EMBRACING DIVERSITY in Foreign Policy
LA DIVERSITÉ dans les Affaires étrangères

AS PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR CANADIAN STUDIES (ACS) AND AS SENIOR DEPARTMENTAL HISTORIAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE – THOUGH I HASTEN TO ADD THAT I SPEAK FOR NEITHER ORGANIZATION IN THESE PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS – IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FIRST ISSUE OF *CANADIAN DIVERSITY / DIVERSITÉ CANADIENNE*. AS THE VARIOUS ARTICLES ATTEST, THIS IS A TIMELY AND IMPORTANT PUBLICATION WHOSE FIELD OF INQUIRY HAS VITAL NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS. MOREOVER, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SCOPE FOR NEW AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH, MUCH OF WHICH WE HOPE WILL FIND ITS WAY INTO THE PAGES OF FUTURE ISSUES OF THIS MAGAZINE. THAT FORWARD-LOOKING APPROACH ALSO PREDOMINATED IN THE SEMINAR ON «RESEARCH AND IDENTITY: THE NEXT DECADE» WHICH TOOK PLACE IN HALIFAX LAST YEAR, AND FROM WHOSE PROCEEDINGS MUCH OF THIS CONTENT IS DRAWN. AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING A DISSONANT NOTE IN THE MIDST OF THIS ERUDITE ATTENTION TO THE FUTURE, HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO REFER BRIEFLY TO THE RELEVANCE OF THIS SUBJECT TO THE HISTORY OF CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. IN LOOKING BACK, I HAVE CHOSEN TO FOCUS ON A FEW MINISTERIAL OR GOVERNMENTAL REVIEWS OF CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY SINCE THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, AN APPROACH WHICH WILL LIKELY LEAD TO THE COMMISSION OF TWO RELATED OFFENCES - GROSS OVER-SIMPLIFICATION AND CRASS GENERALIZATION – BUT WHICH MAY ENABLE ME TO HIGHLIGHT SOME ASPECTS OF THIS QUESTION THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE THEME OF THIS PUBLICATION.

By Hector Mackenzie

En 1947, Louis St-Laurent, Ministre des affaires étrangères et ensuite Premier ministre du Canada, a présenté une allocution intitulée *The Grey Lecture* qui est devenue l'un des premiers énoncés au sujet de l'approche du Canada aux affaires internationales. Même s'il a peut-être sous-estimé l'importance de l'investissement étranger et du commerce international pour le Canada, le texte est considéré comme étant une déclaration directe ainsi qu'une représentation exacte des attitudes du gouvernement et du peuple canadien envers les affaires étrangères à ce moment. La majorité des déterminants clés de la politique étrangère canadienne notés par St-Laurent il y a cinquante ans demeurent valides aujourd'hui, en particulier l'importance singulière de la relation du Canada et des États-Unis, de l'engagement à respecter l'autorité de la loi en affaires internationales, de la croyance que les idéaux canadiens et un gouvernement démocratique pourraient servir d'exemple aux autres et de l'acceptation que le Canada a une responsabilité envers la communauté mondiale.

What is more remarkable to a reader now is what was absent then for understandable, if regrettable, reasons. Although there was explicit attention paid to Canada's historic duality and to the critical importance of national unity, there was nary a word about diversity in Canada's population nor a mention of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. Canada had long been a land of opportunity and a haven in the estimation of Canadians and foreigners alike, yet its immigration policies could still be seen as promoting "White Canada" and barring the door to people of colour. Though Canadian citizenship was being redefined and democratic government was extolled as a vital aspect of Canadian life, there were still formal and informal barriers to political participation for Canadians of Asian descent and other visible minorities whose contributions had helped to build Canada. In a lengthy *tour d'horizon* of Canada's outlook and commitments in international relations, which devoted considerable attention to continental, Commonwealth and European relationships, there were only two incidental references to Asia, none to Latin America and none to Africa. As for global challenges, the dominant concern for St. Laurent and for his colleagues in the Canadian government – as well as for Canadians in

general – was the threat posed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and its allies in the cold war. In other words, the international agenda and Canada's response to world affairs reflected contemporary circumstances, but differed markedly from more recent developments and perspectives.

Two decades later, the review published by the government of Pierre Trudeau, *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, indicated some important changes in both respects, which corresponded to differences in Canadian domestic policy as well as international developments. As one obvious manifestation of an altered view of the rest of the world, the six booklets included one on Latin America and another on the Pacific, while that on the United Nations devoted considerable attention to Southern Africa. By this time, national unity had been seriously challenged, the «points system» had been introduced in Canada's immigration policy and there had been greater attention to the diversity of the Canadian population. Consequently, the first booklet in the series affirmed that "national identity, bilingualism and multicultural expression" were "the main preoccupations of Canada and Canadians today." Whether the policies that followed in the wake of the review altered course from what had come before has been the subject of considerable debate among scholars, but the wider gaze when the government looked beyond Canada's borders was certainly obvious.

By the mid-1980s, when there was a sequence of parliamentary and government reviews of Canadian foreign and defence policy, flows of immigrants and refugees had again altered the composition of the Canadian population, with significant implications for Canada's approach to world affairs. In its report, *Independence and Internationalism* in 1986, the Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations paid heed to this phenomenon. "New waves of immigration during the past 20 years from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean," the parliamentarians noted, "have led to the establishment in Canada of communities with deep personal concerns about problems in parts of the world that previous Canadian governments paid little attention to." Though the committee acknowledged that "Canada's bilingual and multicultural heritage represents an asset" for Canada in international affairs, it emphasized "that it is definitely not in the national interest to allow ethnic communities to draw Canada into taking sides on rivalries and disputes in their countries of origin." In other words, there was a greater awareness on the part of decision-makers that diversity in the composition of Canada's population was likely to have an impact on public attitudes towards policies and priorities for the country in foreign policy. In fact, the relationship between ethnic origins and the outlook on Canada's international relations had been established long before, with sentimental ties to Britain and France, or hostilities to regimes in central and eastern Europe, among significant parts of the Canadian population, as earlier manifestations of this influence.

Le Canada et le contexte global ont tous deux changé de manière significative au moment de la prochaine – et plus récente – réévaluation compréhensive de la politique étrangère canadienne, qui a abouti en la publication d'une déclaration, *Canada dans le monde*, par le gouvernement de Jean Chrétien. Des éléments qui avaient été omis en 1947 ont trouvé de l'importance en 1995. Dans l'introduction de *Canada dans le monde*, il est noté que « la position géographique du Canada lui donne un avantage important alors que de nouveaux pôles de pouvoir économique et politique émergent dans la région du Pacifique et en Amérique latine. » Cela a rehaussé ses autres actifs afin de créer « une politique étrangère active » qui pourrait « protéger et promouvoir les valeurs et les intérêts du *Canada dans le monde.* » Dans ce document, une attention considérable a été dévouée à ces « autres pays » qui d'après le comité conjoint avaient été ignorés ou négligés par les gouvernements précédents. Ce qui est évident pour n'importe quel lecteur est que le Canada et le monde avaient changé considérablement au cours de la décennie précédant *Canada dans le monde* - sans mentionner les cinq décennies depuis l'allocution de St-Laurent – et que les deux ont continué de changer depuis sa publication. Même s'il est très difficile, voire impossible, de prédire de tels changements, des tendances similaires auront probablement un impact sur la politique étrangère du Canada dans le futur.

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Many of the differences in outlook and policies since the end of the Second World War simply reflect these changes in national and international circumstances. Unquestionably, diversity has played its part in altering the context for decision-making, as well as the attitudes of decision-makers. The myriad of overseas connections of the Canadian people contribute to Canada's attitudes toward other countries and regimes, its reaction to events in the rest of the world and its response to global phenomena. The composition of Canada's population is very different today from its make-up in 1947, as is that of the foreign service and other elements in the Canadian government. The aforementioned trends and others as yet unforeseen will continue to alter our understanding of "Canada" and "Canadians," as well as our appreciation of the implications of these demographic changes for Canada's international relations, as for other areas of public policy and society. Moreover, as the articles in this issue of *Canadian Diversity / Diversité canadienne* attest, the importance of this subject will likely be even greater in the years to come – as an historian, however, I will leave the discussion of the future to others.

For now, I simply hope that you will enjoy the multi-faceted exploration which follows in the pages of this magazine.