

NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society

POSITION PAPER

Following a brief background description of the proposed NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, this paper gives the US view of the objectives, implementation and scope of this committee, as well as possible topics for consultation.

Background

In his address to NATO's 20th Anniversary Ministerial Meeting on April 10, the President recommended that NATO establish a Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society. Subsequently, the Allies have agreed that (a) NATO Secretary General Brosio should visit NATO capitals in June and July to explore this proposal with Allied governments; and (b) there would be a special meeting of the North Atlantic Council in the early fall to consider the formation of guidelines for the proposed committee. Brosio is scheduled to visit Washington on July 2-3, the last major stop in his tour of capitals.

The President has designated Daniel P. Moynihan, Assistant to the President, as the coordinator for US activities in this new area of consultation in NATO. Under Dr. Moynihan's chairmanship, US agencies will, as appropriate, develop US papers on urban and environmental topics which will be discussed in NATO.

Objectives

A committee in NATO on modern urban and environmental problems should serve to:

- Pool the resources and experience of most of the technologically advanced Western countries in seeking solutions to their common problems;
- Add to NATO a new dimension of concern for the quality of life;
- Foster increased public support for the Atlantic Alliance, particularly, if possible, among youth.

-- Make use of the unique NATO experience in technology transfer among advanced nations, and the not less singular fact that the deliberations of this international organization receive continuing attention at high levels of government.

Implementation

In agreeing to the Secretary General's tour of capitals and to a special meeting of the North Atlantic Council in the fall reinforced by experts from capitals, the Allies have already taken important steps towards implementation of the President's proposal. We hope that they will soon agree formally to the establishment of a Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society. Formal agreement to the Committee will be necessary to meet the President's proposal. Also, we are encouraged by the efforts which have been undertaken in a number of capitals to coordinate national contributions to these consultations in NATO.

We continue to believe that the special Council meeting in the fall would yield more constructive results if it were preceded by an exploratory meeting of officials from capitals with direct experience and responsibilities in urban and environmental problems. These officials could make an essential contribution by:

- Identifying topics of greatest common interest to the Allies;
- Suggesting priorities for consultation on these topics;
- Designating Allied governments which would undertake initial studies of each topic or sub-topic;
- Preparing recommendations on the composition and terms of reference of the proposed Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society. We believe the Committee should meet perhaps twice annually, restricting its work at each session to at most two or three major subjects, and preparing clearly defined recommendations for further work nationally and multilaterally on each topic.

Scope

Based on discussions in capitals and in NATO, we believe that the Allies are in general agreement that NATO's role in the societal field:

- Should be principally as a stimulator and catalyst for action in this area, and not as an executor of programs;
- Should not normally duplicate work going on in other international bodies;
- Should not involve significant additions to NATO's budget or staff;
- Should be an open activity whose benefits need not be confined to the Treaty area.

Topics for Discussion

The subject is a large one. Moreover, there are a substantial number of international agencies which are conducting studies and programs in this area. Rather than attempting to catalogue and classify the whole range of subjects and current work in the environmental field, we believe that the Allies should begin their consultation, following an exploratory meeting of experts, with a special meeting of the Council to which Allied governments would submit papers proposing subjects for consideration by the Committee, with some indication of priority and willingness to assume a rapporteur responsibility in the actual work of the Committee. It may be hoped that some general sense of the enterprise will emerge from the earlier meeting of experts, so that formal submissions display some measure of coherence.

Five guiding principals may be offered at the outset.

1. Proposals should concern the prevention or control of a problem which is common to most of the industrial nations and related directly or indirectly to expanding technology.

2. Proposals should indicate in what manner and to what degree visible benefits would accrue to the peoples of member nations.

3. Proposals should normally be adaptable to the type of operations analysis which over the years NATO has developed in the field of Military technology.

4. Proposals should seek areas of "comparative advantage" in the economists' sense, as between different nations so that a natural process of beneficial exchange arises.

5. Proposals should reflect a lively sense of what Dr. Moynihan, in calling for suggestions from the cabinet, described as "the risk of sonorous inconsequence."

The United States government does not have a final list of proposals it would most wish to see taken up, but the first round of interagency consultation has elicited widespread, and genuine interest in the enterprise. The following four areas of inquiry evoke the largest consensus and may be treated as firm for the time being. A possible rapporteur country is also indicated.

I. Environmental Pollution

There is no problem more common to the NATO countries, nor any likely to elicit greater public interest. The problem is inexorably international, as for example German pesticide killing Dutch fish, or in the export of DDT from the United States for use in Europe, and very much adapted to the kinds of agreements and understandings that can be reached through the NATO mechanism.

Specific subcommittees might consider:

- a. Ocean pollution (NATO Science Committee)
- b. River Pollution (Netherlands)
- c. Air Pollution (United States)
- d. Waste disposal (Belgium)

II. Urban Development

As with environmental pollution, problems of urban development arise from an expanding technology. Almost all NATO countries are beginning to develop formal programs and policies to shape urban development. Some are more advanced than others, and there is likely to be considerable useful exchange of knowledge.

- a. National land use strategies. (France)
- b. Cooperative research and enforcement in the control of crime. (United States)
- c. Urban planning. (Canada)

III. Educational Development

It would appear that many NATO countries are beginning to see that the educational reforms of middle third of the century have not produced anything like the social mobility that was hoped for. This is increasingly recognized for what it is: perhaps the principal limitation on economic and social development in Western Europe. (Witness the popularity of Serban-Schreiber's book.) The United States has achieved more in this field than most nations, and is considerably in the forefront of research, but of course is still struggling with fateful problems. In the meantime, the brain drain of professional manpower remains a serious problem for Western Europe.

- a. Education and social mobility. (Norway)
- b. Professional manpower. (United Kingdom)
- c. Technical education. (Luxemburg)

IV. Food and Nutrition

In the perverse way of things, food and nutrition is once again a "problem" in the North Atlantic nations. Overweight is a major health problem. (The United States is the only member of the World

Health Organization in which the life expectancy of adult males has not increased in 20 years.) New methods of processing, and now manufacturing food have introduced a fair number of quite serious problems, ranging from toxic dangers to actual diet distortions. The moment is very much at hand for an intensive exchange of information and possibly the further development of some international standards. Simultaneously certain of the southern countries in NATO continue to have some more traditional hunger problems. Further, if the American experience is any guide, there is likely to be more of this in Northern Europe and Canada than is generally assumed.

- a. Food and Nutrition Standards. (Italy)
- b. Pesticides. (Denmark)