



CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY RENEWAL: THE GIVEN PRIORITIES

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A few overriding foreign policy priorities impose themselves on Canada, and this paper assumes their ongoing priority. Geography insists on a close and productive relationship with the United States, and secure access to the US marketplace; as conditions change, Canada needs to propose new ideas for the North American economic and environmental space. Though our neighbourhood is free of hostility, global terrorism is a national security threat.

For years the existential issue of national unity had a critical and potentially overriding external dimension, but has moved (again) to the back burner. Finding suitable international governance and cooperation for Arctic issues has recently become an urgent necessity.

To Strategize is to Choose

What are the discretionary foreign policy priorities? As an outward-looking country, Canada needs to choose foreign policy priorities that support the ongoing search for effective international governance and that generate political capital to support our international interests. They often over-link. For example, the United States thinks globally. While we need to work together with the United States (and Mexico) for positive outcomes on the big North American futures picture, we shall always have a better hearing in Washington if we are visibly active and effective across a range of key global issues. To get on the US agenda, to lift Canada's profile in media and political circles, Canada needs to be a player of interest in world events.



The Necessity of Authenticity

Canadian strategic priorities on international security issues should flow from roles that others recognize as authentically rooted in an earned reputation for seriousness in international affairs, built over time from hard work on substantive issues, consistency and balance in judgments about others, and an overall, if not fundamentalist, commitment to the United Nations Security Council's unique statutory authority to confer legitimacy under the UN Charter for the use of force.

Past Examples of Diplomatic and Military Initiatives

- Confidence and influence-building Canadian diplomatic projects would include:
 - a) the Open Skies initiative of 1989-1990 organized under Foreign Minister Joe Clark, that led to the first East-West meeting after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Though the changing circumstances made the Ottawa conference in January 1990 redundant in its technical substance, it enabled NATO and Warsaw Pact parties to begin the process for the unification of Germany;
 - b) the Ottawa Land Mines Convention conference organized as part of the human security campaign under Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy was a global game-changer in both outcome and its process of engagement by civil society;
 - c) a mixed example might include Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's international peace campaign in 1983-1984, intended to relax nuclear tautness that had tightened after the KAL 007 airliner episode but seen as unhelpful to US nuclear negotiations with the USSR.
- An initially positive example of military deployment was Canada's agreement to serve as the mainstay peacekeeper in Cyprus after war broke out between NATO members Turkey and Greece. It is likely that US President Lyndon Johnson signed the Canada-US Auto Pact in consequence. (Cyprus became a frozen conflict holding Canadian forces down for almost thirty years.) A hypothetical contrary example would have been a deployment to Iraq in support of the US-led 2003 invasion, despite Canada's commitment to the UN as the source of legitimacy for the use of force, as well as the lack of evidence on weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
- The deployment to Afghanistan is almost *sui generis*, a positive and nationally galvanizing contribution that has been under-recognized internationally. Its disproportionate costs to Canada have almost run their supportable course in light of the absence of sufficient solidarity of commitment from NATO partners.



Moving Backwards and Inwards

But in recent years, apart from, or perhaps partly because of, the all-consuming Afghan deployment, Canada has been vacating the roles that earned its reputation. Canadian political capital abroad is depleted. Successive minority governments have been partly responsible for substituting short-term domestic political goals for longer-term strategic ones, and for the growing recourse to gesture politics in international affairs rather than engagement.

The depletion in political capital has been accelerated by a degradation of Canadian representational capacity abroad, the slashing of program funds essential for promoting Canadian purposes and activity, and the constricting of public diplomacy generally in favour of centrally controlled Ottawa-centric communications.

Three Priority Swirls

To re-capture international profile and productive purpose, this paper proposes three mutually-reinforcing and time-sensitive issue swirls for sustained and visible Canadian activity and initiatives to:

- a) strengthen multilateral capacity in peace and security;
- b) strengthen international institutional capacity to negotiate cross-sectoral transnational issues;
- c) strengthen Canada's global reach via key bilateral relationships, public diplomacy, and Canada-branding.

Strengthening Multilateral Capacity in Peace and Security

The prospect of Canada re-joining the United Nations Security Council in 2011 urges focus on the Council's role and potential. The former Chief of Defence Staff, Rick Hillier, judges the UN is "useless." Our purpose should be to work to make the UN useful in specific, concrete, practical ways where Canadian policy and political investment can make a difference. To avoid the more turgid aspects of UN culture, we should focus on areas and activities where improvements in institutions, technology, and political will enhance the prospect for outcomes.

The encouraging post-Cold War comity with Russia did not last, but neither Russia nor China is a competitor today to the United States in any existential way. All in all, more common



ground exists among the five permanent members of the Security Council in substance than at any time in six decades.

The US president is UN-favourable. Canada could develop our specific activities in ways that would complement key US concerns—proliferation of WMD, nuclear build-down, international terrorism, and the international community's capacities to change the conditions of conflicts through mediation and effective peacemaking operations.

The Council's potential mandate is enlarging to include multiple (non-traditional) threats to security, such as environmental degradation, natural disasters, migration, disease, and transnational criminal activity and terrorism. Canada's "Responsibility to Protect" initiative permits the Council on a case-by-case basis to authorize collective intervention within states in cases of mass atrocity and genocide, a significant if as yet tentative step from the UN's traditional unwillingness to countenance "interference" in the internal affairs of member states.

Specifics

We should identify focused activities that would benefit from concentrated Canadian attention.

- *UN Rapid Deployment Force.* The inadequacies of the current methodology for raising UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) are well-known. Having sponsored so much in the area of enhancing human security at a time of "war among the peoples" (General Rupert Smith), and though it will be years before there is such a thing as an "international soldier," Canada should help to give reality to the recommendation in the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (commonly known as the Brahimi Report) for a UN force that could be pre-identified and equipped, and to enable mandates that match the missions. The Canadian government should get past the rejection of themes from previous Canadian governments and use political influence and especially our post-Afghanistan professional capabilities to advance this important cause.
- *Non-proliferation: strengthening the inspections regimes for WMD.* Weapons inspection in Iraq by the time of the UN's Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) in 2002-2003 was a success story (unacknowledged at the time by the United States), reflecting real improvements in technologies for remote, more intrusive, and hence more accurate inspection. UNMOVIC had greater institutional integrity; its experts weren't secondments with dual loyalties but international civil servants. Canada should make the ongoing, further strengthening of the UN's inspection capabilities a forefront policy priority.



- Related to non-proliferation, *counterpart reductions of nuclear arsenals* were a Canadian preoccupation for decades until the Conference on Disarmament fell into paralysis some years ago. President Obama is using the advent of the review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to urge nuclear powers, especially the United States and Russia, to build down arsenals from the current levels of about 27,000 warheads to several hundred. Canada should be providing every possible support in research, argumentation, and political outreach for this objective that some dismiss as a “pipe dream,” but that others, such as Professor John Polanyi of the University of Toronto, judge a core Canadian vocation, more credible because Canada declined to build nuclear weapons after the Second World War, and ceased to deploy them in Canada and Europe later.
- *Engaging in conflict resolution.* The hallmark of the Obama administration’s approach to foreign policy is engagement. The RAND Corporation identifies 648 terrorist groups that between 1968 and 2006 abandoned terrorism. Seven percent of these were compelled by superior military force. Others were absorbed by a political process. The transition needs engagement and mediation from good faith international actors, often not the larger powers—a role that Norway has helpfully played, for example, in the Middle East and in Sri Lanka. Because of a stand-offish declaratory approach to conflict, our ability to engage helpfully in conflict resolution is diminished. Canada has abandoned balance in its approach to the Middle East. But sufficient legacy capital remains to permit a helpful role to be re-assumed.

Strengthening International Capacity to Negotiate Cross-Sectoral Challenges

The G8 will be succeeded by a larger grouping that represents the shift in the world’s economic (and political) power toward emerging economies. It is assumed that Canada’s reach and influence in the world will necessarily shrink. An alternative scenario can see the new landscape favouring Canada, if it can re-possess and re-invigorate its talents and capacity for creative diplomacy. Anne-Marie Slaughter emphasizes that “in this world, the measure of power is connecting,” as the old power hierarchy of states gives way to a wider web of relationships. Canada can move to the centre of the global web and become a “go-to” country in the search for new ways of solving vexing international issues, taking advantage of Canadian experience in working with international civil society and research webs.

In June 2010, Canada will host the G20 summit. At present, Canadian government expectations are for a relatively non-controversial and limited agenda on financial issues and broad objectives for economic growth.



But the G20 should become the essential break-through forum for issues that go beyond finance and economics, and indeed that cross over different sectors. The G20 cannot replace existing universal international negotiating fora, especially as its membership reflects inadequate representation for the world's poorest countries. But it can serve as a clearing house and catalyst on a wide range of interconnected issues.

For example, world trade talks are stalled, partly over the issue of access to developed countries' markets for least-developed countries' (LDCs) agricultural exports. Climate change negotiations are unlikely to agree on acceptable costs to developed countries to pay for technology to reduce Chinese and Indian carbon footprints; nor will China readily accept a much lower growth rate. A forum to explore balanced trade-offs between such nominally unconnected sectors is essential.

However, the G20 will need adequate organization and structures, including a preparatory process that is political and substantive, not process-driven and bureaucratic. It needs a competent rotational secretariat, an influential political-level group of statesmen and women as animators, and connectedness with international civil society. These can best be promoted by a country or countries within the G20 with a reputation for creative seriousness: the largest economies will hang back. But Canada's government will need to upgrade its ambition levels and capacities considerably, particularly given its defensive positions on agricultural protection and carbon abatement.

Strengthening Canada's Bilateral Relationships through Public Diplomacy

Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau once said that Canada is a global power because of important relationships in every part of the globe. These have lapsed. Bilateral relationships of consequence are built up over time. They can lose mass quickly. Each is a separate calculus—Canada's seeded position as a partner of China and Russia, for example, that enhanced the positions of Prime Ministers Brian Mulroney and Jean Chrétien in world councils has eroded.

Strong bilateral and regional partnerships around the world serve Canadian interests directly and also create influence. It is not a question of "diversifying" relationships beyond the United States. Apart from being its own reward, the influence Canada can develop elsewhere can be useful in relations with the United States.

Nowhere is this more evident than with Mexico. As Robert Pastor has written "The best road from Ottawa to Washington is through Mexico City." His point is undoubtedly that as Mexican security is a great preoccupation of the United States, and politically resonant domestically, Canada can more easily get on the US agenda with trilateral underpinnings to bilateral complaints on border security or US protectionism. The ability of Mexico's fragile democracy to hold traction against dislocation from widespread drug violence needs support from both northern neighbours.



Public Diplomacy behind the Canadian Brand

Minority governments fall way short at sustaining efforts required for the pursuit of high-level relationships. Alternatives to an over-emphasis on the superficial technique of (frequently cancelled) ministerial visits need to be found.

Canada's ability to compete internationally depends on abilities to communicate our competitive realities. As the "other North America" with demonstrable and remarkable areas of achievement to set forth, the Canadian story is enviable. But it is a crowded media and communications landscape globally: people don't "think Canada" spontaneously. It is essential to position the country's image and profile toward a threshold of influence.

Having no CNN International or International Herald Tribune, Canada is virtually ignored in international media, even when our international investments, as in Afghanistan, are costly.

The principal instruments and assets to enable Canada to publicize the Canadian narrative and to build the web of essential networks and international relationships are Canadian embassies and consulates abroad.

Modern diplomacy is public diplomacy. Today, our diplomats connect to the public sphere at home and abroad—to civil society, educational institutions, and science, business, and professional circles, as well as to government and to military and intelligence circles. They should showcase the best our country can offer in governance, social realities such as diversity, financial management, artistic creativity, innovation, and values. We need these assets to promote the kinds of foreign policy initiatives proposed above that will need international media resonance to succeed.

Canadian representatives should also be unflinching in giving support to civil society for democracy development and women's rights.

Except in the United States, Canadian missions are today starved of program funds to mount the panels, conferences, exhibitions, and other showcase events we should use to get out our messages, as well as the exchanges with other countries and joint working groups and institutions with civil society and scholars. The communications job is not being done. Ambassadors who are the country's principal voices abroad are constrained by unreasonable limitations on public messaging by an overbearing central communications *apparat* in Ottawa.

Cultural and performance exchanges and showcasing are essential because the tie-in between Canadian cultural creativity and promoting an appreciation of Canada as a locale for innovation is direct; in many respects, the best advance promotion for Canadian telecom solutions in Italy was Robert Lepage and Rhombus Media. Yet, funding for supporting cultural representation abroad has been slashed because of ignorance of its value on the part of an inexperienced, down-sizing government skeptical of the role of the arts.