

# CANADA'S INFLUENCE ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

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## Introduction

Following the Second World War, Canada became one of the most active nations on the international scene. Involvement in bilateral, and multilateral fora guaranteed access of the Canadian voice to almost every alliance on the globe and the effectiveness of Canadian diplomacy was world renowned. After that, the salience of Canadian foreign policy was faced with uncertainty as international politics became centred on Soviet/American primacy. Canada's position as a great power waned somewhat and its voice of reason became lost in the melee that was the Cold War. In the past decade, Canada has attempted to re-establish its seat at the table while, at the same time, maintaining its reputation as an 'honest broker'.

In this presentation, I will address some of the issues facing the Canadian government as it forays into the uncertain world of post-Cold War international relations. I will examine trends in Canadian foreign policy and will illustrate the challenges facing the various departments implicated in foreign policy implementation. Finally, I will offer some solutions to the challenges facing those departments.

## Background

During the Cold War period Canadian foreign policy was decidedly internationalist in nature because of bipolarity and the nuclear threat facing all nations. Canadian internationalism was an effort to maintain stability and security, and avoid the onset of global nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The end of the Second World War signified several important changes for the world and Canada in particular. Establishment of the United Nations at the San Francisco conference of 1945 and the advent of nuclear weapons meant the end of voluntary isolationism. States could no longer dismiss conflict in remote areas of the world. The premise of 'collective defence' entrapped all aligned nations in the grip of the Cold War and others, the 'non-aligned' states, lived under the threat of mutual assured destruction.

In 1947, Louis St. Laurent set the tone for the future of Canada's foreign and international security policy. In the Gray lecture in Toronto he argued for, "the development of new international institutions to promote political stability, economic progress and the avoidance of war." This signalled the beginning of Canada's 'Golden Age' of diplomacy where it became involved in many international institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Commonwealth, and in bilateral relationships with the US and the USSR. Its actions in these international fora set the groundwork for international relations as they exist in Canada today.

The following decade could not be characterized in such glowing terms. The Diefenbaker years presented inconsistencies, disorientation, conflicts with allies (primarily the US), and precious

few positive results. Lester Pearson, it turned out, would not get the opportunity—primarily because of domestic preoccupations—to expand on his earlier diplomatic feats.

With initial hesitation and conflicting signals, Pierre Elliot Trudeau's foreign policy saw improved relations with China and decreased relations with the US. It also brought closer relations with the CSCE and more distance from NATO. At the end of his time in power in 1984, Trudeau had left his revised version of Canadian internationalism, typically captured by the concepts of 'liberal internationalist', and even idealist.

The Mulroney years (1984-93) brought a review of foreign and defence policy that were less than well received. While the Conservatives tried to maintain the impressive record of multilateralism in international security affairs that had been established by their predecessors, the international system started falling apart around them and the long awaited 'peace dividend' remained as distant as ever. To make matters worse, economic recession and national disunity at home placed severe constraints on the latitude with which the Tories could function internationally. This was, without a doubt, one of the most tumultuous periods since World War Two.

*Canada in the World* was the result of the 1994-95 review of Canadian foreign policy by Jean Chrétien's Liberal government following its victory in the 1993 federal election. The review placed increasing influence on economic relations while, at the same time, recognizing new security challenges. Foreign policy goals were articulated as being: the promotion of prosperity and employment; protection of Canadian security within a stable global framework; and, the projection of Canadian values and culture.

The roles of foreign policy laid out in *Canada and the World* have met with varying success. The first, promoting prosperity through international trade, has been a great accomplishment. So much so, in fact, that it has led critics to accuse the Liberal government of having but one foreign policy goal. Alternatively, the third pillar, promoting Canadian culture abroad, has fallen into relative obscurity because of fiscal restraints and 'policy indifference' in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

The second pillar of foreign policy, pursuing global security, has been, undoubtedly, the most controversial and elusive of all three. This concept is supported by the policy of *human security*, brought to the forefront by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy in 1997. The human security agenda is a fundamental part of DFAIT's contribution to international security.

*Canada in the World states*, "Since the end of the Cold War, security for the majority of states has increased, while security for many of the world's people has declined." This thesis postulates that changes in the international system have exacerbated the threat to non-combatants in conflict areas; erosion of state control leading to expansion of organized crime, drug trafficking, and the growth of private security forces; environmental threats such as pollution and mismanagement of non-sustainable resources; and, economic crises. Granted, these problems are not new, but the end of bipolarity that increased independence in many states has highlighted their salience. Additionally, advances in information technology means that previously 'hidden' problems, are

now being tracked by people all over the world, thereby increasing public pressure on governments to act.

Since adopting the human security agenda, there has been no shortage of criticism for what is seen as 'pulpit diplomacy'. Academics across the country have condemned human security as being a 'utopian vision' of the world and dismiss it as being almost impossible to enforce. In particular, they reject Axworthy's view of 'soft power' as misinterpreted and misapplied. In an article to *International Journal*, professors Fen Osler Hampson and Dean Oliver explain how Lloyd Axworthy acknowledges the benefits of diplomacy in soft power while dismissing the necessity of hard power, as articulated in Joseph Nye's *Bound to Lead*.

This may have been an early attempt by the Minister to create a new model for thinking of security issues. The inherent difficulty in operationalizing this concept have become strikingly clear and his comments of late have demonstrated the position that there is still a place for military action in the conduct of statecraft. Axworthy's support for the NATO bombing in Serbia demonstrates that if protection of individuals is the goal, military force may sometimes be required. The necessity for military power in human security and peacebuilding was also acknowledged with a call for increased defence funding that came from human security advocates, some of who were traditional anti-militarists.

Since the end of the Cold War there has been a plethora of suggestions of how the Canadian government may improve its foreign policy mechanisms to attain its goal of providing human security while, at the same time, respecting the realities of international security.

The most pressing problem for the Liberal government to address is the lack of a coherent international security strategy. The problems facing the world today are a magnitude of what they were just ten years ago and require a co-ordinated approach if any sort of meaningful contribution is to be made. In order to develop an international security strategy, the government will have to reconcile the various department that are implicated (in one way or another) in international security. Canada is blessed with a multitude of professionals who have dedicated themselves to working in foreign countries improving the quality of life. This has produced an extensive wealth of knowledge waiting to be tapped into.

The development and implementation of such a strategy would go a long way to addressing another problem that is decreasing Canada's influence on international security, the lack interdepartmental cohesion. Despite a few instances of co-operation between DFAIT, DND, and CIDA, these have usually been the result of *ad hoc* associations and, while effective, have not lasted longer than their immediate mission. In Canada, the conduct of foreign policy envelops the policy aspect (Foreign Affairs), a development aspect (CIDA), an economic aspect (International Trade), and a military aspect (DND). Political and bureaucratic infighting has produced situations of tension between these departments.

The most common solution offered by academics and observers alike is the establishment of a permanent interdepartmental committee to deal with issues related to foreign policy in the broad sense. Michael Pearson, former senior policy advisor to Foreign Ministers André Ouellet and

Lloyd Axworthy, suggests this in his essay on the implementation of Canadian foreign policy. He states:

On the broader machinery of government issue, serious consideration should be given to the re-establishment of a foreign policy cabinet committee. There are too many crosscutting issues with major international dimensions that should benefit from the regular attention of ministers in a collective, decision-making setting. The existence of such a committee would also inevitably have the consequence of tightening the advice-forming process of the civil service around foreign policy questions, thus reinforcing the importance of effective implementation procedures.

As well, in addition to interdepartmental co-operation, better civilian-military relations are required for the foreign policy agenda to be successful. Co-ordinated efforts between DFAIT, DND, and NGOs *before* embarking on a mission would infinitely simplify the operations in theatre. It would also inform personnel from all sides, of the 'big picture' of foreign policy, encouraging them to work together for increased effectiveness. Dean Oliver supports such a concept when he states:

If we think not along Cold War lines but along those most commonly seen in various post-Cold War conflicts, the force should be deployable in whole or in its constituent parts on an extremely quick turn around, either utilizing Canadian military or on-call civilian assets.

New thinking of this sort could bring forth a civilian-military relationship through which the government could benefit from 'the best of both worlds'.

The bottom line to a grand strategy such as this, and one that has been espoused by virtually everyone in the foreign policy apparatus, is that of increased funding. If the government is serious in its commitment to global peace, it must be ready to finance it. Foreign policy "on the cheap" is ineffective and, in most cases, counterproductive. Decreased international presence, especially diplomatic presence, will lead Canada down the road to obscurity where, worse than not getting a seat at the table, Canada will no longer be invited into the room. Canada has received much from the international community in terms of trade dollars and is in a financial position to give some back in the form of international security.

Finally, as part of its international security strategy, the Canadian public must be kept abreast of challenges facing the international community today and be more involved in how the country implements this strategy. Therefore, the government should undertake an education and outreach program that will demonstrate the necessity of international involvement to the average Canadian. Improvements in information technology have created the perfect vehicle to begin this process in schools and the establishment (or re-establishment) of peace and security research centres around the country would do much to increase awareness of Canada's pro-action in conflict prevention and resolution.

## **Conclusion**

The doctrine of human security, that is the basis of Canadian international security policy, does not exclude the use of military force and forcible intervention for the protection of individuals in

conflict. Nevertheless, this policy has created rifts between DFAIT and DND because of its 'soft' tone, friction that has led to confusion and poor performance in the conduct of foreign policy.

The development of an overarching international security strategy would mean increased co-operation between governmental departments and an improved, multidisciplinary approach to international security. The goal of such a strategy would be to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to help 'failed states avoid conflict; improve diplomacy if violent conflict becomes imminent; and establish an appropriate military response to the outbreak of hostilities to ensure the safety of non-combatants in the conflict area. This approach is premised on the fact that the three tiers of security (development, diplomacy, and force) are all integral parts of the spectrum of security.

Although it will take some time to understand the intricacies of such a strategy, the benefit of providing a safe, stable international security environment would certainly outweigh any short-term costs incurred.