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Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of European Affairs (Hickerson)

TOP SECRET

[WASHINGTON,] January 3, 1949.

Participants:	Mr. Povl Bang-Jensen, Chargé d'Affaires, Danish Embassy
	John D. Hickerson, Director for European Affairs
	Theodore C. Achilles, Chief, WE
	Benjamin M. Hulley, Chief, NOE

The Danish Chargé came in at my invitation and I made the following statement to him.

The background and early development of the exploratory conversations looking toward conclusion of a North Atlantic Security Treaty were explained in my oral message of September 23.²

Late in October the Governments of Canada and of the Parties to the Brussels Treaty advised the United States Government that they were agreed in principle on the desirability of concluding such a treaty. Subsequent exploratory talks have resulted in steady progress toward concrete proposals for a treaty following closely the lines indicated in the oral message of September 23. In these talks it was recommended, and the recommendation is now being considered by the seven Governments,³ that Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and Portugal be sounded out as to their willingness to consider participating as original signatories of the treaty and that, if they were prepared in principle to do this, they be invited to participate in the definitive drafting of the terms of the pact. The other representatives [Page 2] proposed, and the United States representatives agreed, that the United States Government should be responsible both for extending such invitations at the appropriate time and for keeping these Governments generally informed.

The treaty envisaged would be within the framework of the United Nations Charter. It would be designed to fortify and preserve the common heritage of the parties and to increase the security of the North Atlantic area. It is hoped that the treaty would serve this purpose by:

(1) Making war less likely through confronting any possible aggressor with evidence of collective determination to resist attack on any party;

(2) Providing for continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid in order better to assure the security of the area;

(3) Providing for consultation on the request of any party in the event of a threat to or breach of the peace;

(4) Providing that, in the event of an armed attack on any party within the area, all the parties would take such action as might be necessary to restore and assure the security of the area; and

(5) Providing for consultative machinery, both political and military, and in which each party would be represented, to facilitate its implementation.

There would thus be a definite obligation to contribute toward the collective defense of the area both before and after an armed attack had occurred by the provision of assistance in keeping with the resources and geographic location of each party. This would not necessarily involve in every case a declaration of war in the event of an armed attack on another party to the treaty and, indeed, the treaty would not provide that any country automatically declare war in such a contingency. In democratic countries declaration of war is, of course, a parliamentary prerogative. Moreover, in some cases it might be more advantageous to the security of the area as a whole if certain countries did not become involved in war unless directly attacked.

It is hoped that the definitive drafting of the treaty can be undertaken soon enough to permit its final conclusion early in February. We should be glad to receive orally and informally any views which the Danish Government may wish to express concerning the form and timing of an official approach concerning this matter.

Similar approaches will shortly be made to each of the Governments named above. The relationship of Italy to the proposed pact is still being studied and that Government is accordingly not being approached at this time. No corresponding approach to the Swedish Government is contemplated. Should that Government, however, desire to become a party to such a treaty its participation would undoubtedly be welcomed.

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Mr. Bang-Jensen asked what difference it would make whether a country were an original member or a later adherent. I said that my understanding is that it would make no difference whatever as regards the terms of the Pact but that obviously a North Atlantic Pact to be worthwhile must include those countries in the area whose position was of strategic importance to the group as a whole. He spoke of the small supply of rifles being obtained from Sweden, expressed the view that Sweden would not be able to supply Denmark and Norway with enough arms, and asked what his country could expect from us in the way of arms as it was very interested in this aspect. I said that the Treaty itself does not commit any country to supply arms to any other, but we plan to recommend legislation to make it possible to supply arms to other members, on the principle that each country would contribute according to its ability to the general defense. He said he had informed his Government that due to limited supplies available it was to be expected that the United States would not have arms available for non-members. I said this was true. He asked what publicity there would be in case Denmark desired to participate now. I said I thought this would be handled according to Denmark's wishes. He suggested that this talk was an approach, but I pointed out that it was not so definite—that its primary purpose is to bring Denmark up-to-date and all we wanted to know now is whether and how and when Denmark wishes to be approached in the light of its own political problems. He asked whether it would be too late to participate in the drafting if Denmark put off acceptance until after February 1 as had

been expected for some time. I said that this would run things too close and I believed it would then be too late to participate in the drafting.

JOHN D. HICKERSON

2. Hickerson met with the Danish Ambassador, Henrik de Kauffmann, on September 23, 1948. The memorandum of conversation, not printed, is in Department of State file No. 840.20/9-2348.

3. The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

Kilde: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v04/d1> (FRUS, 1949, bind IV, s. 1-3)

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