

On January 1, 1969:

... We're living in a world where the strategy is dominated by two powers. All we can do is talk a little bit about tactics but not much.

And on March 25, 1969 (to the National Press Club in Washington):

I hope that we Canadians do not have an exaggerated view of our own importance ... We may be excused, I hope, if we fail to take too seriously the suggestions of some of our friends from time to time that our acts, or our failure to act — this way or that — will have profound international consequences or will lead to wide-scale undesirable results.

No one familiar with the role of a prime minister in the formulation of Canadian foreign policy will be surprised to learn that these ideas emerged relatively intact as the basic philosophy of the White Paper embodying the results of the foreign policy review when it appeared in 1970. Much has been written about *Foreign Policy for Canadians* — if the purpose was to spark discussion, it succeeded admirably in that purpose — to which there is no need to add. But one point must be made.

It was the Prime Minister's expectation and intention that the results of the review would endure. He believed that the review would outfit Canadians with a foreign policy that would do them for a couple of decades. "When you make a decision to review your foreign policy," Mr. Trudeau remarked in Calgary on April 12, 1969, "it will last for quite a while ... You only re-examine your foreign policy once in a generation. You can't switch every year, you can't switch after every election."

Here is a major error. You can switch, and you must. To stay put for so long is not just to risk being overtaken by events, it guarantees it.

Major changes

Between 1970 and 1975, three major changes have occurred within the international system that have drastically altered the pattern of power. Each is advantageous — or prospectively advantageous — to Canada.

The first is the emergence of what might be called "le défi OPEC" — that sudden accretion of wealth to the low-cost oil-bearing countries of the Middle East that is currently netting their treasuries enormous "petrodollar" revenue.

It remains to be seen whether the assorted sheikhdoms and emirates that are the beneficiaries of this windfall can transmute their wealth to power, even whether they will enjoy the prosperity of Croesus or suffer the fate of Midas. (Shah Pahlavi and the late King Faisal show it can go either way.) Two consequences, however, are already clear.

One is that the power of oil-dependent industrial countries — all Western European states that lack access to North Sea sources and Japan — has been drastically reduced. The other is that the power of oil-sufficient industrial countries has been substantially increased — nowhere more so than in Canada, where oil is providentially found in conjunction with other sources of energy (notably coal).

Resource power

A second major change of the past five years is the declining capacity of technology to confer power and the growing capacity of resources to confer it. To a world where population continues an exponential rate of climb towards demographic disaster, ultra-modern processes for the transmission and manipulation of data are more and more irrelevant and in less and less demand. Such a world requires computers, photocopiers and satellite communication systems less than it needs raw materials, minerals and — above all — food. Power is shifting from those who control the former to those who control the latter. A recent discussion of *The New Wealth of Nations* by Charles F. Gallagher identifies this trend:

In a world of finite and dwindling physical assets the balance of market values has shifted, at least temporarily and perhaps for a very long period, from the ability of technology to create and develop new assets to the capacity of existing assets to command considerations that will permit the purchase of technology and the procurement of power. For long technology was joined to capital in a fruitful marriage, a happy coupling that developed material resources and created new assets. Today it is resources which have alienated the affections of capital and created conditions permitting the downgrading of technology to the status of a handmaiden serving the new connubial union. In short, skills have been reduced to a position in which they are traded at a discount relative to goods. He who has the right materials is better off than he who has the right training ...

Because of the revaluation and redistribution of the chips of the game, we have a rearrangement in the classification of nations today.

If this is bad news for the Science Council of Canada, it is good news for the Government of Canada. It means that Canada is exceptionally well endowed to face the worst (short of nuclear war) the future may fling at mankind, exceptionally well equipped for what has been called "the desperate misadventure we are now engaged upon", as well-prepared as any people for those dismal "human prospects" envisaged by melancholiacs who forecast global breakdown. We have what it takes, since we have all it takes.

Canada has almost sinfully bestowed upon it the sources of power, both traditional and new. The technology is there, or waiting. (We need only decide how much technology to develop ourselves, how much to buy from others.) The manpower is there, or waiting. (We need only decide how many millions more our country needs, then pick amongst the jostling clamourers according to the criteria of our choice.) The resources are there, or waiting, too — animal, vegetable and mineral. Hardly a month elapses without the revelation of some new bonanza in our larder. (We need only decide how fast to develop them, how much to charge for them.)

Decline of U.S.

Finally — in part because of these two changes but only just in part — a third change that Peter Wiles has called "the declining self-confidence of the super-powers".