

Clark's woes: just bad luck or Mulroney plan?

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OTTAWA — One of these days, the greyish 43-page tome grandly titled *Competitiveness and Security: Directions for Canada's International Relations* will limp into a special committee of MPs and Senators, maimed and stripped of much of its substance even before it reaches the starting gate.

In a cruel but unintended irony, the inauspicious status of the policy paper on Canadian foreign policy is a mirror image of the inauspicious and maimed status of its sponsor, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark.

ANALYSIS

Although it was originally intended as a bold vehicle to raise the profile of Canadian foreign policy and to develop a public constituency for major change, the paper has been rinsed of sparkle or imagination and left with the bare bones of compromise, back-peddling, contradictions and simplistic assertions.

Similarly, its patron, Mr. Clark, was given the job of heading foreign affairs because the post's prestige was deemed fitting for a former prime minister who,

while he lost the big round, had a still substantial following within the Conservative Party and credibility as a policy man.

As External Affairs Minister, Mr. Clark could be kept occupied flying around the world in lofty pursuits well out of the domestic spotlight on Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

But, almost from the day the new Government was sworn in last September, Mr. Clark has attracted controversy (much of it his own doing) and has been continuously upstaged, contradicted or humiliated.

Mr. Clark's hobbling is real. But the question that remains is whether it is

intentional — a product of Mr. Mulroney's long memory, bursting ego and cleverness — or whether it is happenstance, the cumulative result of Mr. Clark's short suit in those two elements of successful politics: luck and timing.

There are some insiders who say Mr. Mulroney has never forgiven Mr. Clark for beating him for the Conservative leadership in 1978 and that the difficulties Mr. Clark has endured since September result from more than benign neglect.

But one senior bureaucrat who has worked with both Mr. Clark and Mr. Mulroney does not buy the conspiracy theory. "It's more that Mr. Clark is a terribly unlucky man — he reminds me of

that cartoon character who always has the cloud over his head."

The diminution of Mr. Clark by Mr. Mulroney can be traced back to before the Tories assumed power. Mr. Mulroney had assigned Mr. Clark to undertake a major study of Canada's role in the global context, especially with regard to arms control and disarmament, while the Tories were still in opposition, in part a response to the initiatives taken by former prime minister Pierre Trudeau. But Mr. Mulroney killed the report and it was never made public.

Some of Mr. Clark's senior advisers are

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