

Deciding for ourselves

order. Such a view, however, misrepresents both the historic experience and the passionate attachment of Canadians to a much broader set of international institutions and indeed to the global community which these institutions govern. It was not by accident that Canada has become the most well-connected country in the world. The enduring lust with which Canadians create and attach themselves to international institutions represents an instinct far more primordial than the enlightened but self-interested recognition that a stable network of international organizations, law and diplomacy is the most efficient way for a middle power to operate in a civilized society of states, and to secure legal and operational parity with more powerful countries. In its experience in the joint institutions of Canada and the United States, this drive reflects something of the North American belief in the ability to create a new form of international politics on the God-given continent so removed from a Europe enslaved in the bloodthirsty minuet of power politics. In its visionary drive to create a North Atlantic Community as something other than a mere military alliance, it reflects the traditional Anglo-American innocence as an approach to world affairs. And in its full flowering within the League and United Nations system, it reflects the fact that both Canada and those great global experiments came of age at the same time, through the same process, and in ways that made the global body integral to the identity of the emerging country.

Imperial legacy

But ultimately, it is Canada's essential, historic character as British North America that endows Canadian political culture with its profound attachment to a larger political community beyond its borders. Canada began its political life in 1763 as part of a single integrated community which embraced not only most of the North American continent, but also that large portion of the globe over which the Queen of Canada had dominion as well. That some British North Americans living to the south chose to separate themselves politically from this community in 1776 did not disturb the identity of Canadians who, led by the Loyalists, placed the highest value on their continuing attachment to the globe-encircling whole. And for the succeeding century-and-a-half these Canadians acted, physically and psychologically, as full participants in the triumphs and tragedies of that indivisible community. The British Empire belonged to British North Americans as much as to any of its other members, even as they exercised their right both to condemn the follies of His/Her Majesty's government which operated in the United Kingdom, and to create the larger community in their own image. It is hardly surprising that a country that could make francophone Catholics from Wilfrid Laurier, through Louis St. Laurent to Pierre Trudeau, feel a full part of the Empire-Commonwealth, would insist, with varying success, on a place for Catholic Ireland, Boer South Africa, Hindu India, Muslim Pakistan and the rich array of Asian, African and Caribbean states beyond. Nor is it really surprising that South Africa — the one government that purposely left the Commonwealth in order to be free to practise racism — should remain for Canadians the antithesis of "good government" and the embodiment of what is really evil in the world.

The great accomplishment of the past quarter-century in Canadian foreign policy has been making the country's francophones full-fledged participants in this task of creating community on a global basis. Prime Minister Trudeau's success in giving francophone countries their fair share of Canada's development assistance disbursements, and Prime Minister Mulroney's initiative in sacrificing simple concepts and symbols of sovereignty at home in order to create an institutionalized heads-of-government forum for La Francophonie are but the most visible, binational manifestations of a deeply rooted Canadian approach to international order.

A shining record

That order has as an integral component a clear redistributive dimension. A country which, in diplomatic parlance and constitutional structure, refuses to recognize as foreign fellow members of the Commonwealth, and which psychologically extends that same sense of attachment to the governments and peoples of La Francophonie, in so doing affirms its common political identity with the majority of the countries, and virtually all of the very poor countries, in the world. A country which now consistently has one of the world's largest international development assistance programs outward, and is one of the largest recipients of immigrants and refugees inward, arguably operates less from a calculation of national self-interest than from a sense of a larger community. And a country which gives so heavily — financially, psychologically and personally — to the United Nations system and the international development institutions is one which has clearly accepted the legitimacy of equalization payments and the desirability of taxation as an investment in good government.

For Canadians, "peace, order and good government" are not mere slogans but defining principles with definite meaning. And abroad as at home, the core meaning is peace through political accommodation, order through redistribution and good government through building the overlapping, non-exclusive network of institutions to exercise functional governance over the local and larger community as an indivisible whole. Such concepts, along with those of Canada as a peaceable kingdom, as a sanctuary for the dispossessed, and as the custodian of the global commons are, of course, as much national myths as they are reigning empirical facts. But it is as national myths embedded in culture, and expressed relentlessly in organizational routines, political rhetoric, political expectations and thus political commitments, that they have enduring and meaningful political effects. Canadian leaders who duck calls for crusades against testing unarmed cruise missiles and against American intervention in Nicaragua, to focus instead on such things as Commonwealth sanctions against South Africa, building La Francophonie, keeping foreign military vessels out of the Arctic, accepting refugees from Sri Lanka and affirming the human rights of minorities in the Soviet Union are not really running away from the big "realist" issues of the day. They are affirming a Canadian reality by concentrating on the core of the Canadian agenda for the world. □