

CHAPTER 2: POLITICAL CO-OPERATION

I. INTRODUCTION

39. If there is to be vitality and growth in the concept of the Atlantic Community, the relations between the members of NATO must rest on a solid basis of confidence and understanding. Without this there cannot be constructive or solid political co-operation.

40. The deepening and strengthening of this political co-operation does not imply the weakening of the ties of NATO members with other friendly countries or with other international associations, particularly the United Nations. Adherence to NATO is not exclusive or restrictive. Nor should the evolution of the Atlantic Community through NATO prevent the formation of even closer relationships among some of its members; for instance within groups of European countries. The moves toward Atlantic co-operation and European unity should be parallel and complementary, not competitive or conflicting.

41. Effective and constructive international cooperation requires a resolve to work together for the solution of common problems. There are special ties between NATO members, special incentives and security interests, which should make this task easier than it otherwise would be. But its successful accomplishment will depend largely on the extent to which member governments, in their own policies and actions, take into consideration the interests of the Alliance. This requires not only the acceptance of the obligation of consultation and cooperation whenever necessary, but also the development of practices by which the discharge of this obligation becomes a normal part of governmental activity.

42. It is easy to profess devotion to the principle of political - or economic - consultation in NATO. It is difficult and has in fact been shown to be impossible, if the proper conviction is lacking, to convert the profession into practice. Consultation within an alliance means more than exchange of information, though that is necessary. It means more than letting the NATO Council know about national decisions that have already been taken; or trying to enlist support for those decisions. It means the discussion of problems collectively, in the early stages of policy formation, and before national positions become fixed. At best, this will result in collective decisions on matters of common interest affecting the Alliance. At the least, it will ensure that no action is taken by one member without a knowledge of the views of the others.

II. CONSULTATION ON FOREIGN POLICIES

A. Scope and Character of Political Consultation.

43. The essential role of consultation in fostering political co-operation was clearly defined by an earlier NATO Committee on the North Atlantic Community in 1951:

"...The achievement of a closer degree of co-ordination of the foreign policies of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty, through the development of the 'habit of consultation' on matters of common concern, would greatly strengthen the solidarity of the North Atlantic Community and increase the