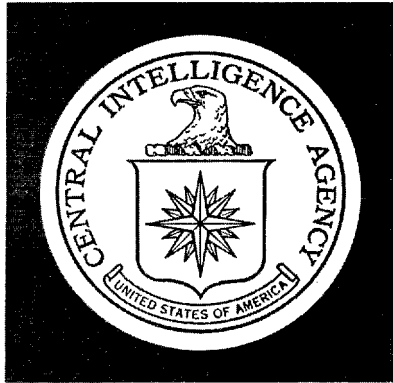


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# Intelligence Memorandum

THE HARMEL STUDY--NATO LOOKS TO ITS FUTURE

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
7 December 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Harmel Study: NATO Looks to its Future

Summary

For the past year, a special group of representatives of the NATO member states has been studying the future tasks of the Alliance. Named for Belgian Foreign Minister Harmel, who proposed it, this study will probably be concluded by a report issued by the NATO ministers following their semiannual conference at Brussels which begins on 12 December. Perhaps the greatest impact of the Harmel study has been its revelation of national sensitivities and concerns as member governments were forced, through the extensive and often heated process of developing the study, to consider the viewpoints of each of the others.

The sponsors of the study hope that it will result in extensive consultations on Germany and European security and on arms control and disarmament--topics of interest to the general European public which wants detente and an end to the Cold War image of NATO. The other topics considered in the course of the study --defense problems in adjacent areas and crises outside the NATO region--are of less interest to Europeans.

The French have expressed reservations about the Harmel study since its inception, fearing that it will develop moves toward political integration within the Alliance. There is a built-in conflict between De Gaulle's

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policy of independence of the US and de-emphasis of military blocs on the one hand, and, on the other, the effort of NATO to plan, in fairly concrete terms, for its long-term future. The ultimate position of the French Government on the Harmel study remains unclear, but it may accept a final report that leaves the question of innovations for later consideration by the North Atlantic Council.

The Harmel study also has implications for 1969, the year in which NATO members may give notice of an intention to withdraw from the Atlantic Alliance. The whole drift of the Special Group's report implies that NATO will go on past 1969, and there is even explicit use of the phrase "in the years ahead." The net impression made by the exercise so far is that, with the possible exception of France, the member states are determined to maintain the Alliance for the indefinite future.

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### Origins of the Study and Initial Developments

1. At various times during the past few years, the suggestion has been made by one or another NATO member that a reappraisal was needed of the organization's function and direction. The time never seemed ripe, however, until the fall of 1966. By then, the pressures in Western Europe for an East-West detente, the French-NATO crisis, and the short time remaining until 1969 (when withdrawal from the Alliance would be possible) all pointed to the wisdom of reaffirming the continuing relevance of the North Atlantic Alliance in order to resell it to European electorates.

2. Accordingly, in November 1966, Belgian Foreign Minister Harmel proposed a NATO study "with the aim of suggesting adaptations dictated by changing circumstances." He carefully cultivated the support of all NATO members, including France, for his proposal, for it was obvious that France, having just withdrawn from the military organization of the Alliance, would be unenthusiastic about plans for a revitalization of the Alliance. The next month, the NATO ministerial conference adopted a resolution "to study the future tasks that face the Alliance, and its procedures for fulfilling them, in order to strengthen the Alliance as a factor for a durable peace." Ways of improving consultation within the Alliance would especially be examined. Surprisingly (and to his later regret), French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville agreed to the resolution provided that it developed no moves toward political integration within the Alliance. The study was to be carried out "at a high political level," with a preliminary report to be made to the ministerial meeting in the spring of 1967, and a final report to the meeting in December, which would "draw the appropriate conclusions that emerge from the enquiry."

3. The Belgians initiated conversations in January 1967 aimed at establishing procedures for implementing the resolution. The French immediately began expressing reservations, stating that the time was not ripe for "political initiatives in NATO." Nonetheless, they went along when, in February, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) set up "an open-ended Special Group of Representatives designated by governments"

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to develop the study under the chairmanship of NATO Secretary General Brosio. All NATO countries were invited to participate if they chose, and they all did so. Four study topics were proposed by Brosio: (1) East-West relations; (2) inter-allied relations; (3) the general defense policy of the Alliance; and (4) developments in regions outside the NATO area.

4. Subgroups for each topic were formed, headed in every case by "a rapporteur particularly well-informed on the subject in question." It was specifically provided that the rapporteur would be personally responsible for his report, which would, however, commit neither his subgroup nor the Special Group. This arrangement resulted in some very subjective reports on which agreement proved difficult. Selection of the rapporteurs involved a number of political considerations; the Scandinavians, for example, objected to a West German rapporteur on the first topic and secured a compromise agreement that Adam Watson of the United Kingdom and Klaus Schuetz of the Federal Republic of Germany would act as co-rapporteurs. The Belgians named Paul-Henri Spaak as rapporteur for the second topic, and the United States appointed Foy Kohler to serve as the rapporteur on the general defense policy of the Alliance. As there was considerable difficulty in developing any consensus on the fourth topic, the Canadian and Italian governments declined requests to name a rapporteur for it, permitting the Dutch to appoint a former parliamentarian and international law expert, C.L. Patijn.

#### The Four Subgroup Reports

5. The discussions in the four subgroups had barely begun by the time of the NATO ministerial meeting in the spring of 1967. Consequently, the interim report at that time merely indicated that progress was "encouraging" and that the study was providing "a useful framework for a free discussion of difficult and delicate problems which are of deep interest for the future of the Alliance."

6. There were lively debates in the subgroup on East-West relations. No governments questioned that the Alliance was still required as a military deterrent, but many of them thought that this rationale

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was not sufficiently understood, especially by young people. They therefore sought a second rationale for the continuance of the Alliance based on a role of detente management. Nonetheless, views on how this role might be carried out varied considerably. In working out the Watson-Schuetz report, important differences were exposed on such matters as new initiatives on the German question and efforts generally to concert Western positions. Several members--Norway, Denmark, the UK, and Canada--wanted NATO to develop moves toward a settlement with the Soviet Union, but the West Germans, with strong French support, sought to preserve their Eastern policy on a bilateral basis and were also reluctant to see any erosion of quadripartite responsibility for Berlin. The report, as it came out, proposed no new NATO machinery to deal with East-West relations and noted that "both bilateral and multilateral contacts will be needed" to overcome the present division of Europe. It stressed the need for close and urgent study of the sort of European settlement toward which the Allies should work.

7. The subgroup on inter-allied relations was racked with dissension, as Spaak insisted on his personal formulations. His paper, which he titled "The Ideological Basis and the Unity of the Alliance," contained extensive references to the 1956 report of the Three Wise Men (the Committee of Three on Non-military Cooperation in NATO), citing their recognition of the need for "a significant strengthening of political consultation." Spaak transformed this into a call for NATO members to adopt a "common policy" on current issues, and warned that Communism "has renounced none of its aims and still hopes to defeat its opponents". The French Government was opposed to any suggestion that NATO members must conform to the views of the majority or the largest members. Consequently, the French representative made vehement objections to the Spaak report, which was also fairly direct in making explicit criticisms of French policy. The French were backed by the Danes and Canadians, but they were unable to get Spaak to alter his objectionable text.

8. The discussions in the subgroup on topic three developed the least amount of controversy, probably because the Fourteen (the NATO members minus France) already had reached a consensus on military

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matters in response to the French withdrawal from the NATO military framework. Kohler concentrated on general principles and political aims for defense policy and on broad aspects of arms control and disarmament. He advocated exploration of means to achieve balanced mutual force reductions and proposed "a permanent Arms Control and Disarmament Committee of NATO," an idea opposed only by the French. The Norwegians and the Danes joined the French in mildly criticizing Kohler for having minimized detente prospects.

9. The great interest of the US in the fourth topic (developments outside the NATO area) tended to further European doubt as to the relative priority which the US attaches to its European commitment. Patijn's report received criticism similar to that of the Spaak report for being too subjective. Patijn wrote: "NATO's task beyond the Treaty area is ... to devise common policies for its members." At least five NATO members joined France in objecting that Patijn had gone too far in trying to systematize Alliance activity on problems beyond the Treaty area.

#### Growing French Dissatisfaction

10. As the Harmel study progressed, the French became increasingly worried. There was, of course, a built-in conflict between De Gaulle's policy of independence of the US and deemphasis of military blocs on the one hand, and, on the other, the effort of NATO to plan, in fairly concrete terms, for its long-term future.

11. By September of this year, French spokesmen were vigorously objecting to the "dangerous" direction in which the rapporteurs, particularly Spaak and Patijn, were taking the Harmel study. Couve de Murville informed Brosio that he must be "very careful" in his actions on the study because "if the intention...was to embarrass the French, they are ready to stand strongly against this." Couve told US Ambassador Bohlen that France was prepared for a "showdown" on the report to conclude the Harmel study. He added that France opposed "making what originally had been conceived as an academic study into a set of principles and recommendations of a more specific nature."

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Reactions of the Other NATO Members

12. The reactions of other NATO members to French objections were diverse. The West Germans particularly sought to avoid any provocation of the French as they did not want to risk what they already had--an Alliance that included France, plus a recognized and proven forum for consideration of the German problem. The British did not wish to shelve the Harmel study, but also were worried that a dispute over it could adversely influence their Common Market membership application. The Scandinavians, while seeking a new image for NATO, indicated that innovations were a lesser concern when compared to retaining France as a counterweight to Germany in NATO. Belgium, the Netherlands, and the US were the most determined to see the study through to a successful conclusion.

13. The reports of the four subgroups were submitted to Secretary General Brosio at a meeting of the rapporteurs at Ditchley Park in the United Kingdom on 11-12 October. In an apparent attempt to avoid contentious phrases, particularly those in the Spaak and Patijn reports, Bowie of the US and von Bellinghen of Belgium produced a 16-page summary of the four reports. Patijn objected to the summary and rewrote two sections. An agreement was reached that the reports and the summary would be presented to a meeting of the Special Group in November with a covering letter stating that the rapporteurs considered the summary to be "no substitute for the reports themselves." At this time, Brosio was reportedly thinking of seeking a minimum agreement with the French in December and continuing the study on unagreed issues after the ministerial meeting.

14. At a long private meeting on 25 October, the NATO permanent representatives heard French representative Seydoux characterize the Bowie - von Bellinghen summary as "absolutely unacceptable even as a point of departure for discussion." He maintained that it reflected all of the rapporteurs' reports, at least some of which were totally condemned by the French, and that the principle of a common NATO policy was stated "at almost every page."

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With the representatives "verging on despair," Brosio agreed to prepare "a list of major substantive points or questions for consideration" by the Special Group. He wrote a short statement to provide the French with "a piece of paper uncontaminated by reference to previous documents." US NATO representative Cleveland felt that the Brosio paper "has the merit of preserving the Ditchley document from emasculation." Cleveland, together with UK representative Burrows, was pushing for a study report providing for a political work program, possibly to be implemented by the Defense Planning Committee, the chief organ of the Fourteen.

#### The First Special Group Meeting

15. As the 7 November meeting of the Special Group approached the West Germans made an effort to come to an agreement with the French on the end product of the Harmel study. Together they worked out a short statement regarding a political work program. But on the morning of the meeting, the French NATO representative, Seydoux, canceled the agreement as a result of a discussion the day before between De Gaulle and Couve de Murville. He informed the German NATO representative, Grewe, that the French would support nothing beyond language in the December ministerial communiqué to conclude the study, and would oppose any new committees or declarations. Speeches by other countries at the meeting on 7 November, however, indicated broad support for a future political work program that would include "intensified and systematic attention" to East-West relations, European security and the German problem, arms control and disarmament, and security in the Mediterranean area. When the other representatives attempted to secure approval for Brosio to draft a report to the ministers on the basis of the discussions on 7 November, Seydoux asked for and obtained an overnight postponement of such a decision. The following day, after consulting Paris for instructions, Seydoux stated that he would "stand aside" to permit Brosio to draft the report, which he described as a "superfluous seventh document." He maintained that the ministers themselves must negotiate a document summarizing the

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Harmel study. It was agreed that the Brosio draft would be reviewed by the Special Group at meetings on 22-23 November.

16. Spokesmen for most NATO nations were generally disappointed with the outcome. Both Denmark and Italy reacted to the French negativism by suggesting that the NATO ministers receive an interim report in December, postponing the final report until the June 1968 ministerial meeting. Luxembourg was "not encouraged" by results of the Special Group conference and did not expect more than "some face-saving pronouncements" from the ministerial meetings in December. Dutch Foreign Minister Luns, citing the French attitude, believed that "nothing significant could come from the Harmel exercise." Bonn hoped that Brosio (instead of the NATO ministers) would sign the report concluding the Harmel study, thereby permitting the Germans to avoid endorsing a report to which France objected.

#### Results of the Second Special Group Meeting

17. In discussions on the weekend of 18-20 November, the Belgians and the French agreed to an informal document outlining points to be made in the ministerial declaration in December. The document reportedly described a number of methods by which the "Alliance should intensify and improve its consultations." Another key provision was that "the Alliance should reinforce cohesion and solidarity of the 15 Atlantic nations, though not controlling national policy, nor acting as executive agency for what they may have discussed or even agreed among themselves."

18. At the Special Group meeting on 22 November, the Belgian-French informal agreement was not discussed, but this formulation of language acceptable to the French did provide a "useful key" in the writing of the Group's report to the NATO ministers. Seydoux concentrated his fire on Brosio's draft, stating that it could not serve as a basis for discussion, but after a lengthy procedural wrangle, he acquiesced in a detailed consideration of the draft without commitments. The Special Group took 12 hours to work out a report to the ministers.

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In the process, a broad consensus developed, often excluding the French, on key issues. According to Cleveland, "the year-long exercise had exposed and pointed up national interests to such an extent that some of the usual wells of sympathy for French obstinacy had run dry."

19. The text of this Special Group report to the NATO ministers contains a number of alternative phrases at important points in the statement. The alternative phrases concern such matters as references to Soviet military strength, multilateral versus bilateral contacts with the Soviet bloc, and harmonization of policies. With one exception, these language problems developed through disagreements between France and the fourteen. One statement suggested by the fourteen seems a definite attack on Gaullist foreign policy: "The way to peace and stability in Europe is not to dissolve existing groupings but to use them constructively to the advantage of detente." The Italians, fearing that a squabble with the French might affect the approaching national elections, wanted to insert a phrase postponing the report of the Special Group until the ministerial conference in June 1968, but most members do not think the Italians will maintain this position. All 15 agreed to the statement that the NATO ministers "will decide what conclusions are to be drawn from the study assigned to the Special Group."

#### Outlook for the December Ministerial Conference

20. It seems likely that the French will continue to test the resolve of the 14, probing for weaknesses regarding support for an increased political role for the Alliance and taking advantage of any divisions that might appear in order to press for a minimal declaration on the future tasks of the Alliance. The French tactical position can, as it has in the past, shift on short notice, adding to the discomfiture of the fourteen. The unresolved phraseology in the Special Group report, and the agreement that the NATO ministers will decide what conclusions are to be drawn from the study, leave the French with plenty of room for maneuvers designed to enhance their viewpoint.

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Seydoux announced on 24 November that his approval of the report for transmission to the ministers was ad referendum and did not prejudice the ultimate position of the French Government. Probably the French will win some--perhaps most--of the battles over the alternative statements (in some cases, both options may be dropped), and to help placate the Italians, specific notice may be taken of several issues raised by the Harmel study which will be examined in detail in the coming months. But the NATO ministerial conference in December will probably adopt the Special Group's report in very much its present form.

Impact of the Study on the Future of the Alliance

21. Perhaps the greatest impact of the study has been its revelation of national sensitivities and concerns as member governments were forced, through the extensive and often heated process of developing the study, to consider the viewpoints of each of the others. For the French, the Harmel study has produced some surprises. Although France retains considerable freedom for maneuver in determining the outcome of the study, it is equally true that some of the previous patience with French obstruction has run low. The Danes, Canadians, and West Germans, for example, are now apparently determined to obtain a public document beyond "communiqué language" at the ministerial conference in December. The Fourteen have mildly indicated that they may, if faced with continued French intransigence, switch much of the proposed work program to the Defense Planning Committee in which France does not participate.

22. The Germans continue to insist on bilateral contacts with the Soviet bloc and on quadripartite responsibility for the German problem, but they have told the Special Group that the other 11 NATO members "would be fully consulted and their views sought once the Four had some suggestions or proposals to make." Such "timely discussions" would not impair the special responsibilities of the Four.

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23. If the Special Group's report were to be approved by France as well as the other nations at the ministerial conference in December, the Harmel study would have a potential impact on the future of the Alliance. The ultimate test of the value of the study will be the degree of implementation after the ministerial meeting in December. The Special Group's report defers to the French aversion to new Alliance machinery and advocates "building on the methods and procedures which have proved their value over many years." It refers to the Alliance serving as "an effective forum and central clearing house" for exchange of viewpoints, but it finds that "the practice of frank and timely consultations needs to be deepened and improved."

24. The Special Group makes four main proposals: (1) that NATO "examine and review suitable policies designed to achieve a just and stable order in Europe, to overcome the division of Germany and to foster European security"; (2) that NATO conduct "intensified" studies on disarmament and practical arms control measures, including the possibility of balanced force reductions; (3) that NATO examine the defense problem of "exposed" areas--the southeastern flank of NATO is cited as an example; (4) that "the Allies or such of them as wish to do so" continue consultations on crises outside the NATO area. In the view of the Special Group, these four activities could be carried out "either by intensifying work already in hand or by activating highly specialized studies by more systematic use of experts and officials sent from capitals."

25. Of the four lines of action, European supporters of the Harmel study hope that NATO will give primary attention to Germany and European security, and to arms control and disarmament. These topics are of interest to the public which wants detente and an end to the Cold War image of NATO. The Europeans are less interested in the third and fourth topics--defense problems in adjacent areas and crises outside the NATO region.

26. The Harmel study also has implications for 1969, the year in which NATO members may give

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notice of an intention to withdraw from the Atlantic Alliance. The whole drift of the Special Group's report implies that NATO will go on past 1969, and there is even explicit use of the phrase "in the years ahead." The net impression made by the exercise so far is that, with the possible exception of France, the member states are determined to maintain the Alliance for the indefinite future.

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