

The  
Formulation of Canadian Policy  
During the Creation  
of the  
North Atlantic Treaty

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## PREFACE

This work is based largely on my own reading of the relevant primary sources. It does not lay claim to previously unexplored territory, but it has brought materials together in an original way provided a new perspective on the formulation of Canadian policy during the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty. The ideas that are not my own have been cited in the footnotes. The largest part of my primary research was conducted at the Public Archives of Canada and in the Department of External Affairs, both of which are in Ottawa. Some supplementary research was conducted at the Public record Office in Kew. These sources as well as the secondary sources are listed in the bibliography.

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## Introduction

Canada agreed in March 1948 to join the United Kingdom and United States in discussions that led, eventually, to the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty. Canada's action was, in some ways, unprecedented. Despite fighting in the First and Second World Wars at the side of Britain, Canada had never made a formal commitment to Imperial defence. Outside of these wars, Canada had never even made a real contribution to her own defence. Why, then, did Canada assume a prominent role in the creation of the Treaty? The answer may be found in an analysis of the formulation of Canadian policy and the considerations upon which it was based: domestic politics, economics, defence, and internationalist ideals.

In Canada, where the federal government was preoccupied with reconciling the diverse interests of two language groups, domestic politics were, not surprisingly, a primary consideration in the formulation of external policy. William Lyon Mackenzie King, Prime Minister from 1921 to 1930 and from 1935 to 1948, was unwilling to pursue any policy that threatened the unity of French- and English-speaking Canadians which was inseparable from the solidarity of his own Liberal party. The decision to enter security discussions with with the United States and the United

Kingdom was an indication that domestic opinion had become more sympathetic to a Canadian commitment to the defence of Europe against Communism.

Just how sympathetic was not yet clear. King was certain that if war broke out in Europe, popular feeling would lead the country to fight once again at the side of Britain and the western Allies. In the event that an overseas defence commitment was politically acceptable, a north Atlantic pact held certain attractions. The pitfalls of a purely Commonwealth grouping or a bilateral arrangement with the United States could be avoided. A pact would help to resolve some of the domestic controversy associated with making the adjustments that were necessary in Canada's defence and economic relations with the United States and the United Kingdom. More importantly, an Atlantic pact that preserved peace would allow Canada to avoid the divisive issue of participation in an overseas conflict as well as the strain on manpower and resources that accompanied being pushed into war ahead of the United States. Despite these attractions, the problem of overcoming isolationist sentiment remained. King's support for the North Atlantic Treaty was contingent upon the absence of any substantial domestic opposition to participation. While he was Prime Minister, Canada's devotion to the Treaty was, therefore, somewhat tentative.

After the Second World War, as before, Canada's own defence tended to be ignored because of the position of the United States

as an irresistible yet largely benevolent force in North America. European security had become significant to Canada through her experience in in two world wars and in 1948 the spread of Communism was perceived as an alarming repetition <sup>of</sup> Nazi Germany's expansion under appeasement. In the 1930s, King maintained, in the interest of national unity, a policy of "no commitments" to Imperial defence. In the 1940s, however, a younger generation of policy makers had risen to prominence in Ottawa. They were convinced that effective action was necessary to prevent a major war. For them, Canada's participation in the North Atlantic Treaty was essential as a matter of principle. The most significant feature of the Treaty for King was the acceptance by the United States of its obligation to defend western Europe.

Canada also faced serious problems of adjustment in her trade relations with Britain and the United States. Policy was torn between pursuing freer trade with the United States and maintaining the pre-war pattern of a high volume of exports to Britain. The younger economists in the Department of Finance were proponents of multilateral trading and advocated the breakdown of protected systems. This attitude was supported by the members of the Department of External Affairs which had always concerned itself with trade relations. A sharp move away from trade with Britain in favour of closer ties with the United States was untenable politically, but economic realities continued to push Canada in that direction.

The divergent aims of Canadian policy in the post-war period corresponded to the political and physical problems of adjusting to a new distribution of power. The civil service was controlled by a younger generation of men, wedded to internationalist ideals which shaped their attitudes to both trade and security. Among these men there was general agreement that restrictive nationalism was incompatible with well ordered state relations. This was the basis of the great interest displayed by Canadians in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and in the United Nations Organisation. Louis St Laurent, the Minister for External Affairs, supported his Department in their aim to create an effective system of collective security first through the United Nations and then through the North Atlantic Treaty. Effectively, this was a direct challenge to King's "no commitments" policy. While he remained in office, internationalist aims, both in trade and defence matters were kept in check. After St Laurent was chosen as the new Liberal leader in August 1948, however, external policy entered a new phase and Canada became much more firmly devoted to the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty.

The aim of this dissertation is to assess relative significance of considerations of domestic politics, defence, economics, and internationalist ideals, during four phases leading to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty: summer 1947 to 11 March 1948 when a decision was taken to join in the first round of negotiations; 11 March to the end of June 1948, when the

Cabinet's reaction to the Berlin crisis revealed that continued existence of old fears about military entanglements; the beginning of July to 15 November 1948 when Louis St. Laurent replaced Mackenzie King as Prime Minister; and mid-November to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949.

## Chapter 1

### Historical Background to Canada's Entry into the North Atlantic Treaty

Canada's entry into the North Atlantic Treaty was a significant departure from a long standing tradition of avoiding external defence commitments in the interests of domestic politics. In the First and Second World Wars as well as the Boer War, Canada fought at the side of Britain. This had not been on the basis of any formal commitment to Imperial defence. Canada's contribution to those wars was related to the sentiment and historical connections that accompanied membership in the British Empire. Those wars were accompanied by bitter controversy within Canada which arose largely from the divergent interests of French- and English-speaking Canadians. The threat of such controversy had fostered a general reluctance on the part of successive governments in Ottawa to define and make explicit Canada's relationship with Britain in matters of defence. After the Second World War, Canada was faced with some difficult problems of adjustment in her relations with Britain and the United States - an Atlantic pact came to be viewed as a means of resolving some of the same problems.

A preoccupation with domestic politics was natural in a country

divided along lines of language and religion. Maintaining the unity of the country (and his own Liberal party) was certainly of paramount importance to Mackenzie King, who as Prime Minister, had effective control over policy for most of the years between 1921 and 1948. Between the wars, the isolationist sentiments of French and a not insignificant number of English-speaking Canadians translated into an avoidance of peacetime military commitments to the Empire. King's decision to allow Canada to enter into the negotiations for the North Atlantic Treaty was in some ways a reversal of his policy of "no commitments", but while he remained in office, Canadian support for a regional security arrangement was anything but certain. No firm action would be taken by King in the absence of a political consensus.

King was willing to join in the creation of a treaty in part because, through the experience of two world wars, many Canadians believed that their own security was linked to the security of Europe. Canada had never been persuaded to offer support as part of a Commonwealth grouping, but in 1948, unlike the 1930s, a Canadian together with a much more significant American commitment to European security was sought by Britain. British and Canadian objectives had converged to a certain extent. A commitment by the United States to the defence of western Europe became an important foreign policy aim for Canada, as well as for Britain, because Canadians had a sense that their own interest were inextricably linked to this area of the world. Although



Mackenzie King refused to allow Canada to take too prominent a role in the creation of a treaty, efforts were made to draw the Americans into a firm commitment that a multilateral treaty entailed. There were other policy makers in Ottawa who sought broader aims such as creating an effective replacement for the United Nations. This could not be achieved unless Canada played a more active role in the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty - a course of action for which domestic support was less certain. The Prime Minister saw the Treaty primarily in terms of its potential for alleviating some of Canada's existing external relations problems. An alliance of the north Atlantic nations, unlike a Presidential guarantee or a new lend-lease agreement, could resolve some of the problems of adjustment faced by Canada in her trade and defence relations with the British and Americans.

This chapter describes the relationship between Canada's external policy and her changing interests and aspirations with emphasis upon the influence of domestic politics. To provide a broader context for the analysis of Canadian policy during the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty, certain themes will be sketched out: the character of Canada's population, her defence and trade relations, her attitude towards international institutions, and above all her domestic politics. It should then be possible to show that the North Atlantic Treaty represented a significant break from an external policy

tradition, which in the interests of domestic politics, tended to be characterized by caution and inaction.

During 1948 and 1949 the greatest uncertainty facing policy makers in Ottawa was whether domestic support could be found for participation in something which proponents were anxious to describe as far removed from "military alliances of the old sort" but which remained a military alliance all the same. While there were still, in the post-war years, a large number of English speaking Canadians who supported the maintenance of close ties with Britain, more independent nationalist sentiments and isolationism (something predominant in but not exclusive to Quebec) made acceptance of peacetime military commitments with any country, problematical at best.

Historically, there had been, in French Canada, a negative attitude toward overseas military commitments. This had not prevented French Canadians from participating in the expedition to rescue General Gordon or volunteers from fighting for the Papacy in the wars of Italian unification; but when they were asked to join in making a large contribution to a cause they did not consider their own, the "nationalist" sentiments which grew through the twentieth century came to the fore and political controversy ensued. Even in English Canada there had never been a strong military tradition, as was reflected in the country's tiny peacetime defence forces. Demands from English-speaking Canadians that a contribution be made to the defence of the

Empire, had in the past only become powerful enough to produce positive results when the need for such support had become obvious. Thus little contribution was made to Imperial defence outside of the Boer war and the First and Second World Wars. In 1948 it was not clear that the European situation appeared grave enough to overcome isolationist sentiments.

The roots of French Canadian hostility to overseas military commitments should be examined. With the German attack on France in 1914 there was an expectation that French Canadians would rally to the support of their mother country just as their English speaking counterparts rallied to the support of Britain. The relationship of the French in Canada to those in Europe was much more complex. The France that they were expected to assist was the France that had abandoned them after the conquest in 1763 and which had been effectively cut off since then. The Catholic Church was very much the dominant force in what remained a very traditional society until after the Second World War - it was not until well after the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance that control of public welfare and education shifted away from the Church. There was more affinity between Quebec and the Ancien Regime than the godless France of the Revolution. Antagonism between the two language groups over participation in the Great War was increased with the virtual destruction of the tradition of military service that had existed among French Canadians, through a rather perverse mismanagement of recruiting at

the hands of the Scottish and Orange Presbyterians who controlled the militia in the years leading into the War.[1]

During the Great War, the desire to raise and maintain, despite heavy losses, a large Canadian force led to the adoption of conscription in 1917 - an act which completely alienated many French and a substantial number of English speaking Canadians. Sentiment favouring participation in the war centred in urban areas where "Imperialism" had also been strongest. French Canada remained predominantly rural until after the Second World War and its attitudes toward conscription did not contrast so sharply with rural areas in the rest of the country - particularly among those English speaking Canadians who had been in North America for several generations. Almost exactly half of the Canadian volunteers in the Great War were men who were born in Britain.[2] There was substantial hostility toward conscription in western Canada which had accepted a large number of immigrants from eastern Europe and the American west.

The pacifist and isolationist sentiments of English speaking Canadians, were represented, particularly in the prairie provinces, by the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF); an organization that was a curious combination of socialism, agrarian populism, and to a lesser extent trade unionism. Escott

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1. John Keegan, Six armies in Normandy, p.119.
2. Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 1, photo caption.

Reid, who became the acting Under-Secretary for External Affairs in the autumn of 1948, was an active member of the intellectual wing of the CCF. He, along with almost all of the senior members of the Department of External Affairs in the 1930s, believed that the Europeans should be left to settle their own disputes.[3] In Parliament the CCF were led by J.S. Woodsworth, who openly opposed the declaration of war in 1939. In 1948 it was expected that the CCF would lead the opposition to participation in a military alliance.

Those Canadians who favoured the maintenance of British ties and who were wary of the danger of American dominance had traditionally been represented by the Conservatives. Such sentiments were not exclusive to that party, however, and there were numerous English speaking Liberals who favoured keeping Canada firmly within the Empire, although they tended to place emphasis upon autonomy within that grouping. Mackenzie King was the most important of these.

Crucial to Mackenzie King's and the Liberal Party's political power was the one third of Canada's population that was French-speaking. To hold office the Liberals also needed substantial support outside of Quebec. King's policies were not by any means based simply upon maintaining the support of French Canada - the Canadian declaration of war in 1939 is evidence

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3. Reid, On duty, p.9-10.

enough of that. On the other hand, opposition in Quebec could only be overcome by near unanimous support in the rest of the country. As early as 1919, King had noted that "Quebec dominates the situation in the House of Commons".[4] He was also one of the few English speaking Liberals to side with Laurier against conscription and to not join the Union government. That stance led to his defeat in the 1917 general election but it led to his gaining support from Quebec delegates and to his selection as leader of the Liberal party in 1921.

In the late 1930s, Mackenzie King believed that the country would not wish to remain neutral in a war involving Germany and Britain. He sought to maintain the unity of the two language groups through a policy of "no commitments" to any Imperial defence - a policy that was criticized as being anti-British but which from King's perspective was the only course which would not lead to a further loosening of Imperial ties. Isolationism was strong in Canada during the inter-war years and was only overcome by the swing of public feeling against Hitler's Germany which took place throughout the English-speaking world. Unlike the United States, that swing of opinion was supplemented in Canada by sentiment and Imperial ties which together induced her to declare, independently of the Empire, war on Germany.

King believed that the political costs outweighed the benefits

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4. Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 1, p. 285.

of securing a stronger voice in world affairs either through a unified Empire, joint direction of the war, the League or the United Nations. When, before and during the Great War, Sir Robert Borden led the Conservatives in fighting for greater influence in Imperial policy, Canada was more closely linked, although more by sentiment and tradition than by constitutional arrangements, to Great Britain. Canadian security was still guaranteed by British power and in the event of a major crisis there would almost inevitably be demands from within the Dominion to fight at the side of Britain. In these circumstances there were distinct advantages in having a voice in British foreign policy. These advantages could only be gained at a cost: shared direction of Imperial policy entailed an appropriate material contribution to defence and association with Imperial policy carried with it a certain amount of domestic controversy. The contribution of the First Canadian Corps in the Great War was used by Borden to secure a voice in the direction of the war and an independent position at the Versailles Conference. The country, however, had almost been split over the conscription issue and no Canadian government had ever made a significant contribution to Imperial defence during time of peace. Even expenditure for home defence was virtually non-existent. The belief that the American invasion of British North America had been thwarted by hastily mobilized militia forces contributed to the myth that Canadian defence needs could be met through last minute measures taken when emergencies arose. That Canadian defence had in reality

depended upon the British Regular Army and the Royal Navy was blissfully ignored since to recognize this was to admit that Canada was not pulling her own weight in the defence of the Empire.

During King's years as Prime Minister (1921 to 1930 and 1935 to 1948), the ties that bound Canada to Britain were loosening - the more independent status that had been achieved during the war was formalized through the Statute of Westminster of 1931 which gave the Dominions legislative autonomy. Unlike Australia, New Zealand, or to a lesser extent South Africa, Canada had rapidly become less dependent on Britain for defence and could safely disregard calls for contributions to Imperial defence, particularly since to disregard defence was to avoid heavy expenditures and political contention. The inter-war years can be seen as the period when Canadian security became less dependent on Britain than on the United States. Previously, the Americans <sup>ight</sup> may not have accepted an attack by an outside power on the North American territories that were part of the British Empire, but as various boundary disputes evidenced, the intentions of the Americans themselves were by no means peaceful. By the end of the First World War American territorial ambitions on their own continent had receded and in 1938, F.D. Roosevelt gave a speech in Canada proclaiming that



"the people of the United States would not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by another empire".[5]. Although many Canadians may have been loath to admit it, their country was drifting into the American orbit and the ability to influence British policy had become a less valuable commodity. The associated domestic costs even led King to shy away from demanding a share in the direction of the Second World War, despite Canada's large material contribution which would have made these demands hard to resist in the years before the Americans entered the war.

Canadian defence policy entered a substantially different phase after the Second World War largely because she could not return to the old attitude of benign neglect in security matters. American demands for contribution to common defence were not so easily ignored as the requests from Britain had been. The basis for co-operation with the United States was laid in 1940 through the Ogdensburg agreement which set up the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD).[6] Difficulties associated with this new relationship were recognized before the end of the war. The Canadian conclusion after a meeting of the PJBD was that the

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5. Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 2, p. 226.

6. Holmes, The shaping of peace, 1, p. 23.

United States might be "expected to take an active interest in Canadian defence preparations and may indeed exert pressure." [7] Canadians had little desire to accept both the responsibility and the expense of defending America's northern approaches, but this could not be left to the Americans alone without raising concern over Canadian sovereignty and Commonwealth ties.

From 1945 onwards, King had greater difficulty pursuing policies which minimised involvement in world affairs. There was a new and younger group of policy makers in Ottawa who sought to secure a much more prominent international role for Canada. In support of their aims, the Department of External Affairs pointed to a shift in public opinion in favour of Canada's active participation in such institutions as the United Nations. [8] This was an argument that was difficult for the Prime Minister to resist. As in much of the English-speaking world, the casualties and destruction of two world wars contributed to the generation of widespread public support in Canada for the internationalist ideals that underlay the League of Nations and the United Nations. Canadians were also influenced by American policy which promoted the UN, at least in part, as a means of preventing a return by the United States to isolationism. King's acceptance of Canadian participation in the UN was due less to any

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7. quoted in Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 2, p.407. memo. for the P.M. DEA file 52-c-s-1.

8. Ignatieff, The making of a peacemaker, 76.

conversion to belief in collective security than to the knowledge that it would be almost impossible to resist the powerful trend towards creating a new and more effective international organisation to ensure peace.

Louis St Laurent, L.B. Pearson and Escott Reid were at the head of a group of policy makers who thought that Canada should make the greatest possible contribution to shaping the post-war world. The weakness of the European economies and the strength of the Canadian gave Canada a relatively strong and potentially influential position. Reid had hoped that the United Nations Organization would be a system of world government that would not only provide security, but also allow a country such as Canada to have some influence in international affairs. At the San Francisco Conference of 1945, King ensured that Canadian efforts were directed toward limiting the power of the security council and minimising the degree national sovereignty to be surrendered. The most positive Canadian contribution at that conference was in drafting Chapter 10 of the Charter - the basis for the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Mackenzie King's resistance to schemes for centralization of the Empire, collective security, or for world government was based on a deep seated distrust of any system which relied on a surrender of some degree of national sovereignty in order to achieve a better ordering of state relations. King's refusal to participate in, or make commitments to, Imperial defence was not,

as many believed, due to any latent dislike of British connections. In fact, King thought of himself as being British[9] and saw autonomous control of external policy as a logical outgrowth from self-government and not as something that would weaken the Empire. Only grudgingly did King allow Canada to take a prominent position in the UN (in 1948 she was elected to the Security Council) and he continually worried that through the UN, men such as Pearson would lead the country into trouble in places where Canada had no immediate interests. An attempt by King to withdraw Canada from the Commission supervising the Korean elections precipitated a near crisis in Cabinet - the Prime Minister apparently asked his Ministers how many divisions they were prepared to send to Korea. [10] One of <sup>the</sup> aims of policy makers at External Affairs was to use Canada's influence, first through the United Nations, until the ineffectiveness of the Security Council became apparent, and then through a regional security grouping, a system of ordering state relations in which Canada's position in relation to the great powers, particularly the United States, would not be insignificant. King, however, was not interested in gaining what could only be limited influence in affairs on the basis of an essentially unlimited commitment to fight in foreign wars.

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9. Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 2, p.12.

10. Ignatieff, The making of a peacemaker, p.101.

Canada had never displayed the same non-committal attitude in her external economic relations as she had in defence matters. Since Confederation in 1867, there had been little reluctance to press for influence and independence of action in economic matters. This is perhaps not surprising when it is considered that while little positive action was required on the part of Canada to ensure that her defence interests were met, the same was not true in a field where changes in British or American trade policy were always of direct and immediate consequence to Canada's well being.

Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Canada's external economic relations were characterised by divergent trends: firstly of seeking advantages through trade within the Empire and secondly of pursuing freer trade with the United States. The Canadian economy had always been heavily dependent on the export of primary products and thus sensitive to any restrictions in the international exchange of goods. Before Britain moved towards free trade, the success of the Canadian timber industry depended upon preferential treatment in Britain. In the mid-nineteenth century, the United States was looked to as an export market. British North America enjoyed relative prosperity from 1854 to 1866 when the American market was opened up by the "Reciprocity Treaty", entailing reciprocal reductions in trade barriers across a wide range of goods. The treaty was cancelled by a protectionist American administration, and there

were many Canadians who favoured a return to freer trade. By the end of the last century, the Colonies were pushing Britain to adopt a system of preferential trade within the Empire. In 1894, Canada called, apparently without consultation with London, a colonial conference to meet in Ottawa. The agenda, undoubtedly to the chagrin of Whitehall, made no reference to defence and instead focussed on trade and communications.[11]

Trade relations traditionally were a most contentious political issue in Canada since they were bound up with attachment to Imperial connections and fear of American domination. In the quarter century before the Great War, trade featured most prominently in political debate.[12] There was discussion in both countries of "commercial union" and "unrestricted reciprocity". The opposition to these schemes was led by the Canadian Manufacturers Association who warned of the threat posed to industries that had grown up under the protective tariffs of Conservative Sir John A. Macdonald's "National Policy". Commercial union was depicted by some as the first step towards political absorption by the United States - talk calculated to stir the emotions of those English-speaking Canadians devoted to the Empire. The agreement was defeated along with the Laurier's Liberals in 1911. The Canadian satirist, Stephen Leacock,

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11. Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 1,p.46.

12. Stacey, Canada in the age of Conflict, 1,p.39.

parodied the perception of the 1911 election by a small town in rural Ontario:

... on it turned issues of the most tremendous importance, such as whether Mariposa should become part of the United States, and whether the flag that had waved over the school house at Tecumseh Township for 10 centuries should be trampled under the hoof of an alien invader, and whether Britons should be slaves, and whether Canadians should be Britons, and whether the farming class would prove themselves Canadians."<sup>[13]</sup>

One of the Liberal ministers defeated in that election was Mackenzie King, a man who faced the free trade issue again in 1948. The lessons of 1911 were not lost on him. He stopped, almost single-handedly, insistent demands from policy makers in Ottawa that Canada should take the initiative in negotiating a free trade agreement with the United States.

Britain did not swing towards protectionist policies until the 1930's. The 1932 Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa led to the adoption in Britain of tariffs that discriminated against countries outside of the Empire - a most unpopular act in the United States. The breakdown of the Imperial system became a primary aim of American trade policy through to the period when the North Atlantic Treaty was being negotiated. The Canadian Prime Minister from 1930 to 1934 was R.B. Bennett, leader of the Conservatives but no supporter of increased trade within the Empire for its own sake. Canada suffered severely under the

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13. quoted in The Toronto Star 25 May, 1985. Stephen Leacock, Sunshine Sketches.

effects of the depression and the associated decline in world trade. Preventing a return to restrictive trade practices became one of the primary aims of a group of economists who secured a powerful position for themselves in Ottawa through their most successful management of the wartime economy.

Once the Imperial Preferences were in place, they proved very difficult to remove - their survival through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is demonstration of that. Neither Britain nor Canada could make changes to their respective preferential tariffs without affecting the other. The Americans expected Britain to abandon preferences in return for Lend-Lease. As Norman Robertson, then the Under-Secretary for External Affairs, pointed out, the Americans were "really pressing for payment, not at the expense of the United Kingdom but at the expense of other parts of the Empire which enjoy a preferred position in the British market."<sup>[14]</sup> This was a further complication in trade relations in the post-war period.

The prospect of breaking down Imperial preferences through a free trade deal with the United States provided Canada with useful leverage in negotiations with the Americans when Marshall Plan aid threatened to restrict Canada's European markets. Such adjustments in Canada's trade relations were a sensitive domestic

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14. quoted in Bothwell and English, "Canadian trade policy in the age of American dominance and British decline", p.54.



issue. In 1948 King suggested that these adjustments could be made more acceptable politically if they were made within the framework of a treaty that included both the U.S. and Britain. The promise of improved trade could also be used to overcome public resistance to a military treaty. That the Treaty was thought of, and presented to the public in terms of possible economic gain is evidence of the uncertainty as to whether popular perceptions of the Soviet threat were such that traditional antipathy towards peacetime defence commitments could be overcome.

Some adjustment in Canada's trade relations were almost inevitable in the post-war period. Previously, a deficit in trade with the U.S. had been balanced by a surplus with Britain and the sterling area. The dominant economic position of the Americans and the relative weakness of the British meant that Canada could no longer balance her trade by converting a sterling surplus into dollars. Loans and grants were made to Britain in order to increase exports while attempts were made to reduce imports from the U.S. These were only temporary solutions. The most influential economists advocated multilateral trading, and failing that, a free trade agreement with the United States. This was bound to be a politically explosive issue.

During the Second World War, Canada displayed more interest in contributing to the economic conduct of the Allied effort than to strategic military planning. The struggle to gain membership on

some of the "Combined Boards" concerned with supply, contributed to a shift in Ottawa towards viewing influence in international institutions as a more valuable commodity.[15] The right to representation was claimed by Canadians on the basis of competence or relative strength in a particular field - this was described by them as the "functional principle".[16] Canada was also active in planning the post-war economic structure in such institutions as the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Bank of Reconstruction for Development, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.[17] From this perspective, King's suggestion in the spring of 1948 that some of Canada's trade difficulties might be resolved through the North Atlantic Treaty seems less surprising.

It has been noted by C.P. Stacey that Canadian external policies from 1921 to 1948 were, to a remarkable extent, the policies of one man - Mackenzie King. A good part of the explanation for this lies with the fact that, as an organization, the Canadian government was relatively tiny until the Second World War. In the 1920s, Mackenzie King ran what was essentially a one-man foreign office - in 1925 there were only three administrative officers in

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15. Granatstein, A man of influence, p.139.

16. Anglin, "Canadian Policy towards international institutions", p.v.

17. Cuff and Granatstein, American Dollars, Canadian Prosperity, p.15-16.

the Department. He was directly responsible for External Affairs until 1946 when that portfolio was separated from the Office of the Prime Minister and given to Louis St Laurent.

After the second world war, King faced a civil service headed by a relatively young and tightly knit group of men who had been recruited between the wars. Almost all had university educations and many, including Pearson, Reid, Wrong, and Robertson, had studied at Oxford or Cambridge. As was not uncommon, the experience of study in Britain produced a heightened sense of Canadian nationalism and to a questioning of the basis of Imperial ties.[18] This group of policy makers were not nearly so concerned as King about the maintenance of ties with Britain or about danger of American domination. They were generally sympathetic to the Liberal internationalism preached by Americans such as Cordell Hull. The economists in particular strongly favoured world wide multilateral trading as a means of ensuring that Canada could maintain her exports at a high level. The men who held the senior positions in the Department of External Affairs in the 1940s had gained their experience in the inter-war years when national sovereignty was seen as barrier to peaceful relations. Their belief in the value of collective security underlay their support for the North Atlantic Treaty. They did not share the "dated" perceptions of King, who was much more

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18. Granatstein, The Ottawa men, p.7 and 79.

conscious of the fact that ties with Britain made Canadian neutrality in the event of a third European war impossible. St Laurent and Pearson considered Canada's contribution in the Second World War to have been based on principle and not any sentimental attachments.[19]

The civil servants in Ottawa secured influential positions for themselves during the war as a power shifted away from the provinces to the federal government - this process of centralisation was begun during the depression and accelerated after 1939. At that time the population of Canada was only about eleven million and the decentralised structure had made a large bureaucracy unnecessary. Ottawa was, however, expected to take a more active role in managing the economy and the beginnings of a welfare state. The bureaucracy gradually became a more important source of policy initiatives as the distinction between the civil service and the party in power began to blur.[20] Pearson's move from Under-Secretary to Minister was a clear demonstration of this trend.

Mackenzie King's attitude towards international institutions was not well understood by other policy makers in Ottawa. The Prime Minister was viewed as erratic in external policy matters in the post-war period. Perhaps he would have been viewed as

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19. Ignatieff, Making of a peacemonger, p. 108.

20. Whitaker, The government party.

more predictable if others had more clearly recognised his distrust of international institutions based on a surrender of sovereignty. King's apparent shifts in attitude were confusing to men such as Reid and Pearson, who were never certain that their plans would be supported. At the 1944 Civil Aviation Conference in Chicago, Pearson and Reid headed a Canadian team that made a substantial contribution on the basis of skill in negotiations and in producing draft proposals. A more powerful governing agency was Reid's aim at Chicago, but at least he was permitted to make a constructive contribution to the negotiations. This was not the case at San Francisco during the creation of the United Nations. He was frustrated by King, who insisted that Canada not take a leading position on any contentious issue.[21] King was possibly more consistent than policy makers at the Department of External Affairs believed, but the assumptions upon which he was acting were not shared by some of the younger policy makers. In King's experience, a commitment to collective defence meant dependency on an external authority. He had not battled all his life against Imperial federation to see Canada become subservient to the United Nations or to any other system which relied upon centralised authority.

Where practical economic matters were at stake, King was not adverse to Canada playing a prominent international role, but he

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21. Reid, On duty, p.18.

never placed faith in arrangements that could draw the country into war anywhere in the world. Although Canadian policy makers wedded to the ideals of the UN may not have recognised it, King viewed participation in the North Atlantic Treaty as fundamentally different to a commitment to a world-wide system of collective security. Canadian interests lay in the north Atlantic region. In the event of war in Europe, Canadians would, in all probability, wish to join the struggle at the side of the western Allies. The Treaty entailed a formal commitment, but at least it was restricted to a region where she had informal defence ties. More importantly, Canadian participation was contingent upon the Americans making a similar commitment and this was the most effective means to meet any threat to European security.

In the 1948 Canada was asked, in peacetime, to join a military alliance. In some ways, participation in an Atlantic pact would have been completely unprecedented. Canada had never before entered formal defence arrangements and had never made a real contribution to even her own defence outside of the major wars. The Treaty provided a means of reconciling traditional attachments to Britain with a new post-war defence and economic relationship with the United States. Canada was forced to adjust to a dominant American economy and was being drawn into

co-operation with her neighbour in the defence of the North American continent - something that was to be a clear demonstration that a new relationship with the United States had come into existence. These developments were not readily acceptable to Canadians devoted to Commonwealth ties or to isolationism. Canada's interest in the Treaty's non-military provisions reflected a traditional concern for trade relations and a fear that participation in a mere military alliance would be politically unacceptable. The willingness to embark upon a course of action for which a domestic consensus was uncertain is evidence that Mackenzie King was deeply worried by the threat of war in Europe and that he attached great importance to an American commitment to the defence of western Europe. It is evidence as well that the Prime Minister was being swayed by the internationalist aims of a group of Canadian policy makers who were not content to leave the world arena to the great powers. Mackenzie King, however, refused to pursue any policy which could not find a political consensus. Thus while he remained as Prime Minister, Canada's attitude towards the North Atlantic Treaty was by no means fixed.

## Chapter 2

Summer 1947 to 11 March 1948

Between the summer of 1947 and March 1948 Canadian external policy was shaped by the threat of war in Europe and the belief that domestic opinion would lead Canada once again to make common cause with France and the United Kingdom. The severity of the European situation was made clear to Mackenzie King during a visit to London in November 1947. The internationalists at the Department of External Affairs sought to meet that threat by advocating that the United Nations be reformed or supplemented to provide an effective system of collective security. Although Mackenzie King distrusted the UN, he was interested in an arrangement through which the Americans would guarantee the defence of western Europe. Canada might also participate, but not as part of a Commonwealth grouping. King was not prepared to enter a situation where the great powers did not accept the lion's share of any defence obligations, nor did he desire to see Canada defending areas of the world where she had no immediate interests. Clement Attlee's 10 March proposal for an Atlantic pact satisfied these conditions. Of equal importance to King's reaction to the proposal was that the Communist coup in



Czechoslovakia of February 1948 had created in Canada a domestic political environment favourable to a regional defence pact. Thus on 11 March King made, what for him, was a rather dramatic decision; he accepted an invitation from the British Prime Minister to join secret discussions with the United Kingdom and the United States that would eventually lead to the North Atlantic Treaty.

Mackenzie King was under pressure from within his own government to allow Canada to participate in the creation of a more effective system of collective security. He tolerated the internationalist aims of Louis St Laurent, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester Pearson, the Under-Secretary, and Escott Reid, a senior officer in the Department, largely because of the level of public support for the activities and ideals of the UN. From King's perspective, there were advantages to be had from channelling Canadian interest in collective security into an Atlantic pact. The internationalist aims of the Department of External Affairs could be restricted to the one region of the world where Canadians might support a peacetime military commitment. The dominance of American military and economic power was forcing Canada to make politically difficult adjustments in her relations with both Britain and the United States. Such a pact would facilitate some of these adjustments. By working within framework of the United Nations, the popularity of that organisation could be drawn upon in the event that Canada

agreed to join an regional pact. If isolationism could not be overcome disappointment could be offset by pointing to continued participation in the UN.

### Internationalist Ideals

In the nine months preceeding March 1948, considerable interest was displayed by members of the Department of External Affairs in making the UN a more effective instrument of collective security. This interest was based in part on internationalist ideals which were prominent in the minds of St Laurent, Pearson and Reid. That peace could be ensured through new and more powerful international institutions and that national sovereignty was a barrier to smooth relations were ideas that commanded widespread intellectual and popular support. The fact that the thinking of certain members of the Department of External Affairs was shaped by these ideas was perhaps less surprising than the fact that internationalist ideals found expression in the country's policies. Domestic political considerations underlay this. The controversy associated with appearing to follow a British or American line too closely could be avoided through the UN. Senior Canadian officials who did not share the Prime Minister's apprehensions about international commitments, were able to play

a prominent role in world affairs through the UN, in part because of the level of public support for that institution and the ideals upon which it was based.

Through the late summer and early autumn of 1947, members of the Department of External Affairs put forth various schemes for reforming or supplementing the UN. Pearson has recalled that King was not kept in close touch with these developments.[1] The old Prime minister was apparently content to give St Laurent and his Department some freedom to pursue their own ambitions. Reid was strongly influenced by the belief that national sovereignty was a barrier to peace. In August he presented a lecture, with the permission of St Laurent and Pearson, which proposed a security organisation with "teeth"; the members would pool all of their economic and military resources and there would be no great power veto.[2] Later in the same month Reid, proposed further plans to organise the West on a federal basis. The Soviet Union was in no position, he believed "to stop the western world from changing the specialized agencies [of the UN] into international federal institutions to deal with the international economic and social questions." [3] This was further than St Laurent was prepared to

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1. Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, 4, p.26.

2. Soward, Canadian external policy, p.81.

3. MG31 E46 v.6, "The United States and the Soviet Union: A study of the possibility of war and some of the implications for Canadian policy", by Reid 30 Aug.1947.

go: "I would not care to state as a matter of policy ... that the specialized agencies should be turned into international federal institutions." [4] Throughout the negotiation of the North Atlantic Treaty, Reid found that his internationalist schemes were often too ambitious to find support even within the Department of External Affairs.

St Laurent firmly believed in supporting an effective system of collective security. In a speech delivered by him at the UN in September, he indicated that Canada might favour radical revision of the Charter or the creation of a supplementary regional security system. Pearson and Reid had drafted the speech and it reflected Reid's preference for a supplementary arrangement. Little immediate impression was made with the countries towards which it had been directed, but it did bring Canadians into contact with the British and Americans who were becoming increasingly concerned with meeting the Communist threat in Europe.

Less than one month later, it became known in Ottawa that the State Department was also interested in security arrangements designed to supplement the UN. Reid for one was "extremely interested to learn" that Mr Hickerson was "almost convinced that the time had come to give effect" to the suggestion

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4. MG31 E46 v.6, 30 Aug. 1947.

"for a grouping of the more or less like-minded countries inside the United Nations".[5] Hume Wrong, the Canadian Ambassador in Washington believed that this was an idea to which the Americans might turn "if negotiations go very badly with the Russians".[6]

After the United States had demonstrated its interest, King permitted Canadian policy to proceed in the same direction. On 17 October 1947, he publicly suggested that "perhaps these members of the United Nations who are willing to accept more specific international obligations in return for greater national security will have to consider whether they should not be prepared to agree to a treaty of mutual defence against any aggressor." [7] Reid was pleasantly surprised by this statement: the "Prime Minister has been even more specific than Mr. St. Laurent in his reference to the possibility of the States of the Western world entering into a treaty of mutual defence against the Soviet Union." [8] Through his drafting efforts Reid hoped to influence Canadian policy at a time when an American initiative was expected within the near future. [9] Reid prepared a draft "Treaty for Greater national Security". It was based on the

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5. MG31 E46 v.6 Reid to Wrong, 20 Oct. 1947.

6. Soward, Canadian External Policy, p.82.

7. ibid, p.82.

8. MG31 E46 v.6, 20 Oct. 1947.

9. Reid, Time of fear and hope, p.34.

internationalist belief in the effectiveness of a powerful central authority - to that end a "Board of Collective Self-Defence" with weighted voting was proposed.

The interest displayed by Canadian officials in creating more effective security arrangements through the UN undoubtedly encouraged the British to make proposals of their own along these lines. King's opposition to any defence arrangements based on the Commonwealth was clear; the Canadians might, however, be attracted by regional arrangements within the UN. In New York on 21 November 1947 Gladwyn Jebb spoke with George Ignatieff of the Department of External Affairs. Jebb's proposals indicated that Britain's primary aim was to attract the Americans into accepting an obligation to defend western Europe: "a regional arrangement providing for collective self-defence would have necessarily to include the United States if it were to be effective in containing Soviet expansion."<sup>[10]</sup> By December, interest at the State Department in new security arrangements had increased. According to Wrong, Dean Rusk "seemed to think that it was possible that a proposal regarding mutual defence treaties might be formulated by March or April". The Americans indicated that "to have the proposal presented in the proper light,... it might be presented by five or six members of the United Nations".<sup>[11]</sup>

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10. Reid, Time of fear and hope, p.36.

11. MG 31 E46 v.6, WA-3765, 3 Dec.1947.

Canadian support would probably be regarded as essential by the Americans if such an initiative were launched. At the Canadian Embassy in Washington, R.G. Riddell had gained the impression that "the United States authorities were already casting about to see if the proposals for a Mutual Defence Treaty could not be brought forward from some source other than themselves." Internationalist ideals led Canadian policy only so far before hesitation crept in. Pearson agreed with Riddell that the Department of External Affairs should not "at the present time take any further initiative in regard to the proposal" and that we "should confine ourselves to learning as much as possible about the intentions of the United States and the United Kingdom." Riddell was doubtful that there was any "over-riding advantage to be gained from our being amongst those who initiated it." [12] Reid might have claimed that Canada could exert considerable influence if she made proposals early on and had them accepted as the basis for further discussion. Mackenzie King would have been quick to point out that there were definite disadvantages associated with taking the lead in such matters - domestic controversy was sure to ensue. In any event, he believed such matters to be the responsibility of the great powers.

British were keenly interested in gaining external backing for

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12. MG31 E46 v.6 5 Dec. 1947.

European security, and in 1948, initiatives were to be expected from them. In December 1947 Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, explained to Norman Robertson, the Canadian High Commissioner in London that "one difficulty was that the Americans had no very definite plan. This meant that we in the United Kingdom must clear our minds and produce a plan for them." Bevin suggested an "informal Western Federation with no written constitution. Such a federation would include not only the United States but the whole of Western Civilization." [13] Even the Foreign Secretary was not immune from describing security in terms attractive to the internationalists in the United States and Canada, who focussed so much of their attention on the United Nations. At a meeting of the British Cabinet on 5 March 1948, the view was put forth that "we should work out a much wider scheme for the general co-operation and defence of the whole world outside of the Soviet orbit. What we should in fact be aiming at is a U.N.O. [United Nations Organisation] as it could have been if the Soviet had co-operated." [14]

That King was not yet ready to enter a new security arrangement was made clear in his response to a message from Attlee's who claimed, in January 1948, that the time had come "to take a more active line against Communism". King's oral reply delivered to

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13. PRO CAB129/123 CP(48)6, 17 Dec. 1947.

14. PRO FO800/460, 5 March 1948.



the British High Commissioner suggested the UN as "the centre where all democratic and freedom loving countries could co-ordinate their policies ".[15] King was politely indicating that the great powers should accept their full obligations under the Charter to provide effective security. Canada was certainly not going to be drawn into a commitment to European defence on her own or as part of a Commonwealth bloc.

Other nations may have taken Canadian activity at the United Nations as an indication that she was ready to participate in new security arrangements. While King remained in control, however, the UN was not a completely accurate indicator of Canadian intentions. That institution, King believed, was drawing the country into unforeseen difficulties. In the winter of 1947-1948 administration of Korean elections became a source of great contention within Cabinet. According to the Prime Minister:

The truth is our country has no business trying to play a world role in the affairs of nations, the very location of which our people know little or nothing about. So far as External Affairs is concerned, they have been allowed to run far too much on Pearson's sole say so....He is young, idealistic, etc., but has not responsibility. I am thankful I held responsibility for External Affairs for as long as I did."[16]

King felt "a good deal of concern with the part Pearson takes in New York. ... He likes the international arena but one day it

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15. Soward, Canadian external policy, p.84.

16. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King record, p.140, 21 Dec.1947.

will land us in an obligation from which we will find a great difficulty in being freed." [17] King certainly did not share the internationalist ideals of the Canadians who were active at the UN. He thought that security was a responsibility of the great powers since they had the veto - the sooner the UN got to work creating an international force (i.e. a great power force) to give meaning to its words, and left other things meanwhile, the better. [18]

King's resistance to peacetime military commitments was well known. That such a commitment was not forthcoming in January 1948 should have surprised no one, particularly not a member of the British Cabinet. The Canadian Prime Minister would not consider participation in new security arrangement in the absence of domestic support for such a policy. The Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 had a strong effect on public opinion and convinced King that an Atlantic pact could be contemplated.

#### Defence Considerations

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17. ibid, p.161, 25 Feb. 1948.

18. ibid, p.155, 14 Jan. 1948.

The decision to join the United States and the United Kingdom in exploring the possibility of a north Atlantic pact was motivated to a large extent by King's belief that many Canadians considered their own interests to be bound up with the fortunes of Europe, and at the same time perceived collective action to defend western Europe to be of such importance that traditional resistance to formal military commitments could be overcome. King would not consider a security arrangement in which the Commonwealth was treated as a bloc. A north Atlantic grouping, however, treated Canada as an independent power and would enable Canada to avoid accepting any obligations that were not also accepted by the United States.

A pact that linked Canada to both the United States and the United Kingdom offered distinct advantages over bilateral arrangements with either. Requests for specific commitments from one could be deflected by pointing to Canada's special relationship with the other. In the past, this tactic had been used successfully against calls for Imperial defence co-operation. After the Second World War, it was American demands that became increasingly difficult to resist. In January 1948, the Canadian representative on the security council was advised that the "difficulties of our position in relation to the United States give added significance to our association with the

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19. MG26 J4 v.421, 27 Jan.1948.

other nations of the British Commonwealth." [19] It was important to maintain defence ties with Britain, but at the same time there were political difficulties tied to following British policy too closely.

Merging Canadian defence policy with that of the United States was equally unacceptable politically. Thus one of the arguments against participation in the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Hemispheric defence in August 1947 was that it would be difficult "to formalize participation in the United States Inter-American Defence arrangements when we have been unwilling to formalize those within the Commonwealth." [20] King sought to ensure that Britain was kept in close touch with North American defence arrangements. Commonwealth ties were important because of domestic sentiments, but they were also useful in deflecting American pressure to make a greater contribution to North American defence. There was a stronger tradition among Canadians of considering their defence as part of a larger whole which included Europe. North Atlantic Treaty came to be viewed as one means of countering this emphasis on static home defence.

Ensuring that a situation did not arise in which Canada would be forced to choose between siding with the United States or the United Kingdom was of great political significance. In the autumn of 1947 it was noted that "the Canadian government

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20. Soward, "Canadian external policy", p.78.

considers that the closest possible collaboration between the United States and the United Kingdom is desirable".[21] Any serious conflict between the two was bound to have serious political repercussions in Canada as isolationism clashed with pro-British sentiment. British and American co-operation was of more specific interest with regard to Newfoundland. The possible entry of the British colony into Confederation with <sup>the</sup> nine other Canadian provinces was <sup>a</sup> prominent political issue in 1947 and 1948. The matter was complicated by the base rights that had been granted to the Americans during the Second World War. Late in 1947, it was considered that Canada, the United States and Britain "continue to have tripartite interest in the defence of Newfoundland and Labrador." The Americans had indicated a desire for long-term rights, but were respecting a Canadian "request not to press the matter for the time being, pending the outcome of Newfoundland's future political status" .[22] Within the framework of a treaty that included Britain, the difficulties of granting base rights to the Americans would be eased considerably.

In January 1947, King's attitude towards military commitments remained wholly negative. Despite describing a message received from Attlee on 14 January 1947 as "the nearest thing to a

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21. MG31 E46 v.6, "Joint planning with the United States", 22 October 1947.

22. ibid

statement of a possible approaching conflict between East and West that I had yet seen from the British government in writing." [23] The Canadian Prime Minister said little in reply except to complain that the British were once again guilty of considering the Commonwealth as a unit. King was in no mood to make a positive reply. Earlier in the same day, he had been "shocked" by reports of a speech given by the Minister of Defence Brooke Claxton:

This without a shadow of a doubt will be construed as meaning that we are committed to go to war if the United States is involved in war. I declined, with respect to Britain, to adopt any such policy even to the hour that Poland was invaded. [24]

The British were considering various schemes, including one that sought Commonwealth backing for a European security. King's rebuff was less significant while the primary object remained American support:

Broadly speaking it does not matter to us essentially which approach the Americans should prefer so long as they are prepared to come in. What would be fatal would be any suggestion on the part of the Americans that the Western European nations should themselves form some security system, whether based on Article 51 or otherwise, without the participation of the United States of America. [25]

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23. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King record, p.155.15 Jan. 1948.

24. ibid, p.153, 14 Jan. 1948.

25. PRO FO800/460 Message from the Foreign Office to the British Ambassador in Washington, 26 Jan. 1948.

References to the Commonwealth were carefully avoided in the next approach to the Canadians and Americans regarding European security.

King was almost certain that in the event of a European war against the Soviet Union, Canadians would demand to participate; was "clear that it would be impossible for Canada to remain neutral and that positive participation by Canada on the side of the United States would be expected and, indeed, demanded." [26] This did not mean, however, that he was agreeable to commitments made in advance. In the wake of the Czech coup, news of Soviet pressure on Scandinavia and a crisis in Palestine, King much more receptive to British proposals for an Atlantic security pact. He was apparently ready to consider joining the two countries with which Canada had defence links in a pact that covered the one area where Canada had a tradition of overseas military commitment - northwest Europe.

#### Economic Considerations

Not only in matters of defence did Canada seek to reconcile her

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26. MG26 J4 v.421, "Statement for the guidance of the Canadian permanent delegate to the United Nations and representative on the security council", 27 Jan. 1948.

ties with the United States and the United Kingdom. The solution to Canada's "dollar shortage" favoured by the economists in the Department of Finance and the members of the Department of External Affairs who were concerned with trade relations was the elimination of barriers to multilateral trading. To this end, John Deutsch and Hector McKinnon were active in the negotiation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The dominance of the American economy and the relative weakness of the British position made the possibility of attaining free trade on a world-wide basis remote. The Department of Finance saw free trade with the United States as the only viable alternative. It required the least physical upheaval and would achieve bilateral balance where there had previously been a substantial deficit through increased exports to the United States.

In June 1947, Norman Robertson the High Commissioner in London, and the former Under-Secretary for External Affairs, reported that pressure on the Canadian dollar position could push the country into

an impoverished sterling area held together by policies of discrimination and not much more; or, conceivably it could result in a much closer continental integration of our economy with the United States. Of these polar extremes, I much prefer the second, and want to come home to talk to you about it before the Government commits itself to the first and orthodox course. [27]

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27. Robertson to Pearson, 19 June 1947 quoted in Granatstein, A man of influence, p.219.



Robertson had risen to the senior position in the Department through his skill and experience in trade relations; his advice was, therefore, highly valued. Neither Canada nor Britain could make unilateral reductions in Imperial Preferences. Any attempt by Canada to transform her trade relations with the United States required the co-operation of Britain; ensuring that the latter two remained on friendly terms was most valuable to Canada.

Interest in free trade led, late 1947, John Deutsch, Director of the International Relations Division of the Finance Department, and Hector McKinnon, Chairman of the Tariff Board, to approach the State Department with a proposal for very extensive trade reciprocity, "a comprehensive agreement involving, wherever possible, the complete elimination of duties".[28] Apparently, this approach was made without the authority of Cabinet.[29] The two Canadian officials had just returned to a hero's welcome after an extremely successful series of negotiations in Geneva leading to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The Americans were seeking reductions in of Imperial Preferences in return for proceeding with the Marshall plan. In September 1947, an exchange of notes between the United Kingdom and Canada was arranged to coincide with the signature of the General Agreement; the two countries undertook to release each other from their

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28. FRUS 1947,3,p.129-30, October 1947.

29. Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict,2,p.419.

obligations under the Ottawa Agreements of 1932 to maintain existing margins of preference.[30] The American negotiators described this undertaking as "the abrogation of the most important part of the Ottawa Agreements" and were prepared to sign the GATT on 30 October 1947.[31]

Aid delivered under the Marshall plan threatened to increase Canada's exchange problems if it could be used to make purchases only from the United States. A similar situation had arisen in 1941 when Canada faced the prospect of seeing "free" lend-lease goods drive her munitions out of the British market. [32] The Hyde Park agreement provided a solution whereby the lend-lease account was charged for materials and components imported to Canada but ultimately delivered to Britain. The Americans also agree to import enough from Canada to balance the current account. In 1947, Canadians were hoping for something similar to the Hyde Park agreement. Free trade with the United States was considered by many of the economists to be the most promising solution and one that would provide the Americans with a tantalising prospect while the Marshall plan appropriations were being determined.

Trade discussions between Canadian and American officials

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30. Bullock, Bevin, p.462.

31. FRUS, 1947, 3, p.1014-15.

32. Cuff and Granatstein, "Canada and the Marshall plan", p.201.

appear to have gone on for two and one half months without the Canadian Prime Minister being aware of them.[33] When he was finally informed on 13 January 1948, he seemed enthusiastic. King's well known reluctance to allow Canada a leading role in important international developments may have led the Finance Minister, Douglas Abbott, to suggest that "the proposal was not his but had come from the Americans themselves". He considered the agreement to be "the answer to all our present restrictions. If we could get complete reciprocity, ...we would no longer be dependent on uncertain markets in Europe ". King recorded that "his own approval was strongly given. It is clear to me that the Americans are losing no opportunity to make their relations as close as possible with our country." [34]

The tone of King's diary entry may be an indication that King was not as positive as he had led Abbott to believe. The "strong feeling in the Finance Department - Clarke, Towers [of the Bank of Canada] and Deutsch, who were all favourable "[35] may have convinced King to allow matters to develop as they may. King was not unaware that senior civil servants were stepping beyond their

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33. J.L. Granatstein has implied that King knew of free trade proposal in December, but no evidence was offered. Cuff and Granatstein, "The rise and fall of Canadian American free trade", p.474. C.P. Stacey found no mention of the matter in King's diary in that month. Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 2, p.420.

34. Pickersgill and Forster, the Mckenzie King record, 4, p.260-1.

35. ibid

bounds, initiating policies without the approval of Cabinet:

I really feel that, in these international affairs, matters of government, there is far too much left to a man like Pearson, or A. Heeney and one or two others just as in Finance, far too much is left to the Deputy Minister and one or two others, and that the real function of Cabinet is being sacrificed to some of the ambitions of younger men.[36]

Early in February, King told Abbott that "he could say that he and I were agreed, that our Government would be prepared to support a treaty of the kind, should one be negotiated before mid-summer." It is unlikely that King believed that such a complex matter could be resolved in such a short time. He may have assented to the continuation of negotiations on the assumption that no agreement was possible within the proposed timetable. In this way the proponents of free trade could be left on their own - for the time being anyway.

By early March, a detailed plan had been worked out. Some Americans found the proposals most attractive. In the State Department, it was suggested that the scheme would result in the

immediate elimination of all Empire Preferences granted by Canada, with important political and economic implications for the United States while Canada would be able to make a similar offer of free trade to the United Kingdom which would lessen the likelihood of British opposition to the proposal. ... Postponement would incur a serious risk that conditions would so change that we would lose a unique opportunity to knit the two countries together - an objective of

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36. ibid, p.157-8, 5 Feb. 1948.

37. FRUS, 1948, 9, 406-9.

United States policy since the founding of the Republic.[37]

Thus, at the time of the decision to join discussions leading to a security pact, dramatic changes in Canada's economic relations with both Britain and the United States were being contemplated.

#### Domestic Political Considerations

King's reluctance, before March 1948, even to contemplate participation by Canada in new security arrangements was based, to the greatest extent, on domestic political considerations - isolationism and resistance to peace-time military commitments remained strong and were a threat to the Liberal's small majority in the House of Commons. St Laurent, Claxton, and Pearson were pushing King away from an isolationist position.[38] and by 10 March, the Prime Minister had evidently judged that public perceptions had changed to an extent that made participation in an Atlantic pact politically feasible. Working within the United Nations it would be possible to claim that Canada was accepting no new obligations while an arrangement that included the United States and the United Kingdom might be useful in solving the

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38. Pickersgill, My years with Louis St Laurent, p.45.

political problems associated with maintaining defence and economic ties with those two powers.

The clash between Britain and the United States over Palestine placed Canada in a difficult position in February 1947. King stressed the point "that if, in addition to it being alleged that we were being dominated by the United States on economic matters, we were being dominated as well on military matters, we would have a hard battle to face in our country." [39]

King clearly recognised that new military commitments were bound to give rise to domestic controversy. The Minister of Defence gave a speech in January implying that Canada was prepared to join with the United States in the defence of North America. The Prime Minister believed that "we may have, when Parliament reassembles, one of the most difficult debates we have ever had, throwing into the fire, the fat of Canada's commitment to go to war in advance ... on the mere ground of our sharing a continent in common" with the United States. [40]

By March, a threatening European situation led to a change in attitude: "I do not recall prior to the last great war reading any dispatches that seemed to me as serious and solemn as

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39. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King record, 4, p.163. 20 Feb. 1948.

40. ibid, p.154, 14 January 1948.

41. ibid, p.166, 10 March 1948.

those I have received today".[41] The Canadian people might be ready to make a commitment after all. Isolationism in French Canada was off-set to a certain extent by anti-communist sentiment associated with strength of Catholicism. On the same day that Attlee's message was received, King questioned St Laurent on the Italian elections and on the Pope's pronouncement that voting for the Communists was a sin. The External Affairs Minister "thought that the people took the religious aspect much more lightly in Italy than they did in our country".[42] The Prime Minister believed that "if Britain and the United States were drawn into war with Russia, nothing could keep the country out". Meeting with St Laurent, Pearson, and Claxton, King determined that it was "desirable to agree to explore the situation vis-a-vis the Regional Atlantic Pact of Mutual Assistance under Section 51 of the Charter and that I should so advise Attlee." [43] Working within the UN, King could always claim that Canada was accepting no new obligations and none that were not also accepted by the permanent members of the Security Council, most importantly, the United States. The UN might provide a useful escape hatch if participation in a regional arrangement was politically unacceptable; it could always be claimed that Canada was already a member of the General Assembly and that security was the responsibility of the great powers.

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42. ibid, p.166. 10 March 1948.

43. ibid, p.166. 10 March 1948.

As yet, King had only agreed to send a Canadian official to Washington "to explore the situation". He was careful "to make no commitment" and to make clear that "the cabinet would have a knowledge of what was proposed before any final decisions reached as to what we world do." [44] A thorough appraisal of the domestic political situation was necessary. King immediately proceeded to do just this. He found that the leader of the Conservatives and the leader of the Social Credit party both agreed that the European situation was very serious.

King's decision to send a Canadian official to join security discussions with the United States and the United Kingdom, must have been based on a belief the European situation appeared sufficiently threatening and that enough Canadians considered their own security to be bound up with that of western Europe to overcome traditional resistance to defence commitments. A north Atlantic grouping was a useful way of resolving political difficulties associated with defence and economic ties with Britain and the United States and by working within the framework of the UN, the political difficulties of entering a new arrangement might be avoided.

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44. ibid



Even in the absence of a firm commitment, the 10 March decision to join security discussions was dramatic step for King. Canada's had never entered into a formal commitment to come to another nation's defence. Even the weak pledges of assistance associated with the League of Nations and United Nations were greatly distrusted by King. Still, if the public demanded participation in those institutions, King was willing to accept them. New security arrangements could usefully be pursued within the framework of the UN, drawing upon its popular support to minimise domestic controversy. Canadian activity at the UN, of which King was so disparaging, and public support for it were based to a certain extent on the same internationalist ideals. Pressure both from within the Government and from outside the country for participation in a regional security pact could be more easily managed within the framework of the United Nations. As the threat of war grew in Europe King would weigh the political difficulties associated with entering an arrangement designed to prevent war against the upheaval that would follow a third great European war in this century. Any doubts that King may have harboured were unlikely to be readily apparent:

He skillfully avoided what was wrong

Without saying what was right,

And he never let his on the one hand

Know what his on the other hand was doing.

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45. Scott, Selected poems, p.60-61.

### Chapter 3

11 March to 30 June 1948

Mackenzie King agreed on 11 March 1948, to join the United States and the United Kingdom in discussions leading to a security pact, but he had not yet assessed the attitude within his own party. That was done on 17 March, following a broadcast by President Truman declaring American support for the Brussels Treaty which had been signed that day. That Treaty was considered by the British as a necessary preliminary to gaining an American commitment to western European security.[1] Secret talks leading to an Atlantic pact began in Washington on 22 March. Until July, only three countries were directly involved in the security discussions; the Canadian representative, L.B. Pearson, enjoyed a prominent position to advocate a multilateral treaty against alternatives such as a unilateral declaration by the President. The Americans were unable to proceed without the support of the Senate and the Vandenberg resolution was introduced in May 1948 as a means of gaining tacit consent for proceeding with the development of security matters. After the resolution won acceptance on 11 June 1948, the negotiations were

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1. Bullock, Bevin, p.573.

able to resume in July with Canada and the members of the Brussels Treaty. No firm action was expected from the Americans, however, until after the Presidential election in November. The United States was not the only country to reveal resistance to entangling alliances; the refusal of the Canadian Cabinet to contribute to the Berlin airlift at the end of June, demonstrated that the country was not yet ready to be drawn into a threatening European situation.

#### Internationalist Ideals

In the spring of 1948, Canada's attitude toward a north Atlantic pact was shaped, through the influence of St Laurent, Pearson, and Reid, by internationalist ideals. Those three men believed that Canada could make a significant and positive contribution to international affairs through a suitable framework, such as the one provided by the UN. They were anxious to ensure that Canada was not left out of a new defence arrangement which aimed to create an effective system of collective security where the Security Council had failed. King tolerated the internationalist aims of the Department of External Affairs largely because of the widespread public support for the UN and its ideals. While new security arrangements remained

within the framework of the UN, King could draw upon the UN's popularity if Canada agreed to join an Atlantic pact. If, on the other hand, the political costs of a new commitment were too great, Canada's more general obligations as a member of the UN could be used to defuse any disappointment.

Mackenzie King's interest in using the United Nations as the basis for a more effective system of security was apparent in his meeting with the Prime Minister of Belgium: "I found that Spaak agreed very much about the United Nations not being what it appeared to be and the necessity of agreements ... using the United Nations as a frame. Basing actions on its principles but not counting on it for strength."<sup>[2]</sup> He did not expect that Canada would accept any substantial obligations under such an agreement; security was a responsibility of the great powers. King's reaction to the first reports from the Washington talks was that it "seems to me every way best that the whole matter should be one of United States leadership. It puts increasingly on the United States the obligation of maintaining peace in the Atlantic."<sup>[3]</sup>

Pearson and Reid shared none of the Prime Minister's apprehensions about placing Canada in the forefront of such matters. Reid had to struggle to gain support for his broad

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2. ibid, p.185. 17 April 1948.

3. ibid, p.181. 26 March 1948.

internationalist aims even within the Department of External Affairs. Some policy makers such as Hume Wrong and A.D.P. Heeney were advocates of collective security, but considered some of Reid's proposals to be too ambitious to be of any use. One of his aims was the creation of a more effective international authority:

we should go farther than the Brussels Treaty in setting up revolutionary new political instruments of the Alliance. That is why I feel that we should have not only a board for Collective Self-Defence, but a parliament, a president, a chancellor and a chief of staff. This would give the impression that we mean business when we talk about forming a new society of the free nations.[4]

Heeney, the Secretary to Cabinet, recoiled from such an omnibus scheme as Reid envisaged at that stage: "Surely the U.S.S.R. and friends would be more impressed by a quick business-like arrangement between the U.K.-U.S.-Canada and France and the Western Union ... than by an amorphous conglomeration which included Finland, Portugal and Pakistan." [5] The British call to organise the "ethical and spiritual forces of Western Europe backed by the power and resources of the Commonwealth and Americas" [6] had struck a responsive chord with Reid. He was attracted by the notion of including the self-governing members of the Commonwealth, particularly the new Asian Dominions. King

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4. MG31 E46 v.6, Reid to Pearson, 18 March 1948.

5. ibid, Heeney to Reid, 18 March 1948.

6. Pearson, "Canada and the origins of NATO", p.3.

had little use for arrangements that looked suspiciously like the schemes for Imperial federation that he had spent his long career fighting against.

In an effort to have his ideas accepted as the basis of policy, Reid argued that he was proposing nothing that was not also being considered by the Americans. He claimed that the "State Department view was, apparently, that while the Western Union project was most welcome, Mr. Bevin's proposals lacked breadth and imagination." Some in the State Department "have visions of a much more extensive union, perhaps with common citizenship".[7] Reid was turning the American arguments for a "United States of Europe" around, and using them to build a case for a north Atlantic federation. Ernest Bevin, like King, believed that schemes based on a surrender of sovereignty were dangerous. King's battles had been fought against Imperial federation. Bevin resisted American pressure for a united Europe and later on, he opposed on similar grounds, Canadian proposals for new supra-national institutions.

Pearson and Reid sought to convince King that security matters could not simply be left in American hands if arrangements were to take a form satisfactory to Canada (and incidently to their own internationalist aims). A multilateral treaty was preferable from many points of view. Pearson noted that:

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7. MG31 E46 v.6,22 March 1948.

One reason why we need an Atlantic Union is that we must establish in peacetime some international constitutional machinery which could be used in wartime as the basis for a supreme war command.... The existence of some sort of constitutional machinery enables governments which have wisdom and maturity to have a greater influence on the formulation of policy than would be warranted by their power alone.[8]

Such reasoning could not be used with King. He had purposely avoided associating himself with the military direction of the last war in order to evade domestic controversy.

The Prime Minister was well aware that the Department of External Affairs favoured taking what he considered too prominent a role in world affairs:

More and more I feel I would like to get out of office before any new schemes are brought forward which I shall have to endorse or oppose. There is more than enough to handle at the present without creating more machinery, giving the bureaucrats everywhere more in the way of power without responsibility. What most of these schemes come down to is allowing a body of men who have the most favoured positions in the Civil Service to become a world law-making and governing body without in any way having to gain office through the will of the people themselves.[9]

Reid's proposal for an Atlantic Parliament was just the sort of scheme that was anathema to King.

The Department of External Affairs attempted to push policy in the direction of its own broad internationalist aims through

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8. MG31 E46 v.6, Pearson to Wrong and Reid. 21 May 1948.

9. King Diaries, 16 April 1948.



public pronouncements. King accepted public discussion of security arrangements in terms of the ideals of the United Nations because it was politically useful to do so. A speech presented by St Laurent in the House of Commons in April was intended to present the arguments for Canadian participation in a collective security pact.[10] It was aimed in part at the opponents of the idea of an Atlantic pact in the State Department.[11] The State Department apparently gained the impression that the Canadians were pursuing broad internationalist aims: "In light of these statements [by St Laurent] and of Mr Bevin's memorandum, I think we must be careful not to place ourselves in the position of being the obstacle to further progress toward the political union of the western democracies." [12] Bevin sent a powerful message urging the resumption of negotiations.[13] Their own preoccupation with a European federation possibly led the Americans to interpret the British and Canadian calls for a American participation in a multilateral treaty as interest in a federation. The internationalist influence apparent in the Canadian pronouncements would have done little to dissuade them of this perception.

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10. House of Commons Debates, 48, v.4, p.3449-50.

11. Reid, Time of fear and hope, p.77.

12. MG31 E46 v.6, State Department Document, 24 May 1948.

13. Bullock, Bevin, p.569 and FRUS1948, 3, p.122-3.

Developing security arrangements within the framework of the United Nations was a useful means of mobilising domestic support both in Canada and the United States. The Vandenberg resolution, introduced on 11 May drew upon popular dissatisfaction with the performance of the Security Council. Arthur Vandenberg himself, believed that the resolution provided the President with the necessary support to enter a security arrangement that lived "within the Charter but outside the veto".[14] The British recognised that this interest had to be tapped if they were to attract the Americans: "London discussions on Germany have shown that the presence of United States forces in Germany alone is not sufficient to remove French fears about their own security. A treaty based on Article 51 of the Charter to which the United States would be a party would be the best answer to those urging revision of the Charter." [15] French fears of a revived Germany had to be quelled before western Europe could make an effective recovery and defend itself against Communism.

King favoured keeping security within the United Nations. Public support for internationalist ideals might usefully be drawn upon if Canada entered an Atlantic pact. If she did not, existing obligations under the Charter could be used to offset

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14. Vandenberg, The private papers of senator Vandenberg, p.419.

15. MG31 E46 v.6, summary of UK view sent to UK ambassador in Washington, 22 May 1948.

any disappointment. Thus King tolerated the internationalist ambitions of members of External Affairs largely because it was useful for domestic political reasons to do so.

#### Defence Considerations

Defence considerations formed the basis for arguments used by the internationalists at the Department of External Affairs to convince both their own Prime Minister and the Americans that a multilateral treaty was superior to any alternative arrangements. One of the strongest arguments was that only through such a treaty could Canada resolve some of the domestic problems associated with her defence ties with the United States and the United Kingdom. European security itself was important, but no Canadian commitment would be forthcoming in the absence of favourable domestic conditions.

King was not about to accept any obligations on behalf of Canada that were not also accepted by the United States. He felt strongly that "the big powers, particularly the United States, should be kept prominently in the van. It would be a mistake to make ourselves a sort of apex to a movement which would be

linking together U.S. and U.K. and other nations in a project that is intended to offset the possibility of immediate war with Russia." [16]

The political dangers of being drawn into an intimate defence relationship with the United States, were clearly recognised in Ottawa: "if an agreement along the lines that were discussed becomes a reality, ... it should considerably ease our problems in handling defence relations with the United States." [17] A defence arrangement that included the United States and Britain held great attractions for Canadian policy makers:

Ever since we have been in a position to shape our own policy abroad, we have had to wrestle with the antinomies created by our position as a North American country and as a member of the Commonwealth .... A situation in which our special relationship with the United Kingdom can be identified with our special relationships with other countries in western Europe and in which the United States will be providing a firm basis ... seems to me such a providential solution for so many of our problems that ... we should go to great lengths and even incur considerable risks in order to ... ensure our proper place in this new partnership. [18]

Such arguments could not easily overcome a strong reluctance on King's part to make new commitments. He had to be convinced that an American unilateral declaration was an unacceptable

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16. King diaries, 19 March, 1948.

17. MG26 J4 v.441, Wrong to Pearson, 7 April 1948.

18. quoted in Reid, Time of fear and hope, p.132. Robertson to DEA 21 April 1948.

alternative to a treaty and that Canadians should try to persuade the Americans themselves of this. Pearson suggested that it may be thought in the United States that a Presidential guarantee "will acquire the validity and authority in its field that the Monroe Doctrine, based also solely on a Presidential statement, has acquired in its field. It is also hoped that if a declaration were made, it could be supplemented by one from Canada, though why we, any more than Brazil, Argentina or Australia should give such a guarantee is not clear." [19] Left on his own, King probably would have considered a unilateral guarantee by the Americans as very attractive, relieving Canada of making any commitments herself. He had, however to contend with strong pressure from the Department of External Affairs for a treaty.

Events at the end of June demonstrated just how weak was Cabinet's belief in the need to stand with the United States and the Brussels powers in the defence of western Europe. The Prime Minister was rather surprised to find that the Minister of National Defence did not advocate sending the Royal Canadian Air Force to join the Berlin airlift:

I had expected Claxton, in the light of the advertising he is giving Canada's armed services ... [to] immediately say something to the effect that they were ready to supply a certain number of planes with crew, etc. ... Instead of that, to my amazement, he took the opposite view. ... He thought the business

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19. MG32 B5 v.3, memo. for the PM from Pearson, 12 April, 1948.

was much too dangerous.

Others in Cabinet agreed with Claxton. St Laurent thought that: "the United States might wish us to supply them and we would have to consider this." King thought that here again "I detected a note which is characteristic of Pearson with his close association with the United States." The Prime Minister believed that Cabinet had seen for the first time "that I had been wise in the fight that I had been making right along against getting too quickly and easily and unnecessarily drawn into situations in all parts of the world which we should be extremely careful about assuming." [20]

The Prime Minister's attitude did not sit well with Pearson who believed that "the trial of strength that is now going on in Berlin is of crucial importance." His memorandum to St Laurent argued for Canadian participation in the airlift: "we may be making our contribution to a successful stand against the Russians, and, therefore, eventually to a solution to our present international difficulties." [21] A Canadian contribution was favoured by all the senior members of the Department of External Affairs. [22]

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20. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King record, 4, p.191-2. 30 June 1948.

21. Eayrs, In defence of Canada, 4, p.41-44.

22. Granatstein, A man of influence, p.288.

Despite all of the talk about collective security, when a crisis actually arose, traditional fears about overseas commitments returned. The Cabinet was not prepared to make any sort of contribution even in the face of considerable domestic criticism. [23] This certainly must have come as a shock to the internationalists at External Affairs.

#### Economic Considerations

Earlier in the spring of 1948, King successfully challenged the internationalist aims of the Department of Finance. The economists, backed by the Department of external affairs advocated free trade. This policy was judged by King to be politically impossible. Interest in free trade was channeled into the security discussions, forming the basis for Canadian interest in the non-military provisions in the North Atlantic Treaty.

Soon after the secret talks on an Atlantic pact began in Washington, King began to have serious doubts about the political prospects of a free trade deal:

... had a talk of some length with Abbott about trade

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23. ibid, p.193.

negotiations with the U.S. Told him to read with care what LIFE [magazine] has on a suggested commercial union. I was relieved to hear him make clear that what is being criticized and what we had agreed to in our previous talks was not any immediate free trade but trade so arranged as to make possible the gradual integration of our systems ....[24]

King was aware that the Canadian press had displayed almost unanimous opposition to the customs union proposed in the 15 March edition of LIFE. [25]

King expressed his doubts more clearly to St Laurent, Howe, Clarke, McKinnon, and Deutsch on 22 March:

The cry would be raised at once that it was political union that we were after. ... the Tories would say that this is Mr. King's toy. He has always wanted annexation to the States.

An indirect approach using the alliance proposals would wiser:

... I felt that trade proposals might be made to fit as it were into the larger Atlantic Pact. That if, for example, the Atlantic Security Pact were agreed upon and were brought before Parliament and be passed as it certainly would be, we might immediately follow thereafter with trade as being something which ... helped to further the object of the Pact...". [26]

King thought it might even lead to the "United States and the United Kingdom coming in more in the way of greater freedom of trade."

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24. King diaries, 16 March 1948.

25. Creighton, The forked road, p.155.

26. King diaries, 22 March 1948.



The economists were apparently "strongly taken with the idea" and there was a suggestion that the Americans might already be considering combining the trade and security matters.[27] Canadian interest in the North Atlantic Treaty's non-military provisions can be traced back to this suggestion from King.[28]

Channelling the movement towards free-trade into the security talks provided the Prime Minister with the opportunity to assess the political prospects of such an arrangement. King doubted if Ilsley, the Minister of Justice or Gardiner, the Minister of Agriculture would support free trade. Ilsley was devoted to British connections and Gardiner needed the United Kingdom market to satisfy the prairie farmers.[29] St Laurent agreed that the proposal to complete a trade deal before summer was hardly likely to be feasible but that it might be developed before the August National Liberal Convention and made a plank in the platform .[30]

The proponents of free trade were not easily dissuaded. Before

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27. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King record, 4, p.264.

28. Granatstein has suggested that Norman Robertson had the original idea that led to Article 2 of the Treaty(see appendix), Granatstein, A man of influence, p.237. This view appears to be incorrect since Robertson made no suggestion to combine trade and security matters until late in April. Reid, Time of fear and hope, p.132.

29. Cuff and Granatstein, "The rise and fall of Canadian-American free trade", p.464.

30. King diaries, 25 March 1948.

King departed on a trip to Williamsburg to meet President Truman, Pearson made one more attempt to change the Prime Minister's attitude. King was not about to rush the trade matter: "...it was decided that the United States officials should be asked to postpone their visit to Ottawa, as the Canadian Government did not wish to pursue the question further for the time being." [31]

Pearson was undoubtedly aware, as John Deutsch was that "the price of a customs union with the U.S. is the loss of political independence in the sense that we would no longer be in effective control of our national policies." Deutsch thought that things had "changed since the reciprocity campaign of 1911,... Then reciprocity simply broadened the area of trade.... Now we would inherit a vast structure of American government policy." The internationalists recognised that there was a price to be paid for what they considered a better ordering of state relations. That price was a loss of independence. A customs union, according to Deutsch, "may be a fine thing.... But let us not blink the price." [32]

The public reaction to the customs union proposed in LIFE that public perceptions had in fact changed very little since 1911. Commonwealth ties continued to be cherished and American

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31. MG26 J4 v.441, Pearson to Wrong, 31 March 1948.

32. Cuff and Granatstein, American dollars, Canadian prosperity, p.67-8.

domination feared. The civil service was relatively united in its internationalist aims, and its main opponents were to be found among the older politicians. Deutsch considered those who resisted free trade to be motivated by a perverse sense of nationalism which now expresses itself by hating the U.S. and trying to kick it in the teeth." Deutsch himself was regarded by some "as a poor dupe for the Americans." [33] Internationalism in trade matters at least, was incompatible with Canadian nationalism and emotional attachment to Britain. Some Canadians hoped that internationalist aims could be pursued through a regional pact which in some ways strengthened ties with the United Kingdom.

King had channelled support for free trade into the proposed Atlantic pact and apparently was willing to use a trade agreement to interest the Americans in a broader alliance. As long as free trade was a possibility, the Americans would find it easier to keep the Canadians in mind while determining their economic policy. The Americans in the State Department were disappointed that King was hindering progress on free trade. Marshall, Lovett and Harriman wanted "very much to go ahead on the original timetable", but recognised the force of Canadian reasons for our delaying our decision". [34]

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33. ibid, p.248.

34. MG26 J4 v.441, Wrong to Pearson, 3 April, 1948.

The proponents of free trade faced the problem that security matters were proceeding too slowly for the two to be effectively combined. Despite King's orders to the contrary, a free trade deal independent of an Atlantic treaty was kept alive until the Prime Minister heard through Wrong and Reid that C.D. Howe the American born Minister of Trade and Commerce, had been discussing the matter with State Department officials. According to the American record, Howe stated that the "Prime Minister would be retiring in August and there would be an election in the Spring of 1949. The procedure would be to put a free trade plank in the party platform."<sup>[35]</sup> Pearson, apparently, was delighted with Wrong's report of the talk and he sent Howe's remarks on to King with the comment that he found them "very satisfactory".<sup>[36]</sup> The Prime Minister was greatly offended by what he learned and sought to put an end to the matter by indicating that whether he was in office or out, he would openly oppose his own party over free trade.

For a time, no firm commitments to either trade or security arrangements were made, but this policy of equivocation could not go on forever. The Americans were informed that there was little possibility of a trade deal in the immediate future. The initial American support for the inclusion in the Atlantic Treaty of an

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35. FRUS, 1948, 9, p.410-11.

36. Bothwell, C.D. Howe, p.220.

article referring to the need for economic co-operation was undoubtedly connected to their desire to conclude a trade deal. As that prospect receded, so did American interest in what became Article 2 (see appendix). The senior members of the Departments of Finance and External Affairs were proponents of free trade. The speeches of St Laurent and Pearson which shaped public expectations commonly dealt with the need for economic co-operation. By the final stages of the negotiations, the St Laurent and Pearson were obliged, in the interests of gaining domestic political support for the Treaty, to work extremely hard to ensure that Article 2 was not eliminated.

#### Domestic Political Considerations

During King's Premiership, no firm commitments to any policy were made before the domestic political situation had been carefully assessed. Free trade and the North Atlantic Treaty were no exceptions. Truman's broadcast of 17 March, declaring American support for the Brussels Treaty provided an opportunity for the Prime Minister to gauge the attitude of his own party towards the latter. At the end of April the reaction of the House of Commons as well as the press were carefully considered after a Parliamentary debate on foreign policy. The reaction of the Cabinet to the crisis in Berlin at the end of June was perhaps a more accurate indicator of true feelings towards overseas military commitments. The crisis revealed that, despite the internationalist leanings of the Minister and Department of

External Affairs, the attitude of Cabinet as a whole had changed very little since the summer of 1939.

Mackenzie King considered the 17 of March to be a turning point, both in Canadian policy and in the West's relations with the Soviet Union - "a memorable day in the World's history" was the comment in his diary. After gathering to to hear Truman's radio broadcast of that day, the Liberal Party caucus discussed the situation. To get "a consensus of opinion of the Cabinet" King inquired whether Canada might not declare, as the President had, support for western Europe. The political difficulties of appearing to follow an American line too closely were clearly on the mind of the Minister of Agriculture who "thought that in any statement we issued it would be better to line up with the English rather than the United States." The best thing, King felt, would be to take Bevin's statement of January (urging unity among western nations) and "show how the Brussels agreement had grown out of the Bevin plan, and that our attitude would be to help implement the purposes of the Bevin plan."

This was immediately agreed to by King who thought that "the moment had come to tell the Cabinet of the communications received from Attlee" which had invited Canada to join in discussions leading to an Atlantic pact. King informed Cabinet that Canada was being asked to "join a regional security pact of which the United Kingdom, the United States and ourselves would be the principle persons." There was "agreement on the part of

all". King brought up the matter three or four times to ensure that "there was no dissenting voice". The Prime Minister requested Pearson and Heeney to prepare a statement to be delivered in the House. The influence of Pearson's own internationalism was perhaps too evident for King's liking - "Much less clear type of statement than I would like to have made. ... I just had to take what had been prepared as it was."  
[37]

In the House King announced that the Brussels Treaty was "the partial realization of the idea of collective security ... which may be followed by other similar steps until there is built up an association of all free states ..."[38] Through his speech, he believed that "without disclosing anything ahead", he had more or less prepared that House as he had the Cabinet "for a Security Pact and, to all intents and purposes, secure[d] their tacit assent to Canada becoming a party thereto." [39] The significance of the decision to join the security talks in Washington was not lost on King:

It really was if the hand of providence itself had guided the whole affair in a manner that saved me what would have been a moment in my life almost as difficult as at the time of Munich - or when the war came on and

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37. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King record, 4, p.170-74.

38. Soward, Canadian External Policy, p.84.

39. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King Record, 4, p.173. 17 March 1948.

the beginning of the invasion of Poland ....

King thought that 17 March 1948 was "a day that had its place in History. It is really the demarcation line between past efforts to adjust difficulties with the U.S.S.R. by conciliation and the beginning of settlement by force".[40]

If public resistance to military commitments were to be overcome, great care would have to be taken to avoid stirring up controversy. Pearson had suggested that Quebec or Ottawa might be chosen as the site for negotiations leading to an Atlantic pact. King felt that

... St Laurent and I had made a mistake in even countenancing the idea. ... the real reason was that it would lead to discussion in Quebec, throughout Canada generally, of such questions as compulsory service, focussing in addition on immediate prospects of war, uncertainty of affairs, etc. ... There is a danger of having Pearson take too sudden a lead in any matters of the kind. ... He likes keeping Canada at the head of everything,.... He does not see at all what is involved in the way of getting Parliament to provide what would be necessary in the way of forces money, etc.[41]

The public and Parliamentary reaction to St Laurent's speech in the House of Commons on April 29 was of great interest to policy makers in Ottawa.[42] The Minister responsible for External Affairs proposed "that Canada should play her full part ... with

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40. ibid, p.175.

41. King diaries, 19 March 1948.

42. Reid, Time of Fear and Hope, p.106.



the other free states in any security arrangements which may be worked out under Article 51 or 52 of the Charter." [43] The Department of External Affairs reported that in the House of Commons, "there was almost unanimous acceptance of his point of view on Communism and the United Nations." It continued that "Editorially, the Canadian newspapers showed considerable interest in the Minister's statement. There were a number of criticisms, the most vigorous of which was that expressed by some Quebec papers that the Government was leading the country towards war." On the whole, however, "the general tone of editorial opinion was that the speech was a heroic event and several writers expressed the view that for the first time a clear foreign policy had emerged." [44] The underlining was King's, and was probably a good indication that his support for a treaty was not nearly so firm as External Affairs would have liked. A clear foreign policy had never emerged under King's direction precisely because of the risks such an action entailed to his support among one of the two language groups.

While the North Atlantic Treaty was under discussion, the Department of External Affairs was responsible for a long series of speeches on collective security intended in part to "educate" the Canadian people. From the middle of March to the middle of

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43. House of Commons Debates, 1948, v .4, p.3449-50.

44. MG26 J4 v.274, Summary analysis prepared by DEA, 29 April 1948.

June 1948, St Laurent was the principle spokesman - he gave five public speeches and two others in the House of Commons. At the end of this period he agreed that what he had been doing could justly be described as "a crusade by Canada for the completion of a Western Union or a North Atlantic regional pact."<sup>[45]</sup> St Laurent was aware that his activity did not suit King's more passive style. On 19 June 1948, St Laurent declared that "there might be some great value in having consummated a regional pact [in which the] western European democracies, the United Kingdom, the United States and ourselves agreed to stand together, to pool for defence purposes our respective potentials".<sup>[46]</sup> This statement went further than any issued by the the British or Americans <sup>[47]</sup> and immediately after presenting it in the House, he asked Reid, "I wonder how it will go down." Reid replied "It will go down very well in the country." St Laurent said, "I wasn't thinking of the country, I was thinking of Laurier House [King's residence in Ottawa]."<sup>[48]</sup> As events at the end of June were to demonstrate, it was not only King's attitude that was uncertain.

When Cabinet faced the decision of whether or not to

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45. Reid, Time of fear and hope, p.77.

46. Reid, Time of fear and hope, p.78.

47. ibid.

48. ibid.

participate in the Berlin airlift, it became clear that the Department of External Affairs was not firmly supported in its policies. St Laurent was the only Minister to believe that Canada might have to consider a request (which was never formally made by Bevin but which was reported in the press) to supply air transport. The Prime Minister advised St Laurent that Cabinet should be kept in closer touch with external policy:

I know that Pearson, for many reasons perhaps equally [with St Laurent] dislikes having the Cabinet as a whole have too much of a say, discuss foreign affairs more than is necessary. ... This [advising that Canada send air transport] is right along the lines that External Affairs has been taking for some time past, to get us into every international situation and as much in the front as possible. Not realizing what the appalling possibilities are.[49]

As in 1939 the belief was that in the event of war in Europe, Canadians would wish to participate. Until then Cabinet was most reluctant to act. One of the Ministers from Quebec said that "if war came, he assumed we would have to go into it; otherwise Communism." His thoughts "seemed to be centring on Quebec being ready for a fight against Communism." The Cabinet agreed that in the event of a war between Russia and the three great powers, "Canada would wish to come in instantly." According to King, the Cabinet was "pretty chary about how far they were prepared to go at this time." [50]

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49. King diaries, 30 June 1948.

50. ibid.

Domestic political conditions in March 1948 led King to believe that participation in an Atlantic pact would be generally well received within Canada. He had, however, been careful to make no firm commitments. Certainly, there were advantages to be gained from an arrangement that brought the United States and the United Kingdom together in trade and defence matters. The response to the Berlin crisis indicated that despite the public statements of policy issued by the Department of External Affairs, the Cabinet was not yet ready to become directly involved in a situation where the threat of war was real and immediate.

Canadian policy in the spring of 1948 was influenced by various considerations. The internationalist sentiments prevalent within the Departments of Finance and External Affairs contributed to the interest displayed by certain Canadians in the creation of a more effective system of collective security and in the elimination of barriers to international trade. King recognised the political value of keeping interest in security within the framework of the United Nations - public frustration with the performance of the Security Council could be transformed into support for a regional pact. In the event of an unfavourable reaction from some Canadians to a pact, the disappointment of others could be offset by continued Canadian presence in the General Assembly. In a similar way, the energies of the

proponents (both inside and outside Canada) of free trade were channeled into the security discussions - thus alleviating some of the political difficulties associated with advancing or halting the development of freer trade. The utility of an Atlantic pact in solving some of Canada's trade and defence relations problems was used as an argument to persuade both King and the Americans that a multilateral treaty was the only acceptable basis for a the defence of the north Atlantic area. Despite a belief that if war came, the country was ready to fight against a Communist threat in Europe, the Cabinet was not yet ready to volunteer Canadian support in a situation where there was an immediate risk of war. Old fears about overseas military commitments, and the associated domestic controversy, had not disappeared. There would have to be a further shift in attitude on the part of Cabinet (or a change in leadership) before Canada would join the North Atlantic Treaty.

## Chapter 4

1 July - 15 November 1948

Canadian external policy entered a new phase late in the summer of 1948. In Ottawa during August the National Liberal Convention chose Louis St Laurent as the successor to King. The old Prime Minister was not immediately replaced, however. A Commonwealth Conference was due to take place in October and to avoid a negative reaction in French Canada it was agreed that St Laurent should not travel to London so soon after becoming Prime Minister. Mackenzie King remained as the official head of government until 15 November but his influence over policy was gradually reduced. One of the most important Cabinet decisions concerning the North Atlantic Treaty during was made while he was away in Europe. On 6 October Pearson, who had only recently become Minister responsible for External Affairs, sought and received Cabinet approval for Canada to proceed with negotiations leading to an Atlantic pact. Unlike King, St Laurent and Pearson both strongly favoured a pact and were not receptive to any dissenting opinion in Cabinet.

Through the Vandenberg resolution the Senate had given tacit assent to American participation in further discussions leading to new security arrangements. Talks resumed in Washington

lasting from 5 to 9 July at which point a working group was left to prepare a draft proposal that emerged on 9 September. As an influential member of the "working committee" in Washington, Pearson, along with the British representative Sir Oliver Franks, worked towards developing the idea of an Atlantic pact to meet the needs of the North Americans and the Europeans.[1] It was on the basis of this 9 September paper that the participating nations decided whether or not to proceed with the development of an Atlantic pact. The Canadian Cabinet gave its approval at the beginning of October. In a secret message delivered on 29 October the State Department was informed that the Brussels Powers were ready to join further negotiations. France and the Benelux countries gave their assent only after considerable efforts by Bevin. They were concerned with the immediate provision of practical military assistance and were thinking in terms of accession by the United States to the Brussels Treaty. The Americans were still wedded to the concept of a united Europe and for a time they advocated a "two pillar" arrangement with the North Americans on one side and the Europeans on the other. The position of the United States remained unclear, however, until after the November Presidential election. Truman's re-election cleared the way for talks leading to an Atlantic pact to resume in December.

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1. Bullock, Bevin, p.582.

### Internationalist Ideals

The reaction of Cabinet at the end of June to the Berlin crisis was a direct challenge to the internationalist aims of the Department of External Affairs. St Laurent, Pearson, and Reid continued to work towards an Atlantic pact primarily because of their belief that Canada should play her part in an effective system of collective security. A unilateral American guarantee of European defence or a "two-pillar" arrangement were both unacceptable from this perspective. Pearson's contribution to the Washington working group was certainly shaped by internationalist aims. The position of St Laurent as acting Prime Minister and Pearson as Minister for External Affairs ensured that these aims predominated over isolationist fears in the Cabinet decision recommending entry into the North Atlantic Treaty.

In July there were signs that members of the State Department were being influenced by internationalist ideals and that they were interested in joining the sort of Atlantic grouping that Pearson and Reid favoured. The Vandenberg resolution was an indication that the Americans were considering the development of a treaty closely linked to the United Nations and that they might



proceed on the basis of Congressional discontent with the performance of the Security Council. Policy makers in the State Department were attracted by the idea of creating new federations, particularly in the European context. George Kennan was anxious that an Atlantic grouping should not close the door on a "real unification of Europe and the development of a European idea."<sup>[2]</sup> British and Canadian insistence on an Atlantic grouping may have led some members of the State Department to be swayed by arguments for federation intended for European consumption. On 7 July 1948 Pearson reported:

Mr. Lovett keeps referring to a "North Atlantic system" and to the fact that arrangements agreed upon should be positive and not merely negative; that co-operation should be wider than merely military co-operation and should be closely related to the principles and purposes of the United Nations.<sup>[3]</sup>

The British were much less interested than the Canadians in internationalist aims. Ernest Bevin was primarily seeking a firm American commitment to European defence while at the same time trying to deflect attempts to unite Europe.

The "two-pillar" or "dumb-bell" arrangement was an attempt by the Americans to keep the idea of a "United States of Europe" alive within the framework of an Atlantic pact. A dumb-bell arrangement had few attractions for Canada when she was hoping to

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2. Bullock, Bevin, p.600 and FRUS1948,3,p.177.

3. MG26 J4 v.441, Pearson to Reid, WA-1968, 7 July 1948.

bring her defence and economic ties with Britain and the United States together in a partnership of equals. In July, in the British view, the Americans were still thinking in terms of a "third great power in the shape of a united Europe" and of an Atlantic Pact "more as a bridge between the United States/Canadian block and the European block than as an independent security system." The British negotiators were evidently pleased to have help in their opposition to this American scheme:

"The Canadians, and in particular Pearson, have been most helpful and constructive throughout. They have gone out of their way to do what they could to direct the discussions to the consideration of a new Atlantic arrangement rather than an extension of the Brussels treaty, and they have made it plain that, so far as they were concerned, the latter had no attractions." [4]

An extension of the Brussels treaty was much more difficult to present to the Canadian public; it being viewed as a simple military alliance. It would be easier to join a pact designed from the start as a means of defending the whole of the north Atlantic area. The Canadian internationalists hoped for much more than a simple military alliance.

In September, the Americans were seeking to restrict participation in the Pact "to those western European countries which accepted the obligations of the Brussels Treaty". The reasons were not put forward at the meetings but were explained

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4. PRO, F0800/453/def/48/40 ,13 July 1948.

privately to Wrong who reported that the State Department

"... consider that it would increase the influence of the United States in promoting a closer relationship among the western European countries leading to the establishment of a European federation".[5]

Under Bevin's leadership, Britain stood firmly against pressure for European unification, and they were wary of attempts to use a North Atlantic Pact to secure similar aims.

Escott Reid was able to draw upon State department interest in European federation in pursuit of his own internationalist aims. He hoped that the failed institutions of the UN could be replaced through North Atlantic treaty. The Soviet Union, Reid believed, would continue to render the United Nations ineffective - the North Atlantic Community

"will probably, over the next five years, develop organs and agencies and secretaries which will do for its members most of the things which it had intended the U.N. should do."[6]

Some of these organs would, in time, be created, but Reid's proposal to launch them immediately did not find much support even among Canadian policy makers. Hume Wrong did not share Reid's internationalist ideals and, after Pearson left Washington, Reid had great difficulty convincing Wrong to work for more than a military alliance. The British were dubious of

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5. MG31 E46 v.6, Wrong to DEA, 4 Sept.1948.

6. MG31 E46 v.6, memo. for Riddell, 27 Aug.1948.

the value of bodies that might develop supra-national characteristics and which were not of immediate and practical value. Reid would have found a more sympathetic audience with policy makers in France, who were considering preparing public opinion for a break from the idea of national sovereignty through the creation of a European Assembly. Bevin, however, thought that it "was a dangerous thing to launch big ideas and then to disappoint people." [7]

Through his work in preparing a commentary on the 9 September Washington paper, Reid hoped to shape the form of the security arrangements: firstly by having his aims accepted as the basis of Canadian policy and secondly, by altering the course of the next round of negotiations through having his commentary accepted by other nations as the basis of discussion. Even among the Canadian internationalists there was little desire to adopt a policy that could not find support with other nations. Reid had to then argue that the Americans or British would in fact find his proposals useful:

"Is there not a possibility that the United Kingdom might find it useful to have ... an [Atlantic] Assembly established? It might for example, lessen the pressure on the United Kingdom to concur in the establishment of a Western European Parliamentary Assembly." [8]

The British were unlikely to agree to create in an Atlantic

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7. Bullock, Bevin, p.615.

8. MG31 E46 v.6, Reid to Robertson, 11 Nov.1948.

setting that which they opposed in Europe. Referring back to past statements of policy, Reid attempted to argue that the "official attitude of the Canadian government is that the road we are on is, we hope, leading to the establishment of a world organization of the remaining free states." This may have been true in 1947 or early in 1948 when the creation of an organisation parallel to the UN was under more serious consideration. King certainly never agreed to such a policy and St Laurent was not about to take the lead in such a development.

The internationalist aims of St Laurent, Pearson, and Reid underlay the Canadian insistence that security arrangements take the form of a multilateral treaty based on the north Atlantic region. King probably would have been satisfied with any arrangement in which the United States made a firm commitment and in which Canada was not left alone in either a Commonwealth or North American grouping. A north Atlantic pact was useful in reconciling Canada's defence and economic ties with Britain and the United States but this, in itself, was not sufficiently important to overcome resistance to overseas military commitments. Cabinet's approval of Canadian participation in the North Atlantic Treaty was directly tied to the fact that St Laurent was the acting Prime Minister and was an internationalist himself.

### Defence Considerations

The Berlin crisis raised serious questions for the Canadian proponents of the North Atlantic Treaty. How could Cabinet and the public be convinced to support the Treaty while the government was refusing to contribute to the Berlin airlift? More importantly, how could the Department of External Affairs square its own "crusade" for the Treaty with the attempts by other Cabinet Ministers to defend Canada's refusal to send air transport to Berlin?

The Canadian government had great difficulty defending its attitude towards the Berlin crisis after a press report in Britain claimed that the Dominions had been asked to contribute to the airlift. Canada's High Commissioner in London was immediately informed that it would be "a great embarrassment to us if any requests were made for transport planes." [9] The Canadian press were told, off the record by Brooke Claxton the Minister of Defence, that there were two reasons why no contribution was forthcoming - Canada had no part in the German occupation and "no desire to take part in a situation that might

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9. 30 June 1948, quoted in Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 2, p.415.

10. quoted in Holmes, The shaping of peace, 2, p.103.

easily explode into war." [10] These same arguments could easily be turned against the North Atlantic Treaty. Pearson and Reid were understandably concerned about this. [11] The Canadian position became even more difficult to maintain after the offers of assistance from Australia and South Africa: "The fact that a South African Government which is considered to be so unfriendly to the British connection has made this gesture naturally points up the problem so far as Canada is concerned." [12]

By September, Claxton had reversed his position - he was now prepared to recommend that Royal Canadian Air Force should make a contribution. Even in King's absence, however, the Cabinet declined to make a offer of support. The best public excuse the government could produce was that Canada could make a more effective contribution to relieving the siege of Berlin through her position as a an unbiased member of the Security Council. If King had remained as Prime Minister through into 1949 perhaps a similar argument would have been used in the event that participation in the North Atlantic Treaty was declined.

The problem of the Berlin airlift was complicated by Cabinet's reluctance to allow Canada to contribute as part of a Commonwealth force. The 30 June report in the London Evening Standard that had caused so much controversy was headlined

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11. Eayrs, In defence of Canada, 4, p.45-6.

12. Pearson to Ottawa, ibid, p.48.

"EMPIRE ASKED TO BREAK BERLIN SIEGE". Pearson reported that this had caused "great irritation" in Ottawa.[13] King had once again recalled the Chanak incident of 1922 in which Churchill's ill-considered request of assistance was refused.[14] The storm over Commonwealth ties in the summer of 1948 undoubtedly contributed to St Laurent's decision that he should not travel to October meeting of the Prime Ministers in London: "it would be the worst thing that could happen to him so far as Quebec is concerned..."[15] In French Canada it might be said that relations with Britain were taking precedence over domestic concerns. King was thus to remain in office until after he had travelled to London and to Paris for the third General Assembly of the UN.

The problems associated with resisting demands for increased defence co-operation within the Commonwealth remained real, providing further incentive for entering a pact that included both the United States and United Kingdom. One of the most outspoken critics of the Liberal government's direction of the Canadian war effort was George Drew. He became leader of the Conservatives at the beginning of October 1948. King immediately began to worry that Drew

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13. ibid

14. Stacey, Canada and the age of conflict, 2, p.17.

15. Pickersgill and Forster, Mackenzie King Record, vol.4, 369.



"will centre above all else on a centralized Empire.... There will be raised the old prejudices of race [i.e.language] and religion. If the international situation develops along more dangerous lines, it will be hard to say if something approaching civil strife may not develop in Canada." [16]

A debate in the House of Commons in London caused concern in Ottawa. Both Anthony Eden and Ernest Bevin were apparently

"endorsing the idea of a third force which would balance the forces of the Soviet Union and the United States, and both, therefore - if the report of the debate is accurate - seem to be thinking in terms other than the sort of association between the the United Kingdom and the United States which we desire to see brought about. [17]

On both sides of the Atlantic, old notions about organising the Commonwealth as a unit were slow to die and neither King nor St Laurent was about to encourage their revival.

King was "most anxious to avoid the talks with the other Prime Ministers [in London] being made a substitute for an Imperial Conference to frame policies for the Commonwealth." [18] It was not without cause that the Canadians were apprehensive. A brief prepared by the British Minister of Defence, A.V. Alexander, proposed that:

"The Commonwealth taken as a unit, if, and only if, properly organised to act quickly together is perhaps better placed defensively - because of geographical

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16. Pickersgill and Forster, Mackenzie King Record, 4, p.393, 3 Oct.1948.

17. MG26 J4 v.441, Wrong to Reid, 20 Sept.1948.

18. ibid, King to St Laurent 23 Sept.1948.

dispersal - than either Russia or America."

He hoped "to put formal proposals to this end" before the Prime Ministers' conference in October.[19] It is interesting that Alexander described the United Kingdom as the "connecting pin between European and American co-operation" when many Canadians considered this to be their role. In London, the Commonwealth Relations Office, at least, was aware of the sensitivity of the issue:

" The theme of "intensive Commonwealth planning" must be handled with care in light of the strong susceptibilities of Mr. Mackenzie King [and probably the new South African Government].[20]

Bevin, whose opposition to European federation was based on a desire to maintain an independent British policy, was receptive to the argument presented during King's visit to London that "each nation had a right to have its own foreign policies as well as policies on domestic affairs ...". Bevin's reply was that "the military were hard to convince".[21]

To the British Foreign secretary, King described how he had "succeeded in getting Canada into the war quietly" and he "found

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19. PRO FO800/453 6 July 1948, brief prepared by Alexander for talks with Chifley.

20. PRO FO800/453/def/48/33.

21. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King record, 4, p.396.

22. Pickersgill and Forster, Mackenzie King Record, 4, p.396, 5 Oct.1948.

Bevin most receptive to that point of view." [22] As in the two world wars, an effective Canadian contribution was dependent on the avoidance of domestic controversy. During the 1930's King had refused to commit Canada to any Imperial defence schemes because he believed that such controversy would only weaken the Empire. If war involving Britain broke out in Europe opinion in Canada would be such that the desires of the minority would be ignored in favour of participation. This had been true in 1914 and 1939 and there was little doubt in King's mind that the same held true in 1948. If King had remained as Prime Minister for another year these same arguments might have been used against participation in the North Atlantic Treaty.

#### Economic Considerations

Economic considerations were of much less significance in Canadian policy towards the North Atlantic Treaty after King's opposition to free trade had been made clear. Provisions for economic co-operation had already been introduced into the negotiations. Pearson, a proponent of free trade, was in a position as the leading Canadian at the summer negotiations to ensure that the door remained open for developing trade matters after King's retirement. Pearson's internationalist ideals

coincided with his belief in freer trade. The strength of a federation could be increased through the removal of barriers to multilateral trading. The British, however, were busy resisting pressure for closer economic integration with Europe and were not about to support proposals that entailed the breakdown of the sterling area. Calls for the integration of the north Atlantic economies were not calculated to relieve British anxiety arising from the American failure to understand the seriousness of the United Kingdom's economic difficulties: the demand for economic concessions on a quid quo pro basis; the indifference, often hostility, to the Sterling area; insistence on the elimination of economic discrimination by a given date without regard to circumstances; America's own failure to reduce tariffs or control inflation.[23] In reply to British criticism of the draft Article 2, Wrong pointed out that the Canadian proposals were

not intended solely or even mainly to bring about multilateral action under the agreement, but that its purpose was to give a general blessing to intimate collaboration between any or all of the parties in economic, social and cultural matters.[24]

From Wrong's reasoning, it appears that easing the political difficulties associated with an American trade deal remained a prominent concern. Pearson's interest in trade and in the internationalist ideals led him to lend his name to a memorandum

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23. Bullock, Bevin, 603.

24. MG 31 E46 v.6 Wrong memo. 4 Sept., 1948.

to Cabinet drafted by Reid which proposed that if a movement towards the North Atlantic Community's " political and economic unification can be started this year, no one can forecast the extent of the unity which may exist five, ten or fifteen years from now." [25] Although economic considerations were of decreased importance, they continued to underlie the push by Canada for the inclusion in the treaty of non-military provisions.

#### Domestic Political Considerations

Participation in the North Atlantic treaty entailed a formal commitment to the defence of Europe. Domestic politics was the paramount concern since public acceptance of such an unprecedented act was most uncertain. Military commitments had, in the past, been made by Canada only after the outbreak of war. In those circumstances the strong opposition of a minority was overwhelmed, but in the absence of a clear threat of war the opponents of military entanglements held a potentially decisive position. The Liberals had only a slim majority in the House and were dependent upon back bench support from Quebec. In this

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25. MG31 E46 v.6, Memo to Cabinet, 4 Oct.1948.

situation it is not at all clear that Canada would have agreed to join the North Atlantic treaty, if Louis St Laurent had not been chosen as King's successor in August 1948.

The attitude of the Canadian Cabinet to overseas commitments had changed rather dramatically when the Berlin crisis revealed that there was a clear threat of war in Europe. In July King noted that the "significant thing today has been the appreciation at last by the Cabinet and also by External Affairs that there is a very real possibility of war, and that within the very near future. ... St Laurent and others have repeatedly said that there would be no war, which I told them was a great mistake. Claxton, too, as War Minister has talked in this way. What utter foolishness." [26]

At the Cabinet meeting where the decision was made to inform other governments that Canada was ready to enter a "defensive alliance of the North Atlantic states" [27] St Laurent was present as acting Prime Minister and Pearson as Minister for External Affairs. Pearson recalled that

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26. King diaries, 20 July 1948.

27. MG31 E46 v.6 memo. to Cabinet, 4 October 1948.

"My memorandum was given a close examination ... and vigorous discussion took place since it represented a highly important change in Canadian foreign policy." [28] Just how "vigorous" the discussion was remains uncertain. [29] Cabinet may have been fortified by the press response to recent speeches on the North Atlantic Treaty, and by the knowledge that the chief political parties had indicated their support for the Treaty. [30] One thing is certain: St Laurent and Pearson were much less sympathetic to dissenting opinion in Cabinet than King.

When the old Prime Minister met Pearson at the end of the month, King indicated that he did not agree with the way that public support was being sought for the Treaty. Claxton had given a speech a few days before in which he stated that "the Soviet attitude since the end of the war has driven ... the Western democracies into the same kind of union to preserve the peace as was needed to win the war." [31] King considered this speech to be ill-advised and that "Claxton was really helping to focus Russia's enmity on Canada." The Prime Minister did not like

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28. Munro and Inglis, Mike, 2, p.54.

29. Eayrs, In defence of Canada, 4, p.97.

30. Soward, Canadian external policy, p.91-2.

31. MG32 B5 v.109, "Statements made by the Canadian government on the proposed north atlantic treaty", 29 Oct.1948.

"Canada attempting to assume a position and take on responsibilities greater than those which belong to the U.S. and the U.K., not to speak of other nations." [32]

Under normal circumstances, the CCF would have led opposition to what was described as the "North Atlantic War Pact", but that party had just expelled the communists from within its own ranks and it was not about to follow the directive from Moscow to openly oppose the Pact. Reluctance to support a treaty would have remained with many of the people who ordinarily supported the CCF. Five years after the treaty was signed, Reid recalled that

a treaty that was merely a military alliance ... would have been almost impossible to sell to the C.C.F. or to the non-conformist conscience of the United Church. To get wholehearted support both in the house of Commons and in the country the North Atlantic Treaty had to have a "positive and moral content".... [33]

Support from the French Canadian wing of the liberal Party was equally uncertain. Andre Laurendeau, who was by no means an extremist and whose influence extended to non-nationalist groups in Quebec had written an editorial in Le Devoir recommending neutrality for Canada. Reid received a memorandum from M. Cadieux who pointed out that "nationalist leaders in Quebec are now building up a thesis in favour of our neutrality in case of a war between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A.". He went on to suggest that

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32. Pickersgill and Forster, The Mackenzie King record, 4, p.426.30 Oct.1948.

33. MG31 E46 v.13, interview with Reid, 1954.



"those who are responsible for the formulation of our foreign policy should bear in mind the possibility of serious opposition" to a security pact. Reid agreed with M. Cadieux's recommendation that it "would be wise if some members of the Cabinet might make a public reply to the kind of argument in the editorial". Difficulties in Quebec were apparent to foreign observers as well. One month later, Brooke Claxton was asked by the Australian High Commissioner if the hostile attitude of the French Canadian press threatened serious political difficulty. In reply, the Canadian Minister of Defence noted that the fact that the aggressor was Communist helped to overcome the traditional French Canadian attitude.[34] Distrust in Quebec of military commitments was not easily quelled and warnings continued:

"La propogande de certains journeaux canadiens...critique l'alliance nord-atlantique sous le prétexte que nous nous engageons par cette alliance à entre en guerre, même si notre pays n'est pas menacé." [35]

Before Canada joined the security discussions in March Mackenzie King was most reluctant to adopt anti-communist rhetoric and he was particularly concerned about statements that referred directly to the Soviet Union as a threat. No similar reluctance had been shown at External Affairs however:

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34. MG32 B5 v.109, 15 Nov. 1948, Claxton to Pearson, "Australia and the North Atlantic Security Pact".

35. MG26 L v.47, letter to St Laurent from Ladger Dionne, MP.

"I get increasingly alarmed at the lack of judgement on the part of External Affairs in these matters and am beginning to mistrust St. Laurent's judgement in them. I think he has been carried away with clerical feelings against the Communists which has accused him to lose judgement ...."[36]

As part of an effort to gain the support of the Liberal party for the Atlantic pact, King was willing speak of the danger posed by communism. He announced at the National Liberal Convention that "Communism is the greatest menace of our times, because Communism more than all else, is destructive of Freedom - the freedom of individuals and the freedom of nations".[37]

French Canadian isolationism would be overcome largely on the basis of their antipathy to Communism. The depiction of the treaty as more than a military alliance was also important, but was of greater significance among English-speaking Canadians. That Canada was proposing to join Britain in a treaty was enough to ensure the support of the Commonwealth-minded. Most importantly, public acceptance of the treaty depended upon the European situation being perceived as threatening and Cold War rhetoric became common currency in public pronouncements.

The Canadian Cabinet's reluctance to make overseas military

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36. King Diaries, March 1948.

37. MG32 B5, "Press releases and speeches", 6 Aug., 1948.

commitments was revealed in their reaction to the Berlin crisis. The internationalist aims of St Laurent, Pearson, and Reid were not immediately challenged. Canada was currently engaged in negotiations in Washington, in which Pearson was pressing the United States to join a multilateral treaty around the North Atlantic. By the time of the next important Cabinet decision regarding the North Atlantic treaty St Laurent had been chosen as King's successor and was the acting-Prime Minister. Pearson had made the somewhat startling move from Under-Secretary to Minister for External Affairs. Reid became the acting Under-Secretary. Cabinet was in no position to resist the internationalist aims of these men at the beginning of October. Canada was the first country to declare a readiness to join further discussions leading to the North Atlantic Treaty. Truman's election victory in November 1948 enabled the next round of talks to resume almost immediately.

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## Chapter 5

15 November 1948 to 4 April 1949

Louis St Laurent's succession to Mackenzie King as Prime Minister marked the beginning of an internationalist phase in Canadian policy which lasted through the 1950s. Escott Reid sought to take advantage of the change in leadership by pushing for the adoption of even more ambitious internationalist aims. These aims could only be realised if Canada took the lead and pressed its demands at the "exploratory talks" in Washington, due to resume 10 December 1948. Before any new policy was adopted, the relative importance of various considerations once again had to be examined. Even in King's absence, domestic politics remained a major consideration except that his passive approach was abandoned in favour of an active effort to gain political support for a potentially controversial policy - participation in the North Atlantic Treaty. St Laurent would soon be leading his party in a general election and the Treaty had to be, as much as possible, a political asset.

Agreement with other nations on the form of the security arrangement was expected within a few months. The Canadian negotiating team led by Hume Wrong was instructed to push for the inclusion of the non-military provisions which eventually became Article 2 of the Treaty. When this decision was made substantial opposition from other nations was not expected, but by the end of

January, the United States wished to see Article 2 eliminated. By that time, however, the "general welfare" provisions were considered sufficiently important by Canada to warrant threatening withdrawal from the negotiations unless the draft Article 2 remained in a reasonable form. The Canadian people had been led to expect more than a "mere military alliance" by the public pronouncements issued during the preceding months. The influence of internationalist ideals was significant in those pronouncements, particularly while security arrangements more closely tied to the United Nations were under discussion and while a free trade agreement was still a possibility. In the face of American opposition to Article 2, and in the absence of Mackenzie King, improved trade was once again brought forth as an argument for including a provision for economic co-operation. As it turned out, the Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949 included what Canada considered the minimum requirements for non-military provisions. The Canadian attitude towards Article 2, as her attitude towards other finer points in the Treaty was determined to the greatest degree by the need to mobilise domestic political support for the most essential internationalist aim - the creation of a regional security pact.

#### Internationalist Ideals

King's resignation from his position as Prime Minister provided Reid with a fresh environment in which to pursue his internationalist aims. St Laurent had been much more sympathetic than King to the ideals of the United Nations, but any visions that Reid may have had of immediately securing the support of the old political head of External Affairs must have vanished upon receipt of a memorandum from A.D.P. Heeney who was currently Secretary to Cabinet but by March 1949 had become Under-Secretary for External Affairs. Reid sought to gain, within a very few days, Cabinet approval for a plan that entailed taking the lead at the Washington talks in order to push for a conception of the Treaty more in line with his own internationalist ideals. Heeney advised against rushing ahead: "With regard to the proposed Treaty as a whole, I think that before we become too deeply committed we should pause and take pretty thorough stock of our own position at home."<sup>[1]</sup> St Laurent was not convinced by Reid's argument that "if you have a draft treaty prepared in advance and can get it accepted as the basis of discussion, you are in a strong position."<sup>[2]</sup> The problem was that this position could not be achieved without rushing the task of gaining the support of Cabinet.

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1. MG26 L4 v.224, Heeney to Reid, 17 November 1948.

2. MG 31 E46 v.6, Memo. for the PM from Reid, 15 Nov. 1948.

From the Office of the Prime Minister came the message that: " I think the timetable suggested ... is in too high a gear." [3]

Reid hoped to rally the spiritual forces of the western democracies through the creation of imaginative new institutions; thus the popular perceptions of state relations that saw the merging of sovereignties as leading to greater security could be drawn upon to positive effect in the defence against Communism. In the preceding months Reid had not been restrained in his pursuit of internationalist aims by either St Laurent or Pearson - that task could be left to King. Hume Wrong, who was to head the Canadian team at the next round of talks in Washington, had little use for Reid's ambitious schemes:

The purpose of the negotiation is to tie up the United States with the defence of western Europe,....Your aim seems to be wholly to merge the Western Union movement in a North Atlantic Union, and this will not go down here.[4]

St Laurent was concerned, much more than was Reid, with the task of gaining re-election which had to be weighed against internationalist ideals. The only senior policy maker to support Reid was Pearson. Without the support of the newly appointed Minister for External Affairs, it is likely that Canada would have taken an even more passive role in the remaining

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3. MG26 L v.224, hand written memo. from PMO 16 of 17 November 1948.

4. quoted in Eayrs, In defence of Canada, 4, p. 102.



negotiations and accepted a treaty without strong non-military provisions.

St Laurent's own statements were pointed to as proof that Reid and the new Prime Minister were in essential agreement:

The draft emphasises at various points your thesis that the proposed North Atlantic Alliance must be an outward and visible sign that the North Atlantic Nations are bound together not merely by their common opposition to Communist Totalitarianism but by a common belief in the virtues of our western civilization...  
[5]

St Laurent's concern was mobilising political support for the Treaty and he was not about to be constrained by past statements on external policy.

Reid's proposals were subject to criticism even from Pearson. Despite his doubts, the Minister for External Affairs remained the most important supporter of Reid's internationalist aims. Pearson was generally supportive of Reid's approach over Wrong's (the leader of the Canadian team in the final phase of the negotiations who sought little more than a military alliance).  
[6] Reid was eventually successful in gaining Cabinet approval for his commentary setting out Canada's position in the forthcoming negotiations. His influence was reflected throughout the commentary, but his most significant achievements were those

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5. MG31 E46 v.6, memo. for the PM from Reid 15 November 1948.

6. G.A.H. Pearson, "Canada and the beginnings of NATO", p.25.

points that challenged Wrong's view that "We are making an alliance here and not a federation". [7] Cabinet agreed that "In order to emphasize to positive and moral content of the treaty, it should include provisions for consultation, co-operation and common action in the economic field ...".As well, "the preamble should set forth ... the belief of the signatories in the values and virtues of their common civilization...."[8]

Under St Laurent's direction, securing the support of Cabinet took precedence over the more ambitious internationalist aims advocated by Reid. Other nations were left to lead the development of the treaty. Canada did exert itself in ensuring that the Treaty contained non-military provisions - Pearson's own internationalist ideals and the realization that the public did expect more than a mere military alliance had tipped the balance in favour of Reid.

#### Defence Considerations

Defence considerations also predominated over some of Reid's internationalist aims and shaped the Canadian attitude towards

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7. G.A.H. Pearson, "Canada and the beginnings of NATO ", p.24.

8. MG31 E46 v.6, memo. to Cabinet, 1 Dec. 1948.

the wording of the pledge and membership in the Treaty. Hume Wrong and A.D.P. Heeney thought that Canada should not be distracted by non-military aspects of the Treaty:

If we press for more than a North Atlantic Alliance the negotiations may be long and protracted, the other countries may not want to go as far as we and we may prejudice the attainment of what is really necessary. Therefore, I think we should stick to the last of a military alliance only. [9]

That Reid's proposals were not defeated by this argument was due largely to the fact that there were also domestic political considerations involved - a purely military arrangement was bound to encounter substantial opposition.

Canadian opposition to attempts by the United States to water down the Treaty's pledge of mutual assistance was based primarily upon the consideration that a strong pledge was necessary to deter Soviet aggression. A memorandum to Cabinet argued that the purposes of the Treaty could not be "realised unless both the Soviet Union and the Western European nations are convinced that any attack ... would immediately bring the overwhelming economic and military power of the United States and the other signatories into the struggle".[10] Defence had possibly become a more significant consideration since King's departure since he certainly would not have supported an arrangement that appeared

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9. MG26 1 v.224, Reid to Pearson, 25 Nov. 1948.

10. DEA prints and rejects, R14, 16 Feb. 1949.

to commit the country automatically. The inclusion of Portugal in the Treaty was accepted for her strategic importance against the hope that the North Atlantic Alliance would be a grouping based on high democratic ideals. Domestic politics might still be viewed as the dominant underlying concern if a strong pledge and strategically sound alliance was sought in order to reduce the likelihood of war and the associated domestic upheaval.

#### Economic Considerations

Arguments based on economic considerations were used by some Canadian policy makers to advocate the inclusion of provisions in the Treaty for economic co-operation. Other Canadians used similarly based arguments to oppose such provisions. Opponents pointed out that Canada might be asked to devote a greater proportion of her wealth to the common cause than she was prepared to accept. Proponents once again pointed to the possibility of using the Treaty to resolve some of the country's trade relations problems - King's resignation reopened the possibility of a new trade agreement with the United States.

Economic arguments were turned against Reid's proposals for including non-military provisions in the treaty by Heeney:

It may turn out that we will be substantial

contributors to the North Atlantic pool because of our position and resources, but we should not take too leading a part in negotiations until we have more definite indications of what our treaty obligations are to be in men, money and materials. There is, in my view, the real danger that we may be open to the charge of speaking loudly and carrying a pretty small twig.[11]

Heeney's comment on Reid's proposals for agencies designed to increase economic co-operation was "We are co-operating pretty well anyway." [12] St Laurent was "doubtful of general propositions of which the development is hard to foresee". [13]

Despite these doubts and criticisms, Reid's aims prevailed - the non-military provisions were essential if the Treaty were to find the necessary political support in Canada. Problems arose after Dean Acheson became Secretary of State in January 1949. There had recently been problems in Congress with the "general welfare" provisions in the Rio Treaty. Acheson did not want a repetition of similar problems and neither did Tom Connolly or Arthur Vandenberg, the leaders of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The strong opposition of the latter two was made clear to Acheson in meetings on 3 and 5 February. [14] The pursuit trade matters through the treaty was once again brought forward as an

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11. quoted in Reid, Time of fear and hope, p.246. DEA File 283s, pt4, 20 Nov.1948.

12. MG26 L v.224 25 Nov.1948.

13. MG32 B5 v.112,1 Dec.1948.

14. Eayrs, In defence of Canada, 4, p.119.

argument for Canada insisting on the retention of the non-military provisions - this time by Pearson. He was still thinking of a free trade deal with the United States and advised St Laurent, in preparation for a meeting between the Canadian Prime Minister and President Truman, that "it would be very useful if you could get his [the President's] reaction to the general proposition of removing all possible barriers to trade".[15] If he were still in a position to influence policy, King would undoubtedly have been enraged by Pearson's proposition. One of the main purposes of the meeting with Truman was to put forth the Canadian arguments for the non-military provisions that were contained in the draft Article 2.

The Canadians believed that the discussions with the President had been most satisfactory: "The President cordially agreed with the remark by the Prime Minister that it would be in the interests of the two countries that trade should be as free from restriction as possible." [16] As part of the effort to reverse the American attitude towards Article 2, a memorandum was left with the State Department setting out the Canadian economic and domestic political considerations. It also noted the assurances of support that Canada had secured from the British, French and Dutch (these had been gathered in haste after American

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15. DEA prints and rejects, Pearson to Wrong, 9 Feb. 1949.

16. MG26 L v. 235, 12 Feb. 1949, Canadian record of the conversation between PM and President.

opposition became apparent.)

The Americans were not easily persuaded and from Acheson's account on the discussions with the President, Pearson concluded that "I think that we will find that Mr. Truman's amiable offers of assistance and co-operation may be somewhat difficult to implement". Agreement on the inclusion of Article 2 was eventually reached, although in a form weaker than had been hoped. The other nations were persuaded by arguments based on Canadian economic and, much more importantly, domestic political considerations.

#### Domestic Political Considerations

Ensuring that the Treaty would be a political asset had become the dominant concern in the last months of negotiations. Reid sought to create a treaty that had wide popular appeal, but his plan entailed rushing the task of gaining Cabinet approval for a course of action that would place Canada in the forefront of a most important international endeavour. Hume Wrong, Norman Robertson, and A.D.P. Heeney all favoured a much more conservative approach, avoiding difficulties as long as the primary aim of creating a military alliance was achieved. Under the direction of St Laurent and Pearson, neither extreme was

adopted. A purely military arrangement was politically unacceptable. Leading a development that would multiply Canada's external commitments was equally unattractive. In general, Canadian policy makers were going to be satisfied with a multilateral treaty that included and a strong pledge of mutual assistance. Domestic political considerations led Canada to challenge the opposition of other nations on the issues of the Treaty's membership, its scope, its duration and most importantly its non-military provisions.

In a January discussion among St Laurent, Pearson, and Wrong three points had struck the Prime Minister as being important for the public acceptance of the Treaty in Canada. First, the areas specifically covered "should not include any colonial territory"; second, the duration of the Treaty should be only twelve years - while it was directed towards the Soviet Union, "it would be politically easy to defend Canadian participation" but the world could change; third, a reference to constitutional process "would be of some value in defending the Treaty in Canada". Its introduction, however, could be left to the United States.[17]

With regard to the first point, Pearson had noted that

The Prime Minister's main concern was about possible political difficulties in Canada if French North Africa were included in the Treaty, and in particular French North Africa. *Algeria.*

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17. MG31 E46 v.6, 8 Jan. 1949.



He thought that this would give rise later on to difficult issues should an independence movement develop strongly among the inhabitants on Morocco, Algeria, or Tunis.[18]

The inclusion of Italy may have been considered a problem for two reasons: it was difficult to conceive of Italy as a north Atlantic nation and she had only recently been an enemy belligerent and a theatre of war for Canadian soldiers.[19] Offering membership to Portugal was opposed on the grounds that her regime was incompatible with the ideals expressed in the Treaty and thus a obstacle to domestic political support. In the end, Canada retreated from her stance on membership and scope. The French insisted that their north African Departments be included. St Laurent noted that "Algeria was not a matter of great importance to the main purposes of the Treaty, but France was essential." [20] At the insistance of others, Canada conceded that Portugal should<sup>be</sup> included for strategic reasons. As for the duration of the Treaty, a provision allowing for a review at the end of ten years" had been introduced as a result of representations of the Canadian government." [21]

The domestic political arguments for playing a leading role in the negotiations and pushing for the inclusion of non-military

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18. MG31 E46 v.6.

19. Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, 4, p.115.

20. Munro and Inglis, Mike, 2, p.55.

21. DEA Prints and rejects, 10 March 1949.

provisions had been clearly laid out by Escott Reid in November while the Canadian attitude was being reassessed. Heeney had turned some of these arguments against Reid:

I feel we should not take too leading a part in negotiations ... unless we have thought out in advance what our obligations might be, ... and what the reaction of Canadians are going to be after hearing their government plump for the treaty and then discover that we might be unable to fulfill our obligations.[22]

In response to Reid's arguments, St Laurent doubted "very much whether the Canadian people have much of a conception of the implications of this treaty".[23] Reid proposed that Canada could point to her own domestic political considerations in the negotiations with other nations and in so doing, increase her bargaining power:

My suggestion is that the present domestic political situation in Canada and the United States [with isolationism in retreat] perhaps make it possible for us to exert a greater influence on the forthcoming Washington discussions than we could normally expect.[24]

St Laurent's rather harsh comment was: "prove it".[25] Reid's claim that St Laurent's own public statements demonstrated that Canada had already committed herself to create much more than a military alliance, was refuted by Heeney:

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22. MG26 L v.224,c17 Nov. 1948.

23. ibid, Heeney to Reid,c17 Nov.1948.

24. MG31 E46 v.6, memo. for the PM from Reid,15 Nov. 1948.

25. ibid,memo. for Pickersgill,PMO,c17 Nov.1948.

Statements made by the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet give a fairly clear indication of what the government desires. In a sense they are statements of policy. They are too a means of educating the Canadian people. Final policy of course depends upon a decision of the whole Cabinet.

[26]

Despite the criticisms levelled at Reid, his belief that Canadians expected more than a mere military alliance was accepted, although not to the extent necessary to warrant taking the lead in multiplying Canada's commitments to the new Treaty. Reid had been able to build a relatively strong case for himself by pointing to public attitudes:

Canadian newspapermen like George Ferguson [editor of the Montreal Star] here recently in talking to me, urged how essential it is that the document signed at the end of the conference on the North Atlantic Treaty should make references to, and if possible establish immediately, organs similar to those already established by the Western union powers. They contest that unless this is done, an important section of Canadian opinion may feel that the Canadian Government has failed in what Mr. St. Laurent has called its "crusade" [to establish a treaty]".[27]

On 1 December 1948, the Canadian Cabinet approved, with minor amendments, a paper intended as the confidential instructions for the representative at the Washington discussions - Hume Wrong. Reid had failed to gain support for some of his more ambitious internationalist aims, but the paper remained a significant

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26. MG26 L v.224,c25 Nov. 1948,Heeney to Reid.

27. MG31 E46 v.6,20 Nov 1948,Reid to Wrong.

victory for him. It referred to building a "closer unity of the North Atlantic world", to the establishment of new international organs, and to ensuring that the language of the treaty was "simple and clear"; most importantly,

in order to emphasize the positive and moral aspects of the Treaty, it should include provision for consultation, co-operation and common action in the economic field.[28]

Wrong was instructed to abandon his opposition and press for the maintenance of the draft Article 2.

The test of the significance which Canada attached to Article 2 came at the beginning of February, only a few weeks before the end of the negotiations. In mid-January, the Cabinet had been told of a proposal put forward by Canada for a simultaneous declaration by the parties to the treaty when it was ready to be signed:

The object would be to emphasize that the instrument was a "Pact for Peace", not a mere defensive alliance and that it had been worked out under the framework of the United Nations.[29]

The Canadian government was not about to accept the elimination of Article 2 - the most important non-military provisions remaining in the draft Treaty. The emergence of the United States as strong opponents led to the point in mid-February when Canada

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28. MG32 B5 v.112, memo. to Cabinet 1 Dec. 1948.

29. DEA, "prints and rejects", Cabinet conclusion, RC15.

was prepared to threaten withdrawing from the negotiations if Article 2 did not remain in a reasonable form. [30] A change in attitude by the Americans after Canada had rallied support from the European participants, meant that it was not necessary to use the threat. The episode does illustrate the importance which Canada attached to Article 2.

Rather ironically, the Americans found the non-military provisions most useful when the Treaty was finally presented to the public at the end of March 1949. Wrong informed Reid that:

You will I think be interested to know ... that I have yet to see any public statement in the United States about the Atlantic Pact from which has been omitted a reference to Article 2. [31]

Although the Treaty received near unanimous support in the House of Commons, it was by no means universally popular. French-language newspapers in Montreal and Quebec saw it as "appeasement of the imperialists". [32] Solon Low, leader of the Social Credit party, which drew its support from the prairie "bible belt", questioned the motives for so much publicity before hand in the press.

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30. Eayrs, In defence of Canada, 4, p.112.

31. MG31 e46 v.7, Wrong to Reid 25 March 1949.

32. Fraser, The search for identity, p.84.

Repetition of this kind of propaganda, he thought, was bound to give rise to the suspicion that the government intended to rush an agreement through in a wave of public hysteria.[33]

King was most uncomfortable with St Laurent's handling of the Treaty. He feared that "the campaign was paralleling that of 1911" and that "St. Laurent had made so much of the pact that the average man in Quebec would get the idea that he would get into the European arena at a moments notice. ... They would be wiser to get it over and talk about other things." [34]

During November 1948, after St Laurent's became the new Prime Minister, Canadian policy towards the North Atlantic Treaty was reassessed. Reid's aim of placing Canada in the lead of the creation of a treaty reflecting broader internationalist aims was opposed by others who were more concerned with securing American participation in a military alliance. Canada was not about to take the lead in multiplying her own commitments. At the same time more than a mere military alliance was a domestic political necessity. In part, this was because of the public expectations built up by the speeches of the internationalists who were fond

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33. Harrison, Canada in world affairs, p.28.

34. King diaries, p.23 March 1949.

describing security in terms of the ideals of the United Nations and of promoting the connection between defence and economic co-operation. In February 1949 Canada was prepared to challenge strong American opposition to the Treaty's non-military provisions. St Laurent was going to be leading the Liberals in a general election in less than six months and it was essential that the Treaty did not fall short of public expectations. This was not the sort of approach that King would have favoured - he sought wherever possible, to avoid dwelling on potentially divisive issues. Unlike the men who replaced him, King was not motivated by a strong attachment to internationalist ideals.

## Conclusion

Mackenzie King's retirement as Prime Minister marked the end of an era in Canadian external policy. For most of the years between 1921 and 1948, policy was dominated by the belief that overseas military commitments were destructive of national unity and entailed an unacceptable loss of sovereignty to external authority. By the 1940s, however, a younger generation of policy makers, motivated by internationalist ideals, controlled the civil service and had become an important source of policy initiatives. In matters of both trade and security, they viewed the quest for complete national independence as a barrier to peaceful state relations. King's last years in office were spent resisting the internationalist ambitions of the Department of External Affairs and the senior economists in Ottawa. He blocked a powerful movement towards free trade, and had he remained in office for another year, there is reason to believe that participation in the North Atlantic Treaty might also have been stopped. Once St Laurent had been chosen as the new leader, King was no longer in a position to challenge these internationalist policies. Under the new acting Prime Minister, the Canadian government became much more firmly devoted to participation in



the North Atlantic Treaty.

St Laurent was King's personal choice as a successor; he considered the Minister of External Affairs to be the most able candidate for the leadership of the Liberal party. The Prime Minister could not easily remain in office to oppose St Laurent without forcing the Minister out of cabinet. In March 1948, King recorded that "I was even beginning to doubt my own judgement on many matters. I found myself much too cautious and conservative in international matters to feel my views were shared by some of the younger men around me."<sup>[1]</sup> King was apparently worn out after his long years in office and in April he wrote "More and more, I feel that I would like to get out of office before any new schemes are brought forward which I shall have to endorse or oppose." St Laurent and Pearson would have to be left to pursue their own policies to the best of their abilities.

Before he retired, King dealt with pressure from within his own government both to conclude a free trade agreement with the United States and to enter a more effective collective security system, in what for him was typical fashion. The proponents of a given policy were given the impression that the Prime Minister was favourable to their ideas. No firm position was adopted by King, however until the level of political support had been assessed:

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1. King diaries, 22 March 1948.

He seemed to be in the centre  
Because we had no centre,  
No vision  
To pierce the smoke-screen of his politics.[2]

By March 1948, free trade had been judged politically unacceptable - popular fears about American domination had apparently changed very little since 1911 when King himself was defeated along with "reciprocity".

Popular support for the ideal of collective security as embodied in the United Nations and the widespread fear of Communist expansion in Europe undoubtedly led King to believe that the North Atlantic Treaty could be well received within Canada. He was, however, most surprised by Cabinet's reaction to the Berlin crisis. The old fears about overseas military entanglements had not disappeared. If King had remained in office, it is not impossible that the Atlantic pact would have been abandoned in the same way that free trade was. When the decision was made in October to proceed with the development of a security pact, King was no longer in control; St Laurent and Pearson ensured that internationalist aims took precedence over isolationist fears. King's passive approach to finding political support had already been replaced by an active campaign to sell

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2. from "W.L.M.K.", F.R. Scott, Selected poems, p.60-61.

the North Atlantic Treaty to the Canadian public. Of the old Prime Minister, it has been noted that,

Truly he will be remembered

Wherever men honour ingenuity,

Ambiguity, inactivity, and political longevity.[3]

Gone were the days of "Postpone, postpone, abstain." [4] Canada had joined in the mobilisation of Western power against the Communist threat. The government had come under the control of the men who shaped the course of Canadian external policy for the next twenty years.

In retrospect, the 1940s can be seen as a period when Canada was forced to rapidly adjust to the emergence of the United States as the dominant world power. Canada was the key to North American air defence and it was unreasonable for Canadians to think that they could return to the tradition of benign neglect in security matters. Unlike the British Empire, the United States would not allow Canada to escape her defence obligations. In those circumstances, the North Atlantic Treaty was a useful means for avoiding a restrictive bilateral arrangement with the Americans in favour of a system which included the nations that Canada had been allied with in two world wars.

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3. ibid

4. ibid

Earlier in the century, Sir Robert Borden sought a more prominent position for Canada within the Empire on the basis of a contribution to the Imperial cause. St Laurent and Pearson also sought greater influence in world affairs, first through the United Nations and then through the North Atlantic Treaty. This influence was founded upon a contribution to the defence against expansive Communism in Korea and western Europe. The foundations of Canadian nationhood, it has been claimed, were laid by the sacrifices of the First Canadian Corps at Vimy Ridge. It has also been said that Canada's diplomatic influence was greatest in the 1950s when the Royal Canadian Air Force had an air division of twelve squadrons of F-86 Sabres deployed in Europe under NATO.[5] The longevity of King's policy of "no commitments" and the current apathetic attitude towards NATO are probably indications that Canadians were only prepared to make substantial sacrifices during periods of perceived danger - the two world wars and the cold war.

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5. Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict, 2, p.427.

## Appendix

### Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty

The parties will contribute towards the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.

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