

CONSEIL DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD
NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL

619

NATO UNCLASSIFIED
and
PUBLIC DISCLOSED

EXEMPLAIRE
COPY N°
~~NATO SECRET~~
DOCUMENT
C-M(58)138

ORIGINAL: FRENCH
17th November, 1958

INTERIM REPORT OF THE SECRETARY
GENERAL ON POLITICAL CO-OPERATION

In preparing this document for the Council, it has not been my purpose to submit a complete report of the activities of NATO during 1958. I am not thinking in terms of a consolidated report such as I produced at Copenhagen for the annual political appraisal. All I have wished to do is to contribute to our discussion on political consultation by presenting a brief review of recent experience, pointing to the difficulties encountered and suggesting a few measures which, in my opinion, would make our action more effective.

Progress of
the Alliance-
Its depen-
dence on
political
co-operation.

2. In Copenhagen, at the close of their last meeting, the Foreign Ministers of the NATO countries declared: "The Alliance is becoming a true community of free nations. Within this community, to a degree unprecedented in history, countries are carrying out a policy of close co-operation in peacetime without abandoning their independence". They also noted that "remarkable progress had been made in the strengthening of political consultation".

3. This trend of the Alliance in the direction of a community is made necessary by the extension and expansion of the Soviet challenge. But it could not develop without the determination of the member governments to put into practice the basic principles of political co-operation expounded in the report of the Committee of Three.

4. That document bases political co-operation, the essential condition for the survival and progress of the Alliance, on a single all-important element: consultation. Consultation in this context "means the discussion of problems collectively, in the early stages of policy formation, and before national positions become fixed", discussion "that is not an end in itself, but a means to the end of harmonising policies" and which should "seek to arrive at timely agreement on common lines of policy and action".

~~NATO SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED - PUBLIC DISCLOSURE / DECLASSIFIE - MISE EN LECTURE PUBLIQUE

1958 reviewed from the standpoint of political consultation 5. The year now drawing to a close has offered many occasions for applying these principles. Since our meeting of last December, the political activity of the Alliance has in fact been particularly intense. The Council has held 127 meetings, of which 72 were private ones(1), and the latter were devoted almost exclusively to political affairs.

6. Among the cases which gave rise to consultation, I shall mention the following:-

- (a) Marshal Bulganin's letters and the replies of the NATO countries;
- (b) the preparation of the Summit Conference in its dual aspect, the harmonisation of Western views on the substance of the questions to be discussed, and the conduct of the preliminary negotiations with the USSR;
- (c) exchanges of views on the Soviet proposal for a conference on the Middle East;
- (d) the suspension of nuclear tests;
- (e) the United States and United Kingdom intervention in Lebanon and Jordan;
- (f) the situation in Quemoy, and
- (g) the prevention of surprise attacks.

7. Apart from consultation, mention must be made of another form of political co-operation to which NATO, during the last few months, has devoted considerable time, namely conciliation. Whereas the purpose of consultation is to secure for the Alliance unity of views and action vis-à-vis the outside world, the aim of conciliating is to maintain internal unity by endeavouring to smooth out any difference which may arise between its members. The efforts of NATO in the field of conciliation have been directed mainly at two issues, the Icelandic fisheries dispute and the Cyprus problem.

8. This review of the political activities of NATO in 1958 would be incomplete without a reference to the increasingly important part played by the Committee of Political Advisers as an agency for the preparation of the work of the Council and as a virtually permanent forum for exchanges of views and information on all

(1) Up till 17th November, 1958.

questions involving the Alliance.

x

x x

EXPERIENCE DURING 1958 IN THE FIELD OF POLITICAL
CO-OPERATION

9. The experience gained during the current year enables certain conclusions to be drawn and raises a number of problems.

10. In the first place, although consultation was widely practiced, the results obtained were not of equal value.

11. It functioned with complete success in certain cases, the most noteworthy being the harmonising of the replies to Marshal Bulganin's letters and the preparation of the Summit Conference.

12. Both these issues concerned East-West relations, a field in which consultation had already given excellent results the previous year, mainly by making possible the adoption of a common position on the question of disarmament.

13. It did not achieve its aim on other occasions, either because the existence of a permanent divergence was revealed, as in the case of the exchanges of views on the Soviet proposal for a conference on the Middle East, or because no conclusions could be reached owing to the silence of some of the parties consulted, as in the case of the communications of the United States and United Kingdom on their intention to intervene in Lebanon and Jordan, and the communications of the United States on the Quemoy affair.

The difficulties encountered.

14. The difficulties encountered therefore depend in part on the geographical framework within which political consultation is set. The examples I have just given demonstrate, in fact, that it is more difficult to obtain positive results when consultation concerns questions outside the area defined by the Treaty. However, those difficulties also arise from the inherent limitations of consultation between sovereign states.

DECLASSIFIED - PUBLIC DISCLOSURE / DECLASSIFIE - MISE EN LECTURE PUBLIQUE

The problem of "world-wide" consultation.

15. There are no statutory geographical limits on consultation within the Alliance: Article 4 of the Treaty, dealing with consultation, makes no mention of the Treaty area (Article 6) which relates only to the application of the assistance clause (Article 5).

16. On the other hand, the need to extend political co-operation beyond these limits is recognised in the report of the Committee of Three: "Common interests of the Atlantic Community can be seriously affected by developments outside the Treaty Area", therefore the member countries should strive "to harmonise their policies in relation to other areas". Furthermore, the Heads of Government, in the statement issued last December, declared that the Alliance "cannot interest itself only in the North Atlantic area".

17. The fact of the matter is that, the Soviet threat having become "global", the Alliance must do all it can to meet it with a "global" policy, and that this can only be achieved through the practice of consultation on a world-wide scale. As a principle, this necessity can scarcely be contested, and the members of the Alliance with special responsibilities outside the area of the Treaty have on many occasions given evidence of their willingness to take part in consultations on questions outside the boundaries of this area.

18. Nevertheless, unity of views is found to be more difficult of attainment on questions which arise outside these geographical limits, partly because the common danger and the need for solidarity are less strongly felt here and partly because the member States less directly affected refrain from taking a definite stand, no doubt in order to avoid widening their responsibilities.

The limits of consultation.

19. The most stringent limitations on consultation arises from its very nature. It is simply a procedure by which the search for agreement can be facilitated; agreement itself depends in the final analysis upon the will of the national governments. Consultation is successful if it brings out a common purpose or common views; it is a failure if it brings to light irreconcilable differences. When that happens, independent and even conflicting actions may follow and there is a partial breach of solidarity, of a more or less serious character. But even a failure of that sort pre-supposes that the various points of view have been explained in the course of collective discussion,

and this is the lesser evil referred to in the report of the Committee of Three, in the statement: "At the least, it will ensure that no action is taken by one member without a knowledge of the views of the others".

The silence of the parties consulted.

20. However, there is one hypothesis not dealt with in the report of the Committee of Three. I refer to the case in which the consultation remains incomplete and inconclusive because of the silence of the parties consulted. This, as we have just seen, has occurred particularly in connection with questions arising outside the Treaty area. When the United States and the United Kingdom Governments informed their partners of their intention to intervene in Lebanon and Jordan, it was certainly for the purpose of ascertaining, by consultation, the views of their allies. Several of the latter, however, expressed no opinion.

21. Thus we see that the success or failure of consultation rests with the governments, not only insofar as they make it a success by their agreement or wreck it by their disagreement, but also because their refusal to participate may render it incomplete and ineffectual. Such a situation is not without peril: as a factor of uncertainty, ambiguity and misunderstanding it might well, in certain circumstances, be more damaging than a straightforward divergency revealed during the course of a consultation without reserve, the outcome of which was the "lesser evil" of a clearly-defined position.

Conciliation and its difficulties.

22. In the field of conciliation, action by NATO has been unable to effect a settlement in the Iceland and Cyprus affairs. But one cannot say that it has been useless. The efforts of NATO have had favourable psychological effects, have helped to preclude extremist decisions and have preserved the chances of a settlement. They have given the countries not directly concerned in these differences a better comprehension of the issues, and this can be of great significance in the future. It should also be added that the role played by NATO in these affairs has displayed our Organization to the free world in a new light and has demonstrated that positive action is to be expected of it in the political field.

X

X X

CRITICISMS AND REMEDIES

Criticisms.

23. The difficulties experienced by NATO in putting political co-operation into effect cannot be denied. They have, of course, given rise to criticisms. Basically, there would seem to be two main complaints:-

- (a) that NATO has not succeeded in formulating the "global" policy which is required to counter the Soviet threat, and
- (b) that it has been unable to achieve the necessary unity of views and leadership.

24. However well-founded these criticisms may be, it should be remembered that NATO was not originally designed to undertake the tasks thrust upon it today by the extension and expansion of the Soviet threat. It is therefore natural that it should experience difficulties during the process of adaptation. Nevertheless, any positive action to remedy the defects of our Organization must take account of certain basic conditions which cannot be called into question without seriously endangering western solidarity; namely, the North Atlantic Treaty itself, the legal equality of its signatories and the fundamental institutions of the Alliance.

Possible remedies.

25. Bearing these basic conditions in mind, what can we do to make our political action more effective?

Consultation outside NATO. The necessary conditions.

26. It may well be asked whether it is not outside NATO that a remedy for these defects should be sought and whether, owing to its geographical boundaries and the constraints of consultation between fifteen countries, the framework of our Alliance is well-suited to the formulation of a "global policy"; whether, in fact, this task should not be left in a very large measure to separate consultations between the powers having the largest share of responsibility. Whatever reply may, in principle, be given to this question, I wish to indicate here within what limits I consider the system of holding consultations outside NATO could be practised without contravening the obligations of the Alliance.

27. No one claims that the Council is, for each of its members, the sole agency for political co-operation. The NATO countries remain entirely free to reach agreement with one or other of their partners, or with non-NATO governments, on questions of particular concern to themselves. In this respect, countries whose

responsibilities extend far beyond the boundaries of the area covered by the Treaty can certainly consult each other on the overall problems within their competence. But after having reached agreements outside NATO, it is essential that these governments should report to the Council the outcome of their negotiations, for although they can decide between themselves to adopt a common position, the latter, insofar as it affects the interests of the Alliance as a whole, must be the subject of consultation between all its members. Practised in this manner, such a system is in conformity with the principles of NATO and can usefully serve the cause of unity. For the unity of the Alliance is particularly vulnerable to divergencies between those governments which have the most widespread responsibilities, and in many different cases the representatives of other allies have had to express the hope that these governments would first achieve unity of views and intentions between themselves.

28. Nevertheless, our efforts to promote unity of opinion and action in the Alliance must, of course, be made primarily within the framework of our institutions.

How to promote effective global consultation.

29. In the first place, we can try to improve consultation within the Council by seeking to make it effective in all cases, including those which arise outside the area of the Treaty. This might perhaps be more readily achieved if governments kept in mind the following principles:

- Consultation between allies is a duty. Each is entitled to know the opinion of the others. A request for consultation must therefore receive a reply sufficiently clear to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings, the responsibility for which would fall on those who keep silent.
- Every member of the Alliance who takes part in consultation bears the political responsibility of his opinion; this is the necessary counterpart of his right to be heard and a pre-condition for serious and significant consultation. However, this responsibility cannot add in any way to the military and political commitments deriving from the Treaty.
- Consultation on questions outside the boundaries of the Treaty area does not involve for the parties consulted so high a degree of responsibility as in the case of questions arising within these boundaries, in respect of which they have a direct share of the common burdens and obligations.

Conversely, the parties who initiate consultation with a view to action outside this area legitimately retain greater freedom of appraisal as regards the opinions laid before them. In other words, it must be recognised that there are different degrees of consultation, corresponding to the differences of interest and of practical responsibility in the proposed action.

30. What remains constant is the obligation for all parties to contribute to the consultation all the elements of appreciation available to them, and to make known frankly to their allies such opinions as they are in a position to formulate, having regard to their interest and responsibility in the matter under discussion.

31. I can only state these principles without attempting to reach firmer conclusions. Consultation cannot be codified. As is rightly remarked in the report of the Committee of Three, it would be unwise "to define in detail the obligations and duties of consultation".

The most effective factor for progress is the political impulse imparted by the member states through their positive desire to reach agreement and to assume their share of the common task.

32. However, although it seems difficult to go further than this as regards the bare principles of consultation, we can certainly improve the methods we employ.

Preparatory
stage of
consultation.

33. Our efforts to this end should be focused particularly on one point, namely the preparatory stage of consultation.

34. In the words of the report of the Committee of Three, consultation should take place "in the early stages of policy formation, before national positions have become fixed". In practice it is probably not possible for discussions during this preliminary stage to take place in all cases within the Council, for they often call for detailed and specialised studies for which the Council has not always the time or the necessary staff. It is true that reports prepared by groups of experts on the most significant aspects of the international situation are submitted at ministerial meetings. But these documents, however valuable, do not constitute a true "policy forming" factor, since although they offer the best possible appraisal of facts, they usually contain no recommendations for action by the Council.

35. This would seem to be a weak spot in our methods. It could be eliminated by recourse to a procedure closely resembling that used last Spring for the preparation of the Summit Meeting: namely, by the setting-up of committees composed of high-ranking government officials. This seems to be to be the best way of tackling in the most favourable circumstances, the preparatory stage of consultation:

- It would in no way affect the equality of the members of the Alliance or the authority of the Council, for the Council would set up the committees and the Council alone would be able to take decisions on their recommendations.
- It would enable account to be taken of the special position and interests of member states, and would make the best use of the knowledge of their specialists; for the composition of the committees would vary according to the questions submitted to them.
- The rank of these officials, who might, for example, be the heads of major geographical divisions in the foreign ministries, would give them the freedom and authority necessary for the formulation of common views based on objective appraisal of the facts and of the collective interests of the Alliance.

36. By this method, the Council could have plans for co-ordinated action established under the most favourable conditions in all fields in which such action was required. Consultation would thus proceed with greater chance of success, the preparatory stage having already achieved a large measure of harmonisation of views.

Preparation
of long-
term policy.

37. However, there is another aspect of preparatory work, which has so far been rather neglected and which I think NATO should tackle. At the present time, we have no agency in a position to study the long-term problems of the free world, whether in the politico-strategic field or in that of the basic concepts on which our western community is founded.

38. These questions are not, of course, overlooked by government officials, but they are not always able to devote to them all the attention that would be desirable, particularly when they have at the same time to deal with day-to-day policy. Special interest therefore attaches to the contribution which can be made in this field by research institutes, publicists

and experts specialising in international questions. The very significant work accomplished in several member countries has probably not been sufficiently made use of by the Alliance because we have had no means of drawing it together and deriving practical conclusions from it.

39. I believe that this need would be met by various methods:

- (1) We might invite individuals recognised as authorities in their particular fields to meet under the auspices of NATO to discuss questions submitted to them by the Council, to which they would submit a report.
- (2) We might ask national or international bodies, universities and specialised institutes to study selected questions.
- (3) We might promote the creation of an institute for Atlantic studies.

x

x x

40. The suggestions contained in this report can be condensed into the following points which I submit to the Council as subjects for discussion at the Ministerial Meeting in December.

- (1) Political consultation, practised on a wide scale, is a necessity for the Alliance.
- (2) Such consultation cannot be restricted to the geographical limits of the Treaty area, as defined in the assistance clause.
- (3) Consultation is a duty between allies. The rights and duties which it implies vary in degree according to the differing interests and responsibilities of the parties.
- (4) When member governments consult with one another outside the framework of NATO on matters of concern to the Alliance, they should submit the outcome of their deliberations to a further consultation within the Council.
- (5) The preparation of consultation, at the policy-forming stage, should be made more effective. A suitable way of achieving this would be for the Council to set up committees to present

recommendations on questions selected by the Council.

- (6) NATO should tackle the study of long-term political problems and devise the necessary machinery.

(Signed) P.-H. SPAAK

Palais de Chaillot,
Paris, XVIe.