

A NEW CANADA IN A NEW WORLD ORDER?

a. The Foreign Policy Record and Prospect

Integrated as they will be with the turbulent and challenging world of the 1990s and the twenty-first century, Canadians must somehow factor the international stakes into their constitutional calculations. For several reasons, this is a difficult task.

It is in foreign affairs, over the past fifty years, that Canada has most unequivocally acted as one unit, and has done so effectively and honourably. In relations with the outside world, the country's diversity and its divided constitutional jurisdictions have generally been reflected and well-respected — as they needed to be in a world which has continued to operate on the formal basis of relations between sovereign states. The question now is whether conditions will change so fundamentally, either at the global level or in Canada's own constitutional arrangements, that the common foreign policy that is not now broken will have to be fixed.

Some may suggest that the traditional Canadian foreign policy vision of Pearsonian middle-power multilateralism has already been overwhelmed by the reality of regional blocs. One of Mackenzie King's strong reasons for embracing the aspiration for a North Atlantic Community in 1948 had been to head off a proposed free trade area with the US. Forty years later, the worst fears of some Canadian nationalists have been brought much closer by the formalization of the US-Canada FTA.

The Western Europeans, meanwhile, centimetre by painful centimetre, are building their own functional community, although they now confront agonizing choices between its widening and deepening. Some take the European process as the demise of the state — a kind of death by a thousand communiqués. If this is to be believed, it is another reason to argue that the notion of Canada's middle power roles is but a quaint historical footnote.

Does this regionalization mean that multilateralism too is dead? From the point of view both of what is likely, and what will be tolerable, let alone desirable, in the emerging world order, Canadians should cancel any proposed funeral for middle power multilateralism, and perhaps plan a wedding instead. Especially after the Cold War, power is being diffused;