

The Issues of Palestine and Algeria on the Delay of NATO's Formation, 1948–1949: A Study on British International Negotiations

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Abstract

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a military pact founded on 4 April 1949 in Washington D.C. Initially, it was comprised of 12 members committed to containing Soviet encroachment during the Cold War. Since its formation, NATO has expanded to include 32 members. The original members included seven founding countries, namely, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, the United States (U.S.), and Canada, and five invited countries, which were Italy, Norway, Portugal, Iceland, and Denmark. The drafting of this Atlantic military pact involved over a year of negotiations, from March 1948 to March 1949. Previous studies indicate that the process was lengthy primarily due to the issue of Italian membership, which caused delays and rescheduling of the signing ceremony from 1 February 1949 to the first week of April 1949. In addition to the Italian membership issue, this study argues that Palestine and Algeria, though peripheral to the NATO negotiations, contributed to the delay in NATO's formation. By analysing British Foreign Office Papers (FO 371) and the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), this study reveals the disagreement between Britain and the U.S. over these 'stray-stone' countries during the NATO negotiation period. This study is significant because it highlights how seemingly unrelated geopolitical situations can substantially impact major international developments. It demonstrates how the resulting delay was resolved, offering a valuable case study of the unpredictable nature of international negotiations from the perspective of Britain.

Keywords: Palestine, Algeria, delay, 'stray-stone' countries, NATO's formation

Introduction

On 4 April 1949, the twelve founding members of NATO convened in Washington D.C. to sign the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) military pact. Of these, seven members, Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the United States (U.S.), and Canada were considered the original founders due to their initiative and efforts in drafting the pact. The remaining five invited members were Iceland, Denmark, Norway (the Scandinavian countries), Portugal, and Italy. Regardless of their membership types, the Atlantic Treaty obligates all members to consult on threats to the territorial or political integrity of any member, to consider an attack on one as an attack on all, and to collectively develop their joint capacity to resist such an attack.¹ Given that NATO's primary responsibility is to safeguard security and defence, all members regarded this new military alliance as an effective means to contain communist ideology and Soviet encroachment in Western Europe during the post-World War II period.²

Scholars, including revisionists like John M. Blum,³ Denna F. Fleming,⁴ Lloyd C. Gardner,⁵ Gabriel Kolko and Joyce Kolko,⁶ and post-revisionists such as John L. Gaddis,⁷ Geoffrey Smith⁸ and Geir Lundestad⁹ have predominantly focused on Soviet encroachment in Eastern Europe, its opposition to

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¹ Mark Smith, *NATO Enlargement during the Cold War: Strategy and System in the Western Alliance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 11.

² Norasmahani Hussain, "Greco-Turkish Cyprus Dispute and Britain's Decision for Turkey to be included in the Middle East Command for the Political Stabilization of NATO, 1949–1950," *Tamkang Journal of International Affairs* 26, no. 3 (2023): 139. See also Roxana Niknami, "Assessing NATO's Deterrence Strategy against Russian Federation Security Threats in the Baltic Sea," *Geopolitics Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (2023): 252.

³ John M. Blum (ed.), *The Price of Vision: The Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942–46* (Houghton Mifflin, 1973).

⁴ Denna F. Fleming, *The Cold War and its Origins, 1917–60* (Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961).

⁵ Lloyd C. Gardner, *Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941–1949* (Quadrangle, 1972).

⁶ Gabriel Kolko and Joyce Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945–54* (Harper & Row, 1972).

⁷ John L. Gaddis, "The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 7, no. 3 (1983): 171-190.

⁸ Geoffrey Smith (1976), "'Harry, We Hardly Know You': Revisionism, Politics and Diplomacy, 1945-1954," *American Political Science Review* 70, no. 2 (1976): 560-582.

⁹ Geir Lundestad, *America, Scandinavia, and the Cold War, 1945–1949: Expansion and Its Limitation in US Foreign Policy, 1945–1959* (Columbia University Press, 1980).

the Marshall Plan, and its efforts to influence Scandinavia through a friendship pact with Norway. However, they have largely overlooked Soviet involvement in crises within the Eastern Mediterranean, specifically in Greece and Türkiye. Norasmahani Hussain argues that Britain, from a British perspective, played a pivotal role in the formation of NATO.¹⁰ Specifically, Soviet involvement in the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) and the Turkish Straits crisis (1946–1953) prompted Britain to urge the U.S. to abandon its isolationist foreign policy, leading to the Truman Doctrine and the containment of Soviet expansion in Europe.¹¹ The first instalment of this containment policy was economic assistance to Greece and Türkiye, with the Marshall Plan and the establishment of NATO serving as the second and third instalments, respectively.

The establishment of NATO involved three negotiation stages: the Pentagon Talks (22 March 1948 – 1 April 1948), the Washington Security Talks (6 July 1948 – 9 September 1948), and the Washington Exploratory Talks (9 September 1948 – 28 March 1949). Throughout these years, negotiations faced several delays, extending the process and pushing the NATO signing ceremony from the initially planned date of 1 February 1949 to 4 April 1949.¹² Lawrence S. Kaplan,¹³ Sir Nicholas Henderson,¹⁴ Martin H. Folly,¹⁵ Don Cook,¹⁶ Peter G. Boyle,¹⁷ and John Baylis¹⁸ were amongst previous scholars who have studied the hesitation of the U.S. in creating NATO and its refusal to progress promptly during the proceeding of The Washington Security Talks in the summer of 1948. Henderson commented about this hesitation as follows:

During the negotiations in the summer most of the Americans had been reluctant to move fast [because] they were not decided among themselves what the best outcome of the negotiations would be [and] they did not know how congressional and public opinion would take the idea of a Pact containing strong provisions for assistance in the event of aggression.¹⁹

Folly notes that the British were dissatisfied with the American attitude after the Pentagon Talks.²⁰ It is worth noting that Britain, or in particular the British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, was the person who advocated for NATO because he believed the Soviets would never stop their hostile attitude until the European Recovery Program (ERP) had completely failed. Bevin believed that an economic revival in European countries would not be sufficient to prevent Soviet expansion. He argued that, in addition to economic progress, political and spiritual forces must also be mobilised to defend against the Russian threat.²¹ Bevin also advocated for the prompt establishment of the military alliance, citing the increasing Communist threats in Czechoslovakia, Norway, and Finland,²² thus expressing his dissatisfaction with the U.S.'s delay antics.

According to Henderson, one of the reasons for the hesitation was due to the matter of membership, in particular, Italy.²³ Cook also noted the same about the delay that is related to Italian membership when he stated that if Italy was asked to join, it would bring difficulties with Greece and Türkiye.²⁴ However, during the later stage of the talks, all the delegations unanimously agreed to extend the membership

¹⁰ Norasmahani Hussain, *British Foreign Office Perspectives on the Admission of Turkey and Greece to NATO, 1947–1952* (Doctoral Thesis, University of Leeds, 2018), 30.

¹¹ Norasmahani Hussain, "The Origin of U.S. Containment Policy in 1947: The Perception of British School," *Tamkang Journal of International Affairs* 25, no. 4 (2022): 55-56; Norasmahani Hussain and Zulkanain Abdul Rahman (2022), "Strategi Britain ke Arah Pakatan Anglo-Amerika Bagi Mengekang Peluasan Kuasa Kesatuan Soviet di Greece dan Turki, 1945–1947," *Asian Journal of Environment, History and Heritage* 6, no. 2 (2022): 36.

¹² FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 13 December 1948* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 317.

¹³ Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance* (Twayne Publishers, 1988).

¹⁴ Nicholas Henderson, *The Birth of NATO* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982).

¹⁵ Martin H. Folly, "Breaking the Vicious Circle: Britain, the United States and the Genesis of the North Atlantic Treaty," *Diplomatic History* (1988): 59-77.

¹⁶ Don Cook, *Forging the Alliance, NATO, 1945–1950* (Secker & Warburg, 1989).

¹⁷ Peter G. Boyle, "America's Hesitant Road to NATO, 1945–49," in *The Origins of NATO*, ed. J. Smith (University of Exeter Press, 1990), 65-81.

¹⁸ John Baylis (1993), *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942-1949* (Kent State University Press, 1993).

¹⁹ Henderson, *The Birth of NATO*, 74.

²⁰ Folly, "Breaking the Vicious Circle: Britain, the United States and the Genesis of the North Atlantic Treaty," 72.

²¹ CAB 129/23, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: The First Aim of British Foreign Policy, 4 January 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

²² FO371/71458, *Establishment of an Atlantic Security System, 10 March 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

²³ Henderson, *The Birth of NATO*, 59.

²⁴ Cook, *Forging the Alliance, NATO, 1945–1950*, 217.

invitation to Italy. Notably, while the issue of Italian membership was further complicated by the Algerian question, neither Baylis, Henderson, nor Cook explored this aspect in their analyses of the NATO delays. Similarly, these scholars did not adequately address the impact of the Palestine issue, which also impeded the negotiation progress. Consequently, their discussions on the delay in NATO's creation largely overlooked the contributions of Palestine and Algeria, countries peripheral to the negotiations. Norasmahani Hussain and Mohamad Khairul Anuar Mohd Rosli briefly mentioned Palestine and Algeria as factors contributing to NATO's delay.²⁵ However, the authors' article primarily focused on British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's perspective and his concerns regarding the Cyprus dispute between Greece and Türkiye, which explains why they did not elaborate extensively on Palestine and Algeria.

Given the limited examination of Palestine and Algeria's role in the delay of NATO's creation, this study aims to thoroughly discuss these neglected issues from the perspective of NATO's prominent founding members, particularly the U.S. and Britain. It seeks to answer the question: To what extent did the issues concerning Palestine and Algeria, countries peripheral to the NATO negotiations, contribute to the delay in NATO's creation? By focusing on Palestine and Algeria, this study demonstrates that the widely acknowledged issue of Italian membership was not the sole cause of NATO's delay. Instead, it argues that these two issues, concerning the peripheral countries of Palestine and Algeria – nations that could also be considered 'stray-stone' in the context of core European security concerns – significantly contributed to the delay in creating the NATO military pact. These issues were the divergence in views between the U.S. and Britain regarding the partition of Palestine. Additionally, the French demanded for Algeria to be included as a NATO member alongside Italy, a demand accompanied by a threat of French withdrawal from NATO if that demand was unmet.

Methodology

This study focuses on the delay in NATO's formation, attributing it to two issues largely overlooked by previous historians: those concerning the peripheral, or 'stray-stone' countries of Palestine and Algeria. The term 'stray-stone countries' is employed as a metaphor to underscore the unexpected and disruptive nature of Palestine and Algeria's involvement in the NATO negotiations. Much like stray stones that can unexpectedly obstruct a path or disrupt a carefully laid plan, these countries, seemingly peripheral to the core objectives of NATO's formation, became significant hindrances. Their issues, while not central to the primary concerns of the founding members, nonetheless introduced unforeseen complications and delays, impacting the negotiation process. This metaphor highlights their role as unanticipated obstacles that, despite their apparent insignificance, significantly impeded the progress of the NATO negotiations.

Employing a qualitative methodology, this research utilises 'content analysis' to scrutinise British archival records (the primary sources), involving a process of in-depth research and interpretation to support the argument.²⁶ Primary British materials, including Foreign Office letters, reports, and meeting minutes documenting the delay issues that impeded negotiation progress, were sourced from the National Archives, Kew, London. Digital materials from Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) were obtained online, offering easy access to primary sources from the U.S. perspective for scholars and researchers.²⁷ For this study, the specific sources referenced are related to the discussions and negotiations surrounding the establishment of NATO. Additionally, secondary sources, such as books authored by former diplomats, politicians, and government officials, were utilised to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Given this study's argument that the Palestine issue impeded the smooth establishment of NATO, a brief overview of the U.S. and British disagreement concerning the 1948 partition of Palestine is necessary. This context illuminates how the Palestine question arose during the NATO negotiations and consequently contributed to the delays.

²⁵ See Norasmahani Hussain and Mohamad Khairul Anuar Mohd Rosli, "British Foreign Secretary's Role and Influence in the Exclusion of Greece and Türkiye from NATO, 1948–1949," *Journal of International Studies* 19, no. 2 (2023): 161-188.

²⁶ Azlizan Mat Enh, "Pertempuran Rusia-Uthmaniyah 1877-1878 dan Impaknya terhadap Muslim Bulgaria," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 1 (2024): 64.

²⁷ Noorilham Ismail, "Amerika Syarikat, Misi Judd dan Darurat di Tanah Melayu, 1948–1960," *Kajian Malaysia* 42, no. 2 (2024): 241.

Britain, the U.S., and the Palestine Question, 1947–1948

From 1920 to 1948, Britain held a mandate over Palestine granted by the League of Nations. Avi Shlaim contends that Britain's pro-Zionist policies during this mandate contributed to the Zionist takeover of Palestine.²⁸ Thus, Shlaim noted that when an Arab revolt erupted in 1936, the British army responded with extreme brutality to suppress it.²⁹ However, in early post-World War II, the newly elected Labour government in Britain, which took office in July 1945, decided in February 1947 to withdraw from Palestine due to economic struggles and their declining great power status.³⁰ As noted by Shlaim:

[Labour] Prime Minister Clement Attlee was of the opinion that the sensible course was simply to relinquish the mandate and leave Palestine. Like Churchill at the end of the war, he wanted to rid Britain of the costly, painful, and thankless task of maintaining law and order in Palestine. Attlee thought that the chiefs of staff exaggerated the importance of Palestine as a link in the defenses of the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal and in safeguarding Britain's oil supplies. He also profoundly disagreed with the contention of Chief of the Imperial Staff Field-Marshal Montgomery that Pax Britannica could be maintained in Palestine by British bayonets. To a much greater extent than Bevin, Attlee recognized that the diminution of British power made it necessary to cut their losses in Palestine, as they had done in India.³¹

It seems that Prime Minister Clement Attlee believed that Britain should relinquish its mandate and leave Palestine, considering it a costly and unsustainable burden. He disagreed with the military view that Palestine was crucial to Britain's defence and oil security, and he rejected the idea that British power could be maintained through force. Attlee also acknowledged that Britain's weakened state forced them to concede Palestine, much like they had previously done with India. Nonetheless, scholar Ellen Jenny Ravndal argued that apart from economic and strategic considerations, another reason for the decision to withdraw was to safeguard Britain's position in the Middle East, given that its actions in Palestine were straining ties with other independent Arab states.³² This matter also subtly demonstrated the change in British policy towards Zionists. According to Shlaim:

The truth of the matter is that in 1948 Britain did not pursue either an anti-Zionist policy or an anti-Arab policy but a pro-British one. The controlling consideration behind British policy was how to limit the damage to the interests of the British Empire that was bound to result from relinquishing direct control over Palestine. In other words, Britain's policy during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war was essentially an exercise in damage control.³³

It became evident that the Labour government pursued a neutral policy regarding Palestine, abstaining from supporting either Zionist or Arab interests. This policy choice appeared to be driven by Britain's economic insolvency and the need to curtail overseas spending. In the case of Palestine, Britain was ready to move out, given that the expenditure on Palestine "proved to be too expensive for an impoverished country like Britain".³⁴ Given Britain's economic constraints, the United Nations (UN) assumed responsibility for Palestine's future following Britain's withdrawal. The UN General Assembly's resolution on 29 November 1947 proposed partitioning Palestine into two independent states: one Jewish and one Arab.³⁵

²⁸ Avi Shlaim, "Britain, Israel and Jordan in the 1948 war," *Balfour Project, August 20, 2022*, accessed January 31, 2025, <https://balfourproject.org/britain-and-the-arab-israeli-war-of-1948/>. See also Muhamad Hasrul Zakariah, "The Iron Wall Doctrine by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli Regime Stance towards Palestine: A Prolongation of the Zionist Revisionist Ideology," *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 19, no. 2 (2024): 192.

²⁹ Shlaim, "Britain, Israel and Jordan in the 1948 war," *Balfour Project, August 20, 2022*.

³⁰ CAB 128/9, *Bevin and Creech Jones memorandum, 13 February 1947* (The National Archives, 1947). See also *Hansard*, 25 February 1947, Vol. 433 (H.M.S.O., 1947), Col. 2007.

³¹ Avi Shlaim, "Britain and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, no. 4 (1987): 53.

³² Ellen J. Ravndal, "Exit Britain: British Withdrawal from the Palestine Mandate in the Early Cold War, 1947–1948," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21, no. 3 (2010): 417.

³³ Shlaim, "Britain and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948," 52.

³⁴ CAB 80/100, *The Prime Minister's View on British Imperial Strategy in the Middle East, 22 February 1946* (The National Archives, 1946).

³⁵ Lokman, Ainul Asyraf, and Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor. "New Media and Arab-Israeli Conflict: Dynamics, Impact And Challenges." *Al-Muqaddimah: Online Journal of Islamic History and Civilization* 10, no. 2 (2022): 1-12.

British Foreign Secretary Bevin vehemently objected to the partition of Palestine, believing it would not resolve the conflict between Jews and Arabs.³⁶ Prior to relinquishing the Palestine issue to the UN, Bevin had proposed his own plan, the 'Bevin Plan', which would have placed Palestine under a five-year trusteeship.³⁷ However, both Arabs and Zionists rejected the Bevin Plan. The Arabs' rejection stemmed from the plan's provision to place the Arab part of Palestine under King Abdullah of Jordan.³⁸ From the Zionist perspective, the plan was undesirable because it failed to propose a two-state solution and suggested an Arab state with restricted Jewish immigration after five years.³⁹

It appears Bevin's approach to the Palestine issue indicated a subtle inclination towards the Arab position rather than the Zionist. His opposition to the UN's partition of Palestine stemmed from Soviet support for the plan.⁴⁰ British records document this matter as follows:

I [Bevin] was not surprised when the Russians supported partition There are two things operating in the Russian mind. First of all, Palestine. I am sure they are convinced that by immigration they can pour in sufficient indoctrinated Jews to turn it into a Communist state in a very short time. The New York Jews have been doing their work for them.

Secondly, I shall not be surprised if Russia, to consolidate her position in Eastern Europe, does not break up all her satellite States into smaller provinces, reaching down to the Adriatic. Thus partition would suit them as a principle... You [McNeil] must study very carefully Stalin's work on nationalities to realise how his mind works, and then you will learn that he would have no compunction at all in exploiting these nationalities to achieve his object by means of a whole series which Russia could control.⁴¹

The reasons for Bevin's rejection of the partition were elaborated upon by B. A. B. Burrows, head of the Eastern Department at the Foreign Office, as documented in a British file as follows:

...our relations with the Arabs would very likely fall in the end under Jewish influence and be finally absorbed in the Jewish state, thereby increasing the area of possible Russian influence and excluding the possibility of our obtaining strategic requirements in any part of Palestine.⁴²

It seems that Bevin's pro-Arab attitude in this Palestine issue was genuinely based on long-term strategic considerations that would bring advantage to Britain instead of emotions.⁴³ Bevin maintained his opposition towards the partition of Palestine even after the British Mandate for Palestine ended on 15 May 1948. As Shlaim notes, Zionists reacted strongly to Bevin's stance on the Palestine question, claiming he was actively encouraging Arab states to attack Jews and providing them with weapons to do so.⁴⁴ Bevin's pro-Arab stance on the Palestine issue drew criticism from both Zionists and U.S. President Harry S. Truman. The U.S. strongly backed the UN partition plan, contrasting with Bevin's position. President Truman's pro-Zionist leaning was further influenced by domestic political considerations, specifically the Zionist vote in the 1948 presidential election.⁴⁵

While addressing the Palestine issue, British Foreign Secretary Bevin and his delegates differed significantly with the U.S. over its proposed partition. Britain also contended with the U.S. in convening the Washington Security Talks. British records reveal that this Palestine disagreement contributed to the U.S.'s reluctance to proceed promptly in the NATO negotiations.

³⁶ *Hansard*, 25 February 1947, Vol. 433, Col. 1917.

³⁷ Ravndal, "Exit Britain: British Withdrawal from the Palestine Mandate in the Early Cold War, 1947–1948," 420.

³⁸ Shlaim, "Britain and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948," 55.

³⁹ Jonathan D. Fine, *A State Is Born: The Establishment of the Israeli System of Government, 1947–1951* (SUNY Press, 2018), 37.

⁴⁰ Shlaim, "Britain and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948," 53–54.

⁴¹ FO800/509, *Bevin to Minister of State Hector McNeil, 15 October 1947* (The National Archives, 1947).

⁴² FO371/68822, *Minute by B. A. B. Burrows, 17 August 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

⁴³ Shlaim, "Britain and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948," 59.

⁴⁴ Shlaim, "Britain and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948," 59.

⁴⁵ Ritchie Owendale, "The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Government 1947: The Decision to Withdraw," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944)* 56, no. 1 (1980): 73.

The British-U.S. Palestine Disagreement's Contribution to the Delay of the Washington Security Talks

The Washington Security Talks faced delays in their progression. This section examines how the disagreement between Britain and the U.S. over Palestine significantly contributed to these holdups, manifesting in two key instances: the initial reluctance of U.S. representatives to commence the talks as planned after the Pentagon Talks, and their subsequent protraction of The Washington Security Talks. The section will then analyse Britain's reaction and measures taken to overcome this delay because, as mentioned earlier, British Foreign Secretary Bevin was eager to have NATO formed promptly.

U.S. Reluctance to Open the Washington Security Talks and Britain's Efforts to Overcome it

The formation of NATO began with the secret Pentagon Talks between the U.S., Britain, and Canada, where these three delegates unanimously agreed the new pact must "be formed at the soonest opportunity, which they expected before the current session of the U.S. Congress ended".⁴⁶ However, the day before the Pentagon Talks adjourned, Lord Inverchapel⁴⁷ was informed by John D. Hickerson⁴⁸ that the subsequent negotiations might not be convened as promptly as Britain desired.⁴⁹ British and American records reveal four apparent reasons for the U.S.'s delayed resumption of NATO negotiations. These included concerns that a new military pact could jeopardise the U.S. Congressional approval for the European Recovery Program (ERP); the U.S.'s need for evidence of sufficient military strength among the Brussels powers to limit their dependence on American military aid; internal divisions within the U.S. State Department regarding the NATO proposal, notably between proponents like Hickerson and Theodore C. Achilles⁵⁰ and opponents like George F. Kennan⁵¹ and Charles E. Bohlen;⁵² and the U.S. government's prioritisation of the 1948 presidential elections over concluding a new military alliance.⁵³ These four reasons, however, are outside the scope of this study.

In fact, the U.S. government had an additional, previously overlooked reason for delaying the Washington Security Talks which is the Palestine issue. This stemmed from Bevin's perceived favouritism towards the Arabs over Zionists, the latter receiving strong U.S. support. This difference in preference regarding Palestine strained Anglo-American relations. Specifically, the U.S. championed and voted for the UN General Assembly Resolution 181(II), advocating the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, while Britain formally abstained.⁵⁴

Since becoming the British Foreign Secretary in 1945, Bevin had criticised the U.S.'s handling of the Palestine issue, accusing them of insincerity. Bevin believed President Truman's pro-Zionist stance was solely motivated by a desire to secure Jewish financial support, influence, and votes in the 1948 presidential election.⁵⁵ President Truman, on the other hand, reasoned that Bevin's preference for the Arabs cause over the Zionists was rooted in a deep prejudice concerning the circumstances in Palestine.⁵⁶ Anticipating that the unresolved Palestine question would disrupt the secret Pentagon Talks, Bevin instructed Gladwyn Jebb, the head of the British delegation, to avoid raising the issue to ensure the talks proceeded smoothly. Bevin's instruction is documented in a Foreign Office file as follows:

The Secretary of State [Bevin] is most anxious that [the] Palestine question should not be brought in any way into your talks on Atlantic Security and on United States support for [the] Brussels Treaty. You [Jebb] should therefore carefully avoid being drawn into any (repeat any) discussions in Washington [the Pentagon Talks] about Palestine.⁵⁷

⁴⁶ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the United States-United Kingdom-Canada Security Conversation* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 72.

⁴⁷ The British diplomat to the U.S., who represented Britain in the Pentagon Talks.

⁴⁸ The Director of the Office of European Affairs at the U.S. State Department, who represented the U.S. in the Pentagon Talks.

⁴⁹ FO371/68068A/AN1437, *Atlantic Security Talks, 31 March 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

⁵⁰ The Director of the Division of Western European Affairs in the U.S. State Department.

⁵¹ The Director of the Policy Planning Staff in the U.S. State Department.

⁵² Counsellor of the U.S. State Department.

⁵³ FO371/68068A/AN1547, *Atlantic Security, 10 April 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

⁵⁴ FRUS, The Near East and Africa, Vol. V, *The United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) to the Secretary of State, New York, 29 November 1947* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 1291.

⁵⁵ PREM 8/627, *Bevin to Washington, 12 October 1945* (The National Archives, 1945).

⁵⁶ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1953* (Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1956), 164.

⁵⁷ FO371/68067/AN1301, *Atlantic Security Talks, 22 March 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

Gladwyn Jebb required a reminder about avoiding the Palestine issue for two reasons. First, as the British representative on the UN Security Council discussions regarding Palestine, it was a prominent part of his work. Second, due to the secrecy of the Pentagon Talks, he used the Palestine question as a cover story for his trip, ensuring the NATO meetings remained confidential. However, given the immense tension between the U.S. and British governments over Palestine, U.S. representatives could not refrain from questioning Jebb on this matter. As noted by Jebb: “at the end of our discussions today Americans betrayed nervousness regarding my own cover”.⁵⁸ Fortunately for Jebb, he survived this unnecessary inquiry by the U.S. over the Palestine question by saying that “it may be best for me to fly up to New York when Palestine next appears in the agenda of the Security Council”.⁵⁹ Jebb also added that he asked the U.S. delegates to treat the Palestine issue separately from the NATO matter so that a negative vibe during the meetings could be avoided.⁶⁰

Notwithstanding Jebb's efforts, officials within the U.S. State Department persisted in their inquiries regarding Palestine, as this matter directly contributed to the U.S. government's unwillingness to initiate subsequent negotiations for the formation of NATO. Robert A. Lovett,⁶¹ who held the authority to convene the next round of talks, articulated: “I also think it right to mention that leading State Department officials are at the moment labouring under a sense of keen disappointment at the apparent failure until now to reach any meeting of minds about the Palestine issue”.⁶² Moreover, the Palestine question also caught the attention of U.S. Senators. During a meeting between Lovett and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in May 1948, which the objective of the meeting was to obtain their support for the Vandenberg resolution, two prominent U.S. Senators, namely, Senator Brewster and Senator Wherry “tacked on amendments relating to Palestine”.⁶³ Consequently, Lovett concluded that resolving the U.S.-British disagreement over Palestine was a prerequisite for establishing NATO, acknowledging this as a warning to the British government.⁶⁴ Bevin at first appeared to maintain his stance over this Palestine question and this matter was recorded in a Foreign Office file as follows:

While the Secretary of State [Bevin] does not wish to mention Palestine directly in this letter, he wishes to make the point that while Anglo-American relations must, of course, be very close, it is essential that the impression should not get about that we in Britain are tied to the American chariot wheel. This impression is, of course, strengthened if American foreign policy appears to shift with every wind and we are then expected to shift with it.⁶⁵

Seemingly, Bevin was concerned that Britain's ability to formulate its own policies would be diminished if he agreed to succumb to the pressure put forward by the U.S. government over the Palestine issue. Mr Hamilton Fish Armstrong, who was the American diplomat in London, tried to persuade Bevin by asserting the risk of endangerment if the U.S. and Britain became less friendly because of the Palestine question.⁶⁶ In Bevin's response to Mr Hamilton, he reassured that his main target was to secure the U.S. participation in NATO. Thus, he would ensure the disagreement over Palestine would not ruin his aim.⁶⁷ It seems that Bevin was ready to tolerate this Palestine question so that the NATO talks could be resumed at the soonest opportunity. Bevin elucidated his approach to Mr Hamilton, stating that he understood the U.S. did not have as much experience in foreign affairs as Britain did. He also noted that while the U.S. was developing a sense of responsibility remarkably well, occasional setbacks were to be expected and he would not attach excessive importance to them.⁶⁸ Moreover, securing U.S. involvement in NATO was paramount for Bevin and the Foreign Office, so resolving Palestine issues was essential to avoid obstacles.⁶⁹

⁵⁸ FO371/68067/AN1303, *Atlantic Security Talks: Cover for Mr Jebb*, 22 March 1948.

⁵⁹ FO371/68067/AN1303, *Atlantic Security Talks: Cover for Mr Jebb*, 22 March 1948.

⁶⁰ FO371/68067/AN1303, *Atlantic Security Talks: Cover for Mr Jebb*, 22 March 1948.

⁶¹ The U.S. Undersecretary of State in the U.S. State Department.

⁶² FO371/68068A/AN1664, *Western European and North Atlantic Security: U.S. attitude*, 16 April 1948 (The National Archives, 1948).

⁶³ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Lovett)*, 27 April 1948 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 105.

⁶⁴ NASP., file 283(s), part 1, *Wrong to Pearson, memorandum*, 25 May 1948, “North Atlantic Security Pact”. Cited in Escott Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947–1949* (McClelland and Steward, 1977), 52.

⁶⁵ FO371/73070/Z4674, *Western Security, U.S. Policy*, 31 May 1948 (The National Archives, 1948).

⁶⁶ FO800/483, *North Atlantic Pact: Conversation between Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Bevin*, 1 June 1948 (The National Archives, 1948).

⁶⁷ FO800/483, *North Atlantic Pact: Conversation between Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Bevin*, 1 June 1948.

⁶⁸ FO800/483, *North Atlantic Pact: Conversation between Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Bevin*, 1 June 1948.

⁶⁹ FO371/73072/Z5454, Foreign Office minute: Forthcoming Security Talks, 2 July 1948 (The National Archives, 1948). See also CAB 129/29, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 'Palestine'*, 24 August 1948 (The National Archives, 1948).

To sum up, Bevin's willingness to exercise tolerance regarding the contentious issue of Palestine underscores his diplomatic tack in resolving the delay surrounding the opening of the Washington Security Talks. His pragmatic approach, prioritising the overarching goal of securing U.S. involvement in the nascent NATO alliance, demonstrates a strategic flexibility aimed at overcoming obstacles and ensuring the timely formation of the crucial military pact.

Despite Bevin's readiness to accommodate U.S. preferences on Palestine, the U.S. hesitation persisted due to the continued absence of a date for resumed talks. The U.S. eventually opened the Washington Security Talks on 6 July 1948, prompted by the Soviet Union's Berlin Blockade beginning on 24 June 1948.⁷⁰ Scholars like Baylis identify the Berlin Blockade as decisive in NATO's formation, leaving the U.S. no choice but to continue talks.⁷¹ Forced to open the Washington Talks while many delay issues, including the Palestine question, remained unresolved, the U.S. continued to hesitate with its delegates refusing to proceed quickly.⁷²

U.S. Reluctance to Expedite the Talks and Britain's Efforts to Overcome It

The Washington Security Talks, held from 6 July 1948 to 9 September 1948, opened four months before the November U.S. presidential elections. Favouring post-election resumption, the U.S. delegation seemed reluctant to promptly advance the NATO creation. Moreover, Lovett's welcoming speech subtly indicated this delaying tactic, citing the need for cautious moves in an election year to maintain public support.⁷³ Throughout the nearly two-month duration of the Washington Security Talks, U.S. delegates employed four delaying tactics: remaining silent for the first five meetings, Lovett revisiting the settled issue of Brussels Pact military strength, refusing to clarify their stance on American military assistance despite Brussels Pact demands, and halting negotiations due to French demands for immediate U.S. military aid (supplies and personnel) in case of war.⁷⁴ These four reasons are outside the focal scope of this study and will not be discussed in depth.

It is noteworthy that previous historians have also overlooked the issue of Palestine as a contributing factor to the U.S. delegates' delaying tactics during the Washington Security Talks. As previously mentioned, these talks commenced while delay issues remained unresolved. Regarding the Palestine question, as discussed earlier, Bevin was willing to exercise tolerance regarding the contentious issue of Palestine, so that the Washington Security Talks could be resumed. He had assured Mr. Hamilton, a U.S. diplomat in London, that despite any potential misunderstandings, he did not question American intentions and acknowledged ongoing consultations on the matter.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Bevin did not clearly state his real position on the Palestine issue or his future actions. This left unclear how he intended to appease the U.S., which appeared offended by his pro-Arab attitude.

To ascertain the British government's stance on Palestine, U.S. representatives raised the issue again during the 1948 Washington Security Talks. The U.S. felt that resolving their differences on Palestine was crucial before fully committing to NATO's establishment. For Britain, Foreign Secretary Bevin and the Foreign Office instructed their Washington delegates to prioritise securing U.S. agreement on NATO participation as their ultimate goal.⁷⁶ Therefore, ensuring the Palestine question did not jeopardise their primary goal of securing U.S. participation in NATO was crucial. Consequently, Bevin pledged Britain's commitment to continued deliberations with the U.S. to reach a unanimous decision on the matter.⁷⁷ Bevin's willingness to exercise tolerance on the Palestine issue demonstrates his determination to overcome the U.S. representatives' delaying tactics during the Washington Security Talks and facilitate the resumption of negotiations. This further supports the argument of this study that the Palestine issue contributed to the delay in NATO's creation.

⁷⁰ Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946–1953*, 137-138.

⁷¹ Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942–1949*, 101.

⁷² Hussain, *British Foreign Office Perspectives on the Admission of Turkey and Greece to NATO, 1947–1952*, 95.

⁷³ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Minutes of the First Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 6 July 1948* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 149.

⁷⁴ Hussain and Mohd Rosli, "British Foreign Secretary's Role and Influence in the Exclusion of Greece and Türkiye from NATO, 1948–1949," 170.

⁷⁵ FO800/483, *North Atlantic Pact: Conversation between Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Bevin, 1 June 1948*.

⁷⁶ FO371/73072/Z5454, *Foreign Office minute: Forthcoming Security Talks, 2 July 1948*.

⁷⁷ CAB 129/29, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 'Palestine', 24 August 1948*. See also Norasmahani Hussain and Zulkana'in Abdul Rahman, "Peranan Britain dalam Menubuhkan Pertubuhan Perjanjian Atlantik Utara (NATO) pada 1949," *Sejarah: Journal of History Department, University of Malaya* 26, no. 1 (2017): 110.

Bevin's assurances regarding Palestine—specifically his readiness to continue deliberations with the U.S. to reach a unanimous decision on the matter—helped pave the way for renewed U.S. commitment to the new NATO military alliance. Moreover, the conclusion of the November 1948 presidential election and Truman's return to office spurred a much more positive response from U.S. representatives in the Washington Security Talks compared to earlier. The positive change in U.S. attitude was clearly and widely documented by sources such as British diplomat Sir Nicholas Henderson,⁷⁸ Canadian diplomat Escott Reid,⁷⁹ scholars such as Cook⁸⁰ and Baylis,⁸¹ and particularly within British Foreign Office records.⁸² This changed was reflected in Lovett's announcement that the U.S. government would now pursue the Atlantic pact swiftly to leverage the significant congressional election results, with the treaty anticipated to be finalised by February 1949.⁸³

However, a last-minute problem arose in January 1949, necessitating the rescheduling of the treaty signing ceremony planned for February. Previous studies, such as those by Cook,⁸⁴ Baylis,⁸⁵ and Reid,⁸⁶ attribute this delay to issues with Articles 2 and 5, as well as French insistence on Italian membership.⁸⁷ While acknowledging these last-minute complications, this article contends that the issue of Algeria also contributed to the delay in NATO's creation, beyond these widely cited factors.

The French and the New Last-Minute Delays in NATO's Formation

The Algeria issue, as noted earlier, added complexity to the debate surrounding Italian membership in NATO. Before this study elaborates on Algeria's role in delaying NATO's creation, the question of Italian membership will be briefly examined to understand the context in which French delegates subsequently raised the Algeria issue during the formation negotiations.

The Question of Italian Membership During NATO's Formation

Throughout NATO's formative period (March 1948 – March 1949), the question of membership emerged as a significant source of delay, owing to differing views on which countries were eligible to join. The most contentious issue was Italian membership, which according to the U.S. State Department representative Theodore C. Achilles, sparked heated debate. Its inclusion was seen as exceeding the strict "Atlantic" framework, potentially opening the door to ineligible applicants such as Spain, Germany, Türkiye, and Greece.⁸⁸

Italian membership in NATO was initially debated by British, U.S., and Canadian delegations at the secret Pentagon Talks (22 March 1948 – 1 April 1948). The U.S. advocated for Italy's inclusion, citing the imminent April 1948 Italian general election where a Communist victory seemed likely. This, they argued, made Italy a prime target for communist aggression and thus a logical candidate for NATO membership.⁸⁹ Conversely, Britain and Canada resisted, arguing that Italy's geographical position in the Mediterranean placed it clearly outside the Atlantic sphere.⁹⁰

Debates on Italian membership continued at the summer 1948 Washington Security Talks (early July – early September), now involving the seven future NATO founders: the U.S., Britain, Canada (from the Pentagon Talks), and the Brussels Pact nations (Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Belgium).

⁷⁸ See Henderson, *The Birth of NATO*.

⁷⁹ See Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947–1948*.

⁸⁰ See Cook, *Forging the Alliances, NATO, 1945–1950*.

⁸¹ See Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942–1949*.

⁸² See FO371/73081/Z10182, *Washington to Foreign Office, 11 December 1948* (The National Archives, 1948). See also FO 800/483/NA, *North Atlantic Treaty*, 23 November 1948.

⁸³ For documents which mention that the United States agreed to conclude the Atlantic pact by 1 February 1949, see FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 13 December 1948*, 317; FO800/454, *Washington Exploratory Talks on Security Ninth Meeting, 13 December 1948* (The National Archive, 1948).

⁸⁴ See Cook, *Forging the Alliances, NATO, 1945–1950*.

⁸⁵ See Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942–1949*.

⁸⁶ See Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947–1948*.

⁸⁷ See Cook, *Forging the Alliances, NATO, 1945–1950*; see Baylis, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism: Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942–1949*; see Reid, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947–1948*.

⁸⁸ Theodore C. Achilles, "US Role in Negotiations that Led to Atlantic Alliance, Part 2," *NATO Review* 27, no. 5 (1979): 16.

⁸⁹ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *The Problem: The Position of the United States with respect to Western Union and related problems, 23 March 1948* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 63.

⁹⁰ FO371/68067/AN1315, *Atlantic Security Talks, 25 March 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

Following the Italian Communist Party's defeat in the 1948 general election, the U.S. reversed its stance, with delegates strongly believing that inviting Italy "would destroy the natural geographic basis of the North Atlantic area".⁹¹ The other delegations, who had refused Italian membership from the outset, concurred with this stance.

However, during the third stage of negotiations, the Washington Exploratory Talks (early September 1948 – late March 1949), the question of Italian membership resurfaced in December 1948 meetings. This was prompted by the French delegates' assertion "their [French] Government strongly favoured the inclusion of Italy".⁹² Apparently, the French delegates further complicated matters by also demanding Algeria's inclusion alongside Italy.⁹³ Given the other delegations' decision to exclude Italy and the widely perceived absurdity of the Algerian demand, the French delegates' insistence on both memberships ignited further heated debate and prolonged negotiations. This contentious and protracted disagreement over Italy and Algeria clearly demonstrates the delay premise, a point echoed in a statement by Lovett recorded in American FRUS sources as follows:

... time and urgency were of paramount importance. Should the Governments concerned become involved in delicate and intricate negotiations on far-reaching matters, having no direct relations with the North Atlantic security, they might be faced with complications that would retard the speedy conclusion of the Pact.⁹⁴

This instance appears to confirm this study's contention that the last-minute problem involving Algeria also played a role in delaying NATO's formation. The following subsection will provide further details on this matter.

The French Ultimatum, Italian Membership, Algeria, and the NATO Delay

Algeria's status as a French colony (1830-1848) and later as an integral part of France (1848-1962) provides crucial context for understanding France's position during NATO's formative years (1948-1949). At the time, Algeria was under the French territory which clarifies France's insistence on its inclusion. The French government's argument for this demand was recorded in FRUS as follows:

... it would be extremely difficult for France to leave part of its metropolitan territory out of the area. Algeria was a part of France and in the same relation to France as Alaska or Florida to the United States.⁹⁵

British delegates believed France's persistent advocacy for Italy's NATO membership was merely a tactic to bring Algeria under NATO's protection. This would "enhance the solidarity between them and their allies in the event of any nationalist movement in Algeria being stimulated by the Russians or the Arabs, or both".⁹⁶ Accepting Italy, in their view, would then provide France a precedent to demand Algeria's inclusion.

Throughout the NATO negotiations, the initial three delegates from the secret Pentagon Talks (the U.S., Britain, and Canada) consistently refused to invite countries facing internal or local problems, such as Spain, Algeria, and Italy. These delegates viewed such problematic nations as liabilities rather than assets, believing their membership would be more detrimental than beneficial to NATO.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, when French delegates raised the issue of Algeria in December 1948, British delegates, sympathetic to their position, appeared ready to concede.

⁹¹ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Lovett), 27 April 1948*, 107. See also Norasmahani Hussain and Zulkanain Abdul Rahman, "Keanggotaan Negara-negara Eropah dan Kelewatan Penubuhan Nato, 1948-1949," in *Budiman: Kumpulan Esei Sempena Persaraan Profesor Dato' Dr. Mohammad Redzuan Othman*, ed. Zulkanain Abdul Rahman and Abu Hanifah Haris (University Malaya Press, 2022), 262.

⁹² FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Report of the International Working Group to the Ambassadors' Committee: Italy, 24 December 1948* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 341.

⁹³ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks, 22 December 1948* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 325.

⁹⁴ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks, 22 December 1948*, 330-331.

⁹⁵ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks, 22 December 1948*, 325.

⁹⁶ FO371/79222/Z444, *North Atlantic Pact: Participation of Italy and inclusion of Algeria, 11 January 1949* (The National Archives, 1949).

⁹⁷ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Minutes of the Third Meeting of the United States-United Kingdom-Canada Security Conversations, 24 March 1948* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 66.

They “had been thinking of the inclusion of all Africa north of latitude 30° north, which would encompass Algeria, Libya and Egypt”.⁹⁸ However, U.S. and Canadian delegates firmly opposed Algeria’s inclusion “on the ground that it set a precedent for other colonial areas and posed the risk of drawing them into colonial conflicts”.⁹⁹

To secure Algeria’s inclusion in NATO, the French delegates surprised others with a strong stance. Henri Bonnet, the French Ambassador to the U.S. and chief of their delegation, stated that France would only welcome Norway’s membership if Italy and Algeria were also accepted. This ultimatum from Bonnet was recorded in British Foreign Office files as follows:

The attitude the French adopted at yesterday’s meeting, in suddenly linking Norway and Italy and saying that Norway could not be invited to join the talks unless a similar invitation was extended to Italy, has created a deep and unfortunate impression on the Americans from Acheson down.¹⁰⁰

The U.S. delegates and their government viewed France’s attempt to link Italy and Algeria’s membership “as nothing short of blackmail”.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, France unexpectedly threatened to withdraw from NATO if Norway were the sole new member, excluding Italy and Algeria.¹⁰² This ultimatum kept the bitter dispute between French and U.S. delegates alive in the final weeks of negotiations, centred on Italian and Algerian membership. The U.S.’s changing position on these memberships created diplomatic uncertainty. Nevertheless, some U.S. State Department officials, including Hickerson, advocated for Italy’s inclusion, arguing: “Italy would almost certainly go Communist if it was left out of the Atlantic pact”.¹⁰³ However, Kennan opposed this, arguing: “if Italy was included, Greece, Turkey and other countries might claim that they also had a valid case to join; and the commitment would then be extended and diffused”.¹⁰⁴ The lack of unity within the U.S. camp made it difficult for other delegations to fully understand the U.S. government’s true stance on Italy’s membership.

The fact that negotiations were stalled until the Italian and Algerian issues were resolved further validates this study’s delay premise concerning Algeria’s contribution. This delay was a point of concern for the British delegation, leading Sir Oliver Franks to seek guidance from Foreign Secretary Bevin on these matters. Franks observed that: “anything you [Bevin] can do to help to sort this out [the French linking Norway and Italy and Algeria] would be a real contribution to a speedy conclusion”.¹⁰⁵ In fact, Franks had already anticipated the delay due to the Italian and Algerian issues in his mid-December 1948 report to Bevin. As Franks stated: “the main problem has been that of Italy and French North Africa [Algeria]”.¹⁰⁶ In addition, when Bohlen (a U.S. delegate) responded to French Ambassador Bonnet’s inquiry about possible dates for the January 1949 meetings, he stated that: “there were two questions, which still remain unsolved, which might be handled by drafting formulas, namely, the question of the reference to North Africa by, which the French Government had in mind particularly Algeria and Italy”,¹⁰⁷ demonstrated that the matters of Italy and Algeria had extended and complicated the negotiations.

Concerned about the delay in concluding the talks, Bevin indicated his willingness to be flexible on these issues. In his reply to Franks, documented in the Foreign Office file, Bevin stated that he would defer to the U.S.’s decision:

⁹⁸ FO800/454, *Washington Exploratory Talks on Security: Tenth Meeting, 22 December 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

⁹⁹ FO371/79221/Z283, *North Atlantic Pact: Meeting of Washington Working Party on January 10, 10 January 1949* (The National Archives, 1949).

¹⁰⁰ FO371/79229/Z1778, *North Atlantic Pact: French attitude regarding inclusion of Italy and Norway, 26 February 1949* (The National Archives, 1949).

¹⁰¹ FO371/79229/Z1778, *North Atlantic Pact: French attitude regarding inclusion of Italy and Norway, 26 February 1949*.

¹⁰² FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. IV, *Minutes of Fourteenth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 1 March 1949* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 129.

¹⁰³ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. IV, *Minutes of Fourteenth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 1 March 1949*, 130.

¹⁰⁴ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. III, *Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan), ‘Enclosure: Considerations Affecting the Conclusion of A North Atlantic Security Pact – 2. The territorial scope of the pact’, 24 November 1948* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 285-286.

¹⁰⁵ FO371/79229/Z1778, *North Atlantic Pact: French attitude regarding inclusion of Italy and Norway, 26 February 1949* (The National Archives, 1949).

¹⁰⁶ FO800/454, *Sir Oliver Franks to Secretary of State Bevin, 29 December 1948* (The National Archives, 1948).

¹⁰⁷ FRUS (1949), Western Europe, Vol. IV, *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Counselor of the Department of State (Bohlen), 3 January 1949* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949) 5.

The French, however, have demanded—and rightly so I think—that the question of Italy should now be decided one way or the other. Our line is, broadly speaking, the same as it has always been, namely that we ourselves are not (repeat not) keen on Italy acceding to the Pact, but that if both the Americans and the French insist [*sic*] we should not raise objections.¹⁰⁸

Seemingly, in the final stage of NATO talks, British Foreign Secretary Bevin, seeking to avoid further delays, dropped his opposition to Italian membership. Similarly, U.S. President Truman and Senators Arthur H. Vandenberg, Tom Connally, and Walter F. George expressed anxiety about the delayed creation of the NATO pact (FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. IV, 1949, p. 125).¹⁰⁹ Faced with France's credible ultimatum to leave NATO and with the U.S. leadership willing to expedite the process through consensus, the delegations unanimously agreed to invite Italy to join NATO and to extend NATO's pledge to Algeria. This latter action served as a strategic manoeuvre to secure Norway's membership within the alliance.¹¹⁰ Despite setbacks that delayed NATO's formation, the North Atlantic Treaty was eventually signed in Washington on 4 April 1949.

Conclusion

After over a year of contentious negotiations, heavily focused on Italian membership, Italy, initially considered for a Mediterranean security framework with Greece and Türkiye, became one of NATO's twelve founding members. This significantly shifted the Mediterranean's strategic landscape, reflecting evolving Western priorities amidst rising Cold War tensions. Greece and Türkiye, despite initial consideration and strategic importance, were excluded until their successful integration into NATO in 1952.¹¹¹ This delayed inclusion underscored the ongoing deliberations regarding the alliance's scope and strategic objectives. In parallel, Algeria, while not formally granted membership within NATO, was nonetheless encompassed by the security guarantees and pledges of the alliance, highlighting the broader geopolitical considerations that shaped NATO's early posture in the Mediterranean region.

Expanding the established account of NATO's delayed formation, this research, through a re-examination of British and American archives, highlights two previously under-acknowledged contributors: the Palestine question and the Algerian issue. This peripheral or 'stray-stone' countries concerns introduced unforeseen complications and heightened tensions, adding complexity to diplomatic proceedings seemingly tangential to NATO's core strategic goals. By illuminating these overlooked factors, this study underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of NATO's creation, challenging conventional narratives and revealing the intricate influence of global and regional dynamics.

In conclusion, this study's findings underscore the enduring relevance of realist theory in understanding the complexities of international negotiations. The significant delays encountered during the formation of NATO, partly attributable to the seemingly peripheral issues of Palestine and Algeria, demonstrate how the pursuit of individual state interests – even on matters not directly related to the core security dilemma the alliance aimed to address – can profoundly impact the trajectory of multilateral cooperation. The differing calculations of power and national advantage regarding these regional issues ultimately complicated the path towards a unified and timely establishment of the NATO.

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¹⁰⁸ FO371/79229/Z1807, *North Atlantic Pact: discussion between officials of State Department and French Embassy on subject of Italy and Norway, 1 March 1949* (The National Archives, 1949).

¹⁰⁹ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. IV, *Memorandum of Conversation, by Secretary of State: Meeting with the President, 28 February 1949* (U.S. Government Printing Office), 125.

¹¹⁰ FRUS, Western Europe, Vol. IV, *Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 1 March 1949* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 131.

¹¹¹ Hussain, *British Foreign Office Perspectives on the Admission of Turkey and Greece to NATO, 1947–1952*, 292. See also Aslı Ege, Tülay Yıldırım Mat and Mehmet Bardakçı, "Turkish-Greek Relations: A Fragile Stability Between Neighbors on The Two Shores of The Aegean Sea," *Journal of International Studies* 20, no. 1 (2024): 28.

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