



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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## CANADA - A MIDDLE POWER IN A CHANGING WORLD

An Address by the Honorable Mitchell Sharp,  
Secretary of State for External Affairs, to  
the Council on Foreign Affairs, New York,  
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When Canada's Prime Minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, addressed the National Press Club in Washington earlier this year, he said that Canada is rather in the position of someone sharing a bed with an elephant; however well-disposed the beast is, every twitch and grunt affects you. His colorful language exactly describes the situation between our two countries. When your President addresses the nation on television, our networks carry the program as a matter of course. This isn't just a friendly gesture to a neighbor; it isn't just because Canadians take a neighborly interest in American affairs; it is because everything the United States does and everything your President says is of direct and immediate importance to us and, for that matter, to every country on earth.

Nothing is in itself more important to Canada than our relation with the United States. It is probably the closest and most complex relation existing between any two nations. It covers the whole spectrum of affairs, from the maintenance of jointly-owned border monuments to the orderly development and effective defence of the North American continent. As Canada's Foreign Minister, I am also very aware of your country's position as leader of the Western nations and as a preponderant influence in the world as a whole. Canada is a sovereign nation and acts as such. It is also, we like to think, a pragmatic and realistic nation. We pursue a foreign policy designed to promote our own national interest, but we know that in the development of every aspect of our foreign policy the foreign policy objectives, initiatives and activities of the United States must be taken into account.

Canada is actively carrying on negotiations in Stockholm aimed at an exchange of diplomats between Ottawa and Peking. How these negotiations will end remains to be seen. I mention them here only by way of example. In this particular case, the views of my Government are at variance with the views of yours but that doesn't mean that we failed to take the United States position into account. Exchanges between our governments on this subject have been - to

use a phrase the Soviets like - frank and comradely. The important thing is that, after considering your position carefully, we followed the course that we believe serves our national interest and that your Government, despite its preponderant power and its reservations as to the course we are following, has respected our right to pursue that course.

The Communist world, and indeed other countries that know better, like to refer to Canada as a satellite of the United States. This suits their purpose. When Prague dared to differ ideologically with Moscow, it encountered the mailed fist of Soviet armed might and Czechoslovakia's satellite status was affirmed before the whole world. When Ottawa and Washington differ, there is straight talk - and so there should be - but the principle of sovereignty is honored in the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

Canada's right to differ from the United States is important - perhaps more to us than to you. But I don't want to dwell on it any further. More important is that Canada and the United States share the same great national objectives and the same hopes for mankind. Where we shall often differ is in the means by which each of our countries works toward the fulfilment of these objectives and these hopes.

The title of my address suggests that Canada accepts its role as a "middle" power. I use the term because it is in general currency. I am not sure, however, that it has much real meaning in today's world.

There is a faintly old-fashioned ring about classifying countries as great, middle or small powers. In the nineteenth century, nations were ranked by the size of their fleets and there were only five or six "great powers". They were the ones with battleships. Now the battleships have gone and so has the whole order that they symbolized. One of the really striking developments on the world scene in the past 25 years is the advent of vastly greater numbers of independent states. It is very much more difficult, if not impossible, to classify them as great, middle or small powers.

The conception of degrees of "power" remains. It is still true that nations have varying capacities to influence the course of events outside their own borders. None of us is completely independent. The actions of every nation impinge increasingly on the others, and not even the greatest powers can entirely disregard the interplay of national decisions.

The capacity of a state to influence other states rests fundamentally on three factors: economic capacity; military strength and political influence.

No nation can be considered a power of consequence unless it has a measure of capacity in all three. Nevertheless, a nation can place great emphasis on one sphere of activity and much less on the others. It is also possible for a country to be compelled by circumstances to rely heavily on one source of national strength.

There are cases of nations which have considerable economic capacity but have chosen not to acquire or to employ military strength. Postwar Japan is an economic power of major proportions which has decided to maintain only modest military forces and to rely on the United States for its security require-

ments. Britain, on the other hand, is a nation whose economic and military strength has undergone a relative decline. But British political influence is still very significant. We have other states militarily very strong in relation to their economic capacity and their political influence. Israel is an interesting example. The circumstances of that country's recent history have compelled it to devote an extremely high proportion of its resources to military purposes in order to survive.

In Israel we also have an example of another dimension to the whole question of the "power" of modern states - the geographical dimension. A nation may play an important part in some region of the world because of its capacity in one or more of the three areas I mentioned a moment ago, but its effective influence may not extend much beyond the region. Israel's military capacity relative to its neighbors is obviously very high and for this, as well as for other reasons, Israel is a key country in the Middle East. On the other hand, in terms of its size and population, Israel must be considered as a small country, measured on the world scale.

Looking at the world today in the light of the variables I have referred to, it appears that there are really only two great powers - the United States and the U.S.S.R. They are the only countries which are at the same time immensely strong in economic, military and political terms and have the capacity to exert their strength all over the world. They alone - at least in the immediate future - have the supreme ability to exchange intercontinental nuclear annihilation. It is probably more accurate to refer to the United States and the Soviet Union as "super-powers".

I doubt that there is much point in attempting to classify those nations which are not super-powers. The fact of the matter is that the vast majority of countries have the capacity to exert some influence on the international scene, either in their own geographical area or in the world in general, or in one functional field or another, and therefore they fall into an indeterminate classification. We are nearly all middle powers, apart from the two giants at the one end and, at the other, a certain number of very small states which are not capable of exerting influence to any significant degree.

The capacity of the super-powers to affect the destiny of other nations is so great that middle powers must clearly be vitally concerned about the policies of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Middle powers have a right and a duty to seek to influence the actions of the super-powers. This influence is likely to be more effective if middle powers can find ways to act collectively. Indeed, it might be taken as a general rule for middle and small powers that they can be most effective in almost every field of international activity if they act together.

Sometimes a middle power may be able to play a special role in a situation where the super-powers, locked in contest for world-wide influence, dare not make a move. Such cases are rare, however, and their importance should not be exaggerated. Canada's initiative over the Suez affair in 1956 is sometimes cited as an example of this role for a middle power, but there were very special circumstances at that time.

I have arrived by this somewhat circuitous route at the acknowledgement that Canada is probably a "middle power", however we define that term. We have become a nation with significant economic weight. We have a population of 21 million and a gross national product approaching \$70 billion, and our economy is growing at a steady rate. We offer a market of considerable proportions for the products of other countries. In a number of products we are one of the leading producers and exporters. We have resources that are attractive to capital from outside our own country. We have a prosperous economy that enables us to make a substantial contribution to international activities and development. In short, we are an economic power.

We also have an appreciable military capacity. It is not great in terms of the super-powers, but our forces are well-trained professionals, volunteers, not conscripts. They are equipped with modern weapons and capable of very effective employment in selective situations.

Canada also has a considerable capacity for political and diplomatic influence. We are a respected country in most parts of the world and in the United Nations and other international organizations. This is, perhaps, because we have no history of domination over other lands and no historic grievances to trouble our relations with other peoples.

The last few years have seen profound changes in Canada's orientation towards the rest of the world. Traditionally, Canada's external relations have been focused on the United States and Western Europe, for reasons that are obvious in terms of Canada's historical national interests. The changes that have come about reflect changes that are taking place in Canada as much as changes that are taking place in the international environment. In the last decade, there has been a tremendous surge of social dynamism in Canada's French-speaking community and particularly in the Province of Quebec. This was long overdue and has not come about without putting great strain on national unity. The effects of this new force in Canadian political life have not yet been absorbed. I don't think they ever will be or should be. For too long, Canada, with one-third of its population linguistically and culturally French, and another third of varying origin, has presented a predominately Anglo-Saxon face to the international community.

The second great influence for change in Canada affects your country as well. It is the attitude of the rising generation. My generation in Canada was brought up with a clear perception of the United States and of our roots in Western Europe; the rest of the world existed in a kind of mist, we knew it was there, we contributed our pennies to send missionaries to the heathen. The new generation, brought up to be at home in the new age of instantaneous communications, sees the whole world in sharp focus. They seem to share Henry Ford's view that "history is bunk". Historical perspective appears to have little meaning for them; they see things in terms of the present. Disregarding the historical perspective, they seem to have little faith in the future. Action now is what they call for. Governments all over the world are feeling the effects of these new attitudes - nowhere more than in Canada, with more than 65 per cent of its population under the age of 35.

It isn't an easy time for governments, and it isn't an easy time for foreign ministers. In the democratic countries, governments must take into account new attitudes at home and try to come to terms with them in shaping foreign as well as domestic policy. Democratic or not, governments must try to

keep up with rapid changes in the international community. In this environment, there is no way for Canada to creep under the friendly umbrella held up by the United States, there to be sheltered from the worst of the weather. Bombarded by domestic and international forces that we cannot control, we must find our own place to stand, and stand there as best we can. We do not stand alone; we stand next to the United States, our closest friend and ally, but in our own place, in our own way.

It is to come to terms with these new forces that Canada has been reviewing its foreign and defence policies. Some observers at home and abroad are suggesting that the process is taking too long. I don't think so. It isn't an easy process and it isn't a process that can be hurried. As always happens in these circumstances, the process of review itself is having effects on the development of our foreign policy. What we are seeing and what we shall see is not so much change of direction as enlargement of interest; not withdrawal, but diversification. Our relations with you will continue to be of first importance. After an exhaustive study, we have re-affirmed our strong support for the NATO alliance and remain as a full member. It is true that we are reducing our component in the NATO forces stationed in Europe. This represents our new assessment of the realities of the situation in Europe and in Canada and, in the end, our appreciation of our own priorities and national interests. We are not "bugging-out" of NATO or retreating into isolationism or continentalism. Our approach to the Peking Government is perhaps the most visible and dramatic evidence of enlargement. Less obvious and less exciting, but just as important, are our new initiatives in francophone Africa, our growing contacts with Japan and other countries in Asia, our new approach to the Latin American countries, our developing dialogue with the Eastern European powers and the steady increase in our aid to developing countries.

This is quite a catalogue for a middle power, and it is by no means exhaustive. Looking, on the one hand, at our global sphere of activity (like the United States, Canada is at once an Atlantic, Pacific, Arctic and American nation) and, on the other, at our limited resources, it is not surprising that we turn to the multilateral institutions as a means whereby we hope to foster our objectives. We look, for example, to NATO to help maintain the precarious balance upon which global security rests and as an instrument to further the détente that must come if our common security is to be more surely based.

Above all we have looked to the United Nations. In my speech in the general debate at the current Assembly, I expressed as frankly and as cogently as I could the profound uneasiness Canada feels about the present and future effectiveness of the organization. The speech seems to have touched a sensitive nerve, since it has been referred to and reinforced by subsequent speakers in the debate. The United Nations must strengthen and renew itself if it is to deal with the problems of the present and the future, if it is to keep the peace and improve the conditions of life on earth. It is the member nations that will determine whether or not this is to be done. Canada is now engaged in setting out some of the practical steps that can be taken to overcome the weaknesses and difficulties besetting the organization. I made plain to the General Assembly that Canada makes its criticisms as a loyal member of the United Nations and that our faith in the capacity of the organization to renew itself is unimpaired.

There is a tendency in my country to equate an independent foreign policy for Canada with a policy at variance with that of the United States - - by some, indeed, as a policy opposed to that of the United States. Similarly, I have observed in the United States a tendency to feel disappointed when Canadian foreign policy on a specific issue differs from yours, as though your best friend had let you down. May I suggest that these are superficial views?

As Canadians, we run the risk of confusing difference from the United States with independence. In the United States, you may run the risk of looking upon our genuine independence as lack of sympathy with or understanding of the responsibilities of a super-power.

Canada has no pretensions to world power or influence. We strive to live within our resources and to use those limited resources to advance the interests we hold in high esteem, the most important being world peace and development. At the moment, we are reassessing our role and redefining our objectives.

So is the United States, if I read the signs right. The review of your foreign policy may not be quite so explicitly undertaken as is ours, but the reasons are much the same. The world is changing; the United States and Canada are changing with it. These changes have to be assessed in order to determine how our countries can best pursue their natural interests in the years to come. I shall not be surprised if our respective foreign policies tend in the future, as in the past, to complement one another, notably in pursuit of world peace and development.

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