

demise of Anglo-American neoconservatism. The damage it has done may never be undone and its legacy of deficits and debt (amazing if you think about it, since the rhetoric was fiscal responsibility) haunts successor governments and has rendered provincial NDP governments impotent in this country (perhaps that handcuffing of the future was the real intent). But its great failing, the cause of its ultimate undoing, is that it has been unable to deliver the economic growth that it so freely predicted (remember all those jobs that free trade was going to create?). The irony of neoconservative governments is that they were elected because of hard times and have managed to make them worse.

New governments, like Clinton's, are trying to repair the damage. If that fails, the best bet is that publics will opt not for another round of neoconservatism, but stronger state interventionism. My guess is that the Mulroneys of this world are truly toast.

The other area of activism for Mulroney (like other neoconservatives, he preached quiescent government while keeping busy in practice) was the constitution. Here he failed in a manner that is not merely a matter of my judgment.

Admittedly, it can be seen, up to a point, as a noble failure. He put together the improbable alliance of Alberta conservatives and Quebec nationalists and gave his party an unprecedented status in Quebec. He negotiated the Meech Lake Accord, which admitted that Quebec was a

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distinct society, but he lost his touch when it came to understanding the insistence on inclusion by the rest of us, the others, both in the process and in the final product. That deficiency cost him, and us, the possibility of a better and more inclusive Meech that just might have flown.

For that he might still be forgiven. What is unforgivable is that the second time, with the Charlottetown Accord, it is mostly

the same elitist process that is relied upon. That failure is the final nail in Mulroney's coffin, as it should be, but it is also perhaps a very costly failure for Canada. It is uncertain when we shall again have a politician with the credentials to deal with constitutional matters that Mulroney initially had and with a Quebec government amenable to a deal. Should the country break up, Mulroney risks being remembered in the history books not for what he tried to do, but for what he failed to achieve.

Perhaps this, too, must be judged a consequence of the neoconservative mindset. It is by its nature hopelessly elitist (at the end of the road, big business knows best). Those who buy too fully into it, even if they start with the considerable political talents of a Brian Mulroney, lose their populist touch, their feeling for democracy. Appropriately, they typically find their retirement rewards in corporate directorships and legal retainers, the cosseted sinecures of that corporate world they have long been serving.

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MULRONEY FOREIGN AND DEFENCE POLICY

by J.L. Granatstein

One moment remains indelibly in the mind from the first "summit" in Quebec City in 1985: Brian Mulroney and Ronald Reagan and their wives on the stage singing "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling." Although he was already in advanced senility, poor Reagan had enough dignity to resent that he was being used. Much younger and more vigorous than his guest, somehow poor added Mulroney thought that his

shared Irishness would help with Reagan and that his electorate would love him for his ability to schmooze in public with the president. No miscalculation was ever so egregious, for that tuneless quartet probably marked the onset of Canadians' abiding mistrust of their leader.

But we ought to have known what to expect. Mulroney had already declared "superb" relations with the United States his goal, he had pro-

nounced Canada "open for business," and he had already given ample indication that his government would follow the Americans almost everywhere their foreign policies took them. And he did. He supported the Americans' bombing of Libya, their invasion of Panama, their war against Iraq, and their intervention in Somalia. Sometimes he was right to do so, sometimes not, but his support was constant. The

only time his government failed to follow the U.S. lead in world events was when the Defence white paper of 1987 remained militantly anti-Soviet at a time when Reagan and Gorbachev had already begun to remove the energy from the Cold War. No Canadian prime minister ever offered greater fealty to the United States than Brian Mulroney.

More directly yet, Mulroney's free trade agreement and the NAFTA tied us — inextricably — to the American continental economy. The results of the FTA thus far have been mixed at best, the increase in trade matched by the increase in joblessness and closed factories. It will probably take another decade before we can truly judge whether, and how badly, the Yanks snookered us. But it is already clear that however much the Liberals might want to renegotiate and the NDP to scrap the FTA, neither party is remotely credible in their policies. The difficult economic restructuring through which Canadians have been forced since 1989 (and which is far from over) is nothing compared with the dislocation that a withdrawal from the FTA would entail. Mulroney has got his way — like it or lump it, Canada is open for American business forevermore. His failure was to secure a less than perfect deal from the Yanks and to fail completely to understand the genuine concern that Canadians felt about the psychological impact of the FTA on them and their country's ability to survive. On this issue, Mulroney was a true Québécois.

Of course, the FTA may have been inevitable, for economic policies since at least 1917 have forced Canada and the United States together. There was no success under Trudeau in making the "contractual links" with Europe and Japan into viable relationships, and the world's total failure at renegotiating the GATT agreements has only

made manifest the absolute necessity of the American market to us. Europe has little interest in our manufacturers, and decreasing need for our raw materials — especially now when Russian metals, minerals, and petroleum are available at fire sale prices.

Nonetheless, Mulroney's decision to withdraw troops from Europe, one made without consultation with our NATO allies, only reinforced Canada's unimportance to the Europeans. It was curious that this prime minister

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who had increased Canadian military commitments in Europe and who had tried to be a good ally (in contrast to Trudeau's early contempt for NATO) would act in such a cavalier fashion.

Mulroney and Co. tried to argue that the commitment of more than 2,000 troops to the Croatia-Bosnian morass proved Canada's continuing devotion to Europe. The Europeans were unimpressed and they were right to be. This was less commitment to Europe than to peacekeeping, the great Canadian passion. Ever since Mike Pearson's Nobel peace prize, our prime ministers and foreign ministers have chased after their own "good world citizen award," usually by plunging Canadian troops into every global crisis. Too often, and most notably in the Mulroney years, they have paid scant attention to the risks. Peacekeeping used to be undertaken only when the warring parties had agreed to a truce; now, the current UN variant is to send

peacekeepers into wars, civil wars, and chaos.

This is very dangerous. With further cuts to come, the government has already reduced the Canadian forces to the point that there are insufficient regulars to carry out our present peacekeeping commitments for very long. That means that reservists, less well trained and lacking the unit cohesion that regular units develop, have been thrown into Bosnia. If they escape attack, no problem; but if they come under fire and if they take heavy casualties, then the trouble will start. You can imagine the questions in press and Parliament: How much training did the reservists have? Was their equipment up to scratch? Should any Canadians have been there at all? (The answers are 10 weeks, no, and no). The impact of a debacle may very well entail the end of Canadian peacekeeping efforts, the only military role with public support. The net result might well be the effective disbandment of the Canadian Forces.

Not all of this was Mulroney's doing, but it all took place on his watch. Certainly he was eager to take credit for successes whenever there was any to be seized. Ultimately, his desire to be his own foreign minister coupled with his insatiable craving for the adulation and attention he received abroad as a senior statesman means that he must carry the burden for his government's policies. The record is not all bad, to be sure, but neither is it yet concluded. In the short term if there is a military disaster in Bosnia, Mulroney's name will be mud. If the FTA proves a long-term failure, his name will be damned by those few Americans who will still remember that there once was a separate nation in the northern reaches of the continent.

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