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NATO IN CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

A Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, to the Canadian Institute of International Affairs Conference, Calgary, March 1, 1969.

Two Canadian Prime Ministers, Mr. St. Laurent and Mr. Pearson, were among the founders and chief architects of NATO. Twenty years later, under a new Prime Minister, Canada is reviewing its foreign and defence policies, and one of the key questions is whether or not Canada should stay in NATO. Within the last few weeks, the British Prime Minister and the German Chancellor, meeting in Bonn, have re-affirmed their full support of the alliance, and the President of the United States, at NATO headquarters in Brussels and in other European capitals, has renewed his country's pledge to stay in Europe and to stay in NATO. General de Gaulle, with all his distrust of what he likes to call "the American hegemony", has kept France in the alliance, maintains two divisions in Germany and, although he has withdrawn his forces from the unified NATO command, fosters the closest liaison between the French and NATO headquarters.

Why, then, is Canada, an outward-looking, internationally-minded country, closely tied by history, geography and national interest to the United States and Western Europe, the one country currently conducting a fundamental review of its role in the NATO alliance? First let me make clear that the review has not been undertaken for reasons of narrow domestic self-interest. Canada is very far from being a self-contained economy, our standard of living and our very ability to survive depend on a world-wide pattern of foreign trade. No nation in this position can turn inward upon itself and ignore its international responsibilities. To live and to grow, Canada needs a stable and prosperous world.

Regardless of any review, the whole thrust of Canada's foreign policy is directed toward the twin objectives of world order and world prosperity. This means that, for its own self-interest and its own self-respect, Canada must make its proper contribution to the maintenance of world peace and the raising of the world standard of living. These are political objectives and are pursued in the United Nations and NATO, by means of other groupings such as the Commonwealth and the newly-founded Francophonie, and bilaterally with the nations of the world.