

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 World War II 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 relationship with the United States. These were sensible relationships, 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 attenuated to the point that it can no longer be a cornerstone of policy although it remains a useful institution, particularly for its smaller members. The third world is no longer divided into spheres of influence by the white nations. In no sense a power bloc, it is nevertheless a force to be reckoned with.

The NATO Alliance maintains its strength and solidarity, but as evidenced by the slow but encouraging progress toward an East-West Conference on co-operation and security in Europe, it has changed direction from confrontation to negotiation.