

In 1949, when we set up NATO, I think it was true that we could not wait for political settlements in order to meet the security issue, because the security issue was the number-one issue. But 20 years later I should be inclined to say that we can't wait until all the problems of security have been settled before we tackle the political issues of peace in the world. And it so happened that NATO after 20 years in our opinion had developed too much into a military alliance and not enough into a political alliance, not enough into an alliance which is interested not only in keeping the balance of deterrence of tactical power in Europe but into an alliance which is interested in arms control and de-escalation.

And I am afraid, in the situation which we had reached, NATO had in reality determined all of our defence policy. We had no defence policy, so to speak, except that of NATO. And our defence policy had determined all of our foreign policy. And we had no foreign policy of any importance except that which flowed from NATO. And this is a false perspective for any country. It is a false perspective to have a military alliance determine your foreign policy. It should be your foreign policy which determines your military policy.

So all we have done (and it is pretty important), last week in Ottawa, was to stand the pyramid on its base. It was standing on its head. We have decided to review our foreign policy and to have a defence policy flow from that, and from the defence policy to decide which alliances we want to belong to, and how our defences should be deployed. And that is why we gave a series of four priorities. In our statement last week, we said that the first priority for Canadians was not NATO, important though it is, and we have said that we wanted to remain aligned in NATO with those countries who believe in deterring the Soviet aggression in Europe. But this is not our first priority. Our first priority is the protection of Canadian sovereignty, in all the dimensions that it means.

And I don't accept the criticism of those who say this is a return to isolationism, or this is a return to the "fortress America" conception. This is not our purpose and this is not our aim.

What we are doing in our foreign policy, and what we are doing in our defence policy, we shall do by discussing with our allies, and we shall explain to them that our contribution is in order to promote the values which they are promoting in NATO -- values of freedom and of liberty. And this is what we are aiming for first.

But it is false to talk of isolationism when you think of Canada, which is territorially one of the largest countries in the world, second in terms of its land space, and which has a very small population in terms of the middle and great powers. It is absurd to say that this is isolationism because we are not on all the fronts of the world, political and military, fighting with other people. You can't talk of isolationism of Canadians because, with the small manpower we have, with the economic means we have, we say we want to use the first part of it in terms of our own sovereignty, the second part of it in terms of the defence of our territory and of the continent, and the third part of it in defence of other alliances such as NATO, such as peacekeeping operations which we will embark upon and we have embarked upon through the United Nations. We need our armed forces in order to perform these roles, but in degrees determined by our foreign policy. We don't want a military alliance or a defence policy to pre-empt all our choices.