

Speaking Notes
for
Hon. Bob Rae, P.C., M.P.

Canada's Place in the World: How can we fix our foreign policy?

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Toronto, Ontario

Thank you.

Today my Liberal colleagues Dominic LeBlanc and Siobhan Coady are speaking about foreign policy in Ottawa and Halifax, respectively.

I'm here today to do the same – to discuss Canada's place in the world, and how we can lead again.

Lester Pearson once said: "The bewildering impact of modern technology has changed the whole concept of national interest. Who can now ask where his country will be in a few decades without asking where the world will be?"

That was four decades ago. Since then, the pace of history has only quickened. Our world is smaller than it has ever been. We are connected to global networks that link our communities, industries, innovators, artists, and researchers.

This is at the heart of the Liberal Party's *Global Networks Strategy*, our foreign policy platform, which Michael Ignatieff announced in June.

We are, by our nature, an international country. We depend on the world for our wealth and our success. But our common fate extends beyond economics – the political insecurities of the world demand our attention and leadership. The health of the planet itself requires our active engagement, on fighting pollution, the destruction of valuable species, and climate change.

We are in the world and the world is in us.

Our goal abroad is the same as it is at home: we seek a socially just and sustainable prosperity for ourselves and for others. We understand the urgent need to prevent, reduce, and resolve conflict, to curb the terrible violence that still prevails in too many corners of the world.

This is our world, and we are Canadians; indifference is not in our nature. We can no more be aloof from the problems of our planet than we can be from the injustices in our own country.

For sixty years, Canadians have built the infrastructure of modern multilateralism. We were at the founding of the UN and NATO, the Bretton Woods institutions, the G8 and G20.

We depend on the institutions, agreements, and instruments that connect us to the world. And we rely on our people, who are connected across the globe by language, culture, and commerce.

This is why Michael Ignatieff has called for Global Network Agreements to be negotiated with China, India, and other leading new economies. We are a trading nation, whose interests are best served by strong multilateral agreements and the rule of law.

And it is precisely because of who we are – and what we are – that we command a special place of respect in the international community.

As John Diefenbaker told the UN General Assembly in 1960: “We are...a middle power, large enough to bear responsibility but not so large as to have traditions of national power, or aspirations which arouse fears and suspicion.”

Under Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments, Canada’s leadership in the world has been a bipartisan achievement.

Pearson invented UN peacekeeping. Diefenbaker sold wheat to China. Trudeau recognized the People’s Republic. Mulroney opposed Apartheid. Chrétien fought for the International Criminal Court. Martin promoted the G20.

Il nous faut une politique étrangère qui réinvente nos meilleures traditions en fonction d’une nouvelle ère. Nous devons établir des liens avec le reste du monde dans l’intérêt national, et non dans l’intérêt politique du parti au pouvoir. Nous devons être un médiateur respecté, un ami fiable et un solide allié.

Après cinq années d’échecs, le Canada a atteint un point tournant. Allons-nous tourner le dos à la communauté internationale, ou rejoindre ses rangs? Allons-nous ternir notre réputation, ou la renouveler? Allons-nous rejeter le leadership du Canada, ou le rétablir?

For five years, we’ve abandoned our best traditions. The Conservatives have not handled foreign policy well.

They have tarnished our reputation as a human rights leader. They turned a blind eye to torture in Afghanistan, abandoned Canadian citizens at Guantanamo Bay and on death row, and shut down Parliament to escape accountability.

They reduced our commitments to UN peacekeeping, ignored the Responsibility to Protect, froze foreign aid, walked away from Africa, and wasted \$1 billion on a 72-hour G8/G20 photo-op for the Prime Minister – the same Prime Minister who insulted China, ignored India, and abandoned our role as a mediator in the Middle East.

The same Prime Minister who, last month, ignored his own Minister of Defence, screwed up a diplomatic negotiation with the United Arab Emirates over airline landing rights, and got us kicked out of our forward operating base in Dubai, at a cost of \$300 million to the Canadian taxpayer.

Next week, the Conservatives are going to the UN climate change conference in Cancun with a part-time Environment Minister and no plan whatsoever.

They will embarrass us in Cancun. They embarrassed us at last year's climate conference, in Copenhagen. And they embarrassed us last month, at the United Nations, when Canada failed to win a seat on the Security Council for the first time in more than 60 years.

And they have done all this while silencing any group that dares to disagree with their policies.

The problem is a dangerous cocktail of too many poor ideas and too few people of talent and ability. It's a "captain control" government, that sees the world in simplistic terms: good guys and bad guys, more money for weapons, less for aid, and on it goes.

There is also something more mean-spirited and dangerous at work.

In the spin-cycle world they inhabit, the Conservatives have attempted to turn foreign policy into a giant playing field for domestic politics.

This skews every decision, from the Middle East to Asia to Africa. Anyone who disagrees is smeared – as "anti-Israel," "anti-Canadian," or worse.

By treating foreign policy like a tool of domestic politics, the Conservatives have betrayed something fundamental about our identity as Canadians; for more than half a century, we have understood ourselves – regardless of party – in relation to the world around us.

And this style of attack politics is not confined to the Conservative Party. The NDP has been reckless in their rhetoric about Canada's future role in Afghanistan. They've labeled us as "hawks" for proposing a new, non-combat, training role for Canada after combat ends next year. They accuse us of somehow abandoning the Pearsonian tradition.

They've failed to understand that some issues should be above partisan tactics. Some things should be about more than who's up and who's down. Canada's role in Afghanistan, in particular, deserves better than the politics of spin and cynicism.

Notre position à l'égard de l'Afghanistan repose sur un principe : lorsque la paix est en jeu, nous répondons à l'appel. Nous sommes en Afghanistan pour la même raison que Lester Pearson y serait : dans le but de faire avancer la cause de la paix.

À l'ère du terrorisme mondial, ce qui menace l'Afghanistan nous menace nous aussi.

You can't promote peace unless you, "put force behind the law and behind the collective will of the international community."

Those are Lester Pearson's words, not mine. That's what he told the House of Commons in 1956, when Canada deployed troops to the very first UN peacekeeping mission.

Remember: Pearson was no pacifist. He believed in peacekeeping, but he also believed in NATO. Under his leadership, Canada was a founder of both.

In Pearson's time – and our own – the purposes of Canadian foreign policy should be to continue to work for a world where peace and security prevail, and where human development can happen.

And if we are to stay true to these principles, then we cannot abandon Afghanistan.

Le Canada ne peut abandonner l'Afghanistan après une décennie de sacrifices, alors que nos alliés et le peuple afghan ont besoin de notre aide, que des fillettes se font attaquer sur le chemin de l'école et que des crapules parmi les talibans hébergent des terroristes.

Canada's combat role will end in Kandahar, as scheduled, in 2011. Our political effort should increase, and our aid should continue.

Canada must appoint a Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, who would report directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister. The Harper government has resisted this proposal ever since John Manley recommended it when he headed the independent panel on Afghanistan.

The West needs a steady, ongoing strategy, to build schools to counter the madrassas, to allow women to take their place as equals.

These strategies will need to be creative, and must give ownership to the people of Afghanistan. And they must be accompanied by supporting the state's capacity to provide security to its people. At the current time, that means training police and the army.

At the recent NATO meeting in Lisbon, President Karzai and the UN Secretary-General emphasized all of these points. This is the constructive approach we must continue to take.

It is important to note that most progressive parties in Western Europe continue to support this approach, as well.

Nelson Mandela's autobiography talks of "the long walk to freedom." We tend to forget the long walk. It's a journey that goes through valleys and takes detours, because each society is different. Canada's foreign policy in Afghanistan, as elsewhere, needs to focus on what can be done, and what pitfalls need to be avoided.

When Michael Ignatieff announced our proposal for Canada's future role in Afghanistan in June, we heard nothing in response. Silence, for five months, before the government finally got its act together – just days before last week's NATO summit in Portugal.

By contrast, the Liberal Party has taken a leadership role in helping to define our role, in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

We support a new training mission that does not involve combat and is supported by a clear role in peace and reconciliation in the region, and continuing work on development.

None of us pretends this will be easy or without difficulty. But, in a world of difficult choices, it is the better path. As we keep faith with the 153 Canadian soldiers who didn't come home, that is the path we will choose.

Une fois terminée la mission de combat en Afghanistan, nous devons rééquilibrer les « trois D » de notre politique étrangère : la défense, la diplomatie et le développement.

When our combat mission ends next year, a Liberal government will re-allocate the \$1.7 billion incremental cost in order to rebalance the three Ds of our foreign policy: defence, diplomacy, and development.

We will also limit the growth of the National Defence budget to the rate of inflation, and conduct a full procurement review – to make sure we get value for money, while giving our troops the equipment they need for the work we need them to do.

We will cancel the Conservatives' plan to spend \$16 billion on stealth fighter jets, without a competitive bid. My colleague, Dominic LeBlanc, is speaking about this issue today in Ottawa.

We will restore balance to the three Ds, so we can return to UN peace operations, to the Responsibility to Protect, and to the effort to ban cluster munitions, control nuclear proliferation, and stop the use of child soldiers.

As part of our *Global Networks Strategy*, promoting Peace, Order, and Good Government abroad will be a central priority. We will build our capacity to broker, coordinate, and fund a multitude of efforts to share Canada's commitment to democracy, federalism, pluralism, human rights, and human dignity.

We will work with federal agencies and a wide range of non-governmental organisations, and we will review Conservative funding cuts that appear to have a deep ideological bias.

We will commit resources to promote and implement commitments by Canada and the United Nations to protect people threatened with genocide and violence, and we will focus our defence efforts on the prevention and resolution of conflict, in co-ordination with our allies.

Under a new Liberal government, Canada will return to return to Africa, which the Conservatives have largely abandoned. They cut our pledged aid by \$700 million, and cut eight African countries from the list of priority aid recipients.

Our commitment to African development should be clear and consistent. We have to avoid the huge swings in aid policy that have marked the last few years. CIDA's bureaucracy and lack of transparency, noted in a recent report of the Auditor General, needs to be fixed.

Canada should also be prepared to accept a leadership role in the re-building of Haiti, beginning with immediate action to confront the cholera outbreak there.

In the Arctic, we will renew our leadership by appointing a new Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs. The principle of sovereignty is “use it or lose it.” This will require an additional commitment to the people of the North, to their livelihoods and their way of life. We need more assistance to the Arctic fishery, and to deep-sea ports in the Arctic, as well as stronger patrol, research, and rescue capacity for the Coast Guard.

Our foreign assistance efforts should focus on poverty reduction, conflict prevention, and the promotion of human rights and sustainable development. CIDA’s efforts need to be better co-ordinated with those of Foreign Affairs, and wasteful duplication should be ended. The doubling of foreign aid that would be required to get to 0.7 percent of GDP will not be possible to reach in the next few years; however, every effort must be made to see a steady increase in foreign assistance during a Liberal mandate.

The responsibility of the government of Canada to protect and represent Canadians abroad needs to be clear and unambiguous. That starts with renewing our foreign service, after five years of mistreatment by the Harper Conservatives.

Our diplomatic corps must be better trained in foreign languages, based more heavily overseas and not in Canada, and determined to advance Canadian interests on a comprehensive basis.

We will empower our diplomats to engage in both quiet and public diplomacy – celebrating our cultural life, as well as our economic successes. And we must always be prepared to advocate for Canadian citizens, regardless of race, religion, colour, or creed.

The Canadian diplomatic service has been denigrated and downgraded by the Harper government. There is a deep confusion in the architecture and direction of our foreign policy.

The contempt shown for the foreign service by the Prime Minister and his entourage is clear for all to see. Canadian diplomats have to clear every speech with the enforcers in the PMO, and there is no credit given for experience, wisdom, or innovation.

We need to give a truly engaged and effective diplomacy its rightful place at the heart of Canadian foreign policy.

Our first task in government will be to ensure both leadership and co-ordination: our diplomacy, trade, investment, immigration, environmental, foreign assistance, defence and international engagement needs to be brought together. This has not happened, and we paid a price for that in Canada’s historic loss of a seat on the UN Security Council.

Le bilan des conservateurs pour les cinq dernières années est marqué par la dérive et la déception. Nous devons faire mieux. Nous devons tourner la page.

We believe that Canada can lead again. In spite of the last five years, we remain a country that cares about our standing in the world, and wants deeply to engage with the world around us.

Our next generation is more international than any that has come before it; our young people speak the languages and understand the cultures of the world.

For the better part of the last century, when we have sought a place of leadership in the world, our achievements have matched our ambitions. And so they will again – if we are focused in our priorities, and united in our leadership, we will reclaim Canada's place in the world.

Thank you.