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CANADA IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY

An Address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, to the Women's Canadian Club, Toronto, January 14, 1972.

I am going to talk to you today about Canadian foreign policy and I am going to begin by posing a series of questions that as Foreign Minister I face every day.

How much independence can we have? How much should we have? How do we keep it? How do we use it? Why is it important to us? Let me begin with a bit of history in capsule form.

Canada came out of the Second World War in a favourable position -- economically successful, confident in itself, looking to a better world order to be hammered out at the United Nations. Soviet aggressiveness, particularly in Central Europe, and the onset of the Cold War brought rapid disillusionment. By the end of the Forties Canada had entered what might be called its "alliance" period. The cornerstones of our foreign policy were the Commonwealth, the United Nations, NATO and later NORAD, and our special relation with the United States. These were sensible relations, in a world divided into two power blocs, armed to the teeth and trapped in sterile confrontation.

The Fifties and early Sixties was a period of centralization, of coming together. Perhaps polarization is a better word. The so-called "free" nations clustered around the United States; the hegemony of the Soviet Union brought about a power cluster in Eastern Europe. China, though never a satellite, was more or less in the Soviet camp. At home, Canadian unity was not in question, although the more perceptive observers were beginning to warn of coming strains. In the last ten years or so we have lived in a period of decentralization. The "quiet revolution" of Quebec, in itself a positive and welcome development, has been distorted by the phenomenon of separatism and the aberration of violence. China has repudiated Soviet leadership and the nations of Eastern Europe are showing their individuality in small but significant ways.

In the Western World, the Commonwealth has become attenuated to the point where it can no longer be a cornerstone of policy although it remains a useful institution, particularly for its smaller members. The Third World is