

## ROLES PLAYING BY CANADA IN CHANGING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### Abstract

*Canadian politicians have been especially sensitive to respecting human rights, development of international law, and liberalisation of the world economy. Canada's economic position is confirmed by its G-7 membership; the seven wealthiest nation-states agree on a common position in respect of crucial international problems. Canada's place in contemporary international relations is best described as that of "a selective empire." The term applies to states which, though they are not superpowers, assume a leading role in certain respects. Canada meets most superpower criteria except that it does not have a sizeable army, a numerically great population, or a large area of external influence. Its role in international relations is determined by a coherent system of external activism which includes a leadership role in the British Commonwealth of Nations, the role of an ally of the United States, the role of moderator within the Atlantic system, mediation in international conflicts, the position of economic superpower, promotion of aid programmes to Third World countries, incentives taken to protect the natural environment, and activism for the curbing of nuclear arms' expansion. The increasingly poly-centric structure of international relations leads to the growth in importance of countries like Canada.*

### Résumé

*La notion de "puissance sélective" décrit le mieux la place du Canada dans les relations internationales contemporaines. Cette expression concerne les États qui n'étant pas des superpuissances ont pourtant une grande importance dans les domaines différents de la coopération internationale. Le Canada répond à la plupart des critères d'une superpuissance malgré qu'il ne dispose pas d'une grande armée, d'une grande population et n'a pas de sphère d'influence dans sa région ou ailleurs dans le monde. Son rôle dans les relations internationales est bien déterminé par un système cohérent de l'activité internationale, y compris:*

- *rôle du leader dans le Commonwealth,*
- *rôle de l'allié des États-Unis,*
- *rôle du modérateur dans l'Alliance Atlantique,*
- *médiation dans les conflits internationaux,*
- *position d'une superpuissance économique,*
- *promotion des programmes d'aide pour les pays du Tiers Monde,*
- *initiatives pour la protection de l'environnement naturel,*
- *activité contre la diffusion de l'arme nucléaire.*

*Les politiques canadiens attachent beaucoup d'importance aux problèmes de respect des droits de l'homme, de développement de droit international, de libéralisation du commerce mondial. La polycentralisation progressive de la structure des relations internationales augmente la position de tels pays que le Canada.*

A state can pursue its international policies, influence other states and keep powerful armed forces through economic prosperity. However, economic reasons are not decisive in establishing the “empire” criterion. It is equally important to have powerful and modern armed forces, to participate in international affairs and to influence other nations’ policies. The most important elements of an empire are:

area, location, climate, topography,  
the abundance and availability of natural resources, energy sources, food production and supply capability,  
population (numbers, concentration, age, sex and per capita income),  
industrial size and efficiency,  
the presence of effective transportation systems,  
the quality of education system, research capabilities, scientific and technical staff size and quality,  
the size of the armed forces, its equipment and morale,  
the quality of the state’s diplomatic service,  
the national character and morale.

Elements that determine an “empire” change with time. Big, well-trained armed forces were once one of the more important elements.

To define Canadian role internationally, it must be noted that Canada does not have powerful armed forces, or a big population or a great zone of influence. However, it does distinguish itself in many fields. Economic development is one of them. In 1994 Canadian growth rate was the greatest among all OECD countries. Canada is one of the ten top countries in the size of the Gross National Product. In 1998 the Gross National Product was US \$584,200 million, the per capita income was US \$19,281, purchasing power parity per capita was US \$24,468 and the export share of the Gross National Product was 40.7%.

Internationally, Canada is involved in Third World assistance, environmental protection, nuclear weapon non-proliferation, human rights protection, the development and application of international law, the maintenance of international peace, the peaceful solving of international conflicts.

Seen this way, Canada seems to be in a “selective empire” category, where, while leading in some fields, it cannot aspire to be a superpower due to political and economic reasons.

Having done an analysis of Canada’s foreign policy, David Dewitt and John Kirton conclude that Canada is a big empire claim that it is at the top of the international ranking system, due to its independent international activities and its role in the maintenance of international peace. These two scholars claim that Canada is the one country that is not dominated in its international relations by the world’s superpowers. Allan Gotlieb – a Canadian diplomat – hold similar views. According to him Canada need not be afraid of American dominance.

In the inter-war years many Canadian authorities such as Archibald MacMechan and Professor A.R.M. Lower, expressed the view that Canada is merely an American satellite state. These opinions were repeated by James M. Minifie in the sixties and by George Martell in 1970. George Martell particularly noted the strong similarity of

Canadian and American cultures, the integrated economies and saw Canada as an integral part of the American empire.

Because of Canada's vast contribution to the Allied cause in the Second World War, many Canadians considered that Canada had at that time reached its zenith in international status. In 1945 the Canadian government described Canada's position internationally as 'a middle power' relating the amount of a state's international influence to the size of its economic potential. The government also considered that a middle power is particularly responsible for the maintenance of peace, international mediation and problem solving. Canada supervised then peace process in South America. Being in the western block it reduced tensions in East-West relations. Canada disliked the superpower dominance within the UNO.

Although the Prime Minister P. E. Trudeau found Canadian middle power aspirations unrealistic, he did pursue a middle power international policy. This was evident in his 1983-1985 peace initiative and in other international activities. His successor, Brian Mulroney accepted Canadian middle power position and international activities based on the position.

International politics will impose a role on a state or a state tries to realize a role for itself internationally. A role or function of a nation internationally determines the state's position in the global hierarchy. Canada, like other contemporary nations, chooses and then fulfils many international responsibilities

**Canada was an evolutionary catalyst within the British Commonwealth of Nations.** This was one of Canada's most important roles. The Dominion of Canada having been strengthened economically and politically at the end of XIX century, undertook activities that transformed the British Empire into a more flexible voluntary association. The conduct and management of the First World War showed that those parts of the Empire having dominion status required more influence on Empire policy. An Empire War Conference was called and discussions were held on changing the political relationship amongst Member states. In the First World War Canada showed its military, political and economic potential. It took part in the Paris war conference in 1919 and it became a League of Nations member. Canada obtained the right to be chosen for the League Council and joined in international labour organizations. The 1926 Empire Conference resulted in Dominions of the British Empire becoming autonomous and associating in the Empire voluntarily. London was still to be responsible for their international policy and their defence, but the British Empire became the British Commonwealth with Canada being its faithful member. Canada continued to strive for lesser dependence and on December 11, 1931 by Westminster Statute it became a fully independent state with sole responsibility for its foreign policy and defence. Since the beginning of the British Commonwealth of Nations, Canada assumed a leading role. During the Second World War, a Commonwealth aviation training centre was organized on Canadian territory and after India gained independence, Canada persuaded other members to let India stay in the Commonwealth as a republic. Canada was also a leader within the Commonwealth in the condemnation of apartheid in South Africa. It also promoted The Third World aid programmes. All foreign policy was discussed and co-ordinated with London.

**Canada became a key ally of United States.** In the initial period of Canadian independence, Great Britain protected Canada from the US and at the beginning of XX century a close relationship existed with Great Britain. Even in the nineteen thirties

when Canada was capable of having its own foreign policy, London's advice was followed. After the outbreak of war in 1939 though, military co-operation of Canada and the US developed. As the cold war evolved, co-operation continued and a bilateral defence agreement was signed in Washington on April 12 1947, followed by the signing of the North America Air Defence Agreement in 1958. Economic co-operation between the two countries expanded as well. In general the Canadian relationship with Great Britain diminished in favour of the US connection. In the years 1957-1963, John Diefenbaker's conservative government attempted to return to a pro-London policy. However, it became clear that co-operation with the US was the only solution for Canada. Yet Canadian policy regarding many issues was independent, as in the case of the Cuban crisis or the Vietnam war. Finally, after P. E. Trudeau became the prime minister, 'the third option' was chosen and the relationship with countries other than the US was enlarged upon. In the seventies Canada expanded its relationship with many socialist countries such as the Soviet Union, China, some European countries and Japan. Canada also pursued a complex long-term development strategy to strengthen itself economically. In the late eighties the Canadian-US relationship tightened again in reaction to consolidation of the Western European market. Faced by this common economic danger, on January 1, 1988 the two countries signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). In December 1992 the treaty was expanded to include Mexico and was renamed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

**Canada played a moderating influence within NATO.** It undertook balanced activities in reaction to international conflicts and it tried to alleviate internal tensions.

Canada had a major impact in the formation of NATO and in NATO's military policy. At the insistence of Canada, Article 2 was introduced into the treaty, which strengthened the alliance through political and economic co-operation. Canada wanted NATO to be more than just a military organization. Canada believed that international risk should be estimated by member governments and not by the alliance's military. Canada postulated the formation of a new NATO body composed of alliance foreign ministers or secretary of states and/or their deputies.

Canada opposed the extension of NATO's sphere of influence onto French colonies in Northern Africa and initially it objected to Italian membership in NATO. From the beginning, Canada took part in NATO military activities and participated in strategic planning and in financing the alliance. In 1950, after the formation of the Supreme Allied Command Europe (SACEUR) Canadian army and airforce units returned to Europe. In 1958 Canada's 40 ship navy came under NATO command. Canadian involvement in NATO activities was and remains a crucial element of Canada's foreign policy.

**Canadian mediation in international conflicts** was and is of big importance to the international community. Canada, being a founding member of the UN made great effort to maintain international peace and solve international tension. It became a commission member the July 27 1953 Panmunjon armistice agreement, ending the Korean War and it was Lester Pearson's proposal to organize the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) that would provide the solution for the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956. Canada also took part in peace - keeping activities in Cyprus, the Middle East, Namibia and in armistice observation in Vietnam.

Canada is an **economic superpower**. It possesses vast natural and mineral resources. Its mining and processing and manufacturing industries are well-developed and use the

latest technologies. Foreign trade is of great importance to the Canadian economy. Canada has been a member of the G-7 group of the most developed countries since 1975. It has participated in the group meetings devoted to the world economic and political problems. Canada is an active G-7 member and it presided over some meetings. In nineties there was an economic revival in Canada and Canada's 1993 growth rate was 2.5% - shows it clearly. This was mainly due to export increases which in the years 1992-1993 were increased by 8-9%. In 1993 the investment market developed and the investment climate created for foreign investors in Canada was second only to that of Hong Kong. Industrial production also increased by 5% in 1993 and there was a marked increase in the export of automobiles and automatic parts, timber, clothing, steel and electronics. However, oil and natural gas export was depressed. Seventy five percent of Canadian export have been directed at the booming US market.

Canada has played a major international role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and in environmental protection. Ottawa is capable and has been involved in nuclear weapon production and could be a nuclear power, but this was rejected for ethical reasons. Yet Canada, for economic reasons, was interested in the export of uranium products and nuclear technology. Being aware of the potential danger to international safety, for a long time Ottawa was refusing to fulfil its NATO duties and accept nuclear weapon on its territory. Canada was a signatory of 1968 treaty on nuclear weapon non-proliferation and conditions regarding nuclear material sale set by Canada in 1974 turned out to be the strictest in the world. Trudeau's peace proposals from October 27, 1983 reinforced the necessity of European weapon reduction and they were a sign of breaking away from the US policy in East - West relations. International tensions were alleviated and a conference meeting took place in Stockholm between Andrei Gromyko and George Schultz.

Having vast natural and mineral resources and being mostly wilderness, Canada initiated much international activity to protect natural environment. In 1970 a bill was passed through Parliament that set standards against arctic water contamination that were stricter than international norms. Prime Minister Trudeau took part in organizing the Stockholm conference of June 5 - 16, 1972 on the oceanic environment. Canada played a role in establishing the United Nations Environment Protection Program (UNEP) during the UN conference. It developed and established an international convention on marine law in 1982 which included Arctic environment protection. In the eighties environmental problems, acid rains in particular, became prominent in the US - Canadian relations. Some bilateral agreements were signed in order to solve the issues.

**The promotion of aid to Third World countries** became important in Canadian foreign policy. The Canadian society was in favour of international assistance and these programmes have been active since 1951 when Canada took part in the Colombo plan regarding aid to India, Pakistan and Ceylon. International assistance intensified in 1968 as Canada supported assistance to Third World Commonwealth countries and Northern Africa. It donated money to the developing world together with the United Nations and the World Bank. In 1969 the International Development Commission headed by Lester Pearson asked all Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development members to increase their financial help and the Canadian government responded. Canada has helped Third World countries: by entering bilateral and multilateral agreements, by non-governmental organization activities, by governmental activities supporting aid in Canadian International Development Assistance

programme and through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). As Canada has never been a colonial power and it has the esteem of the developing countries, it has become a mediator between developing and developed countries. Development aid is a supplement and support for Canadian diplomacy and trade. Canada can also play a role in international economic system stabilization which through its activities in international financial institutions and its aid obligations to developing countries. The variety of roles played by Canada internationally shows that it has a positive influence on contemporary world development.

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