CHAPTER THREE
"Canada has no sphere of interest to gain and no secret agreements to conceal". (1) This pithy remark of a Canadian writer reveals some of the basic factors of Canadian foreign policy. Though linked with Europe by race and language, Canada is geographically a North American country with a long coastal boundary in the Pacific. The United States of America is the most important influence in the shaping of Canadian foreign policy. Geographical factors and economic compulsions made this inescapable, though this influence has been quite often resented. (2)

Until the beginning of the second World War, Canada had been greatly suspicious of the policy of commitments, either in war or peace time. "Before 1939 this country accepted in principle the idea of collective security but was reluctant to support policies which would make it possible". (3) But after the Nazi attack on European countries and Japanese bombardment of Pearl Harbour, Canada realised that its own safety and


(2) A distinguished Canadian historian, D.G. Creighton remarked, "Canadians had been subjected for the past eight years to the greatest sales campaign in the history of the US - a campaign to sell the cold war in an exclusive American package". *Globe and Mail*, (Toronto) 14 August 1954. See also Cyril S. Belshaw, "Canadian Policy and Asian Society", *International Journal* (Toronto), 11 (Winter, 1955-6) 38.

(3) F.H. Soward, 'Have we accepted collective security?' Canadian Broadcasting Corporation: *25 Years of Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto, n.d.) 19.
security could only be guaranteed by a strong and stable European-American alliance. Therefore, she took the initiative in forging a collective security system across the Atlantic, namely, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Canada is deeply committed in Europe, but she cannot afford to follow a policy of 'go it alone' so far as the American hemisphere is concerned. Hence, some people in Canada advocated closer relations with Europe to provide a counter-vailing force against American pressures. (4)

**Canada and the Far East: A Different Approach**

Canada believes that peace is indivisible. Still Canada's major involvement in international sphere is confined to America and Europe. Its interest in the Far East is 'peripheral'.

"Attitudes and opinions of Canada about events in the Far East are largely derivative from those concerning the world at large". (5) It was only in 1950 that as a consequence of the United Nations action in Korea, Canada was directly involved in

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(4) "In a sense Canada now wages against the United States the battle of status.... Professor Underhill and George V. Ferguson of the *Montreal Star* both pointed this out at the meetings of the Institute of Public Affairs at Lake Couchiching in 1956; both feared that Canada might become a mere satellite of the United States unless it could develop a counterpoise to American influence. Underhill suggested that, for this purpose, Canada should help to foster some form of Western European Union". Masters, n. 1, 209-10.

Asian affairs. Canada sent her troops to fight Communist aggression in Korea to fulfil her obligations under the United Nations Charter. But this action by no means led to a policy of commitments in the Far East, although "they were deeply concerned in the consequences of United States' Far Eastern Policy...." (6) United States post-war involvements in the Far East have been largely instrumental in extending the contours of Canadian foreign policy to this part of the globe.

Another cause of Canada's involvement in world affairs is her membership of the Commonwealth. She is one of the oldest members of the British Commonwealth. She is now, a champion of the multi-racial Commonwealth of Nations. But for Canadian (and South African) stand in pre-war years in favour of a decentralized Commonwealth, the picture of the present Commonwealth would have been different. In fact, Canada reaches Asia via Commonwealth and as Lester Pearson has pointed out: "This influence of the Commonwealth with its Asian members is one reason why Canadians think more about Asia and the Far East than they did a few years ago". (7) Its approaches to the problems of Asia are to a considerable extent influenced by the attitude taken by New Delhi. Pearson said on another occasion that "the main avenue of approach for Canada to the problems of Asia has

(6) Fred Alexander, Canadians and Foreign Policy (Toronto, 1960) 129.

(7) External Affairs (Ottawa), (Henceforward quoted as E.A.) 5 (March 1963) 82.
been by way of the Indian sub-continent". (8) This was so because Canada, unlike most other Western Powers, had understood more clearly the urges and aspirations of the Asian people. There were many in the West who confused the forces of nationalism in Asia with that of communism and in their zest to oppose communism lent support to decadent colonial Powers. Canada had realised that "nationalism - allied to a restless and insistent demand for a better life - is the most important political phenomenon in Asia..." (9) and that "the achievement of national independence by these countries was to them an essential prerequisites for further progress". (10) Pearson forewarned the West that "in our determination...to meet the menace of Communist aggression in Asia or elsewhere, we should not be led or misled, into policies which harness us to reactionary forces or blind us to the sincere gropings of millions of Asians for more bread and more freedom". (11) The fact that Canada was never a colonial Power, had made it easier for her to take this attitude. But Canada never belittled the threat of communism in Asia. Communist expansion in Asia greatly concerned Canada. It also recognised the fact that communism could successfully exploit the "misery and distress" and the "impatience for change" of the Asian people. Yet it did not advocate an entirely military solution

(9) Pearson, *E.A.*, 3 (February 1951) 38.
(10) Pearson, n. 8, 23.
to those problems. Canada believed "that the forces of totalitarian expansionism could not be stopped in South Asia and South East Asia by military force alone". (12) Rather, it emphasised economic betterment of the Asian masses as the most effective defence against communism. "A recognition of nationalism and the justice of its demands, of the need for economic improvement and of the danger of communism comprise the factors upon which present Canadian Far Eastern policy is based". (13)

**Canada, the Pacific Pact and the SEATO**

After the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Europe in 1949, suggestions were made to build up a parallel organisation to arrest the expansion of communism in Asia. Communist victory in China was considered to be a potential threat to peace in that area. Communist aggression in Korea was termed by Canada as "a breach in the outer defences of the free world". (14) So, the question of organising a collective security pact for the Pacific and Canada's participation in it, came to be discussed quite often in Canada. The Canadian government was not opposed in principle to the idea of a regional arrangement in the Pacific and assured/due consideration/whenever

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(13) D.H. Gardener, Canadian Interests and Policies in the Far East since World War II (Mimeograph) (Toronto, 1950) 2-3.

(14) Soward, n. 3, 24-5.
such a proposal was put forward. (15) But it did not regard the Pacific situation as identical with that existing in the Atlantic, and hence was doubtful of the effectiveness of applying the same principles in Asia, which might have proved useful in Europe. While pointing out the differences in the two situations Pearson said:

... In the North Atlantic we had a true community of nations with long standing economic, political and cultural ties between them, similar political systems, and a demonstrable collective capacity to contribute to the common defence. We had an easily definable geographical area.... Not all of these fundamentals are present in Asia, thus making the problems of regional defence and collective security in that area infinitely more difficult. There is the question too of whether a requisite number of Asian nations...would be willing to support such a pact. (16)

Canada always respected the desire of the newly independent countries of Asia to solve their problems in their own way and therefore, did not encourage hasty decisions concerning regional defence in the Far East. While this was the official position, there were others who felt differently on this issue. James Eayrs wrote:

Canadians would do well to consider carefully the background and implications of a Pacific Pact which, if not imminent, is a real possibility.... The Korean war has demonstrated the aggressive tendencies of Asian communism. Do not logic and self-interest dictate that we negotiate, with all possible speed, a Pacific Security Pact similar in purpose and in content to NATO? (17)

(16) E.A., 2 (September 1950) 329.
Gordon Graydon, while speaking in the Canadian House of Commons expressed the same view. He said, "There was a time...when... perhaps it was not feasible to have a Pacific Pact among the nations of that area.... But I am convinced that...the Government would be well advised to explore at once the possibilities...." (18) A Conservative member of the Canadian House of Commons and a great exponent of the idea of Canadian participation in a Pacific Pact, Howard C. Green (who later became External Affairs Minister in the Conservative Government) persistently raised this issue in parliament. He asked the Government to take the lead in the formation of such a pact. He pleaded for the "broadening of the terms of the North Atlantic Treaty" so as to cover aggression in any part of the world. Hence, he urged the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand in the North Atlantic Treaty. (19)

Meanwhile, early in 1951 negotiations were in progress for some sort of a defence arrangement in the Pacific between Australia, New Zealand and the United States and finally on 12 July 1951, the ANU pact was initialled by Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America. The Canadian government was being pressed to join this pact. But the official position concerning the military pact in the Pacific continued to be that of "non-commitment". The ANU pact was not supposed to be an effective base for the organisation of a pact on the lines of

(18) Canada, House of Commons Debates (Henceforward quoted as Canada, H of C Deb.), 1 (22 October 1951) pp.360-1.

the NATO. Canada stressed the difficulty in regard to the composition of a defence pact in Asia. Moreover, it was understood by the Government of Canada that the ANZUS members were not inclined to increase its membership. (20) Thus, "when the ANZUS Treaty was first announced...the Canadian position may be described as one of restrained interest". (21) Apart from the belief held by Canada that "as a doctrine, communism in Asia will not be destroyed by guns, though guns have to be used when Communist violence and banditry occurs and that it will be destroyed by Asian themselves...", (22) she found "three fundamental difficulties in the way of the early realisation of a Pacific Pact on a multilateral basis. The first,... which Pacific states should be included and which should be left out; the second,... how to get the various countries which might participate to agree to team up with other potential members; and finally,... lack of community of interest and purpose and policy among some of the potential members". (23) Therefore, although deeply interested in the safety and security of the area, Canada could not lend its support to any defence pact unless these problems were solved, without which it feared that the suggested remedy might even prove worse than the malady. Canada remained

(20) See the communique issued on 7 August 1952, by the ANZUS Council at its first meeting. That communique reads in part as follows: 'It would be premature at this early state in its own development / that is the development of ANZUS / to establish relationships with other states'. E.A., 5 (March 1953) 87-8.

(21) Bayrs, n. 17, 299.

(22) Pearson, E.A., 4 (April 1952) 147.

a silent spectator to these developments in the Far East. But
the critics continued to press for Canada's participation.
Howard C. Green pleaded "for a policy of united action in the
Pacific" and criticised what he thought to be a "no commitment
policy" of the Government in the Pacific. He strongly pressed
for the creation of a regional alliance of the Asiatic nations
and as a first step suggested extension of the ANZUS Treaty to
include Canada and the United Kingdom. In this context, he also
supported a suggestion made by Senator Knowland of the USA. (24)
However, in the face of the ANZUS Council's communique (25) and
the unsuccessful efforts of the United Kingdom to join the pact,
the Government apprehended that its attempt "to barge our way
into the ANZUS arrangement" (26) would prove abortive.

Meanwhile, the situation in the Far East continued to

(24) Senator William F. Knowland, the majority leader in
the United States Senate, upon his return from a trip to the Far
East last November 1953 made certain suggestions. He expressed
the hope that the new Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay would
call a conference of free 'non-neutralist' Pacific nations as
soon as possible to consider widening the old Australia, New
Zealand, United States pact. Senator Knowland envisaged the
conference as including, besides the English speaking nations of
the Pacific, the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Formosa, Thai­
land, the Indo-Chinese succession states of Laos, Cambodia and
Vietnam, and went as far west as Pakistan. He was asked about
Canada and whether he thought Canada should be a party. Senator
Knowland said: 'If a conference of free nations were held cer­
tainly I would think Canada would be included'. Cited by
H.C. Green, in the Commons, Canada, H of C Deb., 4
(30 March 1954) p. 3478.

(25) The ANZUS Council met in Washington on the 9 and 10
September 1953 and decided against any enlargement of its

(26) See Pearson's speech in the House of Commons,
deteriorate. In the years following the conclusion of the ANZUS pact, 'cold war' tension was further accentuated because of the conflict in Indo-China. The form of subversion, as demonstrated in Malaya and Indo-China perturbed the Western countries and their allies in Asia. But the military defeat of the French in Indo-China at the hands of the Communists brought matters to a head and the Geneva conference was convened to negotiate a peaceful settlement. While on the one hand, peace was being negotiated by the West under the shadow of a defeat, exploratory talks were going on between the ANZUS Powers and other Western representatives at Washington early in June 1954, to halt further military advance of the Communists in Indo-China and to work out some arrangement to prevent any such recurrence in future in this area. Canada was deeply concerned over the progress made by the Communists in securing a stronghold in South East Asia. Therefore, it viewed with approval any attempt at "regional collective security arrangements organized to meet those dangers in the right way, by those immediately concerned". On his way to Geneva to attend the Geneva Peace Conference the Canadian Minister for External Affairs Lester Pearson said in London, that "even though Canada has not been included by Dulles in the group of Powers for the working out of a security system for South East Asia, it does not mean that we are not interested. We most certainly are". (27) But it still harboured misgivings about the practicability or desirability of transplanting an Atlantic type of

(27) The Times (London), 21 April 1954.
security system to the Asian soil. (28) Having this in view, Pearson enunciated certain principles which he thought would be essential for "any right regional solution to the problem of security in that part of the world". (29) These principles, important in themselves, bring out the marked differences in approach between Canada and other Western Powers interested in the security problem of the Far East. They partly explain the reasons why Canada adopted a policy of the utmost caution in dealing with the question of the formation of a multilateral defence treaty in South East Asia. Pearson warned against such arrangements giving an impression to the Asian mind of a design to perpetuate colonial domination or to sustain corrupt and unpopular regimes. He reaffirmed his previous belief that the problem demanded a non-military solution, since the nature of Communist threat in Asia was different from that of Europe.

A Mixed Reception

However, this stand of the Government was not supported


(29) Speaking in the Commons, Pearson said: "Any such regional solution, I think might well embody the following principle:

"First, arrangements reached must be consistent with the provisions of the United Nations Charter. Secondly, they must be divorced from anything that could be called colonialism and not designed to maintain regimes, colonial or national, that have little support. Thirdly, it should be recognised that the problem cannot be dealt with effectively in military terms alone.... Fourth, any solution, must not be, or susceptible to the interpretation as being, a purely "Western" one or one from which free Asian countries feel that they have been excluded", Ibid., pp. 5190-1.
by the Conservative Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition, John Diefenbaker, was of the opinion that "... Canada has responsibilities for peace in all parts of the world, not only in the United Nations; we have to accept them in any pacific pacts that may be achieved.... and that Canada... will stand with the United States and thereby assure the maintenance of a solid wall against the advance of communism everywhere in the world". (30) While commenting on the preliminary negotiations that were going on concerning the formation of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation, the Globe and Mail observed, "that this country should be taking an active part in any plans now on foot to keep the peace in the Pacific and in Asia". (31) The Vancouver Province was extremely critical of Pearson's cautious policy in regard to SEATO. On 14 June 1954, in a scathing editorial, it accused him of running out on collective security. "What is Pearson trying to do" asked the Province: "Repeat Canada's rather shabby performance in the League of Nations in the 1930's? (32) On the other hand, M.J. Coldwell of the C.C.F. (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, merged in 1961 in the New Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party of Canada) held, that the "proposals for a South East Asian pact should not be considered without first obtaining the cooperation and agreement of India, Burma, Pakistan and Ceylon" and that

(31) Globe And Mail (Toronto), 11 May 1954.
"Canada should oppose and refuse to associate itself with any South East Asian alliance which does not include at least the Asian countries...." He thought it necessary that "the initiative must come from Asia if we are going to have a security pact... and particularly from India". (33) Although the idea of a security pact for the Pacific and Canadian participation in it was given a mixed reception, "the Canadian Government remained studiously outside SEATO", and "when the organisation was under consideration in May 1954, Canada made it plain to its allies that it did not intend to participate in a South East Asia pact". (34) Canada was not asked to, nor did it, send any observer to the Manila conference held in the month of September 1954, from which emerged the South East Asia Defence Treaty Organisation. Canada kept herself practically aloof from this development in the Far East.

Factors Influencing Canada's Decision

It was felt that Canada was already heavily committed in Europe and its population and meagre resources greatly limited its capacity for further commitments. Emphasising this point Edgar McInnis, a noted writer on Canadian foreign policy, observed that he was against the dispersal of Canada's limited resources at the risk of weakening her effectiveness in the areas where she was already engaged. (35)

Geographical remoteness was given as another reason for Canada's staying away from the pacts in South East Asia, which according to the *Globe and Mail* was, however, "not even true in fact, if the speed of contemporary war machines is taken into account", and also "irrelevant". (36)

The fear of offending New Delhi weighed heavily with the policy framers at Ottawa in deciding against participation in the SEATO in the absence of any comparable advantage that could have accrued to her from commitment in the Far East. But the *Globe and Mail* felt, that "... Nehru's doubts and fears will not decide this issue, and in any case, will not be intensified by anything that Canada may do". (37) While James Eayrs, an able interpreter of Canadian foreign policy, describing the reasons for Canada's non-participation in the SEATO argued that "the United States could hardly view with favour that further exposure of the glaring disproportion between the number of its Asian and non-Asian members which the admission of Canada would bring about", (38) the *Globe and Mail* emphasised that, "contribution, however small, should be promised now, if only because Canada could not stay out of major Asian trouble involving the United States...." (39) Although these respective views give somewhat contradictory estimates of the supposed US attitude


(39) See n. 37.
towards Canada's participation in the SEATO, one glaring fact that emerges out of these is that "while there is some significant evidence that Canadian post-war horizons have extended across the Pacific as well as across the Atlantic, even Asian problems tend to be looked at in terms of Canadian-American relations". (40) Therefore, it has been emphasised, that "Canadian interest in SEATO...should be as great as in NATO - even if it led to rejecting the principles of SEATO". It was also realised that what Canada needed was "firm public statements of the Canadian position, based on...relative lack of involvement in colonialism or 'dollar imperialism', on a sense of the reality of Far Eastern social and practical developments and on Canada's adherence to basic problems". (41)

One important factor that might have turned an already too cautious and indifferent attitude of Canada towards the SEATO into a definite rejection as far as participation was concerned, was the invitation extended to Canada by the Chairmen of the Geneva Conference Anthony Eden and V.M. Molotov on 21 July 1954 for the membership of the International Supervisory Commissions for Indo-China. This provided Canada with an opportunity to help maintain peace in the most disturbed part of the area, without entangling herself in any military pact whatsoever. Canada's participation in the SEATO would have, otherwise, deprived her of the confidence that she enjoyed among the Asian non-aligned countries. This realisation might have been

(40) Alexander, n. 6, 130.

responsible for Canada's decision to accept the invitation, which
was transmitted to Eden by the Canadian government on 28 July
1954. Hence, pleading against losing manoeuvrability in foreign
policy, McInnis commented: "It seems to me unwise to sacrifice
our existing flexibility.... Indeed, few things would suit our
adversaries better than to see us pinned down and immobilized
by a series of pacts that would destroy our freedom of
manoeuvre". (42)

Conclusion

After the South East Asia Collective Defence Treaty was
signed, its provisions came under severe attack both in the
Press and in the writings of important scholars of Canada. To
many of them, the treaty lacked military teeth and was described
as a 'paper tiger'. They considered it a defective instrument
to achieve its own declared objectives. One writer commented:

SEATO as a military alliance, is an out-growth
of the mistaken notion that solutions which
seem to have worked in Europe must inevitably
succeed elsewhere. As such it does not hold
very much promise in an area where by far the
largest number of states and people distrusts
it and views it as a sort of corporate and
modified successor to the colonial Powers....
SEATO encourages an unrealistic assessment of
Asian problems. In giving the appearance of
a viable military alliance it lulls us into a
false sense of security. (43)

Even the Globe and Mail (11 September 1954), which had not been
soft to the governmental policy on SEATO described it as a

(42) See McInnis, n. 35.

(43) John Meisel, "Pactomania", The Canadian Forum
(Toronto), (April 1956) 1.
"child of haste". It regretted the fact that "of the eight signatories only three...are actually in the area concerned; and of these two are on the Asian mainland". It further criticised the absence of "automatic military action" as NATO provides. It severely attacked the American rider attached to the treaty, which according to it was "calculated to arouse in South East Asia, particularly India, the suspicion that SEATO is an American device created for that country's own purpose". It finally remarked "what Manila has given us is a rash job, a makeshift of the kind that history contemptuously sweeps aside".

Canadian interest evinced in SEATO's formation subsided in the subsequent years and not much reference was made to it either in the Press or in Parliament. Pearson once replying to a question on 22 May 1956 in the Standing Committee on the External Affairs stated that Canada still took interest in SEATO, "because it is a collective security organisation in Asia and anything that can be done there to strengthen security helps us.... But there have been no approaches made of anykind...that we should associate ourselves with SEATO". (44) Thus, the SEATO ceased to be an issue of import, so far as Canada was concerned. Canada's non-participation in the SEATO does not reflect in any way a lessening of interest in or indifference to the South East Asia. On the contrary, it had been undertaking responsibilities in the task of reconstruction and peace-making in this

area, which were manifest in her contribution to the Colombo Plan and participation in International Supervisory Commissions for Indo-China. Canada's decision to stay out was not an accident. Lessons of history, factors of geography and demands of self-interest had driven her to this unavoidable conclusion. The policy pursued by Canada with regard to SEATO in particular and South East Asia in general, was a measure of her independent role in international relations, as well as a reminder of its limited geographical and historical relationship with Asia.