

WEBVTT

00:00:02.940 --> 00:00:09.660

<v SPEAKER_1>Hello again, and welcome to Global Exchange, part of The Canadian Global Affairs Institute's Podcast Network.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I'm your host Colin Robertson.

00:00:11.780 --> 00:00:19.040

<v SPEAKER_1>On this episode, recorded on January 30th, I speak with The Honourable Bob Rae about middle powers and multilateralism.

00:00:19.040 --> 00:00:21.240

<v SPEAKER_1>Bob, welcome back.

00:00:21.240 --> 00:00:22.500

<v SPEAKER_2>Thank you very much, Colin.

00:00:22.500 --> 00:00:24.720

<v SPEAKER_2>It's great to be with you.

00:00:24.720 --> 00:00:35.720

<v SPEAKER_1>A consummate public servant, Bob Rae was elected to the House of Commons in 1978 and would be elected 10 more times to either the National or Ontario Parliaments.

00:00:35.720 --> 00:00:45.480

<v SPEAKER_1>He served as Ontario's 21st Premier from 1990 to 1995 and his interim Federal Leader of the Liberal Party from 2011 to 2013.

00:00:46.520 --> 00:00:54.960

<v SPEAKER_1>He served as Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations from 2020 to 2025, chairing the UN Economic and Social Council.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Bob's father, Sol Rae, one of the greats of the Canadian Foreign Service, served as Canada's UN Ambassador during the 1970s.

00:01:02.800 --> 00:01:06.680

<v SPEAKER_1>Bob is a companion of the Order of Canada, our nation's highest honour.

00:01:06.680 --> 00:01:12.960

<v SPEAKER_1>I'm proud to say Bob served on the CGAI Advisory Council before his appointment to the UN.

00:01:12.960 --> 00:01:18.740

<v SPEAKER_1>For listeners, at Davos, Prime Minister Carney declared, we are at a rupture point.

00:01:18.740 --> 00:01:33.320

<v SPEAKER_1>The old norms, rules, and multilateral institutions of the Liberal International Order that formed the foundation of Canadian foreign policy for 80 years after World War II, no longer work in our multi-centric world.

00:01:33.320 --> 00:01:41.000

<v SPEAKER_1>For the hegemons, might makes right and big dictating terms to middle and small nations.

00:01:41.000 --> 00:01:43.360

<v SPEAKER_1>In a world of variable geometry, Mr.

00:01:43.360 --> 00:01:47.100

<v SPEAKER_1>Carney proposes a values-based realism.

00:01:47.100 --> 00:01:57.740

<v SPEAKER_1>It's an approach involving middle powers in a al-Aqart multilateralism, creating combinations or coalitions of the willing, issue by issue.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So where does Canada fit into this new world?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Is there still a role for middle powers?

00:02:03.940 --> 00:02:08.300

<v SPEAKER_1>And is there room for helpful fixing and bridge building?

00:02:08.300 --> 00:02:09.780

<v SPEAKER_1>So let's get started.

00:02:09.780 --> 00:02:13.460

<v SPEAKER_1>The first question I want to put pose to you Bob is middle powers.

00:02:13.460 --> 00:02:19.820

<v SPEAKER_1>Is this the right term given nations like the Nordics, Baltics and others that punch beyond their weight?

00:02:21.520 --> 00:02:28.140

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, you know Colin, it's a real conundrum because when you think about it, it's like the term middle class.

00:02:28.140 --> 00:02:33.480

<v SPEAKER_2>Everybody likes to use the word middle class rather than working class or lower class.

00:02:33.480 --> 00:02:36.480

<v SPEAKER_2>We all recognize there seems to be an upper class.

00:02:36.480 --> 00:02:40.260

<v SPEAKER_2>And then people say, well, yeah, but I'm not really in it.

00:02:40.600 --> 00:02:53.160

<v SPEAKER_2>And our friend George Orwell used to talk about how he was a member of the lower middle part of whatever.

00:02:53.580 --> 00:03:00.980

<v SPEAKER_2>He said there were all kinds of qualifying terms in which he was part of this terrible class system in the United Kingdom.

00:03:00.980 --> 00:03:01.900

<v SPEAKER_2>I don't know.

00:03:01.900 --> 00:03:10.320

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, I think we know what we're talking about, but I think we don't know exactly how this is supposed to work.

00:03:10.320 --> 00:03:29.440

<v SPEAKER_2>For me, the other issue that's interesting is that in describing others as hegemony, we may end up, as opposed to Pokemons, we may end up thinking that we're not giving people more power than they really have.

00:03:29.440 --> 00:03:41.340

<v SPEAKER_2>I always go back to the Ukraine example where nobody in the West believed that Ukraine could possibly withstand a direct assault from the Russians.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It was just going to be whether it would be 48 or 72 hours before it was all over.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think that what Ukraine has proven is you can be a smaller power and still be successful against a really big power because it's a mistake to think that any power is all-powerful.

00:04:01.840 --> 00:04:06.140

<v SPEAKER_2>It's a mistake to think that the United States is all-powerful or that China is all-powerful.

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<v SPEAKER_2>There are limits on the power of everyone and we can talk about what they all are.

00:04:12.800 --> 00:04:27.760

<v SPEAKER_2>But what I think the Prime Minister was getting at, which I think is right, is that, and he didn't put it, he put it in sort of as a theoretical construct, rather than as a historical narrative of the world we were living in.

00:04:27.760 --> 00:04:45.460

<v SPEAKER_2>But the trouble with the world we're living in is that a country like the United States, which yes, it's a powerful country, can wake up one morning and say, here's a bunch of tariffs I want to put on a whole bunch of countries, completely contrary to the order of the WTO.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And here it goes.

00:04:46.660 --> 00:04:59.020

<v SPEAKER_2>And I know that for a fact that the Prime Minister was very, very, very troubled by the way in which all the spokes went and spoke to the hub, and the spokes weren't speaking to each other.

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<v SPEAKER_2>They all went to Washington and paid tribute of various kinds and then said, okay, here's our deal, here's another deal.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think the reality is the deals that are made in those terms are never any good.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And you shouldn't necessarily play the game of the, of the one in the hub and say, no, we're not going to play that game.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We're going to talk among ourselves, and we're going to figure out how we can do things better together.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that's really what the Prime Minister is talking about.

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<v SPEAKER_1>No, and I think they're certainly after the, the rush to do a deal after quote, liberation day in April, there's been a lot of buyers or more since then, because the deals keep changing.

00:05:39.180 --> 00:05:48.500

<v SPEAKER_1>And when you refer to Russia and Ukraine, I always think, you know, we've got half their population, but almost half a big, it's big again, GDP.

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<v SPEAKER_1>The Russians have the bomb, but as John McCain used to say, they have the bomb, but it's still just a gas station run by the mafia.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And there's, you know, what does that do for power and equalization?

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<v SPEAKER_1>So I do think you're right to, we sometimes, even with China, give them more capacity than they have, because every country has challenges, even the big ones.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:06:12.900 --> 00:06:30.680

<v SPEAKER_2>So I mean, I think that, you know, I know at the UN, the five countries with the veto have just, they feel that they're really, you know, the cock of the walk, they can, they have their own meetings and they have their own schedules and they do their own thing.

00:06:30.680 --> 00:06:37.140

<v SPEAKER_2>And, you know, we're not, the rest of us are just the unwashed in the General Assembly.

00:06:37.260 --> 00:06:40.200

<v SPEAKER_2>And that mindset is still pretty deeply ingrained.

00:06:40.200 --> 00:06:46.220

<v SPEAKER_2>But the reality is that you can have a nuclear weapon and nobody's using it at the moment.

00:06:46.960 --> 00:06:48.620

<v SPEAKER_2>And so what have you got?

00:06:48.620 --> 00:06:50.980

<v SPEAKER_2>You've got the same levels of debt or more.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You've got countries that are either in good shape or bad shape.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it's really important for us to put it in those terms.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I think that the core of what the PM is saying is true.

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<v SPEAKER_2>He's saying that for the longest time now, we've been pretending that there was this thing, this system called the rules-based system, when in fact many countries have been either ignoring it or breaking it with impunity, whether it's to do with the laws on aggression or whether it's to do with the laws on tariffs.

00:07:29.800 --> 00:07:35.760

<v SPEAKER_2>And as that goes further and further, we don't have a rules-based system.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And what we need to figure out is how do we establish one, not because we're nostalgic about it, but because for a country like Canada, and I think frankly all countries in the world, having a rules-based system makes the most sense.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we've got to find more ways to have a rules-based system because it actually works in everybody's interest by and large.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Particularly for smaller middle powers.

00:08:07.860 --> 00:08:10.640

<v SPEAKER_1>If you've got rules, it does tend to level the playing field.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Certainly from trade policy, and this was the whole premise behind, in a sense, functionalism that if you had capacity and competence, you deserve to seat at the table.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So I want to drill down into a bit more because I agree.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I'm going to use the term middle powers.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I'm not sure it's the right one because I think we're talking like-minded or those with similar interests.

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<v SPEAKER_1>It can go beyond democracies as we know, but even democracies itself is not always.

00:08:41.840 --> 00:08:43.360

<v SPEAKER_1>Not all democracies are the same.

00:08:43.360 --> 00:08:44.540

<v SPEAKER_1>Put it this way.

00:08:44.540 --> 00:08:45.200

<v SPEAKER_2>Yes.

00:08:45.200 --> 00:08:57.060

<v SPEAKER_1>I want to start off by asking you, based on your experience at the UN, because you've had more experience with the rest of the world than any other person I can think of in Canada in recent years.

00:08:57.060 --> 00:09:01.840

<v SPEAKER_1>Do you have any experience with Canada being part of a middle powers coalition at the UN?

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<v SPEAKER_1>If so, what was the issue or issues on which we came together?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Any number of issues.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Absolutely, it is a working fact of life in the UN, in New York, and in Geneva, and in Rome, where it could be a group of donor countries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>In the case of, let's say, the Food and Agricultural Organization, it could be a group of people who have been involved militarily.

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<v SPEAKER_2>For example, in Afghanistan, we had a very lively group called the Friends of Afghanistan, of which Canada was the chair.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I made a point of engaging with countries from the region, as well as countries who had sent soldiers to Afghanistan, had been militarily involved.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We had a very active, lively working group that occasionally made a difference, not as often as many of us would have liked, but it was still there.

00:10:08.340 --> 00:10:25.160

<v SPEAKER_2>Similarly, there's an advisory group on Haiti that Canada chaired again, where we looked at how we could make a difference for Haiti countries that had traditionally been donors, countries in the region.

00:10:25.160 --> 00:10:28.860

<v SPEAKER_2>And it's a mixed bag of countries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And sometimes people would say, can I join your group?

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<v SPEAKER_1>It's a mixed bag, so it could be small, middle, and did you have any of what we would call great or US, China, Russia?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Not yet.

00:10:41.040 --> 00:10:42.300

<v SPEAKER_2>Yes.

00:10:42.300 --> 00:10:48.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Under the Biden administration, the US was part of both the Haiti group and the Afghanistan group.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that was an example.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Some of the other, the biggest example, I think, of a kind of broader working group that looked at trying to resolve some issues was the group on financing for development, which did, in fact, include the UK and France and a number of other bigger powers, but also included a ton of middle powers.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I mean, Canada belongs to every conceivable group at the UN or broadly.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, let's face it, we're in every free trade group all around the world.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We're, you know, there's Canada-Africa committees, there's discussion groups going on with Latin America.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I was on a phone call yesterday with a group of Latin

American countries that were interested in my take on what was happening with the so-called Carney Doctrine, as it's now been called, and then trying to figure out, you know, do you have any plans, sir, for the Carney Doctrine?

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I said, well, wait and see.

00:11:51.020 --> 00:11:52.380

<v SPEAKER_2>We'll see how that unfolds.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But the reality is that's very much how we work at the UN.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We work with a group of countries who on any given subject, whether it's the law of the sea or whatever it might be, have a deep interest in that subject and want and think that Canada should have one as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>For example, the group on the law of sea is actually chaired by Vietnam.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Why does Vietnam have such a great concern about the law of the sea?

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<v SPEAKER_2>How about the South China Sea?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Whereas you know, disputes between Vietnam and China have been very real and are very real.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so there's a lot of ways in which the kind of diplomacy which the prime minister has been talking about is already happening.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I would also have to say that it's not really happening in as coordinated a way as it needs to.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that I think is what is next on the agenda or should be next on the agenda.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Okay, well let's explore that.

00:12:55.920 --> 00:12:57.920

<v SPEAKER_1>How can you coordinate it?

00:12:57.920 --> 00:13:02.280

<v SPEAKER_1>And these coalitions you've talked about, how did they get formed?

00:13:02.300 --> 00:13:05.420

<v SPEAKER_1>And who took, who takes the leading role?

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<v SPEAKER_1>You've mentioned Vietnam and the South China Sea all make sense to me.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But is this, is there, again, to go back to your point, starting point for this, the coordination, so that these things can actually come together?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Because it strikes me that these, this is what I would call in the sense the hidden wiring of the UN.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You don't hear about these groups, but they seem to matter.

00:13:28.280 --> 00:13:31.780

<v SPEAKER_1>I mean, what you're saying is that they really do make a difference.

00:13:31.780 --> 00:13:33.140

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, they can make a difference.

00:13:34.320 --> 00:13:40.500

<v SPEAKER_2>They're, they have mixed impact on their home capitals, let's put it that way.

00:13:40.500 --> 00:14:05.840

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, you have to remember that, you know, in a, and you're a much longer veteran of the Foreign Affairs Department than I am, but, you know, in the Foreign Affairs Department, the, what I call the geographic rule, I mean, the, essentially, the silos that are created in the department have more to do with a geographic area than they do with the subject area.

00:14:06.780 --> 00:14:28.120

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think, increasingly, what we need to do is look at

how do we create teams within governments, within capitals, that will say, we're the team that's looking at financing for development, or we're the team that's looking at how do we respond to this crisis or that crisis, and how do we become more effective at doing that?

00:14:28.280 --> 00:14:36.640

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's something that I recommended when I did my work on Myanmar, and say, you have to cut across departments to do it effectively.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You need finance departments and trade departments to be working more closely together with the diplomats, and you need to get others involved.

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<v SPEAKER_2>On the pandemic, you need to have working groups that engage in that way, and you need to encourage other governments to do exactly the same.

00:14:52.540 --> 00:15:01.100

<v SPEAKER_2>So you're actually engaging with those governments on a regular and effective basis that says, well, what's the problem we're trying to solve?

00:15:01.100 --> 00:15:01.980

<v SPEAKER_2>How can we solve them?

00:15:01.980 --> 00:15:03.420

<v SPEAKER_2>Let's move them forward.

00:15:03.420 --> 00:15:09.280

<v SPEAKER_2>That informality, in fact, is how much of diplomacy really works.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, on the pandemic, there was a working group of countries who were donors to international institutions, who were helping out on distributing vaccines.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And we needed to be involved as a group to make sure the money was being raised and to make sure we were doing that in a coordinated way.

00:15:32.580 --> 00:15:36.900

<v SPEAKER_2>And then to say, well, what are you doing about getting access to the vaccines?

00:15:37.480 --> 00:15:40.460

<v SPEAKER_2>How are you encouraging your own domestic industry, et cetera?

00:15:40.460 --> 00:15:45.740

<v SPEAKER_2>So those are things that actually have been put in place and in play.

00:15:45.740 --> 00:15:57.860

<v SPEAKER_2>But now I think the Prime Minister is saying, I want to see more of this, and I want to see it developed more effectively by capitals and by nation states.

00:15:57.860 --> 00:16:14.380

<v SPEAKER_2>And we need to understand that the only way we're going to effectively be able to respond to the whims and desires of those who think they are the greatest powers, is if the rest of us work together more effectively.

00:16:14.380 --> 00:16:16.860

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that's essentially correct.

00:16:18.620 --> 00:16:24.000

<v SPEAKER_1>One thing you've just underlined is the importance of looking at these things horizontally within your capital as well.

00:16:24.000 --> 00:16:37.680

<v SPEAKER_1>It's not just the foreign minister or the geographic, as you pointed out, the successful ones, that seem to involve task force almost approach across, like I think going back to the Afghan task force, for example, which we generally regarded as a useful thing.

00:16:37.700 --> 00:16:51.000

<v SPEAKER_1>We've done this on other issues, and but they're horizontal across government because it seems to me, and what you're saying is that you need the various component parts of government, not just from the foreign ministry.

00:16:52.600 --> 00:16:53.680

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:16:53.680 --> 00:17:04.260

<v SPEAKER_2>My concern about the Afghan model, which I saw in play when I was a member of Parliament and a member of the Afghanistan Committee of Parliament.

00:17:05.420 --> 00:17:48.840

<v SPEAKER_2>My concern then was this seems to me to be a good idea, and I was very impressed when I went to Kandahar and was briefed by a team of CEDA, as it then was the aid agency, and foreign affairs, and the military, all working together and talking with each other, and

then making a presentation to MPs about this is how we work together in this province, and this is how it works, and we were there for two or three days, and so we had a good opportunity to at least get a sense of what the conflict was about, but also how the conflict itself was being managed and how we were working effectively together.

00:17:48.840 --> 00:17:58.440

<v SPEAKER_2>And I have to give full credit to John Manley and his committee for identifying a problem and saying, well, you got to do this if you want to have an effective strategy for a conflict like this.

00:17:59.940 --> 00:18:10.680

<v SPEAKER_2>The problem is, as soon as that was over, we lost our muscle memory and departments just put up the stovepipes once again, just said, no, no, we're not doing that anymore.

00:18:10.680 --> 00:18:13.000

<v SPEAKER_2>And they went back to the way it was.

00:18:13.000 --> 00:18:15.780

<v SPEAKER_2>And the way it was doesn't work.

00:18:15.780 --> 00:18:16.920

<v SPEAKER_2>It's too divided up.

00:18:16.960 --> 00:18:24.940

<v SPEAKER_2>It's too, there's no way of knowing when you've solved and developed a set of priorities that are able to implement them.

00:18:26.060 --> 00:18:41.260

<v SPEAKER_2>And it's hard for governments and it's hard for individuals working within a government system to figure out, well, how do we make this effort to have more joined up diplomacy?

00:18:41.260 --> 00:18:43.400

<v SPEAKER_2>How do we allow that to be more effective?

00:18:44.780 --> 00:18:49.500

<v SPEAKER_2>But really, that's what the Prime Minister is talking about from a working point of view.

00:18:49.500 --> 00:18:59.440

<v SPEAKER_2>And if he wants to make it work, he's going to have to take on some of the bureaucratic resistance that is always in play to doing things in a different way.

00:19:02.020 --> 00:19:05.440

<v SPEAKER_3>Hi, I'm Dave Perry, the President and CEO of The Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

00:19:05.440 --> 00:19:10.060

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00:19:27.260 --> 00:19:31.220

<v SPEAKER_1>Yes, and I think that's where the center has to play the critical role of coming in.

00:19:31.220 --> 00:19:51.220

<v SPEAKER_1>If the Prime Minister decides that is a priority, then the Privy Council Office, as you know, can crack the heads together and bring the parties together and ensure that it has both the resources and is getting the attention to deliver on what is the national priorities.

00:19:51.220 --> 00:19:53.060

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I was on a podcast yesterday.

00:19:53.060 --> 00:20:00.320

<v SPEAKER_2>I seem to spend my life on other people's podcasts, but it was a very interesting podcast with individuals from Latin America.

00:20:00.840 --> 00:20:06.720

<v SPEAKER_2>It was put on by the Canada Latin American organization led by Ken Frankel.

00:20:08.940 --> 00:20:21.460

<v SPEAKER_2>What was interesting to me was that the feeling from Brazil and from Colombia, the two countries that were also represented on the panel, was to say we were really enthusiastic with the Prime Minister's speech.

00:20:21.460 --> 00:20:24.120

<v SPEAKER_2>It really spoke to us in important ways.

00:20:24.120 --> 00:20:31.400

<v SPEAKER_2>We were surprised that it would be Canada that would be coming forward with this insistence on the need for a different approach.

00:20:33.380 --> 00:20:35.280
<v SPEAKER_2>But we have a simple question.

00:20:36.000 --> 00:20:37.540
<v SPEAKER_2>What do you plan to do now, Mr.

00:20:37.540 --> 00:20:39.520
<v SPEAKER_2>Rae?

00:20:39.520 --> 00:20:45.680
<v SPEAKER_2>I had to say, well, I'm not in the government, but I do think that that is the question.

00:20:46.080 --> 00:21:00.700
<v SPEAKER_2>We need to figure out as a government, how are we going to ask and get moving on this in a way that's going to be manageable, rather than have a thousand balls in the air which aren't coordinated.

00:21:00.700 --> 00:21:07.140
<v SPEAKER_2>You have to figure out how do we actually take the steps we want to take to make a difference.

00:21:07.140 --> 00:21:12.120
<v SPEAKER_2>I think it can be done, but it's a challenging thing to do, but it has to happen.

00:21:12.120 --> 00:21:23.540
<v SPEAKER_1>No, but what you're underlining is that we really do need now, the Prime Minister's painted a vision, but we need now a blueprint, some kind of a policy document which spells out what we're talking about.

00:21:23.540 --> 00:21:23.760
<v SPEAKER_1>Yeah.

00:21:23.760 --> 00:21:28.860
<v SPEAKER_2>Well, the difference, I mean, there's always a gap between the word and the deed, and I think the word is clear.

00:21:29.140 --> 00:21:33.720
<v SPEAKER_2>The deed is a little less clear, and that's what we have to make sure comes to life.

00:21:34.400 --> 00:21:37.240
<v SPEAKER_2>Very, very quickly, because we don't have a lot of time.

00:21:37.240 --> 00:21:37.920
<v SPEAKER_1>No.

00:21:37.920 --> 00:21:44.820

<v SPEAKER_1>Now, you mentioned a couple of countries when you were dealing with Ken Frankel and the Latin American side of things.

00:21:44.820 --> 00:21:53.220

<v SPEAKER_1>Are there countries that we partner with on a regular basis that would be obvious targets for us to be speaking with?

00:21:53.220 --> 00:22:00.640

<v SPEAKER_1>Because as you've just pointed out, countries are interested in what we're doing, and probably we want to identify and tell others.

00:22:00.640 --> 00:22:05.180

<v SPEAKER_1>Because certainly I've sensed a lot of interest in what the Prime Minister has talked about.

00:22:05.180 --> 00:22:07.900

<v SPEAKER_1>But should we not be talking to other countries?

00:22:07.900 --> 00:22:12.520

<v SPEAKER_1>And if so, who are some of the key partners that we should be speaking with?

00:22:12.520 --> 00:22:17.500

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, my first point, Colin, would be that we do this at the UN quite a lot.

00:22:17.500 --> 00:22:29.340

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think, again, I would encourage the government to talk to our multilateral ambassadors pronto and get from them a sense of the answer to that question.

00:22:29.880 --> 00:22:32.980

<v SPEAKER_2>Because it's often fairly personal impressionistic.

00:22:32.980 --> 00:22:39.380

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, on something like trade, for example, and trade rules, a key country is Singapore.

00:22:39.380 --> 00:22:50.000

<v SPEAKER_2>Singapore depends intensively on multilateral agreements working because they are a quintessential multilateral country.

00:22:51.460 --> 00:22:54.060

<v SPEAKER_2>And they're not a big country.

00:22:54.880 --> 00:22:59.160

<v SPEAKER_2>They're a small state, but they're a small but mighty state.

00:22:59.840 --> 00:23:02.700

<v SPEAKER_2>In the sense that they have an effective role.

00:23:02.700 --> 00:23:06.660

<v SPEAKER_2>Their diplomats tend to stay in post for a longer time.

00:23:06.660 --> 00:23:07.520

<v SPEAKER_2>They're very senior.

00:23:07.520 --> 00:23:09.280

<v SPEAKER_2>They're very experienced.

00:23:09.280 --> 00:23:14.880

<v SPEAKER_2>And they know a lot about how things could work or should work.

00:23:14.880 --> 00:23:19.700

<v SPEAKER_2>And are extremely pragmatic in building on that basis.

00:23:19.700 --> 00:23:21.460

<v SPEAKER_2>So that's one example.

00:23:21.460 --> 00:23:26.160

<v SPEAKER_2>And my other point is there isn't a region that should be ignored.

00:23:26.160 --> 00:23:27.460

<v SPEAKER_2>Everyone should be included.

00:23:28.180 --> 00:23:30.340

<v SPEAKER_2>You've got to look at the concerns of the Africans.

00:23:30.340 --> 00:23:32.860

<v SPEAKER_2>You've got to look at the concerns of the Caribbeans.

00:23:32.860 --> 00:23:37.320

<v SPEAKER_2>Some of the Caribbean countries together are very, very small.

00:23:37.320 --> 00:23:44.760

<v SPEAKER_2>But the net impact of the relationship between Canada and the Caribbean is very big.

00:23:44.760 --> 00:23:51.140

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, the net concern and level of concern and the level of connection is very high.

00:23:51.140 --> 00:24:18.740

<v SPEAKER_2>So you have to have a very subtle sense of different

areas, different emphases for different groups, and try to identify more clearly, well, what is the problem we're trying to solve, and how can we bring the groups together to look at this in an effective and pragmatic way, knowing that there will always be countries out there that will want to disrupt things and make those things more difficult.

00:24:18.740 --> 00:24:23.900

<v SPEAKER_1>Now, the disruptors, what is the P5 doing in this situation?

00:24:24.660 --> 00:24:33.840

<v SPEAKER_1>Are there members that would participate or they basically don't necessarily go along?

00:24:35.820 --> 00:24:45.620

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I mean, to be very blunt about it, I mean, the Russians have kind of isolated themselves in terms of their policies from us, certainly.

00:24:46.900 --> 00:25:12.060

<v SPEAKER_2>And they've tried to pull together a group of countries who go by the odd name of the Friends of the Charter, which means they're not friends of the charter, and take a very strong view that the job of the UN is to stay the hell out of any human rights or any other issues that involve the quality of life for most people in the world.

00:25:12.860 --> 00:25:16.000

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's their position.

00:25:17.320 --> 00:25:22.500

<v SPEAKER_2>But the Chinese will continue to play a very strong role in the global South.

00:25:22.720 --> 00:25:30.660

<v SPEAKER_2>They will be a very powerful influence on many, many countries and part of the world.

00:25:30.660 --> 00:25:42.940

<v SPEAKER_2>But on the other hand, there will be others who will not want to be totally beholden to Chinese finance and they will want to have a greater access to us.

00:25:42.940 --> 00:26:12.960

<v SPEAKER_2>So this is why I say it's not as simple, you know, there's 12 countries that are going to come and here they are and it's not just the European countries, it's not just the Nordics, it's looking at a group of, and it's also frankly looking at countries that are actually willing and interested to do this and whose leaders are interested, both their Prime Ministers and also their governments that

are going to be there for the longer term.

00:26:12.960 --> 00:26:15.020

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think the main thing that Mr.

00:26:15.020 --> 00:26:22.180

<v SPEAKER_2>Carney has done is he sent a signal to us as Canadians that we have agency.

00:26:22.180 --> 00:26:28.860

<v SPEAKER_2>The notion that we don't have agency and we just do what the United States tells us to do is not correct.

00:26:29.820 --> 00:26:43.500

<v SPEAKER_2>And within some boundaries of common sense we need to figure out what agency do we have and how do we pursue it effectively in order to make change happen.

00:26:43.500 --> 00:26:47.060

<v SPEAKER_2>But for a doctrine to become a doctrine it has to work in practice.

00:26:47.060 --> 00:26:49.960

<v SPEAKER_2>It can't just be a theoretical construct.

00:26:49.960 --> 00:26:52.740

<v SPEAKER_2>You got to say, okay, how do I make this work?

00:26:52.740 --> 00:26:56.580

<v SPEAKER_2>And that I think is the essential challenge facing the government at the moment.

00:26:58.200 --> 00:27:01.860

<v SPEAKER_1>Let me move, flip this around a bit, essential countries.

00:27:01.860 --> 00:27:05.760

<v SPEAKER_1>You mentioned Singapore, for example, in trade, all of which makes sense.

00:27:05.760 --> 00:27:12.460

<v SPEAKER_1>Are there any countries that should be part of any coalition for it to have a chance of success?

00:27:12.580 --> 00:27:15.780

<v SPEAKER_1>You mentioned Canada joins everything and I think that's right.

00:27:15.780 --> 00:27:19.680

<v SPEAKER_1>So I would probably think we would be one that would be in that category.

00:27:19.680 --> 00:27:22.320

<v SPEAKER_1>Are there others that we need?

00:27:22.500 --> 00:27:25.960

<v SPEAKER_1>And you've also talked about the importance of having representation from every region.

00:27:26.540 --> 00:27:34.700

<v SPEAKER_1>Now, you mentioned Singapore, which to me has always had a very first-class foreign service and seems to get involved in most things.

00:27:34.700 --> 00:27:42.580

<v SPEAKER_1>If you look at other parts of the world like Africa, Latin America, who would you identify?

00:27:43.900 --> 00:27:45.820

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I think they have to self-identify.

00:27:45.820 --> 00:27:52.160

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, I think one of the biggest mistakes we could make is, we're not building a club, we're creating an approach.

00:27:54.180 --> 00:27:59.800

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think the government will probably know by now which countries are really interested in this approach.

00:27:59.800 --> 00:28:02.060

<v SPEAKER_2>My sense is there will be a great many.

00:28:02.060 --> 00:28:24.960

<v SPEAKER_2>I was in the UN last week, actually, and just walking down the halls in the General Assembly, I was really, really happy to see the number of people who came over and said, right on for you, I mean, I'm not going to mention countries because an ambassador is by name or by country, but I can just say the support for what Canada has done is very, very widespread.

00:28:24.960 --> 00:28:35.700

<v SPEAKER_2>It's very deep inside the UN because everybody knows how difficult it's been over the last year, and nobody quite knows how to get out of it.

00:28:35.700 --> 00:28:48.320

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think what Canada has said is saying is, well, we don't know exactly how to get out of it either, but one thing we do know is we at least have to have the courage to describe the condition we are in.

00:28:49.220 --> 00:29:02.880

<v SPEAKER_2>And if we don't broaden the frame of friendship in a substantial way, we will be picked off one by one, which is exactly what's going on now.

00:29:02.880 --> 00:29:06.840

<v SPEAKER_2>And if we're unhappy with that prospect, we should try and change it.

00:29:08.340 --> 00:29:15.260

<v SPEAKER_1>You talked about going through the UN and a number of countries coming on saying, yes, we kind of like the idea, but I want to see it fleshed out.

00:29:15.260 --> 00:29:20.040

<v SPEAKER_1>What about blowback from the big guys, the Russia, the China, the United States?

00:29:20.040 --> 00:29:23.140

<v SPEAKER_1>You know, certainly Donald Trump doesn't seem to have appreciated Mr.

00:29:23.140 --> 00:29:25.180

<v SPEAKER_1>Carney's speech.

00:29:26.920 --> 00:29:27.760

<v SPEAKER_2>No.

00:29:27.760 --> 00:29:31.300

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, I think that's for both for bilateral and for multilateral reasons.

00:29:31.300 --> 00:29:56.100

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, I think, I mean, no one, no one appreciates being called out, as the president made it very clear in his speech at Davos, which was in marked contrast to in style, substance and length to the speech of our primeminister.

00:29:59.060 --> 00:30:05.020

<v SPEAKER_2>I think the Russians will dismiss it as just so much, so much well-meaning nothing.

00:30:06.640 --> 00:30:22.020

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think the Chinese will look at it carefully, but also want to be doing everything they can to protect their position, particularly as a leader of the Global South.

00:30:22.020 --> 00:30:56.340

<v SPEAKER_2>And that I think is something that many Western governments have been asleep at the switch about, is understanding how

the Chinese role in the Global South is not just as an intellectual leader or as a propaganda institution, it's as a financier and as a development partner that in many ways is much more nimble and effective for a much smaller amount of money than the Western states are with the development funding that they've come up with.

00:30:56.340 --> 00:31:05.540

<v SPEAKER_2>And the Chinese will be interested to see whether anything of substance comes out of this, this discussion or not.

00:31:06.560 --> 00:31:11.740

<v SPEAKER_1>What about the next sort of tier in that grouping?

00:31:11.740 --> 00:31:23.820

<v SPEAKER_1>So I'm thinking of the Indias, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Indonesia, those that are the kind of emerging big developing countries.

00:31:25.300 --> 00:31:28.900

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, the rapidly industrializing countries are really an interesting mix.

00:31:28.900 --> 00:31:31.840

<v SPEAKER_2>They play, regionally, they play a tremendous role.

00:31:32.100 --> 00:31:40.320

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, they, and they've come alive in ways that weren't necessarily the case 10 or 20 years ago.

00:31:40.320 --> 00:31:47.660

<v SPEAKER_2>Again, they tend to be much more assertive in their regions, but also more assertive on the international stage.

00:31:49.020 --> 00:32:10.740

<v SPEAKER_2>But like every country, they're sometimes prevented from domestic concerns or from their own regional preoccupations to playing a stronger role in policy reform as they might like, which is why I think in a very positive way, Canada can actually do a lot if we choose to.

00:32:10.740 --> 00:32:18.680

<v SPEAKER_2>Because a lot of this is called thought leadership, and you don't have to be big to think, you just have to be able to think.

00:32:18.680 --> 00:32:31.900

<v SPEAKER_2>And we have tremendous numbers of good people in the country who've done a lot of thinking about the international aid system, about global security, and a number of places where this is happening in town.

00:32:31.900 --> 00:32:37.820

<v SPEAKER_2>Frankly, there are a lot of American academics and others who've been thinking about this as well.

00:32:37.820 --> 00:32:48.100

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think we've tended to wait for a signal from Washington as to whether this was okay.

00:32:48.100 --> 00:32:53.840

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think, again, the impact of what the Prime Minister is saying to me is, don't wait for them.

00:32:53.840 --> 00:32:55.680

<v SPEAKER_2>Just let's just do it.

00:32:55.680 --> 00:32:57.900

<v SPEAKER_2>And let's just talk about it with others.

00:32:57.900 --> 00:33:03.420

<v SPEAKER_2>And let's just test as to whether or not that willingness is really there.

00:33:04.740 --> 00:33:25.120

<v SPEAKER_2>And the other factor that I think has got to be taken into account is, you are going to have to be prepared to have a more robust development policy and a more robust diplomatic presence, if you really want to succeed in this kind of effort.

00:33:26.560 --> 00:33:35.860

<v SPEAKER_2>We've just taken a series, we're just taking right now this last week, announced a number of layoffs in foreign affairs and elsewhere.

00:33:35.860 --> 00:33:44.720

<v SPEAKER_2>We're seeing cuts in both development assistance and overall envelopes for humanitarian and other packages.

00:33:44.720 --> 00:33:46.900

<v SPEAKER_2>So this is a concern I have.

00:33:46.900 --> 00:33:55.080

<v SPEAKER_2>My concern is, if you want to be a robust actor, you can't do it without adequate means.

00:33:55.080 --> 00:34:12.080

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think there was something illogical about the government increasing so much its defence spending without recognising that that's really the spending you're doing in the world, but it can't only be military, it also has to be what you're doing on the civilian side and on the development side.

00:34:12.080 --> 00:34:12.900

<v SPEAKER_2>So you're matching it.

00:34:12.900 --> 00:34:16.060

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm all in favour of the defence increases, don't get me wrong.

00:34:16.060 --> 00:34:19.500

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think they have to be matched by understanding how we can do our diplomacy.

00:34:20.060 --> 00:34:24.240

<v SPEAKER_2>Better and sometimes that means being better funded.

00:34:24.240 --> 00:34:25.100

<v SPEAKER_1>I think that's right.

00:34:25.100 --> 00:34:34.760

<v SPEAKER_1>I always remember Bob Gates saying that he'd much rather see a dollar spent on diplomacy because it was going to cost him \$100 on the defence side if he had to do the follow-up.

00:34:37.020 --> 00:35:00.760

<v SPEAKER_1>You've anticipated part of my last question, which is how do we position ourselves in this world, as the Prime Minister says, a variable geometry, and what should be the next steps in a practical sense to give meaning to the idea of realism or variable geometry, values-based realism and the rest.

00:35:00.760 --> 00:35:03.900

<v SPEAKER_1>As you say, we need to think this thing through.

00:35:03.900 --> 00:35:15.180

<v SPEAKER_1>Your points about investment in diplomacy and development are a piece of that, but what would you do in a practical sense for next steps, and then positioning ourselves?

00:35:15.180 --> 00:35:23.420

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I think the Prime Minister has to work with people on a plan, and I think he has to tell us pretty quickly what some of the outlines of that are.

00:35:23.420 --> 00:35:42.640

<v SPEAKER_2>I think the more he consults, as he consults widely, I think you'll hear a lot of interest from, you know, from advisors, from people all around the country who will have some views about how this can be done, as well as other countries who have think tanks, and who have institutions that are able to respond.

00:35:42.640 --> 00:35:53.480

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think we've seen this now in the media, that there was a series of reactions that were very interested, but a lot of questions about, well, exactly what does that mean?

00:35:54.400 --> 00:36:00.540

<v SPEAKER_2>What does it mean to do this, and how do we do it effectively, and how long will it take to pull it all together?

00:36:00.540 --> 00:36:17.520

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think the answer is we don't have a lot of time, because a lot of the stuff that's coming down the pipe for Canada and our bilateral relationship with the United States is going to be decided over the next few months and years, not decades.

00:36:17.520 --> 00:36:22.840

<v SPEAKER_2>And so we need to sort of figure out how we can make good on some of the changes that are needed.

00:36:23.580 --> 00:36:33.160

<v SPEAKER_1>So what you're saying is that we really do need to come up with something that fleshes out what the Prime Minister talked about in Davos in the next two months?

00:36:33.160 --> 00:36:35.860

<v SPEAKER_2>Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying.

00:36:35.860 --> 00:36:40.960

<v SPEAKER_1>So that puts urgency on it because we have, there is some momentum, I think.

00:36:40.960 --> 00:36:46.900

<v SPEAKER_1>But my observation is that unless you do follow up quickly, you often lose.

00:36:46.940 --> 00:36:49.860

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, absolutely, you lose momentum.

00:36:49.860 --> 00:36:51.800

<v SPEAKER_2>And we won't gain the advantage.

00:36:51.800 --> 00:36:58.040

<v SPEAKER_2>And people will just say, well, in the end, it was a great speech, but it was only another speech.

00:36:58.040 --> 00:37:04.800

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, I come from a world where I've heard a lot of speeches and I've given more than a few myself.

00:37:04.800 --> 00:37:09.200

<v SPEAKER_2>And some of them have an impact because they're followed up by something.

00:37:09.200 --> 00:37:12.940

<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, the Marshall Plan was a plan.

00:37:12.940 --> 00:37:18.840

<v SPEAKER_2>And it wasn't, it was a great speech that George Marshall gave very short at Harvard University.

00:37:18.840 --> 00:37:29.220

<v SPEAKER_2>But he transformed Europe, not in one speech, but by the fact that the speech then went to the Congress, then asked for money, then got the money.

00:37:29.220 --> 00:37:49.460

<v SPEAKER_2>Not as much as he asked, but he got a great whack-a-dough and was able to create the institutions very, very quickly that were able to make a particular difference in France and Italy, but eventually in all of Western Europe, and had a huge impact in the reconstruction of Europe.

00:37:49.460 --> 00:37:58.420

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think this is something that if it's a real thing, it's got to be pulled together fast.

00:37:58.420 --> 00:38:01.440

<v SPEAKER_1>So it's an opportunity and it's up to us to seize it.

00:38:01.480 --> 00:38:04.200

<v SPEAKER_2>Yes, exactly right.

00:38:04.200 --> 00:38:11.720

<v SPEAKER_1>At the same time, the Prime Minister is trying to, you know, deal with internal trade barriers, dealing with challenges within Canada.

00:38:11.720 --> 00:38:12.900

<v SPEAKER_1>It's a tall order.

00:38:12.900 --> 00:38:14.780

<v SPEAKER_1>He's got a lot on his plate.

00:38:14.780 --> 00:38:20.800

<v SPEAKER_1>Do you think Canadian public would support what we're suggesting here, is that fleshing this out?

00:38:20.800 --> 00:38:22.200

<v SPEAKER_2>I think so.

00:38:22.200 --> 00:38:35.360

<v SPEAKER_2>And I also think the Prime Minister has to know that there are a lot of people who are interested in helping, and there are a lot of people who want to be given their own agency to go out and do stuff.

00:38:35.700 --> 00:38:45.880

<v SPEAKER_2>And I really think that the team effort has to be broadened as much as possible, so that, you know, Harry Truman didn't give the speech.

00:38:46.620 --> 00:38:48.400

<v SPEAKER_2>It was George Marshall who gave the speech.

00:38:48.400 --> 00:38:55.520

<v SPEAKER_2>And you got to trust a bunch of other people to be delivering strong messages on behalf of a common effort.

00:38:55.520 --> 00:38:58.380

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that's essential.

00:38:59.780 --> 00:39:03.340

<v SPEAKER_2>You need a strong team to be able to pull this together.

00:39:04.360 --> 00:39:06.060

<v SPEAKER_1>All right, Bob, excellent advice.

00:39:06.060 --> 00:39:09.660

<v SPEAKER_1>My final question, what are you reading or streaming these days?

00:39:09.660 --> 00:39:18.400

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I'm streaming a reading, I'm reading a very interesting book which I had read years ago, which I hadn't seen recently.

00:39:19.040 --> 00:39:24.280

<v SPEAKER_2>I came across it in my library and began reading it again.

00:39:24.280 --> 00:39:32.160

<v SPEAKER_2>The last few days, it's a book by historian Richard Hofstadter called The Paranoid Style in American Politics.

00:39:32.160 --> 00:39:34.040

<v SPEAKER_2>Why am I reading that book?

00:39:37.080 --> 00:39:39.440

<v SPEAKER_1>We just have to turn on our TV sets to figure that out.

00:39:39.440 --> 00:39:41.700

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, you know, but it's what Richard is saying.

00:39:41.700 --> 00:39:50.020

<v SPEAKER_2>So, died very young as a historian, really had a huge impact with that book and some of his other writings on American society.

00:39:50.020 --> 00:39:53.620

<v SPEAKER_2>So, it's a very interesting book.

00:39:53.620 --> 00:39:55.860

<v SPEAKER_2>I commend it to the people who are listening.

00:39:55.860 --> 00:39:56.800

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, you commend it to me.

00:39:57.580 --> 00:40:09.040

<v SPEAKER_1>I remember just before you went down and we were having our drinks in the backyard of the Irish residence, and you said read Orwell, and I've been reading it on and off over the last few years, and I know you've-

00:40:09.040 --> 00:40:10.400

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I continue to read Orwell.

00:40:10.400 --> 00:40:11.560

<v SPEAKER_2>I never stopped reading Orwell.

00:40:11.560 --> 00:40:16.660

<v SPEAKER_2>In fact, the Orwell documentary 2 and 2 plus 5 is pretty good.

00:40:16.660 --> 00:40:19.680

<v SPEAKER_2>Not great, but very good.

00:40:19.680 --> 00:40:29.680

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, I certainly think that you read 1984, and you certainly see a lot of similarities to things that are happening today.

00:40:29.680 --> 00:40:29.880

<v SPEAKER_1>Yeah.

00:40:29.880 --> 00:40:42.180

<v SPEAKER_2>And as I said in the speech I gave at Massey College earlier today, earlier this week, I said, you got to remember that 1984 is not a guidebook or a how-to book.

00:40:42.200 --> 00:40:46.600

<v SPEAKER_2>It seems to have been read by some people thinking that, oh, this is what tells me what to do.

00:40:46.600 --> 00:40:47.520

<v SPEAKER_2>It's a warning.

00:40:47.520 --> 00:40:48.280

<v SPEAKER_2>It's a warning.

00:40:49.200 --> 00:40:54.640

<v SPEAKER_2>And, you know, none of us should be loving Big Brother these days.

00:40:54.640 --> 00:40:55.460

<v SPEAKER_1>No.

00:40:55.460 --> 00:40:57.700

<v SPEAKER_1>Sobering but necessary for our times.

00:40:57.700 --> 00:40:58.680

<v SPEAKER_1>Bob, thank you.

00:40:58.680 --> 00:41:00.260

<v SPEAKER_1>And thank you for your service to Canada.

00:41:00.260 --> 00:41:03.120

<v SPEAKER_1>And I know you will continue to serve.

00:41:04.280 --> 00:41:05.340

<v SPEAKER_2>Great to talk to you, Colin.

00:41:05.340 --> 00:41:06.240

<v SPEAKER_2>Take care.

00:41:06.240 --> 00:41:06.600

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:41:06.600 --> 00:41:08.960

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, thanks for listening to this episode of The Global Exchange.

00:41:08.960 --> 00:41:11.180

<v SPEAKER_1>We were joined today by The Honourable Bob Rae.

00:41:11.180 --> 00:41:14.860

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00:41:14.860 --> 00:41:17.820

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00:41:18.280 --> 00:41:24.560

<v SPEAKER_1>My thanks to our producers, Charlotte Duval-Antoine and Jordyn Carroll, and to Drew Phillips for providing our music.

00:41:24.560 --> 00:41:25.940

<v SPEAKER_1>I'm Colin Robertson.

00:41:25.940 --> 00:41:27.700

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for joining us today on The Global Exchange.