

Summary:

In an analysis of the attitudes of the major political parties toward NATO three periods are distinguishable.

i) 1949-1957: Relative Party Consensus.

During this first period there was only minor party disagreement and in many ways a bi-partisan approach toward NATO existed. Here the inclusion of Article II in the treaty helped to ensure party consensus, and in the early 1950's all three major parties agreed that the threat of Communism was important. The CCF was the first party to show dissatisfaction when it felt the Lisbon Conference of 1952 put undue emphasis on the military aspects of NATO, but the Liberals and the Conservatives did not disagree with the military policy of the alliance. None of the parties, however, showed much concern over the nuclear strategy adopted by NATO, and the nuclear question never became a party issue. Table No. 1 shows that all three parties gave general support to the stationing of troops in Europe, and the need to implement Article II of the treaty. Only the Conservatives advocated increasing the force level in Europe and the party was not in complete agreement on this point.

ii) 1958-1963: Party Conflict and Dissension

The main issue of party conflict arose over the acquisition of nuclear weapons. The CCF started to have doubts about the NATO nuclear strategy in early 1958, and by 1960 was advocating withdrawal from the alliance. This position was altered slightly when the CCF and the Canadian Labour Congress, who supported the alliance, became the NDP in 1961. From 1961 to 1963 the NDP would only accept a Canadian role in NATO if it was non-nuclear weapons, but from the spring of 1960 to the election of 1963 the party position (and the Government's) became increasingly evasive. By 1963 it was clear that a serious internal party split existed over the nuclear issue. The Liberals, on the other hand, had supported the acquisition of nuclear weapons during 1958-59, but by 1960 had shifted to an anti-nuclear position and advocated Canada assume a conventional role in NATO. The Cuban crisis of late 1962 and the Norstad interview in early 1963 helped to convince Mr. Pearson that Canada had not fulfilled her commitments to NATO (and NORAD). Consequently he took the position that a Liberal Government would fulfill these commitments by acquiring the necessary nuclear weapons. (The party positions on the nuclear issue are shown in table No. 2) The Conservative party never clarified its position on the nuclear question during the 1963 election, but still maintained strong support for NATO.

iii) 1964-1967: Toward a New Consensus

With the settlement of the nuclear issue the Liberal Government expressed a desire to establish a more stable pattern of defence policy which took form in the establishment of a parliamentary defence committee and the White Paper on Defence in 1964. The White.