INTERVIEW WITH BILL GRAHAM
Minister of Foreign Affairs

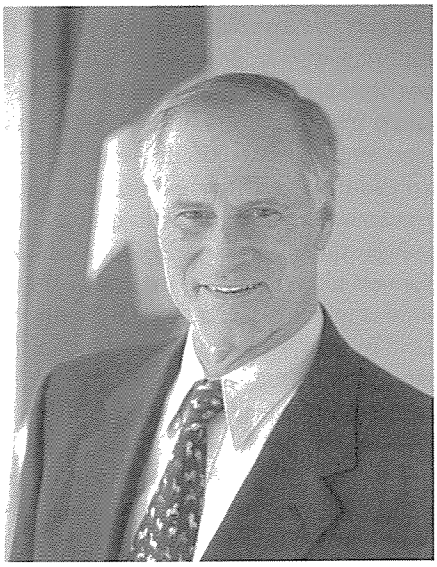
A year has passed since the terrorist attacks on the United States. Since that time we have seen tremendous shifts in global relationships. What have been the most important foreign policy shifts for Canada since 9-11?

I would say that it is less about major policy shifts than it is a re-adjustment of our priorities. The fundamentals of our foreign policy, as articulated in the Government's 'Canada and the World' statement of 1995, remain quite sound. Here I refer to the well-known three 'pillars' upon which our foreign policy is built: the protection and promotion of our security, our prosperity, and our culture and values.

The most important adjustments of the past year, of course, concern our efforts to combat the emergence of international terrorism on an entirely new scale here in North America, particularly through closer collaboration with the United States in a range of ways to protect our citizens, keep our borders open, and prevent future attacks both here at home and abroad. This requires recognizing the complex nature of modern terrorism which uses the very means of communications and techniques on which our international prosperity depends. It also requires a concerted effort on our part to engage moderate elements, particularly in the Muslim world, which will isolate those wishing to commit acts of terrorism.

Our close relationship with the U.S. is clearly fundamental to our security and our prosperity. Looking ahead, I can say that we will continue to explore ways to improve our cooperation in order to assure our continental security and the free movement of legitimate goods, services and people across the border – but we will do so only in ways that we believe will enhance our sovereignty and uphold our core values and interests. At the moment, for instance, we are very much absorbed with the ongoing campaign against terrorism and possible U.S. action against Iraq, with continued progress toward full implementation of the 30-point Smart Border Declaration of late last year, and with the necessary planning and sharing of information among our various civilian agencies and our militaries to think through the best ways to respond and protect our citizens in the event of catastrophic attacks.

I think it is fair to say that these adjustments to our priorities are the direct result of last September's attacks.



In retrospect, do you have a better idea today of why the events of 9-11 occurred?

At a very general level, many explanations have been offered. Some analysts sought immediately to apply Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' view and situate the attacks within the context of a perceived divide between the Christian and Islamic worlds. I think this is both simplistic and wrong. Others have described the attacks as a manifestation externally of tensions internal to Muslim societies. Others still are quick to point out that despite the horror of the attacks of September 11, we must recognize that terrorism has existed throughout history and occured within many different societies, religions and cultures. The difference today is that the attack took place in North America, bringing it closer to home. We must not forget, however, that not all such attacks come from outside, as the Oklahoma bombing illustrated. Such recognition makes it more difficult to draw quick and easy conclusions about the 'root causes' of terrorism generally.

Certainly, what we do know about the case in question is that a small number of committed and well-organized extremists were able to evade surveillance using relatively inexpensive communications technology, to circulate freely under legitimate cover, to absorb specialized knowledge from reputable institutions, and to carry out destructive attacks that few of us would previously have imagined.

Canada-U.S. relations on foreign affairs are often a mix of alignment and tension. The Government of Canada has supported the broad purpose of the U.S.-led war on terrorism and the military efforts in Afghanistan, yet has been careful in its support elsewhere. Under what circumstances should Canadians expect their government to support an initiative against terrorist interests beyond Afghanistan, for example in Iraq?

We are committed to the international effort to eliminate global terrorism. Canadians have in fact assumed a leadership role in doing so in various G-8 working groups on counter-terrorism and through our work in a range of other bilateral and multilateral fora.

In confronting the threat of terrorism beyond Afghanistan, we have stated frequently that we will make decisions as required in individual cases based upon our assessment of the relevant legal, political and security context. This is particularly the case when you are talking about somewhere as complex as the Middle East, where the potential for regional destabilization is always present.

We have no illusions about Saddam Hussein and know well his past record. In the face of any commonly perceived imminent threat that Saddam Hussein would use weapons of mass destruction I believe that the U.N. Security Council and the world community generally would support action against him.

The setting of foreign policy in a potential war zone requires a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the national military. How confi-

dent are you that Canada's Armed Forces can properly meet the demands placed on it where the foreign policy seeks active engagement of an enemy?

Canada's Armed Forces have consistently demonstrated their ability to get the job done. Here we need only recall recent missions abroad such as our peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and East Timor, and the combat role of Canadians during the NATO air campaign in Kosovo.

The exceptional performance of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battalion under extremely difficult conditions in Afghanistan is only the most recent example of the high quality of our Armed Forces.

That being said, we have to be mindful of questions of capacity, particularly when our troops are committed to various global regions at once, and I can assure you that this is something I have been discussing regularly with my colleague John McCallum, the Minister of National Defence.

Because of 9-11, Canadians have been well educated in the foreign policy dilemmas in certain parts of the world. At the same time, other regions are in turmoil yet continue to receive scant attention. Which corners of the globe are international crises in-waiting and thus deserve the attention of the Canadian people?

You are very right to point out that there are some areas of the world just don't seem to get the same amount of public attention as others, but there are also those such as India/Pakistan where the threat of a nuclear exchange remains ever present and has engaged the world community.

More than a decade after the end of the Cold War, countries of the developing world can be divided into two groups: those experiencing slow but significant growth and advancement; and those, including too many in Africa, which seem to be sliding into the abyss, as failed states.

This is why, as Chair of the G-8 for 2002, we chose to focus on African development. The alarming spread of disease and economic instability in parts of Africa simply must be addressed, not just for the good of the African people, but for our own well being and that of our children. We live in an increasingly interdependent world, in which such regional crises can very quickly have an impact throughout the international system.

Does Canada have sufficient international standing to act as an effective broker in regional disputes? If this an objective of our government, when should it engage itself in the internal troubles of another country?

We hold a unique and highly-respected position in international affairs, which has enabled us to assume the role of broker in a range of disputes and among a range of parties. I think we should engage in such activity where the parties in question are willing to accept our assistance, and where we believe we have some particular experience or expertise to offer that can make a difference. Canadians I talk to really do want to see their government promoting our values in the world, sharing our unique experience with others, letting them know more about our own very successful model of society. I think it is fair to say that in areas such as our innovation with governance structures, and our ability to live and flourish amid such remarkable diversity, we are rightly considered with great admiration by most countries of the world. Our federal make-up and experience, together with our Charter, provide useful models for pluralistic societes within a stable governmental framework.

The United Nations has come under increasing criticism in recent years for its lack of impact on many of the world's conflicts, such as Rwanda and the Middle East. Is the UN losing its authority on regional disputes and what kind of UN would Canada most like to see?

I think we would most like to see an effective UN, one that is above all capable of dealing with issues of peace and security, economic and social development, and respect for human rights. Canada has been at the forefront of efforts to enhance the capacity of the organization, and we fully support Secretary-General Kofi Annan's efforts in this respect. The most recent example of such a cooperative effort is the reform package known as the Brahimi Report, aimed at a complete overhaul of the way the UN conducts peace operations. The problem, I would say, is not that the UN has lost authority, but rather that it has been confronted with increasingly complex instances of conflict, during a period in which global demands and expectations of the UN have also expanded enormously. Despite all of this, however, I think we must also acknowledge some of the recent successes of the UN in places such as Sierra Leone and East Timor, and encourage efforts to make the UN, and the multilateral system generally more effective. If we prefer that disputes be resolved politically rather than militarily, we really have no alternative.

What are the greatest challenges Canada faces today on the international stage?

In the broadest sense, I suppose, the challenge facing Canada is the same as that facing most countries, which is to manage interdependence, whether regionally, and in our case particularly with a view to the United States, or globally. We are committed to protecting the sovereignty and security of our country, which exists to uphold our values and interests, and indeed, among the nation-states of the world, ours has been a remarkable success. Yet we are also assuming our place in new and evolving structures and institutions of global governance, in which we seek to expand our prospects and project our values and interests among other nations of the world–in effect, to expand our sovereignty by pooling it. There is no clear model or formula for doing this. It really is a question of looking closely at each opportunity to do so, and carefully evaluating the anticipated costs and benefits.

We know we have no choice, however, but to engage fully in this process. Nearly all of the issues of greatest concern to Canadians – the fight against terror or organized crime, our prospects for economic growth, the state of the environment, the health of our population, and more – all of these are affected dramatically by events and conditions beyond our borders. No one country can address these issues alone, and Canada must remain in the forefront of those nations committed to crafting innovative international institutions, such as the International Criminal Court, and adjusting existing institutions in ways that enhance their ability to meet these global challenges.

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