The White Paper Impulse: Reviewing Foreign Policy under Trudeau and Clark

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Three times in the span of 12 years, the foreign policy of the Canadian government was subjected to review by the Department of External Affairs. Although only the first of these efforts resulted in a white paper formally tabled as such in the House of Commons, subsequent reviews tended to follow the design of the first: a comprehensive examination of all aspects of the country’s foreign policy, led and coordinated by senior officials of External Affairs, drawing to varying degrees on expertise from other government departments and the private sector. In addition, the department undertook other studies, more limited in scope, of specific areas, including that of Canada’s relationship with the United States and its role in the United Nations.

In all cases, the reviews were initiated with the aim of producing a document to serve as a guide to future policy, thus conforming to the usual definition of a white paper, but they varied considerably in their impact on policies actually implemented by the governments of the day.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the foreign policy reviews undertaken between 1968 and 1980, in an effort to account for the seeming popularity of the white paper process among policy-makers in the period, and to assess its influence on the policies ultimately pursued.

Foreign Policy for Canadians

White papers generally reflect the particular context in which they are conceived, and Foreign Policy for Canadians, published in 1970, was no exception. Throughout the nineteen sixties, the clamour for a re-evaluation of Canada’s external policies had mounted steadily, based on the fact that the world had changed considerably since the early years of the Cold War when
they had been conceived. Much of the criticism centred on the nature of Canada’s membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The new emphasis on détente in East-West relations, the recovery of western Europe, and a nascent Canadian nationalism led many, particularly in the academic community, to question Canada’s continuing military contribution to the alliance. Within government, Pierre Elliott Trudeau was among a new generation of members in the Pearson cabinet who shared that view. Indeed, his misgivings extended to much of the “helpful fixer” role attendant on Canada’s status as a middle power which had come to characterize the foreign policy of his predecessor, and which he came to office in April 1968 determined to change.iii

During the general election campaign in the spring of that year, Trudeau issued “Canada and the World,” his major foreign policy statement of the campaign, in which he announced that his government would undertake a sweeping and comprehensive review of Canada’s external policies. Although he was at pains not to undermine the international achievements of Pearson, the new prime minister made it plain that the changed circumstances of the world in the late sixties demanded a “fresh look at the fundamentals of Canadian foreign policy” to determine how the government might “serve more effectively Canada’s current interests, objectives and priorities.” In this and other statements Trudeau indicated those issues which the review was meant to address. First among these was the matter of Canada’s future in the North Atlantic alliance. Trudeau promised that his government would “take a hard look...at [Canada’s] military role in NATO” to see if its present force commitments were justified. But central though that question was to the forthcoming review, many others would have to be addressed to meet new challenges. Among these, Trudeau highlighted the exclusion of the People’s Republic of China
from the international community, the emergence of the Third World and the need for a better
distribution of wealth between the have and the have-not nations, and the proliferation of nuclear
arms. The review therefore would include a re-casting of policy toward China with a view to
extending recognition as soon as possible, and a new emphasis on the Pacific rim. Canada
would also have to strengthen its existing partnership with the countries of western Europe by
broadening its political, economic and cultural ties with the continent, to balance relations with
the western hemisphere, and seek out new and stronger ties with the countries of Latin America.
There was to be a re-examination of Canada’s role in multilateral organizations, particularly the
United Nations. To strengthen bilingualism at home and contribute to national unity, Trudeau’s
overriding priority, francophone countries would be the object of greater attention, through the
opening of new missions there, and the targeting of aid to French-speaking countries. Finally,
the External Aid Office would be replaced by the Canadian International Development Agency
(CIDA), reflecting a shift of emphasis from aid to cooperative development in the emerging
nations. Thus, “Canada and the World” not only launched the foreign policy review, but
anticipated many of the goals it was to achieve. iv

It fell to the Department of External Affairs to carry out the ambitious program outlined
in the prime minister’s campaign statements, a task it took up even before the Liberals’ decisive
victory in the general election of June 25, 1968. It was not the first time that year that the
department had engaged in such activity. Lester Pearson had come to recognize, as his successor
did, the need to re-examine Canada’s international role, and in the months before his retirement
he asked Norman Robertson, a former under-secretary, to oversee a departmental review of
current policy. Robertson and his team worked quietly and without fanfare, and submitted their
conclusions in early April, just as Trudeau prepared to succeed Pearson as Liberal leader and prime minister. The Robertson report recognized that Canadian foreign policy had grown “increasingly reactive rather than creative” in the past decade; rather than identifying areas for specific change, the authors called for “a re-definition and perhaps some re-orientation” of policy to meet present and future challenges. These modest proposals were well received by the under-secretary, Marcel Cadieux, and his senior officials, who held out hope that they might serve as a point of departure in the exercise they were about to undertake at Trudeau’s behest. But the new prime minister considered the Robertson review, as he later put it, “in large measure a justification for the maintenance of the status quo” and ordered the department to begin anew.

Although Trudeau would have preferred to establish the broader foreign policy context before taking any decision on the NATO question, it soon became clear that the latter would take priority, since each of the allies was required to state its force contributions for the coming year at the annual meeting scheduled for April 1969. Accordingly the policy review divided into two distinct phases: the first, under the direction of the Department of National Defence (DND), was to address the issue of Canada’s future in the alliance, while the second, led by External Affairs, was to examine policy in the other areas identified as priorities, namely Europe, the Pacific, Latin America, International Development and the United Nations. But External Affairs in fact played a pivotal role in both exercises, as it was responsible for providing the political rationale for the recommendations of the defence review, a task which absorbed the energies of its senior officials for the better part of a year. The process revealed some troubling fissures between its senior officials, who believed that Canada’s bests interests were served by its continuing
participation in the alliance, and several members of the cabinet, including Trudeau, who advocated either partial or complete withdrawal. It also badly tarnished the image of External Affairs in the eyes of Trudeau and his senior advisors in the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) and Privy Council Office (PCO), who found the department unable or unwilling to undertake the kind of fundamental re-assessment of policy they demanded.\textsuperscript{viii}

The cabinet met at the end of March 1969 to decide the NATO question. The result was compromise. Canada would remain in NATO, but on altered terms. On April 3, Trudeau announced that there would be “a planned and phased reduction of the size of the Canadian forces in Europe.” He went on to describe the shift in the country’s defence priorities. Participation in NATO, once second only to peacekeeping in importance, would henceforth rank third, behind the protection of sovereignty and the defence of North America. Peacekeeping was relegated to fourth place. The prime minister also announced the phasing out of Canada’s nuclear role.\textsuperscript{ix} What was not spelled out in Trudeau’s statement was the extent of Canada’s troop withdrawal from Europe. That question was only settled after protracted and acrimonious debate among officials in the course of the next several weeks. The government finally decided on a force strength of 5,000, a reduction of 50 percent.\textsuperscript{x}

With the announcement of the NATO decision in April 1969, the first and most contentious phase of the foreign policy review process was finally over. The Department of External Affairs could now focus on the other priority areas. By the fall of 1969, the five sector papers were ready for final approval. But by then the prime minister had made it clear to the department that he wanted a statement of foreign policy principles, a “conceptual framework” into which the area studies might fit. Keenly aware that it had lost credibility with the prime
minister in dealing with the NATO question, the department set out to give Trudeau what he wanted.

The officer responsible for the general paper, Geoffrey Murray, had already shown a flare for capturing the prime minister’s ideas in penning an early draft of the “Canada and the World” speech. He proved himself similarly adept in his approach to the task at hand. After familiarising himself with all of Trudeau’s public statements on foreign policy, and mastering the current literature on systems analysis then much in vogue in government circles, Murray drew up a list of foreign policy goals and the policies linked to them. Although there was no immediate agreement on the specifics, this “conceptual approach” to foreign policy proved popular with Trudeau and his ministers when Murray presented his draft paper to the cabinet in November 1969.\textsuperscript{x}\textsuperscript{i}

Many revisions later, in June 1970, the general paper and five sector studies were tabled in the House of Commons as Canada’s first white paper on foreign policy. To encourage public discussion of the document, the six booklets were simultaneously published under the title \textit{Foreign Policy for Canadians} and widely distributed.\textsuperscript{x}\textsuperscript{ii}

The five sector booklets contained few surprises. The studies of the Pacific and Latin America, for instance, expounded themes introduced by Trudeau in his “Canada and the World” speech: Canada would more rigorously pursue its role as a “Pacific power,” and would seek to develop and strengthen its ties with Latin American countries both collectively and individually. The white paper did, however, rule out membership in the Organization of American States for the immediate future. The booklet on the United Nations reflected Trudeau’s long-held views that too much of the Canadian delegation’s time at the UN was spent in pointless debate on
issues in which Canada had no influence. Henceforth, Canadian resources would be directed to 11 priority areas, including social and economic development, disarmament, peacekeeping and the environment. The white paper’s treatment of international development committed the government to the building of a “more just world society” through an increase in the amount of foreign aid provided, greater emphasis on multilateral institutions in its distribution and encouragement of private sector initiatives. Finally, the paper on Europe reiterated the importance of economic, political and cultural links to the continent as a counterweight to the influence on Canada of the United States. Significantly, there was no booklet on relations with the latter. Early in the review process it had been decided that the subject was so large and all-encompassing that it would be better to deal with it separately at a later date. This the department did, though only after an unforeseen shift in those relations forced its hand.

But the booklet outlining Canadian foreign policy priorities, the final version of the general paper, did contain much that was new and unexpected. Among the six themes identified as policy priorities, “fostering economic growth” ranked higher than “safeguarding sovereignty and independence” or “working for peace and security.” Working from the premise that “external activities should be directly related to national policies,” the white paper stated that Canada should no longer be type-cast as the “helpful fixer” of international crises. There was still a role to be played in peacekeeping, and a new emphasis on promoting international development, but policy choices in future would have to meet the test of furthering Canada’s interests and values.

The review process launched two years previously was finally at an end, and the document it produced bore the stamp of a new prime minister determined to chart his own course
in foreign affairs. What remained to be seen was how it would be received by the public, and how it might affect the conduct of foreign policy.

The impact of the review

*Foreign Policy for Canadians* attracted considerable public attention when it first came out, but also a good deal of criticism, focussing on the lack of attention to the United States, the suggestion that the internationalist policies associated with Lester Pearson were no longer sufficient to meet Canada’s needs, and the listing of priority themes, which implied that economic growth was “national policy objective number one” and that Canadians cared little about less affluent parts of the world. But the most telling comment perhaps was Denis Stairs’s contention that the review was irrelevant, since Canada had no control over the international agenda. “The real transformations,” he concluded, “are . . . in the international community, not in the domestic actor, and one is left at the end with the uneasy reflection that - minor differences in timing aside - the policy outputs would have been the same had Mr. Pearson remained in office, and had the review never been held.”

There was certainly no lack of surprises that prevented the government from getting on with its agenda. The problem was evident well before the review appeared, starting with events such as the Czech and Biafran crises in the summer of 1968 and the challenge to Canadian sovereignty when the US oil tanker *Manhattan* sailed through the northwest passage a little over a year later. There were other obstacles after the document was published, notable examples being the FLQ crisis in October 1970, from the start an important international issue because the first kidnap victim was a British diplomat, and the US import restrictions and other measures administered in the Nixon “economic shock” of August 1971.
The government, meanwhile, did not wait for the completion of the review to begin taking initiatives, the rationale being provided by the foreign policy platform outlined during the recent party leadership and election campaigns. These included the adoption of a more vigorous approach to foreign aid, a prolonged campaign against attempts by Quebec and France to enhance the province’s autonomy in matters involving the francophone world; the despatch of a ministerial mission to Latin America (with Mitchell Sharp and the minister of trade and commerce, Jean-Luc Pepin, sharing the leadership); the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Vatican; and entry into negotiations leading to the same with the People’s Republic of China. Trudeau would also develop new interests leading to activities not anticipated at election time or indeed in the foreign policy review when it appeared. Most important of these was his attraction to the Commonwealth, which began as a result of impressions he formed at the first heads of government meeting he attended, in London in January 1969. This would become a favourite forum when he chose to intervene in international disputes, particularly those in southern Africa.

From this course of events, it would be easy to conclude that Foreign Policy for Canadians had little impact: much of what the government wanted to do occurred before it appeared, and much of what the government had to do it was either too late to affect or failed to anticipate. Sharp, however, thought it was well done, describing it in his memoirs as “thorough . . . and . . . relatively clear and precise.” Its limitation, he thought from the perspective of his retirement, was that it soon became out of date because of the rapid pace of change in the international environment. But at least for a while it provided a start for evaluating the government’s performance, for example in the Canadian Annual Review for 1970-1972 and in a
volume covering the years 1968-1971 prepared for the Canadian Institute of International Affairs’ “Canada in World Affairs” series.\textsuperscript{xviii} It was also relevant to some important policy initiatives taken between 1970 and 1972. The emphasis on the Pacific Rim was evident in the prime minister’s extension of his visit to the world’s fair, Expo 70, in Osaka, Japan to include Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Malaysia, and the commitment to promoting \textit{détente} received an ample airing when he went on an extended tour of the Soviet Union in the spring of 1971 and received that country’s premier, Alexei Kosygin, in Canada six months later. All this talk of \textit{détente}, and Trudeau’s successful performance at a Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Singapore in January 1971, at which he had helped resolve difficulties over British arms sales to South Africa, led to suggestions that he might be backsliding into the all-purpose “helpful fixer” role rejected by the foreign policy review, but he denied that that was so. He had not embraced “some vague international role to be played by Canada,” he said in reporting on the conference to the House of Commons. “Canada must act according to how it perceives its aims and interests. It is in our interest that there not be a general racial war in Africa.”\textsuperscript{xix}

The government seems not to have been unduly troubled by the criticisms it had received or the limitations it was experiencing, for it remained committed to the white paper process. In July 1970, the cabinet decided on a review of defence policy, which would be carried out under the aegis of Donald MacDonald after he succeeded Léo Cadieux in September.\textsuperscript{xx} More interesting, because it filled the gap left by the foreign policy review and might say something new, was a paper to be prepared on relations with the United States, initiated in response to the Nixon “shock.”

\textbf{The Third Option}
The decision of the Nixon administration on August 15, 1971, to levy a 10 percent surcharge on import duties jolted Ottawa, particularly as the realization set in that Canada would not be exempted from the measure as it had been on similar occasions in the past. Even as the government’s representatives pleaded its case in Washington, the prime minister launched a parallel exercise to evaluate the nature of Canada’s existing relationship with the United States in light of the seeming end of the “special relationship,” and to explore possible new directions. Appropriately, the Department of External Affairs assumed responsibility, thus covering the one area neglected in the original foreign policy review.

The department submitted a draft document to cabinet early in the autumn entitled “Canada-United States Relations: Options for the Future,” which was as the heart of the strategy eventually adopted. The options paper, as it came to be known, argued that Canada had three choices vis-à-vis its political and economic relationship with the US: to maintain its existing ties, to seek closer integration, or to develop over the long term a strategy “to strengthen the Canadian economy and in the process to reduce the present Canadian vulnerability.” The last, the so-called third option, was that favoured by DEA and, more to the point, by the prime minister. Late in the fall of 1971, the cabinet approved the choice. Implicit in its adoption was the searching out of new markets, particularly those of western Europe and Asia, to make Canada less dependent on its trade relations with the United States, as well as a substantial overhaul of domestic policies to make Canada more autonomous in its economic, social and cultural programs.

The policy was not unveiled to the public until the following year, during the election campaign of 1972, when DEA released an edited version of the original options paper, over the signature of the minister. Thus, from its first public airing, it lacked the official imprimatur
bestowed on *Foreign Policy for Canadians*. In fact, some were left wondering at first if it was to be taken as official government policy.\textsuperscript{xxiv}

But there were other, more fundamental problems affecting its implementation. The crisis which had given rise to the search for a new accommodation with the United States had long since passed by the time the third option was launched. The lifting of the surcharge, together with the meetings of Trudeau and Nixon in December 1971 and April 1972, had done much to restore confidence in the strength of Canada-US relations. Moreover, it was clear early on in the process that the departments of finance and industry, trade and commerce (IT&C) did not share DEA’s enthusiasm for the new policy.\textsuperscript{xxv} In the face of opposition from the responsible agencies, the domestic agenda envisaged in the third option was doomed.

That is not to say, however, that the third option remained a dead letter. The Department of External Affairs and its minister soon demonstrated that they were determined advocates of diversification as foreshadowed in *Foreign Policy for Canadians* and defined more clearly in the options paper. Indeed, by April 1971, Sharp had already called for formal bilateral consultations with the European Community (EC) during a visit to Europe and had been rewarded with a promise to hold regular official-level meetings.\textsuperscript{xxvi} Under the guidance of Michel Dupuy, an assistant under-secretary of state for external affairs, a new Interdepartmental Committee on Commercial Policy (ICCP) was set up in March 1972 to define Canada’s approach to Europe.\textsuperscript{xxvii} Dupuy successfully managed to keep the several interested government departments moving as one and soon convinced cabinet to despatch a senior delegation to Europe to sell a possible Canada-Europe trade agreement.\textsuperscript{xxviii}

While the Canadian mission, led by J.F. Grandy, the experienced and influential deputy
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Despite renewed opposition from IT&C and Finance, which worried that a broad agreement on economic cooperation favoured the EC, the deputy under-secretary of state for external affairs, John Halstead, urged the government to press ahead. The prime minister needed little convincing. Following his strong showing in the July 1974 federal election, Trudeau travelled to Paris and Brussels in October on a moderately successful visit, which eventually prompted the EC to outline for Canadian officials the kind of broad framework agreement, one providing for private sector initiatives within the context of an evolving governmental partnership, that it wanted.

While officials in Ottawa and Brussels sorted through the elements of a possible agreement, Trudeau headed off in the spring of 1976 on a second European tour to drum up political support for a Canadian contractual link with Europe. The impact of the prime minister’s second visit was quickly felt at the EC and by April, the two parties had a preliminary agreement ready for submission to the EC’s ministers. Leaving little to chance, Trudeau attended the May 1975 NATO Summit to underline the importance he attached to the contractual agreement with Europe, adding a short swing through Denmark and Luxembourg to complete his tour of all nine EC member countries. Trudeau’s persistence paid off, and even France, despite its reservations, dared not veto the treaty given the obvious priority attached to it by the Canadian prime minister.  

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minister of IT&C, encountered some scepticism, especially among the French, it found widespread interest in continuing discussions. As a result, over the next few years, Canadian officials and ministers kept the idea of a trade agreement in play during a regular series of encounters with European politicians and officials.
Canada and the European Communities.

Japan too continued to figure prominently on the foreign policy agenda of the early and mid-1970s, though the Department of External Affairs was initially more sceptical in its approach to Tokyo than to Brussels. More important, it lacked the bureaucratic muscle to force other government departments to develop a more dynamic approach towards this emerging economic power. Consequently, Canada’s efforts to “broaden and deepen” its relations with Japan remained half-hearted until the spring of 1974, when Trudeau sent his foreign policy advisor, Ivan Head, to Japan to discuss potential areas of bilateral cooperation. The Japanese prime minister, Kakuei Tanaka, was impressed by Head’s visit, and offered to meet Trudeau briefly in Paris, where the two men agreed to pursue a closer bilateral relationship, starting with a visit to Ottawa by the Japanese premier in September 1974. xxxv

Although External Affairs cautioned the prime minister that Japan as a major power was unlikely to place much importance in its relations with Canada, Trudeau, advised by Head, was undeterred. Following Tanaka’s visit, which the prime minister judged a modest success, Trudeau looked to External Affairs to come up with ideas for expanding relations. The obvious importance he continued to attach to Japan gave External Affairs the stick it needed to beat those departments, mainly IT&C and Finance, whose lack of interest in Japan had effectively paralysed the bureaucracy by March 1976. Virtually alone, External Affairs drew up its own plan for enhancing the relationship in conjunction with Trudeau’s upcoming visit to Japan. The Department suggested that Canada focus its efforts on achieving a “symbolic” breakthrough in the hi-tech sector by selling a CANDU reactor and in concluding an economic cooperation agreement modelled on the European accord. xxxvi Trudeau was delighted with this proposal, and if the
Framework for Economic Cooperation he signed with the Japanese prime minister in September 1976 was a slightly watered-down version of the European agreement, it nonetheless achieved the government’s objective of improving the context in which Canada pursued its relations with Japan.

Reviewing new priorities

By the summer of 1974, it seemed obvious to the prime minister that changes to the international context since the publication of Foreign Policy for Canadians required a sizeable shift in Canadian priorities. The strident demand of the developing countries at the 6th UN Special Session in the spring of 1974 for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and their growing political coherence prompted the prime minister to give renewed importance to Canada’s relations with the developing world. In appointing Allan MacEachen secretary of state for external affairs in August of 1974, he wrote to his new minister that he was “strongly of the opinion that in the years immediately ahead, we must choose consciously to express our concern about the widespread inequalities found in the world. ... a strong moral fibre must appear increasingly to be a fundamental ingredient of our foreign policy.”

Trudeau’s commitment to addressing North-South inequities was reinforced by the government-wide priority setting exercise that the PMO and PCO launched later that fall. Ministers decided that the government would pursue five “themes,” incorporating 16 “priority policy areas.” One theme, “accepting new international responsibilities particularly with regard to assisting developing countries,” embraced two new priorities – “sharing of resources” and “alleviating international crises” – and echoed Trudeau’s mandate letter to MacEachen.

Initially, at least, Geoffrey Pearson, whose Policy Analysis Group was responsible for preparing the department’s response to the cabinet’s decision, thought that Trudeau’s renewed
interest in the developing world would require a whole new foreign policy white paper. But in the end, the department reasonably assumed that the government’s existing priorities, especially the third option and closer relations with Europe, Japan, and Latin America, remained valid and would have a claim, along with its new interest in relations with the developing world, on the government’s time and attention. How this would be worked out in practice, however, was not clear and the department warned the government that its commitment to sharing resources and relieving crises contradicted the emphasis on the national interest found in *Foreign Policy for Canadians*. Working out the basic contradiction between the interest-based foreign policy outlined in *Foreign Policy for Canadians* and the government’s new desire to respond positively to the growing economic and political demands of the Third World involved the department in an extensive series of internal policy reviews that started as early as the fall of 1974 and continued inconclusively into the later half of the decade. Reacting to the South’s pressure for a NIEO, MacEachen and his ministerial colleagues established an Interdepartmental Committee on Economic Relations with the Developing World (ICERDC) at the deputy minister level to conduct a continuing review of all policies that affected Canada’s relations with the developing world. At the same time, alarmed by the bully tactics of the Third World majority at the UN General Assembly and unhappy with MacEachen’s handling of the Palestinian question in New York, the cabinet instructed the department to review Canadian policy in the Middle East and at the United Nations.

In some respects, the review of Canada’s attitude toward the United Nations, where North-South and Middle East issues were most often played out, was at the core of the government’s
effort to re-define its foreign policy in the mid-1970s. The UN review was overseen in the Department of External Affairs by J.E.G. Hardy, the director-general of the bureau of UN Affairs, who focussed on a handful of areas that reflected the department’s preoccupations. In addition to opening discussions on general UN matters, the review concentrated on North-South economic relations and used as its springboard the first meeting of the ICER-DC. It also examined Arab-Israeli relations, taking into account the efforts of the African and Middle East Bureau to meet cabinet’s demand for a new policy for that region. The results of these two discussions were fed into a final review session chaired by MacEachen, which concentrated on Canada’s overall attitude toward the UN and possible membership on the Security Council.

From the three days of talks, the department eventually drew up a lengthy memorandum on Canada’s attitude towards the UN. The cabinet paper did not suggest any sharp departures in Canada’s approach to the UN, but defended and justified current policy. “In the present state of the evolution of the world,” insisted its first conclusion, “there is no real alternative to a universal diplomatic forum such as the United Nations.” Consequently, Canada must maintain a positive attitude towards the UN and its work by continuing to support universality of membership, contributing to attempts to improve the UN’s institutional structure, and increasing consultations on UN matters bilaterally and in other international fora. Canada should also "pursue forthcoming and constructive policies towards the solution of the basic problems facing the world and the United Nations.” This would include pursuing its peacekeeping activities in the Middle East and Cyprus, participating fully in UN disarmament activities, and adopting a “progressive” attitude to continuing problems of decolonization, racialism, and the disregard for human rights in South Africa. This would also include an effort to develop a comprehensive foreign policy toward the
Third World, designed to lessen confrontation and improve cooperation between developing and industrialized countries.\textsuperscript{xlv}

MacEachen was delighted with the department’s memorandum, which signalled the government’s intention to pursue “progressive” policies across a broad range of issues and had it endorsed by the full cabinet in July 1975.\textsuperscript{xliv} The minister was sufficiently impressed by the paper’s forward defence of Canadian policy to ask the under-secretary, Basil Robinson, to arrange for it to be published as a white paper by tabling it in the House of Commons or printing it in \textit{International Perspectives}, which he thought would give it the same status.\textsuperscript{xlv} Work on the policy statement, however, was delayed until March 1976, when Hardy was finally able to assemble the department’s UN experts for a two-day gathering to transform the cabinet memorandum into a white paper.\textsuperscript{xlvii}

While much of this discussion was devoted to a survey of issues likely to confront Canada during its forthcoming term on the Security Council, the group also addressed the changing nature of the UN and its preoccupation with the North-South confrontation, a development that had made the international organization a much more political body. As a more political approach involved greater domestic and international risk, it also demanded greater consultation with the interested public in Canada and abroad. As part of this effort, the department agreed to produce a special issue of \textit{International Perspectives} underlining the UN’s importance to Canada, to improve its media briefings in Ottawa and New York, and to participate more actively in the work of groups like the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and the United Nations Association of Canada.\textsuperscript{xlviii} The updated white paper, explained Hardy, reaffirming Canadian support for the UN, would launch this public affairs initiative in the spring of 1976. Indeed, MacEachen hoped the
white paper would retain the “ringing phrases” found in the earlier cabinet paper.

By the middle of April, in keeping with the minister’s wishes, Hardy had revised the 1975 cabinet paper on Canada’s approach to the United Nations, which he and MacEachen now referred to as a “green paper.” Within weeks, however, the project had collapsed. Robinson was worried that the draft was too preoccupied with the activities of the Third World at the United Nations and wanted changes. The under-secretary was also concerned with the paper’s style and asked Geoffrey Pearson, who was to replace Hardy in June, to take it over. Pearson’s ambitious plans for a paper that would not simply update the 1975 memorandum to cabinet but entirely revamp *The United Nations - Foreign Policy for Canadians* pamphlet meant that the publication schedule would have to be pushed back at least several months, removing the urgent public affairs considerations that motivated the paper’s initial preparation. The paper’s death-knell was effectively sounded in late April when the permanent mission in New York weighed in with its reservations. The mission was worried by the paper’s focus on the North-South confrontation, insisting that it ignored recent successes in bridging that divide, and that it pre-judged Canada’s position on a host of Security Council issues that merited further study. By the summer of 1976, MacEachen’s UN white paper, with its hints of a progressive approach to come, was effectively dead.

And yet, from the perspective of the Department of External Affairs, by early 1977 there remained a pressing need for a broad restatement of the government’s major foreign policy priorities. Although the government had developed a framework for closer economic cooperation with Europe and Japan, it was soon clear that the strategy was not working. The cultural and linguistic challenges involved in developing overseas markets intimidated many Canadian firms,
who preferred to do business with their more familiar neighbours to the south. Just as important, Trudeau turned away from foreign policy following the November 1976 victory of the separatist Parti Quebecois. Without the prime ministerial pressure that had made both the European and Japanese initiatives possible, there was little chance that the government’s domestic departments, which had always doubted the value of diversification, would develop the kind of domestic industrial strategy required to make it work.

Foreign Policy for the 80s

The review exercise that was launched in the fall of 1977 differed from earlier efforts in that it was the officials, not the politicians, who provided the impetus. Neither Donald Jamieson, who succeeded MacEachen as minister in September 1976, nor anyone else at the cabinet level was involved. Soon after Allan Gotlieb became under-secretary in May 1977, discussion began in earnest about the kind of foreign policy Canada should pursue in the next decade, a question to which neither Foreign Policy for Canadians nor the third option provided sufficient answers. Gotlieb assigned to the Policy Planning Secretariat (formerly the Policy Analysis Group) the task of preparing an outline for a full-scale review along the lines of the 1970 white paper. This was the genesis of “Foreign Policy for Canada in the 80s.”

The perceived inadequacy of the prevailing “scriptures” to guide future policy was not the department’s only incentive to review. Gotlieb had taken over as under-secretary determined to restore the department to the position of influence it had once enjoyed and had seemingly lost when Trudeau became prime minister. It was with that intention that he embraced the concept of External Affairs as one of Ottawa’s central agencies, in charge of coordinating all of the government’s foreign operations. Although that initiative would not be formally announced
until early 1979, the decision to fashion a foreign policy framework, into which innovations in the areas of defence and foreign aid might fit, can be seen as part of DEA’s effort to reassert authority in external policies. Therefore when it came to light that National Defence in the fall of 1977 had begun to draft a white paper of its own to replace that published in 1971, Gotlieb took steps to ensure that it would proceed in tandem with the External Affairs exercise, and only within the broader foreign policy context to be determined by the latter.\textsuperscript{lv}

In May 1978, Gotlieb sent the draft outline of FP-80, as the review came to be known, to eight deputy ministers for comments. Within two months five had responded, all of them favourably. Michael Pitfield, the clerk of the privy council and senior bureaucrat, stated that “the time is indeed ripe for a comprehensive review of our foreign policy and External Affairs should have the lead responsibility for it.” He went on to suggest that a portion of the paper should concentrate expressly on relations with the United States. Reflecting the heightened concern over national unity, he also urged that the department develop new ways to reflect abroad the interests of both French and English Canada, and provide for federal-provincial consultation in the area of foreign policy.\textsuperscript{lv} Armed with these and other comments from the deputy ministers, the Policy Planning Secretariat prepared a revised draft.

The department secured the support of Jamieson and the Committee of Deputy Ministers on Foreign Policy for the form and underlying principles of the review, which was to be a policy document of some twenty pages, supported by issue papers on selected topics. In September, Gotlieb convened a colloquium at Touraine, Quebec of senior mandarins from various departments, together with a few foreign policy specialists from the academic world, to consider Canada’s international challenges in the eighties. Following the meeting, the Policy Planning
Secretariat busied itself in drafting outlines for the issue papers, and identifying potential authors. Of those commissioned for the task, all were drawn from the ranks of the public service except for one, Peter Dobell, the head of the Parliamentary Centre for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, who was asked to prepare a paper on how to generate an increased public awareness of and involvement in the foreign policy process. Other topics addressed in the issue papers included federal-provincial coordination, challenges on the frontiers of Canadian sovereignty, Canada’s international security interests, relations with the United States, policy toward the industrialized nations and the developing world, and the expression of basic Canadian values in Canadian foreign relations. Gotlieb wrote to each of the authors early in 1979 to set out the parameters of the studies. By the time of the general election in May 1979, six had been completed.\textsuperscript{lvi}

The Conservative victory brought FP-80 to a halt. However worthy the completed work, it was clear that it would have little bearing on any future initiatives. But as satisfying an intellectual exercise as it may have been, Gotlieb’s review had laboured from the outset under a handicap: at no point was it determined what the end result of the process would be. There were vague plans to include a public dimension, once the election was over, but the way in which the review would be publicized was for the politicians to decide. In the absence of all but the most cursory involvement on Jamieson’s part, the department could only speculate on its ultimate use. As one of the key participants later recalled, it was almost a relief when the change of government brought to power a minister with very definite ideas of what a foreign policy review should entail.\textsuperscript{lvii}

\textbf{Canada in a Changing World}

The dissolution of Parliament on March 22, 1979, and the election of a minority
Progressive Conservative (PC) government under Joe Clark on May 22, put an end to the policy review begun under Jamieson, but not to interest in the process itself. Indeed, the prospect was for even greater change, for during the campaign Clark had promised that the PCs would institute a “total review” of foreign policy if they came to office. Nine years after the appearance of *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, the voters were told to expect something of similar magnitude.

There would be important differences, however, for (except for Clark’s ill-fated proposal to move the Canadian embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem) foreign policy had not figured large in the election campaign, and the PCs had offered nothing similar to “Canada and the World,” and the other statements that Trudeau had made in 1968, by way of guidance on their intentions. On this matter as on many others, moreover, Clark was more inclined than his predecessor to delegate full authority to ministers. Unlike the exercise completed in 1970, the Clark government’s review would be driven by the secretary of state for external affairs, Flora MacDonald, not the prime minister.

A politician with proved popular appeal, MacDonald intended to use that to ensure the entrenchment of ideas embodied in the review. To this end, she declared, she wanted widespread public contributions, which she proposed to stimulate - in keeping with a commitment by her party to make greater use of parliamentary institutions - by engaging the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence (SCEAND). Initially, however, she was not to have full control of the process; instead, the cabinet committee on external policy and defence decided in July, the paper should be prepared for submission jointly with the minister of national defence, Allan McKinnon. There were also officials to contend with. A meeting of interested deputy ministers on July 25 provided one last opportunity for remarks about the
perceived deficiencies of *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, but also for comment on the obscurity of the new government’s intentions. “We must have a vision,” said the deputy minister of national defence, C. R. (Buzz) Nixon, “and this is something the Government does not yet have,” so the policy review “might help to provide them with one.”

MacDonald, although travelling in Africa with the prime minister, where he was attending a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHGM) in Zambia, moved quickly to assert full control. “SSEA expects memo to be overview or assessment of world situation with deptl projections for future and analysis of implications for Cda of world events,” External Affairs was informed on August 9. The model she had in mind was an “analysis of the anatomy of conflict” that had been given by Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore at the CHGM. “Study as envisaged by SSEA,” the message continued, “should include forces at work in world, political motivations, changing power relationships and changing economic conditions.” The study would not be a joint submission with McKinnon but rather one from MacDonald alone, although based on consultations with National Defence and other interested agencies. MacDonald would “personally speak with Min McKinnon in order to clarify situation.”

Two papers were prepared, one on foreign policy, entrusted to the Policy Planning Secretariat in External Affairs, and another, dealing with aid, by the department’s co-ordinator of development policy, L. A. H. (Larry) Smith, and Glen Shortliffe, vice president (policy) of the CIDA. Not everyone in other branches of government was happy with the consultation process, with the Department of National Defence and its minister, McKinnon, registering the most vigorous complaint. The defence authorities’ dissatisfaction, however, seems somewhat beside the point, for with MacDonald’s and Clark’s agreement there was to be a separate paper on defence
issues. MacDonald’s paper would deal with those matters not in isolation but as part of a larger whole, intended to form the basis for public discussion of broad themes in Canadian foreign policy.

While the documentation underwent final redrafting, the process whereby it would be considered by parliamentarians received some refinement. In the cabinet committee on October 22, MacDonald broached the idea of joint consideration by MPs and senators, on the simple ground that “several senators - including some of those recently appointed - had foreign policy expertise.” David Cox, however, has suggested that her motivation was more complicated, since the inclusion of senators was a way of offsetting the comparative inexperience of the PCs in SCEAND, faced as they were with seasoned Liberals including a former external affairs minister, Allan MacEachen. Both the Liberals and the New Democratic Party had reservations about the idea, but it was approved by ministers, when they agreed on November 27 that the papers on foreign policy and aid be tabled and that the committee should report by June 1980.

As printed, the papers provided a great deal of background. In the foreign policy review, this consumed slightly more than 30 out of 44 pages, with sections covering international politics, security, and economics and demography. The remainder identified issues likely to arise in the upcoming decade and posed questions about how they should be handled. All this produced three themes, instability, interdependence, and the need for coherence. In times of instability, the paper observed, there was a natural temptation for countries to turn inward, but interdependence was so far advanced that it was essential to explore ways of working with others, and in order to do so effectively Canada would have to overcome divisive internal forces and come up with a coherent set of policies. “Coherence in foreign policy and in the use of resources,” the paper concluded,
“will be essential for Canada’s success in the interdependent, changing world of the coming decade.” The paper on aid was based on the same themes and followed a similar format but with rather less background and more anticipation of the future: 25 of 47 pages of the main text made up the chapter raising questions about the future aid program. The papers would not be circulated until a date had been established for their tabling, but the intention was clear. While reflecting some of MacDonald’s preoccupations, such as concern for human rights and belief in openness in policy making, they differed from *Foreign Policy for Canadians* by posing questions rather than establishing a policy framework; that was supposed to emerge from consideration by the minister and her colleagues of the results of parliamentary and public deliberation. That, however, would never happen, for the papers were not tabled before the government fell in the House of Commons on December 14, and its subsequent defeat at the polls consigned them to oblivion. Thus Canada’s first experiment with populism in foreign policy planning came to a premature end. This also proved to be the last attempt at the white paper approach to the subject during the rest of what the election of 1980 ensured would be known as the Trudeau years.

As his department was about to embark on the foreign policy review in 1968, Marcel Cadieux had written caustically, “J’ai l’impression que quand le Gouvernement ne sait pas quoi dire, il se rabat sur un examen, une étude, une revue, une re-adaptation, une revision de notre politique étrangère.” That is one plausible explanation for the popularity of the white paper process under Trudeau and Clark, but the evidence suggests others. Incoming ministers and prime ministers found it a useful means of differentiating their foreign policies from those of their predecessors. It also proved an effective method, when choice was possible, of selecting among various policy options and striking out in new directions, as in the aftermath of the Nixon “shock,”
and later in re-orienting policy toward North-South issues. Similarly, officials at External Affairs found that the process helped them sift priorities and assert the department’s prerogative in foreign affairs. It is true that the documents produced had only limited bearing on the policies subsequently pursued. Between 1968 and 1980, politicians and bureaucrats nevertheless continued to yield to the white paper impulse because it suited their needs in setting the foreign policy agenda. It is a habit their successors have shown little inclination to break.
Endnotes

i. The views expressed in this chapter are the authors’ and not necessarily those of Foreign Affairs Canada (FAC).


x. “Minutes of the first meeting of Task Force - Phase 2 - Defence Review,” 11 April 1969; Report


xiv. *Foreign Policy for Canadians*, pp. 8, 9, 32.


xxvii. PDM (Dupuy) to Michael Butler, 3 March 1972, and P.D. Lee to Mr. Dupuy, 8 March 1972, DEA file 37-1-1-ICCP, RDEA vol. 13840.
xxviii. PDE to PDM (Dupuy), 3 May 1972, DEA file 35-20-EEC-1, RDEA vol.14742.

xxix. ECL (Bild), Draft Note on Mission of Officials to the EEC, 27 July 1972; ECL (Bull) to PDM (Dupuy), 23 August 1972 and attachment, DEA file 35-20-EEC-3-1, RDEA vol.14253.

xxx. Dupuy, Memorandum for the Minister, 14 June 1974, DEA file 35-20-EEC-3-Canada, RDEA vol.14254.

xxxi. John Robinson, To All Members of the ICCP and attachment, 23 September 1975, ibid.

xxxii. Ottawa to Canmiseur, Tel ECL-559, 24 March 1975, ibid.


xxxvi. MacEachen to Donald Jamieson, 6 April 1976 and MacEachen, Note for Mr. Jamieson, 14 April 1976, and replies, DEA file 20-Cda-9-Trudeau-Japan, RDEA vol. 9242.


xxxix. PAG (Pearson) to PDM, 12 February 1975, ibid.

xl. PDM (Robinson) to Directors-General, 9 April 1975 and attached Response to the Government’s Priorities, 7 April 1975, ibid.


xliv. Canadian Attitudes Towards the United Nations, Cabinet Document 393-75, 6 June 1975, PCO files, PCO.


xlvi. Note by Claude Lemelin, June 9, 1975 and H.B. Robinson, Memorandum for PDQ (Andrew), DEA file 24-3-1-Cda-1, RDEA vol. 10750.


l. UNP (Hardy) to PDM (Robinson), 15 April 1976, ibid.

li. UNP (Hardy) to PDM (Robinson), 27 April 1976, ibid.

lii. Premisny to Ottawa, tel 749, 28 April 1976, ibid. See also Permanent Mission in New York to USSEA, 14 May 1976, Letter Number 227 in the same file.


liv. For more on Gotlieb and the central agency concept, see Granatstein and Bothwell, Pirouette, pp. 228-230.


Graham Mitchell, director of federal-provincial coordination division, 30 Jan. 1979, DEA file 201-2-1-CANADA IN A CHANGING WORLD-3, RDEA vol. 8808. This volumes contains correspondence between the under-secretary and various issue paper authors.

lvi. Confidential interview.

lx. Under-secretary to SSEA, June 4, 1979, DEA file 20-1-2-CANADA IN A CHANGING WORLD, RDEA vol. 8807.


lx. “. . . Meeting . . . Called by Mr. Gotlieb to Discuss the Paper Requested by Cabinet Reviewing the Changing World Scene and Identifying Implications for Canada,” July 24, 1979, DEA file 20-1-2-1980, RDEA vol. 8811; also under-secretary to SSEA, July 26, 1979, DEA file 20-1-2-CANADA IN A CHANGING WORLD, RDEA vol. 8807.

lxii. Dar-es-Salaam to Ottawa, August 9, 1979, telegram PDEL0128, ibid.


