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Original on: 3  
Defence: Anglo-French  
Nuclear Collaboration  
July 1979

*Prime Minister*

*M.T.*

*Paul*

*R/14.11.79*

PM/79/90

PRIME MINISTER

Discussion with President Giscard of Defence Nuclear Issues

1. Bearing in mind our limited leverage on the Community front, we will want to get as much as possible out of the discussion of defence nuclear issues when President Giscard is here on 19 November. There are signs that he too might welcome an exchange on these subjects: but the French see the initiative as lying with us. I believe therefore that we should be prepared to raise three topics with him:-

A. SALT III

2. The French are worried that British systems will become entangled in SALT III thus increasing the pressure for French involvement. A reassurance on our part that we equally want to avoid this would be welcome to them. I suggest therefore that we take this opportunity:-

- to assure Giscard that we have no interest in seeing our systems involved in SALT III and no wish to participate;
- to express our willingness to keep in close touch with the French on this issue, since our interests are very similar.

3. Soviet pressure has already started and can be expected to intensify during SALT III for non-US nuclear systems to be included. The involvement of British systems would however detract from our fundamental interest in maintaining the effectiveness of our strategic forces unimpaired. I therefore conclude that our best policy is to keep out of the SALT process and to do everything possible to avoid any numerical constraints on our nuclear forces in SALT III.

/4. Giscard

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4. . Giscard may well point out that non-involvement may be difficult for us to sustain as we will continue to rely on US co-operation to maintain the effectiveness of our deterrent.

In response you could say that:

- we shall make our attitude to SALT III clear to the US Administration, who have already indicated that they will resist Soviet efforts to bring UK forces into SALT III;
- we hope to reach agreement with the US on co-operation over a Polaris successor before SALT III negotiations begin;
- in the last resort there is nothing we or the French could do to prevent the super powers deciding without our consent to take account of our national systems in negotiating ceilings for their own forces in SALT III. This is a further reason for keeping in close touch with each other.

5. Giscard may also express concern that SALT III will cover not only strategic but also long range theatre systems, and this could strengthen the Soviet case for inclusion of UK and French forces. If this question arises, I suggest that you might reply that:-

- we can expect intense Soviet pressure irrespective of whether long range TNF are covered;
- it is accepted in the Alliance that UK and French systems should be excluded from any negotiations on TNF;
- SALT I and II provide precedents for the continued exclusion of British and French systems.

#### B. POLARIS SUCCESSOR

6. Giscard will be interested in our plans. He is unlikely to raise the subject himself but he would certainly, I think, be grateful to know where we stand. We cannot say much yet, but you could:-

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- let him know that our thinking clearly points towards a continuation of Anglo-US collaboration on lines similar to the Polaris arrangement;
- give him some idea of our views on timing, mentioning the importance of your visit to Washington in December;
- indicate that we will keep him informed as matters progress.

C. ANGLO-FRENCH NUCLEAR COLLABORATION

7. It is not clear what the French want here. Ideally no doubt they would like to co-operate with us in the development and production of actual nuclear systems. But they probably assume by now that we intend to go on developing our strategic missiles and delivery systems in conjunction with the Americans. There is however some evidence that they would see advantages in co-operation short of major procurement: for example on operational matters, support arrangements and the like. In all of these areas we are restricted by our obligations to the Americans. We have had recent hints that the Americans would understand it if we were a little more frank with the French than hitherto. But it would be unwise to heighten expectations in the latter respect until we have taken our soundings with the Americans further.

8. Subject to the Defence Secretary's views, I suggest therefore that you may like to indicate to Giscard that:

- we are keen to see a greater degree of mutual understanding in the nuclear defence field;
- we would see value in exchanging views on our respective nuclear doctrines, given our broadly similar capabilities and roles;
- we would see this as a useful starting point from which, with patience and time, and within the limits of our obligations to the Americans, something more substantial might develop.

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9. This does not amount to much. It would help to give more substance to the message if we could add that we would also like to investigate the scope for collaboration in more operational areas, such as deployment, support, training and safety. Our very tentative soundings with the Americans have not yet gone far enough to allow us to speak on these lines to the French. But I am sure that we should at some stage seek US agreement to our holding exploratory talks with the French on these matters too.
10. I am sending copies of this minute to the Defence Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary and Sir Robert Armstrong.

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

14 Nov 79

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