



Statements and Speeches

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ENERGY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A Speech by the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Allan Gotlieb, to the Fifth Canadian National Energy Forum, Calgary, November 20, 1979

Relations among states, or among peoples before the days of the nation state, have been driven by all the various forces that move man to action. Religions and ideologies and dynastic ambitions have brought peoples together or set them at war with each other. Great bursts of creative energy, as in Elizabethan England, have rebuilt societies and redrawn the map of large parts of the world. Nationalism itself has altered the stage in dramatic ways.

Among the forces driving international relations has been, of course, the economic. Colonial empires were built not only for the greater glory of the metropolitan centres and their rulers. They were built in the search for economic strength and security. They were, to a considerable extent, about obtaining command over economic resources. And the forces at work in international affairs have included those set up by the depletion of economic resources and the need to find alternatives.

In a sense, then, energy in today's world provides just another instance of processes that have been with us for centuries. There is, however, much more to it. The situation in which we find ourselves is in fact without precedent. While there are many sources of energy, the entire world is dependent on oil to an extent to which it has never been dependent on any other commodity. No country, no corner of the world can be free of the impact of petroleum shortage and the need to adjust to that fact. The impact will be felt within every country and will continue to affect profoundly relations among countries. It is hardly surprising that energy questions are now at the very heart of international politics.

When we look at international politics, we will, I believe, have to accept that the next two or three decades may be more unstable than the years since the end of World War II. The past few decades have seen the peace kept, uneasily, but nevertheless kept, by the nuclear balance between the two superpowers, by the fear of nuclear war, and by the role of the metropolitan powers. Among the potentially destabilizing forces of the future are:

- the increasing diffusion, throughout the world, of real economic power and thus political and military power;
 - the increasingly polycentric character of international communism and the profound rift within the communist world between Moscow and Peking;
 - the emergence of a world-system of over 150 states, many too weak to be economically viable and with the legitimacy of their boundaries often in dispute;
 - the increasing tendency to resort to force in disputes among states;
 - the knowledge, or more accurately, belief that such local disputes will not give
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