

Canada in the United Nations

September 1989

A Commitment to Multilateralism

A National Instinct and a Vocation

The evolution of Canada's foreign policy has been motivated by the desire to achieve greater balance in its relationships with other countries. Until early this century, Canada's international relations were largely limited to its neighbour to the south, to the U.K. and France through its historical ties and with those countries of Europe which were the source of Canada's growing population and therefore its social and cultural expressions.

As Canada gradually moved towards greater political independence these relationships proved too confining. Canadians realized that they were capable of sustaining a more substantial involvement in international affairs and of making a positive contribution to international peace and security. They warmly embraced the idea of a United Nations, and participated actively in its creation and in the drafting of its Charter.

During the following two decades Canada became an active multilateralist and discovered the contribution it could make as a respected middle power. It acted effectively when it came to providing relief and rehabilitation to war shattered Europe. It was also a middle power in the sense of its sensible and moderate attitudes on many issues arising in the UN system such as decolonization, disarmament, and various threats to peace.

Canada earned a solid reputation for successful mediation, conciliation and good offices on many contentious issues at the UN. For example, in 1955, Canada led the "small power revolt" to break the impasse which had been blocking the admission of new members.

More recently, Canada established a solid record in development assistance and other forms of cooperation between North and South. In response to the financial crisis faced by the United Nations during the past few years, Canada has offered a range of innovative solutions and strongly supported all attempts at effective reform. Above all, it has pursued its need to develop countervailing balance in its foreign policy by expanding its diplomatic and trade relations worldwide, and by participating in as many international organizations or groupings of nations as it could.

Canada is the only nation that is a member of the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, the OECD, and the 'Group of Seven' industrialized countries. It participates actively in the international financial institutions in every region of the world. It has also sought special relationships, as observer or external associate, with a variety of regional organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Economic Community, and the Organization of American States. In 1989, for the first time, Canada was invited as a guest to the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. These various memberships provide it with unique credentials as a country that can foster understanding and engage in the search for solutions to the most serious threats to international security.

Canada Welcomes the World

These unique credentials were highlighted recently, when statesmen from around the world met at three summits hosted by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

In September 1987, forty heads of state and heads of government from countries using French as a common language met in Quebec City and addressed an array of international political and economic issues. The meeting represented an important affirmation of solidarity among francophone nations in the world.

Thirty-seven heads of government of the Commonwealth met the next month in Vancouver. Prime Minister Mulroney set the tone of the meeting by clearly signalling Canada's willingness to lead Commonwealth efforts against apartheid in South Africa and

Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and other world leaders at the 1987 Commonwealth Summit in Vancouver.

