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Outside the Rink

The role of British Colonial Africa in the NATO negotiations

Master's thesis in History with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Michael J. Geary

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Sammendrag

Storbritannia spilte en nøkkelrolle i forhandlingene om Atlanterhavspakten, men hva gjorde de med "bagasjen" de hadde med seg i forhandlingene - de afrikanske koloniene? Denne avhandlingen tar for seg hvilken rolle de atlantiske britiske koloniene og de okkuperte italienske koloniene i middelhavsregionen hadde i britisk forsvarspolitik fra 1947 til 1949, og hvordan dette sammenfalt med forsøkene på å inngå et samarbeid mellom Europa og Nord-Amerika. Gjennom kvalitativ analyse av britisk kildemateriale, og en gjennomgang av tilsvarende amerikanske arkiver, undersøker avhandlingen hvordan forhandlingene av Atlanterhavspakten ga Storbritannia mulighet til å påvirke kolonipolitikken til andre prospektive medlemmer av pakten, og hvordan koloniene ble brukt som middel for å påvirke forhandlingsprosessene.

Abstract

Great Britain played a key role in the negotiations of an Atlantic Pact, but what did they do about the “baggage” they carried into the negotiations - the African colonies? This thesis considers the role the Atlantic British colonies and the occupied Italian colonies in the Mediterranean would have in British defence policy from 1947 to 1949, and how this coincided with the attempts of entering into a cooperative treaty between Europe and North America. Through qualitative analysis of British source material, and a review of corresponding American archives, the thesis investigates how the Atlantic Pact negotiations gave Great Britain an opportunity to influence the colonial politics of other prospective members of the treaty, and how the colonies would be used as leverage for influencing the treaty negotiations themselves.

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1. Introduction

In a post-world war setting, Great Britain were in a position where they needed to reorient their thinking concerning their status as a Great Power. Of chief concern were the economic aspects, as they were maintaining a large navy and air force, but struggled to finance it due to the costs of the war, and were hesitant to rely further on the United States for support. In this context, one of the options considered by British officials was to utilize their colonial resources to recover their financial stability. With the international system reorienting itself around the two major actors of the Soviet Union and the United States, British politicians increasingly faced the question of whether to stop considering themselves an equal, or to rise to the challenge by different means. As such, during the initial post war period, British foreign policy had two major directions. The Chiefs of Staff advocated for a pro-American line that concerned itself primarily towards developing and maintaining a strong connection with the United States, and positioned the Soviet Union as their likely adversary. The Foreign Office were more of the opinion that doing so would be hazardous, and considered it a better proposition to indulge the Soviets by concerning themselves primarily towards Germany as a potential future threat. From a British perspective, if they were to maintain the great power status, other alternatives would also have to be explored. A European alliance of states was considered, and for a long time was an outcome their Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin worked towards. Furthermore, overtures were made by Bevin towards the French about pooling their African assets together with other European powers, in order to use these resources to elevate themselves to a similar level to the US and USSR.

Ultimately, British initiatives towards American and Canadian officials concerning mutual security policies set the foundation for the talks that would lead to the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. These negotiations involved, amongst others, discussions as to what areas precisely the alliance would cover geographically, as well as to what extent allies were obligated to support each other with military aid. The formation of NATO has by some historians been viewed as a boon for the British Empire, freeing up resources that would otherwise be spent on homeland defence, thus, prolonging its life. This thesis aims to investigate this claim more thoroughly, with an emphasis on just how important the Atlantic colonies and possessions were for the British participation in North Atlantic Treaty. As such, the main research question for this thesis is *what role did the British colonial possessions (and its occupied territories) in Africa play in the negotiations of the North Atlantic Treaty?*

1.1 Research question

From the initial Pentagon Talks where the groundwork for the North Atlantic Treaty was laid, it is quite clear that there were little formal obligations for a cooperative defence policy that would reach outside the treaty itself. While the British agreed with the United States and Canada that a limited treaty would likely be seen as an admission of weakness and invite potential Soviet interference, there were no provisions made to accommodate this specific concern. However, it also seems intuitively evident to the parties that a war action taken against a member in an area outside of the treaty itself would likely trigger a response, as conflict would spread from the initial area and eventually influence the Atlantic area. While the American government had little ideological interest in sustaining a colonial empire, they would nevertheless have an interest in limiting the spread of communism, and providing reinforcement for the British would be one way of accomplishing their ideological containment.

The colonial question has in the past been raised in connection with NATO, due to the inclusion of French Algeria in the formal negotiations. Its inclusion has primarily been attributed to the desire to mollify France, more so than an attempt at widening the alliance, and was largely viewed by the British as a mere academic exercise, rather than a point of expected pressure. However, as France were able to adamantly insist on including Algeria in the treaty, the potential inclusion of colonial possessions was a factor that the treaty needed to take into account. As France opened the metaphorical door loudly and without regard for the desires of others, there might well be room for others to sneak in behind it, or eventually have prepared the way before.

Thus, this thesis aims to revisit the colonial aspect of the North Atlantic Treaty, and evaluate what role the colonial areas under British control did have on the negotiations of the treaty, whether as part of the negotiations themselves, or as outside factors.

1.2 Approach and sources

This thesis will primarily base itself on a qualitative analysis of the British policy conducted towards what would become the NATO negotiations, starting from 1947 until the signing of the treaty in 1949. It primarily relies on the British National Archives as found online, with an emphasis on the Foreign Office Archives found in FO 800, as well as the Cabinet Files found in the CAB 131 archives. FRUS, or The Foreign Relations of the United States has also been an invaluable source in providing minutes and archival material of the ongoing conversations as they were recorded during the gradual negotiations for UK-US cooperation. The approach is primarily based off British sources in order to best reflect their point of view, which has been supplemented with the policy conducted and documented by the United States where necessary and possible. The Hansard archives of the debates in the House of Lords and the House of Commons have also been a great source for background knowledge, as well as illustrating the different opinions that existed within the British chambers of policymaking. Finally, the thesis has also greatly benefited from the application of the articles available on JSTOR and, to a lesser extent, Google Scholar.

The approach of the thesis will thus be based off observations from official documentations used during the negotiations themselves, memoirs, letters, telegraphs, and journals from the actors involved, as well as minutes taken from the British House of Commons and the House of Lords.

1.3 Justification of topic

This thesis, while niche, is justified on several grounds. While many historians approach the creation of NATO from a great power perspective and from the perspective of the UK trying to get US support for a long-time alliance, the British colonial empire has seemingly received little attention beyond mentions of the material resources it could provide for the UK. While this can be attributed to the gradual loss of the colonial empire happening not long after the signing of the treaty, the Empire was nonetheless considered to be an invaluable instrument from the British perspective in rebuilding its war-wrecked economy, especially through managing the harsh winter of 1947. Given that the British were ostensibly planning to use their colonial assets as a partial means to rebound their post-war economy, it seems a bit peculiar that an alliance formed around the Atlantic would make little mention of areas of importance to the British. Thus, further investigation can help clarify to what extent the British were able to influence their allies to protect their assets - as they were the ones who initiated the negotiations in the first place. Thus, an examination of how the colonies did effect the negotiations would fill a specific gap, seeing the cold war from a perspective of looking both inward on the actual negotiations, as well as an outward perspective of how an area would simultaneously be included and excluded. Furthermore, in light of the increasing fear of weapons of mass destruction, Africa would be approached in a different light by the British war-time planners, which bears investigation by itself.

Furthermore, Bevin's desire for European cooperation was also partially based on utilizing their African assets together with others (France, in particular) in order to remain a Great Power. In this light, these overtures made would be worthy of consideration, given that it reveals an attitude that the colonies would be instrumental in rebounding to great power status. With that in mind, one might then question whether the involvement of the Atlantic colonies were intended to play a greater part in the treaty than the present document indicates, and research based on primary sources could bring to light an area that would be easily overlooked historically.

1.4 Previous research / literature reviews

Literature about the NATO alliance is plentiful, and the initial years of the alliance has been thoroughly explored and revisited. However, the literature concerning the secretive exploratory talks prior to its signing appear to be somewhat more limited in perspective. NATO's own history writers illustrate this issue, who appear to be somewhat revisionist with leaving out information about the Pentagon talks themselves, but rather making it appear to be a natural follow-up to the Brussels Pact.¹ It is probable that this can partially be attributed to the actors themselves not going into great detail about the particulars, but also because by the time the documents from the Pentagon Talks themselves were made available, the cold war system had already constructed a clear ideological framework whose perspective influences our perception of the events that took place. Hughes and Greenwood emphasise how British foreign policy concerns itself increasingly towards reaching for US assurance, whether in the context of avoiding Soviet appeasement, a desire to remain or become a third Great Power, or attributing it to Bevin's gradually increasing desire for Atlantic cooperation.² As such, a fresh pair of eyes could contribute to further study to be done on this topic. Simultaneously, other theories posit that the act of entering into NATO was done as a means to further the imperial ambitions of the UK, a theory that emphasises the role of three great powers following the end of the second world war.

Literature emphasising on cold war history also make emphasis on areas that are deemed more important on a strategic level, in particular, the Middle East and Egypt, and as such, literature concerning British strategic attitudes towards western Africa seems to be comparatively scarce. Furthermore, the literature that emphasises the ideological struggles between outside actors within Africa typically omits British influence to the benefit of other actors. Historians emphasising African history, on the other hand, tend to write about the struggle for independence, which does showcase a general decrease of British influence, but say little about their role in British defence policy. Cold War historiography tends to move in different trends, whether the perspective of the USSR as instigator through their occupation of Eastern Europe, the perspective of US capitalism as a major instigator, an attempt at synthesis by portioning the blame on both (albeit somewhat skewing the balance against the USSR). The narratives have shifted more towards acknowledging that there are other actors than the two great powers, however, and that is where this thesis is intending to fit in, by focusing on the British efforts to maintain their empire, whether through statecraft or through military might.

Several authors have written about different aspects of British foreign policy during this period. I have chosen three works of literature that I feel in particular capture the different aspects of British foreign policy with offering different perspectives with regards to the NATO negotiations, and which have been most useful in the shaping this thesis.

¹ Ismay 1954: 9

² Hughes 2014: 37 & Greenwood 2002: 203

Baylis, John. (1993). *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism*. Kent: Kent State University Press.

Perhaps the most detailed depiction of the conflicts ongoing within the design of British foreign policy can be found in John Baylis' *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism*. Baylis gives a most detailed summary and depiction of British interests and the different opinions as to whether to placate the Soviets, whether to reach for American cooperation, or Bevin's initially preferred alternative of European consolidation. Through his works, he illustrates how the negotiations took place, expounds on the struggling economy that impacted the British room for action, and demonstrates that the British position was not one of luxury, as relations with the Soviet Union gradually deteriorated. Baylis demonstrates how the different treaties entered into by British officials would gradually grow into a bigger concept of global security, and provides a context for how the North Atlantic Treaty grew as a response and realisation that Western Europe could not adequately address the British needs and desires. He also shows mastery of the dichotomy presented within the military administration as to where British defensive efforts should be centered, thus demonstrating the contradiction within an Empire unwilling to fight for mainland Europe, but willing to commit much further abroad in the Middle East. In Baylis' view, the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty indicates that the Foreign office and the Chiefs of Staff in the British administration were finally united on how to approach global politics, and benefited from this approach greatly. His main thesis is that Bevin's role in the negotiation of NATO is a hallmark of policy, rather than a failure, and that his pragmatic approach to diplomacy was one of the deciding factors in the creation of the alliance. He does, however, in spite of this thoroughness, not touch too much upon the Atlantic colonies, save for some mentions of Bevin's overtures towards the French government for African cooperation, which leaves room for further investigation.

Kent, John. (1993). *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War, 1944-1949*. Leicester and London: Leicester University Press.

John Kent in *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War* goes into detail about British designs, but approaches the question of imperial ambitions as the primary British strategy in a post-war period. Positing that what would become the North Atlantic Treaty was never really what was desired by the British Foreign Office, Kent emphasises the importance prescribed to Africa in the British post-war recovery. He details Bevin's dreams of a united Western Europe and Africa working together as a counterbalance to Soviet and US pressures, and shows how Bevin would encourage the administration to work to accomplish these aims, whether through treaties, reports, or personal diplomacy. While he notes that the attempts of binding Africa to Europe ultimately failed, it did not represent a loss economically for the United Kingdom, rather than simply not being a profitable endeavour at the time. Furthermore, Kent posits that ultimately Europe was weakened as a result of its attempts of binding the United States to participate as members of a military treaty, rather than acting as support and backing for it. The "Third Force" alternative so described and desired by Bevin would wane in influence as the British would tie themselves to the fates of the Americans, in an attempt to make sure that US-Soviet cooperation would not take place. However, by so doing, they would find that in spite of their attempts at maintaining different commitments abroad, both in Europe and the Middle East, they were no longer one of the Great Powers of the world. While he has also been criticized for being overly fanciful with his conclusions, he leaves behind a legacy of source material within the British National Archives, which illustrates the mindset of the different British officials at the time, and thus indicates where further research could be done.

Folly, Martin. (1988). Breaking the Vicious Circle: Britain, the United States, and the Genesis of the North Atlantic Treaty. *Diplomatic History*, 12(1), 59-77.

Martin Folly details the pattern observed by British Foreign Office officials, in that the negotiations of a treaty between Britain, the United States, and Western Europe were part of a self-strengthening vicious circle. The countries of Western Europe were unwilling to join together for mutually defensive benefits, fearing the consequences lest the United States would offer guarantees in their direction. Simultaneously, the United States was not of a mind to enter into individual arrangements, and would require proof of Western Europe joining together before it would be interested in any commitment. Folly posits that the way the British would help break this circle, as the brokers of the North Atlantic Pact, would be through a mixture of subterfuge and persistence. Examples of this is shown by how the British would pretend to have no means of influencing the United States with the negotiations of a North Atlantic Treaty, claiming the initiative was all American to begin with - and thus encouraging the Western European states to take the opportunity before it was lost, even if it might not be what they might desire the most. Similarly, he details how the British would in fact be doggedly persistent in providing the United States with different reasons for why they needed to act and commit themselves, while going out of their way to remove any sort of obstacle that was in their way - whether produced by the United States themselves or not. Folly's main argument is that the Pact would ultimately only come into being through the British initiative, by keeping the dream alive, and by ardent negotiations making sure that their position would not get in the way of the grand picture - a completion of the treaty. Thus, the vicious circle they found themselves in would be broken through British means.

I feel like these works give an accurate description of the different views the policy makers had within the British government at the time. Baylis demonstrates the pragmatic approach that would ultimately result in the North Atlantic Treaty, and illustrates the differences within the members of the administration itself. Kent emphasises the global perspective, and demonstrates that there were other directions that Britain could have decided to go - positing that the North Atlantic Treaty might well have led to the decline of British influence, rather than a rebound to a Great Power status. Finally, Folly illustrates the persistence shown by British officials ingathering the members of the treaty, and heavily emphasises the role of Britain as the key member of the negotiations themselves. This is only a small sample of all the available literature on the topic. However, the literature associated with the North Atlantic Treaty will likely never be static, as the source material allows for fresh conclusions to be reached should one be willing to investigate.

1.5 Thesis outline

The thesis will be primarily chronologically structured, emphasising events as they transpired according to their relevance to the research question.

Chapter two will describe the role of the colonies in the British post-war recovery & European unity, and what sort of steps that British officials would consider necessary to ensure their security, including the measures taken through field studies, reports, or overtures to other governments, thus providing a framework for what considerations they would be inclined to bring to the negotiating table.

Chapter three will describe the Pentagon Talks and the following Washington talks, following the reasonings and arguments based on documentation from those meetings, and will detail what provisions were made and what can reasonably be inferred based on the previous chapter.

Chapter four will mostly touch upon the final negotiations of the treaty, and any last-minute concerns that forced the colonial question - in particular, the stressing of French Algeria as a partial comparison to the British colonies, as well as the British trusteeship of the former Italian colonies, such as Tripolitana and Cyracenia.

Finally, chapter five will raise the chief conclusions of the thesis.

2. British colonial post-war concerns

2.1 US Involvement in Africa

The British policy when it came to colonial security was in general to avoid US influence. Already during the war, John Foster Dulles who would later be US Secretary of State in 1953, stated that the only way to remove American distrust of the British Empire would be to invite American cooperation in its post-war colonial development - especially in Africa.³ This was not in general well accepted by British officials, who had already expressed concerns about the American wartime presence, which had led to unsubstantiated rumours that the US would take over the West Africa.⁴ Thus, the policy of Great Britain in the post-war setting was in general to not do anything that might increase this perception, and cause unrest. Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, would also explicitly worry about undue US influence, as from his perception, the colonial empire were one of the strongest cards they had to play in international relations as well as with regards to economic recovery. In a statement about the Marshall plan, he called for Britain to "keep our hands free and not whet American appetites in the colonial empire".⁵ The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Bernard Montgomery had a different approach, however. During his African tour of 1947, he noted that it was imperative to develop the colonies as soon as possible, and would explicitly call for welcoming US assistance, capital, and capital goods.⁶ He further indicated that in his conversations with different officials, there was a general willingness (and more importantly, the capability) to finance their armies by more than what they currently did, effectively enabling the continent to serve as a replacement for India in manpower. Prominent voices within the House of Representatives would continue to argue that the colonial empire was an effective deterrent to the spread of Communism, emphasising that the Colonies would be more vulnerable without the embrace of Great Britain. David Gammans would argue in July 1948 that

"The other thing we must realise is that if Great Britain cannot exist without the Empire, it is equally true that the Colonies cannot exist without us. Independence without security is meaningless. Not one single Colony today in the British Empire could stand alone without the backing of the Empire and this country. The alternative to the British connection is not some "airy-fairy" Utopia, but anarchy. The alternative to the Union Jack in most parts of the world today is the Hammer and Sickle."⁷

Finally, another argument that demonstrates the importance of Africa in British defensive planning can be seen in the needs associated with the development of atomic weaponry. The US relied on Belgium for getting material for their nuclear arsenal, who in turn would produce uranium through their colony in Congo.⁸ As the nation that controlled many key strategic outposts throughout the world, Britain would also have a marked interest in

³ FO 371/34136, Conversation between Lord Cranborne & J.F. Dulles in July 1942.

⁴ Kent 1993: 5

⁵ FO 800/444 FO to Washington 17. Oct. 1947

⁶ FO 800/435, AFR/47/4, 19. Dec. 1947

⁷ Hansard, House of Commons, Colonial Affairs, 8. Jul. 1948. Mr. Gammans. <https://bit.ly/2X7Wylm>

⁸ Kent 1993: 137

keeping its ally-in-but-name , As the ultimate purpose of what would become the NATO treaty would be to dam up against communism, the colonial empire might naturally be expected to play a role in that.⁹

2.2 The Role of West Africa in British Defensive Planning

From a purely military geographical perspective, it seems quite clear that West Africa held relatively little importance to the British. The coast contains few natural harbours, and any perceived threat would need to launch a geographically challenging campaign to circumvent existing British bases on Gibraltar, Aden, or Suez. Perhaps internally, there were more cause for concern. The containment policy propagated by the US was intended to be worldwide, and from the British vision that was forwarded by Bevin for a united Western Europe bloc, including Africa, it seems clear that the continent held an immense perceived value to Great Britain. However, in the aftermath of a wartime economy, the funds for developing the region in order to make it comparatively profitable seems to be hard to come by. Most debates in the British House of Commons emphasise how the region is likely to face starvation due to population growth, and many debates enter into arguments about the finery of whether one should desire for the empire to become gradually more independent or whether one should retain its resources more firmly.¹⁰ While Africa was considered by Bevin to be the economic lifeline in order to provide for the economic recovery of Britain following its post-war struggles, it was somewhat undermined by the stark reality that only a few colonies were net profitable as a whole, being mostly the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, and the fact that the short-term recovery that was necessary went into stark contrast with the intended practice of developing the colonial possessions in order to make them more profitable over time. That said, there is little doubt that there was an overall agreement that there was much to be gained from the colonial resources. With how the Foreign Office increasingly turned towards the potential of the African colonies, the War Office followed suit in order to review and consider what could be done, leading up to the Chief of the General Imperial Staff, Bernard Montgomery, touring the continent during November and December 1947.

2.3 The Proposed African Exodus - Atomic Defence

One of the steps that illustrates how Africa would gain an increasingly important role in British defensive planning were discussed from the fall of 1947 onwards, detailing a scheme intended to combat the severe vulnerability of Great Britain in the face of an atomic attack. Of particular interest is a meeting held by the Defence Committee on the 14th of November, 1947, which overlaps in time with Montgomery's tour of Africa.¹¹ During this meeting the survival of Great Britain is discussed in the context of an attack of weapons of mass destruction, as they are deemed likely to be used in the event of the break out of another war. Given the difficulty of defending against this passively, it is posited as a suggestion to pre-emptively emigrate and disperse a significant portion of

⁹ FRUS 1948 Vol. III, 840.00/3-2948. Minutes of the Fourth meeting of the United States-United Kingdom-Canada Security Conversations, 29. Mar. 1948

¹⁰ Hansard, House of Commons, Colonial Affairs, 8. Jul. 1948.

<https://bit.ly/2X7Wylm>

¹¹ CAB 131/5 - 35279-4 (DO 47: 66), 14. Nov 1947

population and industry overseas across the Dominions and the Colonies, a suggestion that is given serious consideration by many of the participants. Bevin in particular notes that there seems to be strong arguments in favour for approaching their African Colonies in a new way. Others join in in saying that the dispersal should be given early consideration, and the secretary of Commonwealth Integrations notes that their governments would likely be very encouraging with regards to immigration. While drastic in nature, it seems quite clear that this suggestion was taken quite seriously, and for good reasons.

For one, Africa was considered to be under little actual threat by the British government. Montgomery himself notes that the powers that exert their influence on the continent are all Western, and as such there are no hostile foreign footholds.¹² As the Middle East was viewed as the gateway to Africa, the defence of that region would therefore be sufficient to ensure that there would be no external threats to the African colonies. As such, dispersing parts of the populace to the colonial empire and the commonwealth would both ease the defence of the British Isles, as well as strengthen the colonial position significantly.

Secondly, during his tour of Africa as a whole, Montgomery writes that the only real potential threat to the colonies as a whole would be internal - potentially communist uprisings, civil disobedience, and so forth.¹³ By encouraging British citizens to emigrate, they would then be a stabilizing influence. In the event of war, importance was placed on developing the continent of Africa, and thus the colonies, to ensure that the populace would stand on the Western side and with Europe, where it would act as a potential supply of manpower. This emphasis that tended to be placed on African development, illustrates in some way how defence and economy would work hand in hand, with the reminder that a feeling of security is also an important part of economic recovery.

At this same meeting, it is immediately following discussed whether they know if the United States would be offering assistance in the event of weapons of mass destruction being used, and if so, how much, when it could expected. While there would be no explicit mention of any existing agreement between the two governments, it arises out of the meeting that this should be a subject that should be discussed, and planning between the United Kingdom and the United States should happen in peace-time.¹⁴ This is one indicator that in some ways, the defence of the colonial empire was shifting to be more closely linked to the defence of the British Isles themselves.

By the 25th of November, Sir Henry Tizard would posit his proposition in more detail. He explicitly says that one of his reasons for the proposal is partially linked to the fear of an atomic attack, as he states that "no-one can envisage an adequate defence of the civil population of this country in the event of a major war in the atomic bomb age", and thus, a dispersal would greatly ease the problem with defending the British Isles.¹⁵ His proposal indicates that over the course of the next 20 years, there should be an overall decline in the population on the British Isles, caused by a carefully planned emigration policy to Africa and Australasia. This provides for the United Kingdom to "stand a great deal of knocking about", provided the morale would be sufficient, and would in this matter be a great strength in war. However, at the same time, this proposal is also in great detail focused on the aspect of economic recovery, as he indicates that Great Britain is struggling economically in part due to how their overseas investments have

¹² FO 800/435, AFR/47/4, 19. Dec. 1947

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ CAB-131/5 - 35279-4, 14. Nov. 1947

¹⁵ FO 800/444, Attachment to COM 47/31

practically vanished as a consequence of the war, and that food is at a comparative shortage. As Great Britain is nowhere as self-sufficient as it would like to be, with the exception of coal, natural harbours, and a great manufacturing industry, and as the populace is growing at a fast pace coupled with being accustomed to a high living standard, he posits that the emigration policy could help remedy what would become a challenge in the near future. He concludes with a call to action, stating that the Dominions and the Colonies need a much greater population for the development that is desired, warning that if nothing is done, it is more likely that they may lose the colonial initiative to other nations. "Where should they look for immigrants, if not to the Mother Country? ...African colonies are underpopulated and underdeveloped - who is going to develop them? "We, or other nations?"¹⁶ It would follow naturally that if any other country would be part of their development on a greater scale, it would posit a potential security risk.

The Minister of Defence indicates soon thereafter by the 28th of November that that from an economic perspective, he is in favour of the proposal, and suggests that there be made an official inquiry by the talented people of the Universities, covering the political, strategic, economic, and social implications of such a large measure of population disposal and industry.¹⁷ The general attitude remains positive throughout the offices, with the Colonial secretary, The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, as well as The Chancellor of the Exchequer, stating their approval for such a study to take place.¹⁸

A letter to Attlee states soon thereafter that scale is set to somewhere between 3 to 15 million , with a suggested end date of the study to take place to be in June 1949.¹⁹ By the 19th of December, Bevin joins in the agreement - saying that while he hasn't had enough time to review Tizard's proposal until now, he thinks that a study of the situation by a suitable group of University men is a good call.²⁰

Montgomery's report also reaches Bevin on the 19th of December, in a private letter where he indicates that he is happy to discuss any of his findings with the Foreign Secretary should he want it.²¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the general findings of Montgomery's report causes somewhat of a stir within the different departments. Montgomery states in the beginning of his report that "It is impossible to tour Africa without being impressed with... the immense possibilities that exist in British Africa for development", also noting how from what he can observe, that minerals and raw materials exist in almost unlimited quantities.²² The report calls for there to be some sort of "grand design" in place for the African colonies, with a division of the existing colonies into three different groupings. While it would have to be fairly gradual to educate the people on what is required, he desires that this break-up for the current system would ensure a greater efficiency, leading to much closer co-operation between British territories, the mother country, and the other Western Powers. As for what dangers he perceives, the greatest he can see is that there is an increase of social and political consciousness being developed, which could be a great potential danger as a well organised communist movement could make the british position very unpleasant. The best way to keep out Communism, in Montgomery's regard, is for the population to be content through economic and political strength. Finally, the report strongly emphasises

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ FO 800/444 47/31, 25. Nov. 1947

¹⁸ FO 800/444 COM 47/32, 28. Nov. 1947

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ FO 800/444, Bevin to Attlee, 19. Dec. 1947

²¹ FO 800/435, AFR/47/4, 19. Dec. 1947

²² *ibid.*

that "The plain truth is that these lands must be developed in order that Britain may survive."²³

It seems clear that Bevin would take these admonitions to heart. While Tizard's proposal took him almost a month to return to, he would turn to Attlee a mere three days after having studied the enormous report sent by Montgomery. In a letter dated 22. Dec 1947 he states that the issues raised by the report requires "serious and urgent study", noting that the Prime Minister would arrange for a meeting to take part amongst a small group of Ministers on the 8th of January.²⁴ The overall findings of Montgomery's report was in part rebuffed by Arthur Creech-Jones, the Colonial Secretary, to rather overstate the possibilities that existed in Africa. He emphasised that the desire of the C.I.G.S. for breaking up existing territorial boundaries was highly unfeasible, and in some cases would also go against the regulations of the United Nations - which would cause even more trouble.²⁵ However, the overall premise that British Africa was potentially a great source of wealth, was not denied, and has to be seen in the context of the previous proposition of emigration that had served to further fuel the fires. While Montgomery's proposals were deemed to be rather over-simplified, his call for a Grand Design did not go without notice, as the meeting that would then later occur on the 10th of January indicates that the Colonial Secretary would take action as to making an overall plan for African development.²⁶

It appears that the relative dismissal of Montgomery's report left him rather unperturbed, as he continues to be a proponent for decisive African action. In a memorandum to the 30th of January, he outlines British strategy for war with Russia, as it is by far the most likely opponent in a scenario of war. We see that from Montgomery's perspective, once again the economic recovery of Britain in a "post-Marshall dollar era" is closely linked to the development of Africa, stating that

"the only sure and certain solution to the economic problems of Europe is to develop a non-dollar economy in Africa and to link it to Europe. The continent of Africa contains everything we need except oil, and that may well be found there in due course.

If the struggle between the East and the West leads to armed conflict, Africa goes with the West.

Its development is therefore vital; if we fail in this matter we may not survive ourselves."²⁷

The memorandum goes into detail about what are to be the main defensive priorities for Great Britain in an eventual war, which would in general be adopted by the British government for the next few years, until they were revised in 1950. The priorities listed were as follows:

- a) The United Kingdom.
- b) The key areas of the Middle East so as to ensure the integrity of Africa.
- c) The communications from the American Continent to the United Kingdom and the Middle East, and those from the United Kingdom to the Middle East and in the Indian Ocean.²⁸

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ FO 800/435, AFR 47/5, 22. Dec 1947

²⁵ FO 800/435 AFR/48/2

²⁶ FO 800/435 AFR/48/3, 10. Jan. 1948

²⁷ FO 800/452 DEF/48/5, 30. Jan. 1948

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Curiously, while there is no indication that the priorities listed are in order, Montgomery places them in a different order compared to the meeting of the Defence Committee two days prior, indicating a potential difference in opinion.²⁹ This might also be in part due to how Montgomery's tour in the first place could be due to a desire to estimate how efficiently Africa could act as a replacement for the Indian reserve, which was no longer an asset for the British military. From this memorandum we can also see that Montgomery must also have been persuaded as to the possibilities of an emigration policy, as the paragraphs detailing the close defence of the United Kingdom includes a paragraph stating that "The maximum dispersion of vital industries and skilled manpower to other areas of the Commonwealth should be encouraged", and furthermore calls for the situation to be resolved as to whether dispersion of population and vital objectives would constitute the best defence, or whether concentration of defensive measures would be more effective.³⁰

The question of dispersion was, however, left unanswered for some time, as evidenced by the fact that come the 10th of March, the Defence Committee would need another month before they would be able to make a decision with regards to Montgomery's paper on 30th January.³¹ This would posit a challenge, given that the lack of a conclusion would affect how they could approach their proposal of an Atlantic Defence Plan, should it materialize.³²

2.4 North Africa - The Former Italian Colonies

North Africa also held particular importance from a British defence perspective, but for a completely different reason than economic development. While the British had no colonies themselves on the northern coast of Africa, the Italian Colonies were under British occupation following the conclusion of the second world war, and a temporary British administration was set up until the fate of the colonies would be decided by the four major parties of the victors. Described by Bevin as "a few square miles of sand", the regions of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and the Fezzan were in many ways unprofitable from an economic perspective.³³ However, the former Italian Colonies had a high strategic relevance related to two of the three pillars of British defence. The region of Cyrenaica in particular was viewed as crucial, due to it bordering Egypt, and the British were firmly determined that it should not return to Italian control, as the location permitted it to act as a secondary base to enable the defence of Suez. Furthermore, the upcoming Italian elections posited a risk where the communists were deemed likely to emerge victorious, and thus exposing Africa to an ideology that could threaten to topple the entire continent. As the four powers were unable to reach an agreement as to how to proceed, the decision was left to the United Nations council to make. However, they did also have consistent difficulties in coming to an agreement as to whether independence for the colonies was to be desired, whether they should be returned to Italy for the time being, or whether to address other claims to the regions. In the case of Cyrenaica, the British would consistently suggest that a trusteeship would be ideal, especially seeing as the region already was under a military administration.

²⁹ CAB 131/5 35354-2, 8. Jan. 1948

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ FO 800/452, DEF 48/12, 10. Mar. 1948

³² *ibid.*

³³ FO 800/460 - Record of Conversation with US Ambassador, Washington, 26. Feb 1948.

The British came to the conclusion that coordination was necessary in order to maintain their defensive position, and Bevin would on 1. September 1947 send a personal approach to the United States government to jointly review the Middle East position, in an attempt to come to a "gentlemen's understanding" with regards to both policy and joint responsibility.³⁴ The reasons for the British initiative was manifold. For one, the British had been trying to reestablish some of the links that were in place during the second world war. While the British could still field a sizable force, it was nonetheless understood by them that the overall defence of Great Britain would be impossible without the United States backing. Thus, any attempt at rebuilding and solidifying existing lines of communication was to be encouraged, from a national security perspective - which is also illustrated clearly by the fact that the sea communications across the Atlantic was also part of the core British defense approach. While the talks would center around the Middle East area, it was previously discussed and held within the Foreign Office that the talks should also cover the strategic importance of Africa.³⁵ However, as the appeal of the meeting would be a based on the interest of mutual security, the topic of Africa might very well serve to complicate the rebuilding of relations with a US government who viewed the colonial possessions through lenses of ideological disagreement. The British Embassy in Washington was thus instructed that the topics to be discussed would include the establishment of a British base in Cyrenaica, Palestine, Egypt, and ensuring an increase of living standards in the region, to help combat the spread of Communism.³⁶ These conversations, dubbed "The Pentagon Talks of 1947", would commence in Washington on October 16.

During these conversations, the British and the US reached agreement in general on how to proceed with a common policy. The British wasted little time during the talks by turning to the topic which held the highest importance to them, namely the question of Cyrenaica, as the matter would influence many other decisions to be made.³⁷ Seeing the relevance of having a base to retreat to in the event of a prospective British evacuation of Suez, it was agreed that a British base in Cyrenaica would be highly desirable, seeing as it was a strategically key area.³⁸ This would, however, involve some political finesse, evolving some arrangement that would make it possible for the British to remain. From the British perspective, there were multiple options, but ultimately it would boil down to whether they could obtain a British trusteeship for Cyrenaica, or working for an early independence, and entering into an agreement with the Emir. In any case, a swift resolution on the matter was of great importance for the British. That the US officials were in general persuaded and agreed with the conclusions of the British is illustrated in that there was reached a general consensus that even in the event of the British maintain their facilities in Egypt, they should have strategic facilities placed in Cyrenaica, as it would be in their common interest and in the interest of world peace.

As an addendum, during a conversation in London between Marshall and Bevin on the 4th of December, 1947, they both note that the conversations held at Washington, and the conclusions reached thereby, were agreeable to their governments. Simultaneously, Marshall and Bevin agreed that the Washington discussions was to be treated with the utmost secrecy, with the position as follows:

³⁴ FRUS 1947, Volume V, 30. Aug 1947, p. 495.

³⁵ FO 371/61558, Brief for Washington talks 23-30 Oct. 1947, 11. Sep. 1947

³⁶ FRUS 1947, Volume V, 29. Sep 1947, p. 495.

³⁷ Ibid., 16. Oct. 1947, p. 567

³⁸ Ibid., 16. Oct. 1947, p. 562

"There was no agreement nor even an understanding between the two Governments on the questions which had been discussed at Washington; it had merely happened that each of the governments had been presented by their officials with recommendations which substantially coincided."³⁹

Attlee would later with some satisfaction note to the Australian Prime Minister, Joseph Chifley, on the 11th of December that they had reached an agreement that neither the United Kingdom nor the United States can implement a policy regarding the security of the Middle East or the Eastern Mediterranean without the support of the other. As such, they would agree on mutually assisting each other, without any sense of rivalry or desire for one country replacing the other.⁴⁰ Rather, the United States Government pledged to do its best to support and strengthen the British position, including diplomatic support and at the United Nations in maintaining facilities at Cyrenaica and Egypt. In particular, the Americans also note that they wish to see the British retain their strategic position in the Sudan, Gibraltar, Aden, and Cyprus.⁴¹ Thus, unity on defensive attitudes and planning laid the foundation for the implementation of policy, however secretive it might be.

While the attitude of the British towards the US as of late 1947 illustrates the frustration felt with the inconsistent behaviour exhibited by them in the Middle East, the conversations and conclusions hold particular significance in regards to the treaties that would be negotiated later. They are important in the sense that they served to reestablish connections that were previously discontinued following the conclusion of the second world war, and started coordinating policies of defence, even if it was explicitly stated prior to the conversations from the British side that they did not intend for the outcome of the meeting to be a defence treaty of any sort. In particular the reciprocal nature of the statement is of note, as it illustrates an agreement that is not necessarily strongly indicative that the US is the dominant party of the agreement, but demonstrates the necessity for both parties to cooperate for their mutual safety and benefit. Simultaneously, that the prospect of parts of Africa being a key part of the defence of the United Kingdom was accepted and agreed upon by the United States, illustrates a willingness by the US to accept and apply strategic elements beyond country borders, and a small departure from the isolationist policies that up until then was the general approach to any foreign commitments.

2.5 Conclusions

By the end of 1947 and early 1948, it is clear that the African colonies, as well as the former Italian colonies, have a prominent role to play in British defence policy. In order to deal with the challenges of weapons of mass destruction, one proposal that rose in prominence suggested with large scale emigration from the British Isles, whose emigrants the African colonies were thought to play a greater part in receiving, thus allowing for effective defensive policies as well as development at once. That this proposal was taken seriously is demonstrated by how rapidly it would move through the

³⁹ Ibid., 4. Dec. 1947, p. 625

⁴⁰ FO 800/514 US 47/72, Attlee to Chifley 11. Dec. 1947

⁴¹ Ibid.

different departments, garnering approval as it went, which would further coincide with an be reinforced by Montgomery's report about the state of British Africa. Thus, the perceived lifeline for the Empire was alive and well, and may arguably have been at its strongest it has ever been at this time. While there was no explicit mention of the colonies being covered by any sort of nuclear agreement with the United States, and indeed, there being some noticeable reluctance in involving them within the colonial empire, the motion forwarded by the emigration proposal also indicates a perceived necessity for formal defensive arrangements, or at the very least informal arrangements to be entered into across the Atlantic.

The Pentagon Talks of 1947 should be seen in this light, and the "gentlemen's understanding" that was sought was intended at both regulating the differing attitudes and actions taken by the US in the Middle East, but also ensuring US cooperation in order to protect their colonial interests. The British succeeded at both.

3. Pentagon Talks & Washington Talks

3.1 Pentagon Talks: Lead up

Historians differ in how they present the events leading up to the creation of NATO. Some, like Martin Folly have presented the creation of NATO as a masterpiece of British diplomacy, indicating that the idea of a North Atlantic system was a genius move by Ernest Bevin.⁴² Others, like John Kent are positing that NATO was more an unexpected event that ultimately was everything Great Britain did not really want, as the treaty would in essence spell doom for a potential third power Europe-Africa under British leadership by establishing in treaty form a very real dependence on the United States.⁴³ Cold War historiography tends to emphasise the two superpower worldview, of the USSR and the USA being opposed on lines of ideology. However, in more recent years a three power system has increasingly come into view, emphasising the role that Great Britain had in its development, before losing its great power status. That this was the mindset of Bevin is quite clear, in the way that he and his Foreign Office tried to navigate a war-ravaged world that increasingly would demonstrate its limitations on a strained Great Britain that struggled to recover. That Bevin strongly believes in this three power system is made perfectly clear in a debate held in The House of Commons on January 22 1948, in which he makes a strong argument for a Western Union, including and spanning the nations of Europe, Africa, and their overseas possessions.⁴⁴ His talk makes reference to the other two great world powers, in which the Great Britain has its part to play as a different actor, closely cooperating with other european powers, and sees no reason why that should necessarily lead to Britain being entangled in whatever the other two are doing. However, there is no universal agreement that this is, or even should be the case. Bevin is immediately countered with an argument by Anthony Nutting that the Russians have already taken their stand, and that the time is already ripe, if not over-ripe, to do the same - otherwise, Great Britain will wage an economic war against America and a political war against Russia, and lose both. Nutting makes it clear that from his perspective, and being in general quite supported by the Tory perspective, that the way forward must be to "line up the democratic forces of the world with ourselves and America... [form an] alliance forthwith with America, and abandon any ideas of being a bridge, or a "Third Force."⁴⁵ While it is doubtful that Nutting did much to change the views of Bevin over the course of the debate, the British would step up their attempts at making overtures towards the United States in the immediate time-frame.

While it seems quite clear by now that the initiatives for the Atlantic security system were undoubtedly British in origin, the deciding factor for how the topic warranted serious discussion seems more uncertain. There are many events that coalesced into the perception of a serious Soviet threat, whether it be the communistic takeover of Czechoslovakia, the pressures exerted on Finland for a defence treaty between it and the USSR, or the overtures from the Norwegian government to the British in response to perceived Soviet overtures for a similar defence agreement as with Finland. The latter

⁴² Folly 1988: 68

⁴³ Kent 1993:205

⁴⁴ Hansard, Foreign Affairs, 22 January 1948

<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1948/jan/22/foreign-affairs>

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

seems to have sparked a particular fear in Ernest Bevin, British Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, who telegraphed the Americans on the 11th of March calling for "all possible steps" to be taken to prevent Norwegian defection. Later, Bevin would join with the French prime Minister, Georges Bidault, sending a joint telegram on the 17th of March in response to Truman's presidential declaration to call for cooperation in the face of this grand threat.⁴⁶

While the United States traditionally had pursued an isolationist policy, there are, as previously mentioned, some indications that influential elements within its government were starting to warm up to the idea of a more globalist approach to its defence. John Hickerson would send a memorandum to Marshall on the 8th of March, detailing European security as being connected to the United States. It seems clear by the paper that Hickerson was also influenced by the times, as the paper included reference to the recent events in Czechoslovakia and Finland as a reason for acting. However, his defensive scheme would omit Scandinavia in favour of a Mediterranean defense system, in spite of Scandinavia being closer to the United States, and thus more likely to be directly related to US Foreign Policy.⁴⁷ The conversations held some months prior with British officials, the aforementioned "Pentagon Talks of 1947", might be in part why. During these discussions, the British made it clear that from their perspective, any challenges in the Middle East region were going to affect the United States detrimentally in a similar manner to how it would affect them.⁴⁸ As the Middle East was to be the shield for defending Africa, they certainly could not operate in the area with potential US interference, and thus sought to obtain a mutual understanding of policy and approach to the area. The British had previously fought in this area during the war, and as a result they also had a number of troops posited in the geographical vicinity as occupation forces, making it clear that in regards to a military presence, direct US involvement was not what was being asked for in this instance. Thus, keeping these conversations in mind was likely why US focus would for the time being be shifted more towards the Mediterranean region, especially if the military commitment was intended to be minimal.

These conversations would in many ways lay the framework for future cooperation and embolden the officials in the United Kingdom government, by reaching a mutual agreement on important measures that the countries considered to be about their defence. In fact, the successful outcome of these talks is likely one of the factors that led Bevin to continually call for other conversations to be held with regards to other interests they would have in common with security. For one, the Foreign Office approached its embassy in Washington on the 26th of January with mentioning the question of Western security, ideally leading to an exchange of views between the two parties, with a similar approach as to the talks which had previously been conducted on the Middle East.⁴⁹ Furthermore, referring to the talks of a treaty that were taking place between the Benelux countries and France, it also mentioned a desirability for a second system based off the provision for collective self-defence in the United Nations charter. Ultimately, it wouldn't matter as much as to how the Americans would approach it, as much as the simple fact that their participation is what was ultimately desired.⁵⁰ However, it seems clear that this did not seem to strike a chord, as there was little response given by the United States to the overtures. Similarly, a month later, on the 26th of February Bevin would make an approach to Lewis Williams Douglas, the US Ambassador to the United

⁴⁶ FO 800/460 Z 2338/273/G, Conversation with Mr. Bidault on 17. March, 1948 (on train to Brussels)

⁴⁷ FRUS Col. III 1948, Memorandum by Hickerson, 8. Mar. 1948, p. 40-42

⁴⁸ FO 800/514 US 47/72, Attlee to Chifley 11. Dec. 1947

⁴⁹ FO 800/460 EUR/48/4, 26. Jan. 1948

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

Kingdom, about potentially discussing common security issues, in light of recent communist threats.⁵¹ Notably, he would once again suggest that these talks would be similar to the ones had last year, which centered around the Middle East, in order to “help evolve our sort of joint military and civil strategy”.⁵² While this statement would later be corrected to say “a sort of joint military and civil strategy”, it illustrates that what might be felt to be progress from the British side by repeatedly referencing their success on agreeing on policy in the Middle East (and thus indirectly Africa), was not entirely reciprocal by the United States.

However, that these approaches were not entirely unfounded can be seen in a memorandum in which it is stated that Kennan had indicated in January that he thought it might be useful for both the British and the Americans to sit down together and work out “preliminary appreciations of the world situation”.⁵³ As Kennan was one of the leading experts on the Soviet situation in the United States at the time, his approval of talks would likely be seen as a sign of general willingness to work out an understanding within the British Administration.

Finally, in order to gain a more complete picture of the surroundings around the creation of the North Atlantic Pact, the question of Cyrenaica, which had previously been the heart of the earlier US discussions bears a small mention. Notably, on the 8th of March, three days prior to Bevin’s overture towards the US in ensuring their support for Norway, Montgomery would telegraph General Omar Bradley, the US Chief of Staff. Being likely also influenced by the pressures at the time, his letter discusses urgent military steps to be taken jointly in light of the current situation. Of particular note is a statement amongst others to be agreed upon immediately, which includes a clear declaration of intent:

“The time has come to stop political “monkeying about” with the future of Libya. We are going in. Mr. Bevin has agreed. And we want 100% backing from the United States.”⁵⁴

While his letter to Bradley created some complication for the Foreign Office in coordinating how to conduct their policy, it is likely that the approach fell in fertile ground. Thus, the continual approaches were made possible and likely encouraged by the success of the previous talks held about the security of the Middle East and Africa. When Bevin once again made his approach on the 11th of March in light of the recent events, stating the desire for creating a security system for the North Atlantic, Western Europe, and the Mediterranean, Marshall would agree immediately to the secret talks.⁵⁵ The US position prior to these talks would thus include a statement in the planning papers taken before the discussions that

“The US should concentrate its counter-offensive efforts against Soviet-directed world Communism so that our strength will not be wasted by dispersing it too widely, and first priority should be given to those countries of Europe and the Middle East which are immediately threatened by world Communism and whose loss of Freedom would most seriously threaten our national security.”⁵⁶

Montgomery’s desires in his letter seems to be reflected in this proposed policy.

⁵¹ FO 800/460 - Record of Conversation with US Ambassador, Washington, 26. Feb. 1948.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ FO 800/460 EUR/48/11 - Western Union and the United States

⁵⁴ FO 800/452 DEF/48/11 - Montgomery to Bradley, 8. Mar. 1948

⁵⁵ FRUS Foreign Relations, Volume III, 1948. Marshall to Inverchapel, 12. Mar. 1948

⁵⁶ FRUS 1948, Volume III, 840.00/3-1948 - Memorandum by Mr. George H. Butler of the Policy Planning Staff

3.2 The Pentagon Talks: 22. March - 1. April 1948

What has become known as the Pentagon Talks took place in Washington between the 22th of March and the 1st of April, 1948, between British, Canadian, and United States officials. At the initial outset of the talks, the expectations were set quite clearly from the get go - the British desired a firm commitment from the US to "aid militarily in the event of any aggression in Europe."⁵⁷ The Canadian position was more muted, aiming for a smaller business union, rather than one that would be world-wide and include all British dominions.⁵⁸ Douglas, the US Ambassador, immediately responds that he feels that US full support should be assumed in the case of a conflict in Europe. Given the state of difficulty in getting the US to act, it seems prudent to understand this to be the case for the purpose of the discussion, rather than a commitment being given straightway. In his outline there were three different pacts that they feel would be appropriate for discussion. One would include an extension of the Brussels treaty, one would simply be a worldwide pact, and one would include an Atlantic defensive pact with the potential inclusion of other regional pacts, such as for the Mediterranean.

The first two were relatively quickly ruled out. While Hickerson would argue for a worldwide pact in order to avoid any awkwardness in who to include in regional treaties, it was agreed that it would take too long to implement.⁵⁹ Another possible reason for its rejection was that such a treaty could run the risk of being entirely superfluous with the pre-existing United Nations Charter, and could undermine the perceived authority and legitimacy of the organisation by a virtual admission that it did not go far enough.

Similarly, both Canada and the US were in general not in favour of acceding to the Brussels treaty, for the reason that it would unnecessarily elongate its existing core which were in close geographical proximity, and if this was to be the basis for a treaty, it would require substantial revision. Furthermore, such an accession could potentially be seen in a colonial subtext within Canada and the US, in light of how the original Brussels draft by the British Foreign Office states that the signatories will "make every effort to associate the overseas territories for whose foreign relations they are respectively responsible in the attainment of these aims".⁶⁰ Thus, the alternative remaining was an Atlantic pact. Hickerson himself had been in favour of a pact that would cover the North Atlantic as well as countries in the Mediterranean, and as such would have had some difficulty accepting the limitations of such a proposal.⁶¹ While it would offer some challenges on deciding who it could justifiably include, Gladwyn Jebb, the British delegate, suggested that a pact for the Middle East area could be established later, thus covering up an area that could represent a lapse of security, but warning of the difficulty in deciding on where to draw the line.⁶² This is also notable in that it would bring up the question of where the treaty boundaries should go, and whether it would thus feasibly cover Cyrenaica. By the third meeting of the delegates, it was generally accepted that a restriction to the North Atlantic would be ideal, as it would prevent other areas from making the arrangement unwieldy, as the main purpose of the treaty would be as an

⁵⁷ FRUS 1948, Volume III, 840.00/3-2248 - Minutes of the First Meeting of the United States-United-Kingdom-Canada Security Conversations

⁵⁸ Baylis 1993: 93

⁵⁹ FRUS 1948, Volume III, 840.00/3-2348 - Minutes of the Second Meeting of the United States-United-Kingdom-Canada Security Conversations

⁶⁰ Kent 1993: 168

⁶¹ Folly 1988: 70

⁶² *ibid.*

effective attempt at damming up against the Communist threat in areas that were currently at risk.⁶³ One of the biggest challenges of the meeting was thus to decide where precisely these limitations should go. By the fifth meeting, an inconclusive discussion of geographic limits that the pact might operate under illustrates this challenge, where it was questioned whether the treaty should merely cover the "metropolitan territories" of the parties.⁶⁴ However, the indecisiveness in delineating the area to be covered was ultimately agreed to be revisited on a later basis, as the general objective of the talks had been met - the conversations were fruitful, and a course of action was agreed upon.⁶⁵

In general, the biggest struggle of the Pentagon Talks was coming to an agreement on how strong the pledges of mutual defence should be, as well as the area that was to be covered by the agreement. Jebb would later make note of a last minute revision that took place between the two final meetings, which somewhat differed from what they figured that the treaty would cover. Bevin was informed that

"Originally we thought we had got the Americans to agree to
"A provision that an armed attack by any State against any Party to the Pact is an attack against all the Parties; and that in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter each Party undertakes to give immediately to any other Party which is attacked by any State all the military, economic and other aid and assistance in its power".

This has been changed to
"A provision that each Party shall regard any motion in the area covered by the Agreement which it considers an armed attack against any other Party as an armed attack against itself, and that each Party accordingly undertakes to assist in meeting the attack in the exercise of the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the charter".⁶⁶

It is of particular interest that the first draft does not have any geographical limitations whatsoever. As the chief British concern was to ensure US participation in some shape or form, it is not particularly strange that at these early stages, they would be reluctant to rock the metaphorical boat in any way, but the original statement is surprisingly open-minded, even for a draft treaty. As such, it is not surprising that Bevin accepted that it would probably need to be considerably revised, and as such suffer material changes.⁶⁷ The changed US statement might in part also be related to the simple fact that the changed draft would more closely resemble the language of the Rio Treaty, which would be more palatable to the US Senate. Furthermore, the US representatives present, Hickerson & Lovett, acting Undersecretary of State, were already favourably minded towards closer cooperation with Western Europe, as opposed to George Kennan and Charles Bohlen, who were not part of the discussions. The United States did not present a unified front on how to approach the circumstances. Typically, the views would be divided into the Kennan group and the Hickerson group. Over the course of 1948, Kennan would favour avoiding an alliance, viewing it as ultimately more risky than the

⁶³ FRUS 1948, Volume III, 840.00/3-2448 - Minutes of the Third Meeting of the United States-United-Kingdom-Canada Security Conversations

⁶⁴ FRUS 1948, Volume III, 840.00/3-3148 - Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the United States-United-Kingdom-Canada Security Conversations

⁶⁵ FRUS 1948, Volume III, 840.00/4-148 - Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the United States-United-Kingdom-Canada Security Conversations

⁶⁶ FO 800/515, US/48/32, Annex B, Jebb to Bevin, 5. Apr 1948

⁶⁷ FO 800/515, US/48/32, Bevin to Attlee, 6. Apr 1948

alternative, and Marshall was receptive to Kennan's arguments. On the other hand, Hickerson was convinced that an Atlantic alliance was necessary, agreeing with the general British attitude. Lovett would tend to side with Hickerson.⁶⁸ Thus, as US interest cooled off rapidly following the conclusion of the talks, it can certainly be attributed to a difference in opinion between the different officials, with the two factions struggling to control what the outcome of these discussions should be.⁶⁹

While it might seem strange that the British would agree in principle to a potential treaty in which their populace could potentially not be covered, given how the proposal of mass emigration to their African colonies was still in play and heavily considered, it might very well be that due to how they would be at less risk thanks to their geographical placement, the immediate inclusion of that area could be postponed for a later date. As of 1948, the emigration scheme was not yet put in effect directly, but was one of the measures that could be taken in order to defend against weapons of mass destruction. Nonetheless, there are some indicators that provisions for the African colonies might indirectly be included in these negotiations. The strongest indication is Provision f. of the final draft, which had a clause for consultation in the case of the territorial integrity or political integrity of the parties being threatened in any part of the world, making it clear that areas outside of the formal boundaries would not be ignored.⁷⁰ As neither Canada or the United States had any overseas possessions that would presumably fall under this clause, its addition to the draft indicates that it was added to assuage British concerns in its colonial empire. This serves to illustrate an agreement amongst all parties that once a line is drawn, it might indicate to the enemy that repercussions will be limited presuming this line is not crossed. Any "hold line" that would become known to an enemy would present an area that could be considered as easy pickings. Thus, areas that were important for the security of the parties involved, such as the Middle East, could reasonably be expected to come in play by virtue of the assurity that if an attack against one of the parties should occur in an area not covered by the treaty, it would be part of a general and greater campaign, and thus the defensive aspects of the treaty would come into force. This also matches the general US desire to ensure that any promise of military assistance is phrased in such a way that does not presume weakness or inability to assist their allies.⁷¹

There is no firm conclusion reached with regards to Cyrenaica during the talks, and there is also little evidence of the topic being brought up save for in general connection to the importance of the Mediterranean. However, this might simply be because there was already a general agreement on what was to be done in the area. The United States and the United Kingdom were in effect already in agreement on what measures should be taken, and as the delimitations were set temporarily, its inclusion could potentially be provided for at a later date. While its omission is notable, it has certainly not been forgotten in British minds. Bevin makes it quite clear that he certainly thinks that these issues are related, given how he later addresses Attlee about the conclusion of the initial Pentagon Talks. In a telegram detailing how the Pentagon Talks have proceeded, he takes extra steps to fill in Attlee, stating that in order to have a complete background for why these talks are finding place, he would also "remind you of the secret discussion

⁶⁸ Petersen 1986: 203

⁶⁹ Folly 1988: 70

⁷⁰ FRUS 1948, Volume III, 840.00/4-148 - Final Draft, undated

⁷¹ FRUS 1948, Volume III, 840.00/3-1948 - Memorandum by Mr. George H. Butler of the Policy Planning Staff

which Wright and Hollis had in Washington last autumn about the Middle East.”⁷² However, beyond the mention of these talks, there is no inclusion of Africa in this telegram, other than a general mention of the possibility of a Mediterranean system being put in place as well.⁷³ In the mind of Bevin, he would envision a triple system to take place - what has become the Brussels treaty with US backing, an Atlantic security scheme with close US association, as well as a Mediterranean system that would particularly affect Italy. However, it also states that in the event of Italy joining the Atlantic security scheme, there would likely need to be constructed some defence system which would cover the Middle East and Greece, which would be far from practical politics at this time.⁷⁴ Thus, the Atlantic system is where their efforts should be focused. This is reflected in a telegram Bevin sends to the US Government on 9th of April, where he encouragingly states that the British government agrees that arrangements in the Atlantic for mutual defence would be the best guarantee for peace, and the conclusion of a treaty would be essential to give confidence and “put heart” into Western Europe.⁷⁵ “A real defence system worked out by the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and the Western European States would affect the whole approach of the world to the peace problem and be the first great step towards what could ultimately become a real world collective Security System, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations.”

As previously mentioned, the interest of the United States seemed to have declined after internal discussion, so in spite of British encouragement at proceeding the where the talks left off, further overtures made by Bevin are met with little enthusiasm. By April 14th the topic was purposefully avoided by the British embassy in Washington, specifically as to not get a negative response by any US official following Kennan and Bohlen offering their views that a treaty was not desirable.⁷⁶ The debate concludes in general that the inclusion of certain countries in the Mediterranean would be undesirable, due to a risk of spreading themselves too thin, and not long after the decision is also made that in an eventual treaty, it would be unwise to include Italy.

3.3 Alternative Measures

As the US desire for a treaty diminished, the proposal for emigration to the African colonies would once again gain weight in Bevin’s mind. A conversation on the 16th of April between Bevin and Douglas shows a different tactic in trying to influence the United States to make an active decision, by indicating that the present weakness of the United Kingdom would ultimately also be a problem for the United States in the long run. Bevin states that in the event of a war with the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom will fight - but would find it impossible to hold out for two years, as the country is relatively much weaker than it was in 1940.⁷⁷ Simultaneously, Bevin would think of different ways of putting this plan into action. On the 22nd of April 1948, he inquires as to whether it is

⁷² FO 800/452 - 6. Apr. 1948, “Secret talks about creation of Atlantic Defence system & possibly a mediterranean system”

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.20/4-948, Paraphrase of a Telegram From the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Bevin) of April 9th Regarding Recent Talks on North Atlantic Security Arrangements.

⁷⁶ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.00/5-1948 Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Western European Affairs (Achilles) to the Director of the Office of European Affairs (Hickerson)

⁷⁷ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.00/4-1648 Douglas to Lovett, 16. Apr. 1948.

possible to arrange for retiring soldiers to do so in the overseas territories, thus providing opportunity for easier defence of the areas, as well as providing fresh minds to the areas in which they would settle.⁷⁸ His idea would be to start small, but ultimately enable a process whereby this might gain a substantial increase in the "right type of immigrant". However, save for a rapid response by New Zealand that they would be happy to make such arrangements, the Ministry of Defence takes its time in responding to Bevin's overtures - and does not make excuses for its strained situation when it finally responds on the 24th of June. As the soldiers in the National Service would have an initial training period that would consist of only 12 months, it would be rather disadvantageous to move them about more than strictly necessary for the duration of their training. In the case of the regular troops, they are either used as instructors for the National Service, and thus needs to stay close by, and furthermore cannot in general be stationed in colonial areas, as simply put, they are needed elsewhere for strategic reasons.⁷⁹ For that reason, it is highly unlikely that the time of their dismissal would happen while stationed in a colonial territory, and thus it would have little effect. Furthermore, if the army were to move its training facilities abroad in general, it would cause a vast increase of costs, which there simply is no room for in their already strained budget.

While the study of the emigration scheme would be ongoing, Bevin would repeatedly reach out to the United States, once more offering his opinion that the only satisfactory way of dealing with the present world position would be to adapt the program as it was discussed six weeks ago. Stressing that the US agreement to obligations is what might ultimately defeat communist maneuvers, he warned that if there is no action was taken, the opportunity might never come again.⁸⁰ If there is to be some worldwide system, it would only practically come into effect if the way would be prepared by a defence arrangement in the North Atlantic area. While the US responded by the 28th of May with a general statement that they are determined to exercise individual and collective defence in the event of an attack that should threaten its national security, the lack of specifics and lack of reference to the previous negotiations cause Bevin to remark in a conversation to Douglas that Europe has likely lost confidence in the United States.⁸¹ While Douglas receives a response in which he informs Bevin that the recently passed Vanderberg resolution in the US Senate should make negotiations easier on a future basis, and should provide a foundation for resuming talks, he nevertheless indicates that any treaty on the matter would likely have to wait until the US elections would conclude. Furthermore, due to the general lack of US decisiveness at the time, Cyrenaica was once more brought into question by the United Kingdom on June 14th, in an effort to agree on policy. As there had been no direct dialogue about the region since the Pentagon Talks of 1947, the Foreign Office desired to ensure that they still had a strategy in common with both regards to the United Nations, as well as for establishing mutual security objectives. Thus, it was called for to have a "further full and frank exchange of views" over the topic.⁸² The approach might not be too surprising, given that similar language had seemingly produced a willingness to coordinate efforts previously. However, in this case, it would prove unnecessary.

⁷⁸ FO 800/444, COM/48/8, 22. Apr. 1948

⁷⁹ FO 800/444, COM/48/14, 24. Jun. 1948

⁸⁰ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.20/5-1148

⁸¹ FO 800/460, Bevin to Douglas, 5. Jun. 1948

⁸² Bills 1995: 140

A meeting taking place in Washington on the 11th of June illustrates that the administration has come to the conclusion that British friendship and cooperation is a vital part of US security.

“British friendship and cooperation is not only desirable in the United Nations and in dealing with the Soviets; it is necessary for American defense. The United Kingdom, the Dominions, Colonies and Dependencies, form a world-wide network of strategically located territories of great military value, which have served as defensive outposts and as bridgeheads for operations. Subject to our general policy of favoring eventual self-determination of peoples, it is our objective that the integrity of this area be maintained; that the United Kingdom retain control of her outlying possessions; that any retrenchment which she may have to make shall take place in an orderly manner; and that territory over which she may relinquish control shall not fall into less friendly hands.”⁸³

Of interest is how the colonial policy delicately states that the network is essentially of such great value that the United States has a noted interest in the United Kingdom maintaining her colonial possessions. However, it is stated that when it comes to defensive matters, these are subject to be informal, thus still indicating a lack of willingness to publically enter into any commitments. Furthermore, the policy statement indicates that the US opinion is still that Cyrenaica should be retained as a British base, and that the eastern Mediterranean might well become a focal point in a future conflict. As such, Cyrenaica and other areas of North Africa would be of increasing importance, in order to compensate for the withdrawal of British troops from other areas in the region.⁸⁴

Thus, when the British Ambassador once more would bring up the subject of ensuing talks concerning a followup to the Pentagon Talks, it is stated that while the conversations are intended to be entirely exploratory, the US officials would think that invitations to conversations related to the previous meeting could take place.⁸⁵ When pressed for when, however, the question was evaded. It is likely the case that the US declaration on the 23th of June that they were ready to begin talks, was mainly triggered because of the current events in Berlin, with Soviet pressures escalating on the city.⁸⁶ The relatively rapid turnabout is a firm indication that the Kennan-Bohlen line, which was opposed to a treaty, would finally decline in influence within the US administration.

3.4 Washington Exploratory Talks: 6. July 1948 - 10. Sept 1948

The Washington Talks were in effect the forge of which the principles of NATO was agreed upon. While the Pentagon Talks had indicated an informal agreement, and the former discussions of 1947 illustrated a willingness to implement US and UK cooperation on mutual defence propositions, it was nonetheless not a guarantee that any of these overtures would lead to any formal treaty, especially in light of how US support was explicitly desired to be informal on their part. Without the consistent British pressure to make the commitments formal, the talks would very likely not have taken place when they did. However, it is also quite clear that the colonial aspect was mostly not a topic that would be discussed during this initial phase of the talks.

⁸³ FRUS 1948, Vol III, Department of State Policy Statement, 11. Jun. 1948, p. 1091

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.00/6-1448, 14. Jun 1948

⁸⁶ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.00/6-2348, 23. Jun 1948

The parties to the treaty took markedly different approaches and had different aims at what they wanted to accomplish through the alliance. From a British perspective, the most important thing was to gain the reassurance of US cooperation and participation as a signatory in a treaty, and was willing to go to great lengths in order to make sure that this would be the case. This would be done through different means. For one, the British did in general tend to play a line of trying to smooth out differences in the negotiations, rather than setting forth sharp demands. In order to further leverage their position, they would in some cases play the US against the other signatories, presenting it as a case of "take it or leave it", essentially giving the appearance of having been summoned by the US invitations like the rest of Europe, while not informing them about the real role they had in previously requesting that these talks would happen in the first place.⁸⁷ Their knowledge of US bureaucracy and the different factions that were in play within the divided US administration further served to give them ways of influencing the other parties through indirect means.

By contrast, the French position was one of even more uncertainty. Having not participated in the initial Pentagon Talks, they had little way of knowing precisely what was previously agreed upon, and feeling far more exposed to threats from the mainland, their way of negotiating would thus be heavily influenced by their exposed position. From their perspective, they had no guarantee of support, and so the case would frequently be made that if France would not be supported, it would face an imminent collapse in the case of war, which would then in turn be a problem for all the other parties of the treaty. The attitude of "French security first" is also seen in how they would initially be a strong advocate for the lack of inclusion of other signatories than the original Brussels members, as any dispersal of military effort outside of France would be perceived as potentially weakening the aid that would be sent their way. Later, when the Scandinavian countries, as well as the Atlantic nations of Portugal, Ireland, and Iceland were brought up as nations that would be ideal to include in the treaty for strategic purposes, the French national interests would once again bloom, and advocated for the necessary inclusion of Italy, as from their perspective, it would then be a security asset to their southern flank, rather than a frontier.

The United States would in general remind the parties that the discussions were there in part to accommodate European needs, and as such, the viability of putting up demands were in effect a non-factor.⁸⁸ While the United States had a mutual interest in retaining the Western hemisphere as a trading partner as well as for security reasons, as they were by far the party with the highest military presence, they made it clear to the other parties that it would be in their own interest that the United States were kept on board. From the very outset of the Washington Talks, Lovett emphasised that the United States did not intend to offer a guarantee for worldwide peace, and that these discussions are very much taking place due to Bevin's approach and belief that there must be some sort of integration of Western Europe, backed by the United States.⁸⁹ Rather, the main topic of the discussions would be centered around how the feeling of insecurity in Western Europe can be ended. While US military guarantees would be seen as a great deterrent, it would provide a fragile basis for negotiations, as a close US military presence would not necessarily translate into a feeling of security - evidenced by there still being American soldiers stationed on mainland Europe in Germany. Rather than taking the direct military approach, Sir Oliver Franks, the British Ambassador to the United States,

⁸⁷ Folly 1988: 76

⁸⁸ Petersen 1986: 192

⁸⁹ FRUS 1948, vol. III, 840.20/7-648. Minutes of the First Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, July 6th, 1948.

suggested that the best way to approach these talks would be as countries united with the same principles, with a belief in freedom of choice, where the state exists to support the individual. In these matters, Western Europe and North America has a similar heritage and unity of thinking. This argument strikes a chord of resonance within the US delegation, which agrees that the Western attachment to the worth of the individual would be the best cement for the discussions.⁹⁰ The Canadian view, which is generally held, agrees thus that the pact should ultimately not be specifically aimed at Soviet intentions, as it might cause the pact to disintegrate in the case of the danger being removed.⁹¹

The colonial aspect would mostly not be a concern directly brought up during the initial Washington Talks. The British did not want to draw undue attention to any aspect that might cause a major conflict amongst the potential signatories. As such, most conversations were focused on other matters and mollifying the other members of the Brussels treaty - France and the Benelux countries had not been part of the previous discussions, and as such were surprised to find that the talks would center on a North Atlantic pact, rather than assurances against Germany or any other continental threat.⁹² Any attempt of extending defensive commitments beyond Europe and America would thus likely be met with resistance by all other signatories, as Canada was in general opposed to extending the discussions beyond the scope of the Brussels Treaty, and US support would rather be given informally. Thus, the British would also offer their firm opposition to any inclusion of Italy in the proceedings in spite of the wishes of Hickerson, as despite its strategic potential, it was viewed as an outpost that would ultimately contribute little to the treaty, and would prove hard to defend. The British position on this illustrates an interesting dichotomy in their outlook - the Middle East was core to the defence of the Empire, yet Italy was deemed indefensible. The reasoning seems based off of the fact that they believed that sea communications could be retained provided that they had control of the southern part of the Mediterranean, thus reinforcements would not be an issue. Thus, by being assured of the friendship, or at least the neutrality of Spain and Portugal, the Mediterranean should pose little issue, and would not be necessary as a topic for discussion at this stage.⁹³ However, the colonial question would eventually start to simmer when potential signatories were discussed. Portugal was quickly brought up as a country who would be greatly desirable to have as a signatory to the treaty, but that might want assurances for its colonies as a condition for signing the treaty.⁹⁴ While no firm decision is made, the debate would thus start to center around whether there should be possibilities of different gradations of membership. Kennan inquired already during the fourth meeting whether there were provisions in place for different gradations of membership within the Brussels treaty, indicating that some countries could be expected to play a lesser role in the potential pact to be.⁹⁵ This would continue to get brought up during the fifth meeting, in which the boundaries of the treaty would be discussed in some detail. Lovett suggested that perhaps a part of the solution may lie in different degrees of membership within the North Atlantic Pact, depending on what the countries might be able (or unable) to offer. Van Kleffens, the Dutch delegate,

⁹⁰ FRUS 1948, vol. III, 840.20/7-748. Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 7. Jul 1948.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² Folly 1988: 72

⁹³ FO 800/452 DEF/48/5, 30. Jan. 1948

⁹⁴ FRUS 1948, vol. III, 840.20/7-2648. Memorandum of the Sixth Meeting of the Working Group Participating in the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 26. Jul 1948

⁹⁵ FRUS 1948, vol. III, 840.20/7-748. Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 7. Jul 1948.

agrees with this idea, positing that there might be members and associate members - including areas in the Mediterranean.⁹⁶

This question of the importance of different levels of membership, is one that might be up for debate. Kennan's proposal would involve three different tiers of membership, described somewhat whimsically by Lovett as "resident members, non-resident members, and summer privileges"⁹⁷ This system envisaged that the nucleus of the original allies would have their full obligations, that there would be a second group, who would benefit from the protection of the full members in return for cooperation and a pledge to defend themselves, and finally, a grouping of areas that would be strategically important, but could not be expected to contribute much in return. This third category could reasonably be expected to allow some measure of protection from the colonial states of Europe.⁹⁸ While there was voices opposed to this line of thinking, with Pearson, the Canadian delegate asking rhetorically that "why would anyone take on the commitments when they can get all the the benefits", the concept of different levels of membership would prove resilient, remaining in play until late December as a factor in the negotiations.⁹⁹ Simultaneously, the exact boundaries for the treaty was universally agreed to be determined in the event that the proposed drafts were ratified by their representative governments. Thus, by the 9th of September, the draft called for the different Governments to consider the following categories of membership:

- "1) Those whose membership of a North Atlantic Pact would involve maximum commitments for reciprocal assistance (with due regard for the resources of each party), and participation in the development of coordinated military potential
- 2) Those whose membership in the Pact would only involve limited commitments as, for example, to provide facilities for the common defense in return for commitments by the full members to defend their territories; and
- 3) other nations, not members of the Pact, a threat to whose political or territorial integrity would require action by the full members. The division of nations between these categories need not be rigidly fixed but should permit flexibility."¹⁰⁰

From a British perspective, this proposed outline would enable them to have some measures of security aimed towards their colonial possessions without them necessarily being mentioned in the pact itself, which would fit their general idea of having approaches tailored to fit the specific situation at hand, rather than sweeping measures. The different categories would also allow them some finesse in how to approach the question of Italy later.

Finally, Article 5, frequently considered the "heart" of the treaty itself, was one of the core disagreements during these discussions and a point of contention as to what it should cover. The US representatives and the European representatives had substantial disagreements on how strongly the pledge for mutual defence should be phrased. The initial US suggestion went as follows:

⁹⁶ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.20/7-948. Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 9. Jul 1948,

⁹⁷ Henrikson 1980: 20

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.20/12-2248. Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 22. Dec. 1948

¹⁰⁰ FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.20/9-948. Memorandum by the Participants in the Washington Security Talks, July 6 to September 9, Submitted to their Respective Governments for Study and Comment. Washington, 9. Sep. 1948.

"An armed attack by any State against a Party shall be considered as an attack against all the Parties and, consequently, each Party undertakes to assist in meeting the attack in the exercise of the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by article 51 of the Charter."

The initial US suggestion contains some language that is reminiscent of the discussions previously held at the Pentagon Talks, yet insists on retaining the Rio treaty phrasing including references to "meeting the attack". Their reasoning was simple: The closer the text would adhere to the Rio treaty that had already been passed in the Senate, it would greatly increase the likelihood that it would not meet significant resistance upon review. The European representatives would rather have it be closer to the Brussels Treaty, and thus had the following suggestion:

"If any Party should be the object of an armed attack in the area covered by the Treaty, the other parties will, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter, afford the Party so attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power."

Notably, the language is significantly stronger in what it would commit the signatories to do. The first only calls for "meeting" the attack, the second for the countries to give "all...the aid in their power". The compromise that was suggested at the time, while containing some of the stronger verbiage from the Brussels treaty, would contain assurances to the US that the authority of Congress to declare war was maintained, while also including reference to individual determination of whether an armed attack actually took place.

"Provision that each Party should agree that any act which, in its opinion, constituted an armed attack against any other Party in the area covered by the treaty be considered an attack against itself, and should consequently, in accordance with its constitutional processes, assist in repelling the attack by all military, economic and other means in its power in the exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter."¹⁰¹

The colonial aspect is probably most visible in the provision for consultation that is in place, as the clause specifically mentions the area outside of where the defence clause would potentially be triggered. Thus, there are contingencies in place in the event of a threat to the integrity of the territory or sovereignty or political independence of a party, or in the event of an armed attack against a Party outside the area delineated in article 7, and if the security of any party should be affected by an armed attack against a nation not a party to the treaty, or in the event of any other fact or situation which might constitute a threat to the peace.

Following the temporary conclusion of the Washington Talks on September 10th, the British would in general find the outcome of the talks rather satisfactory.¹⁰² While the meeting explicitly would state that the drafts sent to the respective governments was intended to be non-committal, the satisfaction expressed by the multiple members in their accomplishment seemed to reverberate through the otherwise neutrally laden message. These talks would, following the conclusion of the US elections, resume after three months in December 1948.

¹⁰¹ Annex to memorandum by participants in the Washington Security Talks, "Washington Exploratory Conversations on Security", 9. Sep 1948, FRUS 1948, Vol III, 237-48

¹⁰² FO 800/483, Atlantic Pact, Flag D, 20. Nov. 1948

3.5 Ripples in Africa

Simultaneously as the negotiations would be ongoing in Washington, the British Defence Committee would increasingly turn to the question of how they could retain the control of Cyrenaica. In light of the tense situation on mainland Europe, the Defence Committee feared that war might break out in a matter of weeks.¹⁰³ This once again made the desert territory vital in the minds of the planners, as the defence of the region would be contingent on having a proper barracks with amenities in place, so as to support any troops stationed in the area. Bevin states that he has repeatedly made overtures to the French and the US, and are certain that they agree in principle, however due to the impasse in the United Nations, there is still not enough support for a proposed British trusteeship. That the colonial empire is losing some of its expected value is also clear in how the British experience their frustration that they would increasingly have to turn towards the United States for purchasing raw materials for rearming themselves - going contrary to what Montgomery's report would have suggested would be the case.¹⁰⁴ This frustration is probably what leads to the colonial development being used as leverage towards one of the prospective signatories, Portugal.

As both the US and the British had great interest in the export of strategically important minerals from the African continent, the development of a proper port to efficiently export them would be vital.¹⁰⁵ Bevin would thus approach the Portuguese ambassador on October 23., with the clear intent of emphasising that both the US and the UK would benefit from an expanded port in Beira, one of the few natural harbours along the African coast. As he brings up the subject and discusses how they had previously agreed to closely co-operate on building up this critical infrastructure, he illustrates how it really would be in Portugal's best interest to do so:

"As he probably knew, the question of an Atlantic Pact had been under discussion in Washington and it was likely to be decided that Portugal should be invited to adhere to it. He also knew that the international situation had made it necessary for us and the United States to start rearming. For this purpose we had great need of strategic raw materials. Moreover, in connexion with the European Recovery Programme we had an obligation to supply the United States with raw materials necessary for American rearmament. And the United States were pressing us to fulfil this obligation. In Rhodesia there were many raw materials, such as copper, chrome, mica and coal, which were of the greatest importance ..."¹⁰⁶

The hint is implicit - Portugal might have a lower chance of being invited to the treaty discussions should they not contribute to the rearmament of its bigger members. It is in perhaps this light of disappointment that the colonial situation should be examined from this point onward, as they are increasingly used as a means of pressure in personal diplomacy outside of the Washington Proceedings. This is one likely reason for when Portugal later would contact the United States in January 1949 with regards to what membership in the Atlantic Pact might entail, they are somewhat uncertain what membership in the pact would entail for their overseas possessions, to the point where they might be reassured to hear that "the proposed treaty would not be applicable to the colonial possessions of any of the parties except insofar a provision would be made for consultation in the event of a threat to such possessions."¹⁰⁷ Other parts of Africa would

¹⁰³ CAB 131/5 35942-6, 30 Jul. 1948

¹⁰⁴ CAB 131/5 35942-7, 6. Aug. 1948

¹⁰⁵ FO 800/515, 29. Sep. 1948

¹⁰⁶ FO 800/435, Bevin to Portuguese Ambassador, 23. Oct. 1948

¹⁰⁷ FRUS 1949, Vol IV, 840.20/3-949: Portuguese Ambassador to Secretary of State, Lisbon, 9. Mar. 1949.

also take note of the ongoing security conversations. In September 1948, the British High Commissioner reported that the South African government watched the negotiations with great interest, as they were supportive of efforts that would halt the spread of Communism.¹⁰⁸ While by no means a colonial possession, and far geographically removed from the other members of the treaty, it is interesting to see the appeal of the treaty spreading relatively far. The overtures were ignored by British officials, however, as any relations built up with the South African regime would likely send signals to other colonies that were undesirable.

While the colonies saw little mention in the Washington Talks, they would indirectly affect the proceedings as membership in the pact would be used as leverage for the United Kingdom to get what they wanted. Bevin's dream of a united Europe-Africa was still therefore enabled somewhat by the unity the prospective pact did produce. In a talk given to the House of Commons, he envisions an association of the nations of Western Europe with their colonies running through "the middle of the planet", with a great potential for wealth.¹⁰⁹ The relief of the presumptive successful negotiations might be part of the reason why.

3.6 Conclusions

There are many events that lead to the creation of NATO, and putting the onus squarely on a single triggering event would likely be an overly simplistic approach by looking for a "cause and effect". However, it is clear that without the British concern for the Middle East and Africa expressed in the events leading up to the Pentagon Talks of 1947, the British would have a harder time approaching the United States for any sort of mutual security conversations. The successful attempt at reaching mutual policy was what prepared the way for further measures, and without them the British would likely not be as persistent as they were, seeing as the attempt emboldened their approach to the United States. That the Pentagon Talks of 1947 left a lasting impression on US policy makers is also indicated by Hickerson preparing for the Mediterranean over Scandinavia when considering how to approach US defence, while in general being a firm proponent of the inclusion of the Mediterranean in any negotiation with an Atlantic Pact. Thus, the question of colonial defence did arguably contribute in large part to the foundation of the NATO treaty, the Pentagon Talks of 1948, by establishing precedent for why they should happen.

The colonial question might have been indirectly involved as of the conclusion of those talks, seeing as the draft Jebb reported indicated no geographic limitation on the defensive clause. However, even when this proved to be revised by the conclusion of the Pentagon Talks, the suggested draft did go to length to cover a consultative clause for any attack outside of the boundaries of such an agreement - which at the time, would only cover British interests explicitly. Thus, some agreement was already in place for overseas possessions in the original treaty, rather than being slotted in at a later stage in an attempt to mollify any future signatories. The scheme for emigration seems to have risen in consideration in tact with the United States becoming gradually more muted in their desire to continue any Atlantic negotiations, even if it ultimately would be put on

¹⁰⁸ Devereux 1989: 334

¹⁰⁹ Hansard House of Commons debates 15. Sep. 1948

<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1948/sep/15/debate-on-the-address>

the metaphorical backburner awaiting the results of the study, due to Bevin's proposal of military emigration not being compatible with British strategic concerns.

The Washington Talks of the summer 1948 would ultimately feature little colonial mention save for the question of different levels of membership, in which they could plausibly feature, as well as the continual existence of the article providing for consultation. However, these talks are providing international pressure that Britain is able to utilize for strengthening its own colonial position, as indicated by Bevin's willingness to finesse the ongoing Washington Talks in a conversation with the Portuguese ambassador to the United Kingdom. The treaty-in-progress is thus proving useful as an instrument for Britain in maneuvering one of the would-be essential signatories, providing for closer colonial integration and development.

4. Final Negotiations

4.1 Washington Exploratory Talks: 10. December 1948 - 15. March 1949

Following the end of the US elections in November, the US administration quickly proved to be more amenable towards reaching a rapid agreement on how to conclude the treaty discussions, seeing as the Senate was generally in favour of such a treaty, as well as the US populace. As decided between the different parties prior, the European parties had already met, and agreed on a draft that suited their preferences as of late November.¹¹⁰ The representatives would thus meet once again on the 10th of December. Following a small procedural debate as to how to proceed, it was established that the best way to achieve a unified approach would be through discussing the different relevant points, rather than the European powers simply presenting the draft they had agreed upon, as that would likely not lead to a feeling of ownership towards the treaty.¹¹¹ As it finally seemed likely that the United States would be willing to commit themselves to an agreement, the British representatives had more pointed priorities than simply achieving a signature. Their main priorities during these negotiations was to obtain a satisfactory operative clause to cover an armed attack, to successfully delimitate the area the clause would cover, as well as trying to secure appropriate consultative articles on different contingencies.¹¹² The proposed draft they brought with them would adequately address British desires on most points, however, it was not expected to last, as they would expect that the current version of Article 5 would be too strong for American tastes, seeing that it once again would diverge significantly from the text of the Rio treaty.

“The High Contracting Parties agree that any act which constitutes an armed attack against any of them shall be considered an attack against them all; consequently each one of them undertakes in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, to afford all the military and other aid and assistance in its power to the High Contracting Party so attacked.”¹¹³

Unlike previous drafts, this proposed treaty furthermore included mention of an actual delimitation. While Jebb noted that the area that was proposed needs to be scrutinized to ensure that it fits their aims, he nonetheless states that they could not find anything more appropriate for the time being. The draft includes mention of any attack directed against the “territory, the population or the armed forces of any of the High Contracting Parties in America, Europe, Africa and the areas between them, North of Latitude 30° North” Thus, the treaty would in essence cover an attack on their forces in Greece and North Africa, seeing as the treaty holds provision for any attack on troops positioned immediately following it being signed.¹¹⁴ In this way, even though the treaty might not explicitly mention the region of Cyrenaica which would be of chief concern to the British, it would indirectly contain provisions for ensuring its safety - which somewhat is to be expected, given that its fate was still not decided by the United Nations.

¹¹⁰FO 800/483, Atlantic Pact, 22. Nov. 1948

¹¹¹FRUS 1948, Vol III, 840.20/12-1048, Memorandum of the Eight Meeting of the Working Group Participating in the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 10. Dec. 1948

¹¹²FO 800/483, Atlantic Pact, Flag D, 20. Nov. 1948

¹¹³FO 800/483, Atlantic Pact, Flag B, 20. Nov. 1948

¹¹⁴FO 800/483, Atlantic Pact, Flag D, 20. Nov. 1948

However, there are signs that the United States representatives would not be so willing to accept the sudden inclusion of African territory. The US Ambassador in Belgium reports on a conversation held in November with the Belgian Foreign Minister, in which the question is raised as to whether it is wise to draw the line for the Atlantic Pact at the thirtieth parallel, as it would be rather far north of Congo.¹¹⁵ Thus informed, even though the United States most certainly has an interest in the security of Congo due to its Uranium deposits, they respond to the Belgian embassy the day after the negotiations start that the United States is opposed to the inclusion of any African territory.¹¹⁶

This seems to be generally accepted, save for by the French. Just in time as Franks expresses his desire to get something to their governments before Christmas, Bonnet states that it would be extremely difficult not to include Algeria, as it is part of its metropolitan territory. It is somewhat indicative that the British are for once attempting to cover their own interests as Franks states that his government had been thinking of the inclusion of all of Africa north of latitude 30° north, but in a surprising turn, he expresses that the British government sympathized with the French position; thus, while the British government "would probably not wish to continue to press for the inclusion of all of Africa north of 30, it would want the part west of Libya".¹¹⁷ This is not received all that well by the other participants, and Lovett states with frustration that there has also been approaches made by South Africa to them, and as such, getting into Africa would be to open a limitless field.¹¹⁸ As of the 24th of December, the parties seem to be mostly agreed, with some exceptions - in particular, the definition of where the mutual defence clause of the treaty should apply.

The alternatives were as follows:

"Article 5, Paragraph 2 (Definition of Area)

a) The provisions of the foregoing paragraph shall be applicable in the event of any armed attack directed against the territory, the population or the armed forces of any of the Parties in:

ALTERNATIVE A

(a) Europe or North America; (b) the sea and air space of the North Atlantic are north of the Tropic of Cancer.

ALTERNATIVE B

(a) Europe or North America; Africa north of Latitude 30° North and West of Longitude 12° East; (b) the sea and air space of the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer; and (c) the sea and air space of the western Mediterranean, West of Longitude 12° East [or, if Italy comes in, Longitude 20° East]."¹¹⁹

It became clear that alternative (a) was acceptable to Canada, USA, and Belgium, whereas alternative (b) was acceptable to the French and the British. That the British would prefer alternative (b) is particularly interesting, as it would go far in making the inclusion of Italy more certain, even as they remained the staunchest opponent of Italy joining the alliance. It is also significant that Franks did go out of his way to specifically exclude one of the areas that would be of particular interest to his government while supporting Bonnet, especially seeing as the general sentiment of his government was, in

¹¹⁵ FRUS 1948, Vol. III, 840.20/11-2948 - Ambassador in Belgium (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, 29. Nov. 1948

¹¹⁶ FRUS 1948, Vol. III, 840.20/12-1148 - Secretary of State to Ambassador in Belgium. 11. Dec. 1948.

¹¹⁷ FRUS 1948, Vol. III, 840.20/12-2248 - Memorandum of the Tenth Meeting of the Working Group Participating in the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 22. Dec. 1948.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ FRUS 1948, Vol. III, 840.20/12-2448 - Report of the International Working group to the Ambassadors' Committee, Annex A, 24. Dec. 1948

fact, not that sympathetic to the French position. Bevin writes to Attlee that while they are prepared to support the French if absolutely necessary, they do not feel the inclusion of Algeria is particularly important.¹²⁰ This opinion is further reflected in a cabinet meeting held on the 3rd of January 1949, which strongly suggests that French North Africa should not be included, as despite the fact that it may be strategically important, it is not as important as excluding Italy. Moreover, the general British attitude was to avoid the inclusion of colonial areas, as by avoiding including North Africa, it would raise the question of British West Africa and Congo.¹²¹ It is likely that the reason for this decisive decision against the inclusion of any colonial territory was twofold. Firstly, that the United States and Canada would likely be most unwilling to participate in the pact on principle and on difficulty in getting the US Senate to agree, which would undermine the core tenant of the Atlantic Pact. Secondly, in the event that the Americans would agree, it would only happen after further lengthy negotiations, and seeing as the climate was favourable in the US at the time being for the treaty, the opportunity might be lost. Thus, when Bevin would meet with the French ambassador on the 5th of January 1949, he explicitly warned that if France pressed for the inclusion of Algeria, they might press for the inclusion of their territories such as parts of North Africa and West Africa, but more importantly, that they should look at the bigger picture, and think of what the pact itself might prevent.¹²² Thus, in a reversal of policy, the threat of Britain pressing for including parts of their colonial empire was used in an attempt to stop France from putting the entire pact at risk. This would, however, not prove to stop the French.

The issue of Algeria would continue to be a thorn in the side for the negotiations, and would be resisted by almost all the other participants on the grounds that it could draw the treaty into colonial conflicts. While the US were prepared to swallow Algeria already on the 22nd of January, they did not explicitly agree with the French demand until the 1st of March.¹²³ During this time, the draft also had to endure the consequences of the change of US delegates, as the Truman administration opted to operate with different officials. Thus, Dean Acheson took the place of Lovett, and almost immediately had to deal with explaining a strengthened Article 5 to the Senate, who found it much too encompassing for their liking, causing delays within the negotiations.¹²⁴ It seems clear that it was mostly the personal diplomacy of Franks who ultimately ensured that the paragraph was phrased in a palatable way with Acheson's assistance, and thus caused the United States President, Henry S. Truman to give the drafted articles his approval.¹²⁵ Algeria would cease to be a contentious topic once Acheson made it clear that the US Senate would also be prepared to accept its inclusion, also causing an end to the opposition of the other parties. Amusingly, while the French position might appear by other onlookers to have been immovable and inflexible, they likely perceived themselves as being restrained in their conditions - as the reason why Morocco and Tunisia were not included in the NATO treaty specifically, was due to French unwillingness to stretch too far, and use an international treaty as basis for foreign policy.¹²⁶ At this point, it does not take long until the negotiations are formally concluded, on the 15th of March 1949.

¹²⁰ FO 800/483, NA/48/5, Bevin to Attlee, 31. Dec. 1948

¹²¹ CAB 131/8 37185-1, 3. Jan. 1949

¹²² FO 800/483, NA/49/2, Bevin to Bidault

¹²³ Baylis 1993: 113

¹²⁴ FRUS 1949, vol. IV, 840.20/2-849 Memorandum of the Twelfth Meeting of the Working Group Participating in the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security- 8. Feb 1949

¹²⁵ Danchev 1991: 217

¹²⁶ Marcum 1957: 307

Franks had ultimately accomplished his main goal, which was to ensure that the operative defensive clause of the treaty would ensure mutual cooperation in the event of an armed attack. The Franks-Acheson version of the pledge reads

"The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe and North America shall be considered an armed attack against them all; and consequently that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith such action including the use of armed force, individually and in concert with the other parties, as it deems necessary to restore and assure the security of the North Atlantic area."¹²⁷

Accepted and ratified by the United States Senate, it had thus passed its main hurdle, and would be put into effect as of the signing of the treaty taking place on the 4th of April, 1949.

While the delimitating clause that was part of the finished treaty would not explicitly make reference to any parts of British Africa, the reference to the Tropic of Cancer provided potential coverage for the British troops stationed at Cyrenaica. As it also was explicitly made clear, the paragraph for consultation between the parties would cover "all threats to the peace, including attacks against the overseas territories of any of the parties to the Treaty".¹²⁸ Thus, Franks had succeeded in virtually all the aspects that mattered to the British.

Simultaneously, it is made clear already in December that the concept of different grades of membership would not be continued.¹²⁹ Thus, any sort of reference to areas that were strategically important to the treaty, yet would fall outside of its scope, would have to rely on the consultation article, rather than on specific agreements. In this matter, a potential opening for the treaty covering colonial conflicts was cut off.

4.2 Cyrenaica & African Emigration

Cyrenaica would continue to be a focal point for British interests, even after the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. As the United Nations continued to stonewall the British attempts to obtain a trusteeship of the region, even after a proposed settlement of other, more contentious regions, and thus giving up leverage, the British decided on a strategy of early independence, by purposefully releasing exchanged letters between the Amir and Attlee, in order to gain the opportunity to negotiate for a treaty for the establishment of a larger British base in the area.¹³⁰ However, Cyrenaica subsequently fell in prominence as the Middle East became less of a focal point for British strategy following 1950, with the North Atlantic Treaty being viewed as far more of a reliable asset. The "few square miles of sand" would ultimately prove to be much less important to the British following the Suez Crisis of 1956, where they arguably decisively lost their prominence in the region. In general, it can also be debated how successful the British were in their scheme to encourage immigration. While the study was supposed to be finished by June 1949, the

¹²⁷ Danchev 1991: 217

¹²⁸ FRUS 1948, Vol. III, 840.20/12-2448 - Report of the International Working group to the Ambassadors' Committee, Annex B, 24. Dec. 1948

¹²⁹ FRUS 1948 Vol III, 840.20/12-2248 Memorandum of the Tenth Meeting of the Working Group Participating in the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 22. Dec. 1948.

¹³⁰ FO 800/435 AFR/49/5, 27. Jul. 1949

author has been unable to find any trace of it in the materials available, and there has been no mention of the subject in the Defence Committee for the following year, nor complaint that the study was finished. Thus, the scheme can be speculated to have reached an early end, that the study was deemed unfruitful, or perhaps that the reality of the North Atlantic Treaty made such extraordinary measures much less desirable. That the British were in general unwilling to immigrate, seems clear by a debate held in the House of Lords as of March 1949, where it makes it clear that Europeans are not coming to the Gold Coast to immigrate, but stay only for the duration of their work.¹³¹ This is by itself an interesting observation, seeing as the Gold Coast itself was one of the colonies that were the most well off. If the scheme achieved its purpose, it seemingly must have happened without the notice of the British Defence Committee, and its Foreign Office.

4.3 Colonial Security

On the 6th of November 1948, Bevin expresses his worries to Attlee that he is seriously worried that that the Russians will soon make a major drive against their African position. He states that

“I feel sure you will agree with me that we cannot afford to let any such obstacles stand in the way of a firm and realistic policy in regard to overseas territories. If really serious trouble were to break out at any point, we have no further forces available to suppress it, and if such trouble were not to be put right at once, I am afraid that the Soviet Government might make a serious and perhaps dangerous miscalculation as to our real strength, with grave effects on our foreign policy.”

At the time, the ongoing problems in Malay might be to blame for Bevin’s frightened attitude. However, in spite of his stated aims of not letting any obstacles get in the way, and the lack of forces available to suppress any trouble, there is no indication that the biggest instrument that could potentially be utilized to enable colonial security was used - instructions for the British delegates to involve the colonies in the ongoing drafting process for the European proposition of the North Atlantic Pact. It may well be that the lack of such action might be based on an assessment by Bevin that such an attempt would be viewed in poor taste, similar to how the French overtures typically were. Another alternative would be that it might cause difficulty for the negotiations when brought up with the United States and Canada, or a third, that he was simply reluctant to invite foreign involvement in the colonial empire that he wanted to stay firmly under British control. Regardless, there are no indication of the topic being brought up when the negotiations resume in December 1948, in spite of the fact that Soviet pressures, while ostensibly not being the cause for the treaty, would certainly be a potential cause for the other signatories to act on Britains behalf and to its benefit. While the United States was notoriously unwilling to commit themselves to most treaties, it was nonetheless an established fact by the US administration that Great Britain was ultimately the country that mattered most to their policy, save for maybe the Soviet Union, in part due to the Empire.¹³² While it might never admit it publicly, ensuring that the colonial empire would

¹³¹ Hansard House of Lords, “The West African Colonies”, 17. Mar. 1949
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1949-03-17/debates/3013a2ac-a934-4383-b2d5-fc0e6a8f0ff8/TheWestAfricanColonies>

¹³² FRUS 1948, Vol III, Department of State Policy Statement, 11. Jun 1948, p. 1091-92

not fall into less friendly hands was one of the US stated objectives towards Britain, thus, Bevin's fears that there would be no assistance might be well founded, but in the case of an actual crisis, he would likely find himself with more friends than he would initially have anticipated.

However, whether the United Kingdom would accept such aid, is another matter. It seems clear that there was a stark difference in opinion between Bevin and Montgomery whether US aid, or any foreign aid for that matter would be acceptable in the first place, in spite of Bevin's desire for general European co-operation in Africa. As previously mentioned, Montgomery would argue in his report of 1947 that there was great potential for the colonies financing several divisions of soldiers, a suggestion that was greatly disputed by Creech-Jones, on the merits that the colonies simply were not that profitable, and as such could not be expected to contribute.¹³³ As the NATO treaty would not explicitly cover the colonies beyond the paragraph of consultation, they would ultimately continue to be financed either internally, or by the British Government. As of July 1949, it seems clear that it would be the former. During a Defence Committee meeting the colonial forces are discussed, as there seems to be disagreement on how they were to be financed. It is agreed that they cannot be reduced, as they are at present at a minimum strength, even though the reality might be that the colonial governments themselves might decide to reduce the forces, seeing as they are the ones who would foot the bill.¹³⁴ It can thus be debated whether NATO really did make a difference for the purpose of colonial defence. The argument fronted by NATO historians that the signature of the treaty allowed the colonial empire to sustain for longer doesn't really have that implication given that there is no influx of funds to be allocated to strengthen the colonial position. Rather, it indicates that in spite of worries and perceived threats, an attitude of strong reluctance to have any sort of US involvement in the colonial areas would prevail.

The discussions held with Dr. Malan following the signing of the North Atlantic treaty seem to indicate the reluctance as well. While Malan expresses that the South African government would have been happy if the Atlantic Pact agreement could in some way have been extended to cover Africa, and listing the important roles it could play in supplying food, raw materials, and other requirements, Bevin would brush off the attempt of inclusion.¹³⁵ However, his attitude does reveal that even though the treaty might not cover Africa explicitly, it would likely be involved regardless in a conflict in which Britain and the United States would be participants.

"I told Dr. Malan that the US and Canada were under no illusion as to the importance of Africa, but it was extremely difficult to get the United States Congress to make the Pact wider than it was. But of course the Administration there, just as here, were conscious that if unfortunately war did occur it was bound to be a world war, and everyone would be involved. The advantage of the Atlantic Pact was that it brought into effect the greatest productive unit in the world, and it led to a supply position which would have much wider repercussions than the military position. On the other hand, there was a traditional attitude regarding colonial territories, and as Africa was largely a colonial territory it would be almost impossible to get the United States Congress to enter into any further arrangements at this stage."

¹³³ FO 800/435, AFR/47/4, 19. Dec. 1947

¹³⁴ CAB 131/8 37483-2, 1. July 1949 & CAB 131/8 37483-3 27. July 1949

¹³⁵ FO 800/445, Malan to Bevin, 27 April 1949

As any other treaty would ultimately thus be somewhat superfluous, it may be for this reason that when Bevin would be asked in the House of Commons whether there were any other treaties under negotiation, that his answer was simply that there are no other discussions for regional pacts ongoing - and he probably didn't see the need.¹³⁶

By 1954, the attitude of Great Britain towards Africa is clear, as in a potential war in the Middle East, they would intend to rely heavily upon African troops in a Middle East war, and wanted West and East Africa to provide 9 and 12 battalions respectively - which while it might sound significant, is actually a drop from the two divisions that Montgomery estimated could be raised in 1947.¹³⁷ While the British would continue to keep Africa as a part of their strategy for times to come, it nonetheless serves to illustrate that the British priority on Africa was declining.

4.4 Conclusions

Following the reestablishment of the Washington Talks in December 1948, the colonial question would be put to the agenda more explicitly than before. The draft produced by the European parties made explicit reference to and provision for the defensive line to be drawn so that it would include North Africa, which while more ideal for British interests, would prove difficult for the United States to swallow. However, that the colonial question was nowhere as important to Britain as the signature of the Americans, is illustrated through how Britain would immediately cede any required mention of territory in Africa under their control - and the only indication that they might be unwilling to completely let go is seen in how they in a surprising manner support the French demands for their part of Northern Africa to be covered by the treaty. However, it is clear that while Bevin would attempt to utilize the threat of including parts of their colonial empire in the negotiations in an attempt to get the French to back down, they would ultimately be unwilling to do so out of fear for holding up the treaty, letting the opportunity go to waste. Thus, the French inclusion of Algeria illustrates an entirely different approach - to Britain, the language of the treaty was more important than what areas it would cover, specifically. The concept of multiple grades of membership was discontinued as of December 1948, thus in effect ensuring that the only parts of the treaty that would affect British colonial territory was the provisions for consultation, as well as any occupying troops in Cyrenaica. The question of emigration seems to have reached a standstill, and in any case, with the assurance of a military pact being reached, it is quite possible that the necessity of such measures was deemed to be too expensive and ineffective compared to the value of deterrence and prevention.

Africa would once again be brought up for consideration through the inquiries of South Africa as to how the negotiations were going, but from the British perspective, it would be impossible to have the treaty reach that far - as it would risk becoming too unwieldy to enforce. However, the British attitude reveals that the treaty need not cover Africa for

¹³⁶ Hansard, House of Commons, 21 of March, 1949

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1949-03-21/debates/2328cf27-cfe7-43b0-9c58-1921af553b22/RegionalPacts>

¹³⁷ FO 800/435, AFR/47/4, 19. Dec. 1947

it to be involved, seeing that any war that would involve the treaty members would be a worldwide war, in which Africa would undoubtedly be involved. As the treaty had been concluded without the involvement of the United States in the colonial empire, it seems like the British position was that it would rather struggle with maintaining its overseas possessions than invite foreign involvement. Finally, as to their ultimate role in the Empire, the British attitude was clear: The colonies were to be an asset, not a drain on the treasury, as indicated by their unwillingness to finance their internal troops even following the conclusion of the treaty as of the 4th of April 1949, thus somewhat countering the argument that NATO allowed for a longer lease on the colonial empire - the British didn't see the need to make any changes to their financing as a result.

5. Concluding Remarks & Reservations

What role did the British colonial possessions (and its occupied territories) play in the negotiations of the North Atlantic Treaty?

While it is clear that they would play a peripheral role, they nonetheless impacted the negotiations in subtle ways. From the outset of the Pentagon Talks of 1947, the colonial question would lurk in the background, providing context for why the British viewed the Middle East as of particular value as a shield for Africa - and the United States seem to have accepted this policy. Thus, the first sign of a united approach to foreign policy following the dissolution of the wartime alliance between the two powers was centered on an area with colonial subtext, in the name of fighting the spread of Communism. This is especially noteworthy given the context of the large-scale emigration policy that was being simultaneously contemplated by the British government at this time, ultimately preparing the way for the United States to cooperate in the defence of where future British citizens would dwell. Furthermore, the later Pentagon Talks of 1948 would likely not have been possible if not for the previously entered into US-UK agreement, as the British were frequently making mention of this successful cooperation in their overtures to convince the US government of the necessity of conversations to be held about a defensive pact.

While the colonial question in the actual negotiations themselves would mostly be limited to paragraphs of consultation, there are some indications that they were kept in mind of the negotiators of the treaty. The question of different grades of membership would open the door ajar for colonial provisions to be made, had the discussions continued down that path. The draft created by the European representatives as of November 1948 indicates a willingness to extend the area that the NATO treaty would cover into Africa without US agreement, and while the US would prove resilient, the treaty did eventually make provisions for parts of Northern Africa. The possibility exists therefore that the British could have pushed for the inclusion of their possessions in North and West Africa, should they dare to follow in the footsteps of their French diplomats. However, the British attitude seems to be mostly centered on making sure the treaty would be viable, that the language would leave little room for interpretation, and that there would be no doubt as to whether the United States would commit to it. The colonial question as connected to the Atlantic Pact would mostly be raised in tangential conversations, either in cases where it would be used to ensure Portuguese cooperation with British colonial interests, or in the attempt of getting France to back down with their demands of areas to be included. Thus, it would amount to little more than being an instrument for leverage and indirect threats.

Later historians write that the creation of NATO itself gave the British colonies an extended lease on life, indirectly allowing for redirecting troops and permitting Britain to have the manpower to protect its atlantic colonies. However, the armies standing in peacetime does not seem to be the chief reason for its continual retention. The British Empire was unwilling to station troops outside of where it perceived that they were needed, and in light of the increasing tensions in Berlin, it is hard to see why they would be assigned elsewhere. The colonies were expected to cover their own budgets, and even in the case of them having difficulties financing their internal garrisons, it was deemed to not be an issue to the Defence Committee, who promptly would suggest that there was no alternative to them financing themselves. Ultimately, the colonies that were supposed to be the lifeline of the British empire, would play a miniscule role in the treaty itself, as

the role it would play would be implied and thus unnecessary to put into writing. What has been deemed one of the greatest accomplishments of the British Foreign Office, simultaneously illustrates that the colonial empire's visionary champion for a more integrated United Kingdom and Europe-Africa, Ernest Bevin, would ultimately leave this vision out of his administration's crowning achievement out of necessity. Britain's gaze was fixed across the western Atlantic as of 1949, not the southern parts of it.

Finally, it should bear mention that the research has had some heavy limiters placed on them due to the ongoing pandemic. As a result, this thesis has had to limit itself on what material was publicly available and what was already scanned, in particular with regards to the National Archives. Multiple conversations, letters, and comments held by officials have thus been unavailable, and would have been of great assistance in further illuminating and bringing clarity to the research performed, and the conclusions reached might well be impacted by the availability of other material. In particular, the study about an effective African exodus scheme described previously has proved difficult to track with limited resources beyond what is already described. As a result, this thesis has admittedly been unable to reach a definitive conclusion on the matter, as most sources that would prove useful to determining the fate of the study and other plans made, have been locked away due to the ongoing pandemic, and are not available online. Thus, a further study could certainly be warranted, and would be greatly appreciated by the author, as it illustrates an unusual means of defending themselves in the case of preventive measures not being sufficient to ensure the safety of British citizens, and is an aspect of British history that does not appear to be covered to a great extent.

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Appendix: Relevance for the teaching profession

As this thesis is written as part of pedagogical studies and the teacher education at NTNU, it is required that the relevance of the study should also translate into a teaching context. From my perspective, I find that this work has helped me to develop as a teacher and contributed to my competence in the following three ways.

First, this thesis deals with the negotiations of a monumental historical event, which has shaped the western world as we know it today. As it emphasises the beginnings of the North Atlantic Treaty, the thesis serves to illustrate that previously established narratives may be unbalanced, and that through further inspection, there are surprising amounts of knowledge to be gained of events that are hardly considered to be part of a typical history book used in a public schooling system. While history is said to be written by the victors, this thesis also demonstrates that those who felt like they were continually struggling or even fighting a losing battle will leave their traces and writings too, such as the British in their struggle to obtain a trusteeship over Cyrenaica, or their repeated attempts at establishing negotiations with the United States.

Second, by virtue of digging through what felt like excessive amounts of archival material, it demonstrates the necessity of learning to work with historical sources in order to see what they, and the context they were created in, can tell you. The dive into the source material that has been available has been mesmerising in its complexity and abundance, and all the more frustrating to sift through in search for evidence of your theory. However, once I found that I understood the context many of the sources were written in, it became fascinating to see how the writers were affected by their times.

Third, and last this thesis has given me a greater understanding of the different kinds of bargaining power exercised in the negotiations of the North Atlantic Treaty, and as an ardent proponent of simulation in history education, this has been most helpful in being able to provide a more accurate retelling for my future students. I look forward to utilizing the different works I have been able to study in a classroom context - as well as the detailed source material that was available online in spite of the current situation. The material as it is, would help me to make the events of the past come alive to them, through active interaction with the source material, mixed with their own understanding. Thus, they may too come to know the events of the past through human interaction, in a similar matter to the actors of the past.

