

2. There were subtle changes in the way we began to perceive our multilateral vocation. Within some of the government's pronouncements, there were increasing echoes of a sort of incipient neutralism. First heard in the defence policy review in the early Trudeau years, there was a growing tendency to present ourselves as standing equipoised between the two superpowers, morally at arm's length from the two, so to speak. While it is true that these expressions were more characteristic of the outlook of Mr. Trudeau than his foreign ministers, they found some resonance within the Department of External Affairs. If anti-Americanism was not a typical state of mind among our diplomats, it is nevertheless the case that, in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, a number of officers sometimes gave the impression that they judged the legitimacy of our foreign policy by the extent to which it differed from that of the U.S. The effect of this was to distort and, in some respects, undermine the rationale underlying our historic commitment to multilateralism.

Notwithstanding these changing nuances, multilateralism remained the constant behind our foreign policy during all these years. But the sense of vulnerability of our nationhood to the pervasive influences of the U.S. was, so to speak, the constant behind the constant.

During these decades there was a third constant in our foreign policy, and it also arose from our relationship with the United States.

This constant concerned the way in which Canada tried to manage the American relationship, and it came down to this: the best method for getting along with our sprawling, unpredictable and sometimes insensitive neighbour was to follow the diplomatic way. In other words, the relationship was best managed by utilizing diplomatic skills, maintaining maximum control over our own negotiating position and, above all, not relying on intermediation in any form other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

As that brilliant practitioner of the diplomatic arts, John Holmes, put it, "Our wordly wisdom has been that no mechanisms provide a valid alternative to the rough and tumble of diplomacy." Formal