

Notes for a Presentation by
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on Canada in the World,
Aspirations and Concerns for Canada's
Future
at the Trudeau Foundation Conference on
Redefining Canada's Global Agenda
Montreal,
November 15,
2008

Check Against Delivery

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Introduction

We are the last panel of the conference.

Which means that we are at the point in the proceedings where everything has been said, but it has just not been said yet by everybody.

I and my colleagues on this panel will remedy that failing.

I will begin with a brief overview of how I see the world changing and then, in that context, I will discuss my aspirations, or at least as many of them as the limited time permits,

And my one overwhelming concern—whether Canadians still believe in Canada, at least Canada as a significant international player.

My presentation will call for an expansive world view, that believes in Canada, that takes our place in the world seriously, that invests in diplomacy, military capability, and foreign aid,

and that harnesses the enterprise and idealism of Canadians.

Given that I have 10 minutes or so, I will necessarily be more assertive than persuasive.

The Context

It's the world, stupid!

The world is changing,

**dramatically,
before our eyes,
and much of that change is being driven by Asia.**

**We in the West forget all too easily,
if we ever really knew,
that China and India not being major powers is the exception in
world history, not the rule.**

**As Kishore Mahbubani, a former colleague of mine in New York and a
member of the International Advisory Board of Governors of the
Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), observed in a
recent book:**

**Asians have long been regarded in the West as just consumers of
world history,
reacting tactically and [with the obvious exception of Japan]
defensively to the surges of Western commerce, power and
thought.**

**But, now the Asians are again producing history as they did for eighteen
centuries before the rise of the West.**

**In that sense it is more accurate to speak not of the “rise” of Asia, but of
the “return” of Asia, back to the forefront of regional and world affairs.**

**China, Japan and India currently rank 2nd, 3rd and 4th in the world in
terms of Gross Domestic Product at Purchasing Power Parity.**

Japan, with a population of 128 million, 10th in the world, ranks 2nd in GDP, at market rates.

Japan and China rank first and second, respectively, as major foreign holders of US Treasuries, not an insignificant fact in the current global financial crisis.

China ranks 3rd in international trade (\$1,761 billion) and Japan ranks 4th, according to the latest WTO statistics (for 2006).

India and China are still developing countries with wide swathes of impoverished people

But, overall, both are enjoying extraordinary, unprecedented prosperity.

Consider this insight from Mr. Mahbubani's new book:

“They called it the Industrial Revolution [in Europe] because, for the first time in all of human history, standards of living rose at a rate where there were noticeable changes within a [single] human life span—changes of perhaps 50 percent.

At current growth rates in Asia, standards of living may rise 100 fold or 10,000 percent within a human life span.”

India is expected to reach developed nation status (\$20,000 per capita income in terms of purchasing power parity) in 2028, i.e., within the working life of most of the people in this room.

On current trends, China will get there earlier.

This jaw-dropping economic performance is coming, regrettably, with a comparably stunning environmental price-tag.

Global energy-related CO2 emissions are projected to rise from 28 gigatonnes (Gt) in 2006 to 41 Gt in 2030 – an increase of 45%.

Three-quarters of the projected increase by 2030 in energy-related CO2 emissions will be in China, India and the Middle East.

China, India and Japan rank 2nd, 3rd and 8th respectively in the world in military spending [on a purchasing power parity basis (the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2007 yearbook)].

I cite all these statistics to reinforce the point that Asia is not just emerging.

It has already emerged as a determining factor in international relations.

This is not a forecast; it's a current reality

And that is not the whole story of global change, of course.

The European Union, with a combined GDP of almost \$17 trillion, is a huge spender on engineering and technological innovation,

and a leader in environmental research and development.

Six of the ten leading exporters and importers in world merchandise trade in 2006 were European.

although the list of the world's ten largest economies will likely look quite different in 2050,

when the "BRIC" countries will likely comprise four of the five largest economies.

But, for today, Germany remains the world's leading exporter and second leading importer;

for the most part German firms have succeeded in staying ahead of the innovation curve.

The EU,

which counts two nuclear weapons powers, and 10 other countries that have the money and the technology to give themselves nuclear weapons if they want to,

accounts for \$256 billion of military spending,

cumulatively second only to the US.

The EU is, cumulatively as well, the largest aid donor, providing 75% of the total aid transferred to poorer countries (Source: OECD).

Europe's next door neighbour Russia is "back", thanks to rampaging commodity prices, especially oil,

and its own blend of democratic autocracy, with the emphasis on autocracy, that delivers legitimacy through rising standards of living.

With in excess of 14,000 nuclear warheads, Russia remains the second most powerful in the world militarily.

As events in Georgia confirm, Russia intends neither to be taken for granted nor to be dominated.

At the same time, while Russia's reaction to the ill-considered Georgian provocation was excessive and self-serving,

it probably does not signal a return to the Cold War,

however much some think-tanks long for it.

Latin America is no longer a continent apart in political terms,

It is demanding and getting a prominent place at the top tables, such as the Doha (trade) Round, the Bali Climate Change process, and, increasingly, the UN Security Council.

Clearly, times are changing, and quickly.

It is not our grandfathers' world or, even, our fathers'.

**Still, even if the world is becoming increasingly integrated economically
and multi-power politically,
the United States will remain the pivot of the international system
for a very long time to come.**

American culture will remain pervasive.

American science, especially medical science, will lead the world.

**American universities will continue to set international standards of
excellence.**

The American economy,

**unless it collapses under the weight of future surprises originating
in unregulated financial transactions,**

**will continue to generate unprecedented wealth for its people, and
for its economic partners.**

**Militarily, the US will remain without peer in terms of sheer hard
power, even with the spending cuts President-elect Obama has
promised.**

But American dominance will inevitably diminish as other powers rise.

**A more cooperative approach, with a much larger quotient of
diplomacy, will be necessary for the US, and for Canada.**

**The US will need to gear back on its faith to in its own exceptionalism,
and see the world in decidedly less unilateralist and militaristic
terms and in a decidedly more cosmopolitan light.**

This is why Barack Obama is the man for this season.

**The election of Mr. Obama signals that America is capable of serious
change and of keeping faith with its vast promise.**

Further, Obama's view of the world is inherently cosmopolitan.

**Because he was born of a Kenyan father and a globe-trotting
mother,**

because he spent childhood years in Indonesia,

even because part of his US upbringing was in offshore Hawaii,

**he is arguably the most worldly candidate ever to win the US
Presidency.**

**That will have positive implications for the image of the US in the world
and for US foreign policy, and it will create opportunities for Canada,
as well.**

**The fundamental point is that the world is changing faster and further
than we can sometimes process, and that it will not be dominated by
anyone.**

Aspirations

What aspirations can Canadians reasonably and legitimately have for Canada in this new World, particularly as regards “High Principles and Effective Proposals”.

Obviously, in a world that will comprise at least a dozen countries that will dwarf us in population, economic size and military strength, we will not be doing much physical dominating.

But, strength is no guarantee of genius and ideas are inherently democratic.

In that respect, I am very optimistic for Canada.

We have a proven record for diplomatic innovation, from the creation of the UN and NATO, to peacekeeping, to the human security agenda.

Among my many aspirations for Canada, three stand out.

First, I want a self-respecting and effective relationship with the United States,

bilaterally and in the world.

The election of Barack Obama opens opportunities for Canada in the world that were not there under the neo-con-dominated administration of George Bush.

The world needs, and wants, an America it can believe in again, one that provides principled and astute leadership.

The Bush Administration dug a deep hole for the United States in world esteem, and the US will not climb back out quickly.

On issues from Afghanistan to Palestine, we can help with sound, responsible policy contributions of our own.

Second, I would like to see a responsible and active Canadian foreign policy that respects and actively advances international law

Integral to that foreign policy is an effective diplomacy capable of contributing to a treaty-based system of global governance

That diplomacy should be addressed to the two potentially transformative challenges of our times,

nuclear weapons and climate change

and to the significant but entirely surmountable issue in our own backyard, governance of the Arctic.

With the advent of a US administration that sees arms control and disarmament as important,

that seeks to control the production of fissile material,

that is wary of installing unproven ballistic missile defence systems

and that is pledged not to “weaponize” space, among other things,

there is an opportunity for Canada to pursue creative diplomacy.

Likewise, for climate change, although the current Canadian position is not a promising starting point.

Nevertheless, the issue is truly global and will yield only to far-sighted and far-reaching cooperation.

Further, I think that the Arctic should prove responsive to Canadian diplomacy, because

--the number of participants in the Arctic is limited,

the issues will not be resolved by military force—short of World War III—

and the legal principles are well established

Third, I would like to see Canada bring its assets to bear on human security again, which is the other side of the national security coin.

Putting people back at the heart of foreign policy is entirely in keeping with the values of Canadians evident in the Trudeau Foundation-Laval University poll.

In my experience, it is, also, consistent with our reputation in the world, as a country that respects the human rights of its minorities and recognizes diversity as a strength.

From promoting respect for international humanitarian law and defending human rights to following through on the Responsibility to Protect, the agenda is tailor-made for Canada.

Addressing ourselves to the well-being of people in failed and fragile states is not just a moral obligation, it is, also, very much in our security interest.

A world cordial to Canadian values is likely to be cordial to Canadian interests as well.

But for that goal to be more than just feel-good policy, we have to give ourselves the assets, including the military assets, that allow us to intervene in complex crises abroad.

And to use them when push comes to shove.

Concerns

I have one overriding concern, which if I were a pessimist, would call into question all of my aspirations.

The question on my mind is: Do Canadians still believe in Canada?

We, Canadians are better educated than we have ever been before.

We are richer than we have ever been before, the current financial downturn notwithstanding.

With extensive access to the internet and You Tube and online newspapers and television, etc., we are better informed about the world than we have ever been before.

We are living abroad more and travelling further than we ever have done before.

So, how to reconcile our evident worldly sophistication with our persistent parochial behaviour.

As the old Walt Kelly cartoon character, Pogo, observed, “We have met the enemy and he is us.”

Why do we tolerate political processes that are so provincial, literally and figuratively?

Why do we not expect our political leaders to be conversant with international issues?

In the 2006 election leaders’ debates, not a single question was asked about international relations.

In this past election, with the world melting down financially around us, the near exclusive focus of the debate was again domestic.

We at CIGI were promoting the idea of a leaders’ debate on foreign policy.

None of the parties, or the media enterprises involved, was sufficiently interested to make it happen.

Why is that?

Does our leadership not recognize Canada’s possibilities?

In a multipower world in which diplomacy will be so crucial, why have successive Canadian governments de-invested in diplomacy and deprecated our professional foreign service?

Precisely because we are not a superpower in a multipower world, we need to be ahead of the global curve, and for that we need a talented, dedicated diplomatic corps.

Have we conducted a diplomacy commensurate with our commitments for example on Afghanistan?

Do we realize that we matter?

Further, why are Canadians not more vocal when Diaspora politics determine foreign policy, pitting one group against another and putting our public peace at risk, for domestic political gain in one riding or another?

A significant minority of Canadians (37%) according to the Trudeau Foundation/Laval university poll, feel that individuals and NGOs can be more influential [than governments] in affecting positive influence in world affairs.

Is that attitude a cause of our parochial politics or a consequence of it?

Or have this many Canadians decided that size really does matter and they should not bother with inter-state relations?

Underlying part of these poll findings is the assumption that NGO's are necessarily a progressive force in international affairs.

Many are progressive, especially those providing services to the displaced, such as Care Canada, or monitoring human rights abuses, such as Human Rights Watch or bringing expertise to bear, such as the Sierra Club or Engineers Without Borders.

But many are not—from the National Rifle Association undermining a small arms treaty to big Pharma fighting the sale of HIV-AIDS generic drugs, to the Catholic and evangelical churches making common cause with Islamists to block the provision of reproductive services.

So be careful what you wish for.

And don't sell the Canadian state short.

The state remains the basic organizing unit of international governance, through which the requisite resources can be marshaled for action abroad.

Our size notwithstanding, Canada continues to dispose of very significant assets, notably our well educated, rich, sophisticated, worldly population.

Conclusion

But I am not a pessimist; I am an optimist.

I have seen what a difference Canada and Canadians can make,

from the contributions of Prime Ministers Pearson and St. Laurent to the creation of the UN, NATO and NORAD and peacekeeping,

to the opening to China and the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth by Prime Minister Diefenbaker,

to the establishment of relations with China and the promotion of arms control and disarmament by Prime Minister Trudeau, whose incandescence illuminated our country to the world

to the end of Apartheid and the unification of Germany, on which Prime Minister Mulroney, with his confidence in Canada and close personal relations with the leaders of his day, was so effective against powerful opposition in the G7

to the human security agenda of Prime Minister Chretien and Foreign Minister Axworthy, including the Landmines Treaty, the International Criminal Court and the Human Security agenda.

To the Responsibility to Protect which was endorsed by the UN summit in 2005 at the urging of Prime Minister Martin.

But we need to rebuild a sense of ourselves again if we are to do so.

We need to believe in Canada, again.

