

In 1967, faced with a changing strategic situation, NATO carried out a review of its policies and issued a report entitled: "The Future Tasks of the Alliance" (the Harmel Report). This report indicated that the basic policy of NATO is to pursue the two objectives of defence and detente, and stated that the aim of all members countries is to achieve a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe accompanied by appropriate security guarantees.

The record of East-West relations over the last twenty years has been a mixed one, but nonetheless NATO has continued to pursue better relations with the East whenever that was possible. In the early 1970s it supported establishment of the SALT I Treaty, the conclusion of the Berlin agreements, and the launching of negotiations on European security and conventional force reductions. A period of stagnation following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979 and the imposition of martial law in Poland in the early 1980s, has recently given way to renewed hopes for improvements focussing on the INF Treaty and the prospect of new negotiations on conventional military stability and progress on other arms control issues.

At the same time, NATO has continued to give attention to the requirements of Western cohesion and defence. The Atlantic Declaration of 1974 reaffirmed the commitment of all members to the Treaty and clarified further their responsibilities in such fields as political consultation. Defence improvements and force modernization programmes have also continued, together with work on defence planning, infrastructures, communications, crisis management procedures and similar tasks.

The North Atlantic Council is the highest authority in the Alliance. Composed of the representatives of the sixteen member countries, it meets at the level of Ministers or of Permanent Representatives (Ambassadors).