

postwar world. And there were benefits, Lester Pearson once described NATO as a form of group insurance which, as was well known, was always cheaper than an individual policy.

**Canada's nuclear  
policy**

That comment brings me to another key element in Canada's foreign policy framework which is by no means simple to explain. In terms of our security we consistently opted for group insurance, and deliberately chose, in the nuclear age, not to develop our own nuclear weapons. This despite the fact that we were, at the close of the war, among those very few countries with the technology and resources to produce nuclear weapons.

Both for our past and for our future that has been a fundamental and resonant decision. It has taken us into collective security arrangements with associated obligations in Europe and in North America. It has taken us into the forefront of the complex and controversial use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes, made us experts on safeguards against the military application of nuclear technology, and on non-proliferation policy. It has brought home the strategic vulnerability of our location between the two super-powers.

This choice not to "go nuclear" in military armament was not taken from ignorance of our potential. Futurists should note that Lester Pearson, speaking in 1934 when nuclear weapons were no more than a dark shadow on some laboratory wall, said and I quote: "It is altogether likely that in 25 years from now the weapons of today will be as out-of-date as pikes and tomahawks.... We get almost into the realm of the fantastic when we consider the release of atomic energy as a destructive agency.... If that energy is ever released...and applied to destructive purposes, we would doubtless have world peace, because the world would be blown to bits."

For 1934, that was a remarkable insight into the future. And Pearson's political assessment still stands in the sense that fear of the nuclear holocaust has so far maintained a condition which, if it is not precisely peace, is not exactly war either.

My point therefore is that the conscious abdication of nuclear weapons evolved in Canada, as in no other country at the time, both in the full knowledge of the power which nuclear weaponry could endow, and with the capacity to produce nuclear weapons ourselves.

A choice of this kind is, it seems to me and has evidently seemed to successive governments, so deeply grounded in Canada's policy culture as not to be a choice at all. It is simply not an issue. Its ramifications of course continue to be hotly debated, but the basic premise that Canada will not construct nuclear weapons is, quite rightly in my view, never questioned. It is a tribute to what I have earlier called our relative security in a relatively insecure world.