



SIPP

Saskatchewan Institute
of Public Policy

The
**Scholar
Series**

Canadian Foreign Policy and
the Events of September 11:
A Dramatic Turn

Dr. Howard Leeson
Winter 2002



UNIVERSITY OF
REGINA

**Canadian Foreign Policy and the Events of September 11:
A Dramatic Turn**

Dr. Howard Leeson
Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy Senior Fellow
and Professor of Political Science,
University of Regina

Public Lecture at the
Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy
February 26, 2002

Each year the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy benefits from the appoint of two Senior Fellows, one appointed by the University of Regina and the other by the Government of Saskatchewan. The fellowships, which are held at the Institute, are each for twelve months, and follow upon the conclusion of competitive processes designed to recognise scholars and practitioners who have made significant contributions in some area of public policy. During their year at SIPP, the Fellows are free to pursue their public-policy research interests and to participate in the various activities of the Institute.

Towards the conclusion of their appointment, each Fellow is expected to present a public lecture on the research they have undertaken during their term at SIPP. Such lectures are published in our Scholar Series, thereby disseminating to a wider audience the ideas and findings of the Fellows.

For his public lecture, Dr. Howard Leeson—our first University of Regina Senior Fellow—examined the impact of September 11 on Canadian foreign policy.

Dr. Raymond B. Blake
Director, Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy

Canadian Foreign Policy and the Events of September 11: A Dramatic Turn

Dr. Howard Leeson
Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy Senior Fellow
and Professor of Political Science,
University of Regina

Introduction

As you might guess from the title the substance of this lecture is inspired by the events of September 11, 2001. In particular I am interested in the impact of the attacks on the direction of international politics generally, and Canadian foreign policy specifically. May I say at the outset that I share with most people a horror at the events themselves. No one could have looked at the pictures of the towers in New York falling without sharing the intense suffering for those personally touched by the attacks. As well, we also share in a concern that such violence should be stopped, and that the causes of these kinds of events be remedied in order to reduce the possibility of their recurrence in the future.

Sadly, as we all know, September 11 is not an isolated event in human history. Human life has been lost to violence in much greater numbers in far too many instances. If we are to reduce, and even eliminate such violence, we must first understand its causes and then work to create social and political relationships that will prevent these tragedies in the future. In other words, we must work for a peaceful world. Not as starry-eyed idealists, although we could use a few of those, but as citizens who believe that human relationships are actually the creation of human beings, that they are not pre-ordained by impersonal or even god like forces from which there is no escape. In other words, we must believe that our fate really is in our own hands if we hope ever to succeed.

Having started out at this general and philosophical level, I must disappoint you in saying that I do not have a grand plan for this re-ordering. Indeed, my own lecture today is at a much more modest level, one designed I hope to spark thought about the role of Canada in this "New World Order." It starts from the general premise that we can and should re-examine the role that our nation plays in the world. It accepts the idea that September 11 has created some more urgency for doing this. However, it also proposes that changes in policy will not succeed if they are not practical and based on the long-term identified interests of our country and its people. In order to do this I intend to divide the lecture into three sections. The first will review the historical development of Canadian foreign policy, and the forces that have shaped it. Specifically it will concentrate on the role of a middle power in the post-World War II period. Second, it will attempt to analyze the likely outcome for Canada of the new American war on terrorism and the demands for a more continental security and defence policy. Third, it will propose some alternatives to the present trend, a trend which places an emphasis, and even a premium, on the further military and political integration of Canada with the United States.

The Historical Development of Canadian Foreign Policy

Most of you will be familiar with the broad-brush strokes of Canadian foreign policy. We emerged to semi-sovereignty in 1867, comfortably under the wing of the British Empire. Our two major tasks for the next several decades were to attain full sovereignty from Britain and to avoid being swallowed up by the Americans in their drive toward Manifest Destiny. In attempting to attain the first we stressed the need for Britain

to recognize that we were a growing nation in North America, British in origin, but different from Britain. This inherent ambivalence - some might say schizophrenia - dominated our relationships in the empire, alternately pulling us toward Britain and Europe on the one hand, and the US on the other.

Such ambivalence dominated our own domestic politics as well. The presence of Quebec and its large French speaking population in Canada, with the attendant need for attention to dual languages and culture, ensured that our internal political relationships would also be characterized by a lack of unanimity on some key questions. Some would say that this duality, both domestically and internationally, has indelibly marked our approach to all politics. We are a people who cautiously consider everything, looking for all of the options before we commit ourselves to a course of action. Conservative by nature, small in population, and therefore a weak military and economic power, but driven by a need to assert our independence, Canadians carved out a very specific approach to political matters which emphasized negotiation, international law and organization, and the search for counterweight strategies to ensure our independence of action and existence.

Counterweights are essential for the equilibrium and even the existence of smaller and middle rank powers. Strategic alliances and membership in different international bodies ensure counterweights. In Canada's case we have understood this to mean a counterweight to the vast colossus below the forty-ninth parallel. In our first years of existence our place in the British Empire ensured our survival. Britain provided the counterweight to the US, a country with a huge army and an inclination to solve problems with Britain by directing their actions toward Canada.

Thus, while we needed to assert ourselves with the British, we needed to do it without losing their protection. Sir John A. Macdonald performed this small balancing act for the first time when the Treaty of Washington was negotiated and signed in 1871. He was chosen as one of the members of the Imperial negotiating team, specifically to ensure that Canadian interests were not sacrificed to the needs of the empire. He was only partially successful, but the principle of Canadian involvement was established. That involvement came with a cost however, the cost of being in the middle. The problems and the opportunities of being in the "middle," are something I will examine in more depth later.

This early period came to an end with the conclusion of the First World War. Between the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and the Balfour Declaration and the Statute of Westminster in 1931, Canada "came of age" in international affairs. Our new relationship would prove to be one of being even more in the "middle" of world events. The Great Depression, the rise of the Axis powers, and the lead up to World War II proved to be a period of huge turmoil. Coupled with the internal strains caused by the rift over conscription during The Great War, and the ambivalent leadership of McKenzie King after 1921, Canadian foreign policy in the first years of the war was often difficult to discern. We were pulled on the one hand by the isolationism of the US, and on the other by the evident need to counter the buildup of Nazi Germany. We shared with the US what has been described as a naïve outlook toward the "old world" while at the same time remaining firmly wedded to Britain and the empire. Jack Granatstein described this attitude when reviewing the King era:

King knew that Canada was in and of the New World and that this too had its advantages. . . . Canada and the United States shared youth, innocence and, both simplicity and superiority of outlook towards the outside world. Geographical isolation made North Americans smug, superior, untouchable.¹

As most of you know we carried that sense of being untouchable in North America right up to September 11, 2002.

World War II and its aftermath caused Canada to review and reassert its place in the newly realigned politics of the globe. Throughout the war we had tried to be in the middle of everything. We sought to be the middle link between Britain and the US. We were in the middle of the war effort and our status was more than that of a minor power, but less than a great power. We were a middle power. In terms of our "place" in the war we sought to ensure that we were viewed neither as an appendage of Britain, nor simply the errand boy of the US. Our efforts were only partly successful or appreciated. Therefore, at the conclusion of the war, we sought to carve out a new role for ourselves, one which was consistent with our newly acquired international status. This new role was described in several speeches by then Minister of State for External Affairs, Louis St. Laurent, the most important being one at the Gray Lectures in 1947. In that speech he put forward the principles upon which our policy should be developed. The most important of these were:

- National Unity
- Political Liberty
- The Rule of Law in National and International Affairs
- The Acceptance of International Responsibility in Keeping With Our Conception of our Role in World Affairs.

¹ J. L. Granatstein, *Towards A New World* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, Pittman Ltd., 1992) p.11

The latter two of these principles are the most important for our purposes today. The Rule of Law is a cornerstone of our policy, as it ought to be. The major powers will always have strength, as we have seen lately with the US. The others, middle or small, will have either the law, or an alliance with one of the major powers. Thus, Canadian policy has always emphasized international law, institutions, and agreements. The practical applications of these can be found in our support of the United Nations, for international trading agreements, and, latterly, in our support of strengthened roles for international judicial bodies.

The second principle, the acceptance of responsibility in keeping with our conception of our role in world affairs, derived from something called the "functional principle" developed during the Second World War. Roughly this meant that certain nations, given their size, capabilities, state of development, and their willingness, ought to be called upon to perform international tasks that neither small nations nor large powers would be comfortable. The practical outcome of this principle was the growth of our peacekeeping role, a function that required a developed nation, with sufficient economic, social and military resources, and no apparent imperialist ambitions.

These were brought into focus in 1956 in the Suez Crisis, when the principles of international law and international responsibility were intermixed with the counterweight strategy and our role as a middle power. Suddenly we were very much "in the middle" between Britain, on the one side, and the United States, on the other. We were forced to choose between our counterweights. Lester Pearson's suggestion for a peacekeeping force was as much an attempt to salvage our position with both countries, as it was an attempt to broker a genuine peace in the region.

Of course, during this period, the Cold War was at its height. Internal difficulties between allies were important, but not as important as the perceived need to counter the Soviet Union. This was a counterweight strategy of a different order. Given the decline of the British role in the world, the only real counterweight to the challenge of the Soviet Union was the US. It was necessary, therefore, to integrate some defence strategies and capabilities directly with the Americans. The establishment of NORAD and the integration of sea and air patrols were tangible results of this cooperation in defence and foreign policy matters. Some say that we simply made a virtue out of a necessity. As a 1953 defence study explained, "*it may be difficult indeed for the Canadian government to reject any major defense proposals which the United States government presents with conviction as essential to the security of North America.*"² Others were more skeptical, characterizing this period, and the attitude of the military in Canada, as essentially contributing to the ultimate demise of Canada through loss of *de facto* sovereignty. It is a debate that is at the heart of the presentation today.

Living With the Elephant

Most of you will be familiar with the characterization of the Canadian-American relationship as that of the elephant and the mouse in the same bed. The mouse has to be careful that the elephant does not turn over in its sleep. "Nimble" is the word that comes to mind in this type of relationship. We were faithful to the United States in our relations with the Soviet Union, but, at the same time, we sought to carve out an international role consistent with the principles outlined above. This came to be called "liberal internationalism".

² Dewitt-Leyton Brown, p.172

Liberal internationalism was a policy designed to strengthen the sense of Canadian nationhood, mitigate the centrifugal forces drawing us into greater integration with the US, and carve out an identifiable international personality for Canada. Inevitably however, our relations with the US came to dominate discussion about our role. Suddenly the challenge seemed to many to have reverted to an older question: Would Canada survive at all in the face of the huge economic, social and military pull from the south? The treatment of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker in the Cuban Missile Crisis, Pearson's dressing down by US President Lyndon Johnson, and the continued economic integration of the two countries in the 1960's made the question seem a real one indeed.

Thus, beginning in the 1960's a great debate about the future of Canada began. Remember that events in our external relations cannot be separated from the internal debates and strains. This is the time of the rise of the Parti Québécois (PQ) in Quebec, the visit of Charles de Gaulle, and the October crisis of 1970. Some worried that Canada had too many fronts on which to contend, that survival under these strains was at least problematic if not impossible. Many, like George Grant in his *Lament For a Nation*, were pessimistic indeed. Others were more optimistic, arguing that there were options to assimilation by the Americans, and that these ought to be pursued. The twin strains of nationalism and internationalism in foreign policy are intertwined from this time on, and continue to the present. One argues that we can strengthen Canada only by extricating ourselves from our involvement with the US, economically, socially, and militarily.

These "Canada Firsters" of the latter part of the 20th century were scattered across the ideological spectrum, but were most vocal and concentrated on the left. Their argument was quite simple: Economic integration would flow into political integration. We must, at all costs, avoid further continental drift. Prescriptions ranged from making

Canada a socialist country and withdrawing from military and political arrangements with the United States, to the more conservative notions of diverting trade and promoting more international approaches to world order.

Canadians were certainly concerned about this, and to a lesser degree, continue to be concerned. Many argued that this concern was simply wrong. Who can forget the memorable exchanges between Mulroney, Turner and Broadbent in the election battle of 1988 in which Mulroney dismisses fears that economic integration will eventually lead to political integration. He succeeded in that election, but was he right? September 11, and the subsequent events raise this debate again most forcefully.

Certainly there is no dearth of opinions about this matter. The most cogent that I have heard comes from George Ball, former Undersecretary of State, and a person I always thought both forthright and thoughtful, who wrote the following in 1968.

Canada, I have long believed, is fighting a rearguard action against the inevitable. Living next to our nation, with a population ten times as large as theirs and a gross national product fourteen times as great, the Canadians recognize their need for the United States' capital; but at the same time they are determined to maintain their economic and political independence. Their position is understandable, and the desire to maintain their national integrity is a worthwhile objective. But the Canadians pay heavily for it and, over the years, I do not believe they will succeed in reconciling the intrinsic contradictions of their position. I wonder, for example, if the Canadian people will be prepared indefinitely to accept for the psychic satisfaction of maintaining a separate national and political identity, a per capita income less than three-fourths of ours. The struggle is bound to be a difficult one - and I suspect, over the years, a losing one....

Thus while I can understand the motivating assumptions of the Canadian position, I cannot predict a long life expectancy for her present policies. The great land

mass to the south exerts an enormous gravitational attraction while at the same time tending to repel, and even without the divisive element of a second culture in Quebec, the resultant strains and pressures are hard to endure. Sooner or later, commercial imperatives will bring about free movement of all goods back and forth across our long border; and when that occurs, or even before it does, it will become unmistakably clear that countries with economies so inextricably intertwined must also have free movement of the other vital factors of production -- capital, services and labour. The result will inevitably be substantial economic integration, which will require for its full realization a progressively expanding area of common political decision.³

Remember, he wrote that almost 35 years ago.

Is Ball right? He certainly represents one view of the linkage between economic, social and political variables. That view is expressed by those who believe in international integration theory and globalization, as it is now called. Globalization is not new. The globe has been "shrinking" for some time. The forces of technology and social organization have been at work for centuries, but have become most apparent in the last several decades. Academics began to look at this phenomenon with more interest in the 1960's. It was proposed that there was a causal link between social and economic processes and political institutions. That is, that increasing economic integration in the world was forcing political integration also. Such an approach, obviously shared by George Ball, conceives of politics as the dependent variable.

It was also shared by those in the Trudeau Government who took several actions to try and counter what they perceived to be a long-term threat to Canadian independence. These included review of foreign ownership and foreign takeovers in Canada, the

³ J. L. Granatstein, *Canadian Foreign Policy Since 1945: Middle Power Or Satellite* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969) p. 200.

requirement of Canadian content in cultural matters, strengthening the CBC, and many others. In the area of foreign policy the Trudeau government unabashedly adhered to the counterweight strategy, putting forward what it called the Third Option in the early 1970's. The Third Option was a plan to try and divert economic and social attention to Europe, on the assumption that Canada needed to diversify its trade in particular away from the United States. It was not, as some have put it, a ringing success.

On the international front Trudeau was committed to liberal internationalism, but sought to carve out a different personal style, less stuffy than Pearson, characterized by pirouettes and visits with Fidel Castro. The fundamentals remained the same. Of course, for Pierre Trudeau, international policy had to serve the domestic interests of Canada, most notably the cause of national unity. However, and some do not agree with this, I would argue that the basic approaches of Canadian foreign policy remained the same. Interestingly, Trudeau ended his career with an international flavour, as he sought to influence the new order in the Soviet Union, and the decidedly old order, Ronald Reagan, in the United States. As you will recall, he was less than successful.

The New World Order Begins

Most date the beginning of what we now call the “New World Order” from the fall of the Soviet Union. I believe that this period actually begins with the ascension of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The past twenty years have been characterized in the main by a move away from the post-war consensus on the role of the state in society. Older economic and political inclinations, now characterized as neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism, were brought out, dusted off and re-presented to a world in which the existing models seemed to have acquired feet of clay. This is the subject of many lectures

on its own, but for our purposes let me say that these new approaches had profound implications for foreign policy as well. In a world in which the market and its "hidden hand" were viewed not with suspicion but as the saviour of a society which had lost its zest for liberty and individual freedom, there was little doubt that this attitude would permeate international political matters as well.

Increasingly international relations became economic relations, not political relations. The prime role of governments was to reduce their role, to get out of the way. Foreign policy increasingly became fixated on enhancing competitiveness, reducing trade barriers, deregulating, and privatizing. The fall of most Communist governments in the early 1990's simply accelerated an already existing trend. With the removal of the military threat, and a reduced role overall for governments in the international order, it is not surprising that the direction of foreign policy became economic as well.

How did this fit in Canada after Trudeau? As most of you know one of the outcomes was the negotiation of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and its successor the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). How did this fit with the general principles articulated by Louis St. Laurent in 1947? You might be surprised to hear that one view is that they fit quite nicely. The Mulroney government has been pilloried by many as a sleazy and unprincipled lot. However, one view of the negotiation of the FTA is that it was perfectly consistent with what a smaller nation has to do in international affairs. It must bind the larger nations by law, not by force. In Mulroney's view international integration was both inevitable and necessary. The way to control that integration was to bind the US in an agreement that would prohibit it from exercising its economic strength. That, in his view, would give Canada the most

independence in a future, globalized world. It was, surprisingly to many of you, a principled position.

It can be criticized from two points of view however. First, many do not accept the general premise that a globalized world needs to look like the market driven world that has developed so far. Second, Mulroney actually failed in his intent. He did not bind the US in law, as we know too well from softwood lumber and the Canadian Wheat Board. The US was left with countervail and other instruments through which it can bully Canada and Mexico. We are left therefore, in a lopsided arrangement, with an economic giant.

But was there any choice? Many argue there was not. Our attempts at diverting the "natural" economic flows had failed in the past because of the "natural" regional advantages involved in increasing our trade and integration with the US. Therefore, these people argue, we should actually seek to enhance this arrangement since it benefits us and does not threaten our sovereignty in the social and political sphere. Enough, in their view, of counterweights.

Interestingly, the Mulroney government, and later Jean Chretien, did not completely adhere to this view. At the same time that it was binding us under FTA and NAFTA, it was negotiating with the emerging European Union to ensure that Canada would have some special relationship with the new economic giant. The motivation for this policy was complex. Part had to do with the "going global" strategy of the government. Another had to do with the traditional counterweight strategy, a recognition that Canada had to have diverse relations in the world. Yet another was the response to the emerging EU, and the need to ensure that Canada continued to have access and influence in Europe. Overlaying all of this were concerns about security in the world

after the disappearance of the Soviet Union. A new Europe, a new world was about to emerge. What would this mean for NATO and NORAD? How would security concerns be addressed in the disaggregated world that succeeded the rigid cold war structures? How central would Europe remain in the future?

The conclusion was that Europe would remain a vital part of future economic and security concerns, and that Canada needed to reinvigorate its relationship with Europe, and the EU in particular. This would be done both through traditional contacts with the member countries, and through the EU institutions. Part of this approach was motivated also by the fact that the US was seeking to enhance its own relationship with the EU, and Canada did not want to be seen merely as an appendage of the dual arrangements. The result was a TAD or Trans-Atlantic Declaration, which committed governments to closer relations. Both Canada and the US signed TAD's in 1993.

When the Liberals came to power in 1993 there was no mention in the Liberal Party Red Book, as it became known, about relations with Europe. However, International Trade Minister Roy McLaren was keen that this relationship should be expanded and in 1994 proposed that the idea of a Trans Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA) be examined again. For various reasons both the US and the EU were cool to the idea, and in 1996, new "Action Plans" were signed between the US and the EU and Canada and the EU instead. It was obvious, as usual, that Canada could serve as a catalyst for such talks, but they would go nowhere if the two major players were disinclined to do so. The search for counterweights was again only partially successful.

I raise this background to show the consistency of policy in Canada since the Second World War on the one hand, and the range of options that have been pursued during that period. I will return to this later.

September 11 and Its Aftermath

I turn now, finally some of you may say, to September 11 and the implications for Canada. The first major implication is the return of the importance of political events and decisions to the world. Remember, for almost two decades, and certainly during the previous decade, economic matters had been dominant. In particular we have seen the return of military and security matters to the top of the agenda. The "smug security" of the US, mentioned earlier, certainly vanished on that day, and while it remained important what the Federal Reserve Board did with interest rates, it was now shuffled down the list of priorities. (That is, unless you count the new maxim, get out and shop until you drop to save America.)

Remember, security policy in the world had been adrift for nearly a decade. The old world, a world rigidly divided by ideology, had vanished. Much of the *raison d'être* for huge security expenditures also vanished. Remember the "peace dividend"? Most security planners were uncertain as to what might occur next, although they assumed that the world would remain a dangerous place. Institutions like NATO and NORAD remained in place, despite the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact, waiting, some would say hoping, for the call to some as yet unknown crisis. One thing became clear immediately: The world after 1991 was now more fluid, less predictable, and ultimately more chaotic.

Gradually, however, it became clear that two things were required. First, the remnants of the old Soviet empire and its satellites had to be dismantled. This meant that a firm hand had to be used in places like Yugoslavia. Second, the new capitalist, market oriented world had to be allowed to flourish everywhere. The instruments of foreign

policy became fixed on these goals. In Canada we agreed, and aided in the process, even when it meant that our military was put in the position of peacemakers instead of peacekeepers.

What also became clear was that with the demise of rigid ideological divisions, older more deeply rooted human divisions began to re-surface. Now that everything was not contained by the Cold War, differences in religion, race, ethnicity and language, which had remained contained by the two superpowers, began to bubble forth. International institutions became strained in their ability to handle these events, especially in the absence of full participation by the United States, the only remaining superpower. For the US these divisions, and the threat posed by them, seemed insignificant in comparison to the prospect of Mutual Assured Destruction, until September 11.

Although the American reaction to September 11 was somewhat slow in coming, when it did come it was decisive and angry. Without minimizing the importance of the events on September 11, the continuing reaction by the US seems more geared to domestic political and economic needs than to any long-term international strategy.

Canada's Conundrum

For Canada, this reaction has posed a major problem. With the Bush Administration dividing the world into "them and us" the room for maneuver has diminished dramatically. International law and international institutions are being by-passed, if not ignored. Vital concepts like national sovereignty, and agreements like the Geneva and Vienna Conventions, which have guided Canadian foreign policy for 50 years, are being ignored or reinterpreted by the US. Most importantly, the US is poised to act decisively on continental matters involving security. Suddenly, our economic, social,

and military vulnerability to the US is crystal clear. With or without our approval, the present Bush Administration is going to act on continental matters. Our *de jure* sovereignty, may, and I stress may, be respected, but there may be little left of our *de facto* control.

The Options

What, as a famous Russian said, is to be done? It appears that there are three options. (Are there not always three options?)

- Despite any misgivings in the government or the general public, we can welcome the initiatives, support them, and accept the fact that greater integration is probably inevitable.
- We can be "nimble," generally supporting the US, but picking our spots as the saying goes, looking for a return to the *status quo ante* once all the "fuss" has died down.
- We can do what is necessary at the moment to satisfy the US, but recognize that we need to choose between continued continental integration and the need to put in place real alternative policies, which might give us greater flexibility in the future.

Option One

For a moment, let us examine these alternatives in light of our historic positions and our estimate of how realistic each alternative is. The first option is one that I sense the business community and their supporters increasingly favour. The rationale for this approach rests upon the inevitability of international integration. If this is the case, we

need to ensure that we are in a strong regional block in North America, with agreements that ensure that peaceful commerce continues. While this may not lead to immediate political integration, it could lead to a common currency, common security arrangements, a partially integrated military, and broader political cooperation.

This option needs more analysis than I can give it in the small amount of time left. However, it is fair to say that it would not be consistent with previous foreign policy principles. Would this eventually lead to political integration? My own guess would be yes, looking at the European experience, but it would not be integration of the European kind. It would more likely be assimilation, since the US is so much larger than we are. The European model depends in part on the fact that there are several large partners who offset each other. No single partner is dominant. Is this a bad thing? Let us leave this until we look at the other options.

Option Two

Option number two, I have dubbed the "nimble" option. We understand that the Americans are demanding much more cooperation as a result of September 11. In this option we would accede to some arrangements, but keep as many options open as possible for the future. We would seek to forestall unilateral American action in areas outside of Afghanistan, and try to reintegrate the US into international arrangements by seeking allies amongst other states, particularly in Europe. This option essentially separates political and military activities from economic matters. It does not seek to reverse or even forestall economic integration with the US.

Option Three

Option number three, realistic alternatives that give us greater flexibility, is the obverse of number one in many ways. I should add that in my opinion this cannot be what I would call dead-end nationalism. Those who are still calling for a more independent Canada, with less international economic integration, and more self-sufficiency, are swimming against a current that cannot be managed. To be fair, most who oppose globalization are not simple nationalists; they want a different international system than what we have now, one based more on ecological and equity goals. Keeping this in mind, what would this option look like? It would need to have both a short term and a long-term strategy. The short-term strategy would look much like option two, as it would seek to minimize the lasting entanglements that are sprouting out of the American reaction, preserving freedom of action for the future. The long-term strategy would consist of several elements.

With regard to trade and economic matters, we would need to recognize two important starting points. One is the fact that most trade now takes place between the developed nations. The other is that "natural economic flows" are subject to change. The first point addresses the dependence that we have on trade with the Americans. Our second and third level partners are Europe and Japan, respectively. Any re-direction of trade to reduce our dependence on the US would require an increase with these areas. The North Atlantic is the more likely long-term prospect for the same reasons that we trade so much with the US, proximity, similarity, markets, etc. The second point accepts the premise that trade and economic flows are subject to other forces. Most important amongst these are political decisions. A long-term strategy would require a major effort on the part of government to enhance our relationship with the EU. Initially, this would

require us to create favourable political, social, and educational contacts, clusters of activity that would attract business and other organizations to improve and expand contact. The success of this would depend on the effort expended, and how willing the EU was to accept us as a bridge to North America. In the long run we would need to establish an associate membership status with the EU, if we were to keep this relationship intact and growing. There are many problems and pitfalls in this, and no guarantee that the EU would work with Canada outside of an agreement with the US. Eventually, our goal must be to create a TAFTA, but one more akin to the internal EU relationship, that is broader than just an economic arrangement.

The second part of this strategy would need to be diplomatic. Such a strategy would concentrate on returning to our original principle of internationalizing our relationships, and avoiding where possible bilateral arrangements with the US. Of course, in the real world there will continue to be numerous bilateral activities with our neighbour to the south. However, we must work as much as possible through regional or international institutions. This maximizes our room for maneuver and coalition.

The third part would be to reassert our "international role" in the world. The last decade has seen Canada waffling between the peacekeeping role of the decades between 1945 and the 1990s, and a new more aggressive peace making role. I believe that we ought to return to the former role. My reasons are quite simple. It fits with both the second part of our strategy to internationalize, and it respects our real capabilities. Thus, Canada would reassert a role which concentrates on peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and concerns and support for institutions like the United Nations.

The fourth part of this strategy would be to rebuild our military, diplomatic and other international capabilities. This is perhaps more controversial. In my opinion, if

Canada is to survive and contribute to the world, it must have its own capabilities and not be integrated with the US. To do this we need to rebuild our military capability so that it preserves our freedom to act, and to be credible in the defence of Canada. Let us be honest here, the only real military threat to Canada in the future must come from the US. No other state will be allowed to enter North America. It was true during the Cold War, and it is true now. It is just as true that if the US decided for whatever reason to use maximum military force against Canada, our chances of a successful defence would be remote. Indeed, such thoughts seem beyond the pale. The greater threat is that we have so little capability that we are unable or unwilling to mount independent operations, peacekeeping or other, that we are unable to protect our sovereignty from smaller incursions from whatever source. The result would be an automatic assumption of this responsibility by the US. We must have our own ability, independent of the US, to assert our sovereignty and play a constructive role in the world.

The fifth and last part of this strategy would be to enhance our equity role in the world. We must of course pay attention to the needs and interests of our people, but we must also recognize the fact that unless we address the real problems of poverty, inequality, environment, and lack of human opportunity in the world, no country will be safe, or even survive. This cannot mean just lip service to these goals. It must mean real purpose and resources.

As I see it, there are three choices. Are they all feasible and practical? Perhaps. I believe that the third option is the best. Why? First, and foremost, I believe that it would allow Canada to remain a more independent member of the community of nations. Can I guarantee that? The short answer is no. I can guarantee you that inaction, or drift along the present policy lines will result in assimilation. More fundamentally, does it matter

that Canada remains a separate nation? Are we not in a globalizing world, and should we not accept that? The answer is yes, we are in an integrating world, and that can be a good thing. But global integration will be shaped by the values and policies of many players. I believe that we have an outlook, which has something to contribute beyond what can be contributed as a satellite of the US.

Second, we can aid in the process of constructing a transatlantic community, one that will be more prosperous and more equitable than would otherwise be the case. Our immediate future, I believe, still lies in the North Atlantic, and not in constructing a community of the Americas.

Lastly, I believe that this is the best way to contribute to a global village based on principles of respect for individuals, lawful community, justice and opportunity, a community in which many voices are heard, and not submerged into the goals of any particular great power.

Conclusion

Canada can, and should, play a constructive and different role in the world than the United States. If we let that role slip away through inaction and delay, we will have squandered both the legacy of the past and the promise of the future. I fervently hope that this will not happen. It really, in the final analysis, is up to us.

About the Author

Howard Leeson is Professor of Political Science at the University of Regina where he has taught since 1982. His research interests include Canadian federalism, constitutional change in Canada, and prairie politics. Dr. Leeson was Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for the Government of Saskatchewan from 1979 to 1982 and Deputy Minister & Deputy Provincial Secretary from 1993 to 1994. He was the Chief Constitutional advisor for the Government of Saskatchewan in 1992 during the negotiations on the Charlottetown Accord. Dr. Leeson is the author of several books, including *Grant Notley: the Social Conscience of Alberta* and *Canada: Notwithstanding* with John Whyte and Roy Romanow, a history of the patriation of the constitution in the early nineteen eighties. Dr. Leeson holds a PhD from the University of Alberta and was the first recipient of the University of Regina research fellowship at the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy.

Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy
University of Regina, College Avenue Campus
Gallery Building, 2nd Floor
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S 0A2

General Inquiries: (306) 585-5777
Email: sipp@uregina.ca
www.uregina.ca/sipp