

NATO, nuclear weapons and Canada's interests

By George Ignatieff

While reading Escott Reid's excellent book on the making of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, I began to wonder whether the original emphasis placed by Canada on political and economic co-operation within the alliance had not been sacrificed to the counsels of the industrial-military complex. Had NATO become primarily a military machine?

This speculation is supported when one considers the contrast between the pious declarations of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament and the concurrent decision of the North Atlantic Council to authorize another substantial build-up of NATO military strength. Admittedly, the Soviets share the same belief in running ever faster to remain in the same place. Consequently, NATO and the Warsaw Pact act as complementary agents, inflating each other's military budgets and stockpiling incredible destructive capacities.

As the former Canadian Permanent Representative at NATO, the United Nations and the Geneva Disarmament Conference, I had direct experience of this see-saw escalation of military strength, with which no arms-control talks ever seem to be able to keep up. The unfortunate consequence is that the costs of defence increase more than the degree of security. The arms-manufacturers are the only winners.

NATO will remain a necessity so long as Soviet power is deployed in Central Europe. The military resources of Western Europe alone are not enough; they require the all-important transatlantic guarantee. Canada definitely has a role to play; it should be expected to make a fair contribution to the insurance against aggression provided by the United States.

Moreover, as I know from personal experience, Canadians have every reason to feel confidence in the Canadian military forces serving at home and abroad. This article is concerned with the process of planning the Canadian contribution to NATO, and in NATO planning itself. The question in my mind is the extent to

which military planning can or should be divorced from considerations of political, economic and psychological factors that influence foreign policy.

Not limited

The Canadian participants in the making of the North Atlantic Treaty realized that the strategic thinking in the alliance should not be restricted to a purely military point of view. At the signing of the treaty on April 4, 1949, Lester B. Pearson, one of its architects, said: "This treaty, though born of fear and frustration, must, however, lead to positive social, economic and political achievements if it is to live — achievements which will extend beyond the time of the emergency which gave it birth or the geographical area which it now includes."

As Reid recalls in his book, the main opposition to this point of view came from the British, who feared that any new transatlantic machinery might duplicate arrangements already in existence in Europe, like the Organization for European Economic Co-operation. There were those, like Gladwyn Jebb, who were already drawing attention to a possible inconsistency between the conception of an Atlantic Community in which the United States would inevitably be the predominant partner and the idea of a European Community in which it was hoped that Britain and France might once again assume their prewar role as leaders of a Western coalition.

Thus, on September 2, 1948, at a meeting in Washington, D.C., Jebb quoted

British feared duplication of European arrangements

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