

Great Canadian Question: Canada and the World

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As the walls surrounding Berlin came crashing down in 1989, the world witnessed the end of an era defined by the competition of rival superpowers and ushered in a new age of global politics. In this new arena of international politics, many nations struggle to make their voices heard amid a chorus of pleas dominated by the world's remaining superpower, the United States. It is within this context that Canada must define its foreign policy, ensuring a prominent voice in 21st century world affairs. To achieve this, Canada must work toward building a strong economic relationship with the United States. We must also continue to promote the protection of human rights and engage in humanitarian interventions. To successfully engage in global politics, Canada must foster citizens with a global outlook and possess the appropriate human resources to affect global events. To ensure an influential position on the global stage Canadian foreign policy must remain independent among a host of influences while recognizing the importance of international cooperation.

Canada's economic success is inextricably linked to the American market making healthy economic relations a chief priority in the 21st century. The US is by far Canada's largest trading partner demonstrated by the enormous amount of economic activity between the two nations. Nearly 70% of Canadian exports are to the United States while 60% of all Canadian imports are from the US resulting in \$1 billion moving across the boarder every day.ⁱ[i] As former ambassador Allan Gotlieb argues, the pursuit of Canadian economic advantage in the American market can only be achieved if we capitalize on our privileged relationship with the United States.ⁱⁱ[ii] This relationship is clearly demonstrated through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed in 1987, which as historian R. Douglas Francis noted provided Canada with "enhanced access to most sectors of the American market".ⁱⁱⁱ[iii] This unique relationship must be protected and perpetuated into the 21st century in order to increase Canada's access to vital American markets. However, as author Janice Stein asserts, Canada must also "promote multilateral regimes and rules of fair play...[for]...when there is no choice but to deal with an issue bilaterally, there will inevitably be conflict and compromise; Canada will win some, but lose more."^{iv}[iv] The importance of such multilateral regimes of power are clear in the recent trade crisis between Canada and the US in the softwood lumber dispute. While tensions over softwood have existed for 20 years it was not until April of 2006 that an agreement was reached. Prior to 2006 both nations faced a series of impasses resulting in arbitration by NAFTA panels and the World Trade Organization. As a result of these third party arbitrations, Canada has enjoyed the majority of trade rulings despite the gargantuan economic power of the United States.^v[v] Moreover, Gotlieb argues that Canada must continually support formal arrangements with the US to successfully manage relations with the highly fragmented American government. Such arrangements force the more

powerful partner to focus on the issues of the other.vi[vi] By capitalizing on our economic advantage in US markets and relying on multilateral arbiters, Canada will be unique among the world's trading powers catapulting us to a respected position within the international community.

Canada must continue to play a significant role in acts of humanitarian intervention in the 21st century to ensure its voice is respected among international bodies of power. In the post-war era, Canada has defined itself as an active peacekeeping nation. Beginning in 1950 with Canada's involvement in the Korean War, our nation established an identity as an important player in international affairs. As the war reached a stalemate, then minister of external affairs, Lester B. Pearson, helped restrain the overzealous Americans and prevented the entry of China and the Soviet Union into the conflict. Six years later Canada solidified its position as a peacekeeper in the Suez Crisis of 1956 where Pearson initiated an international peacekeeping force led by Canada that ended hostilities in the region and evoked international accolade.vii[vii] In light of Canada's successful past, Gotlieb argues that Canada must re-invest in 'hard power' increasing our military capacity if we seek to maintain our position as a respected international leader in peacekeeping.viii[viii] As it stands, Canada's military is stretched too thin. In 2002 a Senate committee recommended that Canada recall all of its soldiers and immediately infuse the service with \$4 billion to improve the military and bring it to a standard expected of a world leader.ix[ix] While the Canadian government cannot simply recall its military personnel it can continue to gain respect by acting in crisis abroad. In her article Janice Stein asserts that Canada must, "lead where the United States...wishes it could go, but sometimes cannot."x[x] She argues that within the United Nations, Canada has demonstrated its ability to act independently from the US by exploring new avenues regarding sanctions with both Cuba and Iraq when the US was prevented from doing so. Stein also asserts that Canada can act in specific cases of ethnic and religious intolerance where governments are unaccountable to their citizens such as in Haiti in 1991 and Somalia in 1994. By investing in our military capacity and continuing to lead where the US is absent, Canada will maintain a strong peacekeeping legacy and ensure a respected voice in the global community.

As the voice of Canada's official policy, Canadian diplomats must possess the skills necessary to act effectively on the global stage, thereby ensuring Canada a prominent voice in world affairs. Diplomats are on the front line of global politics representing Canada abroad and therefore must be equipped to solidify our position as a world leader. As Gotlieb notes, Canada has historically possessed, "cadres of talented practitioners in the field of foreign relations...[but]...in recent years [they have] been badly wasted, even abused."xi[xi] He contends that Canada must invest in the human resources of our foreign policy if we wish to retain our global authority.xii[xii] We must foster knowledgeable individuals who can effectively influence the global community and solidify Canada's voice in world affairs. This sentiment is echoed by Stein who argues that Canadian culture, its tolerance, respect for human rights and civility provides the expertise needed when nations seek to prevent conflict or reconstruct war-torn societies.xiii[xiii] Stein adds that the Canadian government must also, "conduct a full orchestra of Canadian players who will participate directly in global politics."xiv[xiv]

She contends that in the new age of diplomacy states are beginning to work with new partners such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and multilateral corporations to achieve their goals.^{xv}[xv] Co-operation with NGO's is nothing new for the Canadian government who in 1996 worked with 50 other states, international organizations, UN agencies and a series of NGO's to initiate a ban on landmines culminating in the 1997 signing of the Mine Ban Treaty.^{xvi}[xvi] While Canada played a prominent role in this international crusade we must continue to lead the charge in campaigns of cooperation with NGO's, multinational organizations and international organizations to ensure that our voice is recognized and respected among the world's nations. By developing well-trained diplomats Canada will be equipped to effectively influence the global community and continue to lead the world towards greater cooperation with impartial organizations.

To solidify its position as an influential world leader, Canada must assume an independent stance on global politics while remaining cognizant of the necessity for international cooperation. Maintaining strong economic ties with the United States while advocating fair market practices will ensure respect for the Canadian position. By continuing to act in humanitarian crisis Canada will earn the esteem of foreign nations and be recognized as a world power. Through the work of highly skilled and equipped diplomats Canada will be well represented on the global stage ensuring Canada's influence in world affairs. As the global community continues to adjust to the realities of a uni-polar power structure Canada cannot afford to hesitate in seeking a firm global voice. As various political and economic organizations such as the European Union continue to grow and gain influence Canada will increasingly find itself removed from global politics and so must actively seek to reinforce its position. In addition, the recent industrial and economic boom seen in China and the Asian sub-continent provide further pressure upon Canada's role as a world economic leader that if left unattended could spell disaster for the Canadian market. Thus, Canada must act now to ensure it retains a potent and influential voice among the nations of the world and continues to exist as a paradigm of democracy.

i[i] Historica Foundation of Canada, "Canadian-American Relations, Economic," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*,

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0001258>

ii[ii] Allan Gotlieb, "Canadian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century".

iii[iii] R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones and Donald B Smith, *Journey A History of Canada* (Toronto: Thomson Nelson, 2006), 578.

iv[iv] Janice Stein, "Whisper, Echo, and Voice".

v[v] CBC News Online, "Indepth: Softwood Lumber Dispute," CBC.ca, http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/softwood_lumber/

vi[vi] Gotlieb, "Canada's Greatest Foreign Policy Challenge".

vii[vii] Francis, Jones and Smith, 451.

viii[viii] Gotlieb, "Canadian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century".

ix[ix] CBC News Online, "Canadian Forces in the 21st Century," CBC.ca,
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/cdnmilitary/>

x[x] Stein, "Whisper, Echo, and Voice".

xi[xi] Gotlieb, "Canadian Foreign Policy in the 21st Century".

xii[xii] *Ibid.*

xiii[xiii] Stein, "Whisper, Echo, and Voice".

xiv[xiv] Stein, "Canada and the New Diplomacy".

xv[xv] *Ibid.*

xvi[xvi] Historica Foundation of Canada, "Land Mines," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*,
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1SEC830829>