

# The History of Canadian Security Interests

*Stephen Spence, University of Winnipeg*

The purpose of this paper is to examine the history of Canadian security interests in order to understand an aspect of Canada's position on German reunification at the end of the Cold War. My sources place a heavy emphasis on policy and defense analysis articles. While these sources may reflect establishment bias, it is nevertheless important to understand their basis since they maintain such a consistent stance on the limitations imposed on Canada's foreign policy. Governments preceding Mulroney's, both Conservative and Liberal, will be examined for precedents consistent with and deviating from these biases, arguing that Canada's position on German reunification was a foregone conclusion.

## Canada and the Foundation of NATO

This section will briefly address the foundation of NATO, illustrating Canada's own role in its creation as well as its interpretation of NATO's purpose and expected *modus operandi*. Following the Second World War Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent envisioned an internationalist stance for Canada that included active involvement in international affairs and institutions. Engagement in global politics, it was believed, would serve to maintain international order, preventing a recurrence of the events of the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> Joining NATO represented the first time in its peacetime history that Canada, as an independent nation, was committed to a military alliance.<sup>2</sup> Lester B. Pearson identified the creation of NATO as an event necessitated by the failure of the United Nations to ensure global security. As an expression of wartime international cooperation the UN had fallen short of its purposes, failing to prevent Soviet nuclearization and expansion.<sup>3</sup> While it was a treaty member of NATO from the outset Canadian finances were relieved, in part, by American financial commitments.<sup>4</sup>

Spencer notes that it was concern for the security of the North Atlantic region, rather than devotion to identical political principles, which underlay the treaty. This in spite of the fact, that the treaty articulated unity in terms of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, "Defending the 'Realm': Canadian Strategic Culture Revisited," *International Journal* 59 (2004): 513.

<sup>2</sup> Robert A. Spencer, "Triangle into Treaty: Canada and the Origins of NATO," *International Journal* 14 (1959): 87.

<sup>3</sup> Lester B. Pearson, "Canada and the North Atlantic Treaty," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 23 (1949): 113.

<sup>4</sup> Spencer, 92.

latter.<sup>5</sup> In this respect we can understand NATO in terms of a distinct jurisdiction. This should be kept in mind when contemplating its actions following the collapse of communism, along with what could be brought up at a bargaining negotiating German reunification.

During its creation process Canadian concerns arose regarding the need to include a wider political dimension within NATO's constitutional character to ensure its success. In early 1949 ministers of the Canadian government pressed economic, social and cultural cooperation as a means of establishing a NATO community – beyond the alliance – that would survive the perceived threat. This was based in the conviction that economic weakness might cripple the North Atlantic region in the face of communist aggression. Canada was opposed by both the United Kingdom and the United States on this issue, but non-military provisions were nevertheless incorporated in Article II of the NATO treaty after bitter and contentious struggle.<sup>6</sup>

Following the foundation of NATO in Washington, Lester B. Pearson made a speech – as Secretary of State for External Affairs (SSEA) – describing “the more permanent implications” of the alliance.<sup>7</sup> This speech made clear Canada's contributions to the new peace, the new enemy, and the character of the territory that enemy had conquered. Aside from its role in the war, Canada had contributed military aid and commercial credits to liberated countries through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).<sup>8</sup> The characterization of Soviet aggression adds insight into the eastward expansion of NATO, following German reunification, because Pearson's speech portrayed the countries brought into the Soviet bloc (along with their historic demands for freedom) as one of the strongest historic forces in Europe.<sup>9</sup> Eastern Europe is characterized as part of a “great cultural commonwealth,” subsequently cut off from Western intellectual life by a “dark invader.”<sup>10</sup>

While this speech gives a sense of the understood quality of the Western and Eastern alliances, we can also consider how NATO was meant to function internally, at least from a significant Canadian perspective. Pearson noted that Article 9 grounded NATO in equal representation for all its members, employing democratic negotiation, discussion and compromise.<sup>11</sup> Pearson stated that, through NATO, Canada would not contravene the “principles or purposes of the United Nations” or resort to provocation and aggression. Furthermore, according

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Pearson, “Canada and the North Atlantic Treaty,” 112.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

to Pearson's ideal, there was “nothing in the Treaty that should produce an exclusive or isolationist attitude,” giving us two standards to examine Canada's subsequent foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> Pearson ended by lambasting “stupid and dangerous talk of the inevitability of war,” denying the view and elaborating that evil was not unchangeable.<sup>13</sup>

The takeaway point, with respect to Canada's interest in imbuing NATO with long-term ambition for political character, was that these aspirations were constrained by the assumption of continuing hostility towards and from the Soviet Union. Through NATO, Pearson felt that the “spiritual resources of Western Christendom” could be rallied against totalitarianism. Pearson, receiving praise from both the British and Americans, was made chair of a committee charged with putting Article II into practice. The committee published a report in 1952 that was promptly buried and in 1956 a NATO committee on non-military cooperation produced a report, endorsed by the NATO council that had little effect.<sup>14</sup>

Pearson was the first NATO foreign minister to visit Russia in 1955. In light of already declining contributions to NATO (addressed in greater detail below), Germany's ambassador to Ottawa, Herbert Siefert,<sup>15</sup> called Canada's European policy “remarkably naïve.” Paul Henri Spaak, NATO's secretary general, referred to Canada as the Yugoslavia of NATO,<sup>16</sup> likely comparing the two in terms apparent foot-dragging and lack of commitment within their respective alliances. When Pearson left office all pressure to implement the second article dissipated.<sup>17</sup> Writing in 1960, Pearson upbraided NATO members, particularly the more influential players, for ignoring the “Canadian clause,” shunning it in fear of limiting national action. Meanwhile, Pearson argued that some rights of national sovereignty had to be sacrificed for freedom.<sup>18</sup>

Pearson wrote in his memoirs that it took him too long to realize that the spirit to build the economic requirements of the second article was never present in his time.<sup>19</sup> In some ways we can interpret this idealism as a mirror image of the way Trudeau's peace initiative was later received, generally applauded in public, but derided, regarded more as a nuisance in private.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph T. Jockle and Joel J. Sokolsky, “Canada and NATO: Keeping Ottawa in, Expenses Down, Criticism Out... and the Country Secure,” *International Journal* 64 (2009): 321.

<sup>15</sup> David G Haglund, “The NATO of its Dreams? Canada and the Co-Operative Security Alliance,” *International Journal* 52 (1997): 469.

<sup>16</sup> Haglund, 470.

<sup>17</sup> Jockle and Sokolsky, 321.

<sup>18</sup> Lester B. Pearson, “After the Paris Debacle,” *Foreign Affairs* 38 (1960): 541.

<sup>19</sup> Jockle and Sokolsky, 321.

## Canadian Security Ideology and Policy

This section will entail a broad survey of various actions taken throughout the Cold War, including agreements, postures and public declaration that illustrate the character of Canadian strategy in terms of its interests, strengths and weaknesses in order to get a better sense of the limits of free action in Canadian foreign policy.

With respect to the character of Canadian foreign policy, the work of John Holmes appears in the literature as a highly regarded articulation of both Canada's strategy and place in the world. Holmes worked in External Affairs in the 1940s and '50s; he was the director of the Canadian Institution of International Affairs (CIIA) and a professor at the University of Toronto after resigning from External Affairs in 1960.<sup>20</sup> Holmes understood global order to be highly dependent on the role and policies of the United States, feeling that Canadian governments should seek to influence them.<sup>21</sup> He also criticized Canadians for having a "sour reputation for nauseous holiness and hypocrisy," spouting rhetoric without matching contributions, unable to pay the price of "flippant disagreement" with American actions.<sup>22</sup>

Morton echoes this in an article about the long-term defense of Canadian territory, writing that "Canadians have been free to look at the world with the unctuous righteousness of those who have never had to struggle to survive," characterizing the popular sentiment facing those who recommend increases in defense spending.<sup>23</sup> As such, Canada's military has – since Confederation – often been employed as a policy tool to impress allies. Autonomous self-defense is generally dismissed as impossible, thereby prioritizing other government responsibilities. When it is promoted, defense spending has often been exploited for job creation and regional development, regardless of which party was in power.<sup>24</sup>

Elaborating on the geographic constraints of Canadian strategy, Crosby notes that its size, coastal exposure, climate, material resources and population produce predictable results, namely, alliances and postures – both political and defensive – that are incapable of dramatic deviation from American interests.<sup>25</sup> The effort to eschew continental isolation, according to Morton, is expressed

---

<sup>20</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, "Canada and the Search for World Order: John W. Holmes and Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 59 (2004): 749.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 758.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 759.

<sup>23</sup> Desmond Morton, "Defending the Indefensible: Some Historical Perspectives on Canadian Defence 1867-1987," *International Journal* 42 (1987): 629.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 643.

<sup>25</sup> Ann Denholm Crosby, "A Middle-Power Military in Alliance: Canada and NORAD," *Journal of Peace Research* 34 (1997): 38.

pragmatically in Canadian support for the United Nations, the Commonwealth and NATO and are not, what he calls, a “born-again enthusiasm for collective security.”<sup>26</sup> By this interpretation peacekeeping was a tool that could be employed to localize (not eliminate) conflicts that might draw in greater powers without significantly provoking American ire. Canada's commitment to NATO was born, according to Morton, from the simple conviction that wars starting in Europe would inevitably spread to North America, equating European stability – based on balanced forces between Blocs – with Canadian safety.<sup>27</sup>

Within Cold War literature, NATO's two strategic assumptions regarding the Soviet Union were detente and deterrence, the latter relying on the threat of nuclear annihilation to discourage Soviet expansion and the former upon gradual negotiated military reductions and confidence building measures. Continued maintenance of opposing arms (with emphasis on conventional weaponry) was viewed as a means of ensuring stability, allowing superpowers to define areas of joint interest through which cooperation with respect to the environment, security, trade, science and technology and humanitarian issues could exist. The early 1970s saw a general shift towards favoring detente, motivated by the general recovery of European strength and movement towards European unification, the appearance of Japan as an economic power, increasing Chinese conflict with the Soviet Union and Chinese acceptance into global councils and new claims for recognition and importance made by the developing world (particularly oil producing countries). In light of a nuclear standoff the US and USSR sought global spheres of influence that were more manageable, mutually manipulating sources of international change while “improving” East West relations.<sup>28</sup>

Midway through the 1970s detente was expressed in the idea and actuality of a European security conference. Rempel notes the idea was originally proposed by the Soviet Union, as early as 1954, in an effort to secure Western recognition and acceptance of its position in Eastern Europe. Despite this selfish ambition, Western powers, particularly Brandt's government, came to see positive potential in this idea.<sup>29</sup> Canada shared this interest, positing four points of Western interest, namely, the involvement of both the United States and Canada, the protection of German interests (including the status of West Berlin and the possibility of peaceful reunification), humanitarian and questions and human rights issues, and the legitimate security interests of all European states (including the Soviet Union) in terms of promoting measures of mutual confidence (referring to force

---

<sup>26</sup> Morton, 636.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 641.

<sup>28</sup> Roger Frank Swanson, “Deterrence, Detente, and Canada?” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 32 (1976): 100.

<sup>29</sup> Roy Rempel, *Counterweights – The Failure of Canada's German and European Policy, 1955-1995* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 66.

reductions).<sup>30</sup> Rempel's assessment is that throughout the mid-1970s, Canadian foreign policies towards the Soviet bloc were, by and large, within the Western mainstream.<sup>31</sup>

The spirit of detente that resulted in the Helsinki Accord of 1975 faded with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan,<sup>32</sup> resulting in the general exchanges agreement – signed in 1971 by Canada and the USSR – being broken off.<sup>33</sup> As Trudeau's time in office came to an end NATO was preparing to deploy new medium-range missiles in Europe, the Soviet Union was threatening to leave all arms control talks and CSCE talks, held in Madrid, were inconclusive. The shooting down of a Korean passenger plane only exacerbated an already tense situation,<sup>34</sup> spawning Trudeau's controversial and still debated peace initiative. When Gorbachev came into power Mulroney – focused on free trade initiatives with the United States – had only been in office for six months. In light of an apparent shift in the security picture the Canadian embassy argued for renewing the general exchanges agreement,<sup>35</sup> but despite the apparent sea change in Soviet policy Canada – at the official level – did not begin to significantly change its stance towards the USSR until 1988.

Dobell notes that this fact was due, in part, to policy requirements dictating that the 1987 Defense White Paper be consistent with the 1984 defense pronouncement. The defense department had barely begun to emerge from a stretch of underfunding, considered to have begun with the Diefenbaker years, yielding an establishment with little professional incentive to acknowledge views of a dramatically changing Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup> Proposals for defense spending (as a reflection of a government's stance with respect to a perceived enemy) are, according to Dobell, based on the military capability of an anticipated enemy and not their expressed intentions.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the colouring of the Defense Paper was latent with anti-Soviet language, provoking an uncomfortable public reaction.<sup>38</sup> While the White Paper, along with the Department of External Affairs, emphasized arms control and peacekeeping, they were nevertheless obdurate in

---

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Andrew, *The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1993), 159.

<sup>33</sup> W.M. Dobell, "Soviet Relations and Canadian Defense," *International Journal* 46 (1991): 541-542.

<sup>34</sup> Rempel, 77.

<sup>35</sup> Dobell, 541-2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 543.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 544.

<sup>38</sup> Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing Ltd., 2000), 316.

supporting collective defense against the Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup>

There is no known record of External Affairs or National Defense interpreting Gorbachev's December 6<sup>th</sup> UN announcement about dramatic conventional force reductions as remarkable. In a speech made on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1989 Joe Clark noted that some East European governments had made positive changes, but were themselves nevertheless imposed and maintained by Soviet force, unconvinced they would be free to choose their respective destinies.<sup>40</sup> He even referred to the USSR's "ever improving armed forces" and, in spite of a press conference made in protest by the Soviet embassy, the 19 January closing statements at the CSCE included one by Canada that emphasized the Soviet Union's human rights deficiencies. As Minister of Defense, Perrin Beatty acknowledged in January of 1989 that the Soviet Union had begun to articulate a doctrine of sufficient defense, but that the means available to them exceeded this doctrine. A few days later the government permitted the testing of a missile with first-strike (ie. offensive) potential.<sup>41</sup> It was, according to Dobell, after Mulroney's visit to the Soviet Union and his observation to NATO heads of government that the Soviet economy was in 'a-God-awful mess'<sup>42</sup> that he used Gorbachev's revolution to begin disassociating government strategy from the Cold War. This included open speculation of transferring Canadian troops from Europe to UN peacekeeping.<sup>43</sup> Mulroney still emphasized the importance of preserving NATO and Warsaw pact structures to ensure concerted controlled military reductions.

The Declaration on European Community-Canada Relations was adopted in November of 1990, acknowledging transatlantic solidarity couched in the CSCE, NATO, the UN and the GATT, calling for no new institutions beyond these.<sup>44</sup> Ottawa advocated structural improvements to the CSCE to include an assembly of parliamentarians with frequent meetings amongst heads of government and foreign ministers and the hope for an eventual council for European cooperation.<sup>45</sup> There was a push for an expanded role in disarmament which Washington preferred to maintain at the national and NATO level.<sup>46</sup> The CSCE was distinct from NATO in that as a signatory to the latter Canada was guaranteed a seat on the council while, without some minimal military

---

<sup>39</sup> Joel J. Sokolsky, "Trends in United States Strategy and the 1987 White Paper on Defence," *International Journal* 42 (1987): 676.

<sup>40</sup> Dobell, 546.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 547.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 552.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 549.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Wolfe, "Atlanticism Without the Wall: Transatlantic Co-operation and the Transformation of Europe," *International Journal* 46 (1990/1991): 157.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph T. Jockle, "Canada in a Twin-Pillared Alliance: The 'Dumbbell' May Just Have to Do," *International Journal* 46 (1990/1991): 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

involvement, Canada would have no claim to the former.<sup>47</sup>

An article written in 2005 characterizes Mulroney's foreign policy as a "new internationalism," referring to the approach advocated by Lester Pearson in which Canada could act as a "helpful fixer" internationally.<sup>48</sup> He makes the case, however, that Canadian foreign policy, regardless of which party is in power, has drawn, inherently, from Conservative traditions, understood in the wider ideological sense.<sup>49</sup> This interpretation of reality views human nature as destructive and irrational, requiring state intervention in the lives of individuals to promote stability, viewing society as naturally hierarchical (as opposed to as an aggregate of self-interested individuals structured arbitrarily in relations of power) and change as something best promoted within a stable moral order by means of slow evolution. This is echoed in liberal internationalist writers, according to Chapnick, that characterize Canada's role as embodied in "cooperative endeavor," promoting universal values through institutionalized international order in which great powers are undeniable players.<sup>50</sup> Pearsonian civil servants were, according to Chapnick, instructed to comport themselves with "restraint, equilibrium and moderation" while Mackenzie King viewed non-great power states as accorded influence on individual issues according to their abilities.<sup>51</sup> As a liberal democracy with a small heterogeneous population Canada's leaders are bound to brokerage politics—nationally and internationally—making limited commitments while, at times, blindly devoted to international institutions, uncomfortable with potentially disruptive initiatives.<sup>52</sup> Pearson noted in his memoirs that his own approach was "less a call to action than a prayerful and undemanding expression of our idealism," a kind of satisfying ritual like the automatic repetition of the Lord's prayer.<sup>53</sup>

## Commitments to NATO

In terms of numbers, Canada's commitments to NATO in its early years were at their apogee.<sup>54</sup> Defense planners believed, or at least claimed publicly, that participation would distribute and decrease overall spending beneath what it would cost if Canada were to stand alone. The Soviet testing of an atomic bomb and the Korean war banished this view as Canada underwent rearmament,

---

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>48</sup> Adam Chapnick, "Peace, Order, and Good Government: The 'Conservative' Tradition in Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 60 (2005): 636.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 637.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 638.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 639.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 642.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 649.

<sup>54</sup> Jockle and Sokolsky, 321.



increasing spending to 7.8% GDP in 1952, maintaining high defense spending for several years thereafter. Having withdrawn its forces from Germany as a non-occupying power, the government reversed its position, sending a Canadian brigade of 6 000 experienced personnel to Westphalia in late 1951. While NATO had hoped for two divisions, they also received a full air division of first eleven, later twelve squadrons, consisting of 300 new Sabre jets that were deployed in France and West Germany. This entailed, according to Jockle and Sokolsky, a considerable portion of the alliance's inventory of combat aircraft. The Navy was also rebuilt during this period, providing more than 50 vessels, including submarines and an aircraft carrier.<sup>55</sup> At the end of the 1950s Diefenbaker agreed, in principle, to nuclear armament of Canadian Forces in Europe. When it was deemed required, the brigade group would be provided with "Honest John" surface-to surface missiles while the air division, by this time reduced to eight squadrons of F-104 Starfighters, would serve in a nuclear strike/reconnaissance capacity. While Diefenbaker subsequently backed down from these commitments (including similar ones made regarding NORAD) Pearson subsequently pledged to honour them, following conflict with Washington and a parliamentary collapse of Diefenbaker's government.<sup>56</sup>

The appearance of the Soviet Union as a serious threat in American and Canadian eyes increased, complemented by expensive military advancements. Swanson argues that these escalating costs gave rise to new strategic concepts of cooperation imposing significant limits on Canada's capacity to make independent foreign policy decisions. The 1958 establishment of NORAD – integrating North American air defense command and production – was preceded by the 1954 approval by the Eisenhower administration to develop three early warning systems to facilitate communication and interception. The Pine Tree Line, Mid-Canada Line and Distant Early Warning Line – situated on Canadian soil – were to provide extra warning time against potential Soviet bombers, embodying “defense-in-depth” by providing the ability to engage threats before they could reach their theoretical American targets.<sup>57</sup> Almost immediately, a US-Canadian sharing program was established in 1958 in light of the fact that Canada could not afford the cost of developing major weapons systems.<sup>58</sup>

Growing implication was understood within the Canadian government. An External Affairs memo, written in 1953, noted future difficulty for Canada to reject major American defense proposals presented “with conviction as essential for the security of North America.”<sup>59</sup> In the eyes of the United States, Europe and

---

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>57</sup> Swanson, 103.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>59</sup> Sokolsky, 679.

North America represented two distinct security environments insofar as alliance and interest were concerned. Despite warnings from Canadian diplomats, Diefenbaker made the declaration that NORAD was part of NATO. Upon returning from a Paris NATO summit in 1957 he told the House of Commons that NATO would receive reports from NORAD concerning its activities, infuriating the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>60</sup> Diplomatic negotiations resulted in an agreement that included vague references to NATO.<sup>61</sup>

The establishment of NORAD is associated with the cancellation of the AVRO arrow – an advanced Canadian fighter – and the acquisition of an inferior American interceptor.<sup>62</sup> Throughout its history, NORAD has resulted in incidents reflecting potential cooption of Canadian sovereignty, whereby Canadian forces were placed on alert at the same time as American forces by the American Commander in Chief of NORAD, resulting in the scrambling of CF-101s without Canadian government consultation. Examples include the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Middle East War of October 1973 as well as a false warning of a strategic missile attack in 1979.<sup>63</sup> The character of American interest in Canadian involvement, aside from perception of geographic necessity, might be expressed in the words of the Deputy Commander of NORAD, subsequent to the Persian Gulf War, who invited Canadian participation in a missile defense program because it would “lend credibility,” mitigating “liability” associated with the end result.<sup>64</sup>

Trudeau wanted to get away from the “helpful fixer” image of Pearsonian diplomacy.<sup>65</sup> Canada's defense priorities were slated as the defense of sovereignty, the defense of North America, involvement in NATO and peacekeeping. At this point Canada's combined air-ground force in Europe was approximately 10 000 strong.<sup>66</sup> The reductions that were finally implemented halved this commitment, up from the thirty-five hundred personnel contribution sought by Trudeau. The strength of the entire Canadian Forces was pinned at 80 000 and the defense budget was set at 1.8 billion dollars for the next three years. Trudeau faced fears at home that he was soft on communism; however, these sentiments were predominantly expressed by pro-military pressure groups. Because of the Vietnam War Canadian public opinion increasingly reflected the view a view of proximate moral equivalence between the United States and the USSR.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Jockel and Sokolsky, 324.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>62</sup> Crosby, 37.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>65</sup> Hillmer and Granatstein, 285.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

The 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia renewed the sense of threat to Europe posed by the USSR. The previous year NATO had adopted a doctrine of flexible response that stirred debate over conventional defense.<sup>68</sup> Briefly, this was a shift from the strategy of massive nuclear retaliation to one based on a “balanced range of responses” that could include the use of conventional and nuclear weapons.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, division in Europe over common defense was increased by France's 1966 decision to withdraw from integrated command. Canada's decision to reduce its commitment to Europe and NATO occurred while Eastern and Western powers were preparing to negotiate reciprocal reductions.<sup>70</sup> On May 29, 1968 Trudeau gave a speech in which he argued that the communist bloc could no longer be viewed as “monolithic” or “implacably hostile,” based partially in a growing perception amongst Eastern European states that economies had to be adapted to national needs.<sup>71</sup> It has been argued that while Trudeau had considered the idea of neutrality, his goal – in practice – had been to reevaluate Canadian contributions to European defense without ultimately questioning Canada's participation in NATO.<sup>72</sup>

A report advocating the *status quo* with respect to NATO, requested under Pearson and produced in 1967, led Trudeau to order a complete review of Canadian defense and foreign policy. A task force on relations with Europe (STAFEUR) and the defense department both produced reports arguing that it was in Canada's political, economic and military interest to keep Canadian Forces in Europe.<sup>73</sup> Parliament likewise conducted a review through the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defense (SCEAND), initially favoring review of involvement but changing its tone upon visiting NATO Headquarters in Brussels. Their final conclusion was that Canada should maintain a military presence in Europe in line with equipment replacement, advocating a political role and emphasizing the reduction of conventional forces.<sup>74</sup>

On April 12, 1969, Trudeau made a speech in Calgary in which he argued that Canada possessed no foreign policy other than what flowed from NATO. Meanwhile, he is cited to have believed that detente and the rise of a China, threatening Russia, had removed the Soviet threat from Western Europe.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Michel Fortmann, Martin Larose, and Susan M. Murphy, “An Emerging Strategic Counterculture? Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Canadian Intellectuals and the Revision of Liberal Defence Policy Concerning NATO (1968-1969),” *International Journal* 59 (2004): 538.

<sup>69</sup> NATO, “NATO Update – 1967 – Summary,” last modified November 6, 2001, <http://www.nato.int/docu/update/60-69/1967e.htm>.

<sup>70</sup> Fortmann Larose, and Murphy, 538.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 542.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 544.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 551.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 552.

<sup>75</sup> Robin Ranger, “Canadian Foreign Policy in an Era of Super-Power Detente,” *The World Today*

Trudeau set two major foreign policies in 1972: developing connections with the French speaking world in order to undercut Quebec separatism and breaking out of the Cold War framework adhered to by National Defense and the Department of External Affairs.<sup>76</sup> While Trudeau's shift towards nationalism might appear radical, Ranger notes that his stance actually shared the guiding assumptions of traditional Canadian foreign policy, reaching back to Mackenzie King.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, we can still investigate this period to see what, if any, significant success was made in venturing away from long-standing establishment opinion.

In August of 1971 the American government shocked Canada – which exported 70 percent of its foreign trade to America – by imposing a ten percent surcharge on imports.<sup>78</sup> In October of 1972 Trudeau launched the Third Option in order to reduce Canada's dependence on the United States, seeking to diversify trade and encourage business with the European Community. This endeavor met with resistance from several European countries which pressed Canada to revise its new position on NATO. Throughout the 1970s Trudeau's government reinvested several hundred million dollars in its European contingent, purchasing Aurora long-range patrol craft (designed for antisubmarine warfare), German Leopard C-1 tanks, the CF-18 fighter plane and Patrol Frigates.<sup>79</sup>

Prior to Trudeau foreign policy formation was characterized as a "top-down affair" whereby the government would release information as it deemed necessary. Part of Trudeau's approach involved giving greater access to non-cabinet members and "interested sectors" of the public.<sup>80</sup> Despite this procedural change, Hogg argues that a broad survey of Canadian foreign policy white papers leads to the conclusion that "foreign policy in Canada does not change, even when international and domestic contexts do," suggesting a constancy of strategic understanding of Canada's place in the world.<sup>81</sup> To compare, Trudeau's 1971 document prioritized economic growth, social justice, quality of life, sovereignty and independence, peace and security and a harmonious natural environment while Brian Mulroney's 1985 *Competitiveness and Security* prioritized unity, sovereignty and independence, justice and democracy, peace and security, economic prosperity and the integrity of the natural environment.<sup>82</sup> Hogg quotes Hillmer that throughout its history as a nation Canada's government has kept foreign policy deliberately vague since "governments do not plan foreign policy;"

---

28 (1972): 549.

<sup>76</sup> Ranger, 546.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

<sup>78</sup> Fortmann, Larose, and Murphy, 555.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 556.

<sup>80</sup> William Hogg, "Plus Ça Change: Continuity, Change and Culture in Foreign Policy White Papers," *International Journal* 59 (2004): 524.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 522.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

such planning would suggest clear goals, means to achieve them, and reasonable control of the playing field.<sup>83</sup>

Trudeau's assessment of NATO was that an emphasis on detente was the best approach to great power security issues. This at a time when other allies once more strove to enhance the credibility of extended deterrence.<sup>84</sup> As such, he preferred one side of NATO strategy over another without innovating beyond a NATO framework. Trudeau also believed that Europe should take responsibility for its own defense, a view generally articulated by left wing policy intellectuals at the time. In Trudeau's opinion, focusing on European 'needs' prevented Canada from assisting other areas of the world where aid was more due and needed. In comparison to Trudeau the New Democrats demanded that Canada go so far as to leave NATO.<sup>85</sup> Despite rhetorical claims to be pursuing national interest, Hillmer and Granatstein argue that, other than the need to recognize China, Trudeau's foreign policy saw few new initiatives.<sup>86</sup> As their two decades in power began to end, the Liberals pledged that Canadian NATO spending would increase three percent a year.

In a June 1983 speech Mulroney promised Canada would be a "better ally, a super ally" to its "four traditional allies," namely the United States, Britain, France and Israel (although Canada never previously had an alliance with Israel). Mulroney took the stance, in opposition to Trudeau, that the shooting down of Korean Air Lines flight 007 was an act of cold-blooded murder. Trudeau's lack of support for the 1983 American invasion of Grenada was criticized and, speaking to an Estonian convention in Toronto in July of 1984, Mulroney called the Soviet Union a "slave" state.<sup>87</sup> Once Mulroney achieved power, however, Mulroney's foreign policy took a more moderate, even progressive tack according to Michaud and Nossal.<sup>88</sup> Examples they cite include Canada's decision to not participate in Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, "Star Wars" (SDI) Initiative,<sup>89</sup> and the maintenance of Canada's already established relationship with Cuba.<sup>90</sup>

Mulroney initially cut the defense budget by 154 million dollars, lowering it to 9.37 billion. As defense minister, Erik Nielsen announced a twelve hundred troop increase for NATO. Furthermore, the Distant Early Warning Line was marked to be shut down in July of 1993, replaced by the North Warning System

---

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 530.

<sup>84</sup> Haglund, 470.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Hillmer and Granatstein, 290.

<sup>87</sup> Nelson Michaud and Kim Richard Nossal, "Out of the Blue: The Mulroney Legacy in Foreign Policy," in *Transforming the Nation: Canada and Brian Mulroney*, ed. Raymond B. Blake (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 115.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

to defend against air launched Soviet Cruise missiles.<sup>91</sup> This would cost between seven and eight billion dollars a year, of which Canada would pay 1.2 billion along with anticipated operating costs of roughly 130 million dollars a year. Unlike the DEW line the system would be staffed by Canadian operators. These proposals only stood a short term and the defense increase of this period, from 1986 to 1987, was only 2.75 percent (amounting to less than inflation).<sup>92</sup>

Mulroney broke with international convention by leading Canada as the first country to recognize an independent Ukraine in December of 1991, promising 2.6 billion dollars in aid and credits to Russia.<sup>93</sup> Forgoing consultation with Canada's allies, Mulroney's government announced a total withdrawal of forces from Europe in 1992, to be completed in July of 1993 (projecting budgetary savings of 2.2 billion dollars). As a result, NATO allies began to characterize Canada as committed, but not present in NATO. The German government protested; Kohl appealed for the maintenance of some troops, fearing that the United States might mirror decreases in European defense spending.<sup>94</sup>

Mulroney maintained Canadian commitment to northern cruise missile testing, promised to increase contributions to NATO and to be less critical than Trudeau of American foreign policy. While emphasizing peace his stance, according to Bromke and Nossal, was nevertheless a pro-American anti-Soviet mixture that made a gesture equivalent to Trudeau's peace initiative impossible.<sup>95</sup> Andrew argues that Mulroney was the first Prime Minister since King who could be remotely described as pro-American, though the latter he notes was distinctly pragmatic and suspicious in his views.<sup>96</sup> When Mulroney came into power his government was faced with a huge deficit in addition to the fact that new equipment purchases would provide little benefit to the Canadian economy since purchases would have to be foreign. Polls showed that fifty percent of the population opposed cruise missile testing while eighty percent supported a nuclear freeze.<sup>97</sup> In 1988 Canada committed itself to provide an infantry battalion to serve with either Allied Mobile Force (Land) (AMF(L)) or the NATO Composite Force (NCF) in defense of northern Norway.<sup>98</sup>

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1989 the Minister of Finance announced defense

---

<sup>91</sup> Hillmer and Granatstein, 315.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>95</sup> Adam Bromke and Kim Richard Nossal, "Canada: Foreign Policy Outlook after the Conservative Victory," *The World Today* 40 (1984): 469.

<sup>96</sup> Arthur Andrew, *The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1993), 160.

<sup>97</sup> Bromke and Nossal, 470.

<sup>98</sup> Kenneth J. Calder, "Doing the Things That Matter: Canada and Euro-Atlantic Security," *International Journal* 50 (1995): 715.

budget cuts amounting to 575 million dollars followed by another 2.74 billion over the next five years, anticipating 22 billion dollars of savings over the next fifteen years. Dobell notes that, at the time, these were the most substantial medium-long term cuts ever faced by any Canadian department or agency. The commitment made to purchase 250 heavy tanks for NATO purposes was reduced to 60 with no order to be placed for a minimum of two years and no provision for future funding. The commitment to purchase anywhere from thirteen to twenty-eight CF-19s was canceled.<sup>99</sup>

In a speech made at McGill University on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1990, Joe Clark stated that an expansion of the definition of security was necessary to include verification and confidence building. A new NATO would consider the politics and psychology of security relations and the CSCE had to be the drafting board for a new European architecture.<sup>100</sup> Despite Clark's pronouncement on a possible alternative security system he can also be quoted on a "continuing requirement for prudence and military stability" on the grounds that "twelve months do not invalidate the lessons of history," despite everything that had been happening.<sup>101</sup> As in other Western countries, we see Canada espousing the same argument that a neutral Germany could be coerced by the Soviet Union and might be tempted to rearm in such a manner as to threaten the Soviet Union.<sup>102</sup> In early 1991, Clark was replaced in External Affairs by Barbara McDougall, who reversed many of Clark's positions. At the spring 1991 NATO ministerial meeting, she stated that it was not critical to Canada's NATO participation to maintain troops in Europe.<sup>103</sup> Canada explained its decision to the NATO council on February 26 of 1992 that their decisions were financial and did not signify any change in Canadian security policy or imply a lessening of the country's commitment to the alliance.<sup>104</sup>

Rempel argues that the actions of Canadian officials at and after the Two plus Four meetings illustrate a Canada that is uninterested in investing itself in Europe, increasingly integrated into the North American continent under the umbrella of American security interests.<sup>105</sup> Canada 21, an influential advocacy group involved in the debates preceding the defense and Foreign Office statements of the Chretien government, actually recommended that NATO be de-emphasized as a pillar of Canadian security and that it should "actively press for

---

<sup>99</sup> Dobell, 549.

<sup>100</sup> Arthur E. Blanchette, ed., "Speech by the SSEA, Mr. Joe Clark, to the Department of Political Science and Economics, McGill University, Montreal, February 5, 1990. (Extracts)," in *Canadian Foreign Policy 1977-1992: Selected Speeches and Documents* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), 38.

<sup>101</sup> Jockle, 15.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Rempel, 172.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

the transformation of NATO into an inclusive collective security organization in the new Europe.<sup>106</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In order to understand Canada's position on German reunification with respect to NATO (or any foreign policy matter) one must take the longer deeper view, examining Canada's geo-political interests, predominating self-conception(s) and global strategy as the framework within which leading politicians must operate, regardless of ideological orientation. While this largely results on a short-term reliance upon establishment biases it also provides the most coherent platform for judging their shortcoming as well as a basis upon which to build innovation.

---

<sup>106</sup> Haglund, 476.