PATRICK WATSON'S $10,000 CHALLENGE

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Taras Grescoe's
hopeless tourists

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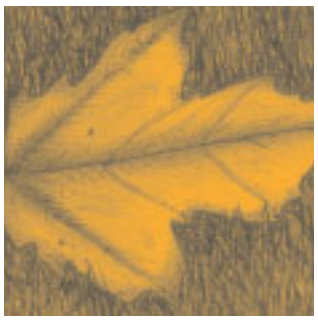
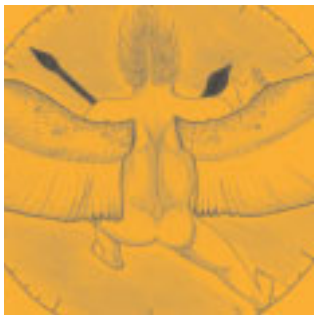


David Malone on Andrew Cohen:
"Cohen is highly critical of the government's foreign policy statement of 1995, 'Canada in the World.' Although I was its principal author, I agree with most of his points ... The statement was hopeful but not particularly honest."

Modris Eksteins on Lesley Krueger's new novel:
"How things have changed. History as explanation is a notion that belongs to a bygone age of empire. In the academy today history is at most suggestion, usually of what is not, rather than what is."



Tom Axworthy on David Frum:
"The character, capacity and commands of the 43rd President of the United States are now critically important to the future of all of us. Frum has written a brief for the defence, but it is a shrewd, insightful and even engaging work that illuminates a president who continues to be underestimated."

Anthony Westell on Michael Adams:
"The percentage of Americans agreeing that 'a widely advertised product is probably good' rose from 32 percent in 1992 to 44 in 2000. Less materialistic, more skeptical Canadians stayed firmly at 17 percent."

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From the Northwest Passage to Mars • Brian Tobin on Canada's war with Spain • A concert for the history books • Birney, Woodcock and Rexroth • Two contemporary novels • Revisiting Kari Levitt • New poetry

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Vol. 11, No. 4 - May 2003

Drawings throughout the issue by **Ward Scott**.

Ward Scott is a New Brunswick illustrator who has published in *The Prairie Journal, Books in Canada* and the *Mystery Review*.

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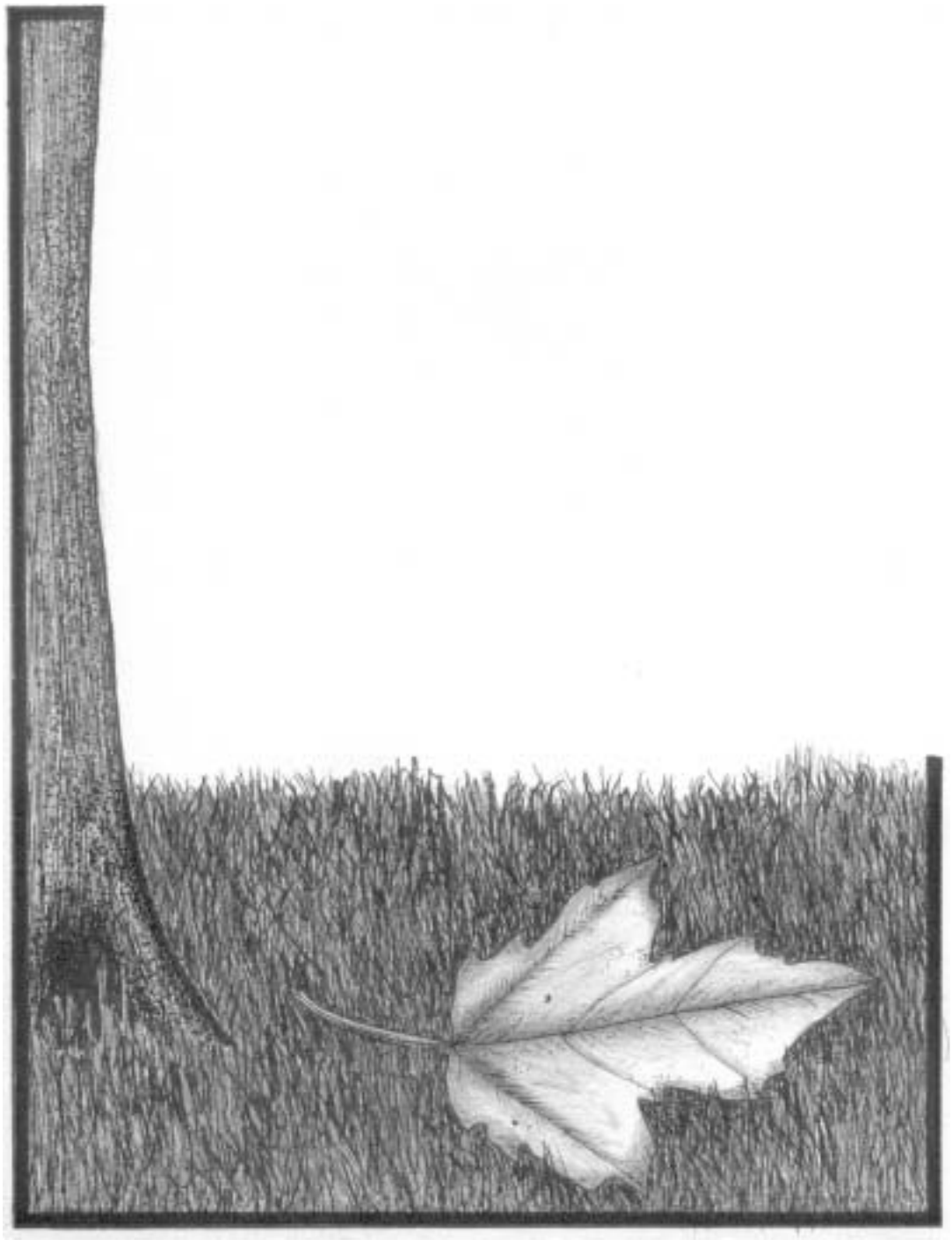
A Shadow of Our Former Selves

What happened to Canada's famous peacekeepers and diplomats?

David M. Malone

While Canada Slept:
How We Lost Our Place in the World
Andrew Cohen
McClelland and Stewart
218 pages, hardcover
ISBN 0771022751



I enjoyed *While Canada Slept: How We Lost Our Place in the World* very much, and had not expected to. Most volumes on Canadian foreign policy are both ahistorical and deadly dull.[1] (The worst of all tend to be diplomatic memoirs, with Charles Ritchie's a happy but rare exception.) While not particularly scholarly in tone or methodology (considering that he is now ensconced at Carleton University), Andrew Cohen has clearly done a lot of homework, speaking to many knowledgeable insiders, former insiders and decided outsiders of the political, civil service, academic and think-tank worlds. Most importantly among many other virtues, the book is fluently written, and the text benefits from a strong point of view and commendable narrative drive. Cohen further offers stimulating judgements and sound policy recommendations.

In brief, it is a very good read and a clear stimulus to some reflections of my own on Canada's conduct of foreign policy since World War II.

I have known many of the individuals discussed or quoted by Cohen at one time or another in the past. My father, once an international correspondent, was among the cohort of new foreign service recruits brought in to staff the rapidly expanding Canadian diplomatic missions abroad during World War II. He worked for the three leaders of the Canadian diplomatic "golden age" that Cohen documents, Lester B. Pearson, Norman Robertson and Hume Wrong. I have personal memories of the first two. I joined the Department of External Affairs in 1975, and have been a foreign service officer ever since, currently on leave working in the research and international non-governmental organization sectors in New York. Much of this volume's terrain is thus familiar. I quailed initially at the narrative hook Cohen provided to the early years of Canadian foreign policy formulation, that is, the careers of Pearson, Robertson and Wrong, since these men were, in all but matters of class and education, a study in contrasts. I have always disliked nostalgia about the purported golden age of Canadian diplomacy because it is often divorced from its time and from the unique circumstances of Canada's emergence from colonial status and short-lived prominence as a belligerent untouched by the Second World War on its own soil. However, Cohen does a good job on the pre-history of today's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. And Pearson, Robertson and Wrong prove good company. All three served in Canada's highest diplomatic positions in the 1940s and 1950s, with Pearson moving on to the political plane, first as Secretary of State for External Affairs and then as Prime Minister (in which position he failed to muster an echo of his earlier, remarkable achievements in the construction of the post-war multilateral architecture and approaches, which are still recognizable at the United Nations).

The book's title reveals Cohen's central thesis: Canada's place in world affairs, once great, has been lost. He sees the rot as having set in under the Trudeau government, as early as 1968, and as

David M. Malone, a former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, is President of the International Peace Academy in New York.

having intensified ever since. He dislikes the emphasis on Canadian economic interests that has characterized foreign policy since the mid 1970s, and hankers for a return of priority to the projection of Canadian values internationally. He is highly critical of the decline of Canada's foreign policy instruments: the military, Canada's aid program and Canada's diplomatic service. On the latter, he seems to have been strongly influenced by the views of contemporary foreign service officers who see themselves as underpaid (definitely), under-promoted (in some cases) and unloved (*à qui la faute?*). Cohen views DFAIT morale and staff retention problems as grave, but his solutions suggest that, like a victim of the Stockholm Syndrome, he has been captured somewhat by his sources: is DFAIT staff, however excellent, really the best judge of how the foreign service should advance Canadian interests internationally, or is some skepticism in order?

There is one serious gap in this book: Cohen treats the decline of Canada's foreign policy instruments in isolation of relevant international trends. For example, while deploring the emphasis on international economic and trade relations in DFAIT and the Prime Minister's Office in recent years, he fails to note that other countries were engaged on a similar track. Indeed, the emergence of the G7 forum in the mid 1970s, an outgrowth of the wrenching economic shocks of the early 1970s, responded to widespread worries in major capitals about international economic management. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of Germany and French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, having earlier worked closely together as their countries' respective finance ministers, convened leaders of the world's major democratic economies (without Canada) in 1975 at Rambouillet to pick up where they had left off in their earlier portfolios. Given a public *crise de nerfs* by the Italian government over Rome's exclusion from the forum, Italy was invited at the last moment, and that gave U.S. president Gerald Ford an opening to include Canada at the next such meeting in 1976 in Puerto Rico.

International economic policy coordination (or cooperation, depending on national preferences) was the big issue of that period, and Canada was eager to play a role. As Cohen rightly points out, Trudeau and his talented foreign policy advisor Ivan Head crafted a niche for Canada as an advocate for the developing world within the G7. Canada came to have the lead (with France) on north-south relations in the early years of this summitry, until Ronald Thatcherism put paid to negotiations over a "new international economic order" in 1981.[2] The failure of Trudeau's "third option"—intended to diversify Canada's economic and political relationships—to elicit any interest in a Europe bent introspectively on unification, made the protection of Canada's trade access to the U.S. even more of a priority, explaining in part the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and North American Free Trade Agreement, pulled off by Brian Mulroney as the centrepiece of his conduct of Canada's international relations. Controversial at the time, and still disliked by many, these trade pacts are seen today as critical foundations for Canadian prosperity, perhaps *faute de mieux*. Their negotiation recalls the salience of a highly skilled school of Canadian public servant, our international trade negotiators, of whom Simon Reisman was the most famous example.

Cohen only deals with the FTA of 1989 in one brief paragraph, although he does recognize it as a "watershed [that] confirmed the trend towards bilateralism and continentalism that had been building for half a century." Equally downplayed (although mentioned in passing) is the extent to which other countries, including the U.S., sought to cash in on a post–Cold War peace dividend by running down their military, aid and diplomatic programs and capacities during the 1990s. Thus, developments in Canada correspond much more to prevailing international trends than Cohen allows and this sometimes skews his analysis.

Cohen is, however, right to focus on the re-emergence of global security issues as central ever since September 11. Here, the news is not so good for Canada, and passivity did overtake Ottawa in the absence of a strategy. The government's last serious defence policy review dates back to the late 1980s, its military capacity for international operations has deteriorated sharply, and military morale has never recovered from the media firestorm surrounding the shocking performance of members of Canada's contingent in UNITAF in Somalia in 1993. Peacekeeping remains the military activity most Canadians associate with, but, as Cohen points out, both Canadian participation and—more important—Canada's capacity for participation have declined. Just as important, many in the Canadian military seem to have fallen out of love with peacekeeping, resenting the Chrétien government's recent decision to send troops to keep the peace in Kabul rather than to fight a war alongside the U.S. and the UK in Iraq. The aging of Canada's military equipment, while depressing, is hardly unique: the vaunted flagship of the French navy, the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*, seems to break down even more often than do our own vessels and the helicopters they sometimes carry. But the erosion of the military's human capital will be harder to reverse, however committed and talented individual officers and enlisted personnel may continue to be. And expertise on security policy in Ottawa will need to be developed again and rewarded in years ahead. Security policy (and our defence and foreign policy instruments) will need to be reoriented from conventional regional strategies to address the actual threats of the early 21st century that are global in scope: nuclear proliferation and that of other weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and those human security challenges Lloyd Axworthy so energetically combated.

Canada's aid performance is a distressing story. Cohen is riveting on its beginnings (about which I knew little). He is right on the pressures the Canadian International Development Agency faced as successive governments slashed budgets but demanded the comfort of CIDA-funded photo opportunities as ministers toured the world. (Ministers, not just Canadian ones, wish to be thanked for public largesse wherever they visit. This dynamic, among others, prevented CIDA from concentrating its efforts on important aid recipients or key issues—such as poverty alleviation—as its resources declined.) Canada has continued to talk a good game on aid, and may finally be witnessing a modest turnaround in the funding of its aid program, with a $500 million infusion of assistance for Africa timed to coincide with the G8 Kananaskis Summit of 2002 and a further 8 percent increase initiated in the recent federal budget. But it still has a very long way to go. Tony Blair virtually doubled the UK aid program when he came to power in 1997 and has further increased it over time. Other leaders, including George W. Bush, made major aid increase pledges at the time of the Monterrey Summit on the financing of development in 2002.

CIDA features a notoriously entrenched bureaucracy, which did not seem to thin out much as programs were cut back. The venerable Cranford Pratt, our leading scholar in this field and often quoted by Cohen, makes clear how CIDA's sad plight today has developed steadily over the years, in spite of occasionally strong leadership by the likes of Maurice Strong and Margaret Catley-Carlson. It now has the worst of all worlds: a large staff with few financial resources. That said, even in its darkest hours, some parts of the agency continued to give signs of life and to produce sparks of innovation. Canada has done well in addressing the security-development nexus, on which both CIDA and DFAIT (the latter very much under Lloyd Axworthy's impetus) developed small but exciting programs to address new challenges in the security sphere that were undermining economic and broader human development. Canada became a leader on these issues in a range of multilateral forums, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, not least because of the dedication of a small group of staffers plugging away in obscurity on both sides of the Ottawa River.

Cohen hardly alludes at all to the important role played by the Department of Finance in Ottawa on the international relations front, through its participation in the G7 (the often powerful forum of finance ministers distinct from the more political G8 at the level of national leaders, until Russia's recent inclusion in the former), its funding of and policy guidance to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and its sometimes opaque but important role in addressing international financial crises such as those that struck Mexico and Russia in the late 1990s.[3] Financial diplomacy has been a very strong suit of Canada's, featuring a number of talented Canadian G7 deputies. Paul Martin played a critical role in the emergence of a promising new forum—G20—which he chaired, bringing together leading industrialized and developing countries to discuss economic and financial issues of mutual interest. Any serious effort to coordinate Canadian foreign policy would need to take into account and leverage the activities and contributions of the government through the Department of Finance. But because this talented and powerful department has signalled that it has no interest in being coordinated by others, this has never occurred.

Cohen does discuss at length the degraded state of Canada's diplomatic instrument as he sees it. Up to a point, I can only agree. (The public service as a whole has experienced several grim decades, but the decline of DFAIT must rank as sharper and more visible than that of other ministries.) His analysis of the causes of rising dissatisfaction (culminating last year in unprecedented picketing of the Pearson building in Ottawa—which houses DFAIT) is accurate. A combination of poor pay, pallid career prospects and a dearth of overseas assignment opportunities, plus the growing contempt of the rest of the public service, particularly its "centre" (essen-

tially the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board, the Department of Finance and a few other agencies), has taken a toll. But so has the changing nature of diplomacy, with cheap telecommunications making the intermediation of skilled policy interpreters and knowledge brokers seemingly a luxury to some.

Cohen argues that Pearson, Robertson and Wrong are an extinct breed. As he rightly notes, this is not a bad thing in all respects: being men of their time, they did little for women, Jews, gays and other non-white establishment males during their public careers. Indeed, they ostracized some of these groups. (DFAIT today is increasingly diverse. One of my more pleasurable recent encounters was a meeting with a remarkably ethnically mixed group of young officers.) It would also be impossible for any single officer in DFAIT today to play the role these three did 50 years ago, because the size of the department and the substantive scope of Canadian international relations preclude any public servant from the degree of personal dominance achieved in earlier decades. (As Cohen reminds us, undersecretaries in the early years used to work directly for the prime minister, who doubled as secretary of state for external affairs.) Even very strong recent deputy ministers (the new designation of the old undersecretaries) such as Allan Gotlieb and Gordon Smith could never hope to stamp their personalities and views on DFAIT as Robertson did in the 1940s.

In fact, Canada's foreign service continues to attract stellar performers often endowed with strong personalities. Let me name four who are currently making a real difference: Paul Heinbecker, Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations, recently much in the news for quarterbacking a courageous Canadian initiative on Iraq; his predecessor, Robert Fowler, who achieved significant influence in the UN Security Council during Canada's activist term 1999–2000 and then served as the Prime Minister's chief aide for Kananaskis, and still serves as Canada's ambassador to Italy; Jeremy Kinsman, currently Canadian ambassador to the European Union in Brussels and formerly head of the Canadian missions in Moscow, Rome and London; and Marie Bernard-Meunier, our ambassador in Germany. Each of these individuals has generated or shaped significant new policies in Ottawa (Heinbecker on security; Fowler on security, Africa and much else; Kinsman on domestic Canadian communications and cultural policy; Bernard-Meunier in the emerging field of global issues, on which Canada did so well in spite of the 1990s budget cutting[4]). From their aeries abroad, they now work hard to galvanize policy initiatives out of Ottawa that will reflect credit on the country, sometimes clashing with each other (strong egos have not gone out of fashion in DFAIT), but always in the service of Canadian ideals. While none of them has the undiluted power or influence of Pearson, Robertson or Wrong, all are worthy successors to them.

At working level, while frustrations abound, so do unparalleled career opportunities. During my formative years, I worked for policy entrepreneurs such as Sylvia Ostry and Derek Burney (now with CAE Inc.), first-class international operators such as former UN Ambassador Yves Fortier, UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette and the International Criminal Court's newly elected presiding judge, Philippe Kirsch. Cohen recognizes continuity in quality of staff, but nostalgically regrets the outsize roles of earlier times. Not much can be done to bring those back!

Cohen seems attracted to the idea of the foreign service as a closed shop, a priesthood, with successful negotiation of the fabled foreign service exam serving as its ordination. Outside appointments are to be discouraged, the answer to staffing shortfalls being the hiring of more career foreign service officers.[5] Perhaps, but times are changing. For one thing, top young internationally competitive professionals today, by and large, do not plan life-long careers, preferring two- to three-year stints offering new challenges and the prospects of more rapid promotion. (This is certainly the case of those with whom I work in New York.) "Have laptop, will travel" might well be their motto. This ethos, combined with the demands of two-career families, may not be compatible any longer with the sometimes rigid (albeit increasingly flexible) career patterns offered by DFAIT.

The foreign service has been cursed by its self-conception as a superior band of internationalists amidst the heathen of the broader public service. It sometimes exhibits an attitude both of victimhood (unloved, underpaid, etc.) and of self-regard and entitlement (they've "met the entrance requirement and paid their dues" in Cohen's words). It is a most unattractive combination. Foreign service officers have tended to struggle unreflectively to keep the great unwashed out of those positions. But why? Are we really so special? The much-vaunted but unreliable foreign service exam historically has served to admit not only deserving candidates but also professional and personal misfits, while keeping out some stellar candidates.

The Global Issues Bureau was one of DFAIT's most dynamic units in the late 1990s. When Bernard-Meunier was asked by Gordon Smith to set it up, few foreign service officers were available for those duties, and fewer still wanted to take a risk on an untried field of foreign policy endeavour. By default, Bernard-Meunier had to hire competent staff where she could find them: elsewhere in government, in the academic world and among NGOs. A few foreign service officers provided a safety net of diplomatic experience to guide the enthusiasm, street smarts and sheer talent of this happy band. Did they take note of what outsiders could achieve within DFAIT? Not noticeably. Last time I asked, many were still fighting a rear-guard action against "lateral entry" by non–foreign services officers, seemingly impervious to the implications of their own protectionism. We need not fear competition. We should welcome it and the rich array of relevant talent and experience that lies beyond Fort Pearson.

One irony, nevertheless, remains: foreign service types are generally held in Ottawa to be aloof, self-important, dim on domestic priorities and policies, and generally bad at the "Ottawa game." In an era of budget cutting, management challenges and obsession with process as opposed to policy (which could not be afforded), the Ottawa community in the 1990s seemed to become even more alienated than usual from the broader Canadian scene, succumbing throughout the public service to the isolation it attributes to DFAIT.

DFAIT's myopic and episodic relationship with leading Canadian universities and academics stands at odds with the strong university backgrounds and enduring links of the early titans at the Department of External Affairs. DFAIT's remove from academic stimulation, relieved only by the presence of the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs at Carleton (now run by the admirable Fen Osler Hampson), is a puzzle. Efforts to engage meaningfully with the academic world have been launched by several recent ministers, including Lloyd Axworthy and Bill Graham, both serious scholars themselves. But they rarely gel. Washington, with its lively think-tanks and first-rate universities, is a very different story. Perhaps the next prime minister will champion a venture jointly funded by government, the private sector and leading Canadian philanthropic organizations, to engage research and reflection on foreign policy writ large.

From Cohen, we learn that only 40 percent of foreign service officers at any given time serve abroad. This startling statistic is one of the results of relentless budget cutting over the years. While the salary of a locally hired trade officer in Canada's embassy in Switzerland might extend to CA$140,000 as opposed to the perhaps CA$75,000 a Canadian diplomat would earn in a similar slot, the expense of deploying and housing that Canadian employee and his or her family abroad can greatly exceed the cost of even an expensive local hire. Thus, increasingly, individuals who had joined government in order to serve their country abroad find themselves confined to Ottawa and urged to play the Ottawa game. Cohen seems bothered by the notion of large numbers of local hires working within the Canadian foreign service. This does not trouble me: they are mostly topflight and highly dedicated. Rather, what perplexes me is the proportion of our Canadian personnel assigned to Ottawa. The grotesque concentration of DFAIT staff in Ottawa will be reversed only once it is recognized as a distortion of how a modern foreign service can and should run.

Where DFAIT is best used is in providing the centre, including the prime minister, with broad options for the orientation of Canada's international relations and the means to implement these *abroad*. Does the UK Prime Minister, for instance, who has at his disposal probably the best foreign service today, require of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that it "play the London game"? The idea is ludicrous. He looks to British diplomats to promote UK interests aggressively abroad while supporting policy development at Number Ten as it relates to foreign spheres. Thus, DFAIT resources would appear to be seriously misallocated, feeding the morale problems Cohen describes so well.[6]

Cohen is highly critical of the government's foreign policy statement of 1995, *Canada in the World*. Although I was its principal author, I agree with most of his points (except on the importance of economic and trade diplomacy for

Cohen sees the rot as having set in under the Trudeau government, as early as 1968, and as having intensified ever since.

Canada). In a recent essay on foreign policy reviews in the *International Journal*, I concluded in part:

> *Canada in the World* was pitched at a high level of generality … Complaints abounded about the absence of specific priorities and ideas on what might be curtailed or eliminated. A Canadian government reluctance to do less of anything internationally led to bland assurances that more would be done with less. In this sense, the statement was hopeful but not particularly honest.
>
> Successive Canadian governments have found it difficult (in some cases, unwise) to make public choices relating to priorities among and within regions of the world. Such temporizing can prove salutary: if foreign policy had been set forever in 1995 and firm priorities had been established, too much emphasis would doubtless have been placed on Asia and perhaps too little on Latin America. It has traditionally proved difficult for politicians to communicate clearly to Canadians how intertwined our economic future has become with the United States. Indeed, an anti-American slant to much foreign policy commentary is virtually a given in Canadian public life. Even though *Canada in the World* discussed the bilateral relationship with the United States in some depth and with acuity, to have portrayed Canadian foreign policy as virtually universal in its potential and appeal was misleading for any uncritical reader.
>
> Is the lengthy review process—and the overblown claims for the outcome—an abdication of hard choices and responsibility rather than a spur to meaningful action? My opposite number in Britain at the time, David Manning,[7] on hearing about our elaborate foreign policy review process, commented dryly: "We don't review foreign policy, we do it."[8]

Canada's problem has been, as Cohen so cogently argues, that it has engaged in wishful thinking (and acting) on foreign policy for some years now. While wishing to save money, for reasons of which I—as a very worried taxpayer in the early 1990s—approved mightily, the government lulled itself into believing that Canada could continue to matter internationally while its foreign policy instruments eroded and while the country's weight relative to others declined, particularly emerging powers such as China, India and Brazil. Our approach was to "be there," hosting summits, turning up in massive Team Canada trade promotion exercises that puzzled our hosts and rapidly outlived their potential, and relying on our many club memberships.

My sense is that things may be about to change. Within the higher reaches of the public service an effort is under way to rethink foreign policy (and more broadly, public policy) priorities in light of September 11 and the success of the government's deficit-fighting efforts. The next prime minister will doubtless wish to engage substantively with the foreign policy challenges of the day and will no longer be quite so constrained by a resource straitjacket. The articulation of foreign policy and the integration of its various instruments (diplomatic, aid, military and financial) should be high on the list of his or her policy challenges. If so, much will be owed to Andrew Cohen for this passionate, informative, entertaining and mostly convincing volume. I myself am greatly in his debt.

Notes

1 History matters tremendously in international relations. In Canada, as in the U.S., the study of history has been short-changed for many years at the high school level. Canadian history has been taught, but largely devoid of broader context, as though Canada was shaping the world rather than (mostly) the other way around. Our curricula need to be rethought.

2 "Ronald Thatcherism" was the expression coined by Canadian economist Sylvia Ostry to describe the ideological shock that the alliance of UK prime minister Margaret Thatcher and U.S. president Ronald Reagan administered to the international system following the latter's election.

3 Funding of the World Bank and other Department of Finance international priorities is often drawn from CIDA's envelope, further restricting the latter's freedom to manoeuvre.

4 On the challenge Bernard-Meunier faced, see my contribution, entitled "The Global Issues Biz: What Gives," to *Canada Among Nations—1999: A Big League Player?*, edited by Fen Osler Hampson, Michael Hart and Martin Rudner (Oxford University Press, 1999).

5 One of the high points of my career was working at the UN for non-career Ambassador Yves Fortier, a superb negotiator and master of the big picture. When appointees from the outside, whether politicians or not, are endowed with the requisite skills, they perform at least as well as the professionals. It is the hacks, appointed solely for reasons of political convenience, who rightly raise hackles.

6 Cohen points to Norway's success in diplomacy, contrasting it to Canada's less entrepreneurial approach. He is right about Norway's success, but it is owed first of all to a willingness to make choices and accept a "niche diplomacy" role (mainly in international mediation) and second to large sums of "walking around money" available to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reputedly up to US$250 million a year. DFAIT does not dispose of 10 percent of this sum for discretionary diplomatic initiatives.

7 Manning, today Blair's principal foreign policy advisor, was recently appointed UK Ambassador to the United States.

8 David M. Malone, "Foreign Policy Reviews Reconsidered," *International Journal*, volume 56, number 4, Autumn 2001, pages 576–577.

GWYNNE DYER

IGNORANT ARMIES

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