

Thirdly, because the member countries can depend on United States nuclear protection, they do not have to produce or acquire independent control of nuclear weapons. By helping to limit the spread of these weapons, NATO contributes to the idea of "non-proliferation" and at the same time, within the alliance, helps to reduce the possibility of nuclear war occurring by accident or miscalculation.

Fourthly, NATO enables West Germany to make an effective contribution to the defence of the West. Germany has the largest single military establishment in Western Europe, but all of its forces are integrated into NATO and responsible to NATO commanders. Germany has no general staff of its own and no forces available to German commanders outside NATO. Because of the nuclear protection which Germany receives through the alliance, it has been prepared formally to renounce the right to manufacture nuclear weapons on its own territory. This was done in 1954 when Germany entered NATO.

Finally, one of the most important characteristics of the NATO system is its provision of machinery for continuing consultation on military and political issues. This arrangement gives smaller members of the alliance like Canada a chance to participate in the making of policy on a wide range of major issues of concern to us that we would not have in any other circumstances. But is this participation effective? It is often assumed that, when lesser powers sit down with a super-power, all they can do is listen and agree. There are two super-powers in the world today, and they are very different. The U.S.S.R. operates in secrecy and by stealth, without much, if any, regard for the wishes and views of its allies. The United States, on the other hand, is an open society with a government that must win elections to achieve and maintain power. While it may be in a position to dominate the alliance, by its own choice it proceeds by consent and is susceptible to many-faceted influences from within and without its borders.

While NATO brings important advantages to its members, the alliance approach also involves both military and political obligations. On the military side, in addition to the guarantee of mutual assistance under the Treaty, there is an implicit understanding that each member will make an appropriate contribution to the overall military resources of the alliance. In the political sphere, just as there is an opportunity to advance ideas and influence the actions of others in the alliance, so there is a requirement to take views and interests of others into account. NATO operates by consensus and there is an expectation that, except in special circumstances, agreement will be reached.

One of the criticisms sometimes directed against NATO is that, besides placing these constraints on the freedom of action of individual members, it is a conservative bureaucracy, tending to perpetuate itself and unable to adjust effectively to changing circumstances.

In an organization made up of 15 governments, there can at times be some difficulty and delay in co-ordinating views. At the same time, to the