detected the French president's influence: 'One is struck by the Gaullist tone of some passages of this document', Harrison observed. 'Gaullist ideas are clearly regarded as a rising force which can be exploited to undermine the American position in Europe'.¹¹² At the very least, the Warsaw Pact statement

lent weight to the French president's insistence that the Soviets sought peaceful co-existence and that, in consequence, the Atlantic Alliance should respond in kind.

As we have previously seen, the NATO crisis taught the Americans and the British to value *détente* as a tactic in the campaign to defeat de Gaulle; in April, NSAM-345 had called for 'forward-looking proposals that would increase the cohesion of NATO and the North Atlantic community' and specifically mentioned '[c]onstructive political, diplomatic and economic initiatives addressed to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union'.¹¹³ Johnson himself, in speeches in May and June, put down *détente* markers as an indication of his administration's evolving policies.¹¹⁴ In summer 1966, a series of high-level US analyses sought to determine whether *détente* should become an end in itself. On 9 June, a joint State-Defense report, overseen by Acheson, doubted the wisdom of associating NATO with *détente* and instead looked to the continued integration of Germany into the West and the development of the EEC as more appropriate means to this end. In any event, the Acheson report argued, the chances of the Soviets negotiating seriously on key issues, especially Germany, were poor and likely to be poorer still if NATO and *détente* were 'tied together'. While some degree of token US interest in *détente* would be needed to offset French moves, a nervous FRG would require reassurance and thus Acheson suggested that the president consider making 'a major address expressing the continuing U.S. interest and participation in NATO'.¹¹⁵

Commenting on the Acheson report, Francis Bator managed to find one future positive. While the Soviet threat was never going to disappear, he argued, perhaps the need to deter that threat was no longer the 'engrossing preoccupation' it had been a decade earlier. Developing this theme in a memorandum to Johnson on 9 June, Bator suggested that if collective security continued to be organised with the Germans 'built in', then 'some reduction in importance of NATO as such in Western policy over the next several years is not something we should fear if we actively nurture relations among the key Allies and keep on working on the East-West front'. This was, Bator admitted, a 'controversial view'.¹¹⁶ He was right and in putting it forward he came close to validating de Gaulle's line that 'NATO as an organization would be progressively weakened as time passed and as the danger receded'.¹¹⁷ Walt Rostow was stung into submitting a note to LBJ rejecting his colleague's notion that deterrence was somehow a 'less engrossing preoccupation' in the mid-1960s compared to the mid-1950s. Echoing the Acheson report, Rostow saw NATO as the axis around which US

security strategy in Europe would continue to revolve. As for détente, he questioned whether an opening really existed in light of Moscow's 'commitment to keep East Germany tightly as a satellite'. This was 'the plug in their whole security and ideological system' – a system he granted that was possibly changing, 'but we have no evidence other than that it will change slowly and that Moscow is not now ready for "neutralization" and all that'. Rostow went on:

... our policy should consist in encouraging 'environmental' changes through German and U.S. and other initiatives; and careful contingency planning against the day – which could be late or soon – when larger moves to settle the Central European question become possible. In the meanwhile, we must maintain momentum in the Atlantic connection and in support for Western European unity ... the critical thing we need to do now is to find a way for you to reassure the Germans that we are not losing interest in Europe and looking towards a pull-out. NATO and the U.S. connection with Europe remains the rock on which all else we do is founded. ... In exploring to the East, we must not be casual about maintaining and strengthening the Western base.¹¹⁸

In this difference of opinion between two of LBJ's most trusted advisers two views of the future of American policy towards the Cold War in Europe are detectable. Bator would not have questioned Rostow's defence of Atlantic partnership and European unity but he did anticipate an alteration in the nature of US relations with the Western Europeans as the latter intensified their pursuit of détente, hence his apprehension about the Acheson report's conservatism. Conversely, Rostow's measurement of what was achievable led him to remind the president of what was imperative. At base the Bator-Rostow dispute was about different visions of the Cold War and it was one which would remain prescient to US policy debates for decades. In 1966, however, the pressing issue was how to deal with East-West relations given de Gaulle's diplomacy, the calls from allies for action and the Soviet bloc's own intervention. Even Rostow agreed that the US must at least appear to be pursuing multilateral détente in the present in order to placate European allies; he had, as we have seen, urged Johnson to contemplate détente in April 1966.¹¹⁹ On 8 July, the president responded by approving NSAM-352 which committed his administration to work with other like-minded governments to 'develop areas of peaceful cooperation with the nations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union'.

All US government agencies, but State and Defense in particular, were asked to give strong support to LBJ's 'personal' endeavours.¹²⁰

Johnson hoped for a similar level of support from the British for whom détente had been an objective since the early 1950s.¹²¹ However, the UK's ability to shape the general state of East-West relations had since been diminished in direct proportion to its contracting international influence. By the mid-1960s it was reduced to the limited, though still important role of trying to resolve through mediation certain specific Cold War problems, an example being Wilson's attempts to broker a US-Soviet agreement on Vietnam.¹²² On 20 June 1966, Stewart suggested to Wilson that the government should also turn its attention to European détente. In this connection the foreign secretary stated his belief in the value of a 'statement of principles and purposes' to which East and West Europeans alike could subscribe, though 'we must of course be careful, while giving it a sufficiently strong European flavour, to avoid any suggestion that we are prepared to exclude the Americans where consideration of European security is involved'.¹²³ Despite this caveat, Palliser cautioned Wilson that the proposed declaration on Europe was 'too narrowly European – it is a shade too much like trying to pinch the General's pants and not doing so too well'. The prime minister, however, was 'not at the moment too worried about Europe/U.S. balance'; on the contrary, he was more interested in signs of 'revived U.S. interest in "disengagement"'.¹²⁴

On 9 June, in talks with Stewart, Rusk had given the impression that he was looking for ways to reduce force levels in Germany and intimated that Anglo-American feasibility studies might be undertaken. Given the sensitivity of this issue to the West Germans and to NATO generally, such studies would have to be on a confidential US-UK basis.¹²⁵ To Wilson, the prospect of mutual force reductions, with the Soviets matching Anglo-American disengagement, was attractive not only as a solution to the UK's offset problems but also in promoting the cause of East-West reconciliation. However, then came the July sterling crisis and the UK threat to implement unilateral troop cuts and with it, American concentration on maintaining current force levels, both to settle relations with Germany and stop the Mansfield Resolution from having full effect.¹²⁶ Stewart's minute to Wilson of 20 June nonetheless proved to be the catalyst for the UK declaration on Europe. This initiative has so far received little historiographical treatment presumably because it failed to achieve very much in the realm of détente.¹²⁷ Yet if the declaration is considered in the context of Britain's attempt to sustain a leadership role in the Atlantic Alliance,

to compete with de Gaulle in speaking for Europe on East-West relations, and to present itself as an EEC member state in waiting, it becomes a means to ends other than just détente. For this reason alone it deserves further reflection.

At the end of June, Palliser informed the FO that the prime minister 'strongly' supported the proposed declaration and hoped that the UK would 'take the initiative' in the matter – though he also confessed to certain (unspecified) 'reservations' about the idea.¹²⁸ On 1 July the FO submitted a draft to the OPD committee setting out principles to guide and improve relations between East and West European states. These included increased bilateral contacts, cooperation to solve the problems of the developing world, the renunciation of the use of force to settle disputes, and the re-affirmation of the 'desire for progress on measures of arms control and disarmament'. The UK would also lead by example in extending its scientific, technical and cultural ties to or with 'any' European state wishing to enter into bilateral relations in these areas.¹²⁹ Indeed bilateralism, as opposed to broad institutional interaction between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, was the FO's preferred *modus operandi*. Notwithstanding earlier qualms expressed by Cabinet Secretary Burke Trend, who thought that '[d]eeds speak louder than words' and that the UK would 'do better to concentrate on trying to achieve definite, albeit limited, agreement on specific issues', on 5 July the OPD, with Wilson chairing, accepted the draft as a basis for discussion with the US government prior to presenting it to NATO.¹³⁰ The prime minister was encouraged by the FO to use his visit to Washington at the end of July to sell the declaration in ways that would pre-empt likely US criticisms.¹³¹ One such had been pinpointed by Trend in his earlier critique, namely that the draft was decidedly European in ethos and failed to allocate a clear role to the US. The Americans were also likely to object to Britain's unilateral drafting methodology; the Johnson administration was known to favour NATO as the forum for working out a collective view on such matters. However, while there is no record of Johnson and Wilson discussing the UK initiative at their tête-à-tête on 29 July, Rostow informed Palliser that day that 'a great deal of fresh thinking' was taking place in the administration on East-West relations, that LBJ 'took a close personal interest in this', and that the president was likely to maintain 'pressure for the crystallisation of some fresh approach'.¹³²

As the US government set about refining its own position on détente, the Committee of Political Advisers to NATO's Permanent Council prepared a report on NATO and East-West relations. In July

the British informed the committee of its work on a declaration but it was not until the passing of the sterling crisis that the FO, now with George Brown at the helm, began to advocate its formal submission to NATO.¹³³ Then, in the autumn, the British initiative was totally eclipsed by the public rendering of the US government's promised 'fresh approach' to détente, one that left no scope for a unilateral approach to Moscow and the communist bloc. In an address to the National Conference of Editorial Writers in New York on 7 October, President Johnson propelled détente to the top of the US Cold War agenda. Noting West European concerns that America's involvement in Vietnam could produce a concomitant reduction in its commitment to European security and to the search for East-West rapprochement, LBJ avowed that 'Our task is to achieve a reconciliation with the East – a shift from the narrow concept of coexistence to the broader vision of peaceful engagement'.¹³⁴ Détente in Europe depended on a resolution of the German problem, a point Johnson readily admitted. But in so doing he insisted that German reunification could only be achieved 'through a growing reconciliation' with the Soviet bloc, a disappointing statement from the standpoint of those many Germans who believed that reunification should be the precursor to, not an outgrowth from, détente. Johnson went on to call for movement 'on three fronts': modernisation in NATO, further integration in Western Europe, and progression in East-West relations. A streamlined NATO with a permanent nuclear planning committee which would also be a mechanism for 'increasingly close consultations' covering 'the full range of joint concern – from East-West relations to crisis management', would be complemented by 'the vigorous pursuit of further unity in the West'. A united Western Europe could be the 'equal partner' of the United States 'in helping to build a peaceful and just world order'. Such a Western Europe moreover could 'move more confidently in peaceful initiatives towards the East' and accommodate a unified Germany as 'a full partner without arousing ancient fears'. Johnson predicted 'a stronger, increasingly united but open Europe – with Great Britain a part of it – and with close ties to America'. There was one 'great goal', he concluded, namely 'to heal the wound in Europe', though the healing process had to be 'a peaceful one achieved with the consent of Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union'.

Commenting on the speech, Britain's ambassador in Washington called it 'a blueprint for United States policy in the field of Europe and East-West relations for some time to come'.¹³⁵ It was indeed, but it also

had immediate utility. Leaving aside the difficulty, as *The Economist* put it, of securing détente with the USSR in Europe 'while the Vietnam war not only continues, but continues to grow in scale', Johnson hoped to stabilise relations with Atlantic Alliance allies and restore US leadership by reaffirming his country's commitment both to European security and détente.¹³⁶ At the same time, linking Atlantic partnership and European integration with détente did represent a genuine evolution in the US administration's policy towards Europe. And it also signalled acceptance that NATO had a role to play in facilitating détente (which was precisely the point made by Wilson in his letter to Johnson at the end of March detailing ways to counteract de Gaulle's assault on the Alliance). LBJ's speech was therefore substantive and tactical. It is clear that it represented an advance in US policy to the West, linking Atlantic partnership, European unity and East-West détente, and also to the East as it would herald a new period of superpower negotiations, not least on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).¹³⁷ But it is also the case that 7 October was about upstaging de Gaulle.

Wilson, who arguably was representative of those Europeans who wished the US and NATO to appreciate the intrinsic merits of de Gaulle's détente policy, wrote to Johnson praising his 'great and imaginative speech' and endorsing 'your belief in the need for balance between strength and conciliation, between firmness and flexibility'.¹³⁸ Revealing much about the way Wilson was seen in the White House, Rostow advised the president that: 'Our problem will be to hold him a little closer to strength and firmness; the conciliation and flexibility come easier'.¹³⁹ Rostow had in mind the potential damage to NATO's strength and firmness should the threatened UK troop withdrawals from Germany come to pass.¹⁴⁰ His remark also hints at resentment towards Wilson's self-appointed role as mediator between the US and USSR on Vietnam.¹⁴¹ In his letter congratulating the president on his speech, the prime minister had also written of his 'strong impression that, despite Vietnam, [the Soviets] want to push ahead with relations in Europe and with you and that this desire has recently grown. That is what makes your initiative so timely'.¹⁴² Such a view was not widely shared in Washington and over time, the Americans would become wary of the optimism the British showed towards the Soviets. In autumn 1966, they were already concerned at the direction taken by UK détente policy. Britain's initiative, the declaration on Europe, had gained few, if any, plaudits in the US government and opened a divide between the UK and the US just as American policy in response to the Gaullist challenge had reached its maturity.

The differences of opinion became clear during the foreign secretary's 14 October Washington visit. To the Americans, the draft declaration was 'overly European in tone and could lead to misunderstanding by the East of the essential role of the United States in a European settlement'. NATO remained the correct – in fact the only – forum in which to establish a common position on détente which, thereafter, could be put to the East Europeans for approval. But if methods were a source of contention, ends were not. 'Despite our difficulties with this specific British proposal,' the State Department reflected, 'we remain deeply interested in possible steps by NATO nations to foster better relations with Eastern European nations'.¹⁴³ On this at least the US and UK were at one. It would be wrong, though, to conclude that the Wilson government was not wholeheartedly committed to détente via Atlantic Alliance solidarity. Rather, it was a case of the British believing that, within the multilateral NATO framework, there was room for unilateral or bilateral initiatives as long as they complemented the agreed overall Alliance objective. The Americans, for their part, remained committed to multilateralism in thought and deed; or remained so as long as the NATO consensus happened to coincide with their own preferences.

Despite Washington's reservations, Brown continued to promote the UK declaration. In Bonn on 4 November, when Schröder remarked that while Germany 'found its relations with the Soviet Union difficult' his government still 'intended to take all chances of improving relations with Eastern European countries', Brown exploited the opening to sell the merits of the British declaration. Schröder, in response, said he 'broadly agreed' with its line and content, but this was not the ringing endorsement the foreign secretary hoped for.¹⁴⁴ Yet, despite the dimming prospects for an East-West proclamation, Brown now had the détente bit firmly between his teeth. On 21 November, in a much publicised speech in London, he drew attention to the role that European nations could play in 'reshaping the vast community of which we are all members'. Distancing himself from the Gaullist concept of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, Brown spoke of the continuing involvement in European affairs of both the US and USSR; with regard to the latter, he described the Warsaw Pact's Bucharest Declaration as 'a very interesting document', and while pulling up short of approving the Pact's call for a European security conference, he welcomed the idea of mutual force reductions (an aim which the British had been pressing in NATO and the trilateral talks). Brown also attempted to resuscitate Britain's ambitions for a declaration by emphasising how bilateral contacts could breed détente.¹⁴⁵

While Brown accepted that détente in a generalised sense required agreement at the superpower level, he was convinced that the Europeans had a role to play not only inside but also outside of their respective Cold War alliance systems. And though he publicly dissociated Britain from de Gaulle's geographical concept of Europe, when it came to the means to effect détente Brown was closer to speaking the General's language than he might have realised. The British foreign secretary also aped the French president in another way by going to Moscow for talks in late November with the Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko. Working on the assumption that 'neither of them were interested in *bloc* answering *bloc*', Brown tried to persuade Gromyko of the virtues of a declaration which 'countries of either East or West could sign'. The present UK declaration, he added, even contained principles 'identical to those in the Bucharest Declaration'. Gromyko, though a little obscure, seemed to concur. But from this point on the talks nose-dived into a series of acrimonious exchanges with the foreign secretary strongly supporting US involvement in any future European security conference and the Soviet commissar denouncing the 'aggressive tendencies' of Germany and the threat of NATO. Brown attempted to restore amity by emphasising the common UK and USSR goal of preventing German access to nuclear weapons and by reminding Gromyko that the lessons of the interwar period meant that matters had to be arranged 'so that Germany was a healthy self-confident nation'.¹⁴⁶

Even if Brown had secured Soviet acceptance of the UK declaration on Europe, for the British to succeed with their efforts to out-do de Gaulle and assist East-West relations in Europe, they would have had to enjoy the support of their allies in NATO. As Brown returned from Moscow it became clear that that was not the case. In late November, as the Committee of Political Advisers submitted its report to NATO's Permanent Council on détente, there was little discernible support. In particular, NATO's Secretary-General, Manlio Brosio, objected strongly to British efforts to give prominence to their declaration in the Committee's final report. Brosio informed the UK NATO permanent representative, Sir Bernard Burrows, that he was 'disturbed' by aspects of the draft which 'gave support to the Gaullist line that Europe should be established from the Atlantic to the Urals and that this process would necessarily be accompanied by the decay of the Western Alliance'. It was 'most important', Brosio insisted, especially in the present uncertain political context, that NATO 'should carefully avoid giving any support to this kind of view'.¹⁴⁷ On the eve of a crucial

NATO meeting, one which was intended to tackle the key issues arising from de Gaulle's challenge to the organisation, the British thus found their diplomatic stock depleted. Any gratitude that NATO might have felt for the UK's constructive role in the early phase of the French-engendered crisis had since been dissipated by the Wilson government's threats of unilateral troop withdrawals from Germany and by its unpopular attempt to give a lead on détente.

A working arrangement: the December 1966 NATO ministerial meeting

In preparation for the NATO meeting the State Department produced an important stock-take on the Atlantic Alliance which also outlined immediate US policy objectives. Discussed by the National Security Council (NSC) on 13 December, the day before the NAC met, the paper, though written from an American perspective, offers a valuable insight into Alliance politics at the close of a torrid year:

Western Europe remains a collection of relatively weak sovereign nations. While economic progress continues, the move towards political unity has been stalled, and each nation seeks to maintain a balance in its immediate environment, avoid entanglement in global problems and ensure its security. The traditional European leaders (a neutralist France, a weak, self-centred UK and a Germany governed by an untested coalition) are unable to provide reassurance to the other Alliance members. The latter are uneasy about the evolving balance of power (i.e., read Germany) in Western Europe, unready to abandon NATO's security but unwilling to contribute a larger share to its defense effort, uneasy about the US commitment to the Alliance and our increasing involvement in Viet Nam, and interested but uncertain about how to capitalize on the apparent détente in East-West relations.¹⁴⁸

This was hardly the most promising backdrop for the US to lead its allies towards a working arrangement between France and NATO while simultaneously preparing to reshape the organisation to meet the challenges of the near and medium future. LBJ was patently frustrated: 'We can't get the American people to support our NATO policy when they see the actions taken by the French, British, and Germans', he complained. 'We are fast approaching a day of reckoning. Our recent elections make this quite clear. Our policy must take into account the

diminishing support of U.S. citizens for the present level of our forces in Europe'.¹⁴⁹ In making this last observation, the president had in mind public disquiet with the mounting cost of the war in Vietnam on the one hand, and on the other the failure of the Europeans to make a greater contribution – or even maintain their existing commitment – to the security of the West. In the past, the Americans had relied on the British to help them guide NATO in the right direction and as recently as May there had been intimate and profitable Anglo-American collaboration in composing a plan to protect the Alliance from the political whirlwind whipped-up by de Gaulle. By December 1966, however, they had become one of the problems themselves and it was to Belgium, not the UK, that the Americans turned for assistance.

At a purely technical level, many of the issues relating to NATO's new relationship with France had been resolved in advance of the Paris meeting. The status and future of French forces in Germany had been the focus of much diplomatic concern in the early stages of the crisis. France expected those forces to remain under the provisions of the Paris Conventions of October 1954 with their assignment to NATO terminated from 1 July 1966.¹⁵⁰ Negotiations on this question between France and the Fourteen had begun in June, though Paris maintained that Franco-German talks were the proper forum for resolution. As events transpired, the Erhard government, fearful of causing irreparable damage to relations with France, agreed to the retention of French forces without insisting on any new political arrangement to supersede the 1954 conventions or any commitment from Paris to place their forces under NATO command in a time of war. This was a victory for France, though the latter issue was of necessity taken up between the French and NATO with negotiations rumbling on until August 1967.¹⁵¹ The problems arising from the eviction of NATO from French soil were also solved, or on their way to being solved, by the time of the December Council. Many of these affected the US more than any other Alliance power, hence a series of Franco-American talks took place during 1966 which resulted in US personnel, plant and equipment being redeployed to countries neighbouring France. By and large the US left without argument and in keeping with Johnson's initial reaction to the de Gaulle demarche: 'when a man asks you to leave his house, you don't argue, you get your hat and go'.¹⁵²

Just as all things American were expelled from France, so too were all things NATO. The relocation of the North Atlantic Council, the core institution of the organisation, was perhaps the most symbolic of the parting of the ways. As Bozo explains, de Gaulle had wanted the

Council to stay in Paris to lend substance to the notion that France remained 'essentially a fully fledged ally'.¹⁵³ Politically, however, this was unacceptable to the US and most other NATO powers and in October the Belgians consented to Brussels becoming the Council's new home. At the same time, in a further act of centralisation, NATO's highest military authority, the Military Committee, moved to the Belgian capital, as did SHAPE. What these and other geographical rearrangements represented was the physical separation of France from NATO's military structures – including the Defence Planning Committee (DPC) which, from late 1966, became the locus of the Fourteen's new institutionalisation. While the military divorce was finalised, political relations between France and NATO were maintained by continued French membership of the NAC.¹⁵⁴ With all of these agreements either sealed or pending, the real business of the December Council concerned NATO's function and future, issues of enormous importance which, thanks to de Gaulle, the organisation was now finally confronting.¹⁵⁵ By the same token, if NATO addressed these matters in a cohesive and cogent manner, this would serve as a decisive rebuff to de Gaulle. For the Americans, however, the reconfiguring of NATO to make it fit for future usage was undertaken with the aim of combating in the present the French challenge to its leadership of the West. To this end, the Johnson administration's promotion of the idea of NATO as an institution dedicated both to defence *and* détente was designed to deny de Gaulle the primacy he sought in promoting East-West rapprochement in Europe.

There were nonetheless a number of specific issues requiring NAC attention, the first of which was nuclear planning and consultation. When France brought crisis to NATO it threatened to widen the institution's fissures. One of the vulnerable areas, as we have seen, was the question of nuclear sharing and German access to nuclear hardware. From November 1965, McNamara attempted to solve the problem with a software solution, namely nuclear consultation through his Special Committee. After Erhard's declaration in September 1966 that his country had renounced its hardline on hardware, McNamara's initiative gained ground. Later that month, NATO ministers agreed to merge the Special Committee with NATO's Nuclear Planning Working Group (NPWG) to create a new, permanent body, the Nuclear Defence Affairs Committee (NDAC), which would comprise all NATO members bar France; it was also agreed to establish a Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), again without French involvement, consisting of four permanent members – Britain, Germany, Italy and the US – and three rotating

members. These arrangements, in giving the FRG an important say in nuclear planning whilst denying Bonn access to or control over nuclear weapons, were strongly supported by a US government for whom a non-proliferation treaty was fast becoming a priority after LBJ's 7 October speech. The British, too, backed the arrangements for similar reasons, and the only remaining uncertainty was whether the new German coalition led by Kiesinger would second Erhard's rejection of hardware.¹⁵⁶

Détente was also destined to take up much of the Council's time. In addition to the report of the Committee of Political Advisers on ways and means by which NATO could contribute to improved East-West relations, ministers would have before them a proposal for a wide-ranging review of the Alliance. Ostensibly a Belgian initiative – the idea had been put to the Americans in November by Foreign Minister Pierre Harmel – it was quickly taken up by the Johnson administration and the resulting formal review proposal was the product of close US-Belgian cooperation.¹⁵⁷ The Harmel Exercise of 1967 will be examined in detail later in this study, but it is appropriate to consider at this point the motivation behind the US government's backing of it. Harmel's proposal for stock-taking and a future tasks study, which harked back to the 1956 'Three Wise Men's Report', was timely in that it dovetailed with growing American interest in renewing NATO and redefining its role as a new era of détente beckoned.¹⁵⁸ Also, tactically, the Americans recognised the value of a European proposal, made by an EEC member state, which the US could back; had it been the other way round de Gaulle would have been gifted yet another opportunity to criticise the apparent Americanisation of NATO.¹⁵⁹

While there is no disputing the Johnson administration's enthusiasm for Harmel's ideas, it is worth pondering the degree to which the Belgian foreign minister's expectation that NATO could help deliver détente was shared by US policy-makers.¹⁶⁰ There had, after all, been a conservatism in the Acheson Group's report which Rostow had endorsed in urging the president to concentrate on NATO's role in binding and defending the West; 'on East-West matters', he told LBJ, 'we must always remember that the limit on what we can do is largely set by changing attitudes in Moscow'.¹⁶¹ It was not so much that the Johnson administration did not want to promote East-West détente, but more that it held reservations about what could be achieved (which would become a point of Anglo-American difference during 1967). What this analysis suggests is that the Americans saw a high degree of tactical advantage in supporting Harmel rather than actual expectation of success in NATO promoting détente.

This approach was apparent from a report by the State Department's Director of Intelligence and Research on 2 December. NATO, the report argued, 'will probably not evolve into an institution for collective decision-making on East-West or any other political matters'. As for 'Alliance-to-Alliance initiatives toward the Warsaw Pact', these were deemed to be 'both impracticable and undesirable'. Indeed a NATO 'stamp' on an East-West initiative might cause East European governments 'to reject the initiative regardless of its merits'; alternatively this approach 'could enhance the Warsaw Pact in a way which most NATO governments would find unacceptable'. Either way, NATO was 'not well fitted for the role of "architect" of détente' and 'the process of consultation in NATO will probably not in itself produce many new approaches to East-West matters'. Yet the *process* of consultation was of some value in that it helped satisfy the desire of the European powers for action on détente even if the ultimate outcome, in the US view, remained unpromising. Moreover, with East-West tensions in Europe predicted to be reduced still further in the coming months, 'centrifugal tendencies in the Alliance are apt to gather strength' which meant that continuing 'consultation in the NATO framework on problems as important to all the Allies as East-West relations provides a significant counter-weight to these tendencies'.¹⁶²

From the outset, then, there was a distinct, if as yet undisclosed, doubtfulness in the Johnson administration about what NATO could actually do to hasten détente. Consequently, American interest in Harmel's proposal is given a more immediate, strategic colour. The Exercise was seen at the outset at least as another means of holding together of the Atlantic Alliance in the face of de Gaulle's potentially destructive activities and the Soviet bloc's new interest in improved East-West relations. As such, Harmel's proposal was more about West-West relations for the US than East-West relations. It was all redolent of George Kennan's 1948 reflection on America's role in any US-European alliance. 'Is it better that we do alone what we think is right or that we do in company with others what we think is wrong [?]', he asked rhetorically before answering that America 'simply must hold' with its allies; 'better to hold with them even though they are wrong rather than step apart with them if we are right, because if we let disunity creep in we may have lost the whole battle anyway'.¹⁶³

Any exploration of the origins of the Harmel Exercise must also consider the Anglo-American dimension. In this connection, the Wilson government, like many of the European NATO powers, disputed the US and Belgian view that the Harmel study's conclusions ought to be

'as binding as possible'; on the contrary, the British 'did not want to do anything that could overburden co-operation again'.¹⁶⁴ It was not that the UK opposed a new study, especially one with such focus on East-West relations, only that the government held to the principle that individual NATO members should be allowed the freedom to pursue their own détente initiatives even if they did not have allies' support. In taking this line, the Wilson government doubtless had in mind the troubled history of its declaration on Europe. Indeed the differences between the Americans and the British on that issue helps explain the unusual lack of Anglo-American alignment – certainly in comparison to the early phase of the NATO crisis – in the build-up to the December NAC. Particularly striking was the absence of any detailed British input as first Belgium, and then Belgium and the US in tandem, began formulating proposals for the NATO review. But it was not just Washington that objected to the way in which, via the proposed declaration, the UK seemed to be striking out in a decidedly independent direction on détente. Secretary-General Brosio reflected a general view when he criticised the British contribution to the draft passage on East-West relations for the Council communiqué as being too Gaullist.¹⁶⁵

The NAC meetings of 15–16 December were a success for American policy and for NATO. Washington's goals were achieved as the Council showed that NATO had 'surmounted its crisis with France'.¹⁶⁶ The Fourteen functioned as a unit in the DPC, taking decisions on NATO's military future (principally agreeing to the establishment of the NDAC and NPG and to new force planning studies) and showing themselves to have survived the crisis intact and enthused. They then joined with French representatives in the North Atlantic Council thus symbolising the continuing relationship with France on non-military matters to discuss the Committee of Political Advisers' report on NATO and East-West relations and to reach a resolution in favour of the Harmel proposal for a 'study of the future tasks which face the Alliance'.¹⁶⁷ Rusk described the December meetings as the 'most substantial and successful of the 12 he had attended'.¹⁶⁸ He was particularly pleased by the performance of the new German Foreign Minister, Willy Brandt, who not only confirmed Germany's willingness to forego a hardware solution to the nuclear sharing problem, but also lent support to the achievement of a non-proliferation treaty, playing directly to new American interest in that aim. Moreover, Brandt showed 'that the new German Government will not be bound by the rigid theology of the Adenauer period and is prepared to probe the possibilities of better relations with Eastern Europe, including the East Germans'.¹⁶⁹ This

early positive appreciation of the Kiesinger coalition's attitudes was also strengthened by the pro-American and pro-Alliance comments made by the new chancellor in conversation with McCloy in Bonn on 16 December.¹⁷⁰ Although it would take time for the Johnson administration to feel fully confident of the Kiesinger government, the promise shown by these early indicators contrast with Rusk's comments about his conversations with the British foreign secretary.

Rusk had used the NATO meeting to give the Europeans some 'old-time religion on Vietnam', emphasising the twin burdens that the US was bearing in Europe and Southeast Asia. In talks with his British opposite, however, Rusk was extremely critical of the UK government's failure, as a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), to do more to help in Vietnam. As he put it in a message to LBJ, he 'hit George Brown pretty hard on the point' and intended to return to the charge, pressing the British 'very hard for more participation but they will probably act like scared rabbits in the face of their domestic political situation'.¹⁷¹ Yet, despite this diplomatic mauling on Vietnam, the NATO meeting was a partial success for the British. The Wilson government was as committed as any of the Fourteen to NATO's survival in the wake of de Gaulle's assault and could thus look with relief on its continued and effective functioning. Moreover, the British were obviously pleased by the outcome of the nuclear sharing problem and fully endorsed the restructuring designed to allow Germany a consultative voice on nuclear strategy.¹⁷² Nevertheless the negative side of the UK ledger also had its entries. No agreement was reached on revised NATO force levels and the British were obliged to await the outcome of the trilaterals before revisiting this question with their allies. Nor was there any enthusiasm amongst the other NATO powers for the UK declaration on Europe, though this was not unexpected. Whether it also explains why neither the Americans nor the Belgians invited British assistance in drawing up the proposal for a review of the tasks of the Alliance is hard to say. It may also have been that Brussels and Washington saw the EEC as Britain's priority in 1967; Harmel certainly raised the point when describing the 'genesis' of his plan to Brown by explaining that 'while awaiting British entry to the EEC he wanted to strengthen the links between European countries in every way possible'.¹⁷³ On the eve of the Wilson government's probe on a second bid for membership, this was a positive message indeed.

On 31 December 1966 the president sent his new year message to the prime minister. 'During the past year our two countries have co-operated closely, as friends and allies, in the cause of world peace', LBJ

noted. 'I know that we shall continue to work together in the years ahead'.¹⁷⁴ Notwithstanding routine diplomatic niceties, it was indeed the case that the Americans and British had cooperated closely in a number of important areas – the NATO crisis being the prime example – and that Wilson's visit to Washington in July had been an unexpected diplomatic success.¹⁷⁵ At that moment in time Britain was America's leading ally, and Johnson, despite occasional bouts of anger over the UK's attitude to the Vietnam war, clearly appreciated this fact. In NATO and Europe, the British had worked closely with the Americans to hold alliances together, reaching a peak of cooperation at the June NATO ministerial meeting in Brussels. The scene was set for the Wilson government to achieve the prominence that it sought for Britain by turning de Gaulle's actions to its advantage. However, during the second half of 1966 things began to fall apart. The economic downturn from July onwards had its ramifications across a range of British policies, not least finance and defence relations with Germany. The severe approach that the British were forced to adopt towards the offset issue and thereafter the trilateral talks had a harmful effect on Britain's reputation in Washington and in Europe. The Wilson government's détente initiative, the declaration on Europe, only compounded this situation. It was received so poorly that it left Britain without any support among NATO allies and, crucially, none in Washington where US policy towards Atlantic Alliance, Europe and détente had reached its maturity in Johnson's 7 October speech. The only really positive move made by the British was the decision to probe towards EEC membership. Indeed, if it had not have been for this new direction in British foreign policy, Britain's claim to first status as an ally in Atlantic-European affairs would have faced more uncertainty than it already did given the effect of economic weakness on American views of the Wilson government. Riding 'the Atlantic and European horses in double harness' would be Britain's policy for Western unity and it would include redoubling 'our efforts to keep [the Americans in NATO] as its lynch-pin' if Washington's military support for the organisation diminished as the US was drawn ever more into the Vietnam vortex.¹⁷⁶ By seeking EEC entry in 1967, the British would fulfil one of the many roles that the Johnson administration asked of them. Perhaps the most important of those roles, however, was for Wilson to continue acting upon the assurances he had given Johnson that Britain would maintain its presence east of Suez. Short of a British troop commitment, this was the greatest support the Wilson government could give LBJ in Vietnam. There was, however, an increasing

incompatibility between Britain's economy, its defence expenditure and its international commitments. Commenting upon Britain's European policies as Wilson and Brown prepared to probe for EEC entry, Viscount Hood, Deputy Under Secretary at the FO, observed on 3 January 1967 that the 'wider question ... is, of course, whether we can play our full part in the Atlantic and Europe if we are also trying to maintain defence forces East of Suez.'¹⁷⁷ It was a point full of painful prophecy.

4

The US and Britain's Approach to Europe, January to March 1967

Introduction

In his book, *The Discipline of Power*, published in 1968, the former State Department under secretary of state and leading Europeanist from the Kennedy and Johnson eras, George Ball, entitled a chapter 'The Disadvantages of the Special Relationship'. Beginning with an admission that there was 'every reason' for such a relationship to exist because the Americans and the British 'look out on the world through similarly refracted mental spectacles', Ball conceded that there was 'some foundation in fact behind General de Gaulle's use of the generic term "les Anglo-Saxons"'. Criticising US governments for encouraging Britain 'in the belief that she could, by her own efforts – so long as she maintained a specially favoured position with the United States – play an independent great power role', Ball stated that this partly American-inspired pretension had 'deflected her from coming to terms with her European destiny'.¹ This was the argument that Ball had presented to the Wilson government and to President Johnson in mid-1966 just before he left the State Department. Thus, he did not see his aspiration realised while in office but the British very shortly afterwards took the decision to probe for EEC membership. They did so principally due to the economic and political realities created by the July 1966 sterling crisis yet the probe decision, like the second application that followed it, was also influenced by the encouragement given by the Americans. Indeed, for the British, the move towards the EEC did not imply what George Ball thought it should, namely an end to an exclusive Anglo-American relationship, but instead the prolongation of it. The position of leadership in Europe that Britain desired to sustain its national and international strength was not intended to succeed relations with the

US, but reinforce and supplement them. As the probe got underway in early 1967, however, it became clear that although Ball's terminal view of the Anglo-American relationship was generally considered extreme in Washington, there was an expectation that UK-US relations had entered a period of transition initiated by Britain's new European ambitions.

This chapter sets out to examine the development of Britain's policy towards a second EEC application and the American view of it. It begins by considering the probe of EEC capitals undertaken by Wilson and Brown and how the Johnson administration responded to the increasing likelihood of a British EEC initiative. In so doing, it relates the evolving UK bid to American policy towards Europe in general and towards defeating the Gaullist challenge in particular and shows how the Johnson administration not only encouraged the British to pursue EEC accession but also to accept the changes in the Anglo-American relationship that this would inevitably bring. The chapter then moves on to place Britain's new approach to Europe within the context of international events, including, *inter alia*, the visit of Soviet premier, Alexei Kosygin, to London in February 1967 and the conclusion of the UK-US-FRG trilateral talks. It thus describes how Britain's EEC policy and its impact in Washington were complicated by wider issues of détente, relations with Germany and the reform of the international monetary system.

Britain's approach to Europe: the probe

At Chequers on 22 October 1966, Wilson marked the first significant advance in British EEC policy since de Gaulle's 1963 veto by securing Cabinet agreement to a probe by himself and Brown of the capitals of the Six EEC member states in an effort to gauge opinion about a possible future British membership bid. This 'continental odyssey', as the CIA described it, took place from January to March 1967.² The first stop, on 16/17 January, was Rome. It was a good start: the Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, declared that 'Europe was not Europe without Great Britain', a statement which enhanced Wilson's belief that Britain could lead Europe.³ Privately, as he noted to his confidant Alastair Hetherington, Wilson 'still thought that our political influence in Europe, if we joined, would be great. If we couldn't dominate that lot, there wasn't much to be said for us' although the PM admitted that this could not happen 'during de Gaulle's lifetime, ... he was thinking beyond that'.⁴ In Rome and elsewhere on the probe,

the prime minister and foreign secretary duly sought to persuade the leaders of the Six that Britain's EEC policy 'had now changed from low gear into top gear' and 'that we meant business'.⁵ Wilson still talked of the need to safeguard British and Commonwealth interests – a national-imperial nexus that had caused so many problems for the first application – but he also signalled a significant advance in the British stance in comparison with 1961. The conditional application of the Macmillan government would not be repeated as Britain no longer regarded 'the Treaty of Rome itself as an inevitable obstacle' and was ready to negotiate seriously on points of major substance such as the CAP, Commonwealth questions, the freedom of capital movements and regional policies. This more flexible approach to negotiating issues was reflective of the main politico-economic thrust of the probe. Although Wilson and Brown did not use the phrase 'Ask not what the EEC can do for you, but what you can do for the EEC', it does précis their message. They declared that UK membership would not only strengthen the Community and enhance its independence but also, through collaboration in technology, enable the EEC to compete with US business interests in this new area of economic activity. And, critically, with Britain an EEC member, Western Europe would be able to approach Eastern Europe emboldened by cohesion and purpose in the search for détente.

This last line of argument was designed to appeal in particular to de Gaulle – the French president being the prime target of the probe, as most historians agree.⁶ Immediately before setting off, Wilson told Hetherington that 'he would deal direct with de Gaulle' and that his meetings with him 'would be the crucial part of the European negotiation'.⁷ They would also be the most challenging. In the FO, the opposition of de Gaulle, and of the French generally, to British membership of the EEC was almost taken for granted. As the FO's senior EEC expert, Con O'Neill, concluded in December 1966, the 'French would love to stop [the] British move in its tracks right now' but as they did not wish to be viewed negatively, they 'gloomily' faced 'the prospect of having [the] momentum for British entry develop'.⁸ FO prime ministerial briefs on the eve of the Paris leg of the probe recommended showing that Britain's 'purpose is not to compete but to co-operate with France'. Wilson was also advised to play to 'de Gaulle's sense of history and to his monumental vanity' by predicting a blighted legacy if he prevented British entry and thus thwarted the full realisation of Europe's potential. At the same time, Anglo-French community of interest could be highlighted, especially 'the need to co-operate economically and

technologically' in order to develop a strong European power base which would in time 'produce exactly the kind of common approach to world problems – and to other world powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union – which [de Gaulle] professes to desire'.⁹ The problem with this approach, however, was that the French president's opposition to British entry rested on two apparently adamant assumptions: first, that Britain's natural orientation in foreign policy was Anglo-American, not European; and second, that British entry would lead to a dissipation of France's dominance in the EEC and to the exposure of that institution to American influence. Nevertheless, revealing the overconfidence which Young has commented upon, Wilson was convinced by the FO's tactical advice:

France and Britain are politically stable. If we give a pledge, we can deliver. Unlike Germany (also Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Italy). In a sense, more stable than the U.S., who are more subject to Congressional pressures. The General and I can sign a treaty and carry it. LBJ can't be certain [He couldn't pull out of Vietnam if he wanted to]...¹⁰

When he met the General in Paris on 24/25 January 1967, Wilson's desire to assert British independence and his eagerness for revived Anglo-French *entente* within the EEC led him to make statements notable for their divergence from the recent norms of British foreign policy. A relaxation of East-West tension would be impossible, Wilson said, unless Britain and France

... pulled their full weight, in the most complete sense of that word, and did so not only within the alliance but also more generally. Europe had an even wider role to play in the world at large; but she would not be able to play it unless she were powerful – and that meant economically powerful. The task of the great European Powers – of France and of Britain – was not to be mere messenger boys between the two great Powers. They had a bigger role to play – and other nations wished them to play it – than merely waiting in the anterooms while the two great Powers settle everything direct between themselves.¹¹

De Gaulle continued to bewail the priority Britain had hitherto given to its relationship with the US (which he saw as 'an inescapable fact of life') but Wilson countered that things had changed and Britain now

'sought independence in the same way as France sought it and was beginning to practise it'.¹² The PM's advocacy had some effect: by the end of the talks, de Gaulle had gained the strong impression that Britain 'really wished to moor itself alongside the continent' and was 'disposed to detach itself to some extent from the special relationship which it had, or had had, with the U.S.A., thus enabling it to be a European country'. As such, Wilson's Paris diplomacy chimed with 'the basic element' in de Gaulle's idea of Europe, namely that it 'must be an enfranchised continent (*affranchi*), as indeed it must be to play its proper part in the world'.

Yet, as historians of Britain's evolving EEC policy have pointed out, de Gaulle cleaved to serious doubts about the reality of Wilson's claims to independence. 'Reasonably enough,' Parr suggests, 'de Gaulle suspected that Wilson's explanation of independence from the USA differed radically from France's'. Similarly, Young has argued that 'in the fields which de Gaulle felt strongly about, such as nuclear weapons, NATO defence policy and finance, Wilson *was* close to America'.¹³ To this list must also be added *détente*. Indeed, Wilson's extended focus on this subject as a means of convincing de Gaulle both of Britain's international autonomy and its shared objectives with France served merely to expose Britain's distance from de Gaulle's conception and actually undermined the British case. While Wilson and Brown had a right to invoke Britain's thinking on East-West relations since 1966 as evidence of independence from the United States – as we have seen, the Americans opposed the idea of a declaration on Europe – the UK was still a supporter of the multilateral approach to *détente* through the Atlantic Alliance, a position which de Gaulle had consistently rejected. Moreover, by trying to appeal to de Gaulle on this subject, the British fanned his concerns that Britain would not only vie with France for leadership in the EEC but work against his attempt to restore French power through independent action in the Cold War.

The probe thus did little to negate de Gaulle's opposition to British entry which he continued to perceive as a threat to France and the EEC and to the solidarity of the Six which he required in the greater contemporaneous struggle with the Johnson administration over the reform of the international monetary system.¹⁴ In his talks with Wilson, de Gaulle had not spoken explicitly of vetoing a second British EEC bid but he had hinted – ominously, in view of London's desire for full membership – that 'some means other than membership' might be appropriate for the UK.¹⁵ In London, meanwhile, the foreign secretary accentuated the positive in reporting to Cabinet on the EEC probe.

French uncertainty and ambivalence were noted, but so too was the enthusiasm of the Five for British entry although Brown did concede that none were ready to back the UK to the point of rupture with de Gaulle and so risk EEC fragmentation. Nevertheless, Brown judged, negotiating difficulties had been reduced and he was more than ever persuaded of 'the commanding position' in the Community that awaited Britain 'if the difficulties which at present stand in the way of membership can be overcome'.¹⁶

American attitudes towards the probe, Britain and the EEC

The Americans, too, looked forward to the UK assuming a 'commanding position' in EEC affairs. In the State Department, news of the probe had been applauded as 'a new and highly significant phase of post-war Atlantic area history'.¹⁷ A CIA analysis pointed out that 'US interests are heavily involved in London's efforts to resolve its heretofore ambiguous relations to the Continent' via a second EEC bid:

British success would contribute an important new element to European stability and in turn significantly influence the subsequent course of Europe's relations with the US. ... Put briefly, Britain's attempt to gain EEC membership could change – and if successful, decisively change – the outlook for European integration, De Gaulle's prospects for preserving France's predominant role in Western Europe, and Europe's relationship with the US. These questions were at issue in 1963 when De Gaulle vetoed British accession, and they still are. In fact, the present state of European and Atlantic relationships is fluid enough to make the outcome of Britain's bid more crucial now than in 1963.¹⁸

At the same time US estimates of the probe's outcome were downbeat, with the State Department concluding that Wilson's 'chances of disabusing de Gaulle of his idea that the British are unprepared to desert their special relationship with the US and their Commonwealth ties in order to join an "independent" Europe seem slim indeed'. Over the long term, 'new alignments in which the UK's admission might hold certain attractions for Paris' – such as if the renewed Franco-German relationship faltered – might possibly alter French opinion. For the moment, however, while the Germans favoured British entry for both economic and political reasons, the 'reanimation of Franco-German relations may mean that Bonn will tend to defer to de Gaulle on the

question, or at least will not allow it to poison relations with Paris'. State thought that de Gaulle considered himself to be in 'a relatively stronger and more key position in Western Europe and in Western Europe's dealings with the USSR and Eastern Europe' than in 1963 and, in consequence, US influence, 'then so strongly exerted [o]n behalf of West European political integration and a tightly knit Atlantic community, is now less felt by most West Europeans and is often considered by them to be directed towards interests outside the area'.¹⁹ As for President Johnson, when first informed of the probe he claimed to be 'immensely heartened' by the news. A Britain inside the EEC would 'certainly help to strengthen and unify the West' and he offered Wilson his assistance in helping 'smooth the path' to British accession (as we will see, the Americans and the British agreed that the best thing that Washington could do was to do very little).²⁰ For Johnson, UK EEC membership had become enmeshed with his long-term European policy objectives and, in the short-term, with his efforts to counter the Gaullist challenge.

The Americans recognised that the political stakes were high for Wilson in making EEC membership a centre-piece of his government's economic and foreign policies. Public backing for UK entry ran at around 70 percent according to some opinion polls, with popular attitudes reflected in a cross-party consensus in parliament. Thus there was no question that a successful EEC initiative would be popular.²¹ But by the same token, the failure of a second application could be politically disastrous to Labour. A potential domestic dividend was not the only factor animating Wilson. According to CIA analyses, the EEC move was designed to encourage investment in British industry, stabilise the British economy, and 'divert attention from failures in other areas'; it was further motivated by longer term 'disillusion with the Commonwealth and with the Anglo-American "special relationship" as vehicles for British influence in the world', sentiments associated with 'a desire to get out of costly military commitments east of Suez'.²² However, while approving of Britain's EEC policy, this combination of factors – and the possibility that Wilson might use them as bargaining chips with de Gaulle in ways that would undermine vital US interests – troubled the Johnson administration.

Washington policy-makers were relatively relaxed about the possibility that the British, as an EEC tactic, might promote the idea of a European caucus within the Atlantic Alliance (the US would generally welcome such a development as adding cohesion to Western Europe and NATO).²³ But the Americans were greatly exercised by the

possibility that Britain might also seek to buy de Gaulle's approval by concessions on sterling, nuclear arrangements, Vietnam or defence commitments east of Suez. In all these areas the administration wanted Britain to abide by long-standing agreements. At the very least, if London was to alter its stance on sterling balances 'and related unmentionables' such as devaluation to improve its economic status as an EEC aspirant, the US would want to be consulted in advance. On a possible nuclear concession, the Johnson administration shared its predecessor's aversion to any British attempt to win de Gaulle's good offices by playing the nuclear card (though this tactic never reached the proportions of 1961–63).²⁴ But the Americans were also concerned that the British might be tempted to assert their European credentials by distancing themselves from the US over Vietnam. Equally, if not more disturbing, the UK might seek to revise or reduce its defence posture east of Suez.

Drawing these concerns together, Bator felt it would be best if the British could be persuaded 'to avoid a "go-for-broke this spring/fish-or-cut-bait" mentality' and to 'dig in for a long siege' should the French block entry. Bator recognised that British accession was only really likely after de Gaulle had departed the political scene, and he acknowledged the redundancy, from the US viewpoint, of any non-EEC alternative, especially some new US-UK-Commonwealth grouping. A self-confessed Anglophile, Bator personally regretted that an Anglo-American alternative was now ruled out. 'In terms of a healthy Europe and a self-respecting and serious role for Britain', he observed, 'the central fact is that we are just too large to be a comfortable dancing partner. It's too bad'.²⁵ However, there were those in Washington who would not mourn a diminished Anglo-American relationship. In conversation with the Dutch ambassador to Washington on 10 January 1967, Robert Bowie, a State Department veteran cast in the George Ball mould when it came to thinking on the Anglo-American relationship and Europe, described the special relationship as something which 'perhaps the British have stressed ... for lack of an alternate policy'; they would now be 'wise to turn an ability to talk to us into a European asset, providing [themselves] a greater role in a unified Europe'.²⁶

On 11 January 1967 the British Ambassador to Washington, Patrick Dean, lunched at the White House with senior US policy-makers, among them Bator, Bowie, John Leddy and Gene and Walt Rostow.²⁷ Dean's views on Anglo-American relations were well-established: though the Americans valued 'our special relationship' they were 'not prepared to make special efforts to foster it'; Britain thus needed to get

into the EEC and then use its 'resources and political sagacity' to unite Europe within the Atlantic world and in the process respond to US foreign policy impulses.²⁸ These opinions were confirmed by the White House lunch. As Dean reported back to London, US enthusiasm for Britain's entry into the EEC was palpable – but so too was a sense of alteration underway in Anglo-American relations. One important effect of British EEC membership, Dean judged, would be the strengthening of the European grouping in the Atlantic Alliance, but this could have 'awkward implications' for the US 'in the political, economic, defence and financial fields'. The Americans, in sum, accepted that British success in Europe might come at the price of UK conflict with the US on certain issues. There was, however, one area of potential friction that Washington policy-makers were quick to ring-fence. Britain, they warned, should do nothing in the Far East – including force withdrawals either as an end in themselves or in connection with EEC policy – that would endanger the American position in Vietnam. Once the war was over, then US attitudes might well change. It was 'a question of time scales', Dean concluded. 'The Vietnamese problem is, they hope, a very short term one by comparison with the evolution of Western Europe towards greater unity. The nature and importance of our presence east of Suez would need to be assessed against an entirely different, and at present unpredictable, set of factors once there is a Vietnamese settlement'. On the other issues dominating Anglo-American relations, sterling and the international monetary system, the ambassador found the Americans both fearful that the Europeans (other than the UK) had little sympathy for the reserve role of the dollar and sterling, and desirous of continued UK attachment to their own plans, rather than Gaullist alternatives, for reform of the international monetary system (as we will see below).²⁹

Having outlined to Dean in general terms their political approach to Britain's EEC policy, the Americans next circulated more formal guidelines to American embassies abroad.³⁰ In public, the State Department advised, officials should convey US backing for the UK in line with Johnson's 7 October speech – though, as agreed with the British, the US government itself would not make public statements of support lest these 'give those who have doubts about UK entry additional information'. More confidentially, US diplomats were apprised of likely French objections to UK plans based on prejudice towards 'the so called "special relationship"'. Rusk counselled that 'If this latter point [is] raised privately by EEC members, you should indicate that we have bilateral relationship[s] with most European countries including EEC

members which continue in spite of EEC membership.' While in practice there was not much to be done to counter the special nature of the Anglo-American relationship in French eyes, Rusk's comment that backing the UK bid for entry 'might entail adjustments in US-UK relations' again hinted that Washington was preparing itself for changes in its relations with London. When the FO was shown a copy of Rusk's circular, officials noted three caveats attached to American backing for the UK's EEC policy, namely the importance of an unconditional approach to the Community, the necessity of Kennedy Round completion, and opposition to alternatives. These US prerequisites would remain constant as Britain moved towards its decision on a second application in May 1967. Moreover, the Wilson government's compliance on all three counts, albeit for its own reasons, might have done much to ensure harmonious Anglo-American relations had not ministers taken the near-simultaneous decision in another realm of British overseas policy.

Judging from Dean's reports, the US government anticipated that Britain's entry into the EEC would not only transform the Atlantic partnership and European unity but also the Anglo-American relationship. While similar expectations had existed in 1961 when Britain made its first application, both the US-Western European and Anglo-American political contexts had since altered. Strains imposed by the Vietnam war, de Gaulle's challenge to the existing political order, and signs of Britain's re-evaluation of its world role, all enhanced the prospects for transition in 1967. Writing to Brown, Dean said that the Americans recognised this nascent adjustment and believed 'that they themselves and the Western community would be better off for the existence of a "loyal opposition"'. It was within this framework that the special relationship would evolve:

The thought of our acquiring the status of 51st state is as repugnant to them as they assume it to be to us. They seem to think, however paradoxically, that our influence over their own policies, which they see as a good thing, would be diminished rather than enhanced if we become too firmly linked to their chariot. They believe that close Anglo-American understanding and co-operation will be at least as important to their general aims and interests in the future as it has been in the past, and they expect that in spite of possible theoretical difficulties and problems of adjustment if we join the EEC, such understanding and co-operation will in fact continue and may even grow stronger. The continuing value of our rela-

tionship to them will depend largely on the degree to which we can act as a force for stability, reason and responsibility, within the region which our power is centred – Europe.³¹

This was quite a prediction. If the British were able to play their part – that is to say, join the EEC whilst avoiding crossing the Americans on one of their political/military conditions – the special relationship stood to benefit. There were two obvious problems with this scenario. The first, which is one of the greater themes of this book, is that the British themselves were less assured that their relationship with the US would not be diluted in a new European arena, a symptom of which were consistent expressions of concern about a special US-German relationship. The second problem, which is of specific relevance to 1967/68, is that unbeknown to the Americans, the Wilson government had not only initiated a new EEC policy, but that it had also begun reviewing Britain's east of Suez commitments with the aim of producing within months decisions on major withdrawals. The coincidence of these developments in Britain's foreign policy would have a transforming effect on the Anglo-American relationship as we shall see in detail in the next chapters.

Complicating factors

Interviewed in 1971 about his recollections of working in the Johnson administration, George Ball claimed that 'I had always sort of taken the lead on European policy, and I didn't get much interference...' as the president 'was rather content to leave it to me'.³² Ball's departure from State in 1966 did not change this situation mainly because Johnson continued to be preoccupied by other matters, not least Vietnam. There was a 'powerful group' according to Ambassador Dean 'whose views tend to predominate within the government' on European policy. As for the president, his thinking was 'more difficult to define' though he was not believed to possess 'any close feeling for European affairs or any strong views on Atlantic institutions'. Johnson would involve himself sporadically in European affairs, such as over the MLF and the France-NATO crisis, but generally 'his influence has been exercised in the sense of discouraging excessive interference on the United States' part and leaving it to the Europeans to work out their own consensus'. This did not mean that the president failed to support the European policies put to him but it implied that he would not take the lead unless he felt he had to – a view confirmed by this

book's analysis. The Wilson government's EEC policy was an example of how Johnson was, at first, content to leave his advisers to manage the US response. Two events changed that. The first, to be dealt with now, was a coalescence of international factors which served to complicate Britain's EEC policy. The second, which will be covered later, was when the Wilson government threatened to do exactly what the US government had asked it not to do in relation to its EEC policy, namely take decisions on Britain's defence presence east of Suez and that would 'sell' the Americans 'down the river on Vietnam'.³³

It was Walt Rostow who stimulated the president's interest in the European situation. Following a visit to London, Rostow wrote to Johnson on 26 February 1967 outlining his thoughts on the politico-diplomatic issues currently affecting Western Europe. Chief among these were relations with Germany and the problematic UK-US-FRG negotiations which, as we have seen, had been convened in October 1966 to seek solutions to the problem of foreign exchange costs for UK and US troops stationed in Germany. These negotiations were already in difficulty but Rostow felt that the diplomatic atmosphere surrounding them had been worsened by matters of international importance, notably Soviet hostility towards the Germans and the superpowers' renewed interest in a non-proliferation treaty. 'We and the British have been proceeding on a series of somewhat separate tracks', Rostow informed Johnson, 'without coordination among them, which, taken together, have put great strain on Germany and opened up important possibilities for de Gaulle and, perhaps, Strauss'.³⁴ It would 'not take much initiative' on de Gaulle's part to engineer the failure of the Kennedy Round, the collapse of the trilateral negotiations (hence 'very substantial British and considerable U.S. withdrawals' from Germany), the destruction of the non-proliferation treaty, and a 'gravely diluted' Anglo-American influence in and over Europe. The long-standing American anxiety that de Gaulle might use the Franco-German relationship to exploit Germany's dissatisfaction with its relations with the US and the UK for the good of his own policies had become acute. Rostow's solution was to relieve the pressure on the Germans by pushing through an agreement in the trilaterals and by securing a German commitment to both the non-proliferation treaty and the Kennedy Round. But success required one of Johnson's rare interventions. 'I am convinced,' Rostow told him, that 'the heart of the matter right now is for you to take Kiesinger up on a mountain and discuss the great common stakes in coming through these months with an alliance that can outlast de Gaulle'.³⁵ In the event, the president did as Rostow asked. But

before we examine Johnson's personal diplomacy it is necessary to look in more detail at the factors complicating both US-European relations and Britain's EEC policy.

The Kosygin visit

The visit to London in early February 1967 of the Soviet premier, Alexei Kosygin, was to have been the moment when Wilson's attempts to broker peace in Vietnam produced, in the words of David Bruce, 'the biggest diplomatic coup of this century'. Instead it resulted in what the prime minister himself called 'a hell of a situation'.³⁶ With just a few days left before the end of the latest US bombing halt, Wilson secured Kosygin's agreement to put new US proposals for a negotiated settlement to the Hanoi leadership. But as the Soviet premier was taking his leave of London, the Americans suddenly transmitted to Wilson a revised and more demanding proposal which Kosygin promptly disowned. This episode, which deeply embarrassed the prime minister (and spoke volumes for the poor state of the Johnson-Wilson relationship), has been much discussed in the historiography of the Vietnam war and has tended to eclipse other important aspects of the Kosygin visit.³⁷ For example, on 9 February, in a speech at Westminster, the Soviet premier spoke warmly of the USSR's desire to improve relations with Britain. On the specific issue of European security, Kosygin called for acceptance of the inviolability of existing borders, recognition of the GDR, and the prevention of West German access to nuclear weapons. He also declared Soviet support for a non-proliferation treaty and in doing so, stated that British and Soviet interests on the question of disarmament 'undoubtedly coincide'. Finally, in the pursuit of 'peaceful co-existence', Kosygin proposed an Anglo-Soviet treaty of 'friendship, peaceful co-operation and non-aggression'.³⁸ In the political context of early 1967 it would have been difficult for the Soviet leader to have come up with a list of statements exceeding this one for the dissension it sowed between Britain and its western allies, especially the Germans and Americans. In each area singled out by Kosygin – European security, non-proliferation and the Anglo-Soviet treaty proposal – there were difficulties.

Although the British did not endorse Soviet aims on either European borders or GDR recognition (and had remained firm on both in private discussions with the Soviets), they did share Kosygin's opposition to German access to nuclear hardware.³⁹ Britain was not the only western European power to hold this position – France being the significant

other – but it was alone in fully supporting the idea of a NPT which, following a series of false starts, had been taken up with vigour by American and Soviet negotiators.⁴⁰ However, the NPT talks produced concerns among non-nuclear powers that they would be prevented from ever achieving nuclear status. The Germans in particular saw the NPT as a form of discrimination, while Kosygin's public remark in London that the FRG would have to sign the NPT 'whether it wanted or not' did little to quell Bonn's fears of a superpower deal arrived at over its head.⁴¹ Kiesinger made his concerns clear on this point during Wilson's EEC probe meetings in Bonn on 16 February:

There was a feeling that Germany was to be downgraded to the status of a tenth-rate power, not only because of the content of the non-proliferation Treaty but to a large measure because of the manner in which that Treaty had been prepared and then put to Germany. It was generally felt that the ground was being cut from beneath her feet, that alliances were no longer reliable and that NATO was no longer a coherent entity and was becoming an anachronism. The United States and Britain seemed to be following a different policy from the rest of NATO and it was felt that the German problem was being written off by their allies.⁴²

Somewhat insensitively, Wilson described the Kosygin visit to London as a 'high-water mark' in Anglo-Soviet relations, a comment that must have increased German alarm and possibly undermined the prime minister's attempt to secure Bonn's backing for the UK's EEC bid.⁴³ Having said this, Kiesinger was quick to distance himself from recent comments by his finance minister, Strauss, to the effect that the NPT would divide the world 'between first and second class nations'. The chancellor gave the British a private assurance that his government intended to sign the NPT for the good of its evolving *Ostpolitik* (though he hoped that a preamble to the treaty would include safeguards for the civilian use of nuclear energy).⁴⁴ Interestingly, however, Kiesinger did not disavow other points made by Strauss, including criticism of the proposed Anglo-Soviet treaty and the reflection that 'the whole Kosygin visit to the United Kingdom was most unfortunate in its effect on Anglo-German relations'.⁴⁵ Given that those relations were already strained by continuing arguments in the trilateral talks, Wilson's efforts to outdo de Gaulle in the pursuit of détente did little to improve Britain's standing in Germany. Nor, for that matter, did it help Anglo-American relations.

In a message to Johnson on 11 February Wilson tried to pre-empt American complaints about an Anglo-Soviet treaty by insisting that he would not allow Moscow 'to drive even the thinnest wedges between us and our allies'. As evidence of his sincerity, Wilson said he had made it 'abundantly clear' to the Russians that Britain could not accept their proposal for a European security conference unless the US was also a member. Nonetheless he maintained that there was 'some political advantage' in pursuing bilateral links in an effort to achieve 'a patient reconstruction of relations with Russia and Eastern Europe'.⁴⁶ This may well have been true, yet there was no disguising the extent to which Britain was out of line with US policy. The Americans only tolerated bilateral ties between their allies in the West and the Soviet bloc if the method chosen to foster those ties had been previously agreed in a multilateral forum like NATO. De Gaulle refused to abide by this principle in his détente policies and this partly explains the fraught state of US-French relations. Now Wilson was exhibiting signs of independent action with a Gaullist tinge in procedure at least.

As it happened, there would be little progress on an Anglo-Soviet treaty during the rest of 1967 mainly because Moscow showed scant interest in following up its own suggestion.⁴⁷ But this did not prevent this 'non-treaty' generating criticism within NATO of the Wilson government's apparent unilateralism, while the Americans joined others in the Western alliance in 'expressing concern about the risk that the Soviets might use such a treaty against Germany and against NATO'.⁴⁸ The British thus found themselves badly isolated in Western councils on the question of East-West relations – the only other recent occasion when they had been so out on a limb was in the promotion of their proposed declaration on Europe in 1966. In combination, that initiative and the Kosygin visit did not augur well for Britain's influence in the Harmel Exercise that was in its very early stages in NATO in February 1967 (a subject which we will return to later). Wilson had hoped to use the Kosygin visit and a consequent improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations to enhance Britain's position in Europe by exhibiting the UK's ability to act independently in the pursuit of détente. In practice, however, Wilson's earlier claim during probe meetings that British membership of the EEC would aid the reduction of tensions between East and West Europe began to ring hollow in the wake of the Kosygin talks. The prime minister remained bullish on the subject; in a letter to de Gaulle on 16 February he linked the French leader's détente initiatives to his own interest in an Anglo-Soviet treaty, though this was also a rather transparent device to stress

Anglo-French solidarity in the context of the looming UK EEC application.⁴⁹

De Gaulle's France was not the only danger presenting itself to Britain's EEC plans in early 1967. Wilson informed Johnson that his probe visit to Bonn had left him 'deeply worried' about the German reaction to the NPT and its likely knock-on effect for Britain's EEC application.⁵⁰ These fears lingered. By mid-March the CIA calculated that UK support for the NPT, combined with the troubled trilateral negotiations and London's 'current eagerness to conclude a treaty of friendship with Moscow', had provided much ammunition for those 'sceptics' on the continent 'further to question the extent of Britain's "European mindedness"'. All of these issues had become 'touchstones for testing Britain's attitudes'.⁵¹ Viewed in this light, the Wilson government's decision henceforward to tone-down its public support for the NPT was designed to buttress its EEC prospects.⁵² A similar EEC motive also shaped Britain's diplomacy in connection with another sore spot in Anglo-American and Anglo-German relations, the trilateral negotiations.

The trilateral negotiations and international money

The UK-US-FRG trilateral talks, convened in autumn 1966, involved high stakes and high anxieties. As we saw in the previous chapter, the British, compelled by the weakness of sterling, had threatened to throw the negotiations (and with them the Atlantic Alliance) into turmoil by unilaterally withdrawing troops from Germany. The Americans were acutely concerned that cuts in Britain's force levels would create a domino effect which could lead to the collapse of Western defence collaboration in Germany and to a parallel breakdown of the fledgling Anglo-American-German cooperation at the heart of the now Frenchless NATO. The USSR would be the only victor in that situation, other than de Gaulle. Anxious to avoid this disastrous scenario, the Johnson administration effectively bought Britain's commitment to remain party to the trilaterals for six months from December 1966 by investing an additional \$35 million in the British economy. In so doing, they also hoped to gain breathing space until the new Grand Coalition in Bonn was ready to represent Germany in the talks.

In early 1967, success in the trilaterals was all the more important as the Paris visit of Kiesinger and Brandt on 13/14 January suggested a 'renewed Franco/German embrace' and as Bonn's dissatisfaction with the NPT continued.⁵³ De Gaulle certainly attempted to unite France

and Germany by defining their relationships with the USA in contrast with the UK-US relationship.⁵⁴ While the pro-Atlanticism of the German government was not yet in doubt, there were concerns about the possible effect on US-German relations of pressure from Gaullists inside Germany and from de Gaulle outside.⁵⁵ It was at this point that Johnson took control of the trilateral negotiations from Washington in a brief, intense period of US-German and US-UK diplomacy in March 1967 which prepared the way for final agreement.⁵⁶ Johnson was never more engaged in his administration's European policy than when relations with Germany, the threat of de Gaulle or a negative impact in US domestic politics were involved and in the case of the trilaterals all three were present, just as they had been amid de Gaulle's withdrawal of France from NATO in spring 1966.

The trilateral negotiations did not resume formally until 27 February 1967 after a hiatus of almost three months. By that stage, however, it had become plain that prospects were bleak. On 1 March, Johnson's frustration was revealed during a meeting to brief the US representative to the trilaterals, McCloy, when the president spoke of the need to pressure the Germans to save the Alliance by paying for it.⁵⁷ After McCloy had conveyed American views to Kiesinger on 5 March, Johnson wrote directly to the chancellor on the 11th, playing the US-German relations and Alliance cards to call for German flexibility in the trilaterals and support in the upcoming negotiations on international liquidity before offering reassurance of American sensitivity to German concerns on the NPT.⁵⁸ It was then only a short distance to an agreement among the American, British and German representatives at the 20/21 March 1967 trilateral talks after the German cabinet had agreed to work towards resolution.⁵⁹ Johnson's leadership had its effect, as did 'the mutual interest in the preservation of the European security structure' among the three states.⁶⁰ The British, it seems, had been the beneficiaries of Johnson's diplomacy and Kiesinger's concessions. They had themselves contributed to agreement by finally departing from their maximum position, but their ability to affect the course of the negotiations had been curtailed by the commitments they had entered into with the Americans under the \$35million deal. With an eye on his developing EEC policy and the importance of good Anglo-German relations (as one observer put it, 'trying to get into Europe politically and getting out militarily makes no sense'), Wilson's strategy for the trilaterals was to pursue what was practical, politically, as suggested by the FO and Ministry of Defence (MoD), rather than following an alternative uncompromising Treasury approach.⁶¹ Despite this stance, the British otherwise showed little

flexibility and it is remarkable that there was no presidential pressure on Wilson after he had restated Britain's fixed position in talks with McCloy on 3 March.⁶² Instead, there was amicable communication from Bator and a secret meeting between McCloy and Thomson ahead of the final trilateral talks.⁶³ During the first phase of the trilateral negotiations in late 1966 the British had felt as much and perhaps more of Johnson's influence than had Erhard. Now, in 1967, they felt relatively little. Their compliance under the \$35 million arrangement partly explains why but there was another factor which came to bear and that was American expectations of Britain's role in defeating the Gaullist challenge and in sustaining a global defence presence.

In spring 1967, American policy towards Britain and the offset question became embroiled with the wider issue of international monetary reform. In late February, US Under Secretary Gene Rostow told the British embassy in Washington that the president was very much aware of Britain's economic situation and was eager to help; he thought this might be done by adding the question of international monetary cooperation to the trilateral negotiations and reaching agreements on that issue as well as on offset payments.⁶⁴ According to Ambassador Dean, the Americans were 'determined to seize this opportunity to create a link between western security and defence on the one hand and international monetary management and reform on the other'.⁶⁵ International liquidity and the reform of the international monetary system were pressing problems for the US government in the mid-1960s; domestic economic difficulties, fanned by inflation, meant that increased international liquidity was vital to US economic expansion. Indeed, as O'Hara points out, the Americans and the British, both facing balance of payments problems, had 'a shared interest in expanding international credit while retaining a link between any new unit of liquidity and their own currencies' so as to control inflation.⁶⁶ Hence, the Anglo-American relationship was epitomised in a financial sense through joint support for the continuation of the reserve currency status of the dollar and sterling in the reform of the international monetary system. De Gaulle believed that the reserve currency system privileged the Americans and the British and thus from 1963-64 he challenged it. With support from other EEC member states, France proposed a new reserve unit which would not be tied to the dollar, and in 1965 even suggested that the international monetary system return to the Gold Standard. If de Gaulle succeeded in his objective, the primacy of the dollar and America's ability to control its deficits would be lost and Britain's economy would also face upheaval.⁶⁷

This long-standing dispute between the Americans, the British and the French intensified in early 1967 as cracks appeared in international support for the de Gaulle proposals.⁶⁸ It was the possibility of exposing those cracks and weakening de Gaulle's position that lay in part behind the Johnson administration's suggestion that international finance be added to the trilateral negotiations. As Dean reported to London on 10 March, 'the president appears to have endorsed, and to have persuaded Congressional leaders to support, a policy of detaching Germany from France in the context of international liquidity'.⁶⁹ The initiative was thus a move in America's competition with France for the loyalty of Germany and its struggle with de Gaulle. But Dean also identified additional UK-specific motives, namely the idea that any new financial arrangement attached to the offset agreement would include 'not only continued [British] participation in defence contributions East and West of Suez, but also some financial quid pro quo, e.g. the liberalization of capital movements and the sale of gold to the United States'. The Americans would also expect the British, once in the EEC, to 'retain the dollar/sterling relationship'. In fact, they believed that this new financial arrangement would assist Britain's EEC policy by solving the problem of the weakness of sterling as a barrier to British entry. As such, the informal and secret offer of a loan, when it came, was different from those previous loans offered to the Wilson government to help sort out Britain's economic troubles.⁷⁰ The 1967 offer had panacean objectives. It would not only strengthen Britain's economy, keep the British east of Suez and assist their entry into the EEC, thus defending that institution from de Gaulle's challenge, but also, by involving the Germans, split them from the French and go towards solving the international liquidity problem on lines acceptable to the Americans.

On 5 March, Walt Rostow 'floated' the idea of a multi-billion dollar long-term stabilisation loan to Britain in conversation with Patrick Dean. Although the suggestion was 'personal and unofficial' Rostow clearly spoke with presidential approval:

Britain was standing at the parting of the ways. If we were to maintain our role as a world power (and it was strongly in the U.S. interest that we should), we must somehow be absolved from the servitudes imposed upon us by having to balance our international accounts in the short term at the price of deflation at home and retrenchment abroad. ... Failing this, the Americans foresee progressive reduction of our overseas defence and aid commitments to our own detriment and to that of the U.S. and the free world as a whole.

If the British failed to 'seize the initiative', Rostow continued, and instead 'settled for the more conservative course on which we appeared to be bent at present, the right conditions would probably never recur and the Americans look forward to attending sadly at our funeral'. Rostow was unaware that the Wilson and his colleagues were already planning for withdrawal from east of Suez and thus the prospect of a loan that would commit Britain to a course that it had already begun to reject contributed to the British response. In addition, British policy-makers had cause to dispute Rostow's claim that the proposed loan, by 'reinforcing' the UK's domestic and international economic and financial position, would strengthen its EEC negotiating hand 'both by impressing the Six of our value as a partner and, if there is a French veto, by enabling us to sit things out until de Gaulle has left the scene'.⁷¹ London thought that the opposite would be true. Wilson believed a loan would play into French hands; 'what would be worse for the Europe approach,' he wrote, 'withdrawing troops or entering an Atlantic ("anti-French") arrangement of this kind? A new Nassau?'⁷² By this logic, if in 1962 the Polaris deal sunk the first application, in 1967 it would be a deal on the pound that gave de Gaulle motive to veto. Wilson nevertheless instructed ministers to reach a decision on the American proposal, not least because despite his personal scepticism he too was thinking, like Rostow, of what would happen should a second EEC application fall foul of the French president.

As the government worked towards a position on the loan offer, it was highly concerned that the idea be 'kept secure' and found the implication that US Congressional leaders had been involved 'most disturbing'.⁷³ A leak could adversely affect Britain's standing in Paris and Bonn in connection with its European diplomacy; worse still, the Americans were apparently looking to the Germans to fund possibly one-third of the loan in which case the French were bound to learn what was going on.⁷⁴ From Paris, Ambassador Reilly warned that if Britain accepted 'increased indebtedness to the United States as a solution to our offset problem we must expect the French to tell the Five that this is another example of our dependence on the United States and another obstacle to our joining the EEC'. Conversely, if Britain were to turn a loan down, the display of independence might actually impress de Gaulle.⁷⁵ In the end the British hedged their bets. At the first meeting of the *ad hoc* cabinet committee established to take decisions on the final stages of the trilateral negotiations Callaghan explained that the American loan suggestion had not been thought through and that it was not in Britain's interest to mix long-term

financial issues with the short-term need to solve the foreign exchange problem with Germany. The chancellor thus recommended that the government turn down the US invitation to send senior civil servants to Washington for talks, though the rejection should be worded in such a way that the possibility of a future loan in connection with Britain's longer-term economic requirements would not be foreclosed.⁷⁶ The Callaghan line was supported by Trend and Wilson's economic adviser, Balogh, who recommended 'humouring' the Americans for six months by which time the fate of the UK's new EEC bid might be decided; if the bid failed, then a loan would be of value.⁷⁷ On 20 March the prime minister agreed to a holding operation.⁷⁸ Against the backdrop of expected retrenchment from east of Suez, the British government saw EEC membership as the preferred solution to its economic weakness. But should that solution fail to materialise, then special financial relations between the US and the UK could substitute as the engine for economic recovery.

It was the day after ministers in London reached their decision on the loan that they also gave Britain's representative at the trilaterals, George Thomson, authority to accept the deal which had just been framed in the talks.⁷⁹ The Johnson administration had decided against any interweaving of the trilateral negotiations with a more grandiose, parallel agreement on the international monetary system, a decision that redounded to the benefit of America's relations with its two foremost European allies and for the good of the Atlantic Alliance as a whole. De Gaulle's challenge to the dollar would be fought in another arena and at another point in 1967. The trilateral deal itself was a compromise between German acceptance of adjustments in UK and US military deployments in the FRG and American and British acceptance of new financial arrangements to support those troops.⁸⁰ In talks with Wilson in April, Kiesinger and Brandt 'assented with some amusement to the Prime Minister's proposition that a solution had been achieved that was unsatisfactory to all parties; it could no doubt therefore be described as a satisfactory agreement'.⁸¹ It was satisfactory in more ways than one. It brought stability to UK-US-FRG relations, prevented 'an unravelling in NATO' and denied de Gaulle a further reason to criticise the organisation.⁸² And from a purely British standpoint, a trilateral agreement which dealt only with the foreign exchange costs issue and not with the wider international monetary questions that the Johnson administration had contemplated was warmly to be welcomed at a moment when the UK government was embracing decisions which would foreshadow historic changes in British foreign policy.

On 21 March Wilson chaired two ministerial meetings. The first, of the full Cabinet, reviewed the EEC probe and agreed the procedure which would lead to decision on an EEC application. At the second, ministers approved the UK-US-FRG trilateral deal.⁸³ The following day, in the OPD, Wilson chaired the cabinet committee which reached the resolution which would lead to Britain's historic retreat from east of Suez.⁸⁴ Though these decisions appeared to be linked, it was a case of coincidental timing rather than cause and effect. Yet, as 1967 wore on, the EEC and the east of Suez decisions ran in parallel and Britain's advance towards Europe and its retreat from the world were planned contemporaneously. This reorientation, especially in the long run, rested on the success of the new EEC policy. If it failed, Dean Acheson's 1962 judgement that 'Great Britain has lost an empire and not yet found a role' would be proved right.⁸⁵ From the start, however, Britain's 1967 approach to Europe had been complicated in a wider political sense by the Wilson government's response to Kosygin's offer of Anglo-Soviet friendship and its attitude towards the NPT. Thanks to the Johnson administration, the deal on foreign exchange costs had, at least, removed one political obstacle in the way of closer Anglo-German relations. Attention would now be focused on removing others as Britain progressed towards making a formal application to the Six. The British government's EEC policy dovetailed with the US government's Atlantic and European objectives but its decision to give up its defence commitments east of Suez would conflict fundamentally with Washington's wider geo-political policies. The result was the greatest row in Anglo-American relations since 1956 and, on both sides of the Atlantic, a re-evaluation of the special relationship.

5

The Decision to Apply and to Pull Out: Anglo-American Relations, Britain's Second EEC Application and East of Suez, March to June 1967

Introduction

Harold Wilson became leader of the Labour Party in an era when 'foreign affairs took the centre of the political stage'. Two questions were 'dominant – the European Common Market and defence, particularly the issue of nuclear weapons'.¹ It was Harold Macmillan who as prime minister had control over these matters and they had for him become analogous with a sustained British world role, a role that Wilson himself wished to retain for his country. In contrast with his Conservative predecessor, however, Wilson was not attached, at first, to the EEC as a vehicle for British international strength. Instead, he was an east of Suez man. Shortly after taking office, he made a speech in the House of Commons on 16 December 1964 in which he said that 'I want to make it quite clear that whatever we may do in the field of cost effectiveness ... we cannot afford to relinquish our world role ... which ... is sometimes called our "East of Suez role"'.² There was also something more personal about this choice. Wilson was 'not a natural European'; instead, he believed that Britain's 'frontiers [were] in the Himalayas'.³

As we have seen, in 1966 Wilson reached the conclusion that Macmillan had reached before him: EEC membership was critical to Britain's international power. It was even more critical for Wilson than it had been for Macmillan because it was under the Labour government that Britain's long-term economic problems finally exposed the irreconcilability between resources and overseas obligations which successive governments had been struggling to reconcile since the late 1940s. In May 1967 two historic resolutions in the British Cabinet marked the transition which was taking place in Britain's international

orientation. On 2 May, ministers agreed to mount a second EEC application and on the 30th, they accepted in principle that British forces east of Suez would be reduced by half in 1970–71 and in full by 1975–76. To paraphrase Wilson, Britain's borders would no longer be in the Himalayas, but on the Rhine.

For Wilson and his government, these decisions did not presage an end to Britain's role outside of Europe, rather a necessary adaptation to a greater role inside of it in order to stabilise and grow the British economy and thus give Britain a basis from which to play a new part in the world, released from the economic drag east of Suez. Of the many problems faced in this transition, one of the greatest was the harm that it could do to the Anglo-American relationship. Britain's global presence was one of the foundations of the special relationship and the Wilson government's east of Suez decision removed it. To counterbalance this unwelcome development for Washington, the British emphasised the leading position that they would now take in Europe, a position which they knew the Americans would value, as indeed they did. Nevertheless, Britain's EEC application did not assuage American frustration towards the contemporaneous decision to retreat from the world, especially as the Vietnam war continued.

With its specific focus on how the British presented their foreign policy evolutions to the Americans and how the Americans responded, this chapter explains why both sides began to conclude that a special relationship was no longer an accurate description of the ties between them. It begins by considering how Britain's advance towards a second EEC application, and the American view of it, was overwhelmed by the revelation that the Wilson government intended to withdraw from the world and announce its intent shortly, a theme which is extended as the chapter then concentrates on the second application itself and Wilson's attempt to profit from it during his 2 June visit to Washington.⁴

Good and bad news

In March 1967, the Johnson administration was aware that the British Cabinet was working towards a second EEC application. Reilly told Bohlen in Paris in 'great confidence' that private sources had indicated to him that Wilson planned to present a formal application at the beginning of May as indeed the prime minister would.⁵ Conversely, the Americans had no idea of how advanced ministerial thinking had become on east of Suez. They knew that the British were exasperated

about the subject amid ongoing economic difficulties. On 21 March, in a meeting with Brown, the US Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific, William Bundy, reaffirmed the importance of a continued British presence east of Suez only to hear the foreign secretary argue that unless the United States 'did more or helped directly east of Suez they [the British] simply could not go on supporting the burden of their forces' there.⁶ On the following day, the OPD approved Denis Healey's proposals for 50 per cent force reductions east of Suez by 1970-71 and full reductions by 1975-76 and while final decisions would not be taken until July 1967, the OPD had effectively converted the issue from one of strategic principle to one of tactics in presenting the withdrawals to allies and the British public alike.⁷ Ministers were particularly conscious that informing the US government of their decision would require the highest skills in diplomacy if a severe reaction was to be avoided. On 4 April, the Cabinet decided that the moment to warn the Americans of what would be unwelcome news would be Brown's conversation with Rusk at the SEATO meeting of 18-20 April.⁸ Thus, in his discussions with McNamara in Washington on 6 April during the inaugural meeting of NATO's NPG, Healey said nothing about the Labour government's east of Suez decision-making.⁹ Unexpectedly, the occasion of the funeral in Bonn of the former German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, meant that the prime minister would have to discuss the decision face to face with the president within days of Brown's revelations to Rusk.

The impact of Britain's east of Suez policy on the Johnson administration's views of the Wilson government would distract from the otherwise positive American appreciation of the development of British EEC policy. American support for a second application continued although there were concerns that the timing of the application could complicate the completion of the Kennedy Round trade negotiations due to end on 30 April. After delays caused by the EEC's crisis in 1965 and little progress in 1966, the GATT talks were a high priority for Washington after January 1967 as Congress had set a deadline of 30 June for agreements to be reached. As these negotiations revealed for the first time that the EEC could match the commercial bargaining power of the US, the Americans wished to avoid any complication which might thwart agreement.¹⁰ When the State Department first began to urge a revived British policy towards the EEC in mid-1966, there was some anxiety that an expression 'of U.K. determination to enter the Common Market would injure the Kennedy Round' by producing another reason to put talks on hold.¹¹ As those talks entered their critical stage in spring 1967,

the prospect of an early announcement of a UK EEC application raised such concerns again. Rusk therefore instructed US missions that it 'would be more prudent' for Britain to delay its EEC initiative until the end of June by which time it was hoped that the Kennedy Round protocol would have been signed off.¹² This guidance was wholly rejected on the grounds that Britain had assured the US government that it would not pre-empt the conclusion of the Kennedy Round, that the Six were already committed to its success and that it would be a tactical error for the US to impede EEC momentum in Britain.¹³ Furthermore, reflecting the views of those in the Community who hoped for EEC regeneration beyond what they saw as de Gaulle-inspired inertia, J. Robert Schaetzel, the US Representative to the European Communities, argued that the progress towards a British application was not only of 'overriding importance' for Britain but also 'more important to the Six'.¹⁴ Once again the political imperative of European unity had dominated Washington's policy towards integration. For the Johnson administration, a British application was vital to the objective of preventing de Gaulle's France from dominating the Community's evolution and hence no demand was placed on the British to postpone their application beyond the Kennedy Round's completion. Instead, London became one of the negotiating problems in the GATT as the British pursued agreements closer to EEC positions with the aim of improving their credentials in Brussels.¹⁵

While Washington had to live with British tactics in the final stages of the Kennedy Round for the same reason that it had to accept muted British advocacy of the NPT – to support Britain's move towards the Community – there was one area in which the Americans did not show flexibility.¹⁶ While they understood that Britain's 'intimate links to Washington and its residual operations in the world power tradition' diluted 'its influence in Western Europe by lending some credence to de Gaulle's charges that Britain has not yet adopted a "European vocation"', the Americans did not wish to see any British concessions in this area.¹⁷ From the standpoint of its European objectives, the Johnson administration could only regret that Britain's global presence added fuel to the bonfire of Gaullist opposition to UK entry to the EEC. But from the standpoint of its wider objectives, particularly those in Asia, the US government was undoubtedly relieved to learn on 14 April, via its London embassy, that there was no 'hint that the British are seriously considering [a] "pull out" from Singapore-Malaysia'. If such plans existed, the embassy observed, the British 'have been at considerable pains to keep them from us. But we don't think there are'.¹⁸ Four days

later, in an urgent telegram for Rusk before he met Brown in Washington at the SEATO Council, an embarrassed London embassy was forced to admit that this assessment was entirely wrong.¹⁹ Viewed against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that the Rusk-Brown encounter on 18 April saw Anglo-American accord on the EEC matched with discord on east of Suez.²⁰ The foreign secretary informed Rusk that a decision would be taken on an EEC application within two weeks and probably on 4 May, a timetable that the Americans generally approved of as success in the Kennedy Round was now almost secured. Rusk then twice offered US help on Britain and the EEC, explaining that the administration 'had been remaining quiet because we felt that any open support by us would simply be counter-productive', a view which Brown agreed with but suggested that in time the Americans 'could help to stiffen the Germans a bit' if their desire to recreate 'Franco-German amity on the basis of the '63 treaty' weakened their support for the UK. The Americans had always thought that the best way for Britain to generate the highest levels of backing within the Community was to present the application in the most effective manner and thus Rusk and his colleagues were pleased to hear Brown say that in contrary to 1961 'the British were preparing a short, simple and clean application'.²¹ In contrast, the Americans listened in dismay as Brown, acting in accordance with Cabinet instructions, laid bare his government's intention to announce in July east of Suez plans for 50 per cent force withdrawals by 1970-71 and 100 per cent withdrawals by 1975-76. In response, Rusk deployed the full armoury of counter-arguments, questioning in particular the adequacy of defence in the region if the UK announced troop withdrawals while the Vietnam war still raged as well as the wisdom of making any immediate announcement of plans that would not come to fruition for another eight years. It was in America's fundamental interest, the secretary avowed, that Britain maintain its world position as an end in itself and as an encouragement to other European states to play a role beyond Europe, an aspiration shared by both Washington and London.²²

When Rostow reported the Brown/Rusk meeting to Johnson it was, naturally enough, the east of Suez issue rather than the EEC that was emphasised. It was 'important', Rostow argued, that Brown did not leave Washington 'with our silence taken as an indication of assent' to UK withdrawals and he thus recommended a frank presidential message expressing the hope that the British 'could forego announcing their complete withdrawal from the Asian mainland by the mid-1970s'.²³ The need for such direct diplomacy was all the more urgent in light of

reports reaching the State Department from well-placed journalistic sources that British thinking on east of Suez was more developed than Brown had let on.²⁴ On 20 April Rusk sent an urgent message for delivery to Brown on his arrival back in London in which the Secretary argued 'against major reductions in the near future, more strongly against any decision now as to what you contemplate after 1971, and even more strongly against any announcement now of any intentions to withdraw from the area'. The 'chain reactions' if the British pressed ahead would include domestic political pressure on the US government to follow suit and withdraw from Vietnam as well as reduce its commitment to Europe. Beyond this, in the context of the Asian Cold War, UK abdication east of Suez would be claimed as a victory by both North Vietnam and Communist China and, more generally, would be seen as a repudiation of UK support for the US position in Southeast Asia and a further weakening of SEATO. Rusk even implied that Britain's actions would be a betrayal of Gaullist proportions:

The strength of our position in the US in assuming international commitments in these last twenty years is that we have always been able to say that we have allies who share our views and share our burden, and not least the UK. The defection of De Gaulle has hurt us. If now there was a UK withdrawal from this area it would be regarded as a similar defection, encouraging the neo-isolationists, and encouraging the critics of our policies both in Asia and in Europe.

But the Secretary was also emollient:

[W]e understand your desire to reduce your forces and base structure in Malaysia and Singapore. We hope this can be done in a gradual and reasonable way without significant withdrawals before a Vietnam settlement, for we feel that your presence continues to play a major role in the security and stability of the area. But above all we hope you can avoid taking, or in any event making public in any way, basic decisions at this point on withdrawal by the mid-1970s.²⁵

Clearly the principle of total British withdrawal was not one that the Americans could countenance, but Rusk's message seemed to signal that reductions *after* the war in Vietnam had ended was more acceptable – in other words, it was a question of timing, much as Ambassador Dean had concluded in January.²⁶ British ministers were nevertheless

resolute and it is perhaps this fact which the Americans underestimated while they concentrated their attention on European affairs, and Britain's role in them.

Brown reported back to Cabinet on his US trip on 21 April, describing American, not to mention Australian and New Zealand, reactions to the east of Suez proposal as 'strong'.²⁷ For this reason, Brown, with Healey's support, argued for softening the blow by informing allies that once the main ground force withdrawals had taken place in 1975–76, Britain would still retain naval and air capability in Asia. On the Anglo-American dimension of the matter, Brown was almost blasé: UK plans would 'add somewhat to the difficulties of the United States Administration' but in his judgement force reductions would 'accord in timing' with the stated US objective of bringing the war in Vietnam to an end within two years.²⁸ Despite Rusk's jeremiad of 20 April, Brown clearly misinterpreted US opposition – though the Americans themselves were partly responsible because of what Francis Bator called 'our light-touch' reaction to the foreign secretary's revelations during his Washington visit.²⁹ It seems that Brown had been treated carefully by the Americans who saw him as an asset to their interests. His belief in Atlanticism (not least his support for maintaining troops in Germany), his ardent espousal of British entry into the EEC and his defence of America's struggle in Vietnam combined to produce a measured response to his revelations about Britain's east of Suez policy plans.³⁰ While existing accounts have identified the low key American response, they have not fully explained why the Johnson administration did not react in April with the force it would afterwards.³¹ The documentary record reveals that two European-related considerations were decisive. First, the Americans seem to have misjudged not just British determination to act *but to act soon* in announcing withdrawal plans. The Americans did not presume that the British would do anything precipitate because the Wilson government knew how damaging to US domestic opinion such action would be; Johnson had made it abundantly clear during the trilateral talks that the failure of European powers to burden share, especially at a time when the US was trapped in Vietnam, could force his administration to make cuts in their commitment to Europe and threaten the cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance. Second, the overriding preoccupation of US diplomacy *vis-à-vis* the UK in April 1967 was Western Europe, not east of Suez – an emphasis only too evident in Johnson's meetings with Kiesinger and Wilson at the time of Adenauer's funeral.

The president, while keen to pay his respects to the Federal Republic's first head of state who had died on 19 April, also had business in mind when in Bonn. According to Schwartz, the primary target for the Johnson treatment was Kiesinger whose loyalty to the United States and Atlanticism he sought to bolster.³² Moreover, talks with the Germans were part of the ongoing American campaign to hold the Atlantic Alliance and Western Europe together, not least because the State Department believed that the administration was still not succeeding in convincing the Europeans of the president's policy enunciated on 7 October 1966.³³ In this, Johnson was largely successful. As for Wilson, he spent much of his time in Bonn discoursing mainly on Britain's EEC policy. In a friendly meeting with Kiesinger, the British premier emphasised the importance of German support for a UK EEC application, the failure of which, he observed, would leave the Americans 'greatly disappointed'.³⁴ Wilson also searched out de Gaulle to urge a joint Anglo-French approach to current international problems, on which they were already working in parallel, as well as on longer-term policies. De Gaulle neither accepted nor rejected this suggestion, but merely opined, with a touch of melancholy, or else with clever avoidance of the issue, that he 'could not of course expect to be there much longer to see the realisation of these ideas'.³⁵

Wilson also wanted the EEC and Europe's future to dominate his 30 minute encounter with Johnson on 25 April. Mostly conducted in private, the only substantive record of this meeting is Wilson's own dictated account.³⁶ The PM began by speaking of Europe only to have Johnson steer him immediately towards east of Suez and, famously, wonder out loud whether the UK 'was "going crazy" in apparently wanting to pull out of its positions in S. E. Asia at a time when its principal allies in the area were fighting Communism in Vietnam'. When Wilson retorted that Brown had already made clear to the Americans that Britain would fully consult its allies before acting, Johnson snapped: 'They're the best damned allies you've got'. This in turn prompted Wilson to remark that he too faced strong domestic political pressures based on economic concerns and military overstretch which could produce a more far-reaching level of retrenchment than presently envisaged if the matter was put to a free vote in the Commons. Johnson then suggested that further discussion should be deferred until the prime minister's planned visit to Washington on 2 June, adding, in a 'cheerful tone', that by then 'the British might have agreed to send two brigades of troops to Vietnam', and this being so, 'Britain's financial worries would be at an end'. Wilson, 'equally

cheerfully', condemned this implicit linkage as 'a libel on his own declared policy and attitude; in any case, if he attempted it, he would have no financial worries himself, since he would be out of Office and no doubt doing quite nicely on his memoirs!'

Despite the apparently good-natured character of these exchanges, the issues under discussion were of the utmost seriousness and tensions were never far from the surface. Moreover, when allowed to move from east of Suez to the issue of Europe, Wilson abandoned all hint of jocularitas as he invoked the ghost of Germany's recent Nazi past. A UK move towards the EEC, he explained, would help settle 'the current difficulties within NATO and in American relations with Europe' by continuing to ensure the development of democratic government in Germany within 'the kind of western framework that would prevent any reversion to earlier and more dangerous tendencies there'. This, of course, was what the Johnson administration also hoped. Going further, Wilson said that with relationships in Europe – whether between Europe and America or more generally between East and West – in a state of uncertainty, 'it was becoming harder to contain Germany'. Worse still, the 'present German coalition was somewhat unnatural' with Brandt having 'reached a kind of understanding' with Kiesinger that he would support the chancellor's pro-French policy in return for support for his (Brandt's) *détente* policy. There was, moreover, a good chance that Johnson would find Kiesinger 'a less easy person to come to terms with' than Erhard for a number of reasons, not least the fact that Germany 'was going through a phase of deliberate dissociation and disengagement from the United States and of closer association with France'. Recalling an earlier comment by Johnson that 'somewhere in Germany there was a boy in short pants who might one day lead the German nation into fresh and disastrous adventures', Wilson asserted that, in his view, 'the youth was now in long pants' and was being encouraged in his nationalist outlook by de Gaulle's recklessness:

The second Franco-German honeymoon might well, like its predecessor, never be consummated. But De Gaulle had been playing a dangerous game by implicitly encouraging in Germany the kind of nationalistic thinking which had led – through a perfectly constitutional process – to disaster in Germany's past and could conceivably do so again though in different circumstances and no doubt in a different form.

Referring to de Gaulle's recent admission of his own mortality, Wilson suggested that once he was no longer president, France 'might well go through a period of political weakness and uncertainty' and that the EEC might be dominated by a powerful Germany as a result. The only antidote to that predicament was a Britain firmly rooted in the Community:

In Germany's present mood the United States could not expect, from 3,000 miles away, to control developments in Germany. This is why the Prime Minister saw such political importance in British membership of the European Community; and this was also both in the interest of France and the United States. From outside the Community Britain could exert little control over events; inside, her position could be most influential and she could help also to lead the Community towards more constructive policies in relation to both East-West issues and to the outside world in general.

In reply, Johnson listened quietly and 'made little comment' though he 'did not dissent'. As the meeting drew to a close, Wilson said he hoped the Americans would understand if the UK, in seeking to ease its path to EEC membership, made statements that indicated divergence from agreed Anglo-American positions. Secretary Rusk, who had belatedly joined the leaders, said that the value of this tactic was well understood and that American concern for the UK's EEC position was why Washington had 'been willing to make most of the running' on the NPT.

Afterwards Palliser recorded Wilson's impression that while the president had been 'friendliness throughout', it had not been 'an encouraging exchange'. Johnson 'struck him as being in an extremely tense and emotional condition and to be virtually obsessed with his Vietnam problem. There was a decidedly "hawkish" flavour to some of his remarks and the Prime Minister foresees a difficult period ahead in our relations with the President, thus confirming the Foreign Secretary's own opinion'.³⁷ This prediction, as we will see, would prove accurate. For the moment, Wilson's focus on Europe in his talk with Johnson, and the stress he laid on the importance to the US of a successful British EEC application, was deliberately designed to de-emphasise the east of Suez issue. To the extent that Johnson's anger at the UK plans turned out to be less than volcanic, Wilson succeeded in his objective. Having said this, it is difficult to agree with Parr that 'Wilson continued to play Britain's weakening hand in the US with some skill,

demonstrating that Britain was taking on a new stance of responsibility in the world'.³⁸ Nothing mattered more to Johnson than Vietnam, and if he had pulled his punches in Bonn due to his concentration on matters European, the fact remained that Britain's east of Suez decision threatened to impact harmfully on the American war effort. From the US standpoint, the positive that was UK EEC policy would be outweighed by the negative of Britain's incipient betrayal of the US in the Far East. Britain was doing what the Americans wanted in Europe, but not in Asia, and when US soldiers were dying in large numbers in Vietnam, that mattered much more to Johnson than the continuing diplomatic game with de Gaulle. At Bonn it was a case of Anglo-American confrontation deferred, not avoided.

The British EEC Application and its Reception in Washington

On his return to London, Wilson chaired a series of Cabinet meetings on 29/30 April at which formal ministerial agreement was reached to go public on 2 May with the second EEC application.³⁹ This brought to an end a gruelling marathon of policy development during which Wilson and Brown – over the course of some twenty cabinet discussions – persuaded sceptical colleagues that there was no option other than EEC entry if the UK was to achieve economic renewal and political independence.⁴⁰ In truth, the critical decision had all but been taken on 20 April when the Cabinet rejected alternatives to EEC membership, a North Atlantic Free Trade Area or 'Going it Alone', and when Wilson used the full force of political arguments for entry to counter Healey's view that the certainty of a rebuff from de Gaulle rendered an application ineffective. The PM said that if rejected, Britain would keep on applying and added superpower weight to his case; the US 'held it to be in our interests and in world interests that we should join the Community', and even the USSR, animated by fears of revived German nationalism, thought UK accession was necessary. As for those ministers who still harboured reservations about the whole EEC concept, Wilson warned that following the death of de Gaulle, 'there was a grave danger that if we were not to join the Community, we should find ourselves confronted with a situation in which a resurgent Germany might dominate Western Europe'.⁴¹ Formal Cabinet agreement, when it came on 2 May, not only marked a final acceptance of Wilson's arguments but also brought to a close a month of exceptionally intense diplomatic activity.

The UK's preparatory diplomacy began on 4–5 April at the Rome WEU meeting where the foreign secretary secured the support of the Five as all bar the French representative, Alphand, made positive public statements about British accession.⁴² The campaign continued with a meeting in London on 13 April between Wilson, Brown, Callaghan and Brandt during which the German foreign minister was subjected to carrot-and-stick diplomacy. The latter was administered by the prime minister via the warning that the vetoing of the UK application could lead to the 'inevitable creation of two rival groups, both intrinsically inward looking – "the little Europe" Common Market, and a group of countries (of which Britain would certainly be one) formed around the United States, which would tend increasingly to withdraw from a policy of cooperation with the countries of Continental Europe'. By way of a more positive inducement, however, Brandt was reminded that if the UK was in the EEC it would not only assist the Community's growth but also boost Germany's *Ostpolitik* through its bilateral relations with the USSR.⁴³ Wilson then maintained the diplomatic momentum during his trip to Bonn for Adenauer's funeral before signalling, in a speech to the parliamentary Labour Party on 27 April, that Britain and Europe stood on the brink of a great move forward.⁴⁴ This carefully choreographed international and domestic diplomacy reached a climax on 1 May when, with the Kennedy Round negotiations nearing completion, the UK government informed Washington and Paris that at 3:30 p.m. BST the following day the prime minister would announce Britain's second application for EEC membership.⁴⁵

In any assessment of Britain's prospects, France in general and the figure of de Gaulle in particular loomed large. As Ludlow has shown, while the Five 'remained firmly in favour of an enlarged EEC' and, for this reason, 'could not but welcome Wilson's decision to take the plunge', the prospect of French resistance meant that they were under no 'illusion that the British bid would easily be accommodated'.⁴⁶ Similar views percolated in Washington where Miriam Camps (an expert on Community affairs attached to the Policy Planning Council) opined that negotiations would be difficult to start, and even more difficult if they got going, because of the barrier represented by de Gaulle.⁴⁷ The French president's opposition was almost a given in US appreciations; the State Department anticipated that de Gaulle would eschew a 'brutal and rapid' rejection of Britain's bid in favour of a strategy of prevarication, delay and general opposition short of a veto.⁴⁸ Thus, the most that Washington hoped for from Britain was that its application should be pursued as sincerely and effectively as possible and therefore when it

came, Wilson's one line application posing almost no conditions was welcomed by American policy-makers.⁴⁹ The Johnson administration would assist the British through inaction on the grounds that anything more would play into de Gaulle's hands. Thus, learning from failed US diplomacy in 1961–63, Rusk advocated public support for the British application but in a 'low, unemotional key so as to attract minimum diplomatic or public attention to [the] US in UK-Community negotiations'.⁵⁰ This also meant that the president would not endorse the bid himself.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Britain's initiative was applauded in Washington for its promise of fulfilling at some future point American foreign policy objectives held since the 1950s and most recently reiterated by Johnson on 7 October 1966. However, US satisfaction in this regard was seriously diminished by irritation at the UK's east of Suez policy as well as by exasperation at the recent drift of events in Europe.

As we have seen, in December 1966 the NSC had conjured up a potential ghost of Christmas future in the form of a debilitated Western Europe devoid of leadership from 'a neutralist France, a weak, self-centred UK and a Germany governed by an untested coalition'.⁵² 'We can't get the American people to support our NATO policy when they see the actions taken by the French, British and Germans', Johnson fumed. 'We are fast approaching a day of reckoning'.⁵³ Five months on, in spring 1967, the president's frustration, like that of the NSC, remained undiminished – especially with regard to France. As Secretary of the Treasury Fowler told the NSC on 3 May, 'France is trying either to expel us completely from Europe or at least to diminish our power there'; for five years Paris had sought to use the Common Market structure 'to diminish our economic, political, and military influence' in Europe and, indirectly, in the world at large. Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey concurred. 'Europeans have rejected the world after the loss of their colonies', he said. 'They resent U.S. power. Détente is what they want. ... The Europeans are selfish. We should challenge them to participate in the world outside their borders'. The president himself wanted to know how 'we persuade Europe to contribute more to the defense effort and how can we persuade our Congress to support our current participation in NATO? ... A showdown in this country is coming soon'. When Rostow weighed in with the observation that 'Europe is neglecting the world', Johnson suddenly saw a solution to some, if not all of America's difficulties. 'We must find a way', he declared, 'of getting them to make a larger contribution to the cost of NATO defense'.⁵⁴

This NSC discussion was held the day after Britain announced its second EEC application and portrays the deep-felt dissatisfaction in the

US government towards the situation in Western Europe. Notwithstanding the positive development that was Britain's move towards EEC membership, the Americans were disappointed that the UK government numbered itself among those countries reluctant to increase their contribution to European defence – the dominant issue of the moment so far as the Johnson administration's European thinking was concerned. Moreover, at a time when Washington hoped to persuade its European partners to increase their responsibilities outside of their borders, the British, in their east of Suez decision, were moving in a totally contrary direction, one that threatened to compromise the US position in Vietnam. From London, however, US Ambassador David Bruce was inclined to divorce the UK EEC bid from wider issues and, reflecting his Europeanist roots, accentuated its intrinsic value. The success of Wilson's initiative, he reminded Rusk on 8 May, would produce a more 'cohesive and united Europe' from which the US would derive 'massive and fortunate benefits'. Harking back to the late 1940s American ideal of Atlantic partnership and European integration as the twin pillars of Western security and prosperity, Bruce described how bilateral relations between the US and the EEC 'should serve for generations to come as the most practicable connection available to induce order and peace'. Nor would the UK and US 'lose anything substantial' from what appeared, on the face of it, to be a British move away from America:

The so-called Anglo-American special relationship is now little more than sentimental terminology, although the underground waters of it will flow with a deep current. The entry of the UK into Europe, via common institutions, should strengthen, not impair, our easy intercourse with it and its new associates. I trust that in the welter of controversy certain to rage in the wake of the imminent formal British application, we will continue the policy to which we have thus far wisely adhered, of applauding progress toward further unity in Europe, without prescribing on what terms in might best be realized.⁵⁵

Had George Ball still been in the administration he would surely have seconded this opinion. While British entry was not guaranteed as long as de Gaulle was in the Elysée, the second application was a critical step towards the completion of the blueprint that State Department Europeanists had pored over and promoted for ten years or more. And while few in Washington expected de Gaulle to accept the British

application, policy-makers hoped that in the very act of making the application the British would contribute to undermining the Gaullist challenge.

The continuing strength of that challenge was made plain by de Gaulle's press conference on 16 May. Completely ignoring Wilson's recent plea to avoid public statements detrimental to the UK's EEC prospects, de Gaulle reeled off a series of difficulties to be overcome before the path to UK admission was cleared.⁵⁶ The EEC was 'a sort of prodigy', he said, which could be jeopardised by enlargement, especially by a Britain which was 'not continental', whose agricultural system could force the collapse of the CAP, and whose balance of payments problems 'still remains threatening'. Moreover, monetary parity between sterling and the currencies of the Six would have to be a prerequisite to UK entry, as would the pound freeing 'itself of the character of reserve currency' which, for de Gaulle, was the fiscal symbol of Britain's commitment 'beyond the seas'. But UK political symbols would likewise have to be consigned to history, notably 'the special relations that tie the British to America' and the preferential links between Britain and the Commonwealth. In perhaps the most telling remark of his press conference, de Gaulle said he could not see how the respective policies of Britain and the Six could merge unless 'the British assumed again, particularly in regards defense, complete command of themselves, or else if the continentals renounced forever a European Europe'. The French president said the Community thus faced with 'a choice between three issues': first, it could accept that British entry 'would amount to necessitating the building of an entirely new edifice, scrapping nearly all of that which has just been built', constructing in effect, an economic NATO; second, it could establish a system of association between the UK and EEC that avoided unnecessary 'upheaval'; or, third, it could postpone the whole issue and await the completion of 'a certain internal and external evolution' in Britain. It was this last option that de Gaulle preferred – as did 'many people', he believed, 'who are anxious to see the emergence of a Europe corresponding to its natural dimensions and who have great admiration and true friendship for Britain'. The president ended with a compliment and a challenge: 'If, one day, [Britain was] to come to this point, how warmly France would welcome this historic conversion'.⁵⁷ It was the iron fist in the velvet veto.⁵⁸

To US observers, de Gaulle's pronouncements were much as predicted. From Paris, Ambassador Bohlen saw 'very little hope' for the British application, at any rate until Britain had been 'de-Americanized', freed of the Commonwealth, and thus 'sufficiently purified to join Europe'.⁵⁹ In

the State Department, the talk was of 'a minimum-cost veto' which tactically left open the possibility of negotiations should the Five insist.⁶⁰ At the EEC summit in Rome at the end of May, however, de Gaulle attempted to steamroller his Community partners into united opposition to UK entry and, in the words of one who was present, generally acted like 'a 12th century ruler haranguing his vassals'.⁶¹ Reports nevertheless suggested that de Gaulle had overextended himself in Rome; as Ludlow has confirmed, although the summit reached no decision as to how to deal with the British application and postponed the issue for further consideration by the EEC Council of Ministers in June, it had shown that the Five hoped to circumvent French opposition.⁶² As we shall see when we return to the question of Britain's EEC application in the next chapter, the British would try to maximise the support of the Five, while also continuing to press de Gaulle, as they carried on regardless of the French president's patent opposition. The British government's stamina, and its diplomacy, would gain approval in Western Europe and the US. Yet in Washington's assessment of the value of the Anglo-American relationship, any success in Britain's EEC policy was overwhelmed by the greater concerns about its intentions east of Suez, and those concerns began to grow in May 1967.

Rusk's 'light-touch' response to Brown's explanation of Britain's east of Suez plans and the Johnson/Wilson discussion in Bonn on 25 April led London to infer initially that the Americans had no fundamental objections to the principle of withdrawals only to the timing of an announcement. By 6 May, Brown was concerned enough at allied reaction to express his anxiety 'privately and unofficially' to Ambassador Bruce and reaffirm that he, and Wilson, were 'anxious to preserve close comity with USG' and were 'sensitive to the fragility of our current connexion'.⁶³ The first senior US policy-maker fully to expose American anger was Defence Secretary Robert McNamara who, in a meeting with his UK opposite, Denis Healey, on 9 May, asserted that it would be 'a disaster for the UK to talk now about moving out of the Far East entirely' and that while 'reductions in the near term are tolerable ... an announced decision now to move out entirely in the 70's would be a disaster to us'. In a heated encounter, Healey stood his ground, maintaining that 'there is no chance to change the decision' and that there was 'a psychological incompatibility between [the] UK's going into Europe on the one hand and staying in the Far East on the other'. Echoing recent NSC deliberations, McNamara countered that the UK could not expect the US 'to pick up the abandoned British pieces' and that 'if Europe is withdrawing from the world while the US

is carrying an unfair burden in defending Europe, the pressures in the US might also lead to US withdrawal from Europe'. If it was really a case of budgetary savings, the defense secretary asked, could not the British find them in reduced troop levels in Europe or even in strategic nuclear forces? Healey reacted brusquely: it would be 'madness' if Britain, while trying to 'join Europe', was party to steps to 'make France the only nuclear power in Europe'; in any event it was 'politically inconceivable' that the UK should renounce its nuclear programme. EEC entry, Healey insisted, 'means a turning away from other parts of the world'.⁶⁴ There was clearly expectation in the British government that the east of Suez decisions would assist EEC policies. Palliser suggested, for example, that Wilson's 'credibility with de Gaulle would "increase if he thinks we do *not* intend to stay in Singapore"'.⁶⁵ The reality, however, was that this decision was unlikely to neutralise de Gaulle's wider reservations about the UK's other extensive economic, political and defence relations with the US.

The links made between Britain's east of Suez plans and its European policies in the Healey/McNamara exchange were significant. Healey's comments implied that the two parallel decisions under consideration in London symbolised a reorientation in Britain's foreign policy towards Europe, one which the Johnson administration had urged upon the British. In January 1967, the Americans had also admitted to the British that they were not opposed in principle to changes in Britain's commitments east of Suez and envisaged adaptation in the Anglo-American relationship as Britain became a leading European power; indeed, they suggested that their relationship could be strengthened as a result.⁶⁶ What they did oppose was complete withdrawal and early announcement of it. Acceptance that Britain's global profile would have to alter as it became an EEC member state was part of this, and hence Jones rightly points out that McNamara's insistence on a sustained British presence in the Far East was increasingly less representative of the growing American resignation towards adjustment in Britain's international priorities.⁶⁷ Yet, in May 1967 at least, the view that Britain should maintain some kind of presence in the long term was held at the highest levels in Washington. Healey's resilience in conversation with McNamara had obviously perturbed the Johnson administration and two days later, the president attempted to persuade the prime minister to put off decisions on east of Suez until they had talked in Washington on 2 June.⁶⁸

Working on the assumption that Wilson would accede to Johnson's plea, Johnson's advisers prepared to disabuse the British of any misapprehensions they had gained about the US position as a result of the

recent Brown/Rusk and Johnson/Wilson encounters. On 26 May, a State Department briefing for the president stressed the danger of Britain's plans to the function of Anglo-American relations, to the future conduct of the war in Vietnam (and the Asian Cold War generally), and to the administration's commitment to European defence. The 'proposal for a decision now to withdraw completely by the mid-70's is incomprehensible', the brief argued, and the president needed to make clear to the prime minister that a refusal to reconsider could lead to 'an erosion in the present broad base of popular support in this country which permits us to associate ourselves with and assist your position when British interests are primarily at stake'.⁶⁹ The Americans were determined to remedy their earlier failure to state their objections with sufficient force and clarity; the president, Bator advised, must 'push' Wilson 'very hard on East of Suez'.⁷⁰

Indeed, there was at least one senior British official in Washington who would have approved of this line. John Killick, counsellor and head of chancery in the British embassy told a State Department official privately on 16 May that it was 'critically important that the President "absolutely knock the pants off Wilson" in June' and 'really hit Wilson hard'.⁷¹ While this outburst was probably due to Killick's frustration at London's plans, it is true that Ambassador Dean was concerned that his government had not grasped rising American anger.⁷² Three days before the PM's arrival in Washington, Palliser certainly grasped it. Bator told him that Wilson would be 'hit hard' on east of Suez. Miscomprehension of the US position, Bator continued, may have been due to the foreign secretary's reading of Rusk's initial reaction, although consequent communications ought to have made 'the American attitude crystal clear'. Palliser asked if the president opposed Britain's decision to withdraw or merely the timing of the announcement of that decision. The decision itself, Bator replied. This statement went further than previous assertions which had intimated acceptance of some withdrawals but opposition to early pronouncement, an inconsistency which can be attributed to the fact that the Americans were set on taking an uncompromising line with Wilson having failed to do so up until now.⁷³

Wilson's 2 June 1967 Washington visit

As it turned out, American plans to confront the British over east of Suez were suspended in light of mounting tensions in the Middle East – tensions that would culminate in the outbreak of the Six Day war on 5 June 1967. On the eve of the Johnson-Wilson talks, Palliser observed

that the signs of a Middle East crisis in the making meant that for the first time 'in several years Vietnam is not automatically the first topic' on the administration's foreign affairs agenda. Moreover, Washington's interest in working with London to stabilise the Arab-Israeli situation had produced a 'quasi-revival of the happy spirit of the "special relationship"' and made likely a 'smoother' ride for Wilson on his US trip than would otherwise have been the case.⁷⁴ In line with Palliser's explanation, historians have attributed Johnson's failure to challenge Wilson forcibly on east of Suez to this Middle East factor.⁷⁵ However, while the Arab-Israeli problem undoubtedly had its effect on the talks, Johnson's approach can also be explained by reference to the activities of an MoD source in providing the Americans with advance reports of the Cabinet's confidential deliberations on east of Suez. Indeed, in light of this covert intelligence, it might be argued that the US government would have pulled back from a confrontation with the British even if there had been no contemporaneous turmoil in the Middle East.

On 30 May the Cabinet discussed Healey's proposal that Britain should maintain some maritime and air forces, though not ground troops, in the Far East in order to reconcile agitated allies to the major force withdrawals being contemplated. Supported by Wilson and Brown, Healey eventually got his way, but only after a lengthy argument.⁷⁶ It goes without saying that all Cabinet discussions are confidential, but in 1967, secrecy regarding east of Suez was absolutely critical to obviate violently negative reactions from UK allies. Hence, until the Brown/Rusk meeting on 18 April, the Johnson administration was unaware of the British government's plans. Ahead of the Cabinet meeting of 30 May, however, the US embassy in London reported an off the record account of ministerial thinking from Frank Cooper, Assistant Under-Secretary (Policy) at the MoD.⁷⁷ Cooper was one of the officials upon whom Healey 'most depended' and who he later described as giving him 'invaluable support' on east of Suez policy-making.⁷⁸ The closeness between Cooper and Healey suggests, though does not confirm, that the former acted as his master's voice in telling the Americans that the Cabinet was likely to approve the line propounded by Healey and Brown, to wit: the 'UK would, for [the] foreseeable future, maintain a military capability for use in Asia'. Cooper described this 'about-to-be-made decision' as a result of 'strong pressures from US, Australia and New Zealand'. It is also clear that Cooper had access to the minutes of the critical 30 May Cabinet meeting and that he passed this sensitive information to the Americans: though the record was 'a bit obscure', Cooper observed, the Cabinet had indeed

decided to maintain some military capability in the Far East although the issue of an announcement of Britain's long-term plans was 'still up in the air', with Healey against and Callaghan in favour; even here, though, 'a few words' from the Americans 'would be helpful'.⁷⁹

Encouraged by these signs of a 'substantial improvement' on the UK's earlier position, the State Department produced revised guidance for the president for his meeting with Wilson. Johnson was no longer to describe the east of Suez plan as 'incomprehensible' or thereafter list the negative consequences likely to flow from UK withdrawal; instead he was simply to ask Wilson to describe UK thinking and, when the Cabinet's decision on maintaining a residual presence was raised, to express gratification – not least because Congress might otherwise have refused to 'permit us to stand alone' and isolationists have demanded 'U.S. withdrawal not only from Far East but also from Europe'.⁸⁰ While the State Department was persuaded by Cooper's secret diplomacy to draw back from confrontation, Francis Bator was more sceptical of the veracity of 'gossip' peddled by what he described (inaccurately in light of Cooper's status) as 'a middle-level source in London'. But even if reports from London were true, the maintenance of token UK forces in the Far East was obviously a front behind which the major withdrawals could still be effected. Nonetheless, in a series of memoranda to the president on the eve of the Wilson visit, Bator made a strong case for understanding, not condemnation, of UK plans. The British economy could not be sustained without major savings, which was what the east of Suez reassessment was all about, Bator argued. The second string to Wilson's economic bow was the EEC application which he anticipated, in tandem with east of Suez, would 'fix up his economics'. But now that de Gaulle had 'doused' EEC hopes 'with very cold water', Britain faced a troubled future – but so did the United States insofar as the UK's ability to underwrite Washington's foreign policy aims would be diminished. With 'economic stagnation at home and no progress towards Europe' Wilson was going to struggle to 'stay in the Far East' and thereby 'back us in Vietnam' while simultaneously avoiding a balance of payments crisis, devaluation, and cut-backs in the BAOR. Getting to the nub of the matter, Bator told Johnson that unless the UK received a \$3.5 billion, long-term, international loan, Wilson might be forced into devaluation. As for confronting the prime minister on east of Suez, Bator reversed his earlier support for this course; if nothing was done to stabilise the UK economy, he contended, Britain would cease to play 'a serious world role' anyway.⁸¹

Bator's analysis accorded with that of Ambassador Bruce who felt that Wilson was 'unquestionably looking for issues on which, without sacrifice of his basic purposes, he can make some concession to public and party disaffection'. Thus the hoped-for savings that would accrue from the east of Suez decision, the early announcement of which, 'looking ahead to what may otherwise be a stormy Labor Party conference in September, is probably the juiciest bone he can throw his critics'. It was also 'thought by some to strengthen the Common Market bid'.⁸² In both Bator's and Bruce's analyses a range of issues were held to be inter-dependent – stable Anglo-American relations, Britain's economic viability, the war in Vietnam, UK withdrawals east of Suez, Europe and the EEC – and it was the interaction of these factors that called into question Britain's future as America's foremost ally at just the point when Washington needed a reliable friend in both Europe and Asia. If, as Jones suggests, Johnson was both annoyed and resigned during his meetings with Wilson on 2 June, it was perhaps because he reluctantly recognised the logic of Bator's argument.⁸³ O'Hara has written convincingly of the 'central contradiction between keeping Britain east of Suez, and strengthening sterling' and of the 'problem for US planners' that the administration wished Britain to remain east of Suez while also seeking EEC membership.⁸⁴ Whereas the Americans had no real answer to this dilemma, the British were increasingly sure of their course: to respond to the American encouragement towards the EEC, accept that Washington expected and, in fact, welcomed the changes to the Anglo-American relationship that this would bring, and hasten the adjustment by withdrawing from east of Suez in the hope that the British economy could be wrenched out of its 1960s' fragility. That 1967's east of Suez decisions marked a point of transition in the Anglo-American relationship is well established but only by giving Britain's EEC policy, and the Wilson government's general focus upon Europe, alongside plans for global withdrawal, full recognition can the true measure of the transformation underway in US-UK relations be appreciated.⁸⁵ And in this connection, the Johnson-Wilson agenda for their first meeting on 2 June is instructive. The top issue was the Middle East, followed, in order, by Britain's EEC application, nuclear policy, and east of Suez.⁸⁶ The EEC had for the first time in a Washington meeting between Johnson and Wilson become an issue of chief importance, not least because the prime minister wanted it to be so.⁸⁷

Briefing Wilson before the meeting, Palliser reminded him that the Middle East-induced 'smoothness' in Anglo-American relations was

'illusory' insofar as 'the basic problems remain' and he had to expect to be 'hit hard' on east of Suez. Even on the EEC, there was a 'disturbing new current of uncertainty about Britain moving through official Washington (and business New York)' born of the near certainty of UK failure and, by extension, the continuation of the UK's economic difficulties. To counteract this thinking, Palliser urged Wilson to 'expound very robustly' the prospects for British economic revival over the next two years and to provide Johnson with 'a comprehensive account of Britain's role in the world as you see it developing over the next 5 to 10 years; and the sort of contribution that we can make when we are in E.E.C., not only to Europe itself, but also on a continuing basis elsewhere in the world, with our European partners, with the Americans, and through the Commonwealth'. According to the Anglo-phile Bator, whom Palliser had consulted prior to briefing Wilson, this kind of UK 'world vision' was likely to impress the president.⁸⁸ Palliser's advice on Britain leading the EEC into a world role alongside the US had also been made in a corrective to the brief on Britain and the EEC prepared in Whitehall for Wilson's Washington visit. While this document has no indication of its author, it nevertheless fits with the trend of Palliser's thinking which, in turn, was a reflection of what Dean had been told by US policy-makers and what Dean himself had been advising London:

In [American] minds, to keep emphasising that our membership of the Community will not weaken our bilateral links with the U.S. is a bad argument vis-à-vis Europe. Furthermore, they have no particular interest in the preservation of a U.S./U.K. special relationship as such, at least not as a public manifestation. They are more interested in us and the Europeans playing a broader world role. Thus they likewise have no particular interest in a permanent settlement of European problems within the Atlantic Alliance as such unless that Alliance is concerning itself effectively with broader world problems.⁸⁹

It was this message which Wilson tried to convey to Johnson on 2 June and in doing so, restore confidence in Britain's international influence.

For all this thorough British preparation in anticipation of a US assault on its east of Suez plans, in the end the brewing Middle East crisis took much of the sting out of the Johnson-Wilson meetings.⁹⁰ But as previously noted, notwithstanding Arab-Israeli tensions, Wilson's confirmation of the decision – conveyed previously to the Americans

via unofficial channels – that the UK would retain a residual naval and air presence in the Far East, went a long way towards reassuring the US government. In the morning session on 2 June, the prime minister was able to focus on the EEC, accentuating Britain's political objectives in making its application which 'appeared to impress the President'. Britain wanted to create a 'more unified and integrated European attitude to world problems' and to get 'the Six and others much more outward-looking in political as well as economic terms' (the need for which had been brought into stark relief by the 'rather pathetic performance of Western Europe on the current Middle Eastern issues'). To emphasise that Europe would require such leadership, Wilson then 'stressed the likely position after de Gaulle's disappearance' (although the record does not elaborate on what the prime minister envisaged exactly, but reference to the growing power of Germany would correspond with previous statements). Wilson warned, however, that his government might on occasion resort to 'anti-American' statements 'for the purpose of proving our Europeanism'; the prime minister later reflected that Johnson took this well and even 'grinned'. More specifically, Wilson felt he might have to look at renegotiating, or denegotiating, the Nassau agreement, to reduce the chances of the second UK EEC application going the way of the first. On east of Suez, the prime minister managed to get the president to defer substantive discussion to the afternoon session, when officials and experts would be involved, though Johnson still flagged up a caution about 'the constant dangers of a renewal of American isolationism, which would affect Europe as well as Asia'.⁹¹

At the afternoon plenary session Wilson put up a strong defence of his government's east of Suez strategy but he also sought to assuage US anxieties by floating the idea of redeploying Britain's Polaris submarines in the region partly to offset ground force withdrawals. Turning to the more general question of the UK's future defence role, the prime minister commented that the trend towards isolationism in the US which the president had mentioned 'was matched by a growing mood of isolationism in the United Kingdom – a reversion to a feeling of "Little England" or perhaps "Little Europe"'. It was thus imperative, said Wilson, that a decision be made on east of Suez by July lest pressure mount for even more drastic levels of military retrenchment than those currently envisaged. Since there was no difference between the UK and its allies regarding the proposed 50 per cent withdrawals in 1970, Wilson took a longer term view and affirmed his government's intention to retain a capability in the Far East appropriate to 'discharge

of our commitments'. In reply, Rusk again questioned the UK's need to 'decide now' the defence posture for the mid-1970s and underlined that it was not the decision itself but its 'premature announcement' that was causing difficulties for the administration. But Wilson gave no quarter. Decisions had to be taken now, he insisted, 'for purposes of forward economic planning'. At this point Johnson intervened, telling Wilson he must 'beware of the chain reaction which such an announcement would almost inevitably provoke – a reaction which could extend to the American troops in Germany'. The trilateral talks had only lately been resolved 'with the greatest difficulty' and if the British now 'contracted out of their obligations East of Suez, it might be impossible for him to hold the question of the United States military presence in Europe any longer'.⁹² Yet Wilson still held firm – probably calculating that the US government, no matter what the level of domestic pressure for a strategic reappraisal, would maintain its European commitments rather than, as a consequence of major re-deployment, destroy the close relations with Germany upon which its whole Atlantic policy hinged. Britain, in contrast, had no real choice about the east of Suez withdrawal, though it could, and did, measure the negative response from its American, Australian, New Zealand and Far Eastern allies against the anticipated positive of enhanced relations with European allies and economic benefits.

At the Washington meetings of July 1966 – a high point in the Johnson-Wilson relationship – Wilson had declared that while Britain had a European role to play it also recognised its 'Pacific loyalties, as well'.⁹³ Almost twelve months on, Wilson's government had been forced to decide that it could not maintain those 'Pacific loyalties' after all, hence Wilson's statement to Cabinet on 6 June 1967 that the 'special relationship between the United States and ourselves was ... undergoing a gradual modification, although close relations in the shape of continuing consultations on international affairs would no doubt continue'.⁹⁴ A carefully composed statement on Britain's new leadership role in Europe and confirmation that the British would maintain a military capability in the Far East, even if its nature had yet to be determined, was enough, alongside the Middle East-inspired spirit of US-UK cooperation, to ensure that the Johnson administration did not react with the fierceness that it would later in 1967 and 1968 when the British had to hasten their east of Suez plans after the calamity of devaluation. Anticipating such an economic crisis, Bator apprised the president of Britain's weakened position and the over-stretch that fulfilling the many roles the US required of it had on

the British government.⁹⁵ The meetings on 2 June did not include a full consideration of such matters as Middle Eastern affairs dominated discussions having produced a 'quasi-revival of the happy spirit of the "special relationship"' as Palliser described it.⁹⁶ Bator would have agreed with Palliser's corresponding judgement that this condition was 'illusory' because 'the basic problems remain'. Those problems were first and foremost caused by the prospect of retrenchment east of Suez and, despite Wilson's successful short-term damage limitation diplomacy, a troubling and increasing trend in the US to doubt, in light of Britain's economic malaise, the UK's credentials on the world stage. The only major area of agreement between the Americans and the British – almost the only hope for Britain – was its EEC application. But here, for all the Wilson government's determination, and notwithstanding the support given by the Five in the EEC, and the encouragement from the US, the reality was that one man stood in its way.

6

De Gaulle's Challenge Contained: the Anglo-American Relationship in Transition, June 1967 to June 1968

Introduction

De Gaulle once said that 'old age is a shipwreck' but he spent the month of his 77th birthday, November 1967, defying this theory.¹ During the second half of 1967, perhaps conscious of time running out, de Gaulle stepped up his challenge. From June he drew on events in the Middle East and Canadian politics to criticise the predominance of the USA and in July, he attempted to renew the Franco-German treaty of friendship of 1963 and draw the Federal Republic away from the Atlantic orbit. From September, he continued with his opposition to Britain's entry to the EEC and jeopardised the review in NATO of the future tasks of the Atlantic Alliance known as the Harmel Exercise. Finally, in November, he crowned this confrontational diplomacy by using the devaluation of the pound to justify a veto of the UK's EEC application while simultaneously increasing the momentum of his campaign against the dollar and emitting signals that France might yet embrace Cold War neutralism. These were not the actions of a man suffering the frailties of age.

This chapter deals with how the Americans and the British sought to contain the General's last stand. It concentrates first on de Gaulle's activities in summer 1967 and their effect on UK and US interests; it then considers the period from September to December 1967 when de Gaulle's policies towards Britain's EEC application and the Harmel Exercise became interconnected. In doing so, it suggests that while Britain's second EEC bid ultimately suffered the fate of the first, it contributed in a way that its antecedent did not to the stability of the Atlantic Alliance. The chapter then concludes by considering how these events and subsequent British decisions in January 1968 to accel-

erate their global retrenchment influenced the development of the Anglo-American relationship.

Enduring de Gaulle

The virulence of de Gaulle's actions after he failed to broker peace during the Six-Day War confirmed that his challenge had lost none of its determination in mid-1967. On 21 June the French government issued an aggressive statement denouncing US intervention in Vietnam and laying the blame for the Arab-Israeli conflict at the door of the Johnson administration.² The next month, on a visit to Canada, de Gaulle further antagonised the Americans by declaring support for the Quebec separatist movement. Leaving aside the controversy that *Vive le Québec Libre!* injected into Canadian domestic politics and Franco-Canadian relations, it was the subtext – the implication that Canada should seek freedom from the influence of the United States – that was really significant.³ In the wake of the US-Soviet summit at Glassboro at the end of June, de Gaulle was once more defying the superpowers.⁴

De Gaulle's anxieties about US and Soviet hegemony were revealed during talks with Harold Wilson at Grand Trianon on 19–20 June, a few days before the Glassboro summit. Writing afterwards to Johnson, Wilson described the general's 'gloomy and apocalyptic mood' and how he appeared to be a 'lonely old man obsessed in his fatalistic way by a sense of real impotence'.⁵ Railing against the US and its Vietnam policy, de Gaulle felt that the only way for 'a medium-sized power like France, (or, in his view, Britain) to conduct their affairs ... was to disengage'.⁶ When the talks turned to the UK priority, EEC entry, de Gaulle reprised his theme of independence from America. Such was Britain's present closeness to the US, he observed, that its membership could turn the EEC into 'an American-dominated Atlantic arrangement'. Wilson, however, had gone to Trianon precisely to assuage de Gaulle's suspicions on this core point by presenting him 'not with a new Nassau but a Nassau in reverse. Trianon was the opposite of Rambouillet'.⁷ Whereas Macmillan had attempted to convince de Gaulle of Britain's EEC ambitions by offering him Atlanticism in tripartite links with the US and nuclear collaboration, Wilson offered bilateralism and Europeanism.⁸ He spoke of Anglo-French military, political and technological cooperation, including nuclear power for civil use, and emphasised how the recent shift in Britain's global horizons away from east of Suez and towards Europe had put important distance between London and Washington.⁹ De Gaulle, however, still wondered

whether it was 'possible for Britain at present – and was Britain willing? – to follow any policy that was really distinct from that of the United States, whether in Asia, the Middle East or Europe? That was what France still did not know'.¹⁰ Of course, de Gaulle did know and Wilson could not convince him otherwise. De Gaulle 'does not want us in and he will use all the delaying tactics he can', he confessed to Johnson, though he drew some comfort from the French leader's failed Middle East initiative and his advancing age; 'if we keep firmly beating at the door ... and do not falter in our purpose or our resolve I am not sure that he any longer has the strength finally to keep us out – a dangerous prophecy, as prophecy always is with the General'.¹¹ As events would soon show, there was more life left in de Gaulle than Wilson imagined and the UK's EEC prospects (given that the Five were not prepared to defy the General on the matter) were consequently very poor. Nevertheless the policy of 'firmly beating at the door' was a sensible one; even if the door was likely to stay locked while de Gaulle held the key, Britain's commitment to European unity would be publicly demonstrated in a way that would surely help any post-de Gaulle application for membership.

On his return from the Trianon meetings, Wilson's sense that de Gaulle was a declining force led him to tell the Cabinet on 22 June that if Britain maintained the pressure behind its EEC application, 'there was a reasonable prospect of our succeeding'.¹² In Paris, Ambassador Reilly concluded similarly that the meetings were 'an important stage in the long process of wearing down the General's opposition' and he offered a number of recommendations that were taken up by the Wilson government. The UK should show de Gaulle 'every possible courtesy', Reilly advised, but 'not worry too much about him' and instead 'stick firmly to our purpose'. In this last connection, London needed to take 'a tougher line' with the Five in public, hence the foreign secretary's planned statement on Britain's application at the WEU on 4 July would be 'crucial' for public opinion in France and for the General's 'capacity to justify his obstruction of our candidature in French eyes'.¹³ As Reilly predicted, Brown's emphasis in the WEU on a clean and simple British application devoid of overweening safeguards earned plaudits from the Five as well as the inevitable brickbats from the French.¹⁴ But it did not lead to an opening of negotiations as the Five versus One split that characterised the course of Britain's application ensued at the EEC Council of Ministers meeting on 10–11 July. There, Couve mounted a 'sharp attack on British admission' which rested on specific issues (related to British agriculture and sterling) and

the principle that enlargement would transform the Community, weaken its political cohesion and deter détente by reinforcing Cold War blocs and causing East-West tensions.¹⁵ In response, France's partners pushed for negotiations but did not push the French to a breach; instead the European Commission was charged with producing its opinion, or *avis*, on enlargement by September after which the Council would return to the question.¹⁶

On 12 July, de Gaulle made France's opposition yet plainer in an interview with Reilly. Ignoring the positive welcome given by the Five to Brown's recent WEU statement, de Gaulle insisted that only a community of the Six had 'the element of balance' necessary to pursue détente. Did this mean, Reilly asked, 'that Europe must be confined to the Six for ever'? '[N]ot for ever', de Gaulle replied, only until Britain 'had changed enough for membership'. And that change, he made clear, was not yet happening.¹⁷ For Wilson, these comments, in light of the Trianon talks, convinced him of the need to cultivate the Five through some 'blatant technological cooperation'.¹⁸ Wilson made this approach the centrepiece of the application which after July was no longer about achieving entry in the short-term, if it ever had been, but about diplomatically and publicly reducing de Gaulle's room for manoeuvre and laying the foundations for future British entry in a post-de Gaulle world by working with the Five and also the European Commission.¹⁹ Now that Wilson believed 'We are past the point of forecasting [de Gaulle's] actions on the basis of rational analysis', this was the only strategy that Britain could pursue in the knowledge that France would at best delay negotiations, and at worst, veto them.²⁰ As for the Americans, they saw realism rather than defeatism at work in London, as even a failed bid for entry had value to them as a means of discomfiting de Gaulle. A successful application would of course be warmly welcomed too, but in the summer of 1967 few in the US government thought this likely if for no other reason than it offered France, the ultimate determiner of Britain's fate, nothing but disadvantages. Leaving aside de Gaulle's concern that behind the UK 'looms the vast power of the United States', at a political level Benelux and Italy might well look for leadership to Britain rather than France (or Germany) and on an economic level French agricultural exports to Germany stood to suffer from British competition. Thus, British entry would reduce France's influence in the Community 'just when the Germans ... seem at long last to be moving [de Gaulle's] way' and consequently it had to be assumed that he would 'continue to block British admission by delays if possible, but by veto if necessary, and that there is little any other government can do about it'.²¹

Britain's nascent application and American views on its prospects and potentialities in mid-1967 must also be discussed in the context of the increasing stridency of de Gaulle's challenge and, more particularly, in relation to the on-going battle between the French, the Americans and the British for the allegiance of the Federal Republic. By summer 1967 the Johnson administration had become alarmed by the Kiesinger government's political intimacy with Gaullist France. At meetings on 11–12 July the French and German leaders agreed to produce a joint study of European security problems, a troubling development from the US standpoint insofar as it confirmed 'the primacy of close collaboration with France in the Kiesinger Government's foreign policy'. What made matters worse was de Gaulle's insistence that the successful pursuit of détente required the Bonn government to 'reorient its foreign policy emphasis away from close links to Washington'. Hitherto resistant to the General's siren songs, there were now signs that both Kiesinger and Brandt saw merit in the idea of reduced US involvement in European political affairs.²² Kiesinger, for his part, promised Johnson that he would 'make no important decisions on foreign policy without first consulting the US'.²³ As a signal of his sincerity, the chancellor gave the Americans a full briefing on his recent talks with de Gaulle during which he said he warned the French president that his anti-Americanism was endangering Franco-German co-operation. Nonetheless, Kiesinger frankly admitted that he shared de Gaulle's vision of a Europe eventually independent of both the US and USSR.²⁴ The chancellor also revealed the nature of the exchanges on Britain's EEC application (which the US authorities subsequently passed on to London). De Gaulle had been 'adamant' in his opposition to UK entry, and while Kiesinger had defended the British he confessed to doubts as to whether it would be possible to forge 'the kind of European political unity which Germany sought in the EEC if Britain became a member'.²⁵ For the Wilson government, though this last remark was somewhat disconcerting, there was satisfaction that the Germans – such a key influence within the Five – still backed their membership bid.²⁶

The Johnson administration was equally relieved by this news, especially as Britain's application, offering as it did the prospect of a different outlook for European unity set within Atlantic partnership, continued to be seen as a valuable counterweight to de Gaulle's design at a time when new life seemed to have been breathed into Franco-German relations.²⁷ In August, a CIA evaluation praised the skill with which the UK had thus far conducted its EEC diplomacy; the British

had 'prosecuted with vigor and ingenuity' their bid and in the face of France's opposition, 'the UK application has proceeded about as well as London had any reason to expect'. By 'increasingly identifying itself with the political and economic objectives of European unity,' London had 'made it difficult for the Five not to go along'. The Gaullist impediment nevertheless remained formidable while the Germans seemed torn between support for British entry and their desire to maintain strong Franco-German relations, with the French pressing them hard to commit in the latter direction.²⁸ The UK's task therefore was to show itself as a better ally for Germany than France at a moment when there were ominous signs that de Gaulle 'might be contemplating some dramatic development of his concept of the *renversement des alliances*' by withdrawing France completely from NATO in either 1968 or 1969.²⁹ Britain's application had to be handled in such a manner as to ensure continued German support for it and what it represented for Europe's future. Tactically, this meant that Britain must present itself as an applicant in waiting both in terms of its diplomacy with the EEC and in NATO's Harmel Exercise, and for the US government to remain a detached but unequivocal supporter of British entry, interdependence and multilateralism in the Atlantic Alliance.

Having said this, the US was not beyond direct action. At talks between Johnson and Kiesinger on 15 August the president assumed the mantle of defender of the Atlantic Alliance whose strength he 'would do anything in his power to preserve'. LBJ also posed as a model of magnanimity in refusing to criticise de Gaulle. In four years, he 'had not said one bad thing' about the General and he believed that 'if the chips were down de Gaulle would stand by the United States'. When the subject of Britain's EEC application came up, Kiesinger reaffirmed his government's support but also stated that there was a limit to how strongly he would push the UK's case; he would not be a 'bulldozer'. LBJ let this comment go and instead expressed respect for the French people and waxed lyrical on the strength of US-FRG relations before asking Kiesinger to act 'as a sort of mediator' in talks with de Gaulle. If only 'he and the Chancellor could stand together it would be an essential contribution to stabilizing the world situation'.³⁰ Johnson's silence on Britain's EEC application requires explanation given its centrality to US strategy for dealing with the Gaullist challenge. To begin with, there is no escaping the fact that the issue, on its own, seldom sparked the president's interest. In addition, the Americans were always wary about overt backing for the UK lest this give de Gaulle further cause to claim the existence of an

Anglo-American plot to hijack the EEC. But it should also be borne in mind that the LBJ-Kiesinger meeting took place at a time when the president's estimate of Britain's status, hence its value as an international power, had recently plummeted. While de Gaulle had made his Middle East and Quebec declarations, attempted to block British EEC entry and lure the Federal Republic into France's orbit, the British had finalised and publicly announced plans that the Americans had implored them not to.

On 18 July 1967 the Wilson government published a White Paper announcing strategies for defence expenditure savings and retrenchment from east of Suez.³¹ These actions were taken in defiance of urgent American pleas, including several from the Oval Office, to implore the government to reconsider.³² But Wilson would not be swayed. The decisions had been taken after 'very earnest and deep consideration', he explained to Johnson on 13 July, and were the product of inescapable economic imperatives. To soften the blow, the prime minister assured the president that after the major withdrawals the UK would 'retain a sophisticated military capability for use if required in the Far East'. But even though he knew it would be 'unwelcome news' to Johnson, the prime minister had seen no alternative, in view of the danger of leaks, to an early and full disclosure of future plans.³³ In actual fact, this news was more than simply 'unwelcome' in Washington where Britain's reputation as an international power and America's leading ally was at stake. In this context, much rested on Britain's European diplomacy and how it contributed to defeating de Gaulle's challenge in the final months of 1967.

NATO renewed, application denied

In summer 1967, as Vietnam continued to take its enervating toll, the Johnson administration grew increasingly exasperated by its Western European allies. De Gaulle was in a category of his own, of course, but Washington was generally frustrated by the reluctance of the European NATO powers – Britain included – to pull their weight in the Alliance at a time when the US was manning the Cold War battlements in both Europe and the Far East. As Rusk complained in August, 'Great Britain has declared that she will pull back from Southeast Asia in the 1970's, Germany is talking about reduction of its defense budget, and no serious attention was paid in Europe to the Arab-Israeli war'. European security and prosperity it seemed had 'led to laziness' and many continentals seemed to think that 'Europe is an innocent bystander in the

Moscow-Washington struggle ... But Europe is not an innocent bystander because Europe is the issue'.³⁴ Paradoxically, despite present negatives, Rusk felt that the future held out some positives. Among the promising 'longer range trends' was an advance towards a Western European 'entity' which might in time 'play a larger role in the world'. This, and the 'more realistic policy *vis-à-vis* the East' prevalent in Bonn, meant that the Alliance was at least 'pointed in the right direction' and 'making headway'.³⁵ De Gaulle, however, remained determined to stymie progress and counteract the 'danger of American domination'; his aim of giving the Europe of the Six its part in bringing détente to East and West found expression in his unrelenting opposition to Britain's EEC application, to the Harmel Exercise in NATO, and in his continuing campaign against the dollar.³⁶ By the end of 1967, however, his challenge, if not defeated, would at least be contained. As we will see, this outcome owed much to the interplay between Britain's EEC application, NATO affairs and, in a wider sense, the interdependence defended by France's allies.

On 23 September 1967, six days before the European Commission would publish its *avis* on Britain's EEC bid, Foreign Secretary Brown had 'a particularly confidential conversation' with his French opposite number. Asked to explain 'frankly' the present French attitude towards Britain and the EEC, Couve said that entry was 'bound to happen' and that negotiations 'would certainly begin before the end of the year', a rare piece of good news that Brown was quick to relay to the Cabinet.³⁷ Since Couve's comments were suspiciously inconsistent with established French attitudes, Brown might have been more cautious.³⁸ The foreign secretary was also highly selective in the information he gave to fellow ministers, choosing to ignore, for example, other indications from the Quai d'Orsay that Britain's application would be vetoed by France at the EEC Council of Ministers on 23 October.³⁹ Palliser, however, was more critical than Brown. 'War of nerves, truth, perfidy – who can tell?', he asked. 'But of course we must take seriously the prospect of a veto'. Wilson, to whom Palliser conveyed these musings, thought that the government should steel itself for failure and wondered if Britain should, at that point, 'make another application and keep the ball before every [meeting]'.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, alongside speculation regarding the French attitude toward the UK's EEC policy, rumours began circulating that de Gaulle planned to pull France out of the Atlantic Alliance by 1969. Exhibiting customary optimism, Brown believed that this would be – like the veto of Britain's application – 'the actual step he can't take'.⁴¹

On 29 September the European Commission approved the opening of negotiations between the EEC and Britain (and the other aspiring applicants), a decision that the Wilson government took to mean that 'our entry is possible and welcome'.⁴² However, though the Commission enthusiastically supported UK membership in principle, it also focused upon Britain's balance of payments problems and sterling's weakness.⁴³ The French immediately seized on these points to justify continued opposition, with Reilly unusually summoned for an audience with de Gaulle. France had no 'objection of principle' to UK entry, the General said, but it would first have to put its economic and agricultural houses in order. This was de Gaulle's principal line of attack – Britain's 'excessive dependence on the United States' was only mentioned in passing, and even then he admitted that London was 'moving a little'. Reilly attempted to fathom de Gaulle's thinking, detecting beneath the surface of his repeated insistence that he had 'no hostility of principle' to British accession the wish that 'if only you would drop all this nonsense about coming into the E.E.C. now, how happy we would be to collaborate with you in all sorts of ways'.⁴⁴ In London, Palliser found this 'distinctly encouraging'. De Gaulle, no matter how much he wanted to exercise a veto, faced such potential hostility that he was 'obviously uncertain how best to play his hand'.⁴⁵ The Commission's opinion and de Gaulle's defensiveness helped sustain the Wilson government's 'dogged determination' which, over the last year, had 'paid great dividends ... in improving the attitudes of the Five towards us, and in discrediting that of the General'. Britain should continue to argue that 'we need Europe, that Europe needs us, that we are fit and proper candidates with a great contribution to make and that we are not taking "No" for an answer' – a view conveyed direct to de Gaulle, albeit in diplomatic terms, on 5 October.⁴⁶ If the General now delivered a veto, there was confidence in London that it would do more harm to France than to Britain in the short-term and, in the medium-term, make a third bid for entry much more likely to succeed.

On 16 October, de Gaulle and his ministers, along with the French permanent representative to NATO, 'agreed on the need to prevent Britain's membership and to avoid the opening of negotiations' but, in a reflection of the uncertainty sensed by Palliser, 'they could not agree on a definite tactic'.⁴⁷ At the Council of Ministers on 23–24 October, Couve latched on to the recent *avis* and now established a new precondition for negotiations: Britain must first stabilise its balance of payments and abolish the reserve function of sterling before substantive negotiations could begin, an 'extreme' demand that produced a

'Five versus One' split. This was judged a 'surprisingly good result' by Sir James Marjoribanks, Britain's ambassador to the EEC, since France would soon have to decide whether to risk a Community crisis by actually vetoing negotiations.⁴⁸ The Americans, however, interpreted Couve's statement as a veto in all but name, a view shared by the Dutch and the Germans.⁴⁹ Chancellor Kiesinger advised Wilson to make a virtue out of patience; while personally convinced that Britain must join the EEC and determined 'to fight for her entry', he could not 'invade Paris' hence the UK 'would have to hang on for at least two years'.⁵⁰ This was as far as Kiesinger could reasonably go given his desire to avoid confrontation with de Gaulle and an EEC crisis. For his part, Wilson was privately convinced that Britain would likely be 'faced with a "no" in de Gaulle's lifetime'. Yet publicly there was no alternative other than to 'keep on pressing', hence, in the Commons in late October, he insisted that Britain's application was 'in and remains in', and at the Guildhall on 13 November, he announced Britain's intention to create a European Technological Community.⁵¹ These words and deeds might have confirmed positive views of Britain's commitment to its EEC application, but their real value was to show Britain 'irrevocably committed' to Europe, as *The Observer* described it, because this was 'the best chance of beating General de Gaulle in the long-term battle for Europe'.⁵²

The Americans, meanwhile, remained impressed by the conduct of Britain's EEC diplomacy; in June, Washington had felt that the British were 'in a stronger position with respect to Europe than they have been at any time since 1950' and that 'General de Gaulle is – for once – on the losing side'.⁵³ The Johnson administration's policy was to maintain a watching brief, express generalised support for EEC enlargement but avoid overt backing for the UK so as to deny de Gaulle the chance to rage against an Anglo-Saxon plot. When French delaying tactics revealed themselves, Washington encouraged London to 'simply peg away' and 'refuse to take "No" for an answer' – which was what the British had more-or-less decided to do anyway.⁵⁴ In October, the US embassy in London reported that 'British strategy and tactics during [the] past six months have been both intelligent and effective', while the State Department, in the wake of Couve's hasty erection of additional economic barriers, felt that the British had no option but to settle in for 'the long pull' and predicted (presciently) that de Gaulle might well bring the issue of the UK application to a head at his November press conference.⁵⁵ If the Americans were thus publicly passive in their support of Britain's EEC policy, they were privately

committed: Rusk consulted with representatives of the Five in routine meetings, Bohlen took the temperature in Paris and Schaetzel did so in Brussels.⁵⁶ There was, however, surprisingly little Anglo-American diplomatic dialogue on EEC matters prior to de Gaulle's veto. On 30 October Wilson wrote to Johnson to assure him that there was no truth in press reports of a planned reappraisal of Britain's foreign policy in the event that the EEC application foundered – but this was the only exchange between them on the subject.⁵⁷ Even Ambassador Dean, who had been instrumental in promoting a new EEC policy in 1966, offered only rare observations.⁵⁸ The EEC application, it seemed, now that it had been lodged and was awaiting its fate, was considered a pending rather than a live issue in Anglo-American relations.

By contrast, there was close and sustained UK-US collaboration on the Harmel Exercise – the review of NATO's function and purpose agreed to by the organisation's ministers in December 1966. In recommending the review in the first place, Belgian Foreign Minister Harmel's motive was to confront head-on 'a crisis within the Alliance and a crisis in public opinion about the Alliance'.⁵⁹ He sought to answer pressing questions such as what NATO's role ought to be as an era of détente began to dawn, and how should NATO address the dilemma posed by the fact that its most powerful member was fighting a war in Southeast Asia which not only sowed dissension within NATO ranks but also exacerbated Cold War tensions and therefore damaged the prospects of East-West détente in Europe? In this latter regard, de Gaulle was the most vocal critic of America and NATO but there was a wider 'troubled partnership' between the US and its allies in the mid-1960s.⁶⁰ Harmel thus aimed to deflect de Gaulle's criticisms by reforming and revitalising NATO so that it became a dual-purpose organisation; not only would it ensure Cold War security but also exploit any lightening of East-West tensions to deliver détente. As the Johnson administration had elevated détente to priority status in the president's 7 October 1966 speech, it supported Harmel's initiative and though the year-long review in 1967 was ostensibly a Belgian project, it was in practice a joint US-Belgian endeavour. The American input was subtle but decisive. Just as it served US purposes in 1966 to have the British take the lead in organising the European response to the NATO crisis, so it suited the US in 1967 to have Belgium make the public running. In both cases the aim was to maintain a low profile and avoid a US-French confrontation.

The Harmel Exercise began in earnest in February 1967 when the NAC created a Special Group comprised of senior representatives from

the member states to coordinate the review process; this group in turn went on to establish four sub-groups to examine and then report on specific issues: I: East-West Relations; II: Intra-Alliance Relations; III: General Questions of Defence Policy; and IV: Developments in Regions Outside of the NATO Treaty Area. The Exercise began well but the controversial nature of the issues involved, especially those of sub-group I on East-West relations and the German question, meant that reports were not completed until the autumn.⁶¹ It was only then, however, as NATO officials set about producing a final all-encompassing Harmel Report, that the French – who had hitherto ‘paid little attention’ – showed their obstructionist hand by taking issue with the criticisms of their Atlantic and European policies contained in the report of sub-group III.⁶² On 20 September, in ‘almost violent language’, Couve condemned the Exercise and threatened a schism between France and the Fourteen.⁶³ Less vehemently, the French permanent representative to NATO argued that the Harmel Exercise had ‘gone further and faster’ than his government had expected and that it was ‘illogical’ to believe that NATO could foster détente when it was regarded by the Soviet bloc as ‘a basically hostile organisation’.⁶⁴ When the French went on to make clear that they would reject anything in the Harmel Report which ‘implied a commitment to remain in the Alliance after 1969’, this only added to speculation that de Gaulle planned to divest France of all NATO connections when the original 1949 treaty came up for renewal.⁶⁵ However, while the Fourteen had worked hard in 1966 to prevent a full breach with the French in NATO, in 1967 they showed little interest in compromise as they agreed *en masse* to defend the Harmel Report against French wrecking tactics. This remarkable demonstration of collective opposition testifies to the importance the Fourteen attached to the review exercise in terms of legitimising NATO’s continued existence at a point when it seemed possible that the Cold War might give way to détente. The French, possibly taken aback by this display of unity, ultimately came to terms with their NATO partners and the Harmel Report was the centrepiece at the December 1967 ministerial NAC meeting. As historians acknowledge, these developments were of great moment. The Harmel Exercise had proven a ‘master stroke’ by which the Americans vanquished de Gaulle’s view of NATO and détente and ‘confirmed the US conception of the political order’, one that would endure until the end of the Cold War.⁶⁶ In accounts of these events, the influence of Anglo-American cooperation, indeed the policy and role of the British in particular, have been largely absent.⁶⁷ This is an important omission as analysis of

the Harmel Exercise with these two aspects in mind reveals significant characteristics about the Anglo-American relationship and its connection to the Atlantic Alliance and détente; moreover, when the UK's EEC application is juxtaposed with the Harmel Exercise, it becomes clear just how much of a part the British played containing de Gaulle's challenge to NATO.

In December 1966 the State Department concluded that 'NATO, as an institution, is not well fitted for the role of an "architect" of détente', although the 'habit of consultation' enabled information exchange and afforded 'a means for a country to develop acceptance and support for responsible East-West initiatives'.⁶⁸ The subsequent Harmel Exercise did not alter this basic US outlook; in November 1967, the Policy Planning Council concluded that while NATO ought to concern itself with 'the security aspects of détente' it should not become involved with 'formulating the agreed political design of a European settlement'. At the same time it was accepted that NATO's 'image' needed remodelling in the context of détente, not least to satisfy the European partners that the issue was being taken seriously, hence a new NATO forum on East-West relations 'could perform a useful supporting role'.⁶⁹ For the Americans, then, the Harmel Exercise was largely about ensuring that the other member states – France especially but not exclusively – adopted 'responsible' attitudes towards détente. This was also important domestically to the Johnson administration which believed that finding 'common positions' with its NATO allies would help 'combat the ever-present pressure of isolationism'.⁷⁰ As for the Anglo-American dimension, both London and Washington agreed that the Exercise, insofar as it reaffirmed NATO's multilateral principles and updated its relevance as its third decade of existence beckoned, was a valuable counter to de Gaulle.⁷¹ But the two governments differed on certain fundamentals; the Americans were less inclined to the British view that the Exercise should produce concrete proposals on NATO's role in reducing East-West tension and they did not share the Wilson government's optimistic forecast that a genuine measure of détente with the Soviet bloc was attainable in the current atmosphere. The origins of this divergence went back at least to 1966 when London's interest in a declaration on Europe, mutual NATO-Warsaw Pact force reductions and an Anglo-Soviet treaty of friendship had been dismissed by Washington as premature and even imprudent.⁷²

In recognition of the UK's 'receptive attitude towards détente', NATO had given a British official, Foreign Office Assistant Under-Secretary,

Adam Watson, the task of drafting the portion of the sub-group 1 report devoted to East-West relations; the remainder would be drafted by a German official.⁷³ From the outset, however, Anglo-American tensions were palpable as the British, to US displeasure, sought to integrate into the report their old idea of a declaration on Europe along with their generally hopeful estimate of Soviet bloc attitudes on détente and a proposal for mutual East-West force reductions.⁷⁴ The Americans, backed by NATO Secretary-General Brosio, took exception to all of these proposals, while the British ventilated concerns of their own that the sub-group dealing with defence policy, under the direction of the US Deputy Under Secretary of State, Foy Kohler, seemed certain to 'play down' détente.⁷⁵ As the Exercise continued over the summer of 1967 Anglo-American arguments continued, particularly on force reductions, with Kohler at one point warning about 'excessive optimism, or premature expectations, about the feasibility of the kind of fundamental settlements which alone would warrant a substantial diminution in the defense efforts of the alliance'.⁷⁶ In London, the FO was inclined to agree with Kohler but Watson remained keen that the final Harmel Report should make a 'vigorous case' for détente in order to balance those parts of the document under US authorship which were bound to stress the defensive and deterrent value of NATO.⁷⁷ By September, however, with French obstructionism mounting and the whole Exercise suddenly in peril, the British perspective shifted as they became more concerned with safeguarding the review process in general than in defending their own views on détente and paths towards it.

For the most part the Harmel Exercise had been coordinated on a US-Belgian basis, as befitted its genesis as a Washington-backed Brussels initiative. But in its final critical stages from September to November 1967 the British played a central diplomatic role.⁷⁸ The Wilson government was more active in the review process partly in response to escalating rumours that the French were thinking of jettisoning NATO in 1969.⁷⁹ While the Americans were not so persuaded that de Gaulle would make such a move, and declined British suggestions for contingency planning, they were as convinced that the Harmel Exercise must succeed.⁸⁰ This, though, would require some skilful diplomatic navigation. As Viscount Hood of the Foreign Office warned, the Harmel Report would have to be steered 'between the Scylla of saying too much and so pushing the French into a corner and having them reject the whole report, and the Charybdis of saying too little and so letting the exercise come to nothing with consequent damage to NATO'.⁸¹ The British faced an additional difficulty arising from the interplay between their EEC

application and events in NATO, namely the likelihood that being among the leading the forces of opposition to France, as they had done in 1966, could damage Anglo-French relations at just the moment when the verdict on the UK EEC bid was being decided.⁸² Britain's conciliatory nature towards cooperation with the Germans in completing the work of sub-group I was similarly influenced by this nexus. There was compromise on both sides but it is significant that the British accepted that there were contrary views to their own optimistic appraisal of Soviet intentions and that they studiously decided to remain 'one step behind the Germans' in discussions of practical proposals on détente.⁸³ Convinced that relations with the Soviet bloc could be improved, Britain had entered into the Harmel Exercise with the desire to guide NATO allies towards East/West initiatives. That same outlook had produced the declaration on Europe in 1966 and had contributed to Wilson's response to Kosygin's offer of an Anglo-Soviet treaty in February 1967. Despite the fact that these proposals won no support from NATO allies, the British nevertheless persisted with their approach until it became apparent that doing so would jeopardise relations with Germany and possibly impede the completion of the Harmel Exercise. Thus, in producing sub-group I's report, the British were conciliatory towards the more cautious German position on détente to maintain good relations with Bonn for EEC purposes and to contribute to the success of the NATO review. Both tactics were also calculated to best the French as they attempted to obstruct its conclusion.

On the subject of Germany, the attitude of the Bonn government during the final lap of the Exercise caused the Americans and British some shared anxiety. Although the Germans were committed in principle to the Harmel Exercise and to the renewal of US-Western European relations – the American defence guarantee was of 'cardinal importance' to them – they were also committed to close Franco-German relations. UK and US authorities consequently feared that in order to curry favour in Paris, Bonn might yet back-track on what was in process of being agreed regarding NATO's future and possibly even 'scuttle' the whole Exercise.⁸⁴ Such anxieties were only heightened by Kiesinger's reluctance to confront France over negotiations for British EEC entry. In these circumstances, the Americans and the British agreed that the NATO powers should not 'trim their sails' for France – or Germany for that matter – when the final shape of the report was debated at the Ditchley Park meetings on 11–12 October. Nor did they as the Americans, British and Belgians successfully combined to circumvent French objections and secure agreement that the draft report should go

before Special Group for final consideration and confirmation in November.⁸⁵ On 31 October, on British initiative, an informal meeting of NATO permanent representatives was convened to make the 'first real attempt to define what the outcome of the Harmel Study would be if the French proved no obstacle'.⁸⁶ A risky duality was developing in Britain's diplomacy: at the same time as London was doing everything it could to avoid antagonising de Gaulle and France in the context of its EEC application, it was driving the Harmel Exercise forward to a conclusion that in certain respects the French might well resent.⁸⁷ Yet, with Americans equally determined to make the Exercise a success, this joint Belgian-UK-US push seemed to surprise the French. At any rate, as the first of two scheduled November Special Group meetings loomed, Couve offered the welcome opinion that France was 'not looking for any crisis or head on collision with anybody in NATO'.⁸⁸ But what else lay behind this apparent softening of the French attitude? To get at an answer the wider events of November 1967 – a month of breakdowns and breakthroughs – need to be borne in mind: on the 18th Britain was forced to devalue the pound and on the 27th its second EEC application went the way of the first, brought down by de Gaulle's veto; in between, from 22 to 24 November, the Fourteen and the French compromised in such a way as to enable the completion of the final Harmel Report for consideration by ministers at the NAC in December. All of these developments, interesting and important as they are in themselves, were in fact linked in significant and hitherto unappreciated ways.

At the start of the month there was little inkling in British circles that de Gaulle would veto the UK EEC application, at any rate in the near future. According to Ambassador Reilly – who met with Couve on 15 November – the General would probably only veto if forced to do so by the Five, which seemed improbable, but even if this judgement was flawed all the signs were that Paris would at least let matters run into 1968.⁸⁹ On 18 November, however, Wilson gifted de Gaulle the perfect excuse for an assault on Britain's EEC bid by announcing the devaluation of the pound.⁹⁰ The British government went out of its way to assure the Six that this action left unaffected its standing as an EEC aspirant, but de Gaulle, for one, demurred. In a press conference on 27 November, he emphasised the pound's weakness, and the problems this portended for the EEC, in rejecting the UK application.⁹¹ By any standards, this was a great blow to the Wilson government. Yet, unlike the 1963 veto, the 1967 version at least contained a NATO blessing in disguise. Hence it is to the Harmel Exercise that we must now return.

The decisive Harmel Special Group meetings took place on 7–8 and 22–24 November 1967. Earlier indications of a constructive French attitude – such as Couve's assurance that his government was not looking to provoke a crisis – were confirmed when, at the first meeting, the French representative bowed to his colleagues on a key procedural point, namely that the secretary-general would produce a draft Harmel Report for discussion at the second meeting. On points of substance, however, the French remained inflexible. The British, meanwhile, were concerned that a version of the draft report being prepared by the Germans might be shaped to satisfy French *desiderata* and that this would make it 'a dangerous document to which the waverers could only too easily rally'.⁹² By the time of the second Special Group session, however, the French had fallen into line; on 20 November Couve informed Harmel that his government would now approve a favourable resolution on the Exercise when the December NATO ministerial meeting convened.⁹³ Two days later, at the Special Group meeting, the French maintained their generally constructive mien and, in consequence, a final report was ready in time for consideration by the NATO Council.⁹⁴ The transformation in France's position manifest in Couve's assurance to Harmel on 20 November requires further exploration. And in this connection, it is not without relevance that Couve, in addition to expressing French readiness to conform on the NATO review, also insisted that his government's pre-conditions had to be met before the EEC Council moved to negotiations on UK membership bid.⁹⁵

French diplomacy on the Harmel Exercise and on the UK EEC application had become transparently entwined.⁹⁶ In December, Rusk reflected that France 'undoubtedly went along' with the Harmel Report in order to restore amity with the Fourteen and avoid a NATO crisis just as it was preparing to snub the British on the EEC.⁹⁷ The British were also of the view that French compromise on Harmel was designed to avoid 'a war on two fronts'.⁹⁸ De Gaulle had, it seemed, accepted a tactical retreat in NATO to preserve his other goals, among them thwarting the UK's EEC ambitions and his on-going challenge to the international monetary system.⁹⁹ The French president may have had other secondary motives – the maintenance of friendly Franco-Belgian relations, for instance, at a time when the sale of Mirage fighters to Brussels was under discussion – but it is the Harmel-EEC interface that is most striking: Couve's 15 November meeting with Reilly, his 20 November talk with Harmel, and his statement in the EEC Council following devaluation of the pound, along with the

French government's acceptance of the draft Harmel Report on 24 November and de Gaulle's veto on 27 November, all form links in a French diplomatic chain.

Interestingly, de Gaulle made no reference to the Harmel Exercise at his press conference on 27 November and concentrated instead on attacking the dollar and the international monetary system, waxing lyrical on other matters presently engaging his attention – the Middle East, Quebec, European détente – and ultimately vetoing the UK's EEC application.¹⁰⁰ In 1963, when delivering his first veto, the General had struck a distinctive anti-Anglo-Saxon chord, condemning US predominance in the West and insisting that the UK would have to undergo an attitudinal transformation by renouncing the Washington connection and fully embracing Europeanism before being allowed into the EEC club.¹⁰¹ In 1967, the anti-Anglo-Saxonism could still be plainly heard – especially in de Gaulle's judgement that Britain had still to undergo a 'very vast and very far-reaching mutation' from Atlantic to European entity – but de Gaulle paid equal attention to Britain's financial weakness and the potential damage to the Community if such a troubled economy was admitted to its ranks. The General's press conference was thus a restatement of many of the themes that had informed his international diplomacy since 1958 and which in turn underpinned his challenge to the US hegemon and its UK ally. If anything, that challenge only intensified in late 1967. In December the chief of staff of the French armed forces, General Ailleret, acting on de Gaulle's instructions, publicly dissociated France not only from NATO but from the doctrine of flexible response and Cold War blocs and hinted at a future foreign policy based on neutralism.¹⁰² France also stepped up its policy of seeking the reform of the international monetary system, leading Johnson to condemn 'the desire of the French and Soviets "and all of our enemies" to get US gold and bring the dollar down' so that it 'busted like the pound was busted'.¹⁰³ Yet, for all its appearance of sustained hostility, de Gaulle's diplomacy in the closing stages of 1967 was curiously lacking in potency, certainly in comparison with 1963–66.¹⁰⁴ NATO's acceptance of the Harmel Report with its emphasis on multilateralism and détente had been a blow to the General – even if he had brought it on himself by trading compromise in NATO for freedom to block UK entry to the EEC. But when, in this last regard, he played the veto card, de Gaulle only achieved his aim of keeping the UK out of the Community at the cost of great criticism from his European partners. For all the superficial bluster, de Gaulle was fast becoming a man more challenged than

challenging. This was certainly the American view and it strongly influenced the Johnson administration's efforts to manage the British response to the EEC veto.

To begin with, the Wilson government followed the bullish advice of Foreign Secretary Brown to urge the Five to pretend the veto did not exist by fixing a date for the opening of negotiations; if nothing else this would make life difficult for France at the EEC Council meeting of 18–19 December at which the British application was due to be discussed.¹⁰⁵ On 13 December Brown informed Rusk of his favoured strategy, arguing that 'if pressed, the French will agree to negotiations' and asking for Washington's support in urging a 'firm line' on the Five. In a 'vigorous US presentation' which Brown refused, the Americans 'seriously questioned' the wisdom of this approach (sounding 'a historical note' by 'citing past UK errors in dealing with the Common Market') and declined Britain's request for wide-ranging Anglo-American contingency planning on the fall-out from the French veto.¹⁰⁶ With the Harmel Exercise out of the way, the Johnson administration looked forward to a period of stability in transatlantic relations after the tumult of the previous two years. The December 1967 NATO meeting represented a fresh start: it was the first major NAC ministerial conclave since its move from Paris to Brussels, and its communiqué was the first such document for many months that did not begin with a reaffirmation of the necessity of allied unity. NATO had been renewed and reformed and de Gaulle vanquished. Defence and détente, the shield and the olive branch, were now equal portions of the greater NATO whole.¹⁰⁷ That his press conference and the confirmation of France's veto at the EEC Council on 18–19 December had brought ostensible failure to Britain's EEC policy was not a matter about which the Americans were willing to support the British in seeking to isolate de Gaulle beyond the Five versus One split already apparent.¹⁰⁸ The EEC could not be brought to crisis point again, least of all at a time when German loyalty to the Atlantic Alliance and its institutions was not entirely certain. Besides which, Britain's EEC application, despite its ultimate failure, had already achieved many of the results the Americans had hoped for when deciding in 1966 to back a second UK membership bid. 'In the long run the political gains from U.K. membership in the European Communities are in our interest', the State Department acknowledged, but 'in the short run, an unequivocal British willingness to join the Communities would significantly strengthen the Five in dealing with Gaullist France and indirectly help the fourteen hold NATO together, whatever the French do'.¹⁰⁹ And so it

proved. Britain's *failed* second application had both wrought greater cohesion amongst the Five inside the EEC and limited de Gaulle's scope for undermining the Harmel Exercise. In the aftermath of the veto, all that Washington wanted London to do was carry on as it had before by simply 'peg[ging] away'.¹¹⁰ Once their disappointment subsided, the British, too, realised that this was the only course open to them.¹¹¹ Although set on retaliation, Brown had also noted on 1 December 1967 that there was always 'consolation in the religious thought that man was mortal'.¹¹² Similarly, an Italian politician suggested to State Department officials five days later that for the British, 'the ultimate solution to the impasse' over their EEC entry was de Gaulle's "'departure for another world'".¹¹³ They would not have to wait long.

The Anglo-American relationship at the point of transition

The impact of the devaluation of sterling on Britain's foreign policy was not limited to de Gaulle's veto of the second EEC application and the indirect encouragement it gave him to sanction the Harmel Report. It also led to the acceleration of Britain's withdrawal from east of Suez, the cancellation of London's purchase from the US of the F-111 aircraft, and what Patrick Dean called 'a watershed' in Anglo-American relations as Washington reacted angrily to the Wilson government's decisions.¹¹⁴ 'If these steps are taken', Johnson wrote to the prime minister on 11 January, 'they will be tantamount to British withdrawal from world affairs, with all that means for the future safety and health of the free world. ... Our own capability and political will could be gravely weakened if we have to man the ramparts all alone'.¹¹⁵ The following day, with Brown just back from a 'bloody unpleasant meeting in Washington' (famous for Rusk's 'For God's sake act like Britain' comment), Wilson chaired a remarkable Cabinet meeting at which the fundamental direction of Britain in the world and its relations with the US were debated.¹¹⁶ Brown began by stressing the Johnson administration's strong sense of betrayal, but Wilson countered stridently that the United States had not consulted Britain before its most recent actions to stabilise the US economy despite their bearing on the UK balance of payments. Hitting an anti-American stride, the prime minister argued that it was 'important to our future relations that both we and the United States should recognise that we must each look after our own interests'. In the ensuing discussion, ministers argued the case for and against appeasing Washington's sensibilities, though the Cabinet record does not attribute specific viewpoints to individuals. Ranged

against the perennial acceptance that 'we could not afford to disregard the views of the United States Government' was an altogether more nationalistic – dare one say Gaullist – argument that 'the time had come for a decisive break with our previous policies'. Britain should no longer adopt policies 'merely because the United States wished us to adopt them and out of fear for the economic consequences if we did not do so. The friendship of the United States had been valuable to us; but we had often paid a heavy price for it'. World-wide commitments were not an 'essential' condition of US cooperation and in any event the UK's policy 'was now to concentrate on Europe'. In this connection there was 'no reason why our relations with the United States should not be at least as good as, for example, those between the United States and Germany'. On the face of it, the Cabinet seemed split between, on the one hand, proponents of the special relationship and the maintenance of a global role and, on the other, those for whom the EEC application and east of Suez decision represented the beginning of a new streamlined and Eurocentric foreign policy; this division was, however, more apparent than real.¹¹⁷ The January Cabinet debates were not about questioning the underlying principles of Britain's foreign policy but about the 'speed of withdrawal and, even more crucially, the decision to cancel the F-111 order, and to hold no special capability to intervene east of Suez'.¹¹⁸

The news that the British were on the verge of abandoning the F-111 prompted Johnson to write to Wilson on 14 January to make known his 'extreme concern' about a move which his administration would be bound to regard 'as a total disengagement from any commitments whatsoever to the security of areas outside Europe and, indeed, to a considerable extent in Europe as well'.¹¹⁹ It made no difference. The following day, the Cabinet rubber-stamped the decision to accelerate disengagement from east of Suez and cancelled the F-111 contract.¹²⁰ In informing LBJ of this outcome, Wilson rejected any implication that Britain was somehow retreating from the 'world stage' and moving towards a 'Little England' policy. Rather, the Cabinet's resolutions reflected a 'blend of exasperation at our inability to weather the successive economic storms of the past twenty years and determination, once and for all, to hew out a new role for Britain in the world at once commensurate with her real resources yet worthy of her past'. The process leading to this outcome had been 'the most difficult and the heaviest' of Wilson's career in public life, indeed of the public life of most of his ministers, but the government was sustained by the conviction that there was no alternative.¹²¹

By the time that Wilson visited Johnson in Washington on 8 February 1968 Anglo-American harmony appeared restored. The Persian Gulf merited no discussion, while the president's reference to east of Suez withdrawals 'did not add up to more than ten words, injected parenthetically and in a different context'.¹²² Nor was there any overt sense of Britain's demotion as an ally in any of the statements by the president and his staff. On the contrary Wilson gained the impression that 'the United States needed our friendship and support at least as much as we needed theirs' while Ambassador Dean thought that Johnson had accepted that 'a page had been turned and that what matters now is to work together in the new situation'.¹²³ It may be that events in the present contributed to LBJ's readiness to bury the recent past; in the same way that the Middle East crisis had imbued the June 1967 Johnson-Wilson talks with an air of deceptive ease, so the Tet offensive in Vietnam and the US-North Korean *Pueblo* dispute had much the same effect in February 1968. The situation in Vietnam in particular meant that Johnson, at that precise moment in time, was more interested in Wilson's continued backing of the US war effort in that one country than the wider question of Britain's future external and defence policy.¹²⁴ But such a narrow focus was always likely to be transitory, a point made indirectly by Dean when he remarked that the January 1968 decisions had really been 'taken to heart' in Washington and there remained 'resentment' towards not only their basic content but the accompanying lack of consultation and the 'virtual fait accompli'.¹²⁵

The briefings prepared for LBJ in advance of Wilson's visit confirm that, in private, the US now saw Britain as a much reduced power even if other preoccupations prevented the president stating as much to the prime minister's face. The UK government had put 'an end to Britain's traditional world role' and had found a 'European vocation' and defence posture which could be strengthened directly by the east of Suez/F-111 moves and indirectly – 'to the extent that these decisions were not warmly received in Washington' – by over-readiness to attenuate 'the so-called US-UK special relationship'.¹²⁶ This American perception of a Britain and an Anglo-American relationship in transition had taken deeper root by the summer. Britain, Rusk told the NSC on 5 June, was now concentrating its security commitments in and through NATO with the result that the 'special relationship the UK has with us is less important to them now because the British have less interest in maintaining a world role'. Operationally the US and UK were 'working on fewer real problems', Rusk said, and it was possible that the concept

of 'Atlantic cooperation could replace the special relationship' although close bilateral Anglo-American ties would 'certainly continue'. Only time would tell just how close those ties would be, though if Clark Clifford, McNamara's successor as defense secretary, was any guide, they might not be worth Washington's effort to maintain. The British 'do not have the resources, the backup, or the hardware to deal with any big world problem', he observed, and 'they are no longer a powerful ally of ours because they cannot afford the cost of an adequate defense effort'.¹²⁷ This was not quite true, of course. The Anglo-American special relationship may have been 'rapidly receding into history', but in Europe – as President Johnson, if not his new defense secretary, acknowledged – the UK could still be a valuable as an ally of the United States.¹²⁸

As Britain surrendered its global status and moved towards accepting its European 'vocation' in 1967–68, the United States could reflect on the successful realisation of a foreign policy aim that originated in 1950 when the Truman administration first pledged American support for European unity within Atlantic partnership. Always implicit in US plans for full UK involvement in a united Europe was an assumption that success in this regard must perforce bring about a change in the nature of the special relationship – whether a diminution as US-European partnership took over, or a strengthening as the UK became *primum inter pares* in Europe. The Johnson administration in particular, in pressing Britain hard on the EEC, did so in the knowledge that the corollary of a successful UK application would be an adjustment in Britain's role east of Suez hence an adjustment in the US-UK relationship. As we have seen, it was not the principle of British global retrenchment that troubled the Americans in the late 1960s but, rather, the Wilson government's sense of timing at a point when the Vietnam war was consuming US blood and treasure at an alarming rate. Similarly, the Johnson administration's anger in 1967–68 was as much to do with the Wilson government's lack of communication and consultation as it was with the principle of east of Suez disengagement.

On the British side, while a European rather than global role was the chosen course in and after 1967–68, this did not mean that the UK had abandoned the Atlantic Alliance and the Anglo-American relationship as complementary foreign policy foundations. There is no evidence to suggest that the Wilson government retreated from these principles even as it ordered the retreat in Asia and the Persian Gulf. Successive long-term foreign policy reviews since the 1950s had consistently argued the need to ride 'the Atlantic and European horses in double-

harness' – which is effectively what the British did through their handling of NATO and the EEC in 1966–67.¹²⁹ The Labour government had set out to do what the Conservative government had attempted in 1961: to give Britain's international status a new foundation in Europe. Due to the financial turmoil of the mid-1960s, Wilson had been motivated more by economic necessity and expediency than Macmillan, and the consequent decisions to retreat from the world had made EEC membership and dynamism in relations within the Atlantic Alliance and Western Europe the principal focus of Britain's diplomacy now that it was 'no longer a very great Power'.¹³⁰ In his Guildhall speech on 16 November 1964, just one month into office, Wilson had said that 'We are a world power, and a world influence, or we are nothing'.¹³¹ Just over three years later, Britain, in terms of strict geographical reach, was on its way to being 'just another European country', the rank that Ernest Bevin had fought to avoid in the late 1940s.¹³² Henceforward, British governments would seek to build on their Eurocentric power base to retain their international standing and influence. As for the US, it would continue to rely on the UK which, though reduced in global ambit, still possessed valuable attributes as an international partner. Just as Western unity had de Gaulle to thank for acting as the catalyst of renewal, so too did the Anglo-American relationship.

Conclusion

De Gaulle left office in 1969 with his objectives unrealised. He had neither restored great power status to France nor revised the international political order. While there were many events that signified his failure, there were two in 1969 which have specific relevance to this book. On 4 April in Washington, the signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty commemorated its 20th anniversary, marking formally the longevity and strength of the Atlantic Alliance and the normalisation of relations with France after de Gaulle's March 1966 withdrawal of his country from NATO's military integration.¹ Then, on 1–2 December, The Hague summit of the EEC powers heralded the post-de Gaulle era as the Community looked towards completion, widening and deepening and as the new President of France, Georges Pompidou, signalled the lifting of the Gaullist barrier to British accession.² The passing of these landmarks also symbolised the passing of de Gaulle's blueprint for a French-led independent European Europe, free from American influence, in a multipolar Cold War world. While de Gaulle's legacy would endure, Atlantic partnership and European integration had survived his challenge. The role played by the Americans and the British in this process, singly and jointly, has been one focus of this book; the other has been to consider how events in Atlantic and European affairs featured in the Anglo-American relationship of the 1960s. It is upon these two subjects that this conclusion concentrates.

Anglo-American relations and the Gaullist challenge

The full force of de Gaulle's challenge was first felt by the Americans and the British on 14 January 1963. In his vetoes of John F. Kennedy's Grand Design and Britain's 1961 EEC application, the French president

rebuffed those he described as the Anglo-Saxons and overwhelmed their European policies. This seeming victory held within it, however, the seeds of defeat as in rejecting London and Washington he also conjoined them in a mutual objective to ensure that his challenge did not prevail as it matured over the 1960s. As the Austrian Foreign Minister, Bruno Kreisky, told de Gaulle in February 1963, this had implications for the pursuit of de Gaulle's plans: 'how do you want to pursue a great foreign policy, in today's world, if the Anglo-Saxon countries hate you?'³ It was a good question and one which de Gaulle was unable to answer as his grand design was predicated on a contrary vision to that of the Americans and the British, a vision which could not accept what de Gaulle saw as US hegemony in the West or British leadership of Western Europe. Such was his resentment towards the Americans and the British that he could not see beyond his antipathy when in fact, what was special about the Anglo-American relationship in its latest form under Kennedy and Macmillan was contested interdependence.⁴ Then again, to an observer of international relations as astute as de Gaulle, the asymmetrical realities of Anglo-American relations must have been apparent although it was not in his interest to admit it openly. To have done so would have meant recognising that Britain had a European future which would in turn have undermined French predominance.

While the UK and the US grew frustrated as de Gaulle's foreign policies evolved antagonistically in many areas of international relations over 1964 and 1965, there was no opportunity for them to begin the response to his challenge. Both agreed in the aftermath of January 1963 that it was better to work around de Gaulle rather than confront him, especially given the uncertainty in London about Britain's future approach towards the Community. The necessity of such a strategy was also the product of Anglo-American divergence over the MLF, the principal means of sustaining the idea of Atlantic Community and of tying Germany to the Western alliance. Holding within it the credo of the State Department Europeanists which envisaged a Britain without an independent nuclear deterrent, within a united Europe and with no Anglo-American special relationship, successive British governments avoided commitment to it. Their hesitancy was not the only reason for the MLF's troubled history, but it contributed to the ongoing unsolved problem of nuclear sharing within NATO and remained a diplomatic lesion as the allies first learnt, in mid-1965, that de Gaulle wanted what Acheson later described as 'everything French out of NATO and everything NATO – especially everything American – out of France'.⁵

This book has shown that in the atmosphere of de Gaulle's heightening challenge in 1965 as he instigated the EEC's empty chair crisis and planned his move against NATO, the Americans and the British began a process of cooperation in response. Neither power could directly counter de Gaulle's attempt to lead the EEC on a French path having resolved not to interfere in the Community's business, but once a connection was made between de Gaulle's EEC diplomacy and his intentions towards NATO, London and Washington began, for the first time since January 1963, to rise to the Gaullist challenge. They did so in part for shared interests, chiefly the desire to stem de Gaulle's divisiveness and protect the Atlantic Alliance, but they also did so for their own reasons. The Americans were increasingly concerned by the French president's seditious impact on Western relations especially in the battle for the loyalty of Germany which so dominated Atlantic relations in the 1960s. To protect the twin objectives of Atlantic partnership and European integration, they prepared policies to meet an increasingly inevitable crisis in NATO. One element of those policies was cooperation with the British, tactically in rallying France's fourteen partners, and substantively in building an Anglo-American-German relationship to solidify the Western alliance. Similarly motivated by de Gaulle's mounting threat, particularly to Britain's influence as a power locked out of the EEC and facing economic and political weakness, the Wilson government eagerly sought collaboration with the Americans ahead of a schism in NATO and began to consider, tentatively at the top, but energetically from below, the prospect of a renewed EEC policy. In January 1963, Macmillan told Kennedy that by 'a curious paradox de Gaulle's attitude is cementing that very Anglo-Saxon alliance which he professes to dislike'.⁶ Such a judgment was part aspiration for a prime minister inclined towards special ties with the US and it was one which suffered as the MLF put distance between London and Washington and as a new US administration with different predilections took power. In 1965, however, by pursuing his challenge, de Gaulle proved Macmillan right.

It is well established that the crisis in NATO initiated by de Gaulle's letter to Johnson of 7 March 1966 was turned into an opportunity for renewal of that organisation through the solution of various problems such as nuclear sharing.⁷ What has been less clear until now is how closely the Americans and the British worked together, and also in conjunction with other allies, principally the Germans, to steer NATO through the crisis. It was the British, with Washington's sanction, that led France's fourteen allies towards the March 18th declaration, and by

means of George Thomson's diplomacy, laid the foundations for solidarity at the June North Atlantic Council meeting. The Wilson government, and Wilson in particular, were motivated by a desire to reclaim political influence in Atlantic-European affairs, and to push the Johnson administration away from a hardware solution to nuclear sharing and towards a new détente-oriented Alliance. Throughout 1966 and into 1967 they worked dynamically to stamp a British thumbprint on the plans for NATO's future. This is not to say that the historical praise Johnson has recently received for his management of the NATO crisis is mistaken.⁸ On the contrary, this book's analysis has augmented such a view by explaining how statesmanlike Johnson was in his diplomacy with Britain and Western Europe. By avoiding a 'pissing match' with de Gaulle over NATO, as the president himself put it, and keeping an antagonistic State Department in check, Johnson helped to ensure that in the long-term, de Gaulle's concept of Europe stretched 'from the Atlantic to the Urinals'.⁹

Johnson's 'expansive, but vulnerable egotism – with its constant invocation of slights and insults suffered at the hands of "the Harvards" and "the Fulbrights"' has been described as having 'threatened continuously to destroy decisional and policy coherence'.¹⁰ Over matters Atlantic and European, where the Ivy League-educated foreign policy elite had the experience and expertise that Johnson did not, the president and his policies suffered no such weakness. As with Soviet communism, on Atlantic-European policies, Johnson was 'not a foreign policy innovator', but as Francis Bator has written retrospectively, he was 'often wiser and shrewder than an array of extraordinarily distinguished and senior diplomatic, military and financial advisors'.¹¹ Such political sagacity honed in the domestic arena was exemplified to great effect in foreign affairs as Johnson prevented the offset problem in 1966–67 from becoming a crisis in Anglo-American-German relations causing 'an unravelling in NATO' with grave consequences.¹² Through a mixture of firm diplomacy and well-timed economic assistance, he prevented the British from making good their threat to cut drastically UK forces in Germany and thus avoided certain breakdown in Anglo-German and Anglo-European relations just as the revival of Britain's EEC policy was taking place. In a sense, had the Johnson administration not bailed out Britain's balance of payments with its \$35million in November/December 1966 Britain's new EEC policy would have faced a sizeable political impediment above and beyond that of de Gaulle. Johnson was frequently receptive to his national security advisers' views on handling Britain, avoiding the tougher line

often recommended by the State Department. He was also aware of the strains put upon Britain by the roles it played in the world and in 1967 showed balance as he induced the Germans towards a solution which helped the British over offset. From all of this activity, Johnson emerges the diplomat.

To understand Johnson's statesmanship, it is important to consider that his actions were influenced greatly by what was going on outside of Atlantic-European relations. Vietnam was all-pervading in the president's mind and thus it follows that Johnson's placatory diplomacy in response to de Gaulle's challenge in NATO, and elsewhere, was based on a calculation that fighting a shooting war in Southeast Asia was enough to warrant avoidance of a diplomatic war in the Atlantic Alliance. Hence the prevention of confrontation with de Gaulle and France and the steadying role played in relations with Britain and Germany. In this sense, Europe gained from being 'in the shadow of Vietnam'.¹³ It was Johnson's intent to ensure that Senator Mansfield's Congressional resolution had no further grist to increase public pressure in the US for a revision of American commitments to Western Europe which would have endangered stability in the Alliance. Thus, in restraining a rabble-rousing State Department, in turning his cheek to de Gaulle, in embracing the Germans and in keeping the British in line, Johnson was motivated not purely by international diplomacy for the good of the Atlantic Alliance, but national politics and his desire to forestall adding an Atlantic crisis with domestic fallout to the difficulties he faced as a president fighting a war in Vietnam.

There was another area of Johnson's European statesmanship which was influenced by Cold War conflict in Southeast Asia, his revived personal attachment to détente after October 1966. Johnson had indicated his interest in 'bridge-building' in a May 1964 speech but the policy was not given presidential impetus again until 1966 when de Gaulle's own pursuit of improved East-West relations, especially in Moscow in June 1966, spurred his allies to reconsider the issue. This lull, in combination with preoccupations out of the NATO area, led one leading NATO historian to describe the Johnson administration as having neglected Europe.¹⁴ It was such a view that recent positive accounts of Johnson's policies have revised. One aspect of commendation has been the contribution to Cold War détente made by Johnson, not least in his 7 October 1966 speech which has been described 'as an unheralded yet significant milestone in the pursuit of détente'.¹⁵ It certainly set a tone in its formulation, specifically linking Atlantic partnership, European unity and détente. Also, in positing German reunification as

the product of relaxed East-West tensions, not their prerequisite, it marked an advance in US Cold War policy which in time produced real breakthroughs such as the NPT.¹⁶ While Johnson's accomplishments in preparing the way for his successor's *détente* achievements cannot be gainsaid, they do need to be qualified. The president and his administration took the initiative but only after being stimulated by Western European allies. It was part of de Gaulle's legacy that he forced the US and other allies to reconsider *détente* but France was not the only country calling for action. The Germans were showing new interest in working towards the East as were the British. Indeed, Wilson's encouragement, clear in his 29 March 1966 letter to Johnson, came amid the policy reviews in Washington that led to the October speech. The prime minister's conviction that NATO renewal should include the allies keeping their 'eyes on the importance of an eventual *détente* with the East' complied with growing opinion in the US government.¹⁷ Johnson's speech was about responding to such European views as much as it was about signalling the cautious hand of friendship towards the East. It was additionally about the image of the Americans, and the image of Johnson, an attempt to balance the aggressive US policies in Southeast Asia with peaceful US policies in Europe. And it had the objective of recovering the initiative on *détente* from de Gaulle and controlling Western European ambitions, two themes which found full expression in US expectations of, and policy towards, the Harmel Exercise in NATO in 1967.

A positive and renewed *détente* policy was one way that the Americans sought to repel de Gaulle's challenge in 1966–67. Another was the connection they saw between the NATO crisis, the future of the EEC and Britain's role as a leading European power. Believing that de Gaulle's EEC and NATO policies were contingent parts of his greater challenge, there were concerns early in the NATO crisis that instability in that institution would spill over into the European Community as France's partners reviled against his anti-Atlanticist diplomacy. All agreed that partition between events in NATO and the EEC in its post-Luxembourg compromise restoration was the safest course.¹⁸ There was one area of spill over, however, that both the Americans and the British, and other Western European allies, saw as potentially advantageous, namely a renewed British policy towards European unity. As de Gaulle brought crisis to NATO, there were immediate calls from European allies for Britain to take a lead as it had done in 1954 in settling the Atlantic Alliance. Embroiled in this request was the increasingly less dormant question of Britain's future relationship with the

EEC. Proponents in the State Department of Britain taking up the role in European integration that US administrations had encouraged from the late 1940s utilised the flux caused by French actions to persuade the president to push Wilson towards a more active European policy. The idea that de Gaulle's challenge might provide the opportunity for such diplomacy first arose in the Johnson administration in autumn 1965 but it matured in mid-1966. Then, officials argued that the political atmosphere created by the NATO crisis – discord between the Five and France in the EEC and a desire for enhanced British involvement in European affairs – could animate the British, strengthen the resolution of the Five and galvanise the fourteen in NATO. It was a policy suggestion which had little impact to begin with, largely because the Wilson government, principally Wilson, showed no inclination towards a revived British EEC policy.

Nevertheless, the British had also recognised the possible correlation between the NATO crisis and the EEC or the 'NATO-EEC complex' as it was described by Michael Palliser, the prime minister's foreign policy private secretary.¹⁹ In his previous guise in the FO Planning Department, Palliser had urged a more active European policy on the Wilson government to halt the marginalisation of Britain at the hands of de Gaulle. This plea became part of the FO's campaign, led by Michael Stewart, to convince Wilson over 1965 that he ought to think afresh about Britain's EEC policy. A convinced Atlanticist committed initially to Commonwealth renewal, Wilson also shared some of de Gaulle's reservations about the EEC's supranationality and doubted whether membership was in Britain's economic interest. Such principles did not lend themselves to renewing an EEC bid but ever the politician, Wilson recognised in late 1965/early 1966 that there could be benefit in hinting at a new European policy as domestic interest in the subject grew in the UK, not least among the Conservative Party ahead of the 1966 election.²⁰ His reservations did not, however, disappear and thus when the matter was raised at the July 1966 Washington meetings, the prime minister played it long. The focus of his government's European policy at that stage was leading the way in NATO, not towards the EEC.

The aftermath of the July 1966 sterling crisis changed that.²¹ American encouragement to reconsider policy towards the Community persisted, but Wilson resolved to approach Europe, beginning with the Chequers decisions of October 1966, for reasons which rested upon the failure of his government's National Plan and the apparent decline in British influence in Western European and, potentially, Atlantic relations

should either de Gaulle prevail or the Americans seek special relations with Germany. It was a decision born of political necessity and economic realities, not a conversion to European integration, and from the very beginning, renewed British interest in future EEC membership faced difficulties. The greatest of these, de Gaulle's France, was immediately apparent yet the French were not the only problem in the early stages. The impact of Britain's chronic economic frailty also led the Wilson government to endanger Anglo-German relations, a crucial element in counteracting de Gaulle's consistent hostility towards British EEC entry, over the offset question in 1966–67. Furthermore, the fears that London's inflexibility raised in Washington impacted upon the reception given to Britain's evolving EEC policy in the Johnson administration. It was anxious that the threats of British troop withdrawals so soon after France's eviction notice to NATO might precipitate Congressional and public pressure for American troop withdrawals from Europe with consequent injury to already strained US-European relations. Thus while the Americans were enthusiastic about the Wilson government's acceptance of the enhanced European policies that they had recommended, Britain's diplomacy in another set of affairs dampened the impact of the British advance. A similar effect took place as the decision in favour of a new approach to Europe in autumn 1966 became an announcement of a second British EEC application in May 1967. Although that milestone fulfilled US plans, its effect in the Johnson administration was diminished as the president and his advisers were preoccupied by the contemporaneous British decisions to withdraw from the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia and to retreat to a European role. Nevertheless, in making the application in 1967 the British played a part that the Americans had hoped they would in the struggle with de Gaulle, even though the French president eventually did what the majority of opinion expected him to do, repeat his veto of 1963.

While de Gaulle's 1967 tactics towards Britain's EEC candidature remained similar to those of 1963 (arguing that Britain was not European, that its entry to the EEC would transform the Community, and using an external event, Nassau in 1963 and devaluation in 1967, to justify a veto), the tactics of his allies changed. Whitehall had learned lessons from the way the Macmillan government presented its application to the Six, conditionally, and thus urged the Labour government to submit themselves to the EEC in a manner befitting an applicant eager and ready to join, rather than one hesitant and uncommitted. Hence the probe prepared the political ground and the application was mounted in clean and simple terms with Britain's acceptance

of the Treaties of Rome its foundation. Moreover, the British continued to portray themselves as eager to integrate with their European allies after the application had been made in May 1967 with Wilson's commitment to technological cooperation being an exemplar. Contemporaneously, the British showed their Atlantic credentials in their NATO diplomacy and in their enthusiasm in 1967 for the Belgian initiative for the reform of NATO and the pursuit of *détente* in Europe. While their *détente* initiatives such as the declaration on Europe and their interest in Kosygin's offer of an Anglo-Soviet treaty caused some disquiet, the trajectory of Britain's Atlanticism and its emerging Europeanism, especially after its east of Suez decisions in 1967, were plainly apparent in a way that they had not been in 1961–63. Also in comparison with 1963, the Five's frustrations with French EEC and NATO policies and diplomacy transformed the international political environment in which Britain's second bid was made. De Gaulle was more isolated in 1967 than he had been four years earlier as his zealous criticisms of America and his anti-integration policies conflicted with the Five's attitudes.²² Above all, the Germans, to whom the US security guarantee was paramount, were proponents of the interdependence that de Gaulle abhorred. While Germany, for example, differed with the British over nuclear sharing and offset and would not 'invade Paris' for Britain over the EEC, Erhard did put Atlantic relations before German interests in 1966 and Kiesinger, despite his pursuit of revived Franco-German rapprochement, also made it quite clear to de Gaulle which of his principles he agreed with and which he did not.²³ Thus, in the way the Wilson government presented itself, and in the altered political setting, 1967 favoured Britain's European policies in a manner that 1963 had not.²⁴

Britain's EEC application and diplomacy received approval in Washington. The Wilson government's formula for the bid and its presentation mirrored that which the Americans themselves had envisaged as having the greatest chance of success when success was not about getting past de Gaulle but about isolating him and preparing for EEC entry after his departure. The Johnson administration never thought that the French president's opposition had changed but saw the significance of Britain's application as going beyond securing membership in the short-term. When the State Department urged the administration to convince Wilson that a British move towards Europe would be beneficial to Britain and to Western unity, it had done so on the grounds that 'an unequivocal British willingness to join the Communities would significantly strengthen the Five in dealing with

Gaullist France and indirectly help the fourteen hold NATO together, whatever the French do'.²⁵ In 1967, the British application achieved both these objectives. Offering another kind of non-Gaullist European unity, set within Atlantic partnership, it contributed to the resilience of the Five to de Gaulle's challenge, although it also painfully exposed the tensions within the Community between France and its partners.²⁶ Moreover, the application played a crucial role in the final stages of the Harmel Exercise to assure French agreement to the report upon which NATO's legitimacy and future rested. It is true that France's concurrence at the December 1967 North Atlantic Council was partly inspired by its belief that NATO allies had accepted its logic on *détente*, but it is clear that de Gaulle compromised in NATO to free himself to confront Britain over its EEC application.²⁷ Thus, even in failure, the application achieved successes, both in the short-term in resisting de Gaulle and in the longer-term by preparing the way for when he no longer blocked EEC enlargement.²⁸

Not only did the Americans approve of Britain's EEC policy, tactics and effect but they also assisted the British, largely through inactivity. In the fallout after de Gaulle's 1963 vetoes, Kennedy was advised that while American policies were not misguided, their implementation had been. Support for British entry, diplomacy with de Gaulle that 'was not perfectly framed' and the obvious Anglo-Americanism in the Nassau agreement all contributed to the difficulties faced by the Macmillan government.²⁹ In 1967, the Americans adopted a strategy of low key support for European unity, including the British, but otherwise studiously refrained from involving themselves in the diplomacy surrounding Britain's application and avoided presenting the French with any grounds to criticise it as a product of Anglo-American collaboration. The EEC bid was, for example, never endorsed publicly by Johnson; the only reference he made to Britain being part of a united Europe was that in his 7 October 1966 speech delivered before the Wilson government had decided to pursue a new EEC policy. In this sense, the Johnson administration's strategy towards Britain's second EEC application was in line with its greater strategy to deal with the Gaullist challenge: avoiding conflict with de Gaulle but isolating him by cooperating with allies and concerting the Western alliance in opposition to him. And this strategy involved using proxies; the British played that role in NATO in 1966, the Belgians did so in 1967. The British, through their EEC application, also did what the Americans could not do themselves, help to assure the Europeans that a non-Gaullist Europe existed.

The positive side effects of Britain's bid for EEC membership were not the product of Anglo-American diplomacy. Indeed, apart from the encouragement given to the British by the Johnson administration and the watchful eye kept on their evolving EEC policies and activities over 1966–67, it is the absence of this subject in discourse between London and Washington which is remarkable. That fact is explained by the essential agreement that British membership of the European Community was politically and economically advantageous and by accord on the way the British worked towards it in 1967. The more active area of Anglo-American cooperation and diplomacy was the response to the NATO crisis and, in the later stages of the Harmel Exercise, the collaboration with the Belgians to ensure its success. Yet in their activities, separately and jointly, the Americans and the British had played leading roles in stabilising the West in 1967. Indeed, it had always been the State Department's view that this ought to be how events should play out when Western unity faced a crisis in the mid-1960s of proportions similar to that of 1947–50.³⁰ This is not to say that Anglo-American cooperation alone saved the West in the face of de Gaulle's challenge. There were other reasons why de Gaulle did not succeed. The first was his failure to secure the position of European arbiter in East-West relations. Prior to the French president's June 1966 Moscow visit, there had been concerns that the Soviets would enter into 'dialogue [with de Gaulle] in order to exploit to the hilt de Gaulle's disruptive value'.³¹ These fears proved to be over-stated and while de Gaulle continued to seek a role in the pursuit of détente, such as his trip to Poland in September 1967, he did not secure the influence that he desired.³² Accordingly, his status declined. The second factor is that while the British contributed to the survival of NATO after March 1966, the institution was saved by the solidity of the Alliance. Multilateralism overwhelmed de Gaulle's unilateralism, especially in relation to the future role of NATO in moves towards détente, and the solution to the 1966 crisis was a multilateral affair. Moreover, without American cooperation, the Wilson government would not have been able to take such a prominent role and, similarly, the solution to many of the specific problems of the Alliance would not have been achieved without flexibility from Germany. The third factor centres on the development of the EEC as an institution and on the maturity of France's five partners in pressing for enlargement. The Gaullist challenge and its promotion of the nation-state over the Community, at its height during the empty chair crisis, strengthened the ambition of

France's partners to protect EEC institutions and to extend the Community programme further. British entry was supported as a means of diluting French influence and became embroiled in the wider revival of integration after 1969.³³

The Atlantic Alliance and Europe as factors in the Anglo-American relationship

In addition to its analysis of the role played by the Americans and the British in containing de Gaulle's challenge, this book has also considered how events in Atlantic and European affairs featured in the Anglo-American relationship and what they reveal about its development in the 1960s. For some time, the historical consensus has been that 1963 to 1968 were 'lean years', or 'years of transition', as the Anglo-American relationship waned and drifted without a close partnership between leaders, a view which one recent study has largely accepted.³⁴ Historians have, however, also offered a different perspective. While they accept that the contrasting styles and priorities of the Johnson administration, in comparison with its predecessor, and Britain's economic decline and Vietnam had their impact, they suggest that the relationship was not entirely characterised by deterioration. Although relations between Johnson and Wilson are still depicted as having had their limits, there were successful summits between them and, overall, the Americans were conscious of the problems the British faced in carrying out responsibilities with failing resources.³⁵ Nevertheless, when allies were a rare commodity as the US fought its war in Vietnam, Britain remained of the premier kind and despite chronic economic problems, the British cooperated and competed with the Americans in world affairs as they always had done.³⁶ Thus, historians have not sought to overturn the consensus that relations suffered difficulties, but to propose that in spite of them, a shared view of the West and of the communist threat, together with the habit of cooperation, especially between individuals and institutions, and the utility of both allies to each other, ensured that a unique relationship endured between the two states even though the size and scope of their activities inevitably reduced with Britain's declining global strength.³⁷ Indeed, perhaps this endurance is what was, and has since been, special about the Anglo-American relationship. This more considered view of the Johnson-Wilson era also fits with the recent analysis of the Kennedy-Macmillan relationship; if their days were not as 'golden' as

previously thought, then it is possible to see the 1964–68 period as less of a trough if the peak prior to it was not quite so high.³⁸

In Atlantic-European affairs, the Anglo-American relationship certainly exhibited the characteristics depicted by revisionist accounts of the relationship in other areas of interaction. Britain became, for the Americans, one of the problem countries in Western Europe, alongside France and Germany, despite the fact that Britain's allegiance to the US and to Atlanticism was never fundamentally in question. In 1963–5, continuing British opposition to the MLF and in particular to German access to nuclear hardware, even after the Johnson administration had accepted that the MLF was impractical politics, led to US-UK strains. Then, in 1966, de Gaulle's withdrawal of France from NATO created one crisis but, over the offset question, the British threatened to create another as economic weakness led the Wilson government to threaten the nascent Anglo-American-German cooperation that was vital to the continuation of the Atlantic Alliance. In 1967, Britain's decision to withdraw from east of Suez only compounded American frustration at the failure of European powers to share burdens outside of the NATO area as they criticised the US for neglecting Europe due to the Cold War in Asia. Indeed, these developments and Britain's patent reorientation towards Europe through its second EEC application, led to serious debate among policy-makers in London and Washington about the future of special relations between them and an acceptance that transformation was underway, although there was no certainty as to what that would mean. There were hopes among the Europeanists in the State Department that it would produce a new US-European relationship with Britain as one of America's allies in Western Europe, not a partner in a separate category. Yet the Johnson administration as a whole did not wish to see Britain's new Europeanism matched with rejection of its traditional world role, certainly not as long as America needed allied support in Southeast Asia.

It was that desire for UK assistance in parts of the world where the Americans faced complications which ensured that despite the obvious debits on the British account, there were also credits. That was certainly true in regard to the Atlantic Alliance and Europe. Although the British had compounded problems in US-European relations, and displayed ambition for independent action, such as over *détente*, ultimately, the Americans and the British shared mutual objectives in opposition to those of de Gaulle such as the restoration of the political order in Western relations, the protection of the Atlantic Alliance and Germany's part in it.³⁹ Thus, what joined them together was their

desire to contain de Gaulle's challenge; as Patrick Reilly wrote in June 1966, the General's NATO policies drove 'Britain away from France and towards the United States'.⁴⁰ But it was more than that. In Kennedy's pursuit of his Grand Design for an Atlantic Community, the British were given a lead part through their first application for EEC membership. In many respects, they were considered to be the antidote to de Gaulle, a view which persisted in the Johnson administration. From mid-1965, as de Gaulle's challenge approached its zenith, the British were deemed to have a central role in achieving the kind of Atlantic partnership and European integration that American governments had since the Truman era aspired to. And that role was even more significant given the different kind of Atlantic-European relationship that de Gaulle promoted. Thus, in shepherding the NATO allies, with American approval, through the initial crisis stages in NATO in 1966, in mounting their EEC application in 1967 and in assisting the Americans and the Belgians in the production of NATO's Harmel Report, the British had the cohesive effect on Western unity that Washington had envisaged they would. These were roles that the British took up with enthusiasm, even dynamism, as they were critical to policies which sought to return Britain to a position of influence in Atlantic-European relations after the drift which began with de Gaulle's veto on 14 January 1963. They were also considered to be important in retaining influence in Washington.

The Wilson government wanted to perform the roles that the Americans asked of it, in the manner that post-1945 British governments have always aspired to global influence, often through association with the US. Wilson himself remained wedded to international statesmanship and he only reluctantly accepted that Britain had to seek EEC membership, preferring instead to maintain world status, alongside the United States.⁴¹ However, in the way that the Macmillan government had started with the same aspiration in 1957 but had realised by 1961 that the Americans had a different view of an interdependent special relationship than the British, the Wilson government reached a similar conclusion. Another power base, especially given the depleted strength of the Commonwealth, had to be found, in Europe. Wilson's own aversion to this conclusion early in his government, meant that it took the halting economic turmoil of 1966 and the crushing logic of the defence reviews for him to see an EEC application in the same terms that Macmillan had done, as a way to avoid complete dependency on the Anglo-American relationship.⁴² These circumstances emboldened the British to take the decision to get into Europe

and pull out from east of Suez, knowing that the latter would cause consternation in Washington.

That consternation came because of the timing and scope of Britain's decision rather than its principle. The Americans and the British knew that transition in their relationship would occur once Britain finally took up a full European role and in Washington this was not bewailed. What the Americans did not want was the British to move as quickly and completely as they did in 1967–68. Nevertheless, once the anger caused by the January 1968 British decisions had died down, the Americans did not declare the relationship dead and neither did the Wilson government which had never revised Britain's attachment to US-UK ties as a paramount interest overseas. Certainly, Wilson's successor placed unprecedented and, in the greater sweep, unparalleled emphasis on Britain's new Europeanism, but the extent to which Anglo-American relations diminished as a result of Edward Heath's idiosyncratic outlook has yet to be measured. Those relations had always been based, first and foremost, on the utility of the allies to each other in international affairs and despite Britain's declining fortunes over the 1960s, it had remained America's leading ally in the West fulfilling roles that others could not.⁴³ Having shorn Britain of its global presence and thus lost the influence that such a role brought in the Anglo-American partnership, the Wilson government had to make the most of Britain's new European orientation in and of itself, and as a basis of a transformed relationship with the US. Building upon its status in the Atlantic Alliance and NATO, securing a primary position in the EEC, and leading Western Europe towards the East became the future of Britain's international profile. The opportunity to begin that process came with the NATO crisis in 1966. Ironically, the British had de Gaulle to thank for it.

In questioning the form of the Western alliance, de Gaulle indirectly did much to sustain the status quo. His legacy certainly includes encouraging the West towards the East in Cold War Europe, but to some extent, by concentrating American and allied attention on containing his challenge through reinforcing Western unity and renewing NATO, the French president strengthened the very political order he sought to modify.⁴⁴ This paradox also had significance for the Anglo-American relationship. In a period when the foundations of US-UK relations were tested to a degree not experienced since 1956, de Gaulle created the conditions in one important area of international affairs for cooperation between London and Washington, a mutual interest in repelling a common opponent. While the General's description of an

Anglo-Saxon alliance always underestimated the difference between the Americans and the British, in Atlantic-European affairs he nevertheless brought something close to it upon himself. Inasmuch as de Gaulle unintentionally defended Western unity, he also forced France's allies to confront its pressing questions, principally the balance in the relationship between the US and Europe and between Atlantic partnership and European unification. There had always been 'a potential contradiction' between the post-war American policy of creating an integrated Europe and an Atlantic Community if the Europeans sought independence or if Europe became a competitor, rather than an ally, of the US.⁴⁵ The Johnson administration, while recognising the problem, did not have a solution to it and, moreover, it was not forced to confront this fact because de Gaulle's challenge postponed the moment when the contradiction had to be tackled. With Washington's eyes focused primarily on Southeast Asia, its energies in Europe were directed more towards holding the West together rather than exploring ways that its allies could be more independent, even though it often expressed dissatisfaction at their failure to look beyond their own borders. As for the Wilson government, while it struggled with resolving Britain's long-term economic problems it also contributed to the defence of Western unity. Its main preoccupation became the transformation of Britain from a world power to a European power and in the same way that the Johnson administration did not deal with the question of balance between the United States and its European allies, the British government did not resolve the problems that faced Britain as it attempted to be both a leading ally of the United States and of Western Europe. Then again, questions about the future of the US-European relationship and of Britain's ties with the US and Europe that remained unanswered in the period covered by this book have remained in that state far beyond the 1960s.⁴⁶

Notes

Introduction

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1 Facing de Gaulle's Challenge, 1963 to 1965

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2 Turning a Crisis into an Opportunity: Anglo-American Collaboration and French Withdrawal from NATO, January to June 1966

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- 37 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 209, Bator Mempres, 28 July 1966; LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 209, Rostow Mempres, 29 July 1966. Also, LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 216, Background Paper: Britain and the EEC, 28 July 1966.
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- 47 TNA/CAB164/88, Palliser to MacLehose, 1 August 1966.
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- 49 TNA/CAB164/88, Trend to Wilson, 11 August 1966.
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- 58 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.198.
- 59 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, White House Situation Room to President, 29 August 1966; *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.197.
- 60 TNA/PREM13/2264, Dean to FO 171 and 173, both 1 September 1966 and 172, 2 September 1966.
- 61 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.202.
- 62 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.203; for McGhee's reply, see footnote three of this document.
- 63 Haftendorn, *NATO*, pp.253–61 covers Erhard's predicament, policy and tactics and the American response. Also, Schwartz, *Lyndon*, pp.126–33.
- 64 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.207.
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- 70 TNA/CAB148/29, OPD(66)110, 1 November 1966; TNA/CAB129/41, C(66)50th meeting, 13 October 1966; *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.213; TNA/CAB158/64, JIC(66)77(Revised Final), 4 November 1966; TNA/CAB148/29, OPD(66)117, 17 November 1966; *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.218. On the course of the trilateral talks, including Erhard's fall, Haftendorn, *NATO*, pp.251–73.
- 71 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.216.
- 72 Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.172–7.

- 73 The British decision to purchase the American-made F111 brought with it an offset arrangement by which the US government would make purchases in the British economy to the value of \$325 million. While this figure puts the \$35 million offer in perspective, it also emphasises how grave the balance of payments position was in Britain that this relatively small sum was crucial to Britain's economy. TNA/CAB148/29, OPD(66)123, 23 November 1966.
- 74 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson and Johnson to Wilson, 18 and 19 November 1966.
- 75 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, London to State 4272, 22 November 1966; *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.219. Also, Schwartz, *Lyndon*, p.146.
- 76 TNA/CAB148/29, OPD(66)123, 23 November 1966.
- 77 TNA/CAB148/25, ODP(66)46th meeting, 25 November 1966; TNA/CAB129/41, CC(66)61st meeting, 29 November 1966; LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson and Johnson to Wilson, 29 November 1966 and 5 December 1966.
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- 79 TNA/CAB129/41, CC(66)65th meeting, 8 December 1966. For the public announcement, Hansard, *HCD*, Cols.46–51, 12 December 1966.
- 80 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/ECIN6EEC-UK, Box 810, London to State 112, 6 July 1966.
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- 83 TNA/CAB148/69, OPD(O)(66)22Revise and OPD(O)(66)24Revise, both 29 July 1966.
- 84 TNA/CAB134/2705, E(66)11, 19 October 1966.
- 85 Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.172–4.
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- 87 Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister: Volume Two* (London: Book Club Associates, 1977), p.83.
- 88 TNA/PREM13/908, Balogh to Wilson, 15 October 1966. For the Chequers meeting, TNA/CAB134/2705, E(66)3rd meeting, 22 October 1966 and TNA/PREM13/909, Trend to Wilson, 28 October 1966. The prime minister himself suggested these studies to 'cool tempers' in Parr's view, see Parr, *Britain's Policy*, p.90. Young has reached the same conclusion, *Britain and European Unity*, p.90.
- 89 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson, 10 October 1966; LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson, 11 November 1966. Wilson's letter arrived on 15 November.
- 90 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/ECIN6EEC-UK, Box 810, London to State 3920, 10 November 1966. Also TNA/PREM13/909, FO to Washington 10143, 10 November 1966. For the Cabinet discussion and the Commons announcement, TNA/CAB128/41, CC(66)55th meeting, 9 November 1966 and Hansard, *HCD*, cols.1539–51, 10 November 1966.

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- 92 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC3Meetings/Sessions, Box 3292, State Circular 83313, 10 November 1966; LBJL/BP/SF, Box 25, Leddy and Solomon to Rusk, 11 November 1966.
- 93 For the press conference, *FFP1966*, p.159 and TNA/PREM13/909, Reilly to FO 813, 29 October 1966; NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC3Meetings/Sessions, Box 3292, Paris to State 7093, 10 November 1966.
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- 97 Jackson, *de Gaulle*, p.103.
- 98 Schwartz, *Lyndon*, p.226.
- 99 Haftendorn, NATO, pp.369–70.
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- 102 *FRUS/1964–1968/XIII*, doc.176.
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- 108 TNA/PREM13/1509, RoC 5.45pm, 6 July 1966 and RoM 6.15pm, 6 July 1966.
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- 110 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/France, Box 172, CIA Memorandum 1590/66, 20 July 1966.
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- 116 LBJL/BP/SF, Box 28, Bator Mempres, 9 June 1966.
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- 123 TNA/PREM13/902, Stewart to Wilson, 20 June 1966.
- 124 TNA/PREM13/902, Palliser to Wilson, 21 June 1966 and undated Wilson comments.

- 125 TNA/PREM13/902, Palliser to Wilson, 29 June 1966, and to Morphet, 30 June 1966; TNA/FO371/190525/W2/22, RoC, 9 June 1966.
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- 133 TNA/FO371/190529/W3/18, Day to Wade-Grey, 2 September 1966; TNA/FO371/190531/W3/70, Gore-Booth to Brown, 16 September 1966 and MacLehose to Planning Staff, 20 September 1966.
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- 136 *The Economist*, p.258, 15 October 1966.
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- 164 Haftendorn, *NATO*, p.322.
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- 167 *DAFR1966*, pp.149–55, Communiqué, 15–16 December 1966. The resolution on the future tasks study called for the examination of a preliminary report at the spring 1967 ministerial meeting and a full report at the December 1967 ministerial meeting.
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- 173 TNA/PREM13/2264, RoM Brown and Rusk, and Brown and Harmel, 14 December 1966.
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Also, Lord Gore-Booth Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS.Eng.c.4562, Gore-Booth minute, 27 August 1965.

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- 2 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, IntelMemo 0798/67, 14 March 1967.
- 3 TNA/PREM13/1705, RoM 10.00am, 16 January 1967; Wilson, *Labour*, p.420.
- 4 BLPES/HP, 13/18, 24 April 1967.
- 5 TNA/PREM13/1705, RoM 10.00am, 16 January 1967. For the full records of the probe meetings, TNA/CAB129/128, C(67)33, 16 March 1967.
- 6 Parr provides the fullest account of the probe, *Britain's Policy*, pp.103–24. Also see Young, *Britain and European Unity*, pp.91–3.
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- 10 TNA/PREM13/1475, Wilson's comments on Palliser to Wilson, 6 January 1967. Young, *Britain and European Unity 1945–1999*, p.91.
- 11 TNA/PREM13/1707, RoM 10.00am, 24 January 1967. TNA/PREM13/1475, Reilly to Brown, 4 January 1967.
- 12 TNA/PREM13/1707, RoM 10.00am, 24 January 1967.
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- 14 On this point, Martin, *Untying*, pp.179–90. Also, in general, Gérard Bossuat, 'De Gaulle et la seconde candidature britannique aux Communautés européennes (1966–1969)' in Loth (ed.), *Crises and Compromises*, pp.511–39; Parr, 'Saving', pp.425–54.
- 15 TNA/PREM13/1707, RoM 4.15pm, 25 January 1967.
- 16 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)3rd meeting, 26 January 1967; TNA/CAB129/128, C(67)33, 16 March 1967.
- 17 LBJL/BP/SF, Box 25, Leddy and Solomon to Rusk, 11 November 1966.
- 18 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, IntelMemo 2209/67, 16 January 1967.
- 19 LBJL/BP/SF, Box 24, REU-6, 23 January 1967.
- 20 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.216.
- 21 LBJL/BP/SF, Box 25, Leddy and Solomon to Rusk, 11 November 1966.
- 22 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, IntelMemo 2209/67, 16 January 1967.
- 23 LBJL/BP/SF, Box 24, Bator, Summary Position, 10 January 1967.
- 24 Reilly raised it, TNA/PREM13/1479, Reilly to Mulley, 20 April 1967, but as Parr shows, the evidence that it was implemented is indeterminate, Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.156–60.
- 25 For Bator's brief, LBJL/BP/SF, Box 25, Bator memorandum, 9 January 1967; LBJL/BP/SF, Box 24, Summary Position, 10 January 1967.

- 26 FRUS/1964–1968/XIII, doc.233. Bowie was a State Department Europeanist and an originator of the MLF, see Brinkley, *Acheson*, pp.120–4 and Winand, *Eisenhower*, pp.161–6.
- 27 John M. Leddy was Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs in the Department of State from June 1965. On his earlier career in the Kennedy era as a Europeanist and US Treasury official see Winand, *Eisenhower*, pp.151–2.
- 28 TNA/FCO41/2, Dean to Hood, 16 November 1966. Also, TNA/FO371/190723/WUN11970/263, Dean to Gore-Booth, 8 July 1966.
- 29 TNA/PREM13/1475, Dean to Brown, and Dean to O'Neill, 12 and 13 January 1967.
- 30 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, State Circular 131558, 3 February 1967.
- 31 TNA/PREM13/1475, Dean to Brown, and Dean to O'Neill, 12 and 13 January 1967.
- 32 LBJL, George Ball OHT II, 9 July 1971.
- 33 TNA/PREM13/1475, Dean to Brown, 12 January 1967.
- 34 Franz-Josef Strauss, the German Finance Minister, was 'the, reputedly, most "Gaullist" German politician'. See Katharina Böhmer, "'We Too Mean Business": Germany and the Second British Application to the EEC, 1966–67' in Oliver J. Daddow (ed.), *Harold Wilson and European Integration: Britain's Second Application to join the EEC* (London: Cass, 2003), pp.211–26, pp.218–19.
- 35 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, Rostow to Johnson, 26 February 1967.
- 36 Wilson, *Labour*, pp.457, 459.
- 37 For the leaders' accounts of the Phase A-Phase B affair, Johnson, *Vantage*, pp.253–5 and Wilson, *Labour*, pp.442–69. For recent historical judgement, Colman, 'Special', pp.122–32; Dumbrell, *Special*, pp.152–3; Ellis, 'Lyndon', pp.196–9; Young, 'Britain and "LBJ's War"', pp.75–6. Only Hughes has considered the Kosygin visit in a wider sense, concentrating on Britain's détente policies, Hughes, *Harold*, pp.169–210.
- 38 TNA/PREM13/1840, Kosygin Speech, 9 February 1967.
- 39 TNA/PREM13/1840, RoM 10.45am, 10 February 1967.
- 40 Brands, 'Rethinking', pp.83–113.
- 41 TNA/PREM13/1708, RoM 10.00am, 16 February 1967. Also see Böhmer, "'We Too'", p.218. On Germany and the NPT, see David Tal, 'The Burden of Alliance: The NPT Negotiations and the NATO Factor, 1960–1968', in Christian Nuenlist and Anna Locher (eds), *Transatlantic Relations at Stake: Aspects of NATO, 1956–1972* (Zurich: ETH, 2006), pp.97–124.
- 42 TNA/PREM13/1708, RoM 10.00am, 16 February 1967.
- 43 TNA/PREM13/1471, RoM 11.45am, 15 February 1967; TNA/PREM13/1708, RoM 3.30pm, 15 February 1967. Also, Wilson, *Labour*, p.468.
- 44 On the concerns of the Euratom powers about the effect of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on civilian nuclear energy, see Tal, 'Burden', pp.115–24.
- 45 TNA/PREM13/1708, Roberts to Brown, 16 February 1967.
- 46 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson, 11 February 1967.
- 47 TNA/CAB148/31, OPD(67)25, 4 April 1967. Also, Hughes, *Harold*, pp.169–210.
- 48 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, Leddy to Rusk, 15 April 1967 and *ibid.*, Box 216, Background Paper: NATO Problems, 29 May 1967.

- 49 TNA/PREM13/2408, Wilson to de Gaulle, 16 February 1967.
- 50 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Bromley Smith Mempres, 21 February 1967. Also, LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, Rostow to President and Secretary, 23 February 1967 and Box 212, Memcon NPT, 24 February 1967.
- 51 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, IntelMemo 0798/67, 14 March 1967; NARA/RG59/DoS/Lot72D139, Box 316, Owen to Rusk, 27 March 1967.
- 52 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, Leddy to Rusk, 15 April 1967.
- 53 TNA/PREM13/1707, Bonn to FO 50, 9 January 1967.
- 54 *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik des Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1967* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1998) (hereafter AAPD1967), doc.16.
- 55 TNA/PREM13/1707, Paris to FO 47, 14 January 1967; LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, Rostow to Johnson, 26 February 1967. On de Gaulle's policies, Martin, *Untying*, pp.179–96. On Kiesinger's criticisms of the NPT, Schwartz, *Lyndon*, p.152.
- 56 Schwartz, *Lyndon*, pp.152–9 narrates these events.
- 57 LBJL/BP/CF, Box 4, Memorandum, 2 March 1967.
- 58 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, docs.239, 240 and 241.
- 59 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, docs.242 and 243.
- 60 Zimmerman, 'Sour', p.235.
- 61 TNA/PREM13/1525, Trend to Wilson, 9 February 1967; TNA/CAB148/30, OPD(67)7th meeting, 10 February 1967. For the quotation, Hansard, *HCD*, cols. 46–51, 12 December 1966.
- 62 TNA/PREM13/1525, RoC, 3 March 1967.
- 63 TNA/PREM13/1526, Palliser to Wilson, 10 March 1967.
- 64 TNA/PREM13/1525, Washington to FO 581, 24 February 1967.
- 65 TNA/PREM13/1525, Washington to FO 625, 626 and 627, all 1 March 1967. The quotation is from telegram 626.
- 66 O'Hara, 'Limits', p.269.
- 67 Calleo, 'De Gaulle', pp.239–55; O'Hara, 'Limits', pp.269–70; Roy, *Battle*, in general and Schenk, 'Sterling', pp.362–3.
- 68 Martin, *Untying*, pp.181–90; Schenk, 'Sterling', p.363.
- 69 TNA/PREM13/1526, Dean to FO 753, 10 March 1967.
- 70 On earlier loan offers, O'Hara, 'Limits', p.272; on the 1967 loan idea, Roy, *Battle*, pp.270–83.
- 71 TNA/PREM13/1525, Dean to FO 687, 6 March 1966; TNA/PREM13/1902, Rostow to Palliser, 10 March 1967. Also, LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, State to London 150824, 8 March 1967; TNA/PREM13/1525, Palliser minute, undated, on Dean to FO 626, 1 March 1967, and Dean to FO 712, 713, 714, all 8 March 1967.
- 72 TNA/PREM13/1525, Wilson minute, u/d, on Dean to FO 650, 2 March 1967.
- 73 TNA/PREM13/1525, FO to Washington 2244, 7 March 1967 and Luxembourg to FO 42, 8 March 1966.
- 74 TNA/PREM13/1525, FO to Washington 2244, 7 March 1967 and Luxembourg to FO 42, 8 March 1966; TNA/PREM13/1525, Dean to FO 687, 6 March 1966.
- 75 TNA/PREM13/1525, Reilly to FO 220, 8 March 1967.
- 76 TNA/CAB130/313, MISC140(67)1st meeting, 9 March 1967.
- 77 TNA/PREM13/1526, Balogh to Wilson, 17 March 1967.

- 78 TNA/PREM13/1526, Trend to Wilson, 18 March 1967 and hand-written Wilson minute, u/d; TNA/CAB130/313, MISC140(67)3rd meeting, 20 March 1967. Also, TNA/PREM13/1902, Palliser to Rostow, 8 April 1967.
- 79 TNA/CAB130/313, MISC140(67)4th meeting, 21 March 1967. Also, TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)9th meeting, 23 February 1967; TNA/CAB148/30, OPD(67)8th meeting, 23 February 1967; TNA/CAB130/313, MISC140(67)2nd meeting, 13 March 1967; TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)13th meeting, 16 March 1967; TNA/CAB148/31, OPD(67)23, 16 March 1967; and TNA/CAB148/30, OPD(67)13th meeting, 17 March 1967.
- 80 FRUS/1964–1968/XIII, doc.249; TNA/CAB148/33, OPD(67)60, 26 July 1967.
- 81 TNA/PREM13/1526, Palliser to MacLehose, 26 April 1967.
- 82 FRUS/1964–1968/XIII, doc.198.
- 83 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)14th meeting, 21 March 1967; TNA/CAB130/313, MISC140(67)4th meeting, 21 March 1967.
- 84 TNA/CAB148/30, OPD(67)14th meeting, 22 March 1967; also, TNA/CAB148/31, OPD(67)22, 20 March 1967.
- 85 Douglas Brinkley, 'Dean Acheson and the "Special Relationship": The West Point Speech of December 1962', *The Historical Journal*, 33/3 (September 1990), pp.599–608, p.601.

5 The Decision to Apply and to Pull Out: Anglo-American Relations, Britain's Second EEC Application and East of Suez, March to June 1967

- 1 Harold Wilson, *The Governance of Britain* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p.119.
- 2 Hansard, *HCD*, cols.415–526, 16 December 1964.
- 3 Hennessy, *Prime*, p.311; Reynolds, *Britannia*, p.214.
- 4 In the rich literature on the east of Suez decision, historians have provided thorough accounts of British decisions and American reactions but without full consideration of contemporaneous EEC issues. See, for example, Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.183–93 and *passim*, and Matthew Jones, 'A Decision Delayed: Britain's Withdrawal from South East Asia Reconsidered, 1961–68', *English Historical Review*, CXVII/472 (June 2002), pp.569–95. Also see Colman, 'Special', pp.134–41. Britain's EEC policy has been examined by Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.129–56 and Helen Parr, 'Britain, America, East of Suez and the EEC: Finding a Role in British Foreign Policy, 1964–67', *Contemporary British History*, 20/3 (September 2006), pp.403–21, but without detailed analysis of US views. Indeed, the Johnson administration's reactions to Britain's EEC policies and the second application have received little attention, see Guderzo, 'Johnson', pp.89–114 and Winand, *Eisenhower*, pp.351–66. The only other specific work on US policy towards European integration, Lundestad's *'Empire' by Integration*, covers Britain's second application fleetingly and makes factual errors in doing so, see p.81. Schwartz, *Lyndon*, does not deal with the second application to any extent, see pp.146, 194.

- 5 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, Paris to State 14228, 16 March 1967.
- 6 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, London to State 7612, 21 March 1967.
- 7 TNA/CAB148/30, OPD(67)14th meeting, 22 March 1967. Also, TNA/CAB148/31, OPD(67)22, 20 March 1967. Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.178–208 provides excellent narrative and analysis on the development of the debates leading to the east of Suez decision.
- 8 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)16th meeting, 4 April 1967.
- 9 TNA/PREM13/1526, RoC, 6 April 1967.
- 10 Donna Lee, 'Endgame at the Kennedy Round: A Case Study of Multilateral Economic Diplomacy', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 12/3 (September 2001), pp.115–38. Ludlow, *European, passim*; Zeiler, *American Trade, passim*.
- 11 FRUS/1964–1968/XIII, doc.188.
- 12 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, State Circular 149980, 7 March 1967.
- 13 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, London to State 7211 and Brussels to State 4452, both 8 March 1967, and Geneva to State 2699 and London to State 7274, both 9 March 1967.
- 14 NARA/RG59/DoS/Lot72D139/PPC, Box 316, Schaetzel to Owen, 11 March 1967; NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, Brussels to State 4685, 22 March 1967. On such concerns, Ludlow, *European*, p.123.
- 15 Lee, 'Endgame', pp.120–34.
- 16 The State Department recognised that British support for the NPT worked against its political relations with the European partners, especially Germany; NARA/RG59/DoS/Lot72D139/PPC, Box 316, Owen to Rusk, 27 March 1967.
- 17 NARA/RG59/DoS/Lot72D139/PPC, Box 316, REU-17, 22 March 1967.
- 18 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, London to State 8404, 14 April 1967.
- 19 LBJL/BP/SF, Box 24, London to State 8493, 18 April 1967.
- 20 Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.187 and Jones, 'Decision Delayed', p.588 both discuss this meeting but only with reference to east of Suez.
- 21 FRUS/1964–1968/XIII, doc.247. For the British record, TNA/PREM13/1479, RoC, 18 April 1967. Also, TNA/PREM13/1479, RoC Brown and Gene Rostow, 18 April 1967. On the American belief in a clean application, see for example, NARA/RG59/DoS/Lot72D139/PPC, Box 316, Schaetzel to Owen, 11 March 1967.
- 22 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, State to London 177203, 18 April 1967.
- 23 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, Rostow to Johnson, 19 April 1967.
- 24 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, Katzenbach to London 174096, 19 April 1967. It was Henry Brandon, the Washington correspondent of *The Sunday Times*, who said that the British were on the verge of final decision. For his view of the impact of the east of Suez decision, Brandon, *Special*, pp.213–17.
- 25 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, State to London 179522, 20 April 1967. Also FRUS/1964–1968/XII, doc.269.
- 26 TNA/PREM13/1475, Dean to Brown, 12 January 1967. Also TNA/FO800/978, Dean to Brown, 6 May 1967.
- 27 Brown had also consulted the Australian Foreign Minister, Hasluck, and New Zealand Prime Minister, Holyoake, at the SEATO meeting in Washington, see Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.187–8.

- 28 TNA/CAB148/30, OPD(67)17th, 21 April 1967.
- 29 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 216, Bator Mempres, 31 May 1967.
- 30 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, Katzenbach Mempres, 10 April 1967; LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, Bator 'Possible Talking Points', 18 April 1967.
- 31 Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, p.189 and Jones, 'Decision Delayed', pp.587–8.
- 32 Schwartz, *Lyndon*, pp.159–65. Also, LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 210, Rostow to Johnson, 26 February 1967; LBJL/BP/CF, Box 5, Bator Mempres, 22 April 1967.
- 33 NARA/RG59/DoS/Lot72D139/PPC, Box 316, Owen to Rusk, 27 March 1967.
- 34 TNA/PREM13/1528, RoC, 25 April 1967.
- 35 TNA/PREM13/1528, RoC, 25 April 1967.
- 36 TNA/PREM13/1528, Palliser to MacLehose, 28 April 1967. Palliser's minute of the Johnson-Wilson conversation was only given to Brown, Dean and Trend for their personal information.
- 37 TNA/PREM13/1528, Palliser to MacLehose, 28 April 1967.
- 38 Parr, *Britain's Policy*, p.143.
- 39 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)24th meeting, 29 April 1967, CC(67)25th and 26th meetings, both 30 April, and CC(67)27th meeting, 2 May 1967.
- 40 TNA/PREM13/1480, W.K.K. to Palliser, 29 April 1967; Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.129–51 examines Cabinet acceptance from March to May 1967 in detail.
- 41 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)22nd meeting, 20 April 1967. Also, Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.135–7.
- 42 For a summary, TNA/FO800/986, FO to Rome 426, 6 April 1967.
- 43 TNA/PREM13/2667, RoC, 13 April 1967.
- 44 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, London to State 8944, 28 April 1967.
- 45 On American agreement to the timing of the application, TNA/PREM13/1480, Palliser to MacLehose, 21 April 1967. NARA/RG59/ DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, Dean to Rusk, 1 May 1967; TNA/PREM13/1518, FO to Paris 1099, 1 May 1967. For the announcement itself, Hansard, *HCD*, cols.310–32, 2 May 1967.
- 46 Ludlow, *European*, p.137. Also, Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.153–4.
- 47 LBJL/BP/SF, Box 24, Owen to Bator, 1 May 1967. An insider in Brussels and Washington with many close ties in London, Camps wrote two contemporary books of note on the Community, the first of which remains a classic: Miriam Camps, *Britain and the European Community, 1955–1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964) and *European Unification in the Sixties: From the Veto to the Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
- 48 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, Paris to State 17880, 10 May 1967.
- 49 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, Brussels to State 5824, 5 May 1967. Also, NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, London to State 9055, 2 May 1967 and LBJL/BP/SF, Box 24, Leddy to Rusk, 4 May 1967.
- 50 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, State to London 188105, 4 May 1967; *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.250.
- 51 LBJL/BP/CF, Box 5, Bator to Rostow, 23 May 1967.
- 52 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, docs.223 and 226.
- 53 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.226.

- 54 *FRUS/1964–1968/XIII*, docs.251 and 254. Also, LBJL/BP/CF, Box 5, Bator Mempres, 3 May 1967.
- 55 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, Bruce to Rusk 9217, 8 May 1967.
- 56 TNA/PREM13/1528, RoC, 25 April 1967.
- 57 La Documentation Française, *French Foreign Policy: Official Statements, Speeches and Communiqués, January–June 1967* (New York: Ambassade de France, Service de Presse et d'Information, 1967), (hereafter *FFP January–June 1967*), Press Conference, 16 May 1967, pp.66–9.
- 58 De Gaulle's press conference was christened 'the velvet veto,' see Wilson, *Labour*, pp.502–5.
- 59 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, Paris to State 18423, 17 May 1967.
- 60 LBJL/BP/SF, Box 24, Leddy to Rusk, 23 May 1967.
- 61 TNA/PREM13/1482, Brussels to FO 132 and 289, and Bonn to FO, all 2 June 1967; *ibid.*, Paris to FO 86, 5 June 1967.
- 62 TNA/PREM13/1482, Brussels to FO 132 and 289, and Bonn to FO, all 2 June 1967; *ibid.*, Paris to FO 86, 5 June 1967; TNA/PREM13/1484, Shuckburgh to Brown, 7 July 1967. Ludlow, *European*, p.138. The EEC acknowledged receipt of Britain's application after the Rome summit, see TNA/PREM13/1483, Brussels to FO 145, 7 June 1967.
- 63 *FRUS/1964–1968/XII*, doc.270.
- 64 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, London to State 9326, 10 May 1967. On the generally good Healey-McNamara relationship, Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp.306–7.
- 65 Jones, 'Decision Delayed', p.588.
- 66 TNA/PREM13/1475, Dean to Brown, and Dean to O'Neill, 12 and 13 January 1967.
- 67 Jones, 'Decision Delayed', p.589.
- 68 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Johnson to Wilson, 11 May 1967.
- 69 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 216, Kohler to Rostow, 26 May 1967.
- 70 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 216, Bator Mempres, 31 May 1967.
- 71 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, Memcon, 17 May 1967.
- 72 TNA/FO800/978, Dean to Brown, 6 May 1967. On Dean's entreaties, Colman, 'Special', pp.137–8.
- 73 TNA/PREM13/1906, Note of Conversation, 31 May 1967.
- 74 TNA/PREM13/1906, Palliser to Wilson, 1 June 1967. Wilson later wrote that 'It was, I think, an occasion where the US felt they needed us more than we needed them.' See Wilson, *Labour*, p.511.
- 75 Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.192–3; Jones, 'Decision Delayed', pp.589–90.
- 76 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)34th meeting, 30 May 1967. Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.191–2.
- 77 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, London to State 31187, 30 May 1967.
- 78 On Cooper, Healey, *Time*, p.299.
- 79 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, London to State 535, 1 June 1967. As would be expected, the London embassy asked the State Department to protect its source.
- 80 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 216, Read Memorandum for Rostow, 1 June 1967 and 'Alternative Talking Points', undated. For contrast, LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 216, Kohler to Rostow, 26 May 1967.

- 81 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 216, Bator Mempres, 1 June 1967.
- 82 *FRUS*/1964–1968/XII, doc.271.
- 83 Jones, 'Decision Delayed', pp.589–90.
- 84 O'Hara, 'Limits', pp.274–6. Colman has also identified this contradiction in passing, Jonathan Colman, 'The London Ambassadorship of David K. E. Bruce During the Wilson-Johnson Years, 1964–1968', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 15/2 (June 2004), pp.327–52, p.346.
- 85 On 1967 and transition, see, for an early example, Dobson, 'Years', pp.249–58 and, for a recent version, Colman, '*Special*', pp.121–66.
- 86 TNA/PREM13/1906, Visit of the PM to Canada and the United States, 1–3 June 1967.
- 87 Historians have overlooked this point. Colman, '*Special*', pp.134–41 comments upon 'Britain's turn towards Europe' and 'East of Suez and the fifth summit' in succession but does not identify the connection between them at this stage and does not mention that the EEC was discussed during the meetings on 2 June. Another recent study of the Anglo-American relationship is also virtually silent on the subject, see Priest, *Kennedy*, pp.141–2. Parr, *Britain's Policy*, offers no comment (although her work is largely focused upon policy making on the EEC application in London). Only Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.192–3 notes the fact that the EEC and east of Suez were on the agenda for the talks but does not analyse the talks themselves.
- 88 TNA/PREM13/1906, Palliser to Wilson, 1 June 1967.
- 89 TNA/PREM13/1906, u/a Brief, u/d (c. late May/1 June 1967).
- 90 Wilson, *Labour*, p.511.
- 91 TNA/PREM13/1906, RoC (Doc.6), 2 June 1967. For Wilson's record of his conversation with Johnson (which was very close to the official record), TNA/PREM13/1906, Palliser to Wilson, 5 June 1967. At a simultaneous meeting of between Fowler, McNamara, Rusk, Dean and Trend, plus other UK and US officials, there was general support for the UK EEC bid, as well American understanding of the need for the UK to 'cock a snook' at Washington to smooth the bid process. Restating American interest in Britain remaining loyal on international monetary reform, Fowler added 'but don't sell us out on the liquidity problem'. See *FRUS*/1964–1968/XIII, doc.255.
- 92 TNA/PREM13/1906, RoC (Doc.8), 2 June 1967.
- 93 TNA/PREM13/1083, RoM, 29 July 1966.
- 94 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)36th meeting, 6 June 1967.
- 95 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 216, Bator Mempres, 31 May and 1 June 1967.
- 96 TNA/PREM13/1906, Palliser to Wilson, 1 June 1967.

6 De Gaulle's Challenge Contained: the Anglo-American Relationship in Transition, June 1967 to June 1968

- 1 Jackson, *de Gaulle*, p.70.
- 2 *FFP January–June 1967*, Official French Government Statement, 21 June 1967, p.103. On de Gaulle and the Middle East crisis, Martin, *Untying*, pp.197–206.
- 3 Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: the Ruler 1945–1970* (London: Harvill, 1992), pp.452–3.
- 4 On Glassboro, Dumbrell, *President*, pp.45–51.

- 5 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson, 22 June 1967. For Wilson's retrospective account, Wilson, *Labour*, pp.515–29.
- 6 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson, 22 June 1967.
- 7 Wilson, *Labour*, p.522.
- 8 On Rambouillet, Young, *Britain and European Unity*, p.68.
- 9 Also see Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.157–8 and Parr, 'Saving', pp.436–7.
- 10 Wilson, *Labour*, p.523.
- 11 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson, 22 June 1967.
- 12 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)41st meeting, 22 June 1967.
- 13 TNA/PREM13/1483, Reilly to Gore-Booth, 28 June 1967.
- 14 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)44th meeting, 3 July 1967; TNA/PREM13/1483, undecipherable to Wilson, 4 July 1967; TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)45th meeting, 6 July 1967. Also, Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.161–3.
- 15 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, REU-39, 27 July 1967. For Couve's recollections of the problem of Britain and the EEC, Maurice Couve de Murville, *Une Politique Étrangère 1958–1969* (Paris: Plon, 1971), pp.385–430.
- 16 TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)46th meeting, 11 July 1967. Also, Ludlow, *European*, pp.140–1.
- 17 TNA/PREM13/1484, Paris to FO 738, 12 July 1967.
- 18 TNA/PREM13/1489, Wilson minute, u/d on Palliser to Wilson, 15 July 1967.
- 19 Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.163–4 has also reached this conclusion.
- 20 TNA/PREM13/1484, Wilson minute, u/d on Palliser to Wilson, 20 July 1967.
- 21 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3147, REU-39, 27 July 1967.
- 22 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/DEF1EUR, Box 1536, IntelNote 607, 20 July 1967. Also, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'The Framework of East-West Reconciliation', *Foreign Affairs*, 46/2 (January 1968), pp.256–75, especially p.259. On the de Gaulle/Kiesinger meetings, *AAPD 1967*, doc.263.
- 23 *FRUS/1964–1968/XIII*, doc.259.
- 24 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/DEF1EUR, Box 1540, Bonn to State 661, 17 July 1967.
- 25 TNA/PREM13/1490, Washington to FO 2416, 20 July 1967.
- 26 TNA/PREM13/1473, Bonn to FO 667, 26 April 1967; TNA/PREM13/1482, Brussels to FO 298, 2 June 1967; TNA/PREM13/1483, RoM (Brown & Brandt), 13 June 1967 and UK Delegation to the European Communities, Brussels (hereafter UKDB) to FO 165, 27 June 1967.
- 27 TNA/PREM13/1490, Paris to FO 759, 19 July 1967.
- 28 LBJL/JP/NSF/CF/UK, Box 211, IntelMemo, 1 August 1967.
- 29 TNA/PREM13/1484, Chalfont to Brown, 19 July 1967.
- 30 *FRUS/1964–1968/XIII*, doc.263.
- 31 Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, pp.193–9.
- 32 For example, LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Johnson to Wilson, 6 July 1967.
- 33 LBJL/JP/HSC, Box 10, Wilson to Johnson, 13 July 1967.
- 34 *FRUS/1964–1968/XIII*, doc.262.
- 35 NARA/RG59/DoS/Lot72D139, Box 316, Rusk Mempres, 12 August 1967.
- 36 *AAPD 1967*, doc.263. For a clear description of how these matters were related in de Gaulle's foreign policy, Martin, *Untying*, pp.222–36.

- 37 TNA/PREM13/1484, UK Mission, New York (hereafter UKMNY) to FO 2420, 24 September 1967; TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)57th meeting, 28 September 1967.
- 38 Couve later disputed Brown's version of his remarks, TNA/PREM13/1486, Paris to FO 1087, 2 November 1967.
- 39 TNA/PREM13/1484, Day to Maitland, 22 September 1967.
- 40 TNA/PREM13/1484, Palliser to Wilson, 22 September 1967 and u/d Wilson minute.
- 41 TNA/FCO41/144, Brown minute, u/d, c.15 September 1967.
- 42 TNA/PREM13/1484, *Avis de la Commission au Conseil*, 29 September 1967; TNA/PREM13/1485, UKDB to FO 247–258, 30 September 1967; TNA/PREM13/1485, FO to Certain Missions 247 and 250, 2 and 3 October 1967. For a full analysis of the opinion, Parr, *Britain's Policy*, pp.164–6; for the Community perspective, Ludlow, *European*, pp.141–2. The other applicant states were Denmark, Ireland and Norway.
- 43 TNA/PREM13/1484, FO to UKDB 728, 11 July 1967; TNA/PREM13/1485, RoM 3.30pm, 29 September 1967.
- 44 TNA/PREM13/1485, Reilly to FO 975 and 983, 5 and 6 October 1967.
- 45 TNA/PREM13/1485, Palliser to Wilson, 6 October 1967.
- 46 TNA/PREM13/1485, Nield to Wilson, 6 October 1967. Also, TNA/CAB128/42, CC(67)58th meeting and TNA/CAB129/133, C(67)159, both 11 October 1967; TNA/PREM13/1485, Paris to FO 1024 and FO to Bonn 2595, both 17 October 1967.
- 47 Martin, *Untying*, p.226; Parr, 'Saving', pp.438–9.
- 48 TNA/PREM13/1486, UKDB to FO 328 and Palliser to Wilson, both 25 October 1967.
- 49 NARA/RG59/DoS/CF/EEC6UK, Box 3148, IntelNote 854, 27 October 1967; Ludlow, *European*, p.142.
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Conclusion

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- 35 Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat*, *passim*; Dumbrell, 'Johnson Administration', pp.211–31; Ellis, 'Lyndon', pp.180–204; Young, *International*, pp.21–2 and *passim*. Colman, 'Special', *passim*, has portrayed particular summits as

successful while generally concluding that Britain became 'one ally among many' in the Johnson-Wilson era.

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