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"CANADA IN THE WORLD: FOREIGN POLICY  
IN THE NEW ERA"

Notes for a speech by  
the Right Honourable Joe Clark,  
Secretary of State for External Affairs,  
on the Occasion of the 66th Meeting of the  
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The last year has brought into focus a revolution in global affairs, a transformation without precedent in this century. We are at the dawn of a new era, an era of extraordinary promise and profound challenge for Canada and for the world. Part of my purpose here today is to describe that revolution in global affairs, and some of its consequences. But my purpose is also to put to you a vision of Canada's role in this new era, a Canadian view of the world and a view of Canada in that world.

The symbols of the new age are compelling:

- The Berlin Wall demolished and the Iron Curtain torn in tatters;
- Vaclav Havel, once a prisoner, once a playwright, now President of Czechoslovakia;
- The leaders of the two superpowers, former implacable enemies, meeting in Helsinki in common purpose; and
- The United Nations, once divided and dispirited, now united as never before in acting against aggression in the Gulf, in planning for peace in Cambodia.

Only a few short years ago, those images would have been dismissed as fantasy.

The scope of today's change is measured by the inadequacy of the old words of diplomacy. The terms East and West have lost their meaning. The Cold War, once the dominant motif of global relations, has evaporated. What we used to call the Communist threat has disappeared, both because there is no longer a threat and because communism itself is dead in all but name. National security - once competitive - is now co-operative.

Those are hopeful unprecedented signs that problems we once thought permanent are now being solved. But there are signs of other problems, growing more serious:

- the debilitating tentacles of the international drug trade;
- the pervasive plague of terrorism;
- the dangers of a decaying global environment;
- the proliferation of weapons and of their means of delivery;

- the daunting problems of international debt and development;
- and the persistence of regional conflicts which prove that avarice and ideology still sew discord.

There is a connection between that new hope and those new threats, and that is a growing pragmatism that dismisses systems or nostrums that don't work.

Look for a moment at what has happened in Europe. It is not the victory of West over East. We did not force change upon those societies. Instead the people themselves recognized that their ideology did not deliver. It did not work. The collapse of communism has not been the triumph of another ideology; it has been the triumph of a pragmatism which proves that when all is said and done, governments and leaders and systems are judged by what they produce, not by what they promise.

That new pragmatism has its counterparts around the globe:

- In Latin America, brave governments and brave peoples are facing serious problems head on, and putting their societies on the road to recovery.
- In South Africa, Nelson Mandela and President de Klerk have begun the process of dismantling apartheid.
- In Asia, the two Koreas have formally met, and the four parties in Cambodia have agreed to United Nations supervision, raising a prospect of ending divisions that have lasted decades.
- And throughout the Non-Aligned Movement, there is a new realism, a welcome diversity, and a willingness to work together with the developed world to seek solutions which work.

This is a world of new promise and new problems. It mandates a foreign policy which is active rather than passive, flexible rather than rigid, co-operative rather than confrontational.

Let me talk about the approach Canada takes to that world.

Foreign policies do not emerge from blank books or back rooms. They are shaped by what a nation is and by what it is not; affected by a country's assets and a country's limits and informed by a nation's past as much as its present.

There are foreign policy choices open to some countries which have never been open to Canada. We could never aspire to great power. Our population and our economy are too small. The choices of conquest, or of empire have never been open to Canada.

Nor has it ever been open to us to act unilaterally or alone. On all the important issues, success for Canada has meant co-operation with others.

Look at economics. We are a country of traders. We depend on the international economy as do few others. We need clear rules, open access, stable markets. That means we must pursue our economic interests with others. So we have pursued a policy of more open trade through co-operation with other traders - whether in the GATT, or through the Free Trade Agreement, or through the Cairns Group on Agriculture or the new emerging forum for Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation.

Similarly, in military matters, we have had little choice but to seek our security through co-operation with others. Our land is too large, our air-space too vast, our coast lines too long. In addition, as a middle power, we have always recognized that it is not here where wars will start or peace will be made. Those choices will be made far away from Canada - but we will be either the victims of conflict or the beneficiaries of peace. So we have pursued our security through co-operation - through NATO and NORAD and multilateral institutions such as the United Nations.

Our foreign policy has been influenced by both our size and our situation. We are at the northern end of a continent we share with a superpower. That situation has led to a close partnership with the United States in the search for peace and prosperity. But it has also led us to emphasize our other associations - with our European Allies, our families in the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, our partners in Asia and our other neighbours in this hemisphere. That reaching out is in pursuit of tangible interests - economic, political and military. But it also reflects the desire for a flexibility which is essential to our success as a smaller power whose next-door neighbour is a superpower.

Our foreign policy, therefore, is influenced both by what we are and what we are not. I do not imply determinism. This country has had choices. We could have been less international in our outlook. We could have been less inclined towards co-operation and the search for solutions to international problems. And we could have been less committed to our alliances and to our friends.

But, by and large, those were not the choices made by Canada. One choice we have made is to keep our feet firmly in the Western camp. The values we have brought to our foreign policy flow from our profound commitment to freedom and democracy. And that commitment comes from the fact that we have built our country by inviting the world to come here and to grow together in peace and freedom. Our foreign policy has been based on supporting abroad what has brought people here. We have pursued this in many ways:

- our support for refuseniks and dissidents behind the Iron Curtain;
- our fight against apartheid and our support for non-racial democracy in South Africa;
- our activism in the U.N., the CSCE and elsewhere in defence of human rights; and
- our alliances through NATO and NORAD which have served to protect our own freedom and our own democracy.

That is one connection between the nature of Canadian society and the nature of Canadian foreign policy. But there is another. And that relates less to the causes we pursue than the approach we take. It flows from the fact that Canada is not a natural phenomenon. For 25 million people to occupy the second largest piece of real estate in the world is not natural. For a country of that size to be able to safeguard our security and our culture and our economy is difficult. For a country which stretches East and West to survive when its natural links run North and South is a challenge. And for a country composed not of one culture but of many, to remain whole is not easy.

But in this challenge we have succeeded. We have avoided civil war and revolution. What we have achieved is unique - a voluntary association of many traditions, and different cultures. The accomplishment of Canada has been to recognize that diversity is not a blemish but a blessing, and to accept that the interests of each community, can only be secured if the interests of others are respected. That Canada has done so well for so long is a testimony to the enduring value of a sense of compromise, which sees advantage in balancing interests, balancing views, balancing powers and responsibilities. That is a lesson of increasing relevance to the world.

As John Holmes, once said: "As managers of the unmanageable, I would stack Sir John A. or Mackenzie King up against Bismarck or Bolivar any day. If they aren't comparable to Lincoln it is because they made sure not to have his problem."

We have brought our experience at home to our approach abroad.

- The Canadian experience proves that strife can sometimes be avoided if antagonists are talking rather than shouting or shooting.
- The Canadian experience proves that while there are often rights and wrongs, there are also often two sides to a story - or even more - and that dialogue is not the avenue of the fearful but the successful.
- The Canadian experience proves that institutions and relationships succeed only when they are flexible and allowed to grow when reality and interests change.
- The Canadian experience proves that solutions lie not in grand schemes and blueprints, but in processes that work and produce results.
- The Canadian experience proves that stability requires a legitimacy which comes from a shared sense that all interests and perspectives are reflected in the institutions of governance.
- The Canadian experience proves that while compromise may preclude total victory, it also preserves peace.

Those conclusions come as much from our failures as from our successes. We have failed when our institutions have ceased to reflect the society we have become. We have failed when we have ceased to talk and started to shout. We have failed when we have rejected compromise or ceased to be flexible in our approaches to nation building.

I believe that it is this experience as much as our situation, which has shaped Canadian foreign policy over the years. We know that if our country requires this behaviour to remain peaceable, that behaviour is even more necessary abroad.

Let me proceed to some lessons and to some examples which reflect Canada's approach to the world.

Lesson 1. Institutions and organizations must adapt if they are to be relevant.

That is why Canada has taken the lead in finding new roles for NATO. That is why we are deeply involved in seeking a new mandate for the CSCE and in adapting the Commonwealth to meet the new needs of its membership. And that is why Canada joined the Organization of American States and moved quickly and successfully to propose new reforms.

Lesson 2. There is little to be gained from isolating countries and ending all contact. Only when there is no practical alternative should such a course be followed. Isolation can be self-fulfilling. Countries without contact are not countries which compromise.

That is why Canada initiated its opening to China in 1971, why we continue to maintain relations with Cuba, why we chose not to impose an embargo on Nicaragua, why we have kept an embassy open in South Africa.

Lesson 3. Unilateralism, while sometimes necessary, is almost always less preferable than multilateral or co-operative approaches. Unilateralism is by definition unpredictable. It often fails or backfires. And while multilateral approaches to problems may be slower and the result less satisfying, the outcome can often be more significant and stable precisely because it is based on consensus.

That is why on issues of trade Canada is such a strong proponent of a strengthened and successful round of the GATT, which would result in new rules observed by all, fairly and fully. That is why at the U.N. Security Council we took the lead in ensuring that the unprecedented international effort to enforce U.N. sanctions against Iraq was conducted with the explicit authorization of the world community. And that is why whether on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait we have been so forceful in opposing those unilateral acts of aggression.

Lesson 4. International organizations should be made to work. They should not be abandoned, even when their failures are intensely frustrating. Reform is rarely achieved from outside, and often achieved from inside.

That is why we remained in UNESCO, and helped move it toward recovery. That is why we seek to reform the invaluable trans-Atlantic institution of NATO, rather than pretend it became irrelevant when the military threat declined. NATO is an institution which works, and has a critical role in building new relations between East and West, and between Europe and North America.

Lesson 5. Co-operation within regions should complement co-operation between regions.

That is why we have been such strong proponents of a North American role in Europe - whether through NATO, the CSCE or dialogue between the European Community and the countries of this continent. That is why we pursue new dialogues, on trade and on security with the countries of Asia Pacific, with whom we share so many common interests. That is why we have stressed that the Soviet Union must be a full partner in a new Europe, that should stretch from Vancouver to Vladivostok. That is why we have sought new links with the nations of Latin America.

Lesson 6. Stability is necessary for successful change. International progress on virtually every issue is made more difficult if countries feel insecure and if predictability is impossible. Countries won't take risks if they are not confident in their future. Structures can be changed most easily when they are stable. And change is virtually impossible when there is no structure at all.

That is why we argue for reforms in NATO to provide stability in a Europe in dramatic change. That is why we were strong proponents of German unification within a united Europe and a stable East-West environment. That is why we have proposed several initiatives to enlarge the CSCE's role in setting new rules for the new Europe; why we have pursued a settlement in Cambodia; why we have urged a new circle of dialogue between ASEAN and its neighbours. And that is one reason why Canada has placed such emphasis on Official Development Assistance - to help poor countries develop the prosperity which is the foundation for stability at home and stability abroad.

Lesson 7. The preservation of peace is based not simply on a balance of interests and power, but also on trust and confidence. The generation of mutual trust between parties is as important in building peace between countries as it is within countries.

That is why Canada has taken the lead in developing expertise and proposals for the verification of arms control agreements in Europe and elsewhere. Verification builds trust. It gives confidence in compliance. We have pursued these initiatives at the CFE talks in Vienna, at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and through the Open Skies initiative.

The desire to build trust is also at the base of our peacekeeping tradition and our preoccupation with conflict resolution. No country in the world has participated in more international peacekeeping activities than Canada. Those activities do not in themselves solve conflicts but they provide breathing room for diplomacy to proceed. They give peace a chance.



Lesson 8. Dialogue is almost always preferable to silence or shouting. It would be naive to believe that dialogue can always produce results, or that those results will come easily and without compromise. But dialogue has a way of inducing compromise and understanding which is vastly preferable to the alternative of conflict or stand-off.

That is why we played a lead role at the Paris Conference on Cambodia in initiating a process which is now moving forward towards peace. That is why we have provided concrete support for face-to-face encounters and dialogue between blacks and whites in South Africa. That is why we have argued that it may be time for Cuba to return to the Organization of American States. That is why we invite our friends to consider a North-Pacific security dialogue involving Canada, the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, China and the two Koreas. That is why we believe it is time to look at a new conversation between developed and developing countries, a conversation without dogma focused on specific issues and specific solutions.

Lesson 9. Dogma is dangerous. It is dangerous abroad as it is dangerous at home. Adolph Hitler proved that, as did Pol Pot and so many others. Saddam Hussein is proving it again.

But so too is a different sort of dogma - the dogma of the search for uniformity, of the presumption of shared values, of the separation of the world into 'them' and 'us'. To quote John Holmes again, "tidy-minded people are a menace in world affairs because the world is untidy."

Those lessons and those examples demonstrate an approach to international affairs which is, I believe, distinctly Canadian. It reflects our assets and our limits. It reflects our view of how problems are best resolved, based on our own national experience. And of course, it reflects the national interest of a country which cannot dictate and which must therefore discuss.

Those are some of the principles which govern the conduct of Canadian foreign policy. Of course, other countries have pursued similar approaches. I suggest that, in this new era, the principles and practices of Canadian foreign policy should become - and are indeed becoming - foreign policy guidelines for others.

There is a perpetual debate in this country about whether or not our foreign policy is different enough from that of the United States. For some people, being different is more important than being right. I think the real phenomenon in recent years is that Washington's approach to foreign policy is becoming more Canadian. I think that has happened with regard to the CSCE, to NATO, to Latin America, to the United Nations and that is a welcome development appropriate to this new era of pragmatism and co-operation.