

1. Introduction

Does the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have a continuing place in Canadian economic diplomacy? Does economic diplomacy have anything to do with making the peace in the 1990s? When Lester Pearson and John Holmes told the story, international economic cooperation formed one of the faces of peace. Since the end of the Second World War, the making of the peace has been one of the preeminent objectives of Canadian foreign policy, and economic diplomacy has been made to serve the cause of peace as well as of prosperity. Canada does not seek to dominate other states, nor do Canadians believe that their own security can be achieved at the expense of others. The way Canadians conduct themselves at home says much about how they try to achieve their goals in the world.² What they want for themselves they want for others, and what Canadians want is peace, order and good government. It would be consistent with Pearsonian internationalism to argue that the OECD is part of the multilateral architecture of peace and that it contributes to the good governance of the global political system. The purpose of this paper is to show how such an argument could be constructed and evaluated.

The economic dimension of Pearsonian internationalism has deep liberal roots, but proofs of the liberal faith are not easy. When accepting his Nobel Peace Prize, Pearson acknowledged that although "we no longer stress so much economic factors as the direct cause of war, that does not lessen their importance in the maintenance of a creative and enduring peace. Men may not now go to war for trade, but lack of trade may help to breed the conditions in which men do go to war."³ Pearson stated this belief having in mind the liberal arguments of Richard Cobden from the 1840s and his own experience of the 1930s, an experience shared by the other leaders of his generation who created the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) after the war, and who later created the OECD out of the ashes of the OEEC. Have these liberal beliefs been vindicated?

It is easy enough to correlate the life span of the OEEC and the OECD with an extraordinarily long period of peace among their members, but it would be just as easy to argue that the correlation is spurious.⁴ Similar pitfalls would attend an attempt to correlate the life span of these organizations with the lengthy period of prosperity experienced in the advanced industrial countries. If international order is made by the powerful, then there is no place for the OECD, and no role for Canada. Even if the OEEC/OECD influence on both peace and prosperity were accepted by assumption, it would still be important to ask how the organizations achieved the effects attributed to them. This problem can be divided in two, by looking for evidence of their contributions both to prosperity and to international governance as separate elements of the OEEC/OECD role "in the maintenance of a creative and enduring peace."