

Kim Campbell: Ukrainian Politics is Never Boring (Kommentarii)

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Kim Campbell, the first female Minister of Justice, the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister of Canada, former Secretary General of the Club of Madrid, acting today as a member of boards of trustees in a number of international organizations, including the position of the chairperson for International Advisory Board of the Foundation for Effective Governance, told us about geopolitical crossroads, superpowers and the Ukrainian soul of Canada.

The second largest country in the world without superpower ambitions, how come? What is the secret of your being friends with actually the entire world?

Indeed, we are geographically the second largest country in the world with with a small population. The population in Canada is less than the population of the State of California. Also, we were founded not on the revolution – we were founded on a peaceful transition to democratic governance. So, our whole tradition is peaceful and historically we couldn't play the heavy role.

However, we are very conscious of the fact that we are a rich and a highly developed country. We have highly developed rule of law, the system of education and the system of government. The Canadians do feel that they have a responsibility to the rest of the world. That's very much a part of the Canadian mentality. But really, because our population is so small and our land is so big, we are not so strategically organized in the way to be heavy-handed.

We live next door to a big superpower, the United States, and have a kind of "love-hate" relationship. We benefit enormously by having access to the American market. Canadian-American trade relationship is the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world. Canadians benefit a great deal and, certainly, it helps preserve our high standard of living. Yet we aren't the same as the Americans. We have a different society. We sometimes feel the need to kind of emphasize the differences and remind people that we are not just a smaller and quieter version of the United States but in fact quite a different society. Americans are becoming more socially conservative; Canadians are much more socially liberal. Americans are much more religious than Canadians. The Canadian society is becoming much more like the Nordic countries – it is also very tolerant. This distinguishes us from the United States. We realistically could not be a hegemonic country. We live next door to a big superpower, who wouldn't let us get away with it. Therefore, we had to develop a role that enables us to use our values and our strengths in a constructive way.

Was it necessary for the Canadian troops to take part in the Afghan mission?

Canada and the United States have the world's longest undefended border and we are a sort of the same security footprint. After the September 11, 2001 the Canadians felt very strongly that they needed to be a part of the solution of dealing with terrorist threats to the U.S., because we could be vulnerable ourselves. If the Americans felt that Canada could be a source of problems, that would be very negative to our interests.

We went into Afghanistan because that's where they were providing shelter to Al-Qaeda. The disappointing thing was that after engaging in Afghanistan to try to counteract Al-Qaeda, the Americans then decided to go to war in Iraq, which Canada didn't support. We are in Afghanistan because this is important to our security too. But Canadians are not unlimited in

their desire to be there. The length of the conflict was very much influenced by the shifting interest of the United States.

You said about living next door to a superpower. There is much in common actually between Canada and Ukraine: the language question, a very ambitious country next door. What experience of Canada could be used here?

I think it could be very useful for Ukrainians to look at the Canadian language policy and see that it is very possible to balance things when you create a public service. Our language policy is not designed to make Canadians bilingual but to allow them to remain unilingual. I look at Ukraine and see some similarities. The home of the Ukrainian language is here and the French-Canadian culture is unique and specific. If Ukraine does not preserve the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture, who will? At the same time you also have a huge population, who speaks Russian. In Canada we found the way of institutionally using both languages in order to preserve the threatened language, in our case – French. In your case it might be Ukrainian because it is not spoken outside of the country. But it doesn't need to be a source of great difficulty; it can be actually a source of great resource. Being a country with a bilingual capability expands your reach. Since people don't speak Ukrainian outside of Ukraine, Ukrainian speakers probably have to learn another language, usually English. But if they know Russian, that gives an access to other countries in the region.

What about the second part of the question: the superpower next door?

A superpower next door always keeps you on your toes. I'm not sure that Russia is a superpower now, but Russia is obviously a big power with nuclear weapons and ambition. This is a power that feels it still has the right to push around the "little brother". One of the big challenges for Ukraine is to balance its relationships with Europe and Russia. Ukraine has a great strategic geographical position and it can be difficult. You might say "well, everybody wants to control us". But you *are* the crossroads. I don't think that Ukraine has to be in one camp or the other.

Ukraine should have strong economic relations with Russia. That's a natural market. You can say intellectually: "We should trade more with this country or that country". Yet if it doesn't make any business sense, nobody will do it. Canada has often tried to diversify its markets and to be less dependent on the United States. Now Canada trades all around the world. But the reason why the bulk of our trade is with the USA is that it makes an economic sense.

I think that living next door to Russia and the European Union, which is also a superpower economically, really gives you the best of both worlds. It gives you access to wonderful markets. Although some Europeans say that Ukraine will never be in the European Union, that is certainly premature. Ukraine is discussing free trade arrangements with the EU. The good thing is that to have this kind of relationship with Europe, Ukraine has to make certain internal changes and reforms. If you can say "well, we have to do this because that's a part of the way into Europe", it can shorten the political debate. Russia is not going to promote democracy in Ukraine – that's the downside of relationship with it. However, Ukraine has already shown a democratic spirit. It is much more democratic than Russia, although your government is not always effective.

You seem to be supporting our return to multi-vectorial policy.

I think that's a natural reality. I don't think you can avoid that.

What is your opinion about the current political situation in Ukraine?

Ukrainian politics is never boring. It is always interesting. You know, I'm proud of you. This country has a very strong political energy. You've made a lot of changes in a fairly short period of time. But there is lots more to go.

I think it is helpful at this stage, whether there will be parliamentary elections early or in two years, to have the president and the parliament in the same political line. If there was an ability for people to cooperate across party lines, that wouldn't be so important. But there doesn't seem to be that ability in the country. The current president was very criticized before, remember the Orange Revolution. He seems to have learned certain things. I'm hopeful that some real changes will be made. But at the end of the day it's not just the question of passing legislation. You need to develop a public service that can deliver and implement the changes in the policy. Lots challenges are ahead but I'm cautiously optimistic. In early days of a new democracy, parties are very much assembled around specific leaders and there is a great deal of personal rivalry. But eventually they mature into a more institutionalized approach.

Could you please evaluate the role of the Ukrainian Diaspora in the Canadian political life?

The best thing one could say about Ukrainians in Canada is how deeply integrated they are into the mainstream of the Canadian society. Ukrainians are everywhere and nobody even thinks about it until they hear a name that sounds Slavonic. But they play a big role in some cases. For example, Canada was very quick to recognize Ukraine. A lot of that was not because of a political pressure pushing us to it, but because we clearly understood the desire of Ukrainians to have their independence. Canada is a country that has something Ukrainian in its soul. Many of the tiles making the cultural mosaic of Canada are Ukrainian. So, this is an integral part of the country.

How has Ukraine coped with the crisis?

Not as well as it should. I think that the crisis showed the need for effective institutions and good public policy. The problem with getting help from the IMF and the ability of the parliament to pass the banking laws point out the need to have structures in place making the system more resilient. The problem with Ukraine is that the institutions and the legal framework are still not developed enough. The crisis is an interesting example of how good it is to develop those democratic institutions. Good that it was an economic crisis, but you can also have a security crisis or a natural disaster. A society can come across many critical situations and needs to be able to respond.

The Europeans are trying to build a new European security system. Does it mean that the European Union is trying to cut the NATO role and thus reduce the U.S. influence in Europe?

I think the Europeans want to keep the United States' commitment to maintaining security in Europe. They also recognize that the security situation is different now. In the old days our security policy was designed around confronting and dealing with a Soviet invasion. We knew where the tanks would come from. Canadians knew where missiles would fly, hopefully on the United States, not on us. This is not the case anymore. I don't think there is a concern about threats to the continental Europe. It is more how we can use our combined hard power to address the issues that might threaten our region.

I think NATO will continue to be an important security instrument. However, I also think that the Europeans may wish to be independent from the USA in some issues. I doubt very much that this will supersede NATO. But when you have an economic union and a community with a

consolidated foreign policy, Europeans will naturally look to develop a common security policy. It doesn't mean that this will have a big military focus but the policy will be built as if it was one country, because that's what the European Union is for.

By Aleksey Kaftan