

*Address by the President (Carter) Before the North Atlantic Council, Washington, D.C., May 30, 1978<sup>10</sup>*

## The Common Purpose of the NATO Alliance

On behalf of the American people, I welcome here today our closest friends and allies—the leaders of the North Atlantic alliance.

Twenty-nine years ago, at an uncertain time for world peace, President Truman spoke these words on signing the North Atlantic Treaty:

“In this pact, we hope to create a shield against aggression . . . a bulwark which will permit us to get on with the real business of government and society, the business of achieving a fuller and happier life for our citizens.”

The alliance born that day in April 1949 has helped preserve our mutual security for nearly 30 years—almost a decade longer than the time between the two great wars of this century. History records no other alliance that has successfully brought together so many different nations for so long, without the firing of a single shot in anger.

Ours is a defensive alliance. No nation need fear aggression from us. But neither should any nation ever doubt our will to deter and defeat aggression against us.

The North Atlantic alliance is a union of peoples moved by a desire to secure a safe future for our children—in liberty and freedom. Our alliance is unique because each of our 15 democratic nations shares a common heritage of human values, the rule of law, and faith in the courage and spirit of free men and women.

The military strength and common political purpose of the North Atlantic alliance has led us to cooperate in a thousand individual efforts, rightly conferring upon us

the name of “community.” And it has given us the self-confidence and strength of will to seek improved relations with our potential adversaries.

As an American, I am proud that the commitment of the United States to the security, independence, and prosperity of Europe is as strong as ever. We are part of you, and you of us. The mutual pledges of trust we exchanged here in 1949 still hold firm and true.

During the next two days, we will reaffirm our commitments to the alliance, to its strategy and doctrine, and to each other. We will review a year-long effort to assess East-West relations as they exist and as they may develop in the future. We will review our cooperation in defense procurement. And through a broad program of defense cooperation, we will seek to reinforce our individual efforts to guarantee our security against aggression for many years ahead.

We must be aware of the new challenges that we face, individually and collectively, which require new efforts of us all.

The Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries pose a military threat to our alliance which far exceeds their legitimate security needs. For more than a decade, the military power of the Soviet Union has steadily expanded, and it has grown consistently more sophisticated. In significant areas, the military lead we once enjoyed has been reduced.

Today we can meet that military challenge. But we cannot be sure of countering the future military threat, unless our alliance modernizes its forces and adds additional military power. In this effort, the United States will play its part, across the spectrum of conventional, theater nuclear, and strategic nuclear forces. I am gratified that America’s allies are joining with us in building up their military might.

In the past year, the United States has increased its conventional combat strength in Europe and is enhancing its capability for rapid deployment to the continent. U.S. theater nuclear forces are being modernized, and the United States will maintain strategic nuclear equivalence with the Soviet Union.

Our alliance centers on Europe; but our vigilance cannot be limited to the continent. In recent years, expanding Soviet power has increasingly penetrated beyond the North Atlantic area. As I speak today, the

<sup>10</sup> Current Policy No. 22, June 1978, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State.

activities of the Soviet Union and Cuba in Africa are preventing individual nations from charting their own course. As members of the world's greatest alliance, we cannot be indifferent to these events—because of what they mean for Africa and because of their effect on the long-term interests of the alliance. I welcome the efforts of individual NATO allies to work for peace in Africa and to support nations and peoples in need—most recently in Zaire.

Our alliance has never been an end in itself. It is a way to promote stability and peace in Europe—and indeed, peace in the world at large. Our strength has made possible the pursuit of détente and agreements to limit arms, while increasing the security of the alliance. Defense in Europe, East-West détente, and global diplomacy go hand-in-hand.

Never before has a defensive alliance devoted so much effort to negotiate limitations and reductions in armaments with its adversaries. Our record has no equal in the search for effective arms control agreements.

The United States continues to move forward in its negotiations with the Soviet Union on a new agreement to limit and reduce strategic arms. Our objective is to preserve and advance the security of all the members of our alliance. We will continue to consult and to work closely with our allies to insure that arms control efforts serve our common needs.

NATO allies are also working for the mutual and balanced reduction of forces in Europe to provide greater security for all European peoples at lower levels of armaments, tensions, and costs. The allies have recently made a new proposal to the Warsaw Pact, and we call upon those nations to respond in the positive spirit in which our offer was made.

Our efforts to reduce weapons and forces in both these negotiations are guided by the need for equivalence and balance in the military capabilities of East and West. That is the only enduring basis for promoting security and peace.

The challenges we face as allies do not end here. Economic changes within our countries and throughout the world have increased our dependence upon one another and complicated our efforts to promote economic and social welfare. Social changes, generated partly by economic and political progress, will require creative

thought and effort by each of our nations. Our alliance derives additional strength through our shared goals and experience.

Finally, we face the challenge of promoting the human values and rights that are the final purpose and meaning of our alliance. The task is not easy; the way to liberty has never been. But our nations preeminently comprise the region of the world where freedom finds its most hospitable environment. As we seek to build détente, therefore, we must continue to seek full implementation, by Warsaw Pact countries as well as our own, of the Helsinki accords on security and cooperation in Europe that were signed three years ago.

If we continue to build on the fundamental strength of the North Atlantic alliance, I am confident that we can meet any challenge in the years ahead. In the future, as in the past, the Government and people of the United States will remain steadfast to our commitment to peace and freedom that all of us, as allies, share together.

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