

Statement

94/68

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE RAYMOND CHAN,
SECRETARY OF STATE (ASIA-PACIFIC),
TO THE ATLANTIK-BRÜCKE CONFERENCE

VANCOUVER, British Columbia
October 31, 1994



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

I am very honoured by your invitation to address the Atlantik-Brücke Conference. This forum is one which, by bringing together Canadian and German decision makers, helps to reinforce the strong bonds of friendship between our two countries. It also provides us with an opportunity to share our views on emerging issues of mutual concern and to look together at how best to address them.

It is my pleasure this evening to address one such important subject: the evolving role of the State since the end of the Cold War. This broad topic can be approached from many different perspectives: political, economic, or cultural. It is a development, however, which affects us all and which has left many of us wondering about how we will deal with the challenges facing us in the 1990s and beyond.

The crux of the matter is that the certainties of the Cold War no longer seem certain. A strong, effective State can no longer be taken for granted. Indeed, many argue that the State is in decline because sovereignty is losing meaning. States appear to have less control over what occurs inside their borders. Borders themselves are disappearing for the growing number of people communicating across data lines and satellite links. On the other hand, the accessibility of new technology has *de facto* increased the sovereignty or autonomy of individuals as people who share common political, ethnic or social interests increasingly see themselves and act as transnational players. A profusion of new commercial organizations are mirroring this trend and joining the older multinationals, vaulting borders to trade and invest.

In conjunction with the end of the Cold War, these trends have accelerated. An iron curtain no longer divides Europeans. At the same time, beliefs that sustained a large, interventionist State in Western societies are held by fewer and fewer people. Partly, this is due to a perception that since the principal enemy — the Soviet Union — no longer exists, allied governments no longer need support large military establishments. Moreover, resources available to the State are diminishing. Deficits and changing attitudes about what kinds of activities are appropriate for the State have combined to make it very difficult for governments in the nineties to take on new tasks, even if they wished to do so.

Increasingly, we understand that our most pressing problems are not limited within our own borders. No one country can protect the ozone layer for example; no single state can stop international crime or disease; no government acting alone can stop arms proliferation or manage the world's financial flows. Pessimistic observers point to the complete breakdown of Somalia and Liberia as examples of "failed states," the beginning of a "coming anarchy." Others fear we will see more of the kind of ethnic and religious conflict that has destroyed states like Yugoslavia.

Some look at this scene I have described and conclude that we must resign ourselves to it. They argue that the State, with its decreasing resources and declining stature, is not ready, willing

nor able to take on the world's problems. Some believe the State should withdraw from many traditional areas and leave people alone to conduct their business. Some maintain that we are on the threshold of the "withering away of the State," and, in particular, of the State's demise as the main actor on the stage of international relations.

I do not believe the State's days are numbered. In the past the State adapted to new conditions and it can do so again. Western states met the challenge of legitimacy by extending the franchise, they met the challenge of social justice by creating a safety net of programs to help the disadvantaged. In international relations, the recent Israel-Jordan Peace Accord has shown us once again that the State can be remarkably flexible, particularly in times of crisis and change, and will undoubtedly continue to be so.

My optimism rests on the values held most strongly by Canadians and by people everywhere who insist that, at the end of the day, there is a place where responsibility lies: that place is the State. Whether the State consists of a federal or provincial government or, perhaps in the not-so-distant future, a European Union government, there must be a centre of responsibility and accountability if there is to be democracy. People cannot directly demand an accounting of bodies such as the UN; neither can they call on a non-governmental organization [NGO] or a multinational corporation to explain itself in Parliament. Democracy means that people are able to exert a measure of control over their lives through their representatives.

We have witnessed what can occur if people do not feel they have a government which is responsible and responsive to them in a meaningful way. In some societies, religious and ethnic fundamentalism has arisen because people feel powerless: one response has been to take up arms. In other societies, political withdrawal grows as people conclude that their participation "just doesn't matter."

In this new era, we have to manage the State and the instruments available to it to maximize the opportunities afforded by the changing international environment. We must "go with the flow," in a sense, but at the same time push the transnational currents in directions which will realize the benefits and objectives our people seek. A more subtle hand at the tiller than before does not mean, however, disengagement from international affairs. Only by active participation and positive results — necessary to maintain the state's credibility — will we be able to keep the support of our people and achieve measurable results.

The challenges of the 1990s are predominantly transnational, involving many players. Some problems are local, but have the potential for spill-over into neighbouring countries, such as the ethnic disputes in the former Soviet Union. Some are regional, such as the nuclear aspirations of North Korea, but are part of a global

problem, nuclear proliferation. And some are truly worldwide, such as environmental degradation and the underworld of drug trafficking. The successful State of the 1990s, after analyzing the nature of the problem, and taking into account resource constraints, must adapt its response accordingly.

To deal with transnational issues demands a co-operative response. Canadians are famously modest, but we can justly claim to be pioneers of this approach to international problem solving. In the 1990s, other countries are coming around to our way of thinking. As a middle power, Canada has long understood that it must act with other countries to ensure prosperity and security. Because of this, Canada has strongly supported the UN, including by participating in virtually every peacekeeping mission; it helped found NATO [the North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and the CSCE [the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe]; it worked to make trade freer by supporting the new world trade organization and by entering the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement].

However, we must look to the future. Our co-operative approach in the past was focussed on state-to-state or state-to-institution arrangements. In the 1990s and beyond, the successful State will be the one that can find the right mix of players to solve the international problem at hand. This will not always mean co-operation solely at the state-to-state or state-to-institution level: it will increasingly entail co-operation among non-state actors such as NGOs, cities and businesses. The State will play an important role in helping to facilitate these links. Prime Minister Chrétien's trip to China next week is an example of how we are adapting our approach. I will be accompanying the Prime Minister as he leads Team Canada, a mix of provincial leaders and business people whose objective will be to engage the Chinese on a broad range of issues, building public and private sector ties.

If we are to help create more prosperity for our peoples, while ensuring that humanitarian and other concerns are met, then we must pay increased attention to the special character of the countries and peoples with whom we hope to co-operate. Cold War-style blocs and the comfortable stereotypes of that period must be replaced. Canadians come from diverse backgrounds. We feel this gives us an advantage in constructing co-operative relationships in trade, security, or on human rights issues. We are applying this advantage in our approach to issues in the region for which I am responsible.

We are witnessing the beginning of a new period of confidence in the Asia-Pacific region as new economic and security interests replace the traditional interests in the post-Cold War world. Asian states are erecting their own architecture of co-operation tailored to their own needs and with their own history in mind. Canada is encouraged by this but is also sensitive to the fact that Asian countries are not going to replace NATO or the CSCE.

For well over a century, Canada has regarded our relationship with Asia as tremendously important. As Asia reaches outward, we must construct both more formal Pacific multilateral institutions and less formal people-oriented linkages. Canada has been a Dialogue Partner at the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] Post-Ministerial Conference, discussing a broad range of issues, including security, with ASEAN and other Pacific countries as well as the EU [European Union]. Canada also participates in the ASEAN Regional Forum, which this summer brought together Pacific states on security matters. In two weeks, the Prime Minister will take part in the APEC Leaders Meeting in Indonesia. This state-to-state dialogue is still at an early stage, but it is building confidence, a key to continued prosperity around the Pacific.

Canada has encouraged exchanges of academics and ideas in the region. We are also working to build relationships among business people, military officers, artists and students. These people-oriented exchanges are aimed at reinforcing and broadening confidence in the region. Our development assistance in the region continues as another means to promote our co-operative approach.

For Canada and Germany, habits of economic, political and security co-operation have become deeply ingrained. Non-state-to-state relationships, including those based on economic links, family ties, and on friendship and intellectual affinity (like Atlantik-Brücke), have flourished. But the relationships among countries like ours are not static. As Minister MacLaren commented in his remarks earlier today, the European Union is in a time of profound evolution, grappling with the same sort of issues I am discussing today.

I will not repeat what Mr. MacLaren has said, but would echo his call for Canada and Europe to update and enhance our existing and extensive co-operative links.

To conclude: we have all spent a great deal of time in the 1990s discussing how things have changed since the Cold War ended. Our initial optimism understated the challenges we face today. The time has now come for us to stop looking backwards and to look to the future. The problems which are out there demand our attention, not hand wringing or nostalgia for "simpler days." Only recently it was unthinkable that the Soviet Union could collapse; surely today it is thinkable that we can work together to solve the common challenges we now face. The State is our instrument: it exists as a collective expression of the will of our peoples. Maintaining the relevance of the State in the 21st century will require that we translate the hopes and aspirations of our citizens into vision and leadership to help create a better, safer and more prosperous world.

Thank you.