

The Ultimate Goal of NATO

NATO was built by people who looked forward to Atlantic federation. The goal of federation remains essential to provide an orientation for progress in the Alliance.

On the surface, NATO is only a military alliance. But it has always been more than this in reality—it has been, as James Huntley has shown,¹ the core institution of a growing community of industrial democracies spanning the Atlantic and Pacific oceans—and still more in inspiration and goal.

In 1949 it was miracle enough that the United States, after a century and a half of reading Washington's Farewell Address warning against "entangling alliances," would have entered into an indefinite peacetime alliance with Europeans. NATO's founders did not dare to ask for more.

Former Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts did ask for more. He met with President Truman and urged him to seek a

Thus, when Robin Beard, NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Defense Support, warned in the February 1987 *NATO Review* (pp. 10-14) of the need for "straight talking" on these problems, "even at the risk of ruffling the odd feather," *NATO Review* took care to emphasize that his views "are not necessarily those of NATO..." Beard called for common NATO planning of arms needs, multi-project trade-offs of costs rather than single-project barter, and common funding of defense research, noting that "such funding arrangements have proved their merits in the sphere of NATO infrastructure." He was hopeful for improved common "long-term NATO defense planning". He said "we should all be prepared to label [the present situation] as an absurd dissipation of resources. . ."

NATO's skewed reporting helps mislead the U.S. Congress into thinking that the problem of burden sharing is that Europe is not spending enough. The actual problem is that Europe's spending and forces are not effective enough due to structural disarmament and lack of standardization and integration. It is this that prevents Europe from sharing the military and political burden Europe *is* sharing the financial burden; it spends almost as much of its GNP on defense as die U.S. when its conscript troops are costed out at the price of American volunteer troops.

More spending has not been NATO's main need for decades, and is not the cure for NATO's problems now. Underspending is a myth; NATO actually spends more on defense than the Warsaw pact. Ineffective spending is the real problem. NATO's failure to report this clearly has allowed the trans-Atlantic dialogue to degenerate into mutually irrelevant accusations.

6 On March 10, 1987 Britain and France announced plans to intensify discussion of cooperation on their nuclear forces and on producing conventional arms. France and Germany have also discussed increased cooperation. France has proposed a "European Security Charter."

These steps are hopeful, but as yet mostly exploratory and far too slow-paced. They have placed the problem on the table, not solved it.

political federation, not just a military alliance. Roberts' coworker Clarence Streit, the former New York Times correspondent at the League of Nations, often recalled how Truman, who was not averse, deferred to the advice of Secretary of State Acheson that the American people were not ready for this.

This remained the official State Department line for two decades, with a brief break under Christian Herter: not that federation was undesirable, nor even that it was unnecessary, but that it was a matter for the future, and that it would be safest not even to bring it up until the American people grew ready for it.

The point is not that this passive conception of progress toward readiness for federation was correct. Far from it: Decades later, the State Department discovered that time had actually brought a "successor generation" problem as memories of wartime unity faded. The point is rather that those who were most involved in building the Alliance and managing its early problems saw that these problems could be actually *resolved* only by federation, and quietly accepted this as the ultimate goal.

It is worth noting that many State Department officials were themselves not ready for NATO in the late 1940s. Indeed, Acheson was long among the skeptics. Those who were most ready for an alliance had been first *readied* for it by the deeper idea of federation.

The prime movers of NATO in the State Department, Theodore Achilles and John Hickerson, took their underlying inspiration from *Union Now*, the book by Clarence Streit which proposed a federation of the Atlantic democracies as the core around which an eventual democratic world federation would be built. "If it hadn't been for *Union Now*" recalled Achilles in 1983,² "I don't think there would have been a NATO Treaty. A lot of people got a hold of that book and read it—Chris Herter, Will Clayton, Jack Hickerson, myself. . . I heard Clarence Streit speak in 1941, got a copy of the book and read it. From here came the

whole idea of Atlantic unity. . . It would be hard to name all the people who had gotten the idea from *Union Now*."

Achilles became the guiding spirit of the Atlantic Council from its formation in 1962 until his death in 1986. As Deputy Secretary of State for Western European Affairs in the late 1940s, he played a pivotal role, alongside Hickerson, in the drafting of the North Atlantic Treaty, its acceptance by the State Department and its ratification by the Senate. The standard histories of NATO tell this much about their role, but neglect to trace their ideological background in federalism. Yet it was this background that gave Achilles and Hickerson the courage to wear down, rather than being worn down by, the State Department traditionalists who argued that American isolationism made even an Atlantic military alliance completely unrealistic.

George Kennan was the strongest opponent of a NATO treaty. He sometimes thought of a separate American deal with Russia as a way out of the European imbroglio and an alternative to a formal bond with America's fellow democracies. He was eventually moved by arguments that NATO would provide cover for non-military common planning and that "we must be very careful not to place ourselves in the position of being the obstacle to further progress toward the political union of the western democracies . . ."³ Federalism vs. isolationism remained the underlying competing poles in his thinking, as in all serious American thinking about global perspectives; "realism" was the formal ground on which these poles competed within his mind, not a substantive pole of its own.

Federalist themes were important to proponents of NATO not only in America but in all the Atlantic countries.

British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin said at the end of 1947, in a remark which is often cited as the launching of the NATO idea, that "the salvation of the west depends on the formation of some form of union, formal or informal in character, in western Europe backed by the United States and the Dominions..."

Sir Winston Churchill called in his Fulton "iron curtain" speech for a close Anglo-American alliance and eventual common citizenship. At the end of his *History of the English Speaking Peoples* he wrote of alliance as a step toward "ultimate union."

France was the country that most wanted a union and not a mere alliance in the interwar years. It was also the source of most of the initiatives for Western integration in the decade after 1945. This is important to recall today. It was above all *the failure* of Atlantic integration to reach the political level, and the American reliance on intergovernmental methods in NATO with their *de jure* equality and their *de facto* dependence on U.S. hegemony, that gave rise to the Gaullist reaction.

Paul-Henri Spaak, Belgian Prime Minister, major founder of the EEC and a Secretary-General of NATO, reaffirmed in 1968 that Atlantic federation "must become reality."⁴

In Canada, Lester Pearson led the fight for NATO as foreign minister. In 1948 he advised that NATO should become "a model of what we hope the whole world will some day become," with institutions for cooperation in all fields, and "some sort of constitutional machinery" for mutual control of "the policies of all which affect all."⁵ His aspirations won partial recognition in Article II of the NATO Treaty, which calls for consolidating peaceful relations among the Allies by building mutual understanding of the common principles of their free institu-

tions, promoting stability, and encouraging "economic collaboration" in place of economic conflict.

Looking back in 1966, Pearson said that Clarence Streit had helped break through the reactive, too-little-too-late pattern of history by holding forth the goal of Atlantic Union long before NATO was built. Unhappily, he continued, NATO itself fell into the rut of perpetuating its initial forms and practices. "Common, unifying political institutions" were needed to provide "collective foreign and economic policies;" nothing less than this could make sense of mutual military commitments in the nuclear era. If NATO was not to decline as it lurched from crisis to crisis, he concluded, it would have to keep the vision in mind and strive toward its realization.⁶

1 James R. Huntley, *Uniting the Democracies: Institutions of the Emerging Atlantic-Pacific System* (NY: New York Univ. Press, 1980).

2 In an interview with *The Federator*, March 18, 1983.

3 Cited in James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Growing Up Allied* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 79-82.

4 *Freedom & Union* magazine (Washington, D.C.), November-December 1968, p. 11.

5 Cited in Eayrs, pp. 58-9, 370.

6 *Freedom & Union*, July-Aug. 1966, pp. 15-18.

Toward a Coherent Western Diplomacy

The Allies need to conduct persistent and intricate common action, not only to defend Europe but to manage detente and to pursue world order. This in turn requires a system of NATO-wide majority rule.

The members of NATO are the traditional bearers of civilized diplomacy and the main repository of hope in the world. They bear the main responsibility for the world's development

Yet the Atlantic Alliance as a unit conducts practically no external diplomacy, while placing sharp constraints on the individual diplomacy of its member states. The Alliance is failing its responsibility in the diplomatic arena, and with it, the individual Allies are also failing.

In most of the world NATO simply has no policy or diplomacy. This is known as the "out of area" problem in NATO parlance. Progress on it has thus far been held hostage to the unit-veto system. This is why NATO has done so

poorly in the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, despite the deep common interests of the Allies in these regions.

Even in the areas where NATO's diplomatic involvement is inescapable—East-West relations, arms control and intra-Alliance relations—NATO's unit-veto procedures and its inability to insure full mutual trust among member states render its diplomacy inadequate.

Absent a system of common citizenship, mutual trust is bound to be limited as each people wonders whether other the other Allies would not look after their own immediate needs in a crunch, even at the expense of the Alliance on which they all ultimately depend. Absent full trust and a system of majority rule, forces and

diplomatic plans cannot be deeply integrated. Absent deep integration of forces and planning, NATO countries are able to agree only on keeping their common forces in place in Western Europe and directing them (and the corresponding diplomatic policies) toward holding the line against any Soviet invasion.

NATO issues communiqués on a wide range of diplomatic issues, but has no common force or authority to follow up on most of them. As a result, the communiqués themselves represent mostly compromises between the various national diplomatic and public relations anxieties, not substantive policies.

Clarity versus Consensus

Richard Perle recently blasted NATO for "sacrificing clarity to consensus." He warned that NATO was undermining its credibility among the public and the "successor generation" by this habit

The charge was undeniable and the warning serious, even if it was made from a highly partisan standpoint. It was routinely rejected in NATO circles, but only by facing it and analyzing its roots can the problem be solved.

"Sacrificing clarity to consensus" flows, simply and directly, from NATO's < requirement of consensus for any action. There can be no deep common plans where every step requires a new consensus. And in the absence of substantial common plans, the consensus itself can only be a public relations front.

NATO is tied to the simultaneous public relations needs and problems of sixteen countries—something like a series of sixteen simultaneous equations, each with relatively rigid parameters, and altogether only several independent variables to play around with in search of a solution. What this means is that there usually is *no* good solution. NATO is not only unable to be tough under such circumstances, which was Perle's chief complaint, it is also unable to be flexible or to conduct seriously forward-looking diplomacy.

Flexibility and Coherence: Two Responsibilities of the West

A diplomacy that is at once flexible and coherent, that is capable of both great firmness and great generosity, is a responsibility of every great power. The Western democracies have a real problem in meeting this responsibility.

When countries share common purpos-

es and can achieve their goals only by common policies, separate national policies which undercut one another not only are foolish but make no sense. If the Western democracies were adversaries and deliberately worked at cross purposes, mutual undercutting would surprise no one and would not interfere with the coherence or goal-orientation of their thinking. But as Allies, their failure to collaborate deeply and their consequent frequent undercutting of one another is already undermining the clarity and integrity of their political-diplomatic thinking.

The partial coordination of Western policies during the past several decades is a major step forward, both for the West and for the world, in comparison with the chaos and back-stabbing of the interwar years. But coordination has been limited to what can be done on a basis of unanimous consent, undermining both firmness and flexibility.

Vital Tasks Simply Go Undone

Many essential policies are never even seriously attempted because it is impossible to count on all the allies to adhere reliably to a common plan of any intricacy and difficulty. Many vital interests simply go by the wayside.

Sales of armaments, nuclear fuels and chemical weapons precursors are far more loosely controlled than they ought to be. If any single government could assume responsibility for these exports, it would control them stringently as a basic survival interest. But no NATO member state is able to assume responsibility, thanks to the multitude of competing commercial and national sources of these lethal products. Nor can the Alliance as a whole assume responsibility with its unreliable unit-veto procedures.

The vital common interests in the Persian Gulf, the Middle East and the Mediterranean are left to national diplomacy. This virtually guarantees failure in the face of terrorism. Nation after nation tries to strike its own deals with terrorists; many fear getting caught in the crossfire when one of them takes a tougher stance. It also obstructs the formation of a strategic concept about the Middle East, leaving the field to domestic pressure groups of all kinds in Europe and America.

The absence of common external policy in turn redounds to the discredit of NATO itself, as countries feel themselves put upon by the consequences of the ac-

tions of their allies. The long term viability of NATO depends upon the extension of the Alliance to the whole field of diplomacy.

The Allies owe it, not only to themselves, but to the world to conduct coherent diplomacy. The Atlantic democracies are the core of stability and progress in the world. They are the core of such order as exists in the world. With their tremendous power, cultural, political, economic and military, they are the only countries capable of promoting world order in a substantial way. Yet, as has been seen, they are capable of sustaining the arduous policies required for the promotion of world order only if they do it together on a reliable and jointly planned basis.

Today, such coherence as exists in NATO policy and diplomacy consists of continuing acquiescence to an old set of compromises that never answered adequately even the problems of the times in which they were first formulated, much less the problems of the present

Public Relations versus Policy

Recently European governments have made the extraordinary argument that the Euromissiles should not be negotiated away, since it had taken a tremendous effort of Alliance public relations to sell them to the public, and getting rid of them now might undo that educational effort and undermine confidence in the Alliance. Here we see clearly the consequence of subjecting Alliance thinking and planning to the public relations requirements of sixteen separate political systems.

Everyone knows how difficult it is for even a single government to change its own policy or to adapt to new realities when it becomes entrapped in its own public relations. It is many times more difficult when there are sixteen public relations equations that must be solved by a single public formulation.¹

When governments devote too much attention to public relations, they tend to become entrapped in it and to lose credibility. They come to feel aloof and isolated from the people, no longer as the executive committee of the country. They can no longer take the people into their confidence or engage them openly in dialogue, but must treat them manipulatively. They must stick by past formulations or revise them only piecemeal, lest they lose whatever credibility they retain. A vicious circle emerges between concentra-

tion on public relations and entrapment in public relations formulations.

When an Alliance policy must meet the test of sixteen essentially separate dialogues, it has to measure how each of its words is going to play in sixteen capitals and several dozen ruling and opposition parties. This alone dooms it to rely more on public relations attempts at engagement with the heart than on reasoned engagement with the mind. This is why NATO has lost so much credibility.

Subtle thinking and planning, and firm and flexible implementation, are excluded by this structural situation. Neither a deep and developing detente nor a serious and sound defense is possible on its basis; the formal subtlety of NATO's official line, "defense plus detente," is inherently lacking in the implementation. It might be called "NATOsclerosis", supplementing the widely-discussed "Eurosclerosis".

Closer Unity Needed for Detente

NATO, alongside the European Community, has been the foundation for the stabilization of Europe, and thus for such detente as there has been. Yet NATO has found it difficult to manage detente.

This should come as no surprise. In the absence of organic bonds and mutual commitments among the peoples, the governments naturally fear mutual betrayal in a crunch. Weapons are installed, not only out of military need, but to prove mutual political commitment. Thus it was insisted that various countries must install INF missiles to prove their loyalty to NATO and one another, and now that the U.S. must keep them in Europe to prove its commitment.

How can serious bargains be struck with Russia if the Alliance often threatens to come unglued when one is even considered (as in the cases of INF and NPT negotiations)? How can serious concessions be made by one country if its allies are inclined to suspect that this may be a betrayal or a sell-out rather than a well-controlled exercise in flexibility? How can concessions in fact be well-controlled and avoid degenerating into a sell-out, when a limited concession or an exploratory move by one ally is often used as an excuse by other allies for unrestrained concession-making (as in arms sales, e.g. to Iran, or trade deals with the Soviet bloc), or when there is no confidence that common allied remedial action will be taken in the event that adversaries

violate their agreements (as in European resistance to any U.S. reaction to apparent Soviet violations of SALT and ABM agreements)?

When Gorbachev accepted NATO's old zero-sum offer, the deputy director of the Arms Control Association remarked that this "has really handed us a big problem of alliance management."² The Allies will remain unable to look outward to the needs of the world and of their own future as long as they remain in fear of the Alliance's falling apart and focused on intra-Alliance management tasks.

If there is to be deep detente, which not only relaxes tensions but builds links of cooperation and collaboration, it will require a capacity for both firmness and flexibility that goes far beyond what the West now has with its unit-veto system of internal cooperation. The internal responsibility of the West to itself—the responsibility to unite in its own interest—is inextricably intertwined with its external responsibility to the world.

From Consensus to Majority Rule: The Way Forward

The root problem is that the requirement of consensus is incompatible with clarity. The solution can only be to agree on a structure that can then take common action with less than a consensus on each issue.

The NATO allies must agree to common planning and common action on a basis of majority decision. A frequently suggested first step is an agreement never to undermine an ally's efforts. This would go a long way toward restoring the spirit of active alliance. However, it raises the question of how to hold a country responsible for the consequences its actions" may bring down on the others. A better step would be to agree never to undermine a *majority's* efforts. The minority would still be saddled with the consequences of the actions of the majority, but with majority rule, winners and losers are likely to vary from vote to vote, and common planning and a sense of common responsibility are likely to develop.

The benefits of majority rule would be considerable. The war against terrorism would suddenly become a winning war. There would finally be a sound political foundation for the efforts to control the sales of armaments and military technologies and nuclear fuels around the world. And also a sound economic foundation:

Armaments and high technologies would be standardized and produced for the entire Atlantic market as a matter of course, greatly reducing unit costs and dependence on Third World exports. NATO would field for the first time a convincing conventional deterrent to Soviet aggression and lift the threat of nuclear escalation. Nuclear forces would be merged; there would no longer be any extra fingers on the trigger, nor any of the old dilemmas of "extended deterrence" which have complicated the equations of arms control to the point of unsolvability. East-West negotiations would move onto a much faster and more coherent track. Real common policy planning could finally be undertaken on strengthening world order.

Common Elections and a Common Public Debate

Majority rule among representatives of governments is still not the final step. In the long run majority rule must be rooted in the people as a whole, so that nations will not feel that they are being outvoted by other nations, but rather that common transnational business is being conducted by a transnational people.

At the base of the entire system there must thus lie an Atlantic Congress elected by the people. Then the people will share responsibility for the common policy and will be able to identify with the common power as their own. Then they will be confronted with the problems directly, along with the opportunity to resolve them through democratic procedures. Then NATO's debates and decisions will rise atop the sturdy foundation of an Atlantic-wide public debate, not just atop national debates and decisions. Then the habit of clarity will grow in place of the habit of consensus.

This may seem far away. Yet the first steps have already been taken. The others must now follow.

1. NATO recently found the courage to issue proclamations with dissenting footnotes from Greece and Denmark. This was necessary for both sides: These governments have made a political ritual of distancing themselves from NATO, so their public relations needs are often better served by dissent than by a common formulation, no matter how watered down.

Thus NATO now has to get unanimous consent from "only" a dozen or so countries. This is a sufficiently thankless task. It means reconciling a dozen political situations and public relations needs. Even among these dozen countries good will cannot be presupposed; they too sometimes feel a need to distance themselves from NATO.

2 Jack Mendelsohn, cited in *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 17, 1987.