tions regarding France brought to a halt the multilateral debate on the alliance’s essentials and necessary adaptations. The expectation of a complete and imminent French disengagement from the organization hampered deliberations on NATO’s perspectives and contributed to the termination of the exercise on the future of the alliance. De Gaulle’s power to affect alliance business clearly also included obstructing the course agreed on among NATO policy-makers. On the other hand, France’s flat refusal to most aspects of the Atlantic alliance showed quite plainly that proceeding despite and, if necessary, without France was a necessity for those who cared to retain and revive NATO. That is, de Gaulle’s uncompromising attitude actually cleared the way for alliance reform ideas already at this stage. There were, after all, “many factors for weakness in the alliance,” as British official E. J. W. Barnes noted, with French “hostility” being only the most obvious example. Prominent amongst these failings was also the nuclear imbalance.

In fact, NATO discussions increasingly turned to the issue of nuclear sharing and arms control measures in 1965. A solution to the burning question of nuclear participation by nuclear have-nots in the alliance, on the one hand, and of nuclear non-proliferation, on the other hand, was deemed ultimately urgent among Western policy-makers – not least with a view to the restoration of confidence in the functionality and relevance of NATO.

2.2 Nuclear Sharing or Nuclear Consultation? Acting on the NATO Crisis

As has been seen, the nuclear sharing debate within NATO had obtained new, though doubtful momentum with the British proposal for an Atlantic Nuclear Force (ANF) in the fall of 1964. In Washington in December 1964, new Prime Minister Harold Wilson had dwelled on the matter in talks with Johnson; Wilson’s presentation of an alternative force had nourished Johnson’s reluctance to develop the nuclear sharing scheme idea further. The British counterproposal had added to manifold opposition to the MLF both in the US and internationally: Resistance in the US Congress was complemented by opposition to the project in Europe – most prominently in France and the Soviet Union – and lukewarm approval in smaller countries such as Germany, Italy, or the Netherlands. Subsequently, Johnson had issued National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 322, in which he asked Rusk and McNamara not to impose nuclear sharing formulas on Washington’s European allies. At the December 1964 ministerial reunion, Norwegian Foreign Minister

120 See also MemCon between Healey and Brosio, 13 May 1965, UKNA, PREM 13/452.
Halvard Lange put it bluntly: “The MLF plan seemed artificial and unnecessarily complicated and its effect had been contrary to its original purpose of unification.”

Alastair Buchan, a British expert on security issues, labeled the period starting with NSAM 322 as a “nine-month lull” lasting until the resumption of the dialogue on the Atlantic alliance after the German elections in September 1965. Nevertheless, discussions on nuclear sharing still lingered in spring 1965, primarily focusing on the British ANF proposal and British-German talks. While, according to Rusk, the US government was “frankly disappointed” in the response to US efforts of the past five years to meet European needs in the nuclear field, British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart admitted there had not been much progress in closing the gap between the MLF and ANF in late March 1965. He felt that further advances were hampered, moreover, by the absence of a coordinated German position.

Since neither the German demand for access to nuclear weapons nor the French force de frappe had been cleared out of the way for good, nuclear sharing schemes nevertheless continued to loom in the transatlantic debate. Officials in the US State Department, including Under Secretary of State George Ball, remained wedded to the MLF idea, as did, in principle, German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard. Still, given its potential for creating antagonism in Germany, MLF supporters in Bonn – including most prominently Erhard – put the issue on hold in view of the federal election of September 1965. The chancellor expressed reluctance to force a MLF decision before September both in talks with de Gaulle in Rambouillet in January 1965 and at meetings of the CDU federal board in February 1965. As European experts and the White House in Washington feared that alignment between Paris and Bonn would gain momentum after the demise of the MLF, they were willing to work the unification angle to prevent closer cooperation between Bonn and Paris and to counteract de Gaulle, who had announced in his press conference on 4 February 1965 – in line with his renewed focus on Europe – that German unification was an exclusive European task and concern.

Among those who advised most strongly against abandoning the MLF was Thomas Finletter, Washington’s permanent representative in NATO, who had identified with the project since its beginnings. Still in July 1965, Finletter’s utterances nourished the hopes of the German foreign and defense ministers and the chancellor;

123 Summary record of NAC meeting, 15 December 1964, NA, C-R(64)54-E.
Finletter kept them thinking they were able to revive the MLF. Bitter disappointment with Johnson’s MLF policies emerging from NSAM 322 caused Finletter to announce his wish to immediately resign and return to private life in the summer of 1965. As his successor Harlan Cleveland saw it, Finletter “couldn’t wait to get out.” Officially, Finletter resigned because his wife was severely ill and he himself was well over 70 years old. To his German colleague at NATO, Wilhelm Grewe, Finletter’s resignation during the summer break was an unmistakable sign that the MLF was dead. Finletter’s colleagues at NATO deeply regretted his departure, which they considered a heavy loss. Grewe felt Finletter had played “an unforgettable role” in the NATO Council, and Norway’s Foreign Minister Halvard Lange thanked the parting ambassador for seeking to maintain the allied spirit within the council and for avoiding the “narrow approach.”

In this state of limbo concerning nuclear sharing plans, another idea for West-West cooperation in nuclear matters was mooted. At the NATO meeting of defense ministers on 31 May 1965, US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara proposed the idea of a “Select Committee” of defense ministers to consult on nuclear issues. The committee, renamed “Special Committee” in fall 1965, was designed by McNamara to be limited to four or five NATO governments and intended to give alliance members a greater degree of nuclear participation. Its purpose was to educate NATO allies on nuclear questions, to enable them to participate in judgments on the use of nuclear weaponry, and to elaborate technical means for improved nuclear crisis communication. In talks with his German colleague Schröder, Rusk at first suggested that the McNamara proposal was “primarily technical, rather than broadly political.”

While the new initiative met the widespread sense of urgency regarding nuclear matters both in the US and in Europe, it came as a surprise to many in the al-

129 OHI Cleveland, LBJL, 37f. See also Letter from Finletter to Johnson, 18 June 1965, LBJL, NSF Agency File, Box 35, NATO General vol. 2 [2/2]; Priest, Kennedy, Johnson and NATO, 116; Osterheld, Aussenpolitik, 215.
131 Letter from Grewe to Finletter, 7 July 1965; Letter from Lange to Finletter, 23 August 1965; Letter from Schaeetzl to Finletter, 6 July 1965, all in HSTL, Papers of Thomas K. Finletter, Box 13, NATO File 1963-65.
133 MemCon between Schröder and Rusk, 2 June 1965, LBJL, NSF Name File, Box 5, Klein Memoranda.
134 MemCon between Healey and Brosio, 13 May 1965, UKNA, PREM 13/452.
liance. At NATO in Paris, there was “general questioning” as to whether the Select Committee proposal was intended to be a substitute for the ANF/MLF. Finletter, during his last weeks in Paris, stated categorically that this was not the case. He portrayed the initiative as an idea to promote knowledge of and responsibility for the use of nuclear weapons according to principles that had already been established in the so-called Athens guidelines of May 1962. In fact, consultative arrangements had been discussed at the Athens ministerial meeting. On various subsequent occasions, London had proposed consultative arrangements, albeit with little response from Bonn, the main addressee. When McNamara made his proposal, prominent NATO governments including Bonn and Rome indeed remained cautious at first for fear that the new proposals might take the place of the MLF.

Nevertheless, the exact contours of the proposal and its future composition remained unclear in early summer 1965. According to McNamara, the committee was to be big enough to represent the view of the non-nuclear partners, but limited enough to allow intense debate. While McNamara at the time asserted that the new proposal was not designed to replace the MLF/ANF plans, he later claimed he had only introduced the idea once it had become clear that the MLF would not materialize. Whenever an opportunity arose, Finletter, during his last days in Paris, emphasized the priority of the MLF project over the Select Committee idea, which he deemed unfit to promote true Atlantic partnership. In the name of alliance cohesion, Finletter continued to put all his weight behind the MLF proposal. In fact, he even proposed that McNamara “drop the whole idea of arranging these consultations in NATO” in talks with his British counterpart Evelyn Shuckburgh in July 1965.

The big unknown – once more – was the question whether Gaullist France would be ready to join NATO deliberations on the Select Committee. Interestingly, at an informal lunch meeting with Secretary-General Brosio on 3 June 1965, NATO ambassadors raised the question of whether the committee was intended as an extension of the triumvirate idea proposed by France in 1958. The US delegation was anxious to dispel such an association and insisted that the proposed committee would not have the authority to make any decisions for the alliance. Decisionmaking power would remain with national governments that acted through the NATO Council in

135 Finletter to Rusk Polto 1770, 5 June 1965, LBJL, NSF Country File, Box 171, France Cables VI [1/2]. On Athens 1962, see also Bluth, “Reconciling the Irreconcilable,” 76f.
137 Hoppe, Zwischen Teilhabe und Mitsprache, 257-61.
139 See Finletter to Rusk Polto 1770, 5 June 1965; Memorandum by Finletter, “A Pressing Problem,” 12 July 1965. Finletter doubted that Washington would be ready to share nuclear data with its allies. See Finletter to Rusk Polto 2, 1 July 1965, LBJL, NSF Country File, Box 171. See also OHI Finletter, LBJL, 13-22; Osterheld, Aussenpolitik, 213.
140 Quoted in Priest, “From Hardware to Software,” 152. See also Bozo, Two Strategies, 153.
ministerial session. This concern came up again on 29 June, when the permanent representatives issued strong calls for a safe and sound role for the NATO Council at an informal discussion in Brosio’s office.

As a matter of fact, the Select Committee can be seen as a first attempt at trilateralism – not between France and the Anglo-Saxon powers, but between the US, the UK, and Germany. The rationale behind the committee was to plan productively in a small circle. Ideas and deliberations surrounding the idea of a Select Committee were judged by policy-makers at the time as the beginning of a US-British attempt to integrate Germany more closely in their policies. Frank Roberts, British ambassador in Bonn and former British NATO ambassador (1957-60), forcefully emphasized the need for associating the Germans more closely with nuclear policy and planning in a message to Lord Hood from the Foreign Office: The gap in allied defense planning bore the dangerous potential of raising the pressure in favor of a more direct German participation in the control and use of atomic weapons. Even MLF proponent Finletter came to accept trilateral approaches in summer 1965. In a mix of resignation over the shelved MLF project and hope that plans for jointly sharing the nuclear burden and control would foster NATO solidarity, he proposed that a US-British-German nucleus should start handling the nuclear question to counteract French policies.

The shift from a focus on nuclear hardware – i.e., nuclear sharing – to nuclear software – i.e., nuclear planning – was indeed welcomed by both long-standing critics and former supporters of the MLF. On various occasions, Harvard professor and policy adviser Henry A. Kissinger had strongly advised against the MLF, which he deemed inappropriate because of its corrosive potential. The potential German involvement had raised instinctive fears throughout Europe, and it was a mistake to seek intra-bloc unity through a project that included German access to nuclear weapons, he maintained. Kissinger advocated that the MLF plans finally be shelved for the sake of intensified political consultation on nuclear issues. In his verdict, the basic problem facing the alliance was political, not strategic. Political unity necessarily

141 Finletter to Rusk Polto 1770, 5 June 1965. See also MemCon between Rusk and Schröder, 2 June 1965; MemCon between McNamara and Schurmann, Washington, 6 July 1965, FRUS 1964-68: 13, 227-30.
143 See, e.g., Memorandum from Klein to Bundy, “France and NATO,” 10 June 1965, LBJL, NSF Name File, Box 5, Klein memoranda; Roberts to Hood, 2 July 1965, UKNA, FO 115/4629; Schertz, Deutschlandpolitik Kennedys und Johnsons, 316. Nevertheless, small allies achieved strong representation on the committee as it was finally implemented. Nuti, “A Decade of Delusions,” 204.
144 Roberts to Hood, 2 July 1965, UKNA, FO 115/4629. See also Roberts, Dealing with Dictators, 235-45.
had to antedate nuclear integration, he stated in his *Troubled Partnership.* In Bonn, the leadership of the oppositional Social Democrats in early May also shifted from tepid support of the MLF to a focus on nuclear planning. According to Helmut Schmidt, the prolific writer on military affairs and later German chancellor, the fate of the MLF was not worth any tears.

In addition to nuclear sharing and nuclear planning, Washington’s policy planners in summer 1965 considered nuclear non-proliferation the other “leading issue” in Atlantic affairs: Nuclear sharing and nuclear non-proliferation were two sides of a coin, and Bonn was at the center of and the key to both debates. Progress in each of these fields seemed to “hinge on discussion among the three major Western powers dedicated to common action: the US, Germany, and the UK.” The non-proliferation argument was linked to the international context of NATO activities. The already modest disposition of the West toward East-West détente suffered from the attentiveness to international out-of-area crises among many NATO politicians. At the same time, however, the nuclear non-proliferation idea did and could gain momentum precisely because no major East-West crises comparable to those of the 1950s and early 1960s had occurred since October 1962. The demise of the MLF idea in late 1964 signaled an opportunity not only for intra-West nuclear planning activities, but also for movement in the nuclear non-proliferation realm. The Soviet Union had not been prepared to enter serious discussion on a non-proliferation treaty as long as the West was considering a multilateral force. The re-launch of the *Eighteen Nations Disarmament Conference* (ENDC) talks in Geneva in summer 1965 was proof of this renewed drive in matters of arms control.

At the May 1965 ministerial convention in London, Italian Foreign Minister Amintore Fanfani, quite in contrast to his fellow statesman, NATO Secretary-General Manlio Brosio, had urged that the promotion of an intensified East-West dialogue was particularly important in view of absorbing international crises. Norway’s Halvard Lange agreed that current tensions should not be allowed to distract the West from extending contacts with Eastern Europe. Together with his Danish and Italian colleagues, he voiced satisfaction at the revived arms control discussions in NATO and advocated that NATO should be maintained and strengthened as an instrument of peace. He argued that the renewal of the Geneva disarmament talks – brought about by an Italian initiative – should be constructively advanced with the

goal of a non-dissemination treaty. Indeed, NATO ambassadors returned to arms control discussions with renewed vigor in spring and early summer 1965. Resuming discussion on the Gomułka plan for a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, and Canada supported a mildly affirmative position. While fully aware that plans for nuclear-free zones as such were not acceptable to NATO members, Belgian Foreign Minister Spaak wanted to propose a constructive alternative to the deteriorating global situation. With explicit reference to Vietnam, Spaak favored progress in arms limitation at least in “relatively calm” Europe.

In July 1965, NATO ambassadors commented on British and Canadian drafts for a nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that was to be tabled in Geneva. Bonn and Paris remained hostile to an NPT. While the Germans feared they might be discriminated against and lose their leverage, France opposed the NPT because it regarded proliferation as inevitable – which, as has been seen, did not keep it from strongly rejecting Bonn’s access to nuclear weapons. Brosio also opposed the NPT, since he regarded it as a serious violation of the NATO spirit that might lead to a split in the alliance. Bearing this in mind, Washington, having essentially abandoned the MLF, insisted on the ‘MLF clause’ in the NPT draft. For the sake of harmony within the Atlantic alliance, London accepted Washington’s NPT draft that was tabled at the Geneva disarmament conference in August after consultation with Ottawa and Rome. With this draft, the NPT scenario was tentatively revived. Nevertheless, as the US continued to appease Bonn’s concerns, the agreement was concluded only after another round of negotiations in 1968.

Western consultation on nuclear issues nevertheless yielded also more immediate results later that fall. In retrospect, Finletter’s successor Harlan Cleveland contrasted the MLF and nuclear consultation schemes by labeling the first as “the most specta-

151 A revised version of the 1957-58 Rapacki plan, the Gomułka plan aimed at a nuclear weapons freeze in Central Europe, the prohibition of their production, the imposition of safeguards, and the establishment of ground observation posts.
152 See AAPD 1965: 1, 588 (footnote 13). Already in 1958 and 1964, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, and Britain had preferred to avoid antagonizing Poland.
154 Summary record of NAC meeting, 26 July 1965.
155 On the need to “avoid any schism in NATO,” see Rusk to Stewart, 22 July 1965, FRUS 1964-68: 11, 229ff. See also Hood to Shuckburgh, 15 July 1965, UKNA, FO 115/4629, especially for the British view that while Germany was important, the question of the NPT had global dimensions – it was the problem of India, Pakistan, Japan, Israel, and Egypt.
cular and least successful effort to resolve the nuclear sharing dilemma” and the latter as the “least spectacular and most successful […] intensive policy consultation among the interested allies.” Indeed, as will be seen, progress on nuclear consultation proved an important element of alliance cohesion at a time when, in view of France’s drastic politics towards NATO, the Vietnam War, and the advent of détente, NATO’s future seemed increasingly at stake. At the moment when NATO’s creed and the overriding nuclear question were being debated, however, de Gaulle intervened with a move in European politics. The “empty chair crisis” in the European Economic Community of summer 1965, triggered by France, added a further element to the deep West-West rift. In many ways, this European crisis foreshadowed and anticipated the events in the Atlantic alliance of fall 1965 to spring 1966.

2.3 Crisis in the EEC and NATO Consultations in Europe

On 30 June 1965, or rather in the early morning hours of 1 July, the French staged what became the biggest crisis in the European Economic Community after that of January 1963, when de Gaulle had blocked British accession to the EEC. The French representative walked out of the Council of Ministers meeting, leaving an “empty chair.” Specifically, what was at issue was the EEC’s farm support program (CPA), but the breakdown was equally due to French resistance to the introduction of “supranational” elements into EEC cooperation and to de Gaulle’s attempt at dominance among the Six in the Community. While France wanted the other five EEC states to pay a larger share of the farm subsidies, these member states in turn demanded expanded authority for the EEC, both budget- and policy-wise. Gaullist France was determined to “freeze everything as it was” rather than yield more power to the EEC decisionmaking institutions. De Gaulle’s rejection paralyzed both the EEC and the Kennedy Round of the GATT, started in 1964, because the French boycott of Common Market meetings made it impossible for the EEC representatives in Geneva to obtain new instructions. US diplomats predicted that the crisis was likely to last throughout 1965, with “de Gaulle getting what he wants.”

The crisis was largely due to contested key questions regarding priorities in Europe. De Gaulle’s policies as of 1963 were characterized by an increasing distance toward Europe for a reorientation toward global problems. The European framework was no longer treated as a priority as de Gaulle realized that a Europe without trans-