

Some Canadian attitudes towards foreign policy were developed when the world was smaller and Canada's interests were more limited. In the 1940's and 1950's Europe was at the centre of the world, and the compelling international challenge was to rebuild Europe after a devastating war, and strengthen or establish international institutions like the UN, and the world trading system. The Colombo Plan began our focus on international development, or aid in 1950. Before that, Canadian interests in Asia, Africa, or Latin America were left largely to traders, teachers, missionaries or others outside government.

Canada and the world have changed dramatically since those time. For more than ten years now, we have drawn more new citizens from Asia than from Europe, and our trade across the Pacific exceeds our trade across the Atlantic. We have become extensively involved in helping people in Africa, Asia and the Americas overcome disease and povety and our role in international organizations has increased to the point that we are among a small handful of nations upon whom the world counts to make multilateral organizations work.

Of course we pursue our interests on the large and well-lit stages of international life - working with the United States, with Europe, with Japan, within the powerful Group of Seven of the Economic Summit. Those, indeed, consume most of our attention in foreign policy. And no one should ever discount their importance.

But much of what is distinctive about Canada's international identity emerges on smaller stages - in dramas where, often, Canada's contribution makes a decisive difference.

That is why we have been so active in Southern Africa. In the final analysis, apartheid will be ended by the people of that region, black and white. But there is no doubt that Canada's presence, our steady pressure, our tangible practical support for the opponents of apartheid, have helped the forces of peaceful change. We could have stood back from sanctions, as other Western countries did. We could have walked away in moral outrage, as some Canadians proposed. Instead, we apply Canada's pressure and prestige, steadily and reasonably, seeking to draw whites away from fear and prejudice, and to draw blacks away from fear and violence.

That is also why Canada sought a place at the Peace Conference on Cambodia, and Co-chaired the Committee which designed a system of peacekeeping and verification.

And that is why we are increasing our role in Latin America, and have decided to join the Organization of American States.

Some Canadians believe that Latin America is not a priority for Canada, and that we have neither major interests nor real influence there. We disagree.

Many of the problems which plague the globe have a direct relation to Latin America.