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THE SKYBOLT CRISIS AND ANGLO-AMERICAN SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

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The Anglo-American nuclear relationship has undergone a process of evolution full of twists and turns. Its origins can be traced back as early as to the first years of the Second World War. Its inherent feature has been the continuous changes in the character of this unique and troubled partnership. In order to understand the most serious crisis in the special relationship that occurred in 1962 in the atomic field – its most important component – one must know about the history of nuclear relations between the two countries. Although there had been many disagreements and rifts between the two allies since as early as 1940, they had never endangered the special partnership as seriously as in the early 1960s. The origins of this crisis were disagreements and misunderstandings not merely over technology but also over nuclear strategy. Nevertheless, what had begun primarily as a technical problem soon developed into the gravest political crisis in the relations between the two countries. Thus, the Skybolt affair serves as a good example of a reciprocal relationship between broadly understood technology and its implications on the one hand, and politics, and especially international relations, on the other. Despite numerous difficulties in nuclear relations, none of them before the Skybolt saga had caused such a serious threat to bilateral relations. After the Suez adventure of 1956, it was the most troubled period in Anglo-American relations. The allies seemed to be moving in completely different directions. Fortunately, the crisis was overcome. Paradoxically, the two gravest debacles in the special partnership – Suez and Skybolt – were followed by the restoration of closer diplomatic and military relations.

This paper aims to analyze the Skybolt crisis and its impact on the so-called special relationship. After some introductory remarks on the concept of the "specialness" a brief historical outline of the Anglo-American nuclear co-operation follows. The purpose of this presentation is to help to locate the Skybolt crisis in a wider background. We shall see that it did not happen suddenly and that it was not the first disagreement over nuclear issues. After highlighting the previous difficulties and the ways they were overcome, it should be easier to relate to them the crisis under examination. Moreover, it will help us to answer the questions of what was unique about the Skybolt affair and what were its longer-term consequences. The positions of both Britain and the United States will be presented. The final part, which serves as the conclusion, will relate the whole crisis in the nuclear field to the broader concept of the special relationship with particular emphasis on the notion of independence-interdependence-dependence.

THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

The concept of the Anglo-American "special relationship" is an ambiguous one. The wider foundation on which this notion rests is that of cultural unity manifested by a common language (which has allowed for extensive and intensive communication), law and the liberal tradition of political thought.[1] On these grounds an intimate political and military partnership has emerged and developed. The special partnership is not composed of one relationship but of many. Moreover, it operates at many different levels and in many areas. Thus, we can distinguish its four basic components: the consultative relations between the two bureaucracies (diplomatic consultations), intelligence co-operation, collaboration between the two navies, and nuclear co-operation.[2] The evolution of intelligence collaboration was rather smooth when compared to nuclear relationship.

Generally speaking, there are two basic approaches towards the concept of the special relationship.[3] The first puts emphasis on the common interests shared by the US and Britain. According to the second, it is sentiment (language, history, culture and politics) that makes for the distinctiveness of the relations. Yet neither explanation alone offers a convincing account of the phenomenon. The following statement expresses this duality: "The Anglo-American relationship has been a sentimental attachment as much as a business transaction precisely because of the interests involved, and the passion with which they have been held and pursued."[4]

It should be remembered that the term "special relationship" is the British construct.[5] It originated during the Second World War and was then popularized by Winston Churchill. The Grand Alliance was the period of the greatest, and thereby formative, extent of the relationship. The major reason for creating the military alliance was the threat perception – in the first instance from Germany, and thereafter from the Soviet Union.

The whole notion is ambiguous since there has been a "love-hate" relationship between the two countries. Since its initial stages, co-operation was parallel to competition, and friendship to rivalry. When British power was declining, the American power was emerging. The *Pax Britannica* was being transformed into the *Pax Americana*. Britain was declining into a regional power while the United States was rising as a superpower. In this context "the notion of an Anglo-American special relationship has been a device used by a declining power for trying to harness a rising power to serve its own needs."[6] Because of the disparity in power exercised by both countries, the partnership has been unavoidably unequal with Britain being a junior partner.

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[1] "(...) Wilsonianism can legitimately be seen as British Liberalism transformed by America's crusading-sense of mission and energized by America's enormous new power." D. Reynolds, *Rethinking Anglo-American relations*, "International Affairs," vol. 65, no. 1, 1988/89, p. 102.

[2] Ibidem, p. 98.

[3] G.M. Dillon, *Dependence and Deterrence: success and civility in the Anglo-American special nuclear relationship, 1962–1982*, Gower, London 1982, pp. 6–7.

[4] Ibidem, p. 7.

[5] A. Danchev, *On specialness*, "International Affairs," vol. 72, no. 4, 1996, pp. 738–740.

[6] D. Reynolds, *A "special relationship"? America, Britain and the international order since the Second World War*, "International Affairs," vol. 62, no. 1, 1985/86, p. 2.

After the loss of Empire and first-class power status Great Britain was searching for a new role in the world. British leaders decided to opt for the conscious course of becoming more dependent on the United States. That aim turned out to be one of the main goals of British foreign policy. After the war, it was based on Churchill's three concentric circles theory, according to which there are three spheres of British interests: the United States, Western Europe and the Commonwealth. In different periods of history the relevance of each of these spheres varied. After 1945 the circle labeled "the United States" became central for British foreign policy since "for Britain, the alliance has been of importance in helping to sustain her world position as her relative power has declined."[7] In 1949 William Strang's Committee outlined the basis of British foreign policy assuming that "The interests of the United Kingdom therefore demand that her present policy of close Anglo--American cooperation in world affairs should continue. Such cooperation will involve our sustained political, military and economic effort."[8] Thus, the principle of the Anglo-American special relationship turned into the cornerstone of British post-war foreign policy. The course of interdependence was thought to be one of the best ways of extending British influence. The formula which had been worked out was of the strengthening the special relationship. Its most important aspect was the co-operation in the field of atomic energy, that is to say, the special nuclear relationship.

The concept of a special relationship, however, is not uniquely Anglo-American. It has also been applied to the US's relations with, for example, Israel, Brazil and the Federal Republic of Germany.[9] Nevertheless, the relations between the US and the UK have been exceptional in quality when compared to other bilateral alliances. It is extremely difficult to find closer relations between any two countries in the nuclear field than in the case of the US and the UK. P.A. Brody and Henry Kissinger claimed that the occurrence of nuclear weapons within an alliance would inevitably lead to its disintegration and, eventually, to its break-up. However, at least with reference to the Anglo-American military alliance, this, as we shall see, did not come true.[10] Despite more than one crisis over nuclear issues in the history of the special relationship, nuclear weapons in general contributed to the cohesion of the alliance. Nuclear co-operation has been very much at the heart of the special relationship. The collaboration in this field seemed to have a spillover effect in other areas of the relations between the two countries. Thus, using the basic assumption of the neofunctionalist theory of integration it can be claimed that nuclear collaboration, being the chief area of the special relationship, worked as a catalyst for co-operation in the other fields. This will be evident once the impact of the Skybolt crisis on the partnership is examined. Paradoxically, this severe crisis, after being overcome, led to

[7] J. Baylis, *The Anglo-American Relationship and Alliance Theory*, "International Relations," vol. VIII, issue 4, November 1985, p. 373.

[8] Quoted in: R. Ovendale, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*, Macmillan, London 1998, p. 83.

[9] D. Reynolds, op.cit., p. 4.

[10] A.P. Brody: "(...) after the spread of nuclear weapons within an alliance, cohesion will decline;" H. Kissinger: "Nuclear weapons make alliances less likely to (...) persist because allies are not necessary to gain preponderant power." Quoted in: J. Baylis, *The Anglo--American*..., pp. 373–374.

closer collaboration. At the same time, it resulted in both qualitative and quantitative changes of the character of the special relationship. The shift from partnership to dependence might be observed.

The special relationship does not mean full harmony. On the contrary, there have often been periods of friction and disenchantment. Thus, both continuity and change (even given the most dramatic crises) are inherent features of Anglo-American relations. This article aims to examine one of these periods of friction.

THE UK-US NUCLEAR CO-OPERATION IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the period of 1939–1941 nuclear research was much more advanced in the United Kingdom than in the United States. Two key reasons of this may be identified. These were scientific-technical and political factors. The former was the contribution of the Jewish scientists, who had emigrated from Nazi Germany, while the latter was Prime Minister Churchill's personal interest in the work on an atomic bomb.

In March 1940 two émigré physics, Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls, prepared a memorandum. Their essential belief was that it would be possible to construct an uranium bomb. As a direct result of the memorandum, in June 1940, a special governmental body – the MAUD Committee – was set up in order to examine their thesis.[11] Since its prime goal was to find the answer to the question weather it would be possible to construct a bomb, the MAUD report had vital consequences. In general, the Frisch-Peierls thesis was confirmed.

The Prime Minister's attitude was best expressed in the following words: "Although personally I am quite content with the existing explosives, I feel we must not stand in the path of improvement(...)."[12] In September 1940, during his meeting with the Chiefs of Staff, the decision was reached that "immediate action with the maximum priority" should be taken. The British nuclear program was officially inaugurated.

By the way of contrast, in the United States, research was concentrated on an atom as the source of energy. The turning point, which resulted in starting up the American nuclear program, was when, in October 1941, the MAUD report was officially passed on to the US. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt then inaugurated a large atomic project. Having known the early history of nuclear weapons, we can wholeheartedly subscribe to the opinion expressed by Margaret Gowing that

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[11] The name of the Committee came from the last words of Niels Bohr's telegram to Otto Frish of April 1940: "Tell Cockcroft and Maud Ray Kent." British intelligence took the last three words as an anagram. After replacing the letter "y" with "i" in the word "Ray" and using the other two words "Maud" and "Kent" a new phrase was created: "radium taken." The conclusion seemed to be obvious – Bohr warned that the Germans had advanced their atomic program. Later, it became clear that the message was addressed to the former governess of Bohr's children, Maud Ray living at that time in Kent. Subsequently MAUD was commonly taken as meaning *Military Applications of Uranium Detonation* or *Ministry of Air: Uranium Development*. P. Malone, *The British Nuclear Deterrent*, Croom Helm, London 1984, passim 1, p. 22; M. Bundy, *Danger and Survival. Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years*, Random House, New York 1988, pp. 25–26.

[12] Quoted in: P. Malone, op.cit., p. 1.

"Without it [the MAUD report] World War II would almost certainly have ended before an atomic bomb was dropped."[13]

Britain, being more advanced in nuclear research, was reluctant to agree to American proposals to merge the atomic projects. The British believed that it would never be too late for closer co-operation. That was, however, a most serious miscalculation. The United States quickly developed its program which was significantly accelerated after Pear Harbor. The roles were being reversed and Britain was now lagging behind. At the time, it was Britain that was proposing the merging of the two programs but, not surprisingly, the US, with its Manhattan Project already established and developing under the Army's control, was not now interested in such integration.

The first Anglo-American agreement in the field of nuclear co-operation was signed between Roosevelt and Churchill in Hyde Park in June 1942.[14] It was decided that, given the threat of German bombardment of the British Isles, the entire British program would be moved to the US. The Hyde Park Agreement introduced full collaboration which was to be based on the principle of "sharing the results as equal partners."[15] Nonetheless, by the end of 1942 the Americans had halted the flow of information which they justified as necessary safeguarding the security of the Manhattan Project. This American policy of "restricted interchange," formally approved by Roosevelt in December 1942, caused the first crisis in Anglo-American nuclear relations. A British diplomatic offensive aiming to fully implement the Hyde Park Agreement was launched. As a result, in September 1943, the Quebec Agreement was signed which formalized the wartime regime of nuclear co-operation.[16] The decisions taken in Quebec were extended over the post-war period by the Hyde Park *aide-mémoire* of September 1944.[17] Full Anglo-American collaboration appeared to be secured. At that time the US seemed to acknowledge that "armed with atomic weapons, Great Britain would be America's outpost on the European frontier(...)."[18] The spirit of the special relationship was evident in the statement by Roosevelt's adviser, Harry Hopkins: "It was vital for the United States to have a strong Britain because we must be realistic enough to understand that in any future war England would be on America's side and America on England's. It was no use having a weak ally."[19]

Very soon, however, after the end of the war, it became clear that the United States was no longer interested in any nuclear collaboration. In general, such co-

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[13] M. Gowing, *Nuclear Weapons and the "Special Relationship"* [in:] *The "Special Relationship", Anglo-American Relations Since 1945*, W.M. Roger Louis, H. Bull (eds.), Clarendon Press, Oxford 1986, p. 119.

[14] R.G. Hewlett, E. Anderson, Jr., *The New World, 1939/1946. A History of the United States Atomic Energy Commission*, vol. I, The Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania 1962, pp. 260–261.

[15] R.W. Clark, *The Birth of the Bomb. The Untold Story of Britain's Part in the Weapon That Changed the World*, Phoenix House Ltd, London 1961, pp. 183, 184.

[16] J. Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations, 1939-80. The Special Relationship*, Macmillan, London 1984, pp. 23–24.

[17] M. Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy 1939–1945*, Macmillan, London 1964, p. 447.

[18] M. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed. The Atomic Bomb and the Grande Alliance*, Vintage Books, New York 1977, p. 113.

[19] Quoted in: ibidem, p. 114.

operation was regarded as a serious burden for US policy. The dominating approach was one of nuclear monopoly. Any commitments to another country were considered as a vast obstacle. This American policy was profoundly ambiguous. On the one hand, the US was pursuing the project of international control of atomic energy (the Baruch Plan), but at the same time it wanted to secure its own nuclear hegemony. None of these tactics was favorable for Britain since both nationalism and multinationalism excluded bilateralism. Eventually, the monopolist position won. In September 1946, Congress passed the *McMahon Act* introducing a national nuclear regime.[20] Any exchange of atomic ("restricted") information with other countries was prohibited. It was the final blow for the British efforts to continue the wartime collaboration. After then, the United States and Britain were to proceed with their nuclear programs separately.

In 1947 the Attlee cabinet decided to begin a national ("go-it-alone") nuclear project. This resulted in the explosion of the UK's first atomic bomb in October 1952.[21] The United Kingdom joined the "nuclear club" becoming the third nuclear power. Nuclear capabilities strengthened Britain's world position, seriously undermined during the Second World War and by the dissolution of the Empire. It was also an important factor in reinforcing Britain's role in NATO. Consequently, the country reinforced its position *vis-à-vis* the United States.

From the late 1940s onwards it looked as if Anglo-American relations were improving. In 1948, in connection with the Berlin blockade, the US asked the British for the establishing of American bases in Britain. The response was positive and sixty bombers B-29 arrived.[22] From the early 1950s Britain was *de facto* hosting American nuclear strategic strike bases. The legal foundation for the American presence was agreed in October 1951 in the *Truman-Attlee Understandings*. This document became the basic regulation of the issue during the Cold War and thereafter. The presence of American forces in Britain inaugurated the strategic relations between the two countries since limited but mutual strategic planning, targeting and co-operation between British and American air forces were required.

Although the partnership had improved and was gradually developing, in 1956 came the most dramatic crisis of the time. It was over Suez. President Eisenhower strongly opposed the use of force and under his influence the Anglo-French military action was stopped. The President described the operation as "the greatest mistake of our times," adding: "Bombs, by God. What does Anthony think he's doing? Why is he doing this to me?"[23] Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, Anthony Eden's successor, realized that the traditional concept of the three concentric circles, on which British postwar foreign policy was based, had to be fundamentally reassessed. It was clear that any independent British action without American support would be risky and destined to fail. One of the basic principles of Macmillan's foreign policy turned out to be the

[20] R.G. Hewlett, E. Anderson, op.cit., pp. 714–722.

[21] M. Gowing, L. Arnold, *Independence and Deterrence. Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945–1952*, Macmillan, London 1974; B. Cathcart, *Test of Greatness. Britain's Struggle for the Atom Bomb*, John Murray, London 1994.

[22] J. Baylis, *American bases in Britain: the "Truman-Attlee Understandings,"* "The World Today," vol. 42, no. 8, 9, January–December 1986, pp. 155–159.

[23] C.C. Kingseed, *Eisenhower and the Suez Crisis of 1956*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge–London 1995, p. 81.

notion of interdependence with the United States. For the Anglo-American nuclear relations the Suez crisis had paradoxical consequences; it speeded up the restoration of the close co-operation broken off in 1946. "Suez should have been the end of the U.S.-British tie; in fact, it was the amphitheater of its rebirth."[24]

NUCLEAR CO-OPERATION RESTORED

A few factors that contributed to the re-establishment of the unique nuclear partnership can be enumerated. The launching of Sputnik and subsequent changes in American nuclear strategy, the demonstration of British thermonuclear capacity, and, on the whole, the tightening of ties after the Suez crisis should be regarded as the most essential.[25]

The launching of Sputnik in October 1957 by the Soviet Union brought about real shock, if not panic in the United States. American technological domination in nuclear weaponry had been challenged and the strategy of massive retaliation questioned.[26] In order to bridge the "missile gap" that had arisen the US introduced the doctrine of the limited nuclear war. Its essence was to supply the NATO allies with tactical nuclear weapons until the US would come into the possession of intercontinental ballistic capabilities. Thus, Western Europe would be covered with a sort of nuclear umbrella. At the same time, however, the US's allies should improve their conventional forces. In those circumstances, the United States badly needed its allies. Among them Britain, as the third nuclear power and an American overseas base, was in the best position. When, however, the Americans were introducing their new strategy, Britain's announcements of reductions in its conventional forces were deeply against American aims. Significant cuts were proclaimed in the British Defense Minister, Duncan Sandy's *White Paper* of April 1957.[27] The Americans thought that supplying nuclear information and weapons to Britain would allow the British to do more on the conventional front.

In March 1957, during the Bermuda Eisenhower-Macmillan meeting a tentative agreement on the Thor intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRMBs) to be stationed on the British soil was reached. The final arrangement was signed in February 1958.[28] The formula of control over the weapons was a dual-key system. It meant that the missiles could not be launched without the mutual consent of both the United States and Britain.[29] This rule significantly strengthened the principle of interdependence for which Macmillan was striving hard. The effects of the agreement

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[24] R. Dawson, R. Rosecrance, *Theory and Reality in the Anglo-American Alliance*, "World Politics," vol. 19, issue 1, October 1966, p. 51.

[25] J. Melissen, *The Struggle for Nuclear Partnership*, STYX Publications, Groningen 1993.

[26] R.A. Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge. Eisenhower's Response to the Soviet Satellite*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1993; D. Healey, *The Sputnik and Western Defence*, "International Affairs," vol. 34, no. 2, April 1958, pp. 145–156.

[27] The reductions were to be from 690,000 to 375,000. At the same time conscription was to be replaced by professional army. *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*, Cmnd. 124, HMSO, London 1957.

[28] In: J. Baylis, *Anglo-American...*, pp. 108–111.

[29] J. Simpson, *The Independent Nuclear State. The US, Britain and the Military Atom*, Macmillan, London 1983, p. 125.

may be examined from two angles. Militarily, the US achieved the possibility of reaching the territory of the Soviet Union with its nuclear weapons. Thus, it secured itself credible deterrence capabilities. The American nuclear umbrella over Western Europe had been strengthened and the concept of "nuclear sharing" within NATO had acquired a practical realization.[30] On the other hand, Thor would secure ballistic missile capabilities for the United Kingdom until the development of the British ground-to-air missile, Blue Streak, would be completed. According to plans, it was to enter service in 1965/66. Politically, the agreement constituted a crucial stage in the process of the restoration of close Anglo-American relations after the Suez affair since military collaboration was intensified.

The UK not only considerably strengthened its international prestige but, first and foremost, its negotiating position *vis-à-vis* the US by conducting the successful test explosion of its thermonuclear device in May 1957.[31] The Americans were genuinely impressed by British scientific-technical potential. President Eisenhower was a strong supporter of the idea of the restoration of nuclear collaboration. He expressed his position as follows: "when many of our former secrets were known to our enemies, it made no sense to keep them from our friends."[32] British thermonuclear capabilities were something that Eisenhower was badly in need of to break down the opposition in Congress and the Joint Atomic Energy Commission for the amending of the *McMahon Act* in order to allow the re-establishment of relations with Britain.

British nuclear policy after 1945 proceeded in a double-track way. On the one side, Britain was developing its own atomic and thereafter thermonuclear programs. On the other, diplomatic actions as well as less formal activities were undertaken in order to restore the co-operation with the United States. In both of these spheres the UK had succeeded. Atomic and hydrogen bombs were produced and the Americans were influenced into changing their legal regulations regarding nuclear energy. President Eisenhower asked Congress to change the atomic energy legislation and the amendment of the *McMahon Act* was passed in June 1958. From then on, the transfer of nuclear information was allowed to a country that had made a "substantial progress" in the development of atomic weapons.[33] Without doubt, Britain was the only country that was meeting this criterion. On 3 July 1958, an exceptional agreement for co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defense purposes (commonly known as the *Mutual Defense Agreement*) was signed between the United States and Great Britain. It allowed for extremely broad and close nuclear co-operation. As John Baylis remarks, "It provided for the unprecedented exchange of a wide range of vital nuclear secrets and established a framework for an Anglo-American nuclear partnership which remained in force

[30] Apart from Britain, the American IRBMs were also located in Italy and Turkey. J. Melissen, *Nuclearizing NATO, 1957–1959: the "Anglo-Saxons," nuclear sharing and the fourth country problem*, "Review of International Studies," vol. 20, issue 3, 1994, pp. 253–276.

[31] See: K. Pyne, *Art or Article? The need for and Nature of the British Hydrogen Bomb, 1954–58*, "Contemporary Record," vol. 9, no. 3, 1995, pp. 562–585; J. Baylis, *The Development of Britain's Thermonuclear Capability 1954–61: Myth or Reality?*, "Contemporary Record," vol. 8, no. 1, 1994, pp. 159–174.

[32] D.D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years*, Vol. II, *Waging Peace, 1956–61*, Heinemann, London 1966, p. 219.

[33] J. Simpson, op.cit., p. 137.

throughout the cold war period and which continues in the late 1990s."[34] The agreement became a cornerstone of Anglo-American nuclear collaboration, which has grown into the central component of the special relationship. Independence (the development of British nuclear technology) was used by Britain as a means leading to interdependence (the restoration of Anglo-American co-operation).[35] Although Britain's quest for full nuclear collaboration and interchange with the United States was a source of friction and bitterness in the special relationship, the tactic appeared to be wholly successful.

It was a great achievement of the Macmillan government. Everything looked as though the close nuclear partnership had been restored and, hence, the special relationship crucially reinforced. Nonetheless, the next crisis, this time one of the most serious in the whole history of the relations between the two countries, was soon to appear.

THE SKYBOLT CRISIS

The origins

A British nuclear deterrent system was being initially developed in the period of 1956–1960. Its realization was carried out by the Air Ministry. The resulting V-bombers, gradually fitted with nuclear weapons, were coming into service. Within the Air Force research and development (R&D) work was also conducted on ballistic missiles. As a potential successor for the V-bombers, which in an age of advancing technological development were becoming less effective and more vulnerable, the IRBM (intermediate range ballistic missile) Blue Streak had been chosen and its development commenced in 1955. The basic premise was to maintain an independent deterrent force and to obtain the capability of reaching Soviet territory. Yet, in February 1960, following the recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff, the Defense Committee made a decision to abandon the program. There were several reasons for this but strategic, technological and financial considerations were of decisive importance.[36] First, the missiles placed in the underground silos would be highly susceptible to attack. The early warning system would give Britain only four to five minutes before a would-be Soviet attack. Therefore, Blue Streak could be used only as a first-strike weapon but this was not sufficient to make British deterrent credible enough. Second-strike capacity was required, as well as a more mobile system. Second, the development of the Soviet anti-ballistic missile capabilities questioned the missile's military value, making Blue Streak relatively ineffective. Third, given the above dis-

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[34] J. Baylis, *Exchanging Nuclear Secrets: Laying the Foundations of the Anglo-American Nuclear Relationship*, "Diplomatic History," vol. 25, issue 1, Winter 2001, pp. 33–61.

[35] I. Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship. Britain's Deterrent and America, 1957–1962*, Clarendon Press, London 1994, p. 105.

[36] J. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence. British Nuclear Strategy 1945–1964*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1995, pp. 286–287; S. Menaul, *Countdown. Britain's Strategic Nuclear Forces*, Robert Hale, London 1980, pp. 102–106; I. Clark, op.cit., pp. 157–189; K. Harrison, *From Independence to Dependence: Blue Streak, Skybolt, Nassau and Polaris*, "RUSI Journal," vol. 127, no. 4, December 1982, pp. 26–27.

advantages, the system was very expensive. According to the assessments it would cost, without warheads, around £500–600 million.

The Blue Streak project was the last British effort to secure an independent delivery system. With its cancellation Britain was to rely completely on American assistance. Consequently, British strategic "independence" was to be undermined. The decision to abandon Blue Streak was followed by the recommendation to undertake negotiations with the US on the supply of American air-to-ground ballistic missile – Skybolt.

In tune with British wishes, during the Eisenhower-Macmillan meeting in Camp David, held between 26 and 29 March 1960, the President provisionally agreed to sell Skybolt to Britain. The record was as follows: "In a desire to be of assistance in improving and extending the effective life of the V-bomber force, the US, subject only to US priorities, is prepared to provide Skybolt missiles – minus warheads – to the UK on a reimbursable basis in 1965 or thereafter. Since Skybolt is still in the early stages of development, this offer is necessarily dependent on the successful and timely completion of its development program."[37] During the summit another agreement was also signed. Britain agreed to make its Scottish port, Holy Loch, available for American submarines carrying Polaris missiles.[38] These two deals – Skybolt and Holy Loch – have commonly been considered as linked with each other. Although it was not a real tie-in transaction, there was undoubtedly some serious connection between the two agreements which spelled "interdependence." The Camp David meeting and its outcomes constituted one step further in the process of restoration of the special partnership.

The *Memorandum of Understanding* signed in June by the British minister of defense, Harold Watkinson, and his American counterpart, Thomas Gates regulated the details of the agreement.[39] The US was to cover the entire R&D costs and then, when ready, sell Skybolt missiles – minus warheads – to Great Britain.

After giving up the development of ground-launched delivery systems, the British made all of their efforts to extend the operational capabilities of their strategic Air Force. Fitting the V-bombers with Skybolt was thought to be the solution to the stalemate – a way of maintaining a credible deterrent system until the early 1970s and thus, sustaining Britain's deterrence posture.

American R&D on Skybolt, though, met serious difficulties and the chances of the production of a fully operational and effective missile was moving away. It had been originally foreseen that the rocket would obtain its operational status in October 1964. Yet in 1962 it was estimated that this would be possible only in 1966. The costs were growing drastically. When the project had been initiated they were calculated at approximately $354 million, while in 1962 the sum was already $493 million.[40] Apart from the financial problems technical difficulties also occurred – all five

[37] *Memorandum From President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Macmillan*, Camp David, 29 March 1960, *Foreign Relations of the United* States (*FRUS*), GPO, Washington D.C. 1958–1960, Vol. VII/2, p. 863.

[38] D. Murray, *Kennedy, Macmillan and Nuclear Weapons*, Macmillan, London 2000, pp. 38–44.

[39] PRO, CAB 129/101 C (60) 97, *Memorandum of Understanding*, 6 June 1960.

[40] G.M. Dillon, op.cit., p. 27.

tests failed. Thus, the whole program was in jeopardy, especially when confronted with the successful developments of two other systems: Minuteman (the intercontinental missile) and Polaris (the submarine rocket). Consequently, the US began to consider the possibility of canceling the Skybolt project.[41]

Although the British were fairly early aware of difficulties surrounding Skybolt and were kept up-to-date about its progress, they strongly believed that the project would be completed.[42] Macmillan wrote in his memoirs: "There had since been some disquieting rumours of technical difficulties in relation to Skybolt; but President Eisenhower and subsequently President Kennedy had assured me that these would be overcome. As late as April 1962, the minister of defense, Peter Thorneycroft, had felt it possible to assure the House of Commons that he had no evidence of any unforeseen setback."[43] At the end of November 1962 the Americans officially informed the British about the problems that has arisen with Skybolt but still both sides were somewhat playing for time. When US defense secretary, Robert McNamara visited London in December, it seemed that the decision on the abandonment of Skybolt was already a *fait accompli*. McNamara, however, assured the British that the final decision would not be taken without prior mutual "consultations" which for the British, it seems, meant "compensation." Despite this promise, the explicit disclosure of American intentions "led to a veritable political eruption in London, a wave of anti-Americanism in the British public, and at the official level the greatest crisis between the two countries since the Suez affair."[44] British reaction might be best described as a mixture of shock, indignation and anger. Pandora's box had been opened.

The American and British perspectives

In the United States the Skybolt problem was seen in technical and economic terms. Thus, the arguments for the cancellation of the missile were all about technical difficulties and rapidly increasing costs. There was also strategic reasoning since Skybolt combined the disadvantages of bombers (vulnerable to attack while on the ground) and missiles (the limitations of accuracy and range). McNamara attempted to justify the decision referring to a more technically advanced system: "In view of Minuteman's greater flexibility, reliability, accuracy, its much lower vulnerability and faster time to target, it clearly makes sense to meet our extra missile requirements by buying Minuteman rather than Skybolt."[45]

Conversely, for Britain Skybolt was merely a political problem since the future of British deterrent, and hence defense and security policies, depended on the success

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[41] R.C. Williams, *Skybolt and American Foreign Policy*, "Military Affairs," vol. 30, no. 3, 1966, pp. 153–160.

[42] PRO, PREM 11/3716, *The Importance of Skybolt to the RAF, Skybolt Development Progress*; PRO, PREM 11/3716, *David Ormsby Gore from Washington to Foreign Office*, November 28, 1962; J. Baylis, *Ambiguity...*, pp. 312–316.

[43] H. Macmillan, *At the End of the Day, 1961–1963*, Macmillan, London 1973, pp. 342–343.

[44] A.J. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics. The British Experience with an Independent Strategic Force, 1939–70*, Oxford University Press, London 1972, p. 224.

[45] Quoted in: R.C. Williams, op.cit., p. 157.

of the project. Therefore, the possession of the missile turned out to be crucial for maintaining British independent nuclear forces. Skybolt became the symbol of Britain's standing in the nuclear club. On the one hand, Kennedy seemed not to be completely aware of diplomatic implications of Skybolt's demise. On the other, Macmillan appeared to ignore American arguments regarding technical complications and cost-effectiveness calculations.

During the Cuban missile crisis the Skybolt problem, unsurprisingly, became utterly unimportant for the US and was put aside. Such a trifling issue as the impact of the decision to abandon the project on British public opinion or on bilateral relations was hardly considered. There were much more important problems to be concerned with – the danger of a nuclear war between the superpowers being the most worrying.

In the meantime, in Britain the atmosphere of anti-Americanism was becoming evident. The British were convinced of the American intention to throw them out of the "nuclear club." US officials' statements significantly strengthened this feeling of distrust facilitating the rise of conspiracy theories. In his speech of 16 June 1962 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Robert McNamara said that "limited nuclear capabilities, operating independently, are dangerous, expensive, prone to obsolescence and lacking credibility as a deterrent."[46] Although afterwards the United States insisted that the statement was not aimed at Britain's nuclear deterrent, at the time it was obvious that the secretary of defense had the UK in mind. Former secretary of state, Dean Acheson added fuel to the flames when on 5 December 1962 affirmed at West Point that "Great Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a new role."[47] The British might have rightly suspected that their nuclear "independence" constituted a major obstacle for American strategic considerations.

The US had finally given up the strategy of massive retaliation and was gradually introducing the doctrine of flexible response. In short, nuclear defense – "the sword" – was to be conducted by the Americans, and Western Europe was to be protected by their nuclear umbrella. Meanwhile, the European NATO allies were expected to increase their expenditures on conventional forces in order to build up "the shield." At the heart of the idea of the doctrine laid a gradual and elastic counteraction to Soviet threats. In the first instance the conventional shield would be employed. Only once it failed, the US would gradually make use of its nuclear forces. Logically, the development of independent European nuclear capabilities was not in tune with those American plans. Any further nuclear proliferation in Western Europe would work against the cohesion of Western nuclear capacities. For the US, its European allies would much better contribute to the defense of the Alliance by reinforcing their conventional forces while leaving nuclear deterrence exclusively to the United States.

Therefore, US politicians did not subscribe to the opinion expressed by Andre Beaufre that the West's ability to deter Soviet attack had been strengthened by the existence of three separate centers of nuclear decision in the West (Washington, London and Paris). They strongly attempted to limit national proliferation through multilateralization. The idea was not to devolve nuclear decision-making to the allies

[46] Quoted in: K. Harrison, op.cit., p. 29.
[47] Quoted in: A.J. Pierre, op.cit., p. 225.

but to centralize it under American control. This was one of the basic assumptions of McNamara's strategy. The secretary of defense argued that "we must avoid the fragmentation and compartmentalization of NATO's nuclear power, which could be dangerous to us all."[48] It was thought that US proposal for the Multilateral Nuclear Force (MLF) would satisfy European demands for a say in nuclear decision-making process and reduce their future nuclear aspirations. However, there was more symbolism in this proposition than resultant changes in practice.

The sequence of events from the Cuban crisis through the statements by McNamara and Acheson to the cancellation of Skybolt not only undermined British public trust in the US but also weakened the Macmillan government's position. The crisis, which serves as an astonishing example of miscommunication between close allies, grew to be a real "political dynamite" in the bilateral relations, and thereby the true test for the special relationship. By and large, it was a tangible evidence of the growing British dependence on the United States.

Solution – the Nassau conference

The Skybolt affair dominated the agenda of the Nassau meeting between Kennedy and Macmillan held on 18–21 December 1962. Macmillan in his opening and melodramatic speech referred, among other things, to close relations between the two countries, to nuclear co-operation during the Second World War, emphasizing especially British contributions, and to the restoration of the special relationship after the Suez crisis. Henry Brandon described his talk in this way: "Macmillan opened the conference like a Mark Anthony giving the funeral oration (...)."[49] Then, the Prime Minister moved on to the Skybolt problem, reminding President Eisenhower's commitment made in Camp David.[50] Macmillan stated that the US had the "moral obligation" to supply Britain with the equivalent of Skybolt, which for him was Polaris. At first President Kennedy was strongly opposed. It would have been extremely difficult for the US to be bound by any bilateral agreement on the supply of ballistic missiles at a time when it was pushing the multinational approach within NATO and when the US was denying its allies any firm right of decision in nuclear matters. Kennedy proposed a solution – the continuation of the Skybolt project as a mutual enterprise with Britain sharing 50 per cent of R&D costs. The proposition was unacceptable for the British since Skybolt was no longer a credible deterrent. Macmillan expressed this bluntly: "Although the proposed British marriage with Skybolt was not exactly a shotgun wedding, the virginity of the lady must now be regarded as doubtful. We were being asked to spend hundreds of millions of dollars upon a weapon on which the President's own authorities were casting doubts, both publicly and privately."[51] Skybolt was already a dead horse.

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[48] W.W. Kaufman, *The McNamara Strategy*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York–London 1964, p. 123.

[49] H. Brandon, *Special Relationships. A Foreign Correspondent's Memoirs From Roosevelt to Reagan*, Macmillan, London 1988, p. 165.

[50] PRO, PREM 11/4229, *Record of a meeting held at Bali-Hai, the Bahamas, at 9.50 a.m. on Wednesday, December 19, 1962*, December 19, 1962.

[51] H. Macmillan, op.cit., p. 358.

Subsequently, the Americans came up with another option – the Hound Dog missile which, like Skybolt, could have been carried by the V-bombers.[52] That was neither to be accepted by the British given that the missile could not in fact perform a strategic role. At this point, they were determined to obtain Polaris believing that they had the right to do so.

Macmillan decided to use more dramatic arguments and play on friendship and fear, rightly assuming that this way he would make a strong impression on the President. He simply asked whether Kennedy wanted to be held responsible for the fall of his government, a great anti-American frustration in Britain and the decline of the just rebuilt special relationship. Without doubt, the President must have been moved. After his stirring speech the Prime Minister directly asked Kennedy what were his intentions. For both sides there could have been no doubt – Britain would be satisfied only with Polaris as a substitute for the unfortunate Skybolt.

It looked as if Kennedy understood the anger and determination of the British. Eventually, the President agreed to sell Polaris to Britain. It would be, however, a mistake to see this decision merely as the result of Macmillan's pressure because just before Nassau, on 16 December, during Kennedy's meeting with his chief advisers the agreement was reached to provide Britain with Polaris.[53] There was a fear in the US that unless Britain was supplied with a substitute for Skybolt, it could have opted for co-operation with France and "offer de Gaulle nuclear aid in exchange for his OK on England joining the Market."[54] This possibility of the Anglo-French tie-in transaction, taken quite seriously in Washington, was one of the reasons why the US agreed to sell Polaris to Britain. What is more, the public attitude in the United States was rather sympathetic to Britain as reflected in the "Washington Post" comment on 15 December: "(...) the Government of the United States has handled its relations with Great Britain with little consideration for British feelings, and not much evidence of real concern about the British position."[55]

Although the Americans did not want to risk the special relationship, at the same time they could not make their MLF proposition vulnerable to the criticism based on exceptional treatment for the British. Thus, the solution that had been worked out was to tie British Polaris force with the NATO's multilateralization. The way out was to make the Polaris offer, in contrast to Skybolt, conditional – to link it with the projected MLF.

As the result of the Bahamas Conference, on 21 December 1962, the *Statement on Nuclear Defense Systems* was published.[56] The United States agreed to provide Britain with Polaris missiles, less warheads. The UK was to produce the warheads and submarines on its own. British nuclear forces that were established in this way were to become the part of NATO multilateral nuclear forces and serve "for the purposes of international defense of the Western Alliance."[57] Nevertheless, Britain re-

[52] PRO, PREM 11/4229, *Record of a meeting held at Bali-Hai, the Bahamas, at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, December 20, 1962*, December 20, 1962.

[53] R.E. Neustadt, *Report to RFK. The Skybolt Crisis in Perspective*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca–London 1999, p. 81.

[54] I. Clark, op.cit., p. 395.

[55] Quoted in: R.E. Neustadt, op.cit., p. 80.

[56] PRO, PREM 11/4229, *Statement on Nuclear Defence Systems*, December 21, 1962.

[57] Ibidem, par. 9.

served the right of independent use of the weapons "where her Majesty's Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake." This escape-clause was thought to assure the independence of British nuclear forces. That, however, was rather ambiguous and as Andrew Pierre rightly points out: "(...) could one imagine Britain considering the use of nuclear weapons in circumstances other than those involving the supreme national interest?"[58] Nonetheless, the escape-clause preserved the symbolism of independence. The agreement was thought to be "a major milestone in the long march to a truly interdependent Atlantic alliance."[59] Thus, British nuclear forces were assigned the role of forming a key component of the MLF. In fact, they were thought to become, along with American submarines, a foundation for the joint controlled and commanded NATO nuclear forces.

The Nassau Conference and Agreement were, unquestionably, Macmillan's diplomatic successes. He achieved what he was striving for – the most sophisticated means of delivery – on extremely favorable conditions. The British were not to participate in the costs of R&D but only pay for ready missiles. Polaris was to secure the UK's operational capabilities up to the early 1990s. Nassau became the peak of Macmillan's policy of interdependence and the crowning achievement of merging two cardinal points of reference of his foreign policy: the "special relationship" and the "independent deterrent." On the other hand, however, Great Britain had become strongly dependent on American delivery systems which made the thesis of its "independent nuclear deterrent" highly debatable. As far as the American interests are concerned, the US acquired a strong influence over Britain's nuclear capabilities and future aspirations.

THE SKYBOLT CRISIS AND THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Paradoxical consequences

The crisis under examination had far-reaching consequences, which were not limited only to the area of nuclear co-operation. First and foremost, it was the most severe crisis in the special relationship, newly restored after the Suez debacle, and posed a real danger of disintegration of the partnership. Paradoxically enough, after the period of serious tension, the special relationship was strengthened and cemented. During the crisis the continuation of the entire partnership was at stake but after the problems had been overcome, the special relationship seemed to flourish again. The situation was very similar to that surrounding the Suez affair. The traditional alliance theory explains neither the Suez nor the Skybolt crises since it suggests that "when there are contradictory interests, alliances must give way."[60] In contrast, both Suez and Skybolt led to the reinforcement of the alliance.

Three types of consequences of the crisis can be distinguished. First, as has already been mentioned, closer relations were established in nuclear affairs. Second, the priorities of British nuclear strategy and policy were radically changed as a result

[58] A.J. Pierre, op.cit., p. 237.
[59] W.W. Kaufman, op.cit., p. 126.
[60] J. Baylis, *The Anglo-American...*, p. 377.

of the decisions made in the Bahamas. Third, the problem of independence and interdependence not only of British deterrent but also, more generally, of British foreign policy had arisen as a serious issue.

Changes in British nuclear policy

From the early beginnings, that is since the 1940s, the British nuclear program was developed under the RAF (Royal Air Force). Until the late 1960s the role of nuclear deterrent was conducted by Bomber Command. Although Britain undertook the development of its own projects of ballistic missiles (e.g. Blue Streak), which were to replace the V-bombers in the mid-1960s, it was given up because of technical and financial difficulties. The British, therefore, went back to the formula of deterrent carried out by the RAF. Nevertheless, in order to maintain the operational capabilities, the decision was made to purchase the American air-launched Skybolt missile. When the US abandoned the project, Britain found itself in a dilemma. A modern delivery system was badly needed in order to extend the operational capabilities of British nuclear weapons up to the early 1990s. As the result of the Nassau Conference, the US agreed to provide Britain with the most modern delivery system – the submarine-launched ballistic missile Polaris. One of the effects of the 1962 events was that the priorities of British nuclear policy were drastically changed. The whole responsibility for the future deterrent was taken over by the Royal Navy. Contemporary British nuclear policy took shape as the result of decisions taken in Nassau. Therefore, the Bahamas Conference can be regarded as a real turning point in the history of the development of British nuclear program and also in the special relationship.

The year 1962, then, can and should be viewed as one of the breakthroughs in the history of British nuclear program and policy. It has its deserved place among such events as: 1940/41 – the Frisch-Peierls Memorandum and the MAUD Report; 1947 and 1952 – the decision to build an atomic bomb and its first explosion; 1954 and 1957 – the decision to build a hydrogen bomb and its first successful test; and 1958 – the Anglo-American *Mutual Defense Agreement.*

INDEPENDENCE-INTERDEPENDENCE-DEPENDENCE. NUCLEAR CO-OPERATION AND THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

The development of military nuclear technology in Britain can only be comprehended in the context of the evolution of Anglo-American relations. The crucial role in the description of this process is played by the concept of independence-interdependence-dependence.

Various types of relations between two countries can be distinguished. One approach is to present them as a continuum, one end of which is occupied by self-reliance/independence and the other – by dependence.[61] Self-reliance is the ability to fulfill a state's needs by employing its own resources. Dependence, on the other hand, can be identified as meeting these needs only by using the resources under

[61] J. Simpson, op.cit., pp. 14–15.

control of other state. Following John Simpson we can single out two types of dependency: absolute and relative. The first type occurs when the fulfillment of the needs is impossible once the relations between two states are broken off. We deal with the second one when the needs can be met in some other way, not only by the assistance of a particular state. As far as the relations between the weaker state and the stronger one are concerned, we are usually dealing with the asymmetrical relationship of dependency, with a weaker state in a position of absolute or relative dependence.

Anglo-American nuclear co-operation has evolved from a phase of integration (1943–1946), through a period of full independence (1946–1957), followed by interdependence (1958–1962/63) until the stage of dependency which has lasted up to the present day. Close relations with the United States have helped Britain to save time and money but it has to be said that even without American assistance, the UK would probably have been able to produce and maintain its nuclear deterrent. If the Nassau Accord had not been reached, it would have been possible for Britain to opt for an *entente nucleaire* with France. Therefore, Anglo-American relations cannot be classified as an absolute dependency, but relative – it could have been overcome by the employment of its own, adequately high, expenditures and/or by the establishing of closer co-operation with another country (France being the most probable option). Nevertheless, there is no question that as early as the abandonment of Blue Streak, and symbolically as early as Nassau, Britain has been dependent on the American means of delivery. The possession of nuclear capabilities (the ability to produce warheads) does not suffice. What matters is the capacity to manufacture the means of delivery. Thus, the decision to abandon an independent British development of the delivery vehicle was made after it was recognized "that the pursuit of full independence was largely illusory."[62]

To sum up, Britain is not absolutely dependent on the United States. It could have independently manufactured and maintained a nuclear weapon system. In the situation of a threat to national security it could, and still can, independently use nuclear weapons (the Nassau Agreement's "opt-out clause"). The British nuclear deterrent, as it took shape in the aftermath of Nassau, can be compared to driving a car. One has to refuel and from time to time have it serviced but this does not stop the car from being one's property, nor from driving it in the direction one chooses.

British understanding of the confusing term of "independence" changed after the Suez crisis and a "much more modest vision of independence" was adopted.[63] In the early 1960s serious attempts were undertaken in order to work out its definition. The aim was also to establish a less ambiguous concept on which national nuclear policy could be based. In December 1962 the Joint Planning Staff prepared its Report. Two conditions of "independence" in the field of nuclear weapons were recognized. The first was that "the final authority for the dispatch of the strategic nuclear force must be retained by the UK government (...)." The second read that "every element of the weapon system should be owned, manned, maintained, supported and controlled by Britain".[64] The former, being in accord with the Nassau Agreement's escape-

[62] J. Baylis, *Ambiguity*..., p. 288.
[63] Ibidem.
[64] PRO, DEFE 6/81, JP (62) 134 Final, December 3, 1962.

clause, has been fulfilled. Yet some serious doubts have remained in reference to the latter. Although Britain was to produce both warheads and submarines for the Polaris missiles on its own, it used American assistance widely. British warheads were constructed on the model of American W76 ones and were tested in the American Nevada trials site. What is more, the construction of British Polaris Resolution-class submarines was based on American Ohio-class submarine and a number of components were of American production. The fuel for the submarines' reactors as well as for warheads came from the US. By and large, the whole maintenance of the Polaris system was highly dependent on the American assistance. In the case of Polaris' successor – Trident – also provided by the United States (as the result of agreements reached in 1980–1982), the dependence has been even greater, especially in the spheres of communication and navigation.[65] This evidence calls into question the fulfillment of the second condition of "independence" as singled out in the 1962 Report.

Along with growing dependence on the United States, British understanding of "independence" was being narrowed. Hence, unsurprisingly, it kept British politicians awake at night. Macmillan was clearly aware of the dilemma and, during one of the Nassau meetings, expressed it by saying that the British were "between two worlds, the world of independence which was now ceasing to exist and the world of interdependence which we had not yet reached, though we were moving towards it. The nearer we got to it, the more surrender of sovereignty there would have to be in practice, but until our design for interdependence was completed, we must be able in the last resort to control our own forces."[66] It seems, therefore, that the second condition was being gradually weakened so the final criterion for an "independent" nuclear force became the ability of using them autonomously. Since 1962 Britain has been moving towards "the world of interdependence." It was characteristic for both nuclear co-operation and the special relationship in general. When the relationship was becoming more "special" and the co-operation was deepening, it was more and more difficult for Britain to sustain the "nice balance" between two contradicting notions. This should be better understood when we quote what Macmillan wrote to Kennedy about Nassau – it was "a historic example of the nice balance between interdependence and independence which is necessary if Sovereign states are to work in partnership."[67] It seems that in order to preserve this balance, the British more often appealed to the mythologization of an "independent" deterrent and to symbolization of the special relationship. By and large, "dependence on the United States was justified by the benefits this "special" relationship brought to Britain (...)."[68]

Apart from the connections in the area of nuclear technology, the close coordination of strategic planning meant that British plans were to be subordinated to American ones (among other things in the hierarchy of nuclear targeting). The Brit-

[65] See: C. McInnes, *Trident. The Only Option?*, Brassey's Defence Publishers, London 1986.

[66] PRO, PREM 11/4229, *Prime Minister's Talks with President Kennedy and Mr Diefenbaker in the Bahamas*, December 18–22, 1962.

[67] PRO, PREM 11/4052, *Macmillan to Kennedy*, December 24, 1962.

[68] W. Wallace, *What price independence? Sovereignty and interdependence in British politics*, "International Affairs," vol. 62, no. 3, 1986, p. 370.

ish also relied heavily on the American early warning systems. With the increasing development of nuclear technology, British dependency was systematically growing, passing subsequently through the following phases: Skybolt – Polaris – Trident.[69]

Implementing the policy of interdependence meant the restoration of old, and the establishment of new, links with the US. One can subscribe to the following generalization: the deeper the interdependence, the closer the special relationship grew to be. Without doubt close partnership with the United States did not help Britain in its application to the Common Market. It will be recalled that in Nassau Kennedy and Macmillan also decided to offer Polaris to France.[70] The basic idea was not to alienate de Gaulle, to prove American good intentions and to tie France with the planned MLF. During his press conference on 14 January 1963, President Charles de Gaulle announced his decision – the double "non." He rejected Kennedy's proposition regarding Polaris and blocked Britain joining the Common Market.[71] The Nassau Agreement convinced de Gaulle that every time Britain had to choose between the US and Europe it would choose the former. However, the assumption that it was the Nassau Agreement that caused the French veto simply does not hold true. There was no such a direct connection. Immediately before the meeting with Kennedy in the Bahamas, Macmillan visited de Gaulle. During the talks in Rambouillet the French President unambiguously gave Macmillan to understand that he intended to veto British application.[72] Thus, Nassau served for de Gaulle only as an excellent pretext. In this light, the Nassau Agreement can be said to be "the symbol of Britain's insufficient Europeannes and the transatlantic entanglement of its deterrent."[73]

As for the US, the special relationship appeared to be a serious obstacle for implementing the concept of "nuclear sharing" within NATO and also partly of doctrine of the limited nuclear war. For Britain it became a big barrier in its way towards closer relations with Europe.

While the Skybolt crisis can be viewed as an example of the periodic friction in the special relationship, though a very serious one at that, the Nassau and Polaris Agreements may be seen as further steps in the process of restoration of the partnership. In the late 1950s and early 1960s growing inequality in the alliance was evident. It was transforming into a highly dependent relationship. The maintenance of a British "independent" nuclear force was ultimately dependent upon US security guarantees and good will. The notion of British dependency developed into an in-

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[69] L. Freedman, M. Navias, N. Wheeler, *Independence in Concert: The British Rationale for Possessing Strategic Nuclear Weapons*, Occasional Paper 5, Centre for International Security Studies at Maryland School of Public Affairs, Maryland 1989.

[70] *Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in France*, January 1, 1963, *FRUS*, 1961–1963, vol. XIII, pp. 743–744.

[71] J. Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons*, Andre Deutsch, London 1970, pp. 232–237; R.E. Neustadt, *Report to RFK*, p. 106.

[72] PRO, PREM 11/4230, *Visit of the Prime Minister to Chateau de Rambouillet*, December 15–16, 1962; *Record of conversation at Rambouillet at 3.45 p.m. on Saturday*, December 15, 1962; *Record of conversation at Rambouillet at 12 noon on Sunday*, December 16, 1962; "(...) the General had told me that Britain would not wish to join Europe and that the country and the Commonwealth were not ready." H. Macmillan, op.cit., p. 351; J. Newhouse, op.cit., p. 209.

[73] R.E. Neustadt, op.cit., p. 1.

herent feature of the special partnership. It is the most evident where nuclear affairs are concerned. British dependence reflected Britain's weakness on the one side and the US superpower status on the other. Along with the developments in nuclear technology and changes in strategy, British dependence on the US was deepening. This shows the progressive character of this dependency, and the Skybolt affair constituted an important step in the process of its extension. By and large, the Anglo-American special partnership and its chief component – nuclear collaboration, in particular, appear to support the judgment that "independence and interdependence need not to be mutually exclusive."[74]

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Two, at first glimpse different, factors – technology and diplomacy – constituted the basic components of the special relationship. They were closely interrelated as the Skybolt affair shows. The disagreement over technology grew to be a severe crisis in Anglo-American diplomatic relations. This friction was effectively minimized and the conflict successfully resolved through the use of diplomatic means. However, while the crisis over Skybolt highlighted British dependence on the United States, the Nassau Agreement merely confirmed it. Although Britain enjoyed exceptional access to American nuclear secrets and weapons, it was to become the only nuclear power devoid of a delivery system of its own.

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[74] G. Stern, *The structure of international society*, Pinter, London–New York 2000, p. 132.

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