

Since it has no central organs of government, there can, of course, be no such thing as a Commonwealth policy as such; though there can be, and most often is, identity of policies among the nations of the Commonwealth.

It follows that there can be no conflict between membership in the Commonwealth and membership in the United Nations or in regional arrangements under the Charter of the United Nations. The nations of the Commonwealth participate in the activities of the United Nations in exactly the same way as any other members of that organization; each of them makes its own decisions in accordance with its own views of what is best to achieve the objectives of the United Nations. We may hope and believe that our Commonwealth relationship predisposes us to take a longer view and to show wider sympathies in making our decisions. It also predisposes us to consult, whenever possible, with our Commonwealth colleagues, and with representatives of other like-minded nations before making our decisions.

The United Nations, unlike the Commonwealth, has a constitution with a charter and with specific and limited obligations solemnly undertaken by its members. The prime purpose of the United Nations is to maintain peace and to provide security for its members. Since these aims are also the fundamental aims of every one of the nations of the Commonwealth I think one would be justified in saying that membership in the Commonwealth tends to fortify our loyalty to the United Nations and to strengthen our support of its fundamental objectives.

There is no incompatibility either between membership in the Commonwealth and membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is an alliance restricted to a particular region of the world and formed for the purpose of securing within that region the peace which we felt was not sufficiently secured, under present conditions, by the way in which the United Nations world-wide organization was functioning or rather was being prevented from functioning. Now it so happens that this North Atlantic region includes the area in which the two world wars had their origins. While the nations within that area have a special interest in, and a special obligation to their peoples to work for the preservation of peace in the Atlantic region, there can be no question that the success of our efforts will be of benefit to those nations of the Commonwealth which are not in the North Atlantic alliance, and, indeed, to the whole world.

Other nations of the Commonwealth have special interests and special responsibilities in other regions, and their success in preserving peace and security in those other regions will likewise benefit the whole Commonwealth and also the whole world. And we all hope that in time the world-wide organization of the United Nations may be made to function in such a way as to make all these regional arrangements an unnecessary duplication.

In the years since the close of the Second World War the Commonwealth itself has undergone a profound change. Until the close of the war, the Commonwealth was composed of nations, apart from the United Kingdom, geographically outside Europe but predominantly European in their origins and in the basic character of their institutions. The inclusion within the Commonwealth circle, as absolutely equal partners, of three great Asian nations may well prove to be as important a landmark in the development of the Commonwealth as the recognition of complete self-government was in 1926.