

Keynote Address

Post 9/11:
How Might Churchill Advise Us?

International Churchill Society of Canada &
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5th Annual Joint Dinner

**Check against delivery*

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Let me begin tonight with the words Sir Winston offered at Manchester on May 9, 1938:

“Finally, there must be a basis for British foreign policy. People in this country, after all we have gone through, do not mean to be drawn into another terrible war in the name of old-world alliances or diplomatic combinations. If deep causes of division are to be removed from our midst, if all our energies are to be concentrated upon the essential task of increasing our strength and security, it can only be because of lofty and unselfish ideals which command the allegiance of all classes here at home, which rouse their echoes on the breasts even of Dictator-ridden people themselves, and stir the pulses of the English-speaking race in every quarter of the globe.”

At a time when there is some general lack of certainty in Canada of the purposes associated with our military capacities, obligations and commitments, at a time when the American president confronts the lack of focused, interconnected and priority-based management of all intelligence sources, at a time when Canada’s own foreign policy cries out for some clarity and direction, Churchill’s admonitions – to learn from folly and misfortune, and promoting an overarching nobility for our foreign policy have never mattered more.

At this time in our national life, Canada and Canadians have the right to be invited to consider both a domestic and foreign policy framework that offers something more than just muddling through, as is the present case in domestic policy – or pure muddle as is the case with our foreign and defence policies. Frankly, as we gather to celebrate Sir Winston this evening, it would not be ungenerous to suggest that none of our political parties have chosen to extend that kind of invitation to Canadians.

It is, of course, much easier not to issue the invitation, not to begin the debate, not to risk the unavoidable cynicism in the media - and instead to govern as if addressing the larger thematic challenges facing not only Canada but our allies in the West and our colleagues in the English-speaking world, did not really matter. But that would be the ultimate denial of the larger reality with which democracies must come to grips.

The twin threats we face of the radical anti-globalization forces – forces that use unlawful street violence to support the kind of trade embargoes, non-tariff barriers and the most jingoistic of obstacles to the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, and the terrorist blowback against which enlightened forces are deployed in Central Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere are unique and separate. But, they are unified by a doctrine we should all see for what it truly is – namely the denial, suppression, destruction and obliteration of democracy.

Arguing that democratically elected leaders should not be allowed to meet in order to pursue further trade liberalization – or whatever else they seek to discuss – is to actually attack the sovereignty that democracies produce and legitimize. The attack of September 11, 2001 was not about a war between civilizations or even cultures. It was an attack on democracy by profoundly dictatorial and totalitarian forces, camouflaging themselves with Islam. That attack very much underlined that the forces of democracy now face a war on three fronts – here at home where no target is beyond the terror of Al Qaeda, in the Middle East, where even moderate Palestinians and

others who seek a workable peace are undermined daily by Hizbollah, Islamic Jihad and others who are clearly linking to Al Qaeda, and in Afghanistan where coalition forces are engaged in addressing a foe that continues to regroup, re-arm and refinance while eluding any kind of meaningful military eradication.

While we can find many sincere individuals who respect democracy, in places that erect or propose barriers to free trade – like the US Congress, or our own Council of Canadians, all individuals who are very much inspired by their own policy concerns as democrats, we must remember that in a democracy, those who oppose stated policy are part of the process that shapes policy for the future. Diefenbaker's axiom that "if we all thought the same way, no one would be thinking" is as true today as ever. Lawful dissent is not the enemy of democracy – but its most steadfast companion and supporter.

Our concern, and in this we can be inspired by much of Churchill's life and writings should be for democracy itself. It should be our primary foreign policy goal – it should be the framework of our domestic priorities.

In his famous Fulton, Missouri speech on March 5, 1956, after referring to the inherited principles of the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the *Habeas Corpus*, trial by jury, and the common law, Churchill declared:

"All this means that the people of any country, have the right, and should have the power by constitutional action, by free unfettered elections, with secret ballot, to choose or change the character or the form of government under which they dwell, that freedom of speech and thought should reign; that courts of justice, independent of the executive, unbiased by any party should administer laws which have received the broad ascent of large majorities or are consecrated by time or custom. Here are the little deeds of freedom which should lie in every cottage home . . . Let us preach what we practice – let us practice what we preach."

What could this mean as a clarifying theme for Canadian foreign policy? Well, simply this. Our priority must be support of democracies and democratic principles worldwide. Why? Because the core Canadian interests of national security and international peace and order, human rights and equality of opportunity are uniformly and manifestly advanced by the support and promotion of democracies and democratic development worldwide.

Democracies do not usually make war on each other. Reflect on wars we have seen: World War I, the democracies responded to aggression from others. In World War II, neither Hitler's Germany nor Mussolini's Italy, or Imperial Japan were democracies when aggression begun by the dictatorships brought the democracies into the war. In Korea, totalitarian Communists unleashed the aggression that brought the democracies to Southeast Asia under the UN flag. The creation by the United Nations in 1948 of a Jewish and Arab state in the old British Palestinian protectorate produced war because non-democracies among the neighbouring countries launched an all-out attack on the one democracy in the region.

And, if we reflect on those countries whose activities may represent a serious risk to peace and even a threat to global security – countries like Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Syria, they are, while

divided by denomination and geography, all united by less than democratic governments. The vast majority of hijackers associated with the attacks on New York City and Washington came from Saudi Arabia, itself a resolute non-democracy. The notion that economic development and human rights are more important than democracy misunderstands and underestimates how much democracy is an incentive for and guarantor of economic and social progress.

Today, a firm global position based on democracy would see Canada eagerly and enthusiastically support the creation and promotion of a vibrant, independent and democratically self-governed Palestinian state to become the only democratic neighbour to the Israeli democracy in the region. Just this week, the new democracy of East Timor, created through UN stabilization, joined the democratic family.

In our own hemisphere, Canadian support for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the rest of our hemispheric friends should be tied to steady and measurable progress towards democracy. The notion that we could promote human rights without first promoting democracy, makes little sense. To be comfortable when the People's Republic of China relaxes human rights abuses without making any real progress towards democracy is the ultimate congenial self-delusion. There are no rights without democracy as Churchill described it – only short-term privileges at the capricious convenience of the regime du jour.

Prime Minister Chrétien has embarked, in his proposed G-8 response to the challenge of Africa, on an encouraging course – with democracy being a point of analysis relative to evaluating foreign aid partners on that continent. We should assert as Canadians the right to define other relationships – exports, technical assistance, CIDA investment, export development support around this same democratic priority. The deployment of our troops abroad should be related to the defence or promotion of democratic development. In many trouble spots around the world – the Koreas, the Mideast, Central America, Eastern Europe, the democratic priority should be a defining principle.

And lest any of us conclude that democracy as a defining principle only offers guidance in matters foreign – we would do well to use democracy as a motivating force relative to domestic policy priorities as well.

There have been no elected Canadian governments since Confederation, no American administration, no British government, devoid of the touch of scandal. Some more, some less than others. All of which serves to diminish the credibility of democracy and its perceived efficacy and integrity.

And when democracy is diminished, the ability we share to move ahead collectively is severely reduced. And whether the issue is health care, tax policy, trade policy, or national security, diminished democracy, diluted public trust and legitimacy all weaken us – as a society and as individuals whose freedom and prospects are defined by the democratic principles that protect us all.

The ability and freedom we all have to act as individuals in our own interest – in the interest of our families, our enterprises, our communities is no less important than the right and freedom we have in a democracy to act in our collective interest as citizens, taxpayers and community members. Patriotism, something we are far too shy about in this country is, after all, the individual acting and

believing in the collective love of country, in one's fellow citizens and in the legitimate interest of the nation-state. Canadians who have expressed great support for the men and women serving under the Canadian flag in Bosnia and Afghanistan or the Golan Heights reflect the shared bonds of patriotism, as did our fellow democrats in the French Republic recently in their massive repudiation of Monsieur Le Pen.

And it is with patriotism that we should view the need to strengthen a democratic system that preserves our capacity to act collectively on the issues we choose as a country to pursue.

When Churchill was President of the Board of Trade in the Asquith government, he made a series of speeches attacking the House of Lords for usurping the powers and prerogatives of the elected House of Commons. These were later gathered by him in a publication not easy to find these days, entitled "The Peoples' Rights." In it, he reflected on the balance of individual and collective interests in a free and democratic society.

"No man," he wrote, "can be a collectivist alone or an individualist alone. He must be both an individualist and a collectivist. The nature of man is a dual nature. The character of the organization of human society is dual. Man is at once a unique being and a gregarious animal; for some purposes he must be a collectivist, for others he is and will for all time remain an individualist. Collectively we have an Army and a Navy and a Civil Service; collectively we have a Post Office, and a police and a government; collectively we light our streets and supply ourselves with water; collectively we indulge increasingly in all the necessities of communication. But we do not make love collectively, and we do not die collectively; and it is not collectively that we face the sorrows and the hopes, the winnings and the losings of this world of accident and storm."

But that balance is destroyed when our collective democratic life is diminished and depleted. Scandal contributes to that, as do governments that get elected on one plan and then head in the opposite direction; as do rules and conventions, or the absence of same that threaten the legitimacy and credibility of our democratic system.

We face impediments to our democratic system in Canada. Our pure "first-past-the-post" system provides a serious disincentive to vote – as only those voting for the winning candidate in every riding actually have their vote count; moreover in a country as diverse as Canada, and as geographically large, our present system actually exaggerates the divisions between regions while minimizing the unifying effects of national parties. It is high time we sought improvement here.

In Quebec and Manitoba campaigns, corporations and trade unions are not allowed to make political contributions. The vibrancy of politics in these two provinces has not diminished as a result. We should be debating national rules of a similar nature. Our publicly traded corporations must disclose all material financial activity on a quarterly basis. Surely our political parties and government departments should have no less a burden of public disclosure.

And, as democracy implies participation by a well-informed and competent electorate the issues of education and clarity of public policy, openness and irreducible minimums of public disclosure suggest themselves – for broad national debate.

So democracy as a defining point for our foreign and defence policy and our domestic policy yields

a rich agenda for any political party or parties that truly care about the democratic process and its fundamental role in a healthy and constructive society. It leads to issues like parliamentary reform and the linkage between public and private sector governance.

And in the large picture of how we deal with the post-9/11 world, the focus on democracy, those who would use force to destroy it, those who hide behind religious or political extremism to argue that a higher value has the right to displace it, those nations and countries that embrace democracy, and those countries, however rich or powerful who suppress democracy, afford us all a map, a chart, a grand overview by which to sound, test and vet our priorities as Canadians. Democracy is the "condition prealable" for economic and social progress, for human rights, for respect for diversity. Its absence or suppression are sure indications that these Canadian values will not survive unthreatened or undiminished anywhere in the world.

Let me express the hope that we learn from more than Churchill's strength of spirit, resolute will and unflinching determination.

It is our inherited commitment to democracy that has seen American, Canadian and Australian troops serve with forces from the United Kingdom and others in the Afghan theatre. It is the openness and power of the democracies that was attacked by Al Qaeda in September of last year. Measures that we take to defend ourselves against terrorists at home and abroad must reflect the importance of democracy to our way of life, to our right to choose – a right we need not only protect for ourselves but should project and promote world wide.

Because we stood firm in our alliances between World War II and the 1980s, the old nations of the Soviet bloc are now more free, more democratic and while still in various stages of development towards democracy, clearly on the right path.

Churchill would surely embrace this signal challenge of broadening the genuine democratic family to Asia, Africa and the Middle East – not to impose any superior way of life, but to open the way to economic, social, and human rights progress to the hundreds of millions who deserve those benefits no less than any of us here gathered in Sir Winston's name tonight.

Thank you all very much.