

Canada charts its own course

Living next to the most powerful nation in the world has its advantages and disadvantages. It certainly helps Canada economically to be close to the commercial powerhouse that is the United States. Traditionally, Canada has tried to avoid too close a relationship, economically and politically with the United States. In the economic realm, this has prompted the search for 'counterweights' to the preponderant American influence on the Canadian economy and a preference for multilateralism and alternative markets in trade. Politically, Canadian governments have had to consider the limits of sympathy for American policy. Thus, for example, Canada maintained its diplomatic and commercial relations with Cuba after Fidel Castro came to power; Canada also embarked on major sales of wheat to China, when American policy was distinctly hostile to both communist states. When the United States became increasingly mired in the Vietnam War, Lester Pearson (by then prime minister) attempted, unsuccessfully, to prod the American government to adopt a more conciliatory approach. That dissent was not welcomed in Washington.

But, there were many positive aspects to Ottawa's relations with the U.S. during this period — one was the Auto Pact. Signed in 1965, the agreement set up free trade in cars and car parts between the two nations. One result of this was that large numbers of cars made in Canada were sold in the U.S., providing much-needed jobs for Canadian autoworkers.

The Trudeau era

Lester Pearson retired in 1968 and Pierre Trudeau became prime minister. Unconvinced that Canada's traditional approach to international affairs served Canada's interests and reflected Canadian attitudes, Trudeau launched a review of Canada's foreign policy. In 1970, Canada's goals were spelled out: they were to "foster economic growth, safeguard sovereignty and independence, work for peace and security, promote social justice, enhance the quality of life, [and] ensure a harmonious environment."

Trudeau also worked, in the words of his biographer George Radwanski, "to further the cause of national unity at home by ensuring that Canada [maintained] a fully bicultural presence abroad..." New links were forged with the nations of the Pacific Rim, Latin America, and francophone Africa. Ties with these regions reflected the growth in their importance as source countries for immigrants. Canada increasingly projected it-

self to the world as a multicultural and bilingual nation.

While Canada grew in stature on the world stage, especially among developing nations, its relations with the United States were sometimes strained. Government policy reflected the concern of many Canadians that American interests had too much control of Canada's economy. The Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) and the National Energy Programme (NEP) addressed that concern. Both were unpopular in the United States, as well as in parts of Canada.

Though it had been critical of 'Pearsonian internationalism' at the outset, the Trudeau government devoted increasing attention to the lessening of international tensions (both in the context of the Cold War between East and West and in the dialogue between developed countries of the North and the less-developed countries of the South). Particularly in his final years in office, the prime minister assigned a personal priority to this work, though his 'Peace Mission' bore little fruit.

Strengthening international ties

In recent years, Canada has continued to look outward in foreign policy. It has encouraged the development of La Francophonie — an organization of French-speaking nations which held its second summit meeting in Quebec in 1987. There has been a continuation of strong support for the Commonwealth and the United Nations. And, in 1990, Canada joined the Organization of American States.

Canada has also worked for better trading relations among nations of the world. Through groups such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and G7 (a group of the Western world's seven leading economies) Canada has pushed for freer international trade. However, the growth in regional trading blocks, such as the European Community, has tended to encourage more protectionism in world commerce. For its part, the Canadian government negotiated a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States which came into effect in 1989.

The FTA reflects the development of friendlier relations with the United States which has taken place since Brian Mulroney became prime minister in 1984. The relaxation of foreign investment rules and an opening of the oil and gas industry have also been welcomed in the United States.

Canada has matured as a nation in the 60 years since the Statute of Westminster was proclaimed. One reflection of that increasing maturity has been a greater willingness to accept responsibility and to make commitments as part of the international community of nations. Throughout this period, our foreign policy has reflected the values and concerns Canadians have in common.

Additional information on the development of Canada's foreign policy may be obtained from the Foreign Policy Communication Division, External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ont., K1A 0G2



External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

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