



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA AND THE PACIFIC: AGENDA FOR THE EIGHTIES

An Address by Mr. A.E. Gotlieb, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to a Seminar at the University of Toronto – York University – Toronto, April 16, 1981

...In the postwar period Canada's Pacific personality has reached a point of considerable complexity. The economic/commercial fact is perhaps the most obvious and the activity of the private sector reflects its importance. In the Asia/Pacific region, the countries of which enjoy a gross national product now close to 75 per cent of that of the United States, Japan is our second most important trading partner, while economic relations with the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN], Korea, India, China, Australia and New Zealand have been developing rapidly and offer the potential for continued expansion and growth. Indeed, most relevant indicators suggest that the dynamism of the Asia/Pacific region will not falter and will represent an ever-growing attraction for Canadian trade and investment.

Political ties

The political dimension of our relations with this area, which is fundamental to the promotion of Canadian interests, has also developed considerably. We have strong political ties with many Asia/Pacific nations and an active concern for events which challenge regional peace and security. Our commitment to the rule of law in international relations and collective security has drawn us into United Nations supervisory exercises both in Northwest and Southwest Asia, as well as into the United Nations emergency operation in Korea in the early 1950s. We recognized the People's Republic of China long before most of our friends in the West and the establishment of relations allowed us to make efforts to expand the international perceptions of the Peking government. In the early 1970s it became clear that Canadian and Japanese interests in the Pacific were intersecting more and more and a conscious effort was made to enhance the political aspects of relations. Most recently ASEAN has achieved a level of internal cohesion and co-operation that no one could have expected only five years ago. Canada has supported this development and the Secretary of State for External Affairs last year attended meetings with his ASEAN counterparts within the context of their foreign ministers' consultations. He will be meeting them again in Manila this June and we expect that this will become an annual event on the minister's calendar.

Cultural ties

There have also been efforts to expand activity by our cultural, academic and media communities. Cultural exchanges are increasing, Asian studies are taking a foothold in some Canadian universities and there are indications that the Canadian media are following more closely some aspects of Asia/Pacific affairs. In addition, provincial governments, particularly those of the Canadian West, are taking a much more active interest in this part of the world.

Some might ask why this range of activity is necessary; what relevance it has to the development of relations. It is our conviction that the full potential to Canada of the

Asia/Pacific community can only be realized if Canadians on the one side and Asians on the other know a great deal more about each other. This sustained program of action is aimed at developing a more balanced and substantive totality of relationships intended to broaden significantly the base of mutual knowledge, appreciation and respect between us. The basic objective is to build a sense of confidence in Canada and in our firm and continuing commitment to the area. It is our conclusion that, over time, such a pattern could significantly increase two-way understanding and would probably give Canada a greater opportunity to be considered as a serious partner for economic and political co-operation. In concrete and specific terms, no one does business with a stranger and no one seeks political solutions to regional or global problems with partners in whom one has limited trust and confidence because of limited knowledge.

**Increasing
relevance**

In reviewing the present state of affairs I think it is safe to say that it is now widely accepted that the Asia/Pacific region has acquired an increasing relevance for Canadians. In many ways this is a reaffirmation of the historic westward thrust of Canadian development. In contemporary terms, as the markets of Asia attract greater attention as a result of increasingly important economic developments in Western Canada, it is as desirable as it is inevitable that the East-West dimension of the Canadian outlook should be strengthened. Call it Third Option, if you will, the fact of the matter is that Canada is more and more looking westward, within itself, and beyond to the world of the Pacific. This has obvious and important consequences for foreign policy formulation and for the public attitudes on which these policies ultimately rest.

Considerations such as these have brought us to the conclusion that a renewed emphasis on the system of our bilateral relationships will be increasingly necessary during the decade on which we have embarked. And nowhere is the potential usefulness of a bilateralism emphasis in developing relationships more evident than in the Asia/Pacific world. There appears to be widespread agreement about the significance and desirability of Canada's westward foreign policy thrust; there is also a general sense of dissatisfaction that the potential has not been fully exploited and that we are not doing as well in this part of the world as we might. In attempting to analyze "what is missing" I would like to touch briefly on some of the expectations of the countries in the Asia/Pacific community, on the Canadian environment and finally on the experience of two of our major partners in the region, as well as competitors, Japan and Australia.

What is missing

One major objective of most nations in the Asia/Pacific region is to obtain a strong commitment from countries such as Canada to provide firm, substantive and public support for their integrity, stability and economic wellbeing. But their expectations go far beyond that basic point. They also have a rich cultural and historical heritage of which they are justifiably proud and they expect others to understand and appreciate that fact. This understanding is essential in Canada if we are to be successful in having these countries look at us in a way which will support Canadian aspirations.

Within Canada the principal historical influences have been of European origin. That fact continues to colour our society. Elementary and high school curricula across

the country develop history and political science programs with a heavy European content. We study German, Spanish and Italian in our high schools, with a few brave souls even devoting attention to the language of Julius Caesar. On a broader basis our legal profession draws from the well of European experience, our political system looks to Westminster as the "Mother of Parliaments" and Canada's leading professional theatre is devoted to the works of one of Elizabethan England's more successful dramatists.

On the other hand the Asian influence upon Canada has been almost non-existent. Asian philosophy has not been a factor in shaping our social structures and the delights of Asian literature are foreign to the vast majority of us. Asian languages in the pre-college level are generally ignored, while even in post-secondary institutions only a brave few undertake the study of Chinese and Japanese. It is instructive to note that in 1978, 295 of the 417 students studying Japanese in Canadian universities were in first year, with only seven studying at the fourth year level.

In spite of the efforts which have been made in recent years, it seems to me that we have so far failed to invest in the Asia/Pacific region the intellectual and cultural capital it deserves. Given this situation it is not surprising that the understanding of the Asian reality in Canada is sadly lacking in comparison to that of Europe. Without firmly-based cultural foundations and the historical network of shared experiences there is little to encourage our artists, academics and other professionals to share their experience with Asian colleagues.

Within this context it is most interesting to look at the example of Japan and Australia which, like Canada, experienced a dramatic shift in the 1970s in certain aspects of their relations with the Asia/Pacific world and which have attempted to encourage and develop those relations across a broad and textured front.

Example of
Japan

Japan's economic and political interests in the region require no explanation. It is interesting to note however that, despite the intensity of activity in these areas, the Japanese concluded that a broader approach was required and that enhanced efforts had to be made to develop better understanding and awareness.

A variety of institutions are involved in this effort on the Japanese side, the most well-known being the Japan Foundation, which dispenses 37 per cent of its annual budget of more than \$25 million in Asia. The Foundation, funded by a \$200-million endowment supplied by the government and private industry, supports academic, linguistic and cultural exchanges which seek to insure that the common elements shared by all Asians is dramatized, and that the unique qualities of the Japanese experience are understood and appreciated. The Foundation is an independent organization but works closely with the Foreign Ministry in establishing its objectives and is guided by Japanese embassies in countries where there is no resident Fund office.

The ASEAN countries receive particular attention from the Japan Foundation. In addition, other programs have been initiated with ASEAN to complement its efforts. These include a cultural fund with a \$30-million endowment to promote inter-

ASEAN cultural exchanges; a scholarship fund dispensing \$1 million annually in ASEAN and applicable anywhere in the world; and a cultural grants program to develop the infrastructure necessary to further cultural exchange programs throughout Southeast Asia.

**Example of
Australia**

Since Australia and Canada are perhaps more comparable than Canada and Japan, the Australian experience may be even more relevant to our discussion.

By the mid-1970s, a variety of factors had made it obvious to Canberra that relations with Japan would be of increasing importance and that efforts would have to be made to insure their rational development and successful management. A committee was established by the government which recommended, among other things, that an Australia/Japan Foundation be established to give texture and depth to a relationship which had become too narrowly focused on economic issues. The committee concluded that an economic superstructure was a very unsteady creation without a firm foundation of mutual understanding, and awareness of the other country as a society of individuals with cultural interests, professional concerns and family problems. In 1976, an Act of Parliament established this Foundation which was to be funded annually by both government and private sources. By 1980 its annual income totalled \$1.5 million.

In the few years since its establishment it has developed a variety of imaginative programs. A common interests program promotes and funds contacts between Japanese and Australians of similar interests — everything from firemen to craftsmen, medical researchers to legal librarians, martial arts enthusiasts to aficionados of the tea ceremony. A media program promotes cross-fertilization among journalists and media organizations, while support for Japanese language studies at Australia National University incorporates residence in Japan in the program. This brief description touches only the surface of the broad range of activities that have been put into place. I might add that the Australia experience with this Foundation has been so successful that an Australia/China Foundation with similar objectives has been recently established.

I have not mentioned the United States but it should be noted that the U.S.A. has had for years a number of very large and, in some instances, privately funded foundations promoting relations with Asia and the Pacific.

In looking at "what is missing" in Canada's efforts to meet the opportunities in this region I would be less than candid were I to suggest that our own thinking has not been influenced by Japan and Australia. The initiatives of these countries in expanding the range of their intellectual and cultural activities in the region have been most informative.

**Canada founda-
tion idea**

As a result of these assessments Dr. MacGuigan has, in recent months, reviewed the idea of establishing a foundation in Canada that would not be limited to one nation but rather would focus on the Asia/Pacific region. He found considerable interest in this concept at the Pacific Rim Opportunities Conference in Vancouver last November and subsequently there have been additional expressions of support. This

positive reaction has encouraged him to view favourably the commissioning of a study which we hope will be under way soon.

Although our thinking is in a preliminary stage, we consider that the potential benefits of such a foundation could be significant. I would be very interested to know if you share this view.

Broadly stated, the purpose of a Canada foundation for Asia and the Pacific would be to develop programs aimed at increasing the understanding of Canada to those countries and to develop a greater knowledge and awareness of those countries amongst Canadians. It would serve as a symbol of Canada's commitment to the countries and peoples of the Asia/Pacific world and the development of more sophisticated and stable longer-term relationships which could be beneficial to all concerned. I am not suggesting that a foundation would be a panacea in meeting all of the difficulties which we face in meeting our objectives. Nor do I look upon this initiative as a short-term solution; it would be an investment reflecting not only our interest in the region but also our confidence in the longer-term prospects for enhanced co-operation.

I believe it would be wise to give such a foundation considerable autonomy from government direction, although if federal funds were involved there would have to be some consistency with general government policy.

Need for support

This is of course only a thumbnail sketch of our thinking at this point which I must stress is still notional. The first requirement in developing such a concept would be a decision as to the nature and scope of the foundation's purposes. The second is to ascertain the degree of interest in Canada from those at all levels of government and the private sector who would be prepared to participate in such an undertaking. Needless to say we see this as a collaborative effort requiring the support of the various Canadian communities with interests in Asia and the Pacific. As I mentioned earlier I would be grateful for views you might have on the creation of the type of foundation I have outlined.

I want to assure you that our motives are far from abstract and effete. The stimulation of mutual awareness should expose to a much broader spectrum of Canadians, as well as people from the region, a core of common interests, shared values and mutual concerns which lie just beneath the surface differences of language, culture and tradition. This in itself could make a significant contribution to Canada's economic and political objectives in this important part of the world.

In conclusion I would only restate our view that Canada's relations with the countries of the Asia/Pacific world have become increasingly complex over the past two decades. There is little doubt of the potential for further collaboration and of the growing opportunities in the region for Canada. However, many consider that we have fallen short in pursuing our interests and that more needs to be done to assist in meeting our expectations. Imagination and innovation will be required in meeting this challenge. I would suggest that the intellectual, cultural and social awareness which could be stimulated by a Canadian foundation for Asia and the Pacific could make an important contribution to the process.

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