

before the western European countries had been strengthened by United States support and especially military supplies.

The French at this time were not only apprehensive about American foreign policy, they were hesitant about the very idea of a North Atlantic treaty. This led the Canadian government in mid-August to tell the French government that one reason they should support the creation of a North Atlantic alliance was their fear, which Canada shared, that the United States might press the Soviet Union too hard and too fast and not leave the Soviet Union a way out. "To lessen this danger, the western European powers will have to exert a steady and constructive influence on Washington. The establishment of a North Atlantic union will give them additional channels through which to exert this moderating influence."

All policies debatable

The North Atlantic Treaty gives the allies of the United States the right to have the North Atlantic Council discuss any American policy which they consider a threat to their security. The Treaty likewise gives the United States the right to have the Council discuss the policy of any of its allies which it considers a threat to its security. Arthur Vandenberg, then Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told Dean Rusk of the State Department in April 1948 that he was concerned with "the possibility that guarantees of security from the United States, whatever form they might take, might . . . encourage [European countries] to act provocatively . . . To meet . . . [this] possibility he thought that the consultative body, if one were created, should have the authority to review actions of one signatory which might be considered provocative by another signatory."

In the thirty-six years since the formation of the Alliance its members have embarked on many unwise foreign policies from which they have been slow to withdraw. The Alliance and indeed the world would be in better shape if France had withdrawn sooner from Indochina and North Africa, if Britain and France had not invaded Egypt in 1956, if the United States had recognized the Communist regime in China sooner and had got out of Vietnam sooner. Is it not possible that if there had been frank discussion of these matters at meetings of the heads of the North Atlantic governments some of these errors might not have been committed and others might have been corrected sooner?

On issues such as these a government which is committing an error cannot rely on a friendly government giving it a friendly warning in a talk between the two governments. Governments are always reluctant to say displeasing things to a friendly government on an issue that government considers important. This reluctance is especially great when the government whose policies are being questioned is the government of the United States, for then the other governments have to bear in mind that their criticism may make it less likely that they will get the support or sympathy they need from the United States on matters of great importance to them. One example which Alastair Buchan has given of this was the way in which "[President] Johnson brutally used the dependence of sterling on the dollar to exact [Prime Minister] Wilson's support for American policy in Vietnam, except for the bombing of the North. In the end, Wilson failed in both his objectives: to maintain the

parity of sterling and to retain any leverage over American policy in Asia. Both countries suffered in the process."

The democratic North Atlantic allies of the United States would have found it easier to talk frankly to the United States about its Vietnam policy if they had sought safety in numbers, if they had agreed among themselves well in advance of a North Atlantic summit meeting that they would act together at that meeting in an effort to persuade the United States to reconsider its Vietnam policy. Faced with the arguments of its allies the US administration might have moved sooner to get out of Vietnam.

Too many advisers present

In the negotiations on the North Atlantic Treaty the principal negotiators discovered on two occasions that they were unlikely to get very far in composing their differences if they met in the presence of their advisers and of stenographers and if an agreed record were made of their discussions. They therefore met in August 1948 and February 1949 in informal, top-secret meetings with no advisers present, no stenographers, and no agreed minutes. They reduced the number of people at their meetings from about twenty-five to seven. The meetings were successful in composing the differences.

I was present in the late 1950s at a top-secret meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Paris, where Dulles expounded United States policy on Communist China. There must have been at least 200 people in the room. The meeting resembled a press conference, not a consultation among allies. It gave Dulles what he wanted, an opportunity to promote what he called "a more sympathetic attitude towards United States policies." It did not give the allies an opportunity to influence United States policies.

Governments know that multilateral intergovernmental discussions on delicate, grave and divisive issues are more likely to be effective the fewer the number of people present. A head of government is more likely to speak frankly at a meeting with his peers if he can talk to them in a small room across a table seating no more than about twenty people. It would therefore be well if the governments of the fifteen North Atlantic countries were to agree that a meeting of their heads of government to discuss such issues as Star Wars, the first-use of nuclear weapons, policy toward the Soviet Union and the problems of Central America and the Mid-East should be restricted to the heads of government, each with only one adviser who would sit behind him or her at the small council table, the Secretary-General of the Alliance and no more than a couple of alliance officials.

First-use and Star Wars

No one summit meeting of the heads of government of the North Atlantic countries could usefully discuss more than two of these five issues. The most urgent are the refusal of NATO to renounce the first-use of nuclear weapons in a war against the Soviet Union in Europe and President Reagan's Star Wars program. The governments of the Alliance should decide that a summit meeting of their heads of government be held within the next few months to discuss these two questions. If all the governments are not in favor of this then those that want it should request this consultation under Article 4 of the Treaty on the ground that the strategy of first-use of nuclear weapons and the Star Wars program threaten their security. The