

*Great Questions for Canada,  
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## DEVELOPING A NATIONAL VOICE

BY JANICE GROSS STEIN

**I**N a global economy, sovereignty is no longer what it was and states no longer have the same power to protect, or to abuse, their citizens. Canada is no exception: It is but a shadow of its former self, with only a whisper for a voice. On this, Canadian champions and the critics of "globalization" agree.

But both are wrong. Each underestimates the capacity Canada retains to make a difference on global issues, even as the face of sovereignty changes.

We can only make a difference, however, if we build the domestic platform needed to participate effectively in a knowledge-based global system; what we do at home shapes our choices abroad.

In the post-Cold War world, powerful enemies are largely absent and global market forces are ever-present. In the global marketplace, Canada is not as significant a player as it was 50 years ago, and it is likely to become even less important as China, Brazil, Argentina and Indonesia mature. Canada also faces a special challenge: It lives next door to the mighty United States.

The most serious threat to Canada's survival as a nation with a distinct identity is no longer military attack, but the pull and push of the U.S. economy and its entertainment industries. More and more innovative, risk-acceptant young Canadians are being drawn to the United States to work. More and more Canadians are watching programs produced in the United States, listening to music by American recording artists and reading books and magazines written and edited in the United States.

It is no surprise that managing the Canada-U.S. relationship is front and centre on our government's agenda. If there is to be a Canada at all — much less a Canada that speaks with authority on global issues — strategic choices must be made.

Ottawa, the provincial governments and the private sector must invest strategically in educating a scientifically and technically literate population and in promoting innovation. We have just begun, for example, to renovate our decaying scientific infrastructure through the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, but far more must be done.

Telecommunications and computer companies, software developers and biotechnology firms must partner with universities, colleges and governments to provide world-class opportunities for young Canadians. How Canada will fare in a global knowledge-based economy will depend largely on the skills of our citizens. Here we must do far better than in the past if Canada is to be a player in global markets.

But scientific and technical literacy alone will not provide a sufficient platform for authoritative participation in world politics. Canadians know alarmingly little about their own history, and they are unfamiliar with the cultures and practices of their diverse fellow citizens. Our schools, post-secondary institutions and national public broadcaster must do significantly better in

teaching Canadians about the richness of their past and the diversity of their present.

Participation in global politics is no longer restricted to a cadre of trained experts, as it was half a century ago. In the future, larger and larger numbers of Canadians will move abroad, come home and move out again. If we do not know our history, we will quickly forget who we are as we spend more time away from home. Canadian identity will blur and Canada's voice will gradually become mute.

We will also be unable to exploit one of our most important assets in global politics — our richly diverse population. Networks of immigrants now connect Canada around the globe. These networks are invaluable channels as Canada seeks to make its voice heard on international issues. We should lead in developing practices of multiple citizenship to strengthen these connections. Access to Canadian citizenship should be made easier rather than more difficult, and dual, even triple, citizenship should become possible. Canadians who move in and out of the country strengthen our international connections and help “brand” Canada to those who might not know us otherwise.

But even if we invest strategically in engineering a better knowledge platform than we have in the past, living permanently in the shadow of the United States is still no easy task. It is even harder now, in this “unipolar” moment.

Canada must watch its economic back continuously. It does, and should, devote a great deal of attention to monitoring and lobbying Washington. Officials must also use the dense networks of political, social and economic connections between Canadians and Americans to promote Canadian interests in Washington. We must also continue to promote multilateral regimes and rules of fair play. Logic dictates that Canada will generally do better on a regulated multilateral playing field

than in one-to-one contests with Washington. When there is no choice but to deal with an issue bilaterally, there will inevitably be conflict and compromise; Canada will win some, but lose more.

Above all, Canada must have a responsible, independent voice in global politics. What Canada says and does globally helps us to define ourselves, and we have the power to speak strategically in several important ways. We can, for example, lead where the United States — particularly the executive branch — wishes it could go but sometimes cannot. We did so recently, for example, in Havana, and at the United Nations when sanctions against Iraq were once again on the agenda. In both cases, political constraints prevented the United States from exploring new openings. Despite rhetoric to the contrary in Congress, Canada's leadership was helpful, and was seen as helpful, in the American government.

Canada can also speak directly to some of the most difficult problems bedeviling the global system. Ethnic and religious intolerance, governments unaccountable to their citizens, legal systems ungoverned by the rule of law, social inequity and the fracturing of communities in an age of global markets — all often spill over into violence. Canadian culture in its deepest sense — our habits of tolerance, our respect for human rights and our civility — provides the kind of expertise needed when the big powers or international institutions seek to prevent conflict or to reconstruct war-torn societies.

Canada has taken the lead on a basket of humanitarian issues — the ban on land mines, the creation of an International Criminal Court — and has built a coalition of 12 states, including Norway and South Africa, committed to enhancing the protection of citizens, even, if necessary, against their own governments. Seizing the moment when sovereignty is in

retreat, Canada has made a difference globally. We can continue to do so if we use our human resources well and choose our issues carefully. But this capacity for significant engagement in global politics will be impaired if we are reduced to echoing the United States. Unease with the weight of American economic, cultural, military and political power is not just a Canadian concern; Europe and Japan are worried as well, and they are not stilling their voices. On the right issues, it is imperative that Canada have an independent voice, even if that voice occasionally irritates our neighbours.

The gravest threat, not only to our capacity to engage in the world but also to our survival, is our tendency to whisper or echo when we can indeed speak and make a difference.

## POSTSCRIPT BY ALLAN GOTLIEB

“THE most serious threat to Canada’s survival is no longer military attack, but the pull and push of the U.S. economy and its entertainment industries.” Thus writes Janice Gross Stein. If this is Canada’s greatest threat, we are indeed a blessed nation. But is it true?

Canada has enjoyed a century and a half of peace with the United States. And thanks to the prosperity that has come with good relations, over a third of our total wealth is derived from U.S. markets. Hollywood has been in business most of this century, but we are still around. Can you imagine the outrage in Toronto and Vancouver if, as some Americans propose, the U.S. were to ban offshore production of Hollywood films? If the entertainment industry is our most serious threat, why did Ottawa license giant ears on our southern boundary to capture popular programs from the U.S. television networks and carry them by cable into virtually every Canadian household? We know why. Canadians wanted them. The truth is there are probably no two nations in the world that, thanks to shared values and cultural affinities, have enjoyed a more enduring friendship. This probably explains why Canadians tend to think of foreign policy as relating to everything in the world — the U.N., the Third World, the Commonwealth — except the United

