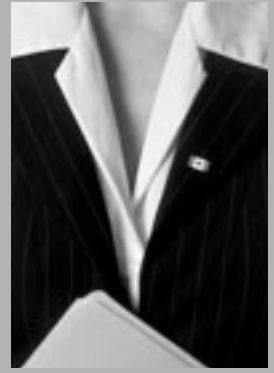


ROMANTICISM AND REALISM IN CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Allan Gotlieb

Canada projects a bipolar personality, of romanticism on one side and realism on the other. For decades, the realists held the upper hand. Even as Canada followed the path of multilateralism, it pursued unilateral goals in expanding its coastline, and promoted a bilateral trade agenda with the US. In the last decade, the romanticists have gained the upper hand, promoting a human security agenda, distancing Canada from the US, and articulating a foreign policy based on Canadian values, which its proponents say it is our duty to export. In a dazzling *tour d'horizon* of Canadian foreign policy over the last half-century, Allan Gotlieb, one of Canada's leading foreign policy practitioners, appraises the records of prime ministers from St-Laurent to Chrétien, and proposes a reality-based agenda for Paul Martin.

Entre romantisme et réalisme, le Canada projette une image bipolaire en matière de relations étrangères. Le réalisme l'a d'abord emporté pendant quelques décennies : tout en s'engageant dans la voie du multilatéralisme, notre pays a également visé des objectifs unilatéraux, en étendant ses eaux territoriales et en appliquant un programme commercial bilatéral avec les États-Unis. Mais depuis dix ans, les romantiques ont repris la main en préconisant une politique de sécurité plus humaine, en se distançant des Américains et en élaborant une politique étrangère fondée sur les valeurs canadiennes — valeurs qu'il serait de notre devoir d'exporter à l'étranger, disent-ils. Dans un saisissant tour d'horizon de notre politique étrangère du dernier demi-siècle, Allan Gotlieb examine l'action de nos premiers ministres, de Louis Saint-Laurent à Jean Chrétien, et propose à Paul Martin une stratégie réaliste.



Every nation needs a psychiatrist, Robertson Davies once observed, although I have never found the quote. He must have said it because it is so true in Canada's case. In the five decades that I have been involved, in one way or another, in Canadian foreign policy, I have often thought that Canadians have a split personality. We seem constantly attracted to opposite poles in our thinking about our role in the world.

One pole ties us to hard reality, *realpolitik* if you will, and makes us want our governments to protect the national interest when it deals with other states. Canadians, when they think this way, talk in terms of our sovereignty, security, territory, trade, economic growth and prosperity. In contrast to the pole of realism, there is another pole that attracts Canadians to an idealistic vocation. Its advocates tend to have a visionary, at times almost romantic, approach to our position in the world. The vision changes from time to time, but at its most expansive, it is based on a mission to create a more just world, promote democracy, reduce inequities among nations, protect victims of injustice and alleviate the conditions of the poor and oppressed.

Canadians believe, as the slogan of a national book chain proclaims, "the world needs more Canada."

These two destinations in our thinking have not always pulled in opposite directions. On various occasions in our history, one or the other served as a spur to action. Sometimes they led to coherent strategies, but at times our national interests and international aspirations seemed irreconcilable. In describing these as the realist and the romantic approaches to Canadian foreign policy, I must emphasize that the actual goals have been far from static. The continuing importance of the two visions lies in their formative power to define and shape our national goals.

These relatively new, value-oriented goals appear, on first inspection, consistent with a deeply rooted, traditional theme in our national psyche, that of Canada as the world's foremost peacekeeper, peacemaker and peace builder. But as the decline of our capability to play such a role became more evident in recent years, due largely to lack of resources — and perhaps even as a result of the decline — a new vision of Canada's mission emerged, more ambitious but less expensive. In official circles, it is increasingly expressed

in terms of our attempts to create new norms of international behaviour which, in turn, reflect our values. The authors of the Canadian foreign policy review of 1995 — *Canada in the World* — committed Canadians to the goal,

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as Jennifer Welsh writes, of “an international system...ruled by law not power.” No small task.

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The most activist of Canadian foreign ministers in recent history, Lloyd Axworthy, conceived of Canada as an “agent of change,” an avatar of the “responsibility to protect” the victims in the world, rallying global networks to break the monopoly power of elites and resist “the way of the warrior” (read the US), which uses its military power “to seduce, shape and when necessary coerce” compliance with its own goals. He saw Canada as the leader of the “third way,” positioned between the victims and the elites, the country with “the right stuff to be agents of change.” Although the rhetoric of his successors is not as dramatic, the foreign policy thrust of a successor, Bill Graham, remained heavily value-oriented. He saw Canada's mission to be the champion of equality, diversity and humanitarian concerns.

Some scholars find such goals ill defined, overreaching and divorced from the national interest. “Lloyd Axworthy,” as Norman Hillmer and Allan Chapnick put it, “unleashed an ambitious doctrine of intrusive inter-

nationalism, transforming the tone and character of Canadian foreign policy.” But the visionary school of Canadian foreign policy, even at its most crusading level, is seen by some distinguished historians, such as John

English, and by Robert Bothwell, Canada's leading authority on the history of Canadian foreign policy, as firmly planted in the longstanding Canadian liberal tradition.

What Canadians leave largely unexamined is whether the broad, visionary approach, focused on transforming state behaviour rather than on specific conflict resolution, can accomplish very much, aside from making its advocates feel good. In recent times, arguments between advocates of the two competing themes have become louder and sharper. Perhaps this increasing national irritability arises from the growing appreciation of our declining influence and the sense of impotence that comes from the lack of hard resources that can help Canada make a difference in the world.

But I believe the reasons lie deeper and are to be found in the almost revolutionary changes that have occurred in the international order in recent years. Canadians are now far more conscious than ever before of the encroachment of the international environment on our daily lives. When terrorist threats are regular occurrences, when acts of genocide are visible in our living rooms, when crossing international borders becomes an anxiety-ridden challenge, when frightening diseases and environmental issues have no boundaries, when our economic survival depends so starkly on access to the market of a single foreign power, Canadians begin to realize that foreign policies actually have some

relevance to their personal lives. Canadians are also coming to recognize, although we have been slow in doing so, that the United States is not the same nation that it was before the events of September 11, 2001. Now one issue — and only one — dominates US relations with other countries: national security.

In these circumstances, some Canadians advocate a hard-nosed role for Canada in the world. Canada must adopt a reality-based foreign policy by responding to the imperatives of geography, history and economics. The supreme challenge for Canada, in their view, is to improve the relationship with the colossus to the south and make Canada more secure, without reducing our independence and sovereignty.

But others have a contrary vision: The mission of Canada, they argue, is to support countervailing forces against the colossus and try to create new norms, or rules, to constrain its power. Of course, one can advocate either approach or a blend of the two and maintain that the ensuing policies are in our true national interest. These are not simply different ways of describing similar challenges: Major differences of style and substance flow from the way one thinks about Canadian foreign policy.

What follows is an account of the effects of these two poles — the realistic and the romantic — in Canadian foreign policy over nearly half a century.

Let me state at the outset my conclusions about Canadian foreign policy, as it has emerged through the decades:

- Realism and romanticism, or *realpolitik* and the missionary spirit, have done battle to occupy centre stage in our foreign policy.
- These competing themes have often failed to be reconciled and have created confusion and incoherence.
- The theme of realism, or the national interest, has remained a constant and has been dedicated to

three broad goals over time: control over territory and resources, national unity, and more secure economic access to foreign markets, in particular the United States.

- The idealistic theme, a do-good impulse, while also a constant, has evolved in recent years, from helpful fixer and honest broker to norm entrepreneur, change agent and protector of victims. Arguably, it has metastasized from a do-good to a feel-good foreign policy.
- Whether motivated by protecting our sovereignty, or achieving a better world, our foreign policy has often been characterized by a reluctance to commit resources,

and a tendency to moralize and proclaim superior values.

As I warned, there is a personal element in this story. I joined the Department of External Affairs at the time of the Suez Crisis in the era of High Pearsonianism. The Canadian diplomatic service had an astonishing reputation in those days. In Oxford, where I was recruited, the eminent philosopher Stuart Hampshire told me it was the best in the world. I did not need to be convinced. But I was not happy when I was assigned to be the desk officer on the Law of the Sea. I did not leave the high tables of Oxford in order to deal with fish. Or so I thought.

In being assigned to territorial waters, I was, however, about to plunge (no pun intended) into an area of exceptional importance to Canada where, though unglamorous, our national interest was directly at stake.

We were not saving the world; we were trying to appropriate a larger part of it. The operative principle was: if it's water, grab it.

Concern over maritime borders was not all that surprising for a country with by far the longest coastline in the world. What is more surprising is that, in the inter-war years, Canada did not draw any distinction between imperial interests and Canadian ones. It was the British who defined our



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President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney at the ramparts of the Citadel in Quebec City at the Shamrock Summit in March 1985. "Under Mulroney," writes Allan Gotlieb, "Canada followed a reality-based foreign policy" focused on Canada-US relations. Results included the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA and the acid rain accord.

national interests. For the champion of the freedom of the high seas, the three-mile rule was an article of faith.

This principle of international law was under heavy challenge during the League of Nations era by a number of states including the Soviet Union, which wanted recognition of the legitimacy of a 12-mile limit. At the Codification Conference that the League convened at The Hague in 1930, Canada exercised its newly acquired right to representation separate from that of the mother country. My first job in the Legal Division was to ascertain what position Canada took at the conference. No easy task. I could find only one statement in all the records made by the Canadian representative, a very junior officer named Lester Pearson, and it consisted of one sentence: Canada supports the position of Great Britain in favour of the three-mile limit. Canadian interests and imperial interests were one.

Two decades later, the Interdepartmental Committee on Territorial Waters established by the Privy Council, determined our national interests to be otherwise: Canada should seek international agreement on a 12-mile territorial sea. Realism-based diplomacy was about to emerge in full flower.

After the first UN Conference on the Law of the Sea failed, the General Assembly in 1958 debated whether to call a second one to address the unresolved issue of the breadth of the territorial sea. Canada decided to strongly advocate convening such a conference. As the delegate to the UN Committee where the issue was to be debated, the government sent a political appointee from the Senate assisted by a young foreign service officer just off probation — myself.

Shortly afterwards, Canada began to organize an aggressive diplomatic global campaign in favour of a Canadian proposal for a six-mile territorial sea and further six-mile exclusive fishing zone. This was because the initiative was driven from the top by

George Drew, Canadian high commissioner to London, whom the newly elected prime minister, John Diefenbaker, made head of the Canadian delegation to the Law of the Sea conferences, providing him with a free hand. The campaign was greeted with skepticism in the higher regions of the department, directed, as it was, against the position of our allies.

Under the Pearson government, Canada began a lengthy negotiation with the United States, led by then secretary of state for external affairs Paul Martin (father of the current prime minister), to obtain US recognition of

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our claims. Because the US would agree to nothing, the negotiations came to a complete impasse. In the early days of the Trudeau government, Canadian officials devised an innovative approach that distinguished between territorial and functional jurisdiction: Canada would claim 200-mile zones for fisheries conservation purposes and pollution control. But because we feared that even these claims could be successfully challenged in international law, Canada withdrew its acceptance from the compulsory jurisdiction of the court regarding all matters relating to our adjacent coastal waters.

Canada's only other choice was to drop at least some of our most bloated claims. In the face of strident political support on both coasts, the government was not prepared to do this. In renouncing recourse to law, Canada determined that its national interest, as it was conceived, took precedence over its commitment to broader international goals. There was no idealism involved in renouncing the court's jurisdiction.

In the broad context of Canadian foreign policy at the time, the Law of

the Sea initiative was more of a side-show than a mainstream pursuit. In time however, there was to be a migration of the national-interest theme to the broad goals of our foreign policy. But this had to await the arrival on the scene of Pierre Trudeau some years later.

The two decades following the Second World War have been called, by Andrew Cohen among others, the "golden age" of Canadian diplomacy. Canada's standing was so high that it was called on to make contributions to keeping the peace in a number of troubled areas including

Pakistan, Korea, Palestine, Lebanon and Indochina. The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Lester Pearson for his leadership in the creation of the first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), the crowning achievement of the period, brought Canada unprecedented recognition, but it also created in Canada a belief that we Canadians had a special calling to bring peace to the world and would as a matter of course, be the leader of middle powers showing the way.

The Department of External Affairs at the time contained a large number of creative individuals, men of strong egos and self-confidence. It is true that many of those men were motivated, at least in part, by a sort of missionary zeal or impulse. There was an idealistic, romantic, almost crusading spirit that unleashed great energies in pursuit of a better world order. They were part of a generation that had made enormous sacrifices during the recent war and they formed the view that collective security, based on Anglo-American and European solidarity was vital to prevent yet another tragic descent into chaos and destruction. Our international security policies, as Denis Stairs has pointed out, were unabashedly

linked to the national interest. As a result, it is probably true to say there never was a greater correspondence between our idealistic goals and our basic national interest than at this time in our history.

It follows that in no sense were our diplomats during the “golden age” trying to differentiate Canada from the United States on the international plane. In helping to create NATO or resolve the Suez crisis — the defining event of the era for Canadian diplomacy — they were doing precisely the opposite. Working with the US for a better world was the bedrock principle.

But it was already the case that our talent exceeded our influence.

John Diefenbaker, taking up office in the midst of post-Suez fever, believed he had to demonstrate that not just Pearson, but he and his government, too, could cut a swath on the international stage. They immediately solicited suggestions from every foreign service officer for “initiatives” that Canada could take on the international scene. Even at the bottom rung of the department, this struck us as a perversion of our true calling. Diefenbaker’s foreign initiatives did much to weaken Canada’s international reputation — whether in the economic sphere, with his ill-considered suggestion for a 15 percent diversion of trade to Britain, or at the UN, where his personal initiative to condemn the Soviet Union for colonizing its East European neighbours aborted, or in East-West relations, when he questioned US evidence of Soviet missiles in Cuba and called for an international inspection team to determine the facts.

The failures of the Diefenbaker era simply added to the pressures when Lester Pearson became prime minister in 1963 for Canada to bolster its romantic vocation as a leader of middle powers and international peace broker *par excellence*. During the acrimonious years of the Vietnam War, the

magnetic pole of Canada’s international vocation pulled more strongly than ever. The new secretary of state for external affairs, a strong internationalist, thought he heard the drumbeat of public opinion. Canada, the message went, should be a player, a broker, a mediator. Paul Martin Sr. was vigorous in trying to turn a Nobel trick. He had enjoyed a foreign policy success a decade earlier in negotiating an end to the impasse that blocked the entry of new UN members. As foreign minister, he was successful in helping establish a UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus. But with both eyes on succeeding Pearson as prime minister, he wanted further achievements to his credit.

The problem was that expectations of Canadians about their role in the

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world had become gravely exaggerated and could not be realized. “The case for realism in our foreign policy,” I concluded in a private 1967 memorandum to Pierre Trudeau, co-authored with Max Yalden, “derives much of its urgency and strength from an appreciation of the consequences of national policies based upon immature or unreal concepts of internationalism. False internationalism leads to disillusionment and the consequences of disillusionment are isolationism and withdrawal.”

In *Federalism and International Relations*, a document prepared under the aegis of Pierre Trudeau in the context of the constitutional discussions of the time, the government stated Canada’s foreign policy should project

internationally its character as a federal and bilingual country and reflect the priorities that flowed from these constitutional realities. Tellingly, the first paragraph of the statement was entitled, “Foreign Policy as an Expression of the National Interest.”

The new approach to Canadian foreign policy, as expressed in *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, the six-booklet document published in 1970, migrated from the constitutional statement in *Federalism and International Relations* to the foreign policy review. *Foreign Policy for Canadians* defined Canada’s foreign policy as “the product of the government’s progressive definition and pursuit of national aims and interests in the international environment.” Was anything new or useful being said? The

fact is that the Trudeau review did reflect a significant change of emphasis in our foreign policy toward realism and away from the honest-broker or save-the-world role. Not surprisingly, Lester Pearson was unhappy about the review in that it failed to make the pursuit of peace and security Canada’s highest priority.

The call in the White Paper for developing “countervailing factors” in our relations with the United States found full expression two years later, when External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp published the Third Option, which proposed diversification of Canada’s economic relations with Europe and Japan as a way of reducing our dependence on the US. The Third Option was primarily an expression of domestic policy in that it called for strengthening the public instruments that would enable Canada to gain greater control over its economy. It was a remarkable policy for dealing with the US because it was a policy for not dealing with the US.

As an exercise in economic nationalism designed to strengthen Canada’s sovereignty and control over its economic destiny, the Third Option reflected the realist school’s

view of what the purpose of foreign policy should be. It proved to be a flawed policy, inspired by misguided views about the national interest. Its principal associated domestic policies which, in time, were the Foreign Investment Review Agency (FIRA) and the National Energy Program (NEP), did not survive the Trudeau

The new Progressive Conservative prime minister's principal priority in foreign affairs was refurbishing relations with the United States, which he made part of his campaign platform. Trudeau's nationalist policies, in particular the NEP and FIRA, were viewed as helpful neither to the Canadian economy nor to Canada-US relations.

The legacy of the Trudeau years was a foreign policy that swung erratically between the poles of aggressive nationalism and unrealistic internationalism. The compass jerks from pole to pole. For Trudeau, one day it was brass-knuckles realism, the next, feel-good idealism. The contradictions in the style, substance and expression of his foreign policy cannot be resolved.

era; and trade, far from becoming more diversified under Trudeau's government, grew even more dependent on the US market.

As the years passed, Canada's foreign policy under Trudeau increasingly took on the crusading, moralistic, save-the-world overtones that belied the explicit focus on the national interest of his White Paper. Trudeau became in time the leading *tier-mondist* and proponent of the north-south dialogue among the industrialized countries and in the Commonwealth. His swan song, the peace initiative of 1983, supported by a cheer-leading Canadian media, was overreaching and led nowhere.

The legacy of the Trudeau years was a foreign policy that swung erratically between the poles of aggressive nationalism and unrealistic internationalism. The compass jerks from pole to pole. For Trudeau, one day it was brass-knuckles realism, the next, feel-good idealism. The contradictions in the style, substance and expression of his foreign policy cannot be resolved. The symptoms of bipolarism grew more prominent than ever. But the focus of the national interest, especially as it affected Canada's relationship with the United States, was to demonstrate growing resonance in the incoming government of Brian Mulroney.

Trudeau's tendency to find moral equivalence between the two superpowers, particularly at a time when Ronald Reagan was declaring the Soviet Union to be an evil empire, was deeply resented in the White House. The goals of Mulroney's foreign policy were thus grounded in a clear view of the national interest from which he never wavered in his two terms as prime minister.

The bedrock reality principle was that the US was friend and ally and not a power against which one sought counterweights. It was a foreign policy that he would direct himself, rather than through his foreign minister, Joe Clark.

Within weeks of taking office, Mulroney went to Washington to meet Reagan, against the unanimous counsel of his advisers in Ottawa. This set the stage for the reality-based style and substance of his leadership. He immersed himself not only in designing the grand strategies, but in most specific tactical considerations, especially as they related to Congress. His shift from multilateralism to bilateralism in relations with the United States was a departure of historic proportions. From the outset of its postwar role, Canada had been a vigorous advocate of lowering tariffs and other barriers to trade through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and multilateral trade negotia-

tions. To conclude that a continental arrangement with the US was the best way to obtain increased access to American markets marked a major breach with Canada's traditional preference for multilateral solutions.

Assisted by the support of the Macdonald Commission for a Canada-US free trade agreement, and by the positive effects of the Auto Pact, the Mulroney government pursued continental free-trade to a successful conclusion. Conducting high level personal diplomacy, Mulroney was able to achieve his other two objectives as well, an acid-rain accord with President George Bush Sr. and an agreement with Reagan on the passage of US vessels through Arctic waters, providing increased recognition of Canada's claim to sovereignty.

Notwithstanding the prime minister's determination that a continentalist approach was necessary to advance our national interest, it was inevitable that his new Progressive Conservative government would want to conduct its own general foreign policy review, which it did under the aegis of Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark.

It can be argued that Canada pursued a two-track foreign policy in the Mulroney years — the prime minister's continental, national-interest track and Joe Clark's internationalist track.

Outside the new hemispheric interest, including joining the Organization of American States in 1989, Mulroney's foreign policy maintained a strong focus on international issues. As was to be expected, Canada remained committed to its role as peacekeeper *par excellence*, devoting resources to conflict resolution in Bosnia and Somalia and to the US-led campaign in the first Gulf War.

An idealistic — and most would say commendable — streak was visible in Mulroney's vigorous, though unsuccessful, attempt to persuade Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher to sup-

port sanctions against South Africa. Unlike Trudeau, he was outspoken on human rights violations (in China, Kenya, Indonesia) and could thus be said to have placed new emphasis on humanitarian values in Canadian foreign policy, even claiming that human rights and good governance was a “cornerstone of our foreign policy.”

It is fair to conclude that, under Mulroney, Canada followed a reality-based foreign policy. There were few strains between the polar attractions of the national interest and an activist global role. In rooting national interest in North American soil, in Canada-US friendship, and in enthusiastically engaging with the US on international issues, Canada’s global role was enhanced; there was no sense of Canada’s seeking internationally to offset US power. That coherence was in marked contrast to the role of Canada in the world that was to emerge under the government of Jean Chrétien.

In a habit of Canadian political life that had become addictive, the Chrétien government did not long delay in conducting its own, *de rigueur* foreign policy review. Predictably, the review of 1994/1995, *Canada in the World*, reflected both faces of Canadian foreign policy: security and prosperity on the one hand, and Canadian values, such as good governance, the rule of law and democracy and the need to project them abroad, on the other.

As it turns out, the government of Jean Chrétien did strike out in new directions and we did get on with seeking a “larger role.” But far from liberating ourselves and our foreign policy from overwhelming US preoccupation, the demon of anti-Americanism cast a large shadow over our international ventures in the Chrétien years.

The Chrétien government’s approach to foreign policy was to be characterized first by a profound lack of coherence, then by an increased anti-American inflection which led us to adopt a quixotic international role, notably different from the heyday of



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Lester B. Pearson and Louis St-Laurent at the end of their decade-long partnership as external affairs minister and prime minister, the zenith of Canada’s influence in the world. At the time, Canada committed 7.3 percent of GDP to defence spending, compared with only 1.1 percent today. Canada’s influence as a middle power culminated with Pearson being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957.

Canadian diplomacy. As well, there emerged an excessive preoccupation with the projection of Canadian values as a goal of foreign policy.

During most of the Chrétien era, our foreign policy could have been mistaken for that of two countries. On the one hand, there was the prime minister’s single-minded devotion to pursuing trade promotion around the globe; on the other, his foreign minister’s crusade for human security. The poles of Canadian foreign policy were never further apart. On economic matters, the prime minister’s

approach could be seen as grounded in the national interest. Almost immediately after the Liberals won the 1993 election and Chrétien became prime minister, he threw to the winds his commitment as leader of the opposition to renegotiate NAFTA. Under his leadership, the government entered into free-trade agreements with Chile and Israel and became a leading proponent of free trade throughout the Americas.

During this time, Chrétien’s longest serving foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, soon after his appointment

in 1996, began to carve out what Robin Jeffrey Hay described as “arguably the most ambitious agenda of any foreign minister in history.” “In putting people at the heart of security policy, Axworthy’s vision,” in the words of Canada’s former ambassador to the United Nations, Paul Heinbecker, “was virtually Copernican in its significance.”

Notwithstanding its roots in the idealism of Canada’s diplomat-missionaries of an earlier era, it differed in significant ways from past Canadian foreign policy. Unlike earlier Canadian diplomats born in the manse, who tended to be practical in their outlook, Axworthy articulated his vision in the broadest possible terms, often engaging in what his critics have called full blown “pulpit diplomacy.”

Until 1990, Canada had participated in every UN peacekeeping activity and under Chrétien, it strained itself to maintain that role in the last decade of the century. In the NATO-authorized operation in Kosovo and in the UN operation in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia, Canadian forces were active participants. There was no diminution in our self-identification as the world’s foremost peacekeeper.

This identification, however, was grounded ever more in the romantic vision of ourselves and ever less in reality. The story is now well told, though still insufficiently appreciated, of the decline in our defense spending, our aid programs and the capacity of our armed forces to conduct various roles. Compared to a level of defense spending of some 7.3 percent of GDP in the 1950s and some 0.53 percent of GDP in official aid in the 1970s, expenditures declined to a fraction of that by century’s end — 1.1 percent of GDP on defense and some 0.22 percent on aid. Canadian spending on defense ranked Canada among the lowest three members of NATO, along with Luxembourg and the Netherlands, and 17th in the world in terms of official aid. From being the largest contributor to peacekeeping in

the 1970s and 1980s, Canada declined to 32nd in the world by the end of 2001. By 2003, Canada had only 250 military and civilian personnel in UN peacekeeping operations. In Jack Granatstein’s assessment: “By the beginning of the current century, shortages of equipment and personnel all but eliminated Canada’s military capacity.”

Yet as Foreign Minister Bill Graham put it in 2002: “For many Canadians, and in the eyes of the world, peacekeeping is fundamental to who we are as a nation. I am proud to affirm that the maintenance of peace remains our highest aspiration.” Yet it was on the watch of the government of which he was a member that the resources behind Canada’s

With declining influence in Washington, neglect of the military, and emphasis on projecting our virtues and values, Canadians, at the end of the Chrétien decade, had little reason to believe their country any longer influenced the major issues of the time.

soft power declined precipitously. How could this be our highest aspiration, if there was no willingness to increase the resources necessary to achieve it? This was another contradiction in Canada’s foreign policy of the era. There were others. Axworthy’s human security agenda, which he sought to implement through soft power, led to great emphasis on the projection abroad of Canadian values. This translated into advocacy of the rule of law and international rule-making, a main object being to constrain the United States in its international behaviour. Yet there was no evidence that new regimes of law would influence US conduct. The US, through refusing to ratify several new treaties, made it perfectly clear they would not.

Axworthy’s third way represented, in essence, a Utopian vision of

Canada’s role, or more accurately, a quixotic one, distinguished from Canada’s traditional approach to its international vocation by abandoning the concerns of the realist school. In seeking to transform the behaviour of other states, its aims were ill-defined, overreaching and by and large impossible of fulfillment. Never in the history of Canada’s foreign relations had differentiation from the United States become a greater imperative than under Axworthy’s stewardship. It was no less than a prerequisite for navigating the third way. Fortunately, the emphasis on soft power, “human security networks” and the third way found no resonance with his successor, down-to-earth, practical-minded John

Manley, whose objective was restoring good relations with the US. During the all-too-short term of his stewardship, the needle of the foreign policy compass swung dramatically from feel-good vision to do-good practicalities like managing the Canada-US border.

But declarations about how quickly the Axworthy legacy seemed to be fading proved to be premature, to say the least. Under Manley’s successor, Bill Graham, there was yet another foreign policy review in 2003 — *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy* — and the government again placed great stress on projecting Canadian values, humanitarian goals and peacekeeping. The needle shifted back yet again to the visionary, feel-good side of a foreign policy conducted, if not in opposition to Washington, at least at some distance from it.

Thus in the later years of his government, Chrétien, at the helm of Canadian foreign policy, distanced Canada from the US on Iraq. The rationale for his decision, the “Chrétien Doctrine” as I called it, was that Canada would never engage in enforcement action unless the UN authorized it.

The Chrétien doctrine broke new ground in Canadian foreign policy. Half

a decade earlier, Canada had joined a NATO-sponsored armed intervention in Kosovo without the authority of the UN Security Council. It is possible that Chrétien used lack of UN authorization for the Iraq invasion as a fig leaf to disguise his true but unarticulated reasons for Canada's non-participation. However, in ceding, or appearing to cede, to the UN the determination of our national security interests, the prime minister went some distance toward positioning the Axworthy vision of the third way in the mainstream of Canadian foreign policy.

Paradoxically, he was also articulating a foreign policy for turning inward. Because Security Council agreement to authorize armed intervention in areas of conflict and human rights violations will remain a rare occurrence, the Chrétien doctrine enables Canada to justify non-involvement regardless of moral principles that may call for intervention. It thus can serve as a cover for a policy of isolationism.

Chrétien's reluctance to criticize offensive comments about the United States made by his colleagues and other insiders helped distance Canada further from Washington than at any time since the John Diefenbaker era. There was arguably more coherence, less polarity and fewer contradictions in Canadian foreign policy at the end of the Chrétien era than during most of the years of his leadership. The romantic view held unchallenged ascendancy. Although Lloyd Axworthy was no longer his foreign minister, Chrétien became at one with him in positioning Canada outside the orbit of Washington and in downgrading concerns about the impact of our policies on Canada-US relations.

In two decades, Canada went from honest broker to norm-entrepreneur, from doing good to feeling good in foreign policy.

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and emphasis on projecting our virtues and values, Canadians, at the end of the Chrétien decade, had little reason to believe their country any longer influenced the major issues of the time.

The Martin government has announced yet another foreign policy review. It should have avoided that. These time-consuming exercises, at

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best, accomplish little or nothing; at worst, they blow stale air into old clichés and encourage self-congratulation and self-deception about our place in the world.

When asked to define Canadian foreign policy, Lester Pearson, was reported to have replied, "Ask me at the end of the year and when I look back at what Canada has done, I'll tell you what our foreign policy is." Our new government would be well-advised to follow Pearson's example. Whatever we do, we should not try to conceptualize or package our foreign policy in value-wrapped formulations about Canada's place in the world. New directions are increasingly self-evident because they are based on unavoidable realities. The challenge is to open our eyes to these realities, base our foreign policies unambiguously on them and get on with implementing them.

A reality-based foreign policy has a number of requirements.

The first is to recognize that transcendent US power is the dominant feature of the contemporary international order. This is unlikely to change, in our lifetime, in favour of some restoration of nineteenth-century concepts of the balance of power. Call it a hyper-power, imperial power or colossus, the United States is the only state that articulates and acts on a global strategic vision. At least for the foreseeable future, it is the only

state that has the power to do so. China and India, in the pursuit of their national interest, may at some later point in the twenty-first century come to exercise much greater power than they do today. The European Union might also come to pursue a global strategic vision, something it does not do now. It may even, in time, aspire to

play the role of superpower, which will require it to make investments in its military capacity well beyond what its members have been prepared to do. But it is not a superpower today, nor does it wish to be.

The worst prescription for a realistic foreign policy for Canada is to seek differentiation from the US for the sake of being different. For reasons of history, language, culture, geography, demography, security and shared values, Canada has a unique relationship with the US, which should rightly be regarded as special. Far from closeness posing a threat to our existence, it is a necessary condition for our economic well-being and our international effectiveness. Our potential for influencing the world's greatest power is our comparative advantage in the world. It gives us credibility in other capitals. As US power grows, so does Canada's opportunity.

It is to Paul Martin's credit that he has established a permanent cabinet committee on Canada-US relations under his personal chairmanship. This allows him and his government to assess all policy initiatives, domestic and foreign, within the context of the Canada-US relationship. It speaks volumes about the significance of that relationship in realizing our policy goals.

A second requirement for a realistic policy is the recognition that Canada's

role as a middle power can never be regained. The reasons for this are many. For one thing, Canada hardly qualifies as a middle power because of the size of its economy — one of the world's largest. For another, the very concept of middle power, a creature of Cold War geopolitics, is passé. As well, there is no longer any balance of power in the world to tilt one way or another.

While in other times, Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau spoke often of Canada as a middle power, Prime Minister Paul Martin should not

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tether Canadian foreign policy to an obsolete concept.

A third requirement for a reality-based foreign policy is that Canadians liberate themselves from the belief that the UN is the sacred foundation of our foreign policy. Support for multilateralism and support for the UN are not equivalent. Canadians have long espoused multilateralism as a principle of foreign policy. "Canadians" it has been said "are born with a multilateralist chromosome in their biological make-up." We are, of course, right to be multilateralists, where circumstances warrant. But a practical or realistic perspective would make the choice of unilateralism, bilateralism or multilateralism a question of appropriate means to achieve particular ends.

The UN is not the only begetter of multilateral action nor the only authority that can confer legitimacy on armed intervention.

We should also dispense with hypocrisy and moral superiority about our commitment to multilateralism and be honest enough to recognize that when it comes to pursuing our national interest, Canada has a long history of unilateralism. Even if we have a multilateralist chromosome, when our territory or sovereignty is at stake, there is a zest for unilateralism in our genes.

Under at least four prime ministers — St-Laurent, Pearson, Trudeau and Mulroney — Canadians have asserted unilateral claims to sovereignty or jurisdiction over vast maritime zones. Probably the largest claim to sovereignty anywhere on the globe was made by the government of Brian Mulroney when it enthusiastically drew straight baselines around the islands of the Arctic Archipelago. All these actions, including Canada's questionable legal behaviour on the high seas during the 1995 turbot war,

and our renouncing of recourse to the rule of law whenever we could be challenged, were greeted favourably by Canadian public opinion — sometimes with wild acclaim.

Canadians, of course, have always accepted the obvious proposition that international problems require international cooperation for their solution. We have never questioned that multilateralism is at the heart of economic and social cooperation and that international security requires solutions beyond the capacity of individual states to achieve.

Unfortunately, the commitment to multilateralism has tended to blind Canadians to the fact that the UN Charter is a flawed document. Yet the myth that the UN represents the disenfranchised of the world is so strong that the greatest champion of Canada's visionary human-security agenda, Lloyd Axworthy, argued strenuously that the "responsibility to protect" the victims of the world should be the domain not of the Security Council but of the General Assembly — which, of course, includes among its some 190 members, the very dictatorships that are perpetrators of violence against their citizens

Canada and like-minded states must search out new forms of

multilateral cooperation. The only alternative to unilateralism is intelligent and creative multilateralism. This will often mean coalitions of the willing, whether or not Canada wishes to join them. The proposal of Prime Minister Martin for the Group of Twenty to work on "important issues of global concern," although not without problems, is creative in showing a willingness to break out of the UN framework.

As a fourth prerequisite for a reality-based foreign policy, we must also abandon our fixation with international rule-making. Canada is no more qualified to be a leader in rule-making than most other members of the UN. Some may think that, as a "moral superpower" with a value-laden foreign policy,

we have a special calling to be a "norm entrepreneur," but this would be a vain-glorious enterprise. Canada's reputation in the world as a constructive peacemaker has never been based on a passion for legalism and adjudication. Other than with regard to international trade, we have avoided the rule of law whenever we believed it could damage our national interests.

Still, Canada's new government seems to be making international law and rule-making a central theme of its approach to international peace and security. Once again we seem to be trying to make ourselves feel good by taking the high road to a better world.

Our new prime minister has stated that what Canada seeks is the "evolution of international law and practice, so that multilateral action may be taken in situations of extreme humanitarian emergency." He envisages the Security Council establishing thresholds that would define the circumstances that would allow for intervention.

But the idea that agreement could be reached in advance on specific norms that would distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate intervention is romantic in the extreme. But what is

not romantic is that the people of Darfur are slaughtered while we seek UN consensus on the rules of intervention.

Utopianism, millenarianism and visionary crusades should have no place in Canadian foreign policy.

This is a fifth requirement for a reality-based foreign policy.

The extreme emphasis placed by our leaders in recent years on Canada's role as advocate for a world of human security is a recipe for our continued marginalization. If human security throughout the world is the aim of Canada's soft power, then Canadians assuredly need to recognize that all the hard power in the world could not achieve it.

But to acknowledge that our foreign policy must reflect Canadian values is not at all to say that the aim of Canadian foreign policy is to spread Canadian values. Canadian political leaders are rightly responding to Canadian values when they accept humanitarianism as a basic component of foreign policy. But to effectively protect human rights, in concert with like-minded states, our strategies must be based on two fundamental realities: Little can be achieved unless the US is willing to be a leading player, and the UN, because of its flaws, cannot, in many situations, be the instrument of protection. So far as the capacity to protect is concerned, the UN is not an alternative to the United States. Without US support in most situations, the UN cannot act.

A sixth requirement for a realistic foreign policy is the willingness to commit significant resources to achieving Canada's goals. Canada's international aspirations will ring hollow and will be divorced from reality unless Canadians are willing to accord a significantly higher financial priority to the achievement of our foreign policy goals.

The large number of failed and failing states in the world requires those who wish to intervene to protect the victims of famine, disease,

civil disorder and human rights violations to scale their ambitions to their capacity to act. Canada's international aspirations, as well as its self-interest, call for us to commit the financial resources that allow us to play a useful role in these diversified and proliferating situations.

Even when Canada acts unilaterally in the name of the national interest or security, the commitment to the necessary resource allocations has been absent. Some of our claims to Arctic channels remain contested, but Canada lacks the capacity to monitor them to detect the presence of foreign submarines.

The most important requirement is the recognition that our destiny as a sovereign nation is inescapably tied to our geography. We cannot sustain relations

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with our colossal neighbour by being the eternal supplicant. Nor can we retain our self-respect or sustain relations by pretending that we can recruit friendly American constituencies to our side to defend us against powerful US interests and lobbies. In the area of lobbying, US domestic interests can trump a foreign power any day of the week.

We must try to build, as the Europeans have done, on a larger sense of community, a North American community that substitutes enforceable rights and obligations for political arbitrariness and the muscle of special interests. The reward of success in such an endeavour is the securing of our political sovereignty; the price of failure is continuing dependency and a diminishing sense of national self-confidence.

The Canada-US Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA were major achievements based on the North American reality, but did not go far enough in protecting our economic interest — an interest cogently summarized by the fact that bilateral trade now accounts for as much as three-quarters of our annual income.

There is no example anywhere of a major industrialized nation's resting so much of its commerce on so slender an international legal foundation. We should regard our current arrangements as a stage on the way to deeper and wider integration.

Key areas of our trade were not included in our free trade agreements: Procedures for objective bilateral dispute settlement remain primitive; the flow of goods is riddled with protectionist harassment through antidumping and countervail actions; border obstacles to the movement of goods, services and people have increased significantly since the attacks of September 11, 2001; rules of origin interrupt the flow of commerce; and concerns about security threats deepen the divide of the 49th parallel. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has estimated the province's annual costs of border obstacles to be at least \$8 billion.

A reality-based foreign policy for Canada must recognize that, in negotiating with the US, its security concerns are paramount. Greater economic integration should be accompanied by a common security perimeter surrounding the two countries to ensure the security of the continent and freedom of movement within. Without such a bold and innovative approach it is doubtful we will be able to achieve our trade objectives. Similarly, if Canada declines to participate in US missile defense, we will be signalling to the Americans that we are not serious about the defense of the continent. The implications for our long-term economic interests are inescapable.

Would Congress be likely to agree to such a far-reaching and

comprehensive accord? If Canada has the vision, and provided security is a component, there is, in time, some prospect for success. The Canada-US Free Trade Agreement was a Canadian initiative, yet it was the most comprehensive bilateral economic agreement ever entered into by the US. It abridged US sovereignty in areas where this was said to be impossible, and Congress passed it. Paradoxically it may be easier to achieve a grand agreement with the US than a modest one. The greater the number of interests in play, the less fatal can be the opposition of single or narrow interests.

Finally, then, we should recognize functionalism as a realistic underlying principle of our foreign policy. A reality-based approach could take us back to the time of Mackenzie

King and the Second World War, when the basis of Canadian foreign policy was functionalism. In using that word, our diplomats meant that Canadians should look at the specific issues and get involved in situations where we had the specific interests, skills and resources that would allow us to make an effective contribution. A return to functionalism would lack glamour, but it would be a good recipe for Canada in the world of today and tomorrow. In enhancing our economic and security relationship with the United States through strengthening its legal foundation, in regaining our potential for influencing the world's foremost power, in pursuing a more creative approach to multilateralism, in rebuilding the physical and human resources enabling us to increase our contributions to troubled societies and

regional conflicts, Canada would be adopting a functional foreign policy.

We could go even further. By avoiding visionary pronouncements about our foreign policy and ceasing to moralize and talk about our superior values, we could finally bring to an end our long spasms of bipolar behaviour, promote our national interest and gain both self-esteem and the respect of nations. We would, at last, have a reality-based foreign policy.

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