



Statements and Speeches

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REFLECTIONS ON PEACE AND SECURITY

Notes for remarks by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister, to the Conference on Strategies for Peace and Security in the Nuclear Age, University of Guelph, Ontario, October 27, 1983.

Let me, first, congratulate the organizers of this conference. The theme is compelling; your membership is eminent; and your location is appropriate. It is appropriate because the name of Guelph reminds us of another age which was torn by hostile systems, competing alliances and profound ideological division.

The depth and violence of the dispute between Guelphs and Ghibellines tore Europe apart for much of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The argument was fundamental for the time. Who was supreme, Pope or Emperor? It spread from Germany to Italy, France and Sicily, drawing other powers and interests in its wake. No country, church, class or family in Europe was immune from the destructive force of that question.

Popes excommunicated emperors. Emperors took up arms against successive popes. The battle between Guelphs and Ghibellines was remarkable for its ferocity, for the loss of life and the wreck of cities, for its pervasive and lasting influence throughout European politics and culture. It was an early version of total war — on a continental scale. And, because both history and geography are written by the victorious, the name of Guelph lives on, given to this place as the proud heritage of a ruling dynasty.

That this city of Guelph is to be found in Canada encourages me to underline a further proposition, familiar but profound: that we Canadians have a framework of long-standing and deep-rooted ties with Europe and with European conflicts. There is a European-ness, well beyond place-names, in our history, in our culture and in the predisposition of many of our government policies. I do no disservice to our North American nature nor to our place on the Pacific Rim. But our engagement with Europe comes home with particular force in questions of peace and security.

Canada's participation, from the beginning, in both world wars of this century, our founding and loyal membership in NATO [the North Atlantic Treaty Organization], our decision to test the cruise missile in Canadian territory, all demonstrate the recognition that our own security is tightly bound with the security of our European allies.

A nation of our size and geographic location could, in the past or in the present, have considered other options. Those options, whether of isolationism, or of being a nuclear-weapons state ourselves, have in Canada been invariably set aside in favour of a commitment to collective security. Our dedication to the Western Alliance, and to our partnership with the United States in the defence of this continent, is part of the bedrock of our foreign policy.

But the political, economic and military obligations we have undertaken for our common defence offer commensurate rights and duties. Among them is the right to speak about the full range of Western policies, and the duty to reflect about where we are and where we should be going.

We are not silent partners in any of the councils we have joined — because silence would mean the abdication of responsibility in the face of crisis. We are not ambiguous about our international commitments — because we recognize our deep engagement with an interdependent world. We are not afraid to negotiate with those who may threaten us — because that fear would betray lack of confidence in the vital strength of our own values.

That is the mood I want to bring to you this evening, and the spirit in which I want to share with you some of my own reflections on your theme of "Strategies for Peace and Security in the Nuclear Age".

I will tell you right away that I am deeply troubled: by an intellectual climate of acrimony and uncertainty; by the parlous state of East-West relations; by a superpower relationship which is dangerously confrontational; and by a widening gap between military strategy and political purpose. All these reveal most profoundly the urgent need to assert the pre-eminence of the mind of man over machines of war.

There is today an ominous rhythm of crisis. Not just an arms crisis. It is a crisis of confidence in ourselves, a crisis of faith in others. How can we change that ominous rhythm? That is the question which brings me here tonight.

I start from what I suppose is a problem in epistemology — the difficulty all of us experience in trying to know what is going on in the world — to know it and to understand it in a manner that is accurate, that provides the ground for useful action.

Too often our knowledge and our judgments are true and false at the same time. This is often the distinctive sign of rapidly changing realities which tend to elude our understanding. For example we know that there are, in the Eighties, many new kinds of power and many new centres of power. There is the power of oil, or of cheap labour, or of regional hegemony. We call it a multipolar world — which suggests that no nation can act in isolation, that no power is truly dominant. But surely it is also true, and perhaps now with a special force, that the superpower relationship is at this time as dominant and as crucial as it ever was in the Fifties — when we had a more simplistic bipolar model with which to understand the world.

Another example: military strategy is the subject of much debate these days. This is a positive sign. Many strategists, in rightly trying to increase the odds against the nuclear gamble, advocate increased strength in conventional weapons, and new doctrines for conventional deterrence. Some of these doctrines have the sound purpose of delaying, or even preventing, the terrible resort to nuclear weapons in any European conflict.

I believe that such a raising of the nuclear threshold in Europe is a concept of the first importance. It would not be an easy, or an inexpensive task. But even as I am attracted to this concept in its application to Europe, I am troubled by a broader implication. Non-nuclear weapons are in an advanced state of technology, and are widely marketed. Sea-skimming missiles, laser-guided bombs and fragmentation weapons are available for distribution. Is it the purpose of nuclear arms control to make the world safe for conventional warfare?

Surely a basic term is missing in this equation: it is the encouragement of an equilibrium of conventional arms and forces, balanced at lower rather than higher levels. An agreed framework of conventional deterrence against armed aggression — but significantly reducing any dangerous concentration of forces.

This is to some extent the task of the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks [MBFR] in Vienna. But those talks will not succeed unless their importance in terms of military strategy is developed within a wider framework of East-West confidence and political will.

Let me suggest a further example of our difficulty in understanding a time which appears to be out of joint. A moment ago I used the word interdependence. It is the accepted description of the world as we know it. We think it describes a rational and positive condition, an ethic to be encouraged. But we are also learning that the consequences of interdependence are frequently unforeseen, often irrational, negative, and out of control — rogue trends which promote inequality among states, and deep strains between them.

If we have difficulty understanding the intricacies of interdependence, we are not yet even close to managing the economic linkages with peace and security.

Consider Poland. Its economic collapse strongly suggested action to assist. Western banks were deeply exposed. There seemed to be a common interest in the renewed viability of the Polish economy. But the overriding political considerations, in light of the brutal declaration of martial law, pointed in quite the opposite direction.

Thus, the debate over East-West economic relations — which haunts every Western council — reveals the fundamental and unresolved question of how much economic interdependence is desirable between the two systems. Some say less. Some say more. Those who argue for less are often, paradoxically, the first to advocate the punitive merit of economic sanctions — which are only effective if interdependence exists, and if Soviet behaviour is modified by the expectation of economic benefit. Moreover, some who argue for economic sanctions in the civilian sector apparently believe that this will influence Soviet military spending. Yet they may add that there is little if any relationship between civilian and military economies in the Soviet Union.

This particular debate tends also to lay open one of the most gaping self-inflicted wounds of the current period. That is the unfortunate tendency for a discussion which starts off about East-West relations to wind up in the fratricide of West-West relations. There have been days when I, or Ronald Reagan, or Margaret Thatcher may seem to have been accused, for whatever reason or passion of the moment, of posing a greater threat to the security of the West than do the Russians and their associates.

It is almost as though the diversity, pluralism, and freedom of expression which we are determined to preserve through the Alliance, are not seen as appropriate within the Alliance.

The Alliance in arms against itself is a paradox rich with historical allusion. NATO will avoid that fate if we are wise. But institutions cannot grow to meet new challenges if their level of debate — their intellectual universe of discourse — does not expand to meet the changing realities of our environment.

Therefore, I am uneasy with these paradoxes. I am not satisfied with our ability to analyze and understand the complexities of an entirely new phase in East-West relations. I am not reassured by the posture and rhetoric of an earlier wartime age — an age, by the way, in which Canadian nerves were not found to falter.

For it is not our nerves which are being tested now, and these are not playing fields on which we stand and cheer. It is the killing-ground of life itself — and what is being tested is whether the force and will of our statecraft can reverse the momentum of the nuclear arms race.

When I spoke in June of last year at the Second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, I said:

“... I understand full well the people's anguish and confusion. The nuclear debate is difficult and seems to pursue an inverse logic. It deals with power that, by common consent, is unusable. It argues for more nuclear weapons in order that, in the end, there may be fewer. It perceives the vulnerability of cities and of human beings as an element of stability in the nuclear balance. And worst of all, the debate goes on without much evidence of any light at the end of the tunnel.”

More than a year later, I still see little light ahead. How did we arrive at such an impasse? Some of the answers lie in the ragged course of East-West relations over the past 15 years. Those relations have an innate tendency to defy management and control. They are animated by competing philosophies and civilizations, and armed with weaponry that is global in scope. Like Guelphs and Ghibellines, the two sides advocate radically different visions of political order, human values and social behaviour.

As Canadians, we know where we stand. We have a distinguished record of accomplishment in working for international peace and security. NATO has without doubt been one of the instruments preventing nuclear war for the past 35 years. Canada has done pioneering work in the United Nations and elsewhere on arms control and disarmament. Our nuclear power industry has performed as experts on safeguards agreements and has given us a special commitment to the cause of non-proliferation. We have continuously pressed for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, for a convention to prohibit chemical weapons, and for the prohibition of all weapons for use in outer space.

We have played our part in periods of co-operation, and pulled our weight in periods of confrontation. We have identified a distinctive Canadian space in East-West relations, determined by our history and geography, by our membership in NATO, by successive waves of immigration, by such priorities as trade and human rights, and by that sense of realism which is, to paraphrase John Holmes, both the achievement and the comfort of the middle-power's middle age.

I don't believe we had any illusions about the short-lived and much-maligned period of *détente*. I certainly have no embarrassment about my own part in that process, bred in a conjuncture of geopolitics, economic aspirations, and collective leadership on both sides.

But the process too soon became part of the problem. The main achievements of the late Sixties and early Seventies were carried forward with difficulty, perhaps with an overload of linkage. Historians may reflect on the reasons why 1975 was the year which saw both the high point of the formal structure of *détente* in the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act — and the imminent erosion of its broader purpose as a result of Soviet-Cuban adventurism in Angola.

Détente rapidly showed signs of a process being drained of its substance. Core issues were held hostage by one side or the other — human rights, economic co-operation, hegemony in key spheres of influence. *Détente* became both divisible, and reversible.

And yet, I am not ready to call *détente* a failure. There were clear benefits of stability and co-operation. Its long-term impact, for example on Soviet elites, cannot yet be judged. Moreover it did coincide with, or provoke, an important impulse in the early Seventies which seems to have been lost without trace. It is the impulse toward political dialogue, toward regular consultation at the most senior levels of the East-West system.

This was not talk for the sake of talk. It led to a set of interlocking bargains or understandings on strategic arms, on Vietnam, on the place of China in the world, on co-operation in outer space. Techniques of crisis management were put tenuously in place. It was an impulse in which elements of mutual respect contended with the search for advantage — which is to say it was high politics in action.

With the loss of that impulse, and in the absence of high politics in the East-West relationship, it is not surprising that any shred of trust or confidence in the intentions of the other side appears to have vanished as well. Also missing, and this troubles me deeply, is much trace of political craft and creativity directed at ameliorating the intentions of the other side. There is a disturbing complacency, a readiness to adapt to the worse rather than to exert our influence for the better. We are, in short, de-politicizing the most important political relationship we have.

The responsibility for this lies partly, but by no means exclusively, with both superpowers. The United States and the Soviet Union outstrip the rest of us in their global reach, their armaments, and their leadership responsibilities. Naturally, they differ greatly — and I am not committing the fallacy of describing them as equals in any moral sense at all. Nevertheless, they breathe an atmosphere common to themselves, and share a global perception according to which even remote events can threaten their interests or their associates.

And there are some other features which both powers have in common: continental land-mass and considerable economic self-sufficiency; ambivalent relationships with Europe and with Asia; complexities of demography; a central focus on each other in their policies; spasms of unilateralism and isolationism.

It is therefore facile to deny the grave responsibilities which are shared in Washington and Moscow, or to deny that what both seem to lack at the present time is a political vision of a world wherein their nations can live in peace. What is essential to assert is that, just as war is too important to leave to the generals, so the relationship between the superpowers may have become too charged with animosity for East-West relations to be entrusted to them alone.

Military scientists make a routine distinction between capabilities — what weaponry the enemy has; and intentions — when, how, and why he intends to use it. I am profoundly concerned that we are devoting far too great a proportion of our time to the enumeration of capabilities, and far too little to the assessment of intentions which govern the use of arms. We may at some point be able to freeze the nuclear capability in the world at greatly reduced levels. But how do we freeze the menacing intentions which might control those weapons which remain? Therein lies the inadequacy of the nuclear freeze argument.

Although known as the architect of total war, Von Clausewitz himself insisted on a political framework for military capabilities. He said that:

“War cannot be separated from political life; whenever this occurs in our thinking...we have before us a senseless thing without an object.”

On that point, I agree with him. I am convinced that casting a fresh linkage — of military strategy with, and subordinate to, strong political purpose — must become the highest priority of East and West alike.

This is a period of deep questioning of many of the strategic concepts which have dominated the post-war world. New-school strategists, and critics from left and from right, are probing the fundamentals of strategic thought in the nuclear age from many points of view. They are in agreement, however, when they point to changing realities, to evolution in the psychology of those who live constantly with the spectre of nuclear war, and to the importance of weeding out obsolete ideas.

But much of this questioning, provocative as it is, strikes me as missing an important point. And that is the place of military strategy in the nuclear age. I believe that military strategy must, above all, serve a comprehensive set of political objectives and controls, which dominate and give purpose to modern weapons and to military doctrine. Our central purpose must be to create a stable environment of increased security for both East and West. We must aim at suppressing those nearly instinctive fears, frustrations, or ambitions which have so often been the reason for resorting to the use of force.

Therefore it is essential to Western purposes, in my judgment, to maintain in our policies elements of communication, negotiation, and transparency about our own intentions — plus a measure of incentive for the Soviet Union first to clarify, and then to modify, its own objectives towards the West.

This was, in a limited sense, the philosophy which underpinned the NATO response to the Soviet build-up of SS-20 missiles in Europe. We had to ask ourselves what purpose of political intimidation could be

served by that build-up. That is why we decided to respond with a two-track approach — deployment and negotiations. This approach has given the Soviet Union both the clear incentive to reach agreement, and the table at which to do so. I and my fellow NATO heads of government remain firmly committed to that two-track decision.

The tragic shooting down of the Korean airliner raises further questions about military dominance on the Soviet side. Is the Soviet military system edging beyond the reach of the political authorities? Are we contributing to such a trend by the absence of regular contact with the Soviet leadership?

These considerations suggest that our two-track decision may also require, as the time for deployment comes closer, a "third rail" of high-level political energy to speed the course of agreement — a third rail through which might run the current of our broader political purposes, including our determination not to be intimidated.

The risk of accident or miscalculation is too great for us not to begin to repair the lines of communication with our adversaries. The level of tension is too high for us not to revive a more constructive approach to the containment of crises. The degree of mutual mistrust is too intense for us not to try to re-build confidence through active political contact and consultation.

Only in this way can the quality and credibility of efforts toward peace and security, from whatever quarter, be animated and reinforced. But it is a precondition of that goal that Western councils, particularly at the head of government level, benefit from the free flow of ideas which we maintain in our own societies, and which we advocate for others. That, too, forms part of our armament and we should not hesitate to deploy it.

Because the trend is for arms negotiations, like military strategy itself, to become ever more distanced from the political energy of the participants. I have mentioned the MBFR talks in Vienna. That forum has laboured for over ten years and produced very little by way of results. Those talks require urgent political attention if they are to move off dead centre. Over the years, other leaders and I have made several proposals in that direction — proposals which now merit wider support.

We have high hopes for the Conference on Disarmament in Europe, established by the CSCE [Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe], and due to open in Stockholm next January. Canada will do its utmost to make that conference productive. We recognize the importance of agreement on confidence-building measures of a military nature. But these negotiations, important as they are, will not advance our larger hopes if they proceed in a political vacuum. The delicate framework of security in Europe cannot be balanced on the fate of one or two sets of negotiations alone. These negotiations must be grounded in a structure of stable East-West understanding: reciprocal acknowledgement of legitimate security needs, regular high-level dialogue, and a determined approach to crisis management. Here, again, we require that jolt of political energy which I have described as the third rail.

What is missing is a strategy of confidence-building measures of a political nature:

- Steps that reduce tensions caused by uncertainty about objectives, or caused by fear of the consequences of failure;
- Steps that mitigate hostility and promote a modicum of mutual respect;
- Steps that build an authentic confidence in man's ability to survive on this planet.

In short, we must take positive political steps in order to reverse the dangerously downward trend-line in East-West relations.

I shall be exploring such steps with our allies, with other leaders, and with groups such as yours. We must work in a balanced and rational fashion, with a degree of trust, a degree of belief in the good sense of mankind, and with a strong recognition that the task is urgent. The negotiations on theatre nuclear forces in Europe, and on strategic forces, are taking place between the superpowers. Canada is not at the table, and we have no wish to insert ourselves into this vital and delicate process. It is my hope, however, that we might help to influence the atmosphere in which these negotiations are being conducted, and thereby enhance the prospects of early agreement. We need to be realistic about the hard factors in play. We must appreciate the primordial drive for security and for sovereignty which is never very far below the surface of the arms control debate.

Let us begin the search for what Franklyn Griffiths has termed a strategic Keynesianism – counter-cyclical measures which work to moderate the terrible lurch from hope to crisis. We shall have to go against the flow.

I intend to speak further, in other speeches in the weeks ahead, about these issues of confidence, stability, arms control and political will, which dominate not only our times, but our lives as well. I have this week begun a process of close discussion with President Reagan. My consultations with other leaders have already commenced. I plan to take to them in person my own recommendations for a strategy of political confidence-building.

We will want to look at several elements:

- ways of designing a consistent structure of political and economic confidence with which to stabilize East-West relations;
- ways to draw the superpowers away from their concentration on military strength, toward regular and productive dialogue, toward a sense of responsibility commensurate with their power;
- ways to persuade all five nuclear-weapons states to engage in negotiations aimed at establishing global limits on their strategic nuclear arsenals;

– ways of improving European security through the raising of the nuclear threshold, including the imposition of a political dynamic upon the static MBFR talks in Vienna; and

– ways to arrest the proliferation of nuclear weapons among other states.

It is my personal purpose to live up to the undertaking, made by leaders at the Williamsburg Summit last May, "to devote our full political resources to reducing the threat of war". The questions to be raised, as I believe I have shown you tonight, are not easy. There are priorities which inevitably conflict. A new climate of East-West confidence cannot be instilled in a day, nor can the arms race be stopped overnight. But in so far as I, and other leaders who share this purpose, can work together to build authentic confidence, I pledge to you that we shall.

Not to do so at this time would, I believe, amount to a form of escapism – an escapism well defined by the Harvard Nuclear Study Group in their thoughtful book, *Living with Nuclear Weapons*. The book cautions against two forms of escapism: the first form is to believe that nuclear weapons will go away. The authors rightly and regretfully say that they will not. But the second form of escapism, they point out, is to think that nuclear weapons can be treated like other military weapons in history. Surely it is clear that they cannot.

And therefore I would add a third form of escapism, which we indulge in at our peril. That is the escapism of allowing shrill rhetoric to become a substitute for foreign policy, of letting inertia become a substitute for will, of making a desert and calling it peace.

Thank you.