

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire
d'État aux
Affaires
extérieures

91/64

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY

**THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE CONFERENCE COMMEMORATING
THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE STATUTE OF WESTMINSTER**

**TORONTO, Ontario
December 10, 1991**

Affaires extérieures et
Commerce extérieur Canada
External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

Canada

Has Canada made a difference? Of course we have! Can you imagine the French or the British or the Japanese or the Americans or even the Brazilians asking such a question? They would believe that even asking the question would tarnish the names of their heroes, undermine their legends, weaken their national spirit.

The very existence of Canada -- its languages, its cultures, its values, its tolerant spirit, its standards of behaviour -- has represented an independent voice and has constituted something different, something special, for the larger world. By freely forging a united nation based on respect for diversity, Canadians bring a special sensitivity to other problems in the world.

For proof of this claim, ask those who look to us from afar. Ask the Cypriots who have raised their children in peace because we have stood guard. Ask those Ethiopians and Bangladeshis whose children have been nourished in the face of potential starvation. Ask the democrats of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and Chile whose flame of hope we kept alive during the dark years. Or ask the Europeans, who see in Canada a society with the vitality and energy of the New World, but one that respects the values and traditions of the Old World.

Like other countries, Canada's foreign policy is driven by the need to protect and promote our national values and interests. Canada has always believed that a stable, peaceful world, based on fundamental human values, is in its own best interests. Our efforts to encourage international acceptance of moderation, tolerance and the rule of law are rooted in our own domestic traditions.

Our pursuit of political and economic security through multilateral systems based upon recognized rules is not simply self-serving. Canadians are convinced that a world so forged will also be to the advantage of the broader international community.

So perhaps a better question, a divided question, would be: Has Canada, in pursuit of its foreign policy goals, made a measurable difference to the well-being of Canadians, and, in so doing, has it had any measurable impact on the course of human history? In my view, the answer is undoubtedly "yes."

The early years of Canadian foreign policy witnessed the gradual evolution of an independent view of the world, devised by Canadians to serve Canadian rather than imperial interests.

In the early stages of this evolution, we began to take decisions critical to our own nation-building, from immigration and tariff questions to the management of our own war effort during World War I. It was indeed in the muddy and bloody trenches of that war that our mettle was tested, our character was indelibly defined, and we came of age as a people and a nation.

The Statute of Westminster itself was, in fact, a well-earned and formal codification of the reality that had developed during the early part of the century. We were by then unique, different,

ourselves. We were Canada, and few outside our borders doubted our independent, mature and legitimate voice.

During the 1930s, Canada validated its individuality further on the international stage. And, when we went to war again in 1939, there was no question about who made the decision to send Canadians abroad -- the decision was unequivocally "made in Canada."

Our war effort, relative to our size, was unparalleled. Extraordinarily, we emerged from that conflict with the fourth-most powerful military machine in the world. But militarism was neither the lesson we wished to learn nor the vocation we chose to follow. The suffering, loss of human life and degradation of human decency that the war visited upon the world gave us renewed objectives and visions, albeit deeply rooted in traditional Canadian values. We became strong advocates of multilateralism, believers in security through alliances. We petitioned for open, liberal trading regimes and became, over time, leaders in arguing for worldwide covenants guaranteeing respect for basic human values.

Our skills and success at war made us believers in peace.

Those who led us out of the war and into the peace recognized that, in spite of our momentary power, we were neither by size nor by leaning a great military nation. We chose, instead, to assure our own defence within the context of a greater collective commitment, and to use our skills and capabilities to help preserve peace elsewhere. In the post-war period, we quickly earned an envied reputation as a nation of peacekeepers. In so doing we were extending the values on which we had built our own country into the international arena.

Scholars have heralded the "independent" nature of certain key foreign policy decisions taken by Canada. The 1956 Suez Crisis is a case in point. But we did not take action at the time of Suez, or in South Africa's membership in the Commonwealth, or, indeed, in our relations with Cuba, merely to demonstrate "independence." We took the actions we did because of the values and interests we believed to be at stake, and with a clear recognition that we could influence the overall course of international events.

Canada's leadership in the fight against apartheid in South Africa goes back to the days of John Diefenbaker and is consistent with a strong Canadian concern for human rights and social justice, which I have continued to pursue as Chair of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers. Our forward-looking stance on non-proliferation and weapons transfers in the wake of the Gulf War, and, indeed, our recent insistence to a reluctant world that the Yugoslav Crisis be considered by the United Nations Security Council -- these are just a few of the more recent examples of how Canada's foreign policy has diverged from our traditional friends and allies, and has had real impact on the unfolding of events.

But we were not searching for divergence simply for the sake of being different. In all of those cases, we were acting in what we

believed to be Canada's own best interest. And if that self-interest has consistently been best served by reinforcing the rule of international law, it is Canadians at large who have insisted that their values be projected externally. They must be credited for the respected stature that Canada enjoys in the world community and our success in making our foreign policy a source of shared national pride.

Just as we have diverged from friends when our values and interests so suggested, so too have we converged with them in pursuit of shared goals and common objectives when our values and interests have suggested common responses. From a collective effort in the Gulf War to shared efforts to fight tyranny and terrorism, our foreign policy has been no less "independent" when we have stood side-by-side with friends and allies. It would have been rather strange had our interests never coincided with those whose values and traditions we share.

But the world is moving too quickly to dwell at length on the past, even though it is a proud past. We must turn our minds instead to the future, to find the right mix of policies to ensure stability and prosperity at home and, over time, to help to create a more predictable, safer world.

Major Trends

The topography of the post-Cold-War world is far from fully formed. Nonetheless, some important contours are emerging. Global political and economic power is shifting rapidly and becoming more diffuse. Traditional alignments between states are giving way to new alignments. Basic principles of democracy and respect for human rights are ascendant in most of the world.

Yet, as we all know too well, these values are not fully entrenched. Old hatreds are still alive and are being rekindled. And events in Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Armenia, Haiti and Indonesia have reminded us all what tragedy can occur when basic democratic principles and respect for human rights are flouted or when the basic needs of ordinary people are ignored.

As ever, politics and economics are intensely intertwined. Global competition is developing side by side with a renewed emphasis upon regional trading arrangements. This new global economy is paralleled by similar developments in the worldwide diffusion of information and culture. Borders are no longer barriers to knowledge and understanding.

National borders are becoming increasingly porous, as the list of issues that transcend the nation-state grows. There is little question that global environmental threats, population and migratory pressures, and the proliferation of weaponry can be addressed only on a multilateral basis.

In such a rapidly changing world, what are the best policy directions for Canada in the years ahead? Let me highlight the

three broad directions that we envisage for Canada's foreign policy in the 1990s.

Co-operative Security

The first is strengthening co-operative security. The Gulf War, the conflict in Yugoslavia, the coup in Haiti and the ongoing crises of the Soviet Union provide forceful, often bloody, reminders of the need to find a new international framework for stability to fill the strategic void left by the welcome passing of the Cold War.

Developing a broader concept of security has been crucial to building that new stability. What Canada calls "co-operative security" encompasses the traditional military threats to security. But it also takes into account other security concerns, many of which do not have a direct military dimension.

In adopting this wider concept of security, Canada will be more aggressive and active in tackling transnational threats to security, such as weapons proliferation, drug trafficking, terrorism and irregular migration. These threats need to be managed to avoid the dangers of escalation to military action. We are convinced that co-operative regional security regimes and dialogues, from Europe to the Middle East to the Pacific, based on enhanced confidence and understanding, can reduce the number and intensity of threats to global peace and improve our capacity to prevent and manage conflicts.

And Canada is there -- in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), in the upcoming multilateral phase of the Middle East Talks and in the Pacific community, where greater attention is being paid to the need for better dialogue and more effective institutions.

Canada and others are also recognizing the need to address, urgently, the challenges and long-term security threats of climate change and related global environmental problems. In addition, we must address the underlying conditions that create a vicious cycle of excessive population growth, underdevelopment and mass migration.

On the military security side, the Prime Minister's February arms control and disarmament initiative put Canada in the forefront of world efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the excessive build-up of conventional arms. Initially viewed by countries and commentators as too radical and unrealistic, most of those ideas have, a scant 10 months later, become remarkably mainstream. Canada will continue to be intensively active in organizations as diverse as the United Nations (UN), the Organization of American States (OAS), the CSCE, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Group of Seven (G-7), pressing for tighter international regimes to control the proliferation of weaponry.

The world already has the essential framework to contribute to a global co-operative security dialogue -- the United Nations system. We need to strengthen that framework and take advantage of the opportunity before us to develop greater respect for the rule of law and the principles of collective security enshrined in the UN Charter.

Through the framework of the UN, Canada will continue, indeed even expand, its peacekeeping efforts. The Western Sahara, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, and perhaps again the Middle East are all areas of conflict where Canadian expertise will likely be required. The UN's vocation is evolving from peacekeeping to peacemaking and even -- as we see in Cambodia -- into quite intrusive nation-building. The international community, urged on by Canada and others, is increasingly assuming such functions as electoral supervision, refugee protection and even the development of democratic institutions -- actions that were once considered to fall under the exclusive purview of national governments.

Prosperity, Development and the Environment

The second broad direction for Canada's foreign policy in the 1990s is creating what might be called "sustainable prosperity." Our prosperity depends on an open and liberal trading regime. With some 30 per cent of our gross national product (GNP) linked to exports, it could not be otherwise. As a high-wage and high-cost country, Canada's sustained prosperity depends on improving the productivity and skills of our labour force. We must expand our knowledge-based industries of the future, through better skills, more innovation and more efficiency, even as we continue to seek improved market access for our large natural resource exports.

Foreign policy, trade policy and domestic policy (including environmental considerations) must become and are becoming more and more integrated. Given international co-ordination and harmonization of economic, industrial and trade policies, we need to anticipate future trends in such co-ordination to ensure our own timely and effective adjustment to continued globalization.

While our multilateral trade-related objectives are clear -- successful completion of the Uruguay round, obtaining consensus on export financing, and management of debt problems -- regional trading arrangements such as the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will continue to be instruments through which we can advance, in an immediate and effective manner, our trade and investment interests. The new trade policy agenda -- investment, trade in services, intellectual property protection -- will be pursued vigorously to assist Canadian industry to become more competitive.

But the prosperity we seek must also be sustainable. Our economic well-being, living standards and quality of life are dependent upon our ability to protect the environment and its resources not only for ourselves but for future generations of Canadians.

Balancing economic and environmental considerations to create sustainable development will challenge developed and developing countries alike. Differing economic conditions, the pursuit of sustainable development practices and the multilateral sharing of global resources and responsibilities will require new levels of international co-operation -- co-operation that will prove controversial and difficult given the divergent interests involved.

Strengthening Democracy and Respect for Human Values

The third, and perhaps most complex, broad direction of Canada's foreign policy is the strengthening of democracy and respect for human values. Canada has welcomed the emerging trend internationally toward the acceptance of universal democratic values, although they are far from being fully entrenched. Today, on International Human Rights Day, it merits emphasizing that our actions and policy instruments, including development assistance, will continue to support and encourage this trend.

In his address at Stanford University earlier this fall, the Prime Minister was unequivocal in his support for emerging democracies. He said, "We must recognize that there are certain fundamental rights that all people possess -- and that, sometimes, the international community must act to defend them." In announcing a series of measures in support of democratic and economic development throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the former U.S.S.R., he defined the magnitude of the challenge facing Canada and the world. "The task we face -- in Eastern Europe, in Africa and around the world -- is nothing less than to create a commonwealth of universal democratic values."

Progress is not smooth, and, even when the flower of democracy blooms, it can often be a fragile blossom. This delicate balance hastened our resolve in responding to the unacceptable reversal of the democratic process in Haiti. It governed our positive response to the changes in South Africa. And it has stimulated us to create mechanisms through the OAS, the Commonwealth and La Francophonie to help entrench and sustain the democratic process and tradition.

At the Commonwealth Summit in October, the Prime Minister noted that since 1987, human rights have been a concrete factor in Canada's annual review of its development assistance policy. And he went further when he stressed, "For Canada, the future course is clear: we shall increasingly be channelling our development assistance to those countries that show respect for the fundamental rights and individual freedoms of their people."

Let there be no mistake. Canada will have no qualms in refusing to support abusive, corrupt and aggressive regimes that use their power to suppress their own citizens.

Some elements of Canada's new policy in support of good governance, and in particular with respect to human rights, have been only partially understood. It is not our intent to punish the poorest of the poor for oppressive policies taken by leaders of dictatorial

regimes. It is, instead, our intent to use all of the policy levers at our command, including development assistance, to influence the global move toward good governance.

To many, the concept of good governance is confusing. While respect for human rights and a commitment to democratic principles and institutions are key elements of what I call good governance, the concept itself is much broader. Good governance also includes a sufficient priority given to basic social programs, defence spending that is not excessive, and the pursuit of sensible market-based economies.

This is a serious and complex policy issue. Aid programs involve long-term commitments, and they cannot be turned on and off like a light switch. The judgments involved are sensitive, with far-reaching implications.

We intend to use all of the policy levers available to us to try to bring about sustained progress toward democratically and economically viable societies. In the aid field, this could involve refocusing our assistance to ensure that sustenance is offered to groups working for democracy, or to those revising legal codes. We have, for example, lent scholars and judges to others, from Namibia to Central Europe to Hong Kong, to help construct democratic legal systems and entrench basic human rights and freedoms.

These principles are also at the core of what we are trying to do in managing the complex questions surrounding the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As a G-7 player, we have a particular role to play. We have been and will remain in the forefront of efforts to ensure a peaceful and sensible transition of the former U.S.S.R. and the republics, which, like Ukraine, are taking their separate and legitimate places on the international stage.

Our objective is to draw these societies into the world of democratic, market-based economies, through real assistance for real reform, keeping in constant view the principles of good governance that we believe are essential if the process of transition is to be peaceful and stable.

The efforts we have made and will continue to make in the Baltics and in sustaining the transition of Poland, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and Hungary to market-based pluralist democracies -- and indeed the parallel efforts we have made in Latin America -- are all part of this same objective.

Themes and Priorities

Strengthening co-operative security, creating sustainable prosperity, and securing democracy and respect for human values -- these are the broad foreign policy directions we intend to follow for the coming years.

In many of these areas, particularly arms control, human rights and the environment, Canada is at the forefront of international efforts. In developing policies to respond to new imperatives, we are breaking new ground. In any new endeavour, whether it is encouraging the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to carry through on its commitment to good governance or negotiating new agreements in the environmental area, such as the acid rain accord with the United States, there will be difficulties and uncertainties.

I have no illusions that, by developing these broad directions and priorities, Canada will somehow become immune to the vagaries of an often unpredictable world. Nor do I think that the new areas now demanding policy attention will fall into place easily and quickly. I do believe, however, that Canada and Canadian foreign policy will become more focused and capable of acting more quickly in the Canadian national interest when unpredictable events occur.

The conduct of an independent Canadian foreign policy has long been a source of shared pride for all Canadians. It has, in itself, been an important integrating force in the very unity of this nation.

During the period ahead, there will be high expectations by the international community for an active Canadian presence. The world is only too aware and appreciative of the positive difference that a coherent and united Canadian foreign policy has made to international peace, prosperity and security. Individual Canadians also expect Canada to continue to play an active and independent role on the world stage.

We can meet these expectations only if we remain strong and united. And here is where the Canadian disposition toward tolerance, I believe, will emerge once again. We have overcome division before. We have found that the values and the shared interests that bind us together are far greater than those that threaten to divide us. Those principles, and the determination and the skill that we have demonstrated internationally, will surely be as successful for us at home.

Have we made a difference? Absolutely. Will we make a difference? We must.

As we move further into this country's process of constitutional renewal, it is important to remember that the successes and achievements of Canada in the wider world would not have been possible if we had not been a united country. The levels of prosperity, the degree of respect for human rights and freedoms, the diversity itself, which is so envied throughout the world, would not have been possible if we had not been a united country.

Over the next two days, you will grapple further with these questions, but I am convinced unequivocally that through our foreign policy we have made, and we can and will make, a difference to the course of human history and, just as importantly, to the individual and collective well-being of all Canadians.