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NATO: HOW IT SERVES CANADIAN INTERESTS

Notes for a Talk to the Canadian Parliamentary Association by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, Ottawa, April 17, 1973.

In recent years the Government has conducted thorough reviews of its foreign and defence policies. One of the principal conclusions reached was that defence policy should flow from foreign policy and that both should be designed to serve Canadian interests. In a rapidly-evolving world situation, the Government decided that, while pursuing a deliberate program of broadening and diversifying Canada's relations with other states of the world, it should continue to support the organizations to which we already belonged, including NATO. The purpose of my remarks tonight is to outline some of the reasons why we believe participation in NATO serves Canadian interests.

But first a word about NATO itself. It is perhaps a common misconception to think only of Western Europe when NATO is mentioned. It is much more. NATO is shorthand for an association of states stretching from the Pacific coasts of the United States and Canada to Greece and Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its members range from the most powerful country in the world today to one of the smallest, Iceland, which possesses no military forces of any kind and relies entirely on the security of the alliance for protection from military attack.

The commitment to assist each other in the event of an attack is enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty, which was signed in 1949, with Canada one of the original signatories. Although France no longer participates actively in the integrated military structure of NATO, it has remained a member of the alliance and its forces engage in exercises and planning for joint military operations. At present we contribute forces to the three major areas of the alliance -- in Europe itself, in the Atlantic, where our maritime forces are earmarked for assignment to SACLANT in the event of an emergency, and in North America, through the NORAD Agreement (although this is not formally part of the North Atlantic Treaty). In all three spheres, our contribution is modest in the overall scale, but well respected because of its high calibre and professional qualities.

These forces of all the members of NATO, including U.S. nuclear strength, constitute the Western component of the present system of balanced mutual deterrence.

Pending greater progress towards disarmament or a more effective world collective security system under the United Nations, the present balance of deterrence is our best safeguard for peace. In short, NATO's primary security purpose is deterrence.

Its second main purpose is to pursue all realistic avenues of *détente*. At NATO headquarters in Brussels, there is a highly-effective mechanism for inter-allied consultation on a whole range of international political and defence questions of common interest. It is headed by the North Atlantic Council, which meets at least twice a year at ministerial level; but the Council is permanently in session and can be convened in a matter of hours to deal with crises as they arise. Canada and the 14 other nations are represented at senior ambassador level. The Council is assisted by a complex network of committees, including a Committee of Economic Advisers, a Committee of Political Advisers and a Science Committee.

In addition to their traditional functions, these committees now have to adapt themselves to new forms, as well as to the increased pace of consultations, in order to provide the necessary co-ordination of Western positions on subjects on the agenda of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and Mutual Balanced Force Reductions preparatory talks in Helsinki and Vienna. Specialized NATO sub-committees, drawing on legal, economic, political and cultural expertise from capitals, are busily engaged in elaborating NATO's positions on these and many other issues for use in the negotiations themselves. It is clear that a full and careful preparation of these negotiations is necessary in order to ensure their success.

NATO has also embarked on a program to stimulate co-operation in another area of non-military activity. Comprising nearly all the major industrial states of the world, NATO has successfully promoted an exchange of views and experience on environmental and ecological problems under the auspices of the NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society. You will be aware that Canada was host to the plenary session of this committee last week. It was generally agreed that this had been a very useful meeting.

In *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, a primary aim of Canadian policy was defined as follows: "Canada should continue secure as an independent political entity". For a country of Canada's size and geographical location, membership in the alliance provides a high degree of security at a relatively low cost in terms of resources devoted to defence. Even though we contribute forces to all three areas of the alliance, the proportion of our gross national product devoted to defence is considerably lower than that of several other members.

In defence, as well as in political terms, participation in the wider collective defence arrangements of NATO is helpful in projecting our national identity. The Canadian land and air forces in Europe are now combined in one headquarters and, although relatively small, have achieved a deservedly high reputation for effectiveness. They represent in European eyes the visible evidence of Canada's continuing commitment to the alliance.

Participation in NATO's common defence effort does not prejudice the Government's freedom of decision or involve an automatic commitment as to the means of providing mutual support. Article V of the NATO treaty requires that each member take "such action as it deems necessary" in the event of aggression in the treaty area. We can be satisfied that Canadian troops in Europe cannot be ordered into

action by SACEUR without a fully-conscious decision by the Canadian Government to authorize him to do so. Similarly, our maritime forces in the Atlantic are only "earmarked" for assignment to SACLANT in an emergency. Canadian Government authority must be given before they can be deployed in action.

Given Europe's continuing preoccupation with security, the continued presence of Canadian forces has important political overtones. It is evident that Canada's forces in Europe do not play a critical part in the overall strategic equation. However, as a symbol of the credibility of the North American commitment, they remain very important from a political standpoint. This is particularly true in the case of the Federal Republic of Germany because of its special situation. The other smaller members of the alliance, such as the Netherlands and Norway, who are less than sure about the political consequences or the adequacy of integration of defence arrangements among Europeans, are most anxious to retain intact the United States and Canadian commitment to Europe. The Norwegian Foreign Minister, who was visiting Ottawa last week, expressed his Government's special appreciation for Canada's participation in NATO and for contingency plans we have made to send additional forces to that country as a reinforcement measure in the event of an emergency.

Participation in NATO can also have certain direct benefits for Canadian industry. In the NATO program for satellite communication facilities, in which some significant sums will be expended in the coming years, we have obtained recognition that the bids of Canadian manufacturers for all the projects related to this program will be evaluated free of import taxes and duties. It took some bargaining, of course, and it could eventually be accepted as a principle because governments rather than private agencies were the parties to the arrangements. This is a useful illustration of the special advantages we seek to derive from the security relationship with Europe and the kind of concessions we are given. There is a good deal more in the way of technological "spinoff" for Canada, of course, by way of access to European systems in the space and communications fields.

Other illustrations worth mentioning are the possibilities for co-operation with our European allies in the defence production field, which are currently being pursued on many fronts. There are also many co-operative arrangements with them in the field of training whereby Canada extends the use of Canadian training facilities on a full-recovery basis to Britain and the Netherlands. Others are under discussion. All these bring regional economic benefits to Canada at some base facilities which might otherwise be closed down or remain dormant.

Participation in NATO provides a means of strengthening our relations with the countries of Western Europe. To the extent that most, if not all, of the European members of NATO attach considerable importance to the alliance as a guarantee of their security, Canadian support for and active participation in the political and military activities of the alliance can help create a favourable attitude towards Canada on the part of the individual European governments. This can, in turn, influence the position of the same governments when, as members of the EEC, they are required to take action which could affect Canadian interests. A good example of this interaction was the West German Government's initiative in making a direct reference to Canada's economic interests in the communiqué issued by EEC heads of government last year. This step was prompted, we have good reason to believe, by the importance the Germans continue to attach to maintaining a Canadian presence in Europe.

As you know, Canada is making a special effort to develop a satisfactory

relationship with the newly-enlarged European Economic Community. Important Canadian economic interests are at stake, particularly with the situation arising out of the admission of Britain. To the extent that we continue to play a positive and constructive role in NATO, I am convinced that our participation in the alliance cannot but assist us in establishing a good working relationship with the EEC.

NATO strength and solidarity can take much of the credit not only for maintaining peace but also for the progress made to date on East-West issues. The West German Government itself has acknowledged that its *Ostpolitik* could not have succeeded without the backing of its allies. The road to the opening of the negotiations in Helsinki on the CSCE and in Vienna on MBFR required an unstinting diplomatic effort on the part of all concerned, and deliberate and careful consultation in NATO. There is a strong conviction in Europe, which we share, that NATO solidarity will need to be maintained throughout the negotiations which have already been initiated.

Our membership in NATO is our admission-card to the consultations and negotiating tables of the alliance. This is particularly important at the present time, when Canada is directly participating in two separate but related negotiations which have opened a further phase in the lowering of tensions and increasing security in Europe and in the world. The first of these is the Multiple Preparatory Talks in Europe, which have been under way in Helsinki since November last year, with some 35 countries participating. Canadian interests are closely engaged in the CSCE agenda items, and it is worth singling out the economic and freedom-of-movement issues to illustrate the range and importance of the CSCE issues for Canada's foreign and domestic policy aims.

The second set of negotiations in which we are directly participating is the exploratory talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions, which have been under way in Vienna since late January. The main participants in this negotiation are the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact which maintain forces in Central Europe. We expect this to be a difficult negotiation, but it seems to us that it would be illusory to expect *détente* to flow from the CSCE negotiations if parallel steps are not taken to reduce the tensions stemming from the present confrontation of forces in Central Europe.

This is why we regard the CSCE and MBFR as parallel sets of negotiations which we hope will lead to further progress in East-West *détente*. Needless to say, they present an unprecedented opportunity for Canadian co-operation with the countries of Europe, and in particular with our fellow members of NATO, where consultation on the Western position in these negotiations is proceeding apace.

Canada is determined to maintain and strengthen its traditional ties with the countries of Western Europe. This policy will serve Canadian interests not only because of the direct benefits arising from improved bilateral relations with the individual countries but also because it will serve to underline our separate identity and offset somewhat the preponderant influence of the United States.

NATO provides a unique forum in the shape of the Council, where almost every day Canada has an opportunity to express its national point of view on policy matters of key importance to the European members as well as to the United States. Through our participation in the Council and the NATO committees, we have frequently found ourselves siding with the Europeans on issues where the views

and interests of the super-powers may diverge from those of the smaller and middle-size members of the alliance. There is no shortage of occasions when we have the opportunity to express a distinct Canadian point of view, whether this be in the Council at ambassadorial level or at the ministerial sessions.