

**CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY:
FROM INTERNATIONALISM TO ISOLATIONISM?**

A DISCUSSION PAPER BY

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FOREWORD

In 1995, a group of eminent Canadians concerned with Canada's depleting intellectual and financial resources in the field of foreign and security policy created the Canadian National Committee of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (CNC-IISS). The Committee's intentions are to support and publicize the activities of the IISS, and stimulate discussion and research on foreign and security policy in Canada.

In their initial discussions, many committee members expressed concern that Canada was gradually abandoning several of its international commitments, and might be veering inexorably towards retrenchment in international affairs, and even towards a form of isolationism. In the months that followed, the board of the CNC-IISS prepared a research project on the evolution of Canadian foreign policy, emphasizing the risks of a turn away from internationalism. An initial grant by the Donner Canadian Foundation funded the current study by the CNC-IISS officers and helped them to prepare the program for a more substantial undertaking culminating in a conference in Toronto in the spring of 1998.

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INTRODUCTION

While the Cold War may have led us to believe otherwise, foreign policy is not cast in stone. Even the most basic orientations of international action change over time. The current Canadian foreign policy orientation of liberal internationalism, forged during the Second World War, has been tinkered with often in the past. Indeed, circumstances may one day dictate an entirely new policy direction for Canada, one in which the term “liberal internationalism” will no longer apply. Perhaps that time has already arrived. But if it has, you would never know it judging by the pronouncements of our political and academic establishments, which insist, sometimes with doctrinal rigour, that Canada has never departed from internationalism and never will.

It is worth noting, then, that at different times in its history, Canada has held three fundamental foreign policy orientations: imperialism, isolationism, and internationalism. Which makes it all the more surprising that, today, internationalism is perceived as a fundamental aspect of the Canadian identity and an unassailable behaviour given our objective national interest. But as convincing as the arguments in favour of internationalism are, history teaches us that circumstances may lead us in a quite different direction in the future.

Canadian internationalism, which was largely a byproduct of the Western struggle against right-wing and left-wing totalitarianisms, changed markedly with the end of the Cold War. Pronouncements of the 1995 foreign policy White Paper notwithstanding, our foreign policy has become much more selective and conditional than it was 10 years ago. In this paper, we will demonstrate that at present Canada is, *de facto*, practising what we call “selective internationalism.” A position supported by several influential commentators who argue that, since the end of the Cold War, the promotion of Canadian interests no longer requires broad international commitments and initiatives, and that Canada can ensure its prosperity and security without devoting an inordinate amount of resources to foreign affairs. This position usually begins with the notion that the fiscal situation in Canada is the major impediment to an active foreign policy. Finally, it could well be that Canada has no choice but to follow the American lead in its basic international orientation, and if the United States is beginning to question somewhat its international presence, Canada cannot do otherwise. In sum, domestic circumstances and ideologies along with international constraints are combining to reduce the appeal of internationalism.

At the very least Canadian internationalism has been transformed. Foreign aid and defence have been cut to the bone, leaving Canada with limited means with which to cast an international profile. To be sure, Canada is still an upstanding member of the UN, and capable of the occasional initiative in global affairs. However, despite Canada’s current insistence on securing a seat at the Security Council, the fact is that the level of its activities and the quality of its contributions have diminished. Many observers, including Canadian politicians, seem to think that only a modest foreign policy is possible now. They may be right. However, this raises the question of neo-isolationism, since further

retrenchment in Canada may well signify a definitive departure from the internationalist road.

For some, the very idea of isolationism smacks of old-time American foreign policy. It is impossible, they contend, to revert to isolationism in this age of 'globalization,' when many of Canada's economic and trade interests are linked to the provision of strategic protection, foreign aid, and conflict resolution resources, especially in areas of growing or potential economic importance such as Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the coordination of foreign policies and participation in a host of multilateral organisations are seen as necessary elements of foreign policy in today's globalized environment.

This view is not entirely accurate, however. While a reversion to pure isolationism may be out of the question nowadays, one should not confuse isolationism with protectionism, as many people do, including some learned individuals, and academics. Isolationism is a general diplomatic-strategic position, and protectionism is an economic strategy. As American history illustrates, internationalism does not automatically follow from a free trade strategy. For instance, at the turn of the century, the United States was an indefatigable champion of free trade while defending an isolationist foreign policy. Diplomatic and economic postures are not necessarily joined at the hip. While foreign economic interests are vital to a state -- it can even be argued that they are the most important objective of foreign policy -- they can be enhanced by different diplomatic and military postures and strategies: internationalism, isolationism, multilateralism, unilateralism, bilateralism, continentalism, etc. Politicians formulate foreign policies that they calculate will advance the security and economic interests of the nation. Depending on the constraints, objectives, and perceptions of politicians, foreign policy can be oriented one way or another.

Isolationism, or to be more precise, neo-isolationism, is still an option in contemporary diplomacy, an option that we neither laud nor decry. What is worrying, however -- and deceptive to Canadians -- is a government that retreats from internationalism without acknowledging it. Deceptive, not only because it smacks of creeping and unacknowledged isolationism, but because this retreat is being led by a government that has promoted the democratization of foreign policy. Yet, the Chrétien government has been in practice, if not in word, the most isolationist government since Mackenzie King's in the 1930s, all the while touting the official line that internationalism is still the Canadian doctrine in world affairs.

Many people will object that Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy's campaign to ban anti-personnel land mines and that the resounding success of this initiative testifies to the undiminished vigour of Canadian internationalism. In response, it can be argued that the point is not that internationalism is dead in Canada, but that there are strong pressures to dilute it and shift to a more selective approach to international commitments. And it should be remembered as well that the promotion of arms control and disarmament is by no means incompatible with some forms of isolationism, as evidenced by the American support for Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 and the

Briand-Kellogg pact in 1928. Isolationism is usually born out of a fear of being involved in foreign interventions and wars, and arms control agreements and peace treaties also contribute to lessening this possibility. Finally, it must be recognized that Minister Axworthy began the anti mines campaign very much on his own within Cabinet, though with strong support from the NGO community.

Despite the success of the land mines campaign, there is more of an inclination than is acknowledged within the Canadian government and among influential elements of Canadian society in favour of international retrenchment and isolationism. Furthermore, we would do well to recall that the intense focus given to land mines has further drawn attention and resources away from other international concerns.

The sources of the tendency towards withdrawal are varied, and although we do not intend to conduct a thorough analysis of all of them, we will certainly identify some of the most important. By surveying the literature on foreign policy, along with several primary sources, this research paper will identify the doctrinal sources of isolationism and retrenchment tendencies in Canada. This survey was complemented by interviews the authors conducted in late 1996 and early 1997 with several parliamentarians, academics, journalists, and NGO representatives, to gauge the extent of neo-isolationist tendencies among Canadian elites and society.¹

ISOLATIONISM AND INTERNATIONALISM: A REVIEW

American Isolationism: The Shining City on the Hill

The story of American isolationism is well-known and need only be summarized here. Warned by George Washington in his farewell address of 1796 to avoid entanglement in European affairs, the Americans refused until 1944 to enter into any foreign military alliance or mutual assistance treaty.² Because, for most Americans, isolationism was the only tenable and defensible position the country could take, it was rarely questioned. The Monroe Doctrine, authored by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and presented by President Monroe in a message to Congress in December of 1823, reiterated the unwillingness of the United States to play any part in European politics and declared the American continent off-limits to further European colonisation. It effectively divided the Western world in two, leaving the US dominant in the New World, where its unilateral interventions became frequent, notably against Spain in Cuba and elsewhere. American imperialism, in the Americas, in Oceania, and in Asia, also flourished, despite the isolationist policy orientation. Clearly, then, American isolationism never connoted passivity or inaction in the face of international problems and opportunities. But it did rule out actions that could entangle the country in great power conflicts, or that are not in the immediate national self-interest of the US.

American isolationism was cast aside briefly in 1917 when President Wilson led his nation into WWI. Following the war, Wilson tried to involve the United States along with other peace-loving nations in the collective security arrangement known as the

League of Nations. However, the Republican Congress, led by Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, along with several Democrats, expressed reservations with Wilson's "Fourteen Points," and the President's plan was defeated. The isolationism of the inter-war period, fed by the trauma of WWI (presented by pacifists, intellectuals and artists as a useless butchery) was very vocal and almost frenzied,³ leading one veteran observer to describe it as the most internecine foreign policy debate of his lifetime, surpassing even the debate over Vietnam.⁴ Isolationism had widespread support, among both the Left and the Right, and was only abandoned when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December of 1941.

* * *

As noted, US isolationist doctrine stems in part from the messages contained in George Washington's farewell address. Another source of this tendency is the Founding Fathers' exhortations against meddling in European affairs based on the myth of "Manifest Destiny" or "American exceptionalism." This myth defines the United States as a country unlike any other, a country that should not degrade itself in *realpolitik*, a deadly sport of kings but an inappropriate activity for free men. Fueling this myth was the location of the US. Separated from Europe by the Atlantic Ocean, and therefore free to avoid entanglement in foreign debate, many an American saw US physical isolation as a divine sign, allowing them to build their ideal society on earth if only they resisted the appeals of foreign involvement. The Manifest Destiny ideology states that the best contribution that the USA can make to peace and progress in the world is not diplomatic and strategic, but as a showcase for the merits of democracy and private enterprise, to promote free trade, and to open its doors to the wretched of the earth.

Furthermore, many American conservatives have espoused isolationism because they feared that adopting power politics and interventionism would mean an increase -- for national security, or other reasons -- in the size and power of the state. Related to this thesis is the populist notion that Americans should be the first priority of the government, and that the United States owes nothing to other countries. Those who advocate an internationalist foreign policy, the argument goes, are simply Europeanized elites who have deviated from the true path of the American spirit. In this interpretation, they are unrepresentative and illegitimate spokesmen for the American people.

Although isolationism is often viewed as an uninformed and anachronistic right-wing position -- in opposition to the enlightened view of, say, a Woodrow Wilson -- it also has left-wing and pacifist roots. Many influential pacifist Protestant sects in the US have historically joined forces with other isolationist forces in opposition to military deployment overseas, intervention, and war. After the heavy sacrifices of WWI, a whole generation expressed its opposition to war through calls for disarmament, demobilization, and the renunciation of violence. In the 1920s and 1930s, many people judged the private manufacturers of arms -- the so-called "merchants of death" -- primarily responsible for WWI. In Congress, the Nye Committee launched lengthy proceedings devoted to the analysis of this issue and was a vehicle for the expression of strident pacifist and isolationist tirades. The Briand-Kellogg Pact, echoing pacifist sentiments, tried to outlaw

war forever. Naturally, pacifists and leftists stood alongside traditional isolationists and pro-fascists in their opposition to involvement in Europe between 1938 and 1941.

Canadian Isolationism: Quiet Moments in a Fire-Proof House

Until 1919, Canada's foreign policy essentially followed British imperialist designs. Canada did not have external representation outside of Great Britain until the 1870s, and the Department of External Affairs was only created in 1909. In 1914, Canada followed Britain automatically into war. Since it did not yet possess the actual *jus belli*. It was only in 1919, at the Paris conference, that a Canadian foreign policy independent of Britain emerged, which evolved into liberal internationalism.

Canada's enthusiasm for the League of Nations was never more than lukewarm. After monumental failures, such as the limp-wristed response by the League to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, Canada grew completely disillusioned and withdrew into a form of isolationism. Although Canadian isolationism did not preclude participation in the League, Mackenzie King opposed sanctions and other strong League actions.

In the 1920s and 1930s, then, Canada pursued a moderate isolationist policy, captured by the expression "fireproof house" coined in 1924 by Senator Raoul Dandurand in a speech to the League of Nations.⁵ Although Canadian isolationism did not exhibit much ideological content, it had in common with US isolationism an indifference to the quarrels and armed conflicts that were growing in Europe, and a reluctance to prepare for assisting our European cousins against the Nazis. In fact Canadian isolationism was also inspired by a mix of attitudes comparable to the ingredients of the British appeasement mentality: a combination of pacifism, cautious optimism about the Hitler regime in its early days, and hesitancy on Continental European issues. Furthermore, the isolationist attitudes of the Province of Quebec were particularly influential in Canada, since in both previous foreign wars -- the Boer war and WWI -- French Canadians, chiefly from Quebec, had massively opposed Canada's entry into war and conscription. With Quebec accounting for one third of the Canadian population, led by an autonomist government in Quebec City and home to nationalist and religious mass movements able to rapidly mobilize thousands for anti-imperialist causes, the Quebec factor was high in justifying less attention to world affairs.⁶

Nevertheless, when Britain's ally, Poland, was attacked, Canada did not hesitate to declare war on Germany. This convincingly demonstrates that Canadian isolationism was more superficial than that practiced by the United States, the difference undoubtedly accounted for by dissimilar US and Canadian historical experiences with the British Empire. This only shows that there are degrees of isolationism, as there are of internationalism. However, subsequent events have demonstrated the persistence of isolationism in Quebec, and the problems that it created, once again, for national unity.

The isolationist experience left both the United States and Canada ill-prepared for resisting totalitarianism. Indeed, it has often been argued that an early American

commitment to the protection of freedom in Europe would have stopped Hitler in his tracks. When WWII started, military preparation was deficient in both the United States and Canada. While the US had a first-rate navy, its air force and especially its land army were much less impressive. This undoubtedly slowed its acquisition of an operational capability for fighting in Europe and may have delayed the opening of a second front and the victory over Germany.

In Canada, Mackenzie King personally opposed the strengthening of the army and the militia in the 1930s, despite troubling developments in Europe. As a result the Canadian army had to train intensively for more than three years before it was ready for combat.

The Ascent of Internationalism in the USA and Canada

President Roosevelt, who had emerged as a strong internationalist (and slightly Germanophobic), felt that the US would have to participate in the new European war, but he failed to convince his fellow Americans of this until after Pearl Harbor. As soon as he began to prepare for war, however, he commenced also to plan for peace. Designs for the UN and its specialized agencies were discussed and submitted to the Allies. The United States was determined to use its eventual victory to impose on the world such liberal internationalist goals as collective security, the pacific settlement of disputes, decolonization, free trade, technical, scientific and cultural cooperation, and human rights. The United States under FDR became rapidly convinced that their national interest coincided with the international interest, and that both could be served by improved Wilsonian norms and institutions.

The American signing of the UN Charter effectively and formally entangled the United States with Europe and other regions in the Security Council, through collective security and the pacific settlement of disputes. NATO and other pacts of mutual assistance followed, and by the 1950s, the US was at the centre of a web of universalist and bloc organizations designed to mitigate conflict and ensure defence.

Thus, as the Americans declared war on the Axis powers, they became involved once again with the Western Europeans. Except that this time, the relationship would last not two years but more than a half century. Indeed, containment of the USSR became the major reason for a very active internationalist American foreign policy after WWII. If not for the threat that the USSR posed to its allies, the US may have returned to a form of benign isolationism with minimal UN engagement after the war. However, the containment of the USSR required their leadership in the West and their full commitment to a number of pacts and agreements, the number and the gravity of which would have made George Washington blanche. This diplomatic activity, coupled with nuclear mastery and economic hegemony, guaranteed effective US containment for decades, while the USSR slowly decayed from within.

The passage from isolationism to internationalism was more rapid in Canada, but it was in pursuit of essentially the same Wilsonian goals and objectives as in the United

States. Even Mackenzie King, the isolationist and secret admirer of Hitler, sometimes voiced internationalist sentiments. For example, in the House Debate on the establishment of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, he sounded like a resurrected Immanuel Kant, declaring that world government was the only hope of salvation for mankind!⁷ King left External Affairs to his designated heir, Louis Saint-Laurent, who had no experience in, and not much of an appetite for, the topic. Saint-Laurent encouraged the bright minds of Canadian diplomacy, such as Lester Pearson, Escott Reid, Jules Léger, Hume Wrong, George Ignatieff, Norman Robertson, Arnold Heeney, and John Holmes to come up with proposals for internationalist norms and institutions that complemented and often went beyond American plans. Later Secretaries of State for External Affairs, notably Pearson himself and Paul Martin Sr., vigorously pursued the internationalist effort.

Despite this general commitment to liberal internationalism, Canadian internationalism experienced a decline during the first mandate of Prime Minister Trudeau (1968-1972). In the 1970 White Paper, the government reiterated the main internationalist priorities but acknowledged a limited Canadian capability to serve and promote them and recommended readjusting our efforts on the international scene. Clearly, the emphasis in Ottawa was to sustain a foreign policy that would serve Canadians first.⁸ The government, true to its word, reduced Canadian troop contributions to NATO the following year. Later, it generated more heat than light in its search for commercial diversification following the “Third Option” strategy.

In power from 1957 to 1963, 1979-80, and 1984 to 1993, the Conservatives held fast to the internationalist position, though Prime Minister Diefenbaker did try to bring Canada closer to its British roots. Conservative Prime Ministers Clark and Mulroney were deeply committed internationalists, as were such foreign ministers as Flora MacDonald, Joe Clark, and Barbara MacDougall.

THE RETURN OF THE BALD EAGLE: THE CURRENT AMERICAN DEBATE ON ISOLATIONISM

Retreat from Internationalism and Return to “Normalcy”

Following the Cold War, an anti-internationalist mood has affected Washington politics in many ways, the most spectacular being the electoral defeat of President Bush, despite his success in the Iraq war and the consistently good ratings he received for his foreign policy, both among the elite and the general public. President Clinton, instinctively aware that domestic problems mattered far more to Americans than foreign policy, summed up his platform by the rather prosaic formula that marked his first campaign: “it’s the economy, stupid”.

During President Clinton’s first year in office, there were some signs that the United States might withdraw from international commitments. Of particular concern to internationalists was the concentration on trade issues. In 1993, Secretary of State Christopher alarmed both internationalists and atlanticists when he noted that Europe was

no longer dominant in the world. Also in 1993, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Peter Tamoff caused quite a stir by his off-the-record comments on the primacy of economic matters and on the necessity of downsizing American commitments abroad. It is not surprising then that initially many interested observers -- including former Secretary of State James Baker -- attacked the Clinton Administration for its "creeping isolationism".⁹

Since then, however, President Clinton has been careful, in both his travels and his policy pronouncements, to voice his commitment to internationalism, and to demonstrate American confidence in multilateral institutions. He was notably active on the Bosnian and Haitian issues, despite the criticisms he had to face. In some speeches, President Clinton and members of his Administration openly attacked the isolationist alternative. In sum, the President came to realize that it was his duty to defend internationalism, against a very reluctant Congress. Although he was compelled to follow the Congress on issues such as contributions to the UN and the fate of Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, he has consistently reaffirmed his support for the organization and its activities in peacekeeping. In a way, the President has been internationalism's last line of defence in American society. And though he seems to be prevailing for the moment, the movement against internationalism is anything but a spent force.

* * *

Immediately following the end of the Cold War, many commentators began to argue that the most important constraint on US foreign policy had been lifted, and that the United States could return to its isolationist stand on world affairs. As Ms. Jeanne Kirkpatrick succinctly put it: "...the time when Americans should bear such unusual burdens is past. With a return to 'normal' times, we can again become a normal nation..." because, "...the United States is free to focus again on its own national interests without endangering the civilization of which it is a part".¹⁰ The debate on isolationism and internationalism was joined once again. Some politicians immediately expressed "America-First" positions, the early proponent of which was journalist and Republican Presidential contender Patrick Buchanan.¹¹ In the 1992 and 1996 presidential campaigns, billionaire candidate Ross Perot was also a high profile proponent of isolationism.

While, for many, the issue was what kind of foreign goals and actions should be pursued by America during what Charles Krauthammer has called the "unipolar moment,"¹² others saw the end of the Cold War strictly as an opportunity to reduce the number of US international commitments. The most obvious, and most often discussed, opportunity offered by the end of the Cold War was the reduction in military expenditures and alliance commitments, which has been recommended by both the Left and the Right, though for different reasons. The Left argues that military involvement should be cut to reduce the state's means to intervene abroad and risk war, and to concentrate on economic and social reform at home.¹³ (For many, it is also a moral imperative, but we will not deal with pacifism here). In this vein, the 'declinist' school of thought has argued for years that military expenditures are the cause of the decline of nations, and that the US would be wiser to put its money elsewhere.¹⁴ For the Left, a

necessary condition for demilitarization is the renunciation of alliance-type diplomatic and military commitments, save for the UN. To this, we should add that another basis of Left-wing isolationism is a form of protectionism designed to save American jobs from foreign competition. Platforms along these isolationist and protectionist lines have been defended by many first violins of the Democratic party, such as Jesse Jackson, Jerry Brown, Pat Schroeder, and Richard Gephardt.¹⁵

The Right, on the other hand, argues that the reduction in military expenditures is a way to reduce the deficit, limit the role of the state in society and the economy, and restrict presidential autonomy in foreign affairs. As analyst David P. Calleo wrote, since the US has economic and budgetary problems, it cannot sustain collective security alone anymore. Therefore, it should rely on “burden-sharing” with its allies and partners.¹⁶ The theme of “burden-sharing” has been a classic fixture of US-European discussions in NATO, but in Calleo’s paper it becomes -- following a lengthy discussion on why the US cannot afford an activist foreign policy anymore -- a particularly elegant and clever argument to advocate disengagement and withdrawal, without actually calling for isolationism. In fact, few people advocate isolationism outright, but instead resort to euphemistic and disguised arguments in favour of withdrawal. Many prominent Republican politicians in the populist wake of Senator Newt Gingrich have used these arguments to influence the discourse of more traditional Cold War Republicans such as Presidential candidate Robert Dole and Senator Phil Gramm.¹⁷

However, while the Left wants to maintain most non-military foreign programs, including foreign aid, and argues in favour of transferring defence savings to aid, the Right takes a much more radical view of savings. It demands cuts to foreign aid, the UN, peacekeeping, multilateral cooperation, etc. The Republican Congress has been very vocal and active in blocking initiatives and cutting funds for intergovernmental organizations and aid. On the matter of the UN, the Congress has adopted an extremely hard line, eventually resulting in the ousting of Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and his replacement by Mr. Kofi Annan, a favourite in Washington.¹⁸

Isolationism Reconfigured

Despite the isolationist, ‘America First’, or as some authors prefer, anti-internationalist,¹⁹ overtones of the current political debate, theoretical and learned formulations of isolationism are few and far between.²⁰ One exception is a book entitled *Isolationism Reconfigured*. Written by Professor Eric A. Nordlinger of Brown University, just before his death, it reconstructs the doctrine of isolationism for the next century.²¹ The book offers a full isolationist *Weltanschauung*, complete with arguments that (a) all American foreign interventions -- including the entry into WWs I and II -- were unnecessary and detrimental to US interests, and (b) that isolationists were always right about what to do in foreign affairs, and that, had we only listened to them, nothing untoward would ever have happened to America.

The essence of the isolationist argument is that if you do nothing, nothing bad will happen to you, or as Nordlinger himself puts it: “Maximum security lies in getting out of

harm's way".²² Analysts in the realist and internationalist traditions would object that this premise of both pacifist and isolationist literature has been proven wrong time and again the world over. However, it retains its appeal in the US because of the sense of security derived from the military impregnability of the country. After all, states Nordlinger: "The United States was and is militarily and economically invulnerable."²³

Nordlinger insists that American strategic immunity and American democratic ideals should still be considered the bases of isolationism. He rejects internationalist activism: "Going abroad to insure America's security is unnecessary; doing so regularly detracts from it."²⁴ He prefers "(t)he strategic vision of historical and contemporary isolationism, (which) is one of quiet strength and national autonomy."²⁵ He suggests that we add another bird to the bestiary of foreign policy. After hawks, doves, and owls, we should include the American bald eagle as the symbol of isolationism.

However, recognizing that the United States is a principled country that wants to spread its ideals abroad, Nordlinger grants that the new isolationism "...allows for the moderate, unilateral, and multilateral pursuit of a principled, focused, well-leveraged, and thus reasonably beneficial liberal idealism."²⁶ Nordlinger therefore proposes a three-tiered isolationist program, featuring a "...minimally effortful national strategy in the security realm; moderately activist policies to advance our liberal ideals among and within states; and fully active economic diplomacy on behalf of free trade, possibly modified by fairly managed trade relations with Europe and Japan."²⁷

Alarm in the Ranks of Internationalists

In the 1995 Summer issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., launched the liberal internationalist counter-attack against isolationism.²⁸ He recalled that the US has been staunchly isolationist for most of its existence, and that recent declarations by prominent politicians, as well as Congressional attacks against peacekeeping and overseas development assistance, testify to the return of isolationism. Professor Schlesinger's analysis has been echoed in other articles.²⁹ As one author concludes: "...there is an emergence of a minimalist tendency in foreign policy, if not an emergence of outright isolationism."³⁰ Sidney Blumenthal compared elections of 1938 and 1994 in terms of isolationism.³¹ A recent essay offers a thorough analysis of America First and isolationist ideas.³²

However, some of these authors are less worried than Schlesinger about the isolationist direction in foreign policy. They talk of anti-internationalism, populism, minimalism, and unilateralism rather than isolationism. Typical is the analysis that the biggest threat to internationalism is not isolationism, but disinterest, indifference, complacency and apathy in relation to world issues.³³ In reply one could answer that indifference is not a policy. Isolationism, on the other hand is a policy, which derives its appeal from indifference.

Some internationalists dismiss the possibility of a return to isolationism. According to Paul Johnson, the US has never really been isolationist, so there is nothing

to be concerned about.³⁴ In fact, argues Johnson, the United States frequently intervened unilaterally abroad, even in the 19th century. However, one should be careful not to confuse isolationism with complete renunciation of unilateral intervention. No one, except the pacifists and the far Left, argue for such a foreign policy stand. This is neither the spirit of the Washington farewell address nor that of the Monroe doctrine.

* * *

In order to assess the possibility of a return to isolationism in the United States, some analysts have thought it necessary to ask whether there is an isolationist streak in the American public. One of the foremost pollsters on foreign policy, Eugene Wittkopf, concludes from recent results of the annual polling by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations that the American public has not turned isolationist.³⁵ He describes the American public as composed of four cohorts of about equal size on foreign policy: the internationalists, the accommodationists, the hardliners, and the isolationists. A quick look at the literature informs us that different pollsters and analysts agree that the real isolationist public is composed of between 18 and 25 percent of Americans, a proportion that they think has not risen significantly over the years.³⁶ For many liberal-minded analysts, the presence of an America-First and isolationist discourse in contemporary American politics is a manifestation of populism and misinformation, rather than of real change in mood. For instance, they point out that people consistently overestimate the amount of money devoted to foreign aid in the US budget, and when given the straight facts, tend to moderate their anti-internationalist attitudes.³⁷ Using focus groups, two researchers verified this supposition experimentally.³⁸

For other analysts, however, it is not the isolationist view that is superficial, but the internationalist rhetoric. According to Schlesinger:

The latest public opinion survey by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and the Gallup Organisation shows that, while Americans are still ready to endorse euphonious generalities in support of internationalism, there is a marked drop-off when it comes to committing not just words but money and lives. Defending the security of American allies, rated very important by 61 percent of the public in 1990, fell to 41 percent in the most recent survey. Public support for the protection of weaker nations against foreign aggression fell from 57 to 24 percent. There was a 24 percent decline in support for the promotion of human rights and a 19 percent decline in support to improve living standards in underdeveloped countries.³⁹

Bacevich concurs that public backing for globalist policies has dwindled considerably. The Americans now judge foreign policy not based on broad, long-term goals, but rather in terms of immediate benefits for them. He interprets the 1995 poll of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations as an indication that "...the traditional American aversion to grand diplomatic projects is reasserting itself," and concludes that

“...to be sure, the United States will not (because it cannot) revert to out-and-out isolationism. But a strong neopopulist current will foster a national temper incompatible with both of the competing traditions of modern American diplomacy: cold-blooded realism and crusading idealism.”⁴⁰ For Bacevich, this will make America more nationalist, less accommodating, near-term oriented, impulsive, impatient, and erratic. Defence will be valued only for the immediate defence of United States territory. Alliances will not be encouraged. Immigration will not be welcomed. Foreign aid will be cut to the bone (except for Israel, perhaps), and there will be hostility to ‘global agenda’ issues.

Thus, although the adversaries of isolationism have a valid point when they say that many anti-internationalist opinions result from ignorance and can be corrected with some public education, they are less convincing when they affirm that the spread of attitudes on foreign policy has not changed significantly in the US. Indeed, the resistance to idealist and globalist efforts, such as those represented by foreign aid, peacekeeping, and human rights, is palpable.⁴¹ And, from the wealth of data at our disposal, one thing is certain: foreign policy concerns are very low on the public’s agenda.

Admittedly, the data on public opinion is inadequate at the moment. While most polling seems eager to testify to the maintenance of strong internationalist attitudes in the American public, it seems to overlook or downplay the anti-internationalist and isolationist sentiments that are reflected by a lack of interest for foreign affairs, by anti-establishment attitudes, and by an allergy to globalist projects. What is needed are polls that do not assume an internationalist predisposition by the public, with a methodology that would allow them to discriminate between real and superficial beliefs.

FROM SEA TO SEA AND NOWHERE ELSE: RETRENCHMENT TRENDS IN CANADIAN SOCIETY

In Canada, there are no ideological and historical roots to retrenchment and isolationism comparable to those in the United States. Canada’s isolationism existed for only a short period, and was much less dogmatic than American isolationism. As a whole, since WWII, Canadians have identified, and still identify strongly, with the premises of liberal internationalism and its associated doctrines of functionalism, middlepowermanship, and multilateralism. Several Canadian political analysts and many of our interviewees concur that internationalism has become a national trait of Canadians that would be very difficult to uproot without undermining the very national identity of the country.

Nevertheless, retrenchment and ‘Canada-First’ attitudes have always existed in Canada, as evidenced by the historical examples of Quebec nationalism and Western populism. These attitudes have grown rapidly in the last few years, out of concern for the economy, the budgetary situation, the constitutional issue, and out of disappointment over failed multilateral actions in which we participated, in particular the scandalous performance by Canadian forces, notably in Somalia.

Cleansing the Sins of the Cold War: Born Again Foreign Policy

The end of the Cold War is the primary reason why non-internationalist attitudes have begun to emerge in Canada. As in the United States, many commentators agree that with the disappearance of the Soviet threat, Canada no longer needs to spend an inordinate amount of time, money, and energy protecting the free world.

Typical of this analysis were the conclusions of an elite group known as the Canada 21 Council, which was made up of a core of foreign and defence policy specialists, surrounded by distinguished Canadians from all walks of life, including the arts, academia, the business world, science, the media and politics. In 1994, Canada 21's high-powered all-stars took it upon themselves to provide what amounted to an alternative to the government's defence policy white paper. Indeed, their report *Canada 21: Canada and Common Security in the Twenty-First Century*, was issued in time to contribute to and hopefully influence the Defence White Paper, and, to a lesser degree perhaps, the foreign policy White Paper.

In essence, the Canada 21 report argues that the Canadian forces should be turned into a constabulary peacekeeping force that would “abstain from any international operations that include the possibility of attacks by heavy armoured formations, heavy artillery, or modern airpower.”⁴² It further recommends that Canada should not only forego the purchase of new equipment designed for these roles, but also divest itself of any current equipment earmarked for such uses. Instead of purchasing new submarines, for example, the report recommends DND should consider procuring three peacekeeping support, multi-role replenishment ships from domestic shipyards.⁴³

The basis for these and similar recommendations was established in large print at the outset of the introduction. “The Cold War is over,” it said,

Canadian survival is no longer tied to the outcome of a potentially apocalyptic struggle over which we had little influence. No longer are international power and influence measured largely in a military currency that Canada could never hope to possess in large amounts. We can now make *choices* in ways that we could not for the last 40 years; we have the opportunity to reclaim a significant amount of sovereignty.⁴⁴

The report argued that Canada's choice for contributing to security should be to “strengthen its capacity to contribute to peacekeeping and peacebuilding; but that Canada should not participate in combat operations involving heavy armour or modern air power.”⁴⁵ This was a niche approach to security policy and Canada's niche, it was determined, was peacekeeping. In sum, while Canada 21 embodies some of the idealism of internationalism, it offers, in reality, only a truncated version of internationalism.⁴⁶

Also in 1994, two special joint committees of the House of Commons and the Senate were created to review our foreign and defence policies. The report on foreign

policy, published in the Fall of 1994, advocated Canadian adherence to internationalism and the maintenance of most of Canada's foreign engagements.⁴⁷ In its White Paper on foreign policy published in 1995, the government echoed this internationalist orientation, but modernized it by making reference to "global security", which superseded references to national or alliance security.⁴⁸ However, the strong economic/trade orientation of the White Paper left many doubting the strength of the government's concern for diplomatic and strategic issues.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, as Andrew Cohen remarked, although it amounted to a weakening of internationalism, the White Paper was not as isolationist as one would have thought.⁵⁰ A review of the proceedings of the Committee on foreign relations confirms that very few people argued openly for retrenchment or isolationist policies in this exercise, which led Parliament to reconfirm internationalism, albeit with a more selective disposition. However, a Parliamentarian remarked, these hearings took place while the enthusiasm of Canadians for peacekeeping was at its peak. The mood of the country has changed in the interim, mostly due to the problems of the Canadian military. He also commented that during the hearings people were very optimistic about the prospects for rapid development in the former communist bloc, but are now puzzled by the slow pace of progress and the major political and social problems experienced by this region of the world.

The internationalist tone of the parliamentary hearings can also be explained by the fact that the large majority of the people who testified before the committee had a vested interest in an active and internationalist foreign policy. They came mostly from academia, special interest groups, import-export firms, large businesses, development NGOs, and churches; all strong supporters of internationalism. The 'Canada-first' proponents -- who are predominantly ordinary Canadians with little or no professional interest in foreign policy -- did not make an appearance at these hearings. Their command of the topic is very likely negligible, and they may have feared that their views would be highly unwelcome among the more mainstream views of parliamentarians, academics, pressure groups, and the media.

Nevertheless, since the early 1990s many Canadians have been arguing for a selective withdrawal from our Cold War security commitments. The Left has been especially vocal on this issue. For example, testifying as President of the World Federalists of Canada, former Premier Allan Blakeney declared to the Special Joint Committee Reviewing Foreign Policy that "(0)ur forces are not needed in Europe, or I would say, not needed to be committed to Europe, Norway or anywhere else. Clearly, Europeans can look after themselves militarily with respect to any threat they might face, and any role for Canada in providing forces as a trip-wire, I think is not justified."⁵¹ This argument is reminiscent of the one put forward by analyst David Calleo about "burden sharing" in NATO,⁵² and has probably weighed heavily in the government's decision to withdraw our troops from Europe. The difference, of course is that the Americans have not pulled out of Europe yet.

The Deficit and Foreign Policy: Nothing Counts that Can't be Counted

Obviously, Canadians in the last few years have been far more preoccupied by the state of the Canadian economy, the deficit, and the debt than they have been by foreign policy. The dominant view has been to link the future prosperity of Canada to the elimination of the budget deficit and the reduction of the debt. In this context, deep reductions in state expenditures have been undertaken, and defence, foreign aid and foreign policy have provided easy targets to government cost-cutters. The only part of foreign policy that is deemed worthy of pursuit by economists, businesspeople, and all those obsessed by the deficit is international trade. In this vein, one of the parliamentarians we interviewed was struck by the absolute lack of interest in human rights and international security issues by the participants at one of his riding's town hall meeting held to discuss an upcoming Team Canada mission to Asia.

The argument that Canada cannot afford an active foreign policy has been made repeatedly in the last few years. This excerpt from the testimony of a Canadian business executive to the Special Committee on foreign affairs is typical: "...we should focus the greater part of our attention in areas where Canada can achieve the most productive results to the benefit of both Canada and clients. Perhaps we cannot be all things to all people or live up to the commitment level of other partners. Therefore, we must recognize the practical limits of the ability to help."⁵³

This argument has been widely used against foreign aid: "...we need to recognize that a country as heavily in debt as Canada cannot afford major international development aid initiatives, other than humanitarian food and medical aid," said a Calgary economist to the Special Joint Committee.⁵⁴ In a 1994 article, the executive director of the conservative Fraser Institute, Michael Walker, attacked our aid policy, affirming flatly that "...Canada's responsibility in the world begins and ends with Canadians and any more exotic objective is likely to lead to difficulty."⁵⁵ One respondent noted that the Canadian public seems unconcerned with foreign aid, given that CIDA funds have been reduced by 40 percent over 10 years with no public outcry.

Niche Diplomacy: The New Foreign Policy Credo

The preoccupation with fiscal austerity and Canada's constitutional problems that has begun to shape foreign and defence policy in the minds of policymakers has also infected the literature. Analysts have begun to take these forces into account as the most important variables to consider when contemplating future Canadian foreign and security policy. Evan Potter has been forthright in this respect. "Apart from national unity" he writes, "the most important determinant of Canadian foreign policy in the mid-1990s is the precarious state of national finances. Simply put, federal and provincial debts drive Canadian public policy choices."⁵⁶

Eager to have their input at a time when foreign policy is undergoing rapid transition, analysts have begun to trumpet the importance of 'niche diplomacy' and selectivity in foreign policy. Echoing the government, they argue that clear choices must

be made and that a move away from liberal internationalism is inevitable. As Andrew Cooper notes, the concept of niche diplomacy has gained new currency in the 1990s.⁵⁷ Similarly, Evan Potter states that "...Canada has tried to take the lead role in too many international policy initiatives, a legacy of the Golden Age (1947-1957) of Canadian diplomacy."⁵⁸

While clearly Canada needs to make some rather hard choices, the problem with the literature is that the basis for those choices is too narrowly defined, the main criteria seeming to be economic self interest. Cooper in his argument for a return to 'functionalism' in Canadian foreign policy, which he defines as the application of issue-specific skills and strengths in a number of selected areas, states that Canada needs to recognize that it has a greater comparative advantage in the international economic policy-making area than it does in the security domain. He says that Canada should distinguish between the roles it is willing to adopt and those roles it would prefer to leave to other countries. For instance, Canada should make it clear that it does not want to take part in peace enforcement but is willing to engage in peacebuilding. The bottom line for Cooper seems to be that niche diplomacy should promote the national interest and keep Canada out of harm's way.

The literature on niche diplomacy recommends a focus on regions where Canada's economic interests lie, like Asia and Latin America. But advising these choices may be easier than making them. As a respected middle power can Canada hope to make such discrete choices? If problems are transcending borders or are global in nature, is it realistic to - or can we afford to - withdraw from certain issue areas or regions? Will Canadians originating from these parts of the world agree with the choices we make? More to the point, will our allies with whom we leave the security burden? And will the government - or our niche diplomacy specialists - have enough courage to tell the Canadian public that it cannot do anything in the next 'out of our area' humanitarian crisis?

Potter argues that Canadian foreign policy should be more or less privatized. His argument being that the abandonment of several foreign policy responsibilities will lead to a Darwinian outcome, in effect "...forcing the Canadian private and philanthropic sectors to either support this Canadian presence abroad or let it die."⁵⁹ Eventually, "(l)ess and less will our international face be presented by diplomats, soldiers and aid officials; more and more we will be visible through the staff of Canadian-based NGOs and academic, philanthropic, and business organizations."⁶⁰

But on this issue, where will the resources for foreign policy come from, if not from the government? Elsewhere in his writings, Potter acknowledges that the private sector has clearly demonstrated that it is not interested in supporting research on Canadian foreign policy, and that the state should still sustain this activity.⁶¹ However, why would the private sector be more generous in other aspects of foreign policy? Conceivably, NGOs and private companies may be involved in some humanitarian activities in media-popular locales, but it can be expected that their overall contribution to development and peace will be much less than what the Canadian state has traditionally

provided. We also want to be careful about whose values are being carried by these private ambassadors: Canada's or the company/interest group/religious affiliation? In the case of business interests, the profit motive may sometimes conflict with the values that the government wishes to carry abroad. Furthermore, do Canadians want the sometimes controversial agenda of non-profit organizations to represent them on the international scene?

This proposal for the privatisation of foreign policy, in line with the current concern for fiscal austerity, has not been adopted by the Liberal government, especially in view of the possibility, as Potter puts it that "... (i)t is unlikely that the Canadian state will be able to move back into these domains once it has departed from them."⁶² However, one would suspect that some other political parties would agree wholeheartedly with this privatization platform.

More recently, Rudyard Griffiths, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, also argued for a downsized foreign policy, stating that "...it's time we set aside our Pearsonian internationalism and took a crack at self-interest," and advocating a "continentalist" foreign policy emphasizing links with the USA and Latin America. This position is quite similar to that of American isolationists.⁶³

'Niche diplomacy' is the new codeword for a foreign policy concerned only with the material well-being of Canadians. It is partly rooted in a naïve belief on the part of many politicians and bureaucrats that devoting attention to other issues such as security, development, and human rights does not solve problems, but creates them. For Canada's sake, they seem to be arguing, we should get out of the security business and, instead, try to make a buck. Such selectivity in foreign policy is no more than creeping isolationism, and it may undermine human security in the long run.

* * *

The two major right-wing parties, the Conservatives and Reform have also proposed radical cuts in foreign policy, defence, and aid, in order to save public money. Even though they still invoke internationalism and pay lip service to solving global issues, their electoral platforms tell a very different story. For instance, the Reformists have made it clear in their *Green Book* that they would cancel most aid programs, save for humanitarian ones, to save on the order of \$520 millions.⁶⁴ In their dissenting opinion to the Special Joint Committee, they advocated deep cuts in foreign policy activities, the transfer of CIDA's commercial promotion activities to DFAIT and a clear legislative mandate for what would be left of CIDA spelling out the basic principles of Canadian foreign aid.⁶⁵ In their platform entitled *Let the Future Begin*, the Conservatives promised to slash foreign aid spending to the bone and diminish foreign representation abroad, for savings of \$800 millions.⁶⁶ Here again, fiscal austerity and nothing else seems to determine foreign policy. The absence of a widespread belief in foreign policy separate from economic issues was reflected in the 1997 federal election race where international issues were absent from all major pronouncements and debates.

The Revenge of John Q. Public

Another root of current retrenchment proposals in Canadian society is the rise of populist and anti-statist sentiments in the population. According to several analysts, the Canadian political culture, once characterized by deference for political institutions and leaders, is now showing definite signs of cynicism and skepticism about politicians and civil servants.⁶⁷ Although there is debate as to what the causes of this change are - populist ideas from South of the border, or post-materialist attitudes brought by the increase in education - the change is palpable, as several of the parliamentarians we interviewed testified.⁶⁸ These less deferential sentiments often translate into a broad skepticism vis-à-vis foreign commitments, which are viewed as being of little or no benefit to the average Canadian (except for trade) and which are pushed by elites not really in touch with the rest of society. According to many of our interviewees, these sentiments, although widespread, are stronger in Western Canada than in the rest of the country. There, the American influence is notably stronger than in the rest of Canada, and alienation from 'central Canada' sometimes translates into a rejection of foreign policy projects.

These anti-establishment attitudes have been reinforced by the scandals that have affected the Canadian armed forces in the last few years, namely the murder of at least one Somali teenager by Canadian soldiers, the subsequent alleged cover-up of this event, and a video recording of disgraceful hazing rituals in the airborne regiment. All our interviewees agree that these unfortunate events have seriously tarnished the military and, by extension, are turning people against foreign engagements involving the military. For instance, the Reform Party argued against sending troops to Bosnia in 1995, on the pretext that the army is demoralized and unfit to perform the mission.⁶⁹ According to one seasoned analyst, the people are now expecting the military to behave impeccably and with complete transparency, forgetting that the basic function of the military is not to comfort the self-righteous citizen, but to wage war.⁷⁰ The government's efforts to reduce the military budget and to limit our involvement in peacekeeping have certainly been made easy by these circumstances. Some political forces advocating the transformation of the military into a kind of constabulary or *gendarmérie* have found much in these events to support their highly debatable position. Even some right-wing populist observers have gone so far as to conclude that Canada should purely and simply disband its armed forces.⁷¹

One of our parliamentary interviewees noted that, according to his constituents, many Canadians are tempted to retrench from foreign affairs out of a 'them versus us' sentiment. These citizens basically think that the West, including Canada, has little in common with the rest of the world, which is in fact opposed to us. Our interviewee likened this view to Professor Huntington's thesis of the "clash of civilizations."⁷² In this perspective we should not bother helping these societies either through foreign aid, peacekeeping, or immigration. The high level of immigrants coming to Canada was a particularly sour point for this segment of Canadians.

Left-Wing Isolationism: Doing More Good with Less

As stated, withdrawal from foreign involvements is not an exclusive idea of the Right. Many left-wingers also advocate retrenchment, mostly regarding alliances and other forms of North-North cooperation. For instance, Mr. Robert White, President of the Canadian Labour Congress, states that "...Canada can't pull back and become isolationist," and advocates spending on foreign aid, on the UN and in peacekeeping. However, the union leader does call for withdrawal from NATO, and points out that "...Canada's foreign policy should be grounded in Canadian realities. Our priorities should start with our relations with the United States and Latin America, the Asia-Pacific region and our Arctic neighbours. This is not to exclude other parts of the world, but to simply acknowledge and reflect the priority of our self-interest in these regions."⁷³

Although radical left-wing attitudes have lost most of their audience in the last decade or so, they are still influencing the political discourse, mostly under the guise of the moral discourse known as 'political correctness'. This discourse has persuaded Canadians that there is no such thing as a national interest, or Western interests, and that everything is a global problem. Consequently, it advocates withdrawal from alliances, and the substitution of peacebuilding and human rights advocacy for military deterrence and collective security in the troubled regions of the world. This is a laudable program in many ways, but it is geared towards helping solve security problems only in regions where Canadian aid can be a useful instrument and where the risks of conflict are low.

Notable also is the fact that ideas such as peacebuilding, global security, and the increased role of NGOs are readily welcomed additions to Canadian foreign policy, despite their obviously idealistic and left-wing roots. One can not help but think that political correctness has found support among government cost-cutters, for no other reason than that peacebuilding through grants to NGOs is more cost-efficient than actual foreign aid and defence commitments.

Power Politics and a Weak Constitution

Canadian constitutional problems may have, in a small way, diverted attention from foreign affairs, and contributed to retrenchment tendencies. Some of our interviewees mentioned that international peacekeeping in Haiti or in Rwanda was a tough sell west of the Ottawa river, in part because they were directed at French-speaking countries, and many thought they were solely intended to secure the vote of Francophone Quebecers -- including Montreal's Haitian community -- for the Liberal Party.

However, it is hard to provide concrete evidence of the influence of constitutional problems on isolationist attitudes. For instance, polling generally shows that, despite the prevalence of the constitutional question in Quebec, Quebecers' interest in foreign affairs is no less than that of their Anglophone neighbours. Some interviewees claim that Quebecers are very much attached to internationalism, perhaps more so than Western Canadians, as is demonstrated by their constantly high support for foreign aid, multilateral institutions, and peacekeeping. It is quite possible, then, that the national

unity issue has more effect on our elites than on the general population. Presumably, party leaders and militants have less time to devote to foreign affairs than would be the case if the national issue was not so high on the agenda. This could partly explain Mr. Chrétien's moderate involvement in foreign affairs and the cavalier way in which he sometimes deals with these questions.⁷⁴ However, many people have argued that, rather than being consumed by it, our national politicians -- Mr. Chrétien above all -- have been purposely avoiding the national unity issue. Admittedly, constitutional differences in Canada may divert some of the attention from foreign affairs, but, overall, the effect of the national unity debate on foreign policy attitudes is probably secondary as compared to major factors that we have already discussed, such as the end of the Cold War, the deficit issue, and populism.

The Internationalist Resistance: the Power of Incantations

Naturally, there is still a lot of resistance to retrenchment and isolationism in Canadian civil society. Support for internationalism can be found among charitable organizations, academic think-tanks, large corporations, foreign policy advocacy groups, churches, and political parties. In the 1994 Parliamentary hearings, witnesses from different ideological persuasions specifically referred to isolationism and warned against following any American lead in that direction.⁷⁵ In the last few years, most major newspapers have defended an internationalist posture similar to that of the White Paper.

Three of the parliamentarians we interviewed were convinced that foreign aid and defence have been too easy to cut, and that this may mean we have lost sight of the future requirements of our foreign policy. Particularly troublesome to all of our parliamentary interviewees and several others was the neglect of capital expenditures for new military procurement. For example, they think Canada should be willing to spend on basic items such as replacement helicopters for the *Sea Kings*. Yet no decision on this is in sight.

It would be long and tedious to report all the professions of faith in internationalism that have appeared in newspapers, speeches, academic writing, and party platforms over the last few years. These sentiments may be all inspired by genuine belief, but one thing remains: the Canadian government, despite all these believers, has downsized its international commitments, and is continuing to do so. The question remains: When will we have to stop speaking of internationalism, and provide another term for the basic orientation of Canadian foreign policy?

CANADIAN FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY IN THE 1990s: THE EROSION OF INTERNATIONALISM

For all intents and purposes, the Cold War ended in 1989-90 when some of its most potent and enduring aspects--the Berlin Wall, the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet Union itself -- collapsed in sudden and rapid succession. Their disappearance was all the more surprising because of the ease with which these seemingly indomitable structures fell apart.

The world celebrated the end of a forty-year nuclear standoff that for many observers posed an imminent threat to its very existence. But it also faced an uncertain

future. The dissolution of the once mighty Soviet empire threatened instability, civil war, and perhaps even nuclear confrontation within and among the Union's successor and former satellite States in Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe.

For Canadian policymakers, the most immediate impact of the end of the Cold War was the removal - in theory, if not in practice - of the only serious military threat challenging Canadian security. This eased Canada's retreat - at least militarily - from NATO, which had served as a pillar of Canadian foreign policy since WWII.

The Advent of Selective Internationalism

While the end of the Cold War prompted a reassessment of Canadian foreign and security policy priorities, the fiscal crisis that has gripped the Canadian economy in recent years, has been the single largest determinant shaping that policy in the 1990s. In the early part of the decade, the Mulroney government continued to pledge allegiance to NATO and to the United Nations, all the while recognizing that the tasks for these organisations had changed. In Europe, the challenge for NATO, along with the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, was more political and economic than it was military: it was to ensure the viability and stability of the successor states of the former Soviet Union and the emerging 'democracies' in Central and Eastern Europe. The United Nations, it was expected, would move to centre stage, the focal point around which to organise a new world order. This impression was reinforced by the Western response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The success of Operation Desert Storm was pointed to as an illustration of how the United Nations and its Security Council could work together in the post-Cold War era.

But the optimism that accompanied the Gulf War and the end of the Cold War was soon dashed on the shores of conflicts in Yugoslavia and Somalia, conflicts for which there was no easy solution nor unanimity among world leaders about how or whether to intervene. Both situations mocked the much vaunted slogan "a new world order." They also demonstrated that security could be threatened by more than just military force. Ethnic civil conflict, transnational crime, drug trafficking, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, disease, environmental degradation, all of these posed new and lethal threats to security.

* * *

The end of the Cold War coincided with two other dramatic events in Canada that, combined, fueled the most marked Government retreat from Pearsonian internationalism since the inception of that doctrine. Successive Conservative and Liberal governments in Ottawa became preoccupied with reducing the deficit and balancing the federal budget and, at the same time, became embroiled in constitutional questions surrounding the status of Quebec within, or separated from, Canada.

These events began to make themselves felt during the waning years of the Mulroney government, when the Conservatives claimed a peace dividend from the end of

the Cold War to pay down the federal deficit. As such, foreign and defence policy were characterized by consecutive annual cuts to defence and the closing of international policy think-tanks, such as the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security (CIIPS).⁷⁶ Money for non-governmental foreign policy research was also cut back or withdrawn, decimating the non-governmental community's capabilities to provide critical research and policy analysis. Shortly after CIIPS was axed, the government cut core funding for the Canadian Centre for Global Security (formerly the Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament).⁷⁷ This trend has continued under the Liberal government. Funding for independent freelance and university research has begun to dry up or has been reduced. For example the Cooperative Security Competition Program at the Department of Foreign Affairs was canceled in 1994 and DND's Security and Defence Fund is shrinking annually.

The physical withdrawal of military forces from NATO also proceeded apace. Constitutional preoccupations dominated the Government's priorities. As Hampson and Maule explained, Canada spent most of 1992 "navel gazing," as they put it, debating amendments to the constitution resulting in the Charlottetown Accord in July which was, in turn, rejected in a country-wide referendum the following October.⁷⁸

Still, this confluence of events -- the end of the Cold War, the need to address the federal deficit, populism, and the Quebec question - has had its greatest impact under the current Liberal administration, ironically the originators and supposed guardians of the doctrine of Pearsonian internationalism.

* * *

No one would argue that dealing with the federal deficit or grappling with the issue of Canadian unity did not deserve the efforts accorded them by the Liberal government following their election in 1993. Nor can it be argued that the end of the Cold War did not demand a reexamination of Canadian security policy priorities. The question is whether these phenomena and the response of the Liberal government to them, has unfolded in such a way as to leave Canada bereft of its traditional internationalist focus.

Foreign and defence policy issues were not prominent in the 1993 election campaign, though the Liberal Red Book did contain a strong commitment to multilateralism.⁷⁹ In fact, nearly the sum total of the Liberal defence and foreign policy platform was captured by the promises to scrap the purchase of EH-101 helicopters for the Navy (a telling harbinger of the Liberal's approach to defence policy when in power) and re-negotiate certain aspects of the NAFTA. The Liberals also committed, somewhat vaguely, to democratize foreign policy.

The latter entailed a review of both foreign and defence policy, a welcome and overdue undertaking given the end of the Cold War. That review included two special joint House-Senate Committees, one each for defence and foreign policy. Each committee would hold hearings for close to a year, welcoming submissions and witnesses

from across Canada from both the public and private sector. In the words of the 1994 Defence White Paper into which the Defence Committee's review fed: "The Special Joint Committee on Canada's Defence Policy traveled across the country listening to the views of ordinary citizens, defence experts, disarmament advocates and non-governmental organizations."⁸⁰ This is what was meant by the democratization of foreign and defence policy.

But as Claire Sjolander points out, in spite of this commitment to democratization, it was clear that the driving issues behind the development of a new defence policy were financial. As she states: "While the parliamentary review had a broad mandate to consider all aspects of Canadian defence policy, fiscal constraints were paramount."⁸¹

After both public consultation and internal reviews, a new *Defence White Paper* was published in December 1994, followed closely by the publication in early 1995 of the Government Statement on Foreign Policy entitled *Canada in the World*. Any examination of the Liberal government's record must begin with these two documents. Both of them are informed by the need for Canada to adjust its foreign and security policies to a rapidly changing post-Cold War world. Both make reference on their first pages to the need to make these adjustments within the "financial constraints" posed by the "economic realities we face at home."

From a security standpoint, account is taken in both documents of non-traditional threats to security. In *Canada in the World* it was noted that: "...the threats to security now are more complex than before. A whole range of issues that transcend borders - including mass migration, crime, disease, environmental degradation, overpopulation, and underdevelopment - have peace and security implications at the regional or global level."⁸² And the Defence White Paper, satisfied with progress made on arms control and in some areas of regional conflict resolution, highlighted the dangers posed to security by population pressure, refugees, failed states, and the resurgence of old hatreds.⁸³

Both the defence and foreign policy white papers were conscious attempts to come to grips with the new international environment in which Canada found itself in the 1990s. But more explicitly than ever before, they also took account of the Canadian domestic situation, adopting the philosophy that the international and domestic environments are inextricably linked. Both foreign and defence policy were explicitly developed within the constraints of, and with reference to, Canada's domestic economic priorities.

But those constraints manifested themselves differently with reference to defence and foreign policy. While both departments suffered cuts to their budgets, the defence department suffered them disproportionately. The Department of Foreign Affairs was cut, to be sure, especially in the area of foreign aid, but more important was the way foreign policy was re-conceptualized to serve primarily as a vehicle for promoting jobs and economic growth in Canada.

The ground for this type of thinking was prepared in the Liberal Red Book where it was noted that no false distinction should be made between domestic and foreign

policy. Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet confirmed it when he tabled the Government's Foreign Policy Statement in the House of Commons in February 1995. Ouellet told Parliamentarians that the government is committed to implementing a foreign policy that promotes access of Canadian goods and services to foreign markets. The first of three foreign policy objectives, as they are laid out in *Canada in the World*, is to defend and increase Canada's prosperity and to promote jobs and growth by diversifying our economic trade relations.⁸⁴ But the emphasis on trade and economic relations as an aspect of foreign policy has reached unseemly proportions in this government. In the words of Andrew Cohen, prosperity and employment are at the heart of the government's foreign policy agenda, enough so that Minister for International Trade, Roy MacLaren could intone: "Foreign policy is trade policy."⁸⁵

In short, the number crunchers at Defence and Foreign Affairs, not to mention at the Department of Finance, have begun to have steadily increasing influence in determining foreign and defence policy at the expense of the policy mandarins inside the respective departments. In this sense, both areas are being subjugated to the exigencies of short-term domestic concerns.

* * *

That policy however has proved to be another step away from wide and variegated Canadian engagement in world affairs through multilateral participation in the UN and regional organisations and alliances. Indeed, it marked, if anything, a further withdrawal from the world or at least selective participation in it that is based almost entirely on economic and trade interests.

Canada in the World stipulated three objectives for foreign policy: The promotion of prosperity and employment; the protection of our security within a stable global framework; and the projection of Canadian values and culture. The promotion of prosperity and employment was the first objective in order and, as events have shown, in priority.

How seriously committed the government has been about projecting Canadian values and culture abroad was evidenced by the decision in December 1996 to shut down Radio Canada International (RCI). Though RCI was eventually given a reprieve by the government, the tentative nature of that reprieve -- the government would only commit to full funding for one-year period -- indicated that the Liberals' commitment to the cultural pillar of its foreign policy is decidedly ephemeral. As Hampson and Molot point out, when it came to translating the cultural priority into reality there were only modest funds available in the 1995-96 and 1996-97 Departmental Estimates.⁸⁶ John Hay contends that in fact the Government intent is to promote culture and values chiefly in the service of the two other foreign policy objectives - prosperity and security.⁸⁷ It is not surprising, then, that Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy justified interim funding for RCI by saying "We certainly recognize how important it is to have an effective voice for Canada abroad to promote trade and development."⁸⁸

Security was redefined in *Canada in the World* to reflect a broader concept, that of human security. This concept was based on the notion that in the post-Cold War security involves more than the management of state-to-state relationships. It means grappling with serious challenges posed by “environmental, demographic, health, and development issues: Meeting the challenges that this broader security agenda, poses, means, as the National Forum on Canada’s International Relations concluded, working for the promotion of democracy and good governance, of human rights, and the rule of law, and of prosperity through sustainable development. Canadian foreign policy will continue to pursue these goals.”⁸⁹

Clearly development aid would play a prominent role in meeting these many security challenges. Indeed, the government statement was explicit on this point. “There is consensus that such a broader orientation can best be achieved -- at least cost, and to best effect -- through approaches that broaden the response to security issues beyond military options and focus on promoting international cooperation, building stability and on preventing conflict.”⁹⁰ Sustainable development, it was noted, was a precondition for human security.

The Incredibly Shrinking Foreign Aid Budget

This commitment to security and the inordinate burden placed on foreign aid in contributing to global security was not matched by resources, however. In their first budget the Liberals cut the aid envelope by 2 percent adding to the significant reductions of previous years. While the government stated that it remained committed to meeting the ODA target of 0.7 percent of GNP “when Canada’s fiscal situation allows it,” it has come nowhere close, as it continues to cut both the foreign affairs and the foreign aid envelope.

In 1996, the \$2.1 billion international assistance budget was cut by a further \$150 million. This means that since 1991/92 ODA has been cut by more than 40 percent. The North-South Institute projected that for 1998/99 the ODA/GNP ratio would hover around 0.24 percent, which they termed Canada’s worst aid effort since 1965/66.⁹¹ This commitment amounts to less than half the percentage spent on aid by countries such as Denmark and Norway, countries that Canada frequently compares itself with in terms of international outlook.

While Canada’s foreign aid was reduced, it also went less to the developing countries. A significant part of foreign assistance now goes to former Soviet Union states, including Ukraine and Russia, notably for projects related to the cleanup of their nuclear industrial complex.⁹² Naturally, considerations of national security and of influence over the course of events in Eastern Europe are paramount in this reallocation, and this is perfectly defensible. However, what suffers in return is the money that would go to ensure security and diplomatic influence in other parts of the world such as Africa and the Middle East.

In itself, the dramatic drop in the aid budget in Canada is a telling indication of our withdrawal from the rest of the world.⁹³ But given its critical role in promoting

security as outlined in *Canada in the World*, cuts to foreign aid have further softened the Liberal's commitment to this second foreign policy objective. Indeed, the promotion of prosperity and employment seems to be the only objective of foreign policy that is being pursued with vigour these days. It is an objective, the single-minded pursuit of which has changed the character of foreign affairs in Canada and left much of the traditional policy areas floundering in its wake.

Foreign Policy for Winners: The Team Canada Approach

While *Canada in the World* includes many of the traditional foci important to an internationalist foreign policy, the overwhelming emphasis has been on the statement's first objective, to promote prosperity and jobs. This emphasis could have been predicted. In introducing the new foreign policy to the House of Commons, Foreign Minister Ouellet described a world in which world power is dispersing and becoming defined in economic terms rather than military terms.⁹⁴

The Department suffered budget cuts, to be sure -- \$104.9 million in 1995/96 or 7.5 percent -- but care was taken to avoid cuts to the department's economic and trade capabilities. Thus while the number of diplomats and embassies abroad were reduced, Mr. Ouellet was still able to point out that "More than half of the Department's staff abroad are dedicated to the delivery of trade, economic and investment programs."⁹⁵

The same strong emphasis on economic and commercial interests was carried by other ministers. In a speech to the OAS in June 1995, Christine Stewart, Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa noted that Canada's interest in Latin America was highlighted by the major political and trade mission that the Prime Minister led to six countries in January 1995. She called the region one of the new poles of economic and political power.⁹⁶ A similar tone was adopted by Trade Minister Roy MacLaren in August 1995 at the Couchiching Conference where he noted that all the major impacts on Canada's view of its role in the Western hemisphere were economic. In short, the consequence of the end of the Cold War was that a greater emphasis could now be placed on economic rather than traditional diplomacy.⁹⁷

Canadian foreign policy wasted no time in adjusting to the shift. As Douglas Ross points out, foreign policy has been reduced to Team Canada trade missions to communist and ethnically repressive states and fervent well-intentioned but largely irrelevant speeches on disarmament and peacekeeping.⁹⁸

This new emphasis on the economic and trade aspects of foreign policy had a greater impact since it was combined with the need to rationalize activities in the face of diminished resources, the impetus for which did not come solely from the department. Rather, as Hampson and Molot point out, the review was driven by the perspective of the government's central agencies such as the Privy Council Office (PCO), the Treasury Board, and the Department of Finance. Typically, the marching orders to the Department were that it "is doing too much and must decide on which activities to focus."⁹⁹ Like defence policy, foreign policy would be determined by the exigent need to reduce the

deficit and balance the federal budget. Lip service continues to be paid to traditional notions such as human rights, stability and security, but all of these things are second to Canada's commercial and trade interests.

But being engaged economically in the world does not constitute an internationalist foreign policy. This requires engagement on a broader front on the basis of a philosophy that includes more than immediate self-interest. While *Canada in the World* espoused such a philosophy, the Liberals have failed to translate it into reality. Instead, foreign policy has been reduced to TEAM Canada trade missions in Asia and Latin America where the measure of success is the number of contracts that team members can come away with.

As a result, Canada can point to few foreign policy successes or initiatives in other areas. Among them are contributions to peacekeeping and UN multilateral operations, the pursuit of a worldwide ban on the production and use of land mines, and perhaps the independent stance taken on Nigeria. Combined with cuts to foreign aid and peacekeeping's dubious future, the result is that Canada seems to have little to contribute in the international arena, except in areas where a profit can be made or its economic interests are at stake.

This is not to argue that selectivity is not a wise or necessary choice. Clearly fiscal circumstances dictate the need to be careful about where we spend our foreign affairs resources, both human and financial. But selectivity must be determined based on more than the profit motive. Otherwise Canada risks an unwelcome reception in many of the councils where important international issues are decided and where the price of admission is measured in something other than dollars.

Slipping out of the Barracks: The Canadian Retreat from NATO

For more than forty years, one of the most important of those councils for Canada has been NATO. For this reason alone the Canadian retreat from NATO has been startling, if not completely unexpected given the circumstances. Only a few years prior to that retreat, in June 1987, the Mulroney government had released its White Paper on defence, entitled, *Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada*. Considered by many to be hopelessly out of tune with the times, the cornerstone of that policy remained the Soviet threat and Canada's commitment to NATO. It proposed an ambitious weapons acquisition program, including a new main battle tank for use in NATO Europe, and, most controversially, the purchase of nuclear attack submarines. More significantly, it committed the government to "a base annual real growth rate in the defence budget of two percent per year after inflation, for the fifteen-year planning period."¹⁰⁰ A year later, Joe Clark, Canada's External Affairs Minister, was still touting the importance of NATO and Canadian involvement: "We are in NATO because a strong North Atlantic alliance serves the best interests of Canada... Canada is still vitally interested in protecting freedom, and advancing it, in Europe. The Alliance across the Atlantic is still a powerful instrument to resist American instincts to isolation... One thing that has changed is the direct threat to Canada is more terrible now, with strategic missiles."¹⁰¹

But in 1989, that tune began to change. In April, at NATO's fortieth anniversary celebration, Canada still sang the Alliance's praises and the importance of Canada's role in it. But, at the same time, its defence commitment to NATO began to soften. In the defence budget that year, the planned purchase of CF-18 fighter jets was canceled. Similarly, the scope of the main battle tank purchase was reduced and the project itself was put on hold. Plans for a division-size force dedicated to Central Europe in times of crisis remained, but on paper only, since there were no provisions for equipping and reinforcing the division.

Fiscal Austerity and National Defence: Shooting Fish in a Barrel

Only two years after committing itself to 2 percent annual real growth in the defence budget until the year 2000, the government abandoned this goal. The 1989 budget held defence expenditures at \$11.34 billion, marking an actual decline in expenditures after inflation and beginning a trend that would characterize defence budgets in the 1990s. In 1991, it was announced that the two Canadian bases in Germany -- Baden-Soellingen and Lahr -- would be closed by 1995. In the defence estimates of 1992-93, the withdrawal of Canadian forces from Europe was pushed up a year to 1994, and plans to leave a 1,100-man task force in Europe were canceled.

The end of the Cold War, combined with the Federal government's determination to address the deficit, fueled both Canada's military retreat from NATO and the concomitant steady reduction in monies dedicated to the department of national defence. While significant in themselves, these developments also combined to mark the most radical departure in Canadian foreign and security policy in the last fifty years. The end of the Cold War reshaped the international security environment and, at the same time, threw Canadian foreign policy and policymaking into a state of flux. It also left the organs of foreign and security policy vulnerable to economic cuts.

* * *

In spite of acknowledged fiscal constraints and the lack of an identifiable military threat to Canadian security, the Defence White Paper released in 1994 prescribed a general purpose combat-capable force for the Canadian military. While the White Paper acknowledged that "[a] country of Canada's size and means cannot, and should not, attempt to cover the entire military spectrum...the Canadian forces must be able to make a genuine contribution to a wide variety of domestic and international objectives."¹⁰² The Paper cautioned, however, that this did not mean that Canada must possess every component of military capability. Instead, Canada would specialize in those multi-purpose capabilities that are considered to be essential.

The White Paper was an ambitious blueprint for the Canadian military that incorporated all of the traditional missions: the protection of Canada, defence cooperation with the United States, and peacekeeping and involvement in other types of multilateral international security operations undertaken by the UN or NATO. It was especially

ambitious in light of the continuing budget cuts to national defence. In February 1994, the DND budget was cut by \$7 billion over five years, including the scrapping of the EH-101 contract. While the defence budget of 1995 was tailored to reflect the requirements of the White Paper, it left many defence analysts wondering whether Canada was sinking even further into a commitment/capabilities gap.

Professor Doug Ross, for instance, has pointed to a variety of capital equipment deficiencies that have accumulated since 1991.¹⁰³ He includes the elimination of Canada's armoured firepower despite the offer of hundreds of modern American main battle tanks at little more than the cost of shipment. Such tanks are essential, says Ross, to protect Canadian soldiers in today's high risk peacekeeping operations or high-intensity military actions, circumstances envisioned for the multipurpose combat capable forces described in the White Paper.

Other deficiencies include the continued need by the Navy to use outdated and dangerous Sea King helicopters, in lieu of them being replaced by the canceled EH-101; the decision not to replace the now obsolete national submarine capability, despite the offer by Britain to sell Canada modern diesel electric submarines at bargain basement prices; the decision to forego new underwater acoustic surveillance capabilities in the northwest passage; and no timely replacement for the CF-18 fighter jet. The result, Ross says, is that Canada has no credible military instrument to apply to international crises when they arise.

In short, successive budget cuts over the years have emasculated the Canadian Armed Forces with obvious affects for Canada's foreign policy. As Ross concludes: "For a country with rapidly decaying teeth and claws, precious little remains of the physical, substantive force commitments that were the underpinning for Canada's traditional liberal internationalist commitments to collective defence and collective security."¹⁰⁴

So, while the Defence White Paper espoused an internationalist defence architecture that took account of modern-day threats to security, in reality Canada's military remained neither equipped nor funded to support that kind of commitment. Years of budget cuts had taken their toll and Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin promised only more of the same. The brave rhetoric attached to the "total force concept" resulting in a "multipurpose combat capability" is betrayed by a wishy-washy even disingenuous commitment to the capital equipment program. While the White Paper pledged new APCs for the army, helicopters and possibly submarines for the Navy, and search and rescue helicopters for the Air Force, most of this has yet to materialize, even in the form of contracts.

In fact upon close inspection we see that the language in the White Paper is open ended and somewhat vague on many of the aforementioned equipment purchases. Thus the White Paper does not commit DND to replace the Sea King, but "to identify options and plans to put into service new affordable replacement helicopters by the end of the decade." Similarly there was no firm commitment to buy new search and rescue helicopters for the Air Force, but instead to replace the *Labrador*, "as soon as possible."

And finally, the language on the purchase of new submarines is a masterpiece of artful hedging, full of contingent clauses. It is worth quoting in its entirety:

[The Special Joint Committee on Canada's Defence Policy] also recommended that, if *it should prove possible* in the current environment of military downsizing around the world to acquire three to six modern diesel-electric submarines on a *basis that was demonstrably cost-effective* (ie, that could be managed within the existing capital budget), then the Government *should seriously consider* such an initiative....*The Government intends to explore this option.*(emphases added)

Clearly fiscal reality outweighed any other determinant of defence policy, including strategic threat assessment, the traditional basis around which a country shapes its order of battle. While Defence Minister David Collenette argued that the \$7 billion cut in spending over five years (up from the \$1.6 billion announced during the election campaign) would not affect the armed forces combat capability, the inability or unwillingness to purchase new, much needed equipment for all three arms of the services, as well as the commitment to reduce the Regular Forces to 60,000 and the Primary reserve to 23,000, made his contention hard to swallow to say the least. This fact was as much as acknowledged by General Jean Boyle early in his brief tenure as Chief of the Defence Staff, when he remarked that the Canadian army was not fit for front line warfare. "If the government asked me to go into a high intensity theatre with the equipment that I have today, I'd have to say I can't do it."¹⁰⁵

This remark was made in 1996, more than a year after the release of the White Paper. And it was made in light of the fact that 3,000 soldiers had been added to the army because of the important role they played in peacekeeping, an activity that the White Paper gave priority to in the new international environment.

Peacekeeping: the Just Non-War Policy

Successive budget cuts at the defence department have created a situation in which Canada, notwithstanding its rhetorical commitment, would be hard pressed to fulfill many of its international obligations as they are outlined in the White Paper. In other words, if measured by the defence component of our foreign and security policy, Canada has in a *de facto* sense retreated from the world.

One seeming exception is peacekeeping, an activity that has long been one of the most prominent and enduring of Canada's contributions to international security. Indeed, cognizant of the fiscal situation in which Canada found itself in the 1990s, many defence analysts recommended peacekeeping as the central focus of a future Canadian Defence policy, including the Canada 21 Council.¹⁰⁶

While the Defence White Paper argued for multi-purpose combat capable forces, it also placed a disproportionate emphasis on Canada's role in peacekeeping. The army,

which plays the strongest role in peacekeeping, was the only arm of the forces whose personnel strength was increased, by 3,000. This at a time when manpower overall was being cut. As Sjolander states: In the context of a redefined role for the Canadian military in the post-Cold War world, there is no debate as to the role of the Army-it is peacekeeping.

Sjolander also argues that peacekeeping is the key to the new agenda of the armed forces because it can be sold to the Canadian public and to its political masters. "Peacekeeping activities have come to represent the translation of this new mandate to the Canadian public; the easiest answer to the question of what DND currently does -- now that the Cold War is over."¹⁰⁷ Indeed, peacekeeping in the post-Cold War has been the Canadian military's primary contribution to international security, and therefore key to Canada's continued policy of internationalism.

But the disappointing peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda, not to mention the agonizing Somalia inquiry, have -- fairly or unfairly -- sullied Canada's peacekeepers in the eyes of the Canadian public and have tarnished the reputation of the military in general. One must seriously question, then, whether Sjolander's observation any longer holds.

CONCLUSION

The late Eric A. Nordlinger has tried to demonstrate that isolationism is a viable foreign policy option for the 21st century. A number of American politicians and analysts seem to agree with his ideas. And, although the figures are disputable, it is certain that a meaningful segment of Americans believes that isolationism is still the natural policy for the 'shining city on the hill.' Although the long history of isolationism in the United States has been interrupted for a half-century by the internationalist interlude, withdrawal from foreign engagements is creeping back into mainstream American discourse.

Canada does not have the isolationist tradition of the United States, but in practice it is now tempted by the sirens of disengagement and retrenchment. As several of our interviewees testified and as our analysis showed, there are strong withdrawal sentiments brewing under the surface of a seemingly placid public opinion over international affairs, than one would be left to believe by consulting parliamentary hearings or official government statements. This, however, should be verified by the use of opinion polling.

Nevertheless, using the strong word of "isolationism" to describe current retrenchment trends can generate strong denial, if not derision, from many Canadian observers. However, saying that isolationism is no longer possible as a foreign policy is not only false, but it also detracts from the analysis of the new withdrawal attitudes in foreign policy. A pure isolationist foreign policy may not be resurrected, but the concept of isolationism can certainly still be used as an *ideal type* against which to measure how far the current foreign policy is removed from classic Pearsonian internationalism (another *ideal type*).

* * *

That there has been a shift in foreign policy is in many ways understandable. A wise and practical foreign policy is one that takes account of shifting international and domestic circumstances and adjusts and adapts to meet them. The end of the Cold War, globalisation, and the domestic fiscal situation of the 1990s clearly demanded that Canada revisit its foreign and security policy with a view to making the appropriate adjustments.

That Canada has done. The foreign and defence policy White Papers issued by the Liberal government took careful account of the changed international and domestic environments in which Canada found itself in the mid-1990s and, with reference to them, provided a blueprint for Canada's engagement in the world. The Defence White Paper, with its emphasis on multi-capable combat forces, and the Government Statement on Foreign Policy, with its trumpeting of the need for global stability, are both strongly internationalist in tone.

Yet, rhetoric aside, the conduct of Canadian foreign and security policy leaves much to be desired in the minds of traditional internationalists. At best we are pursuing a selective internationalist policy at present and could easily slip into conditional internationalism, which is only a short hop from flexible isolationism.

Perhaps this is to be expected. Perhaps the retreat from internationalism and the emphasis on commercial and economic aspects of foreign policy is the proper and natural approach to international relations at the end of the 20th century. And perhaps those who think otherwise are simply dinosaurs, unable or unwilling to recognize the new environment in which Canada operates.

But if this is the case, why does the Government still feel the need to cloak itself in internationalist rhetoric, even as it pursues retrenchment on all fronts except in foreign economic policy? While it is acknowledged in both government white papers that the international environment is still volatile and the world is still a dangerous place to live, the current Liberal government seems to view that world and its problems through a purely economic lens, willfully ignoring the continued importance of traditional diplomatic and defence commitments and undertakings. Instead it uses Canada's economic situation as an excuse for opting out of some international commitments and its commercial and business undertakings as a multipurpose instrument by which we fulfill most others. In short, it has adopted a Swiss army knife approach to foreign policy.

For instance, our economic circumstances mean that we cannot afford the type of military able to participate in dangerous high-intensity combat operations. But this is of little import since, for the government, global stability is primarily a function of global prosperity. Therefore the promotion of trade and economic relations, which the Liberals admit is "at the heart of the Government's [foreign policy] agenda...help[s] to anchor international stability and make progress toward sustainable development." More than

this the pursuit of Canadian and global prosperity also allows for beneficial economic partnerships with others thereby opening them increasingly to Canadian values.

Canada has made a virtue of necessity. By redefining security and approaching it in 'an integrated fashion' that draws on all available foreign policy instruments, it can pursue its economic and commercial self-interests and maintain that in this way it is actually fulfilling a wide range of international commitments. But is it reasonable to expect that Canada can abandon some of the more traditional forms of international engagement? There are still many areas in the world where stability is tenuous at best: China, Russia, the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East. Is our business approach to foreign policy enough to prevent further instability in these regions? If not, what will Canada contribute to international efforts to prevent or contain a potential catastrophe? Will the promise of providing only peacekeepers after hostilities have been contained cut muster with our allies? If we cannot contribute militarily or diplomatically how will this affect our economic relations with our allies and in the affected regions? More fundamentally, what if the current governmental analysis is wrong and that liberalized world economic relations are the consequence, rather than the cause, of functioning international political and military arrangements? In this case, by reducing its diplomatic commitments, its international activism, its foreign aid, its defence, the Canadian government may be contributing to the slow decline of some of the international arrangements that have been crucial for the welfare and the good government enjoyed by Canadians. On this point, neo-realists and mainstream liberals converge: the long-term self-interest of Canada should dictate an internationalist foreign policy.

Of course another question is whether a foreign policy based purely on economic self-interest befits a respected middle power of Canada's stature? If we can pursue our economic and commercial interests in partnerships with others, why not pursue our diplomatic and defence interests in the same way? And is self-interest a Canadian value that we want to promote to the world? Do we not have international obligations that go beyond self-interest, based on our nature, culture, values and history?

It remains to be seen what the Chrétien government will do in its second term. Lloyd Axworthy as minister of Foreign Affairs remains a committed internationalist. But how much weight will he carry in Cabinet? Also there has been some relaxation in austerity policies. But for government attention and money, Foreign Affairs and Defence will have to stand in line behind a host of other departments and programs that are much bigger vote-getters. And no doubt the stronger showing of the Reform party and the Conservatives will keep the government's feet to the fire when it comes to further spending, especially on foreign issues. Moreover there is continued support for retrenchment in the foreign affairs community, as evidenced by recent articles supporting niche diplomacy.

Canada need not engage in 'niche carving' which may mean further retrenchment and reduced attention to many global and national security problems. Although we are naturally inclined to engage in some activities more than others and conduct relations with some states more than others -- indeed this is natural and was characteristic of our

post-WWII foreign policy -- we need not exclude, *a priori*, other activities or regions.

And we must base our foreign policy on something other than short-term economic self-interest. We must continue to act according to global principles and with reference to the interests of our allies and friends. And we would be wise to consider that our economic interests may in the long run hinge on what we contribute diplomatically and militarily. There are no free rides in international relations.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

A- Individual Interviews

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron, M.P. (Bloc Québécois), Ottawa, Dec.13, 1996
Mr. Tim Draimin, CCIC, Toronto, Dec.9, 1996
Mr. John English, M.P. (Liberal Party), Ottawa, Jan.7, 1997
Mr. Jack Fraser, M.P. (Reform Party), Ottawa, Feb.21, 1997
Mr. Bob Miller, Parliamentary Center, Ottawa, Dec.12, 1996
Professor Maureen Molot, Carleton University, Ottawa, Dec.23, 1996
Mr. Evan Potter, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, Ottawa, Dec.18, 1996
Mr. Nelson Riis, M.P. (New Democratic Party), Ottawa, Jan.20, 1997
Mr. Jeff Sallot, *The Globe and Mail*, Ottawa, Feb.18, 1997
Professor Martin Shadwick, York University, Toronto, Dec.10, 1996

B- Roundtable of the CNC-IISS

At their December 9, 1996 annual meeting, several members of the CNC-IISS held a discussion on the topic of internationalism, isolationism and Canadian foreign policy, which has informed this report. Present were: Mr. Allan Gotlieb, Mr. Thomas Delworth, Mr. Robert Fowler, Dr. Ernest Gilman, Mr. Paul D. Manson, Mr. Eric Margolis, Mr. Richard O'Hagan, Mr. Berv N Dov Rodal, and Mrs. Nancy Wildgoose.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Their comments are not attributed in the paper, but the reader can consult the list of interviewees at Annex 1.
- ² For a recent study on the Washington Address, in light of current foreign policy debates, see Garrity, Patrick J., "Warnings of a Parting Friend," *The National Interest* 45, Fall 1996, pp.14-26.
- ³ Art, Robert J., "America's Foreign Policy," in Macridis, Roy C. (ed.), *Foreign Policy in World Politics*, (6th edit.), Englewoods Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1985, pp. 114-169 (p. 120).
- ⁴ Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr. "Back to the Womb? Isolationism's Renewed Threat," *Foreign Affairs*, 74 (1), July/August 1995, pp. 2-8.
- ⁵ It is worth noting that Sen. Dandurand was not advocating such a stand, but was merely referring to the possibility that Canada could be a fireproof house amidst the fires of war. On this period, see James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, vol. 1, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1964; and John Hilliker, *Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs*, vol. 1, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990; and André Donneur, *Politique étrange canadienne*, Montreal, Guérin, 1994.
- ⁶ Of course, there were anti-conscriptionist sentiments in other segments of Canadian society, particularly in the West, but the Quebec opposition was the most influential.
- ⁷ *House of Commons Debates*, 1st session, 20th legislature, 17 December 1945, p. 3716.
- ⁸ Hence the title of the White Paper: *Foreign Policy for Canadians*.
- ⁹ Dunn, op.cit., p.248.
- ¹⁰ Kirkpatrick, Jane, "A Normal Country in a Normal Time," *The National Interest*, Fall 1990, pp.44, 42.
- ¹¹ Buchanan, Patrick, "America First: Let The World Get By Without Uncle Sam," *International Herald Tribune*, Sept.10, 1991.
- ¹² Krauthammer, Charles, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70 (1), 1991. Also see Khalilzad, Zalmay, "Losing the Moment? The United States and the World after the Cold War," *The Washington Quarterly* 18 (2), 1995.
- ¹³ For example of this position, see Tonelson, Allan, "What is the National Interest?" *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1991. Also, see Steel, Ronald, "The Domestic Core of Foreign Policy," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1995; Steel, Ronald, *Temptations of a Superpower*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995.
- ¹⁴ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Power from 1500 to 2000*, New York, Random House, 1987.
- ¹⁵ See Dunn, David H., "Anti-Internationalism and the New American Foreign Policy Debate," *Contemporary Security Policy* 17 (2), August 1996, pp.238-263 (p.243).
- ¹⁶ Calleo, David P., "Can the United States Afford the New World Order?" *SAIS Review* 12 (2), 1992.
- ¹⁷ Bacevich, A.J., "Politics and Foreign Policy in 1996: The Impact of the New Populism," *Orbis* 40 (1), Winter 1996.
- ¹⁸ Helms, Jesse, "Saving the U.N.: A Challenge to the Next Secretary-General," *Foreign Affairs* 75 (5), Sept-Oct 1996, pp.2-7.
- ¹⁹ Some analysts prefer this label, for they believe isolationism to be too precise a position, when what they see is a set of vaguely America-first, and anti-establishment attitudes that have in common to be opposed to liberal internationalism (Dunn, op.cit., p.244).
- ²⁰ The reasons for this are unknown. Perhaps learned people tend to be more internationalist, or perhaps isolationists fear being attacked and ridiculed by the dominant liberal-internationalist group. Only a handful of learned isolationist material has been published in the last quarter century. See for example Tucker, Robert W., *A New Isolationism: Threat or Promise?*, Washington, Potomac Associates, 1972; and Ravenal, Earl C., "The Case for Strategic Disengagement," *Foreign Affairs* 51 (3), April 1973, pp.505-521.
- ²¹ Nordlinger, Eric A., *Isolationism Reconfigured*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p.131.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p.78.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.6.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p7.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4.
- ²⁸ Schlesinger, op.cit.
- ²⁹ Dunn, David H., "Anti-internationalism and the New American Foreign Policy Debate,"

Contemporary *Security Policy* 17 (2), August 1996, pp.238-263. Hendrickson, David C., "The Recovery of Internationalism," *Foreign Affairs* 73 (5), Sept.-Oct. 1994, pp.26-43. Lavin, Franklin L., "Isolationism and U.S. Foreign Policy," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* III (1), Winter-Spring 1996, pp.271-77.

³⁰ Lavin, op.cit., p.272.

³¹ Blumenthal, Sidney, "The Return of the Repressed: Anti-Internationalism and the American Right," *World Policy Journal*, Fall 1995.

³² Kauffman, Bill, *America First!: Its History Culture, and Politics*, Amherst (NY), Prometheus Books, 1995.

³³ For example, Dunn, op.cit.

³⁴ Johnson, Paul, "The Myth of American Isolationism," *Foreign Policy* 74 (3), May/June 1995, pp.159-164.

³⁵ Wittkopf, Eugene R., "What Americans Really Think about Foreign Policy," *Washington Quarterly* 19 (3), 1996, pp.91-106.

³⁶ See Dunn, op.cit., Wittkopf, op.cit.

³⁷ Destler, LM., "Foreign Policy and the Public: Will Leaders Catch the Full Message," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* III (1), Winter-Spring 1996, pp.265- 269; Kull, Stephen, "What the Public Knows that Washington Doesn't," *Foreign Policy* 101, Winter 1995-1996.

³⁸ Friedman, Will, and John Immerwahr, "Discussing Foreign Policy with the Post-Cold War Public," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* III (1), Winter-Spring 1996, pp.259-264.

³⁹ Schlesinger, op.cit., p.7.

⁴⁰ Bacevich, A.J., "Politics and Foreign Policy in 1996: The Impact of the New Populism," *Orbis* 40 (1), Winter 1996.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Canada 21 Council. *Canada and Common Security in the Twenty-First Century*. Toronto: Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto (1994), p 64.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 53.

⁴⁶ Not to mention a very benign interpretation of peacekeeping, despite the risks associated with some forms of this intervention today, especially in the context of "peace enforcement" or "peace-making" where the line between peacekeeping and war fighting becomes considerably blurred.

⁴⁷ Special Joint Committee Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, *Canada's Foreign Policy: Principles and Priorities for the Future*, Ottawa, November 1994; *Canadian Foreign Policy: Dissenting Opinions and Appendices*, Ottawa, November 1994; Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Government Response to the Recommendations of the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy*, Ottawa, February 1995.

⁴⁸ Government of Canada, *Canada in the World: Government Statement*, Ottawa, 1995.

⁴⁹ Cohen, Andrew, "Canada in the World: the Return of the National Interest," *Behind the Headlines* 52 (4), Summer 1995, 16pp.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy* (hearings of the Special Joint Committee on Foreign Policy), May 31, 1994, p.16:7.

⁵² Calleo, op.cit.

⁵³ Mr. Fred Rayer (President, Alconsult International Limited), *Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy*, June 3, 1994, p.25:61.

⁵⁴ *Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy*, May 30, 1994, p.13:13.

⁵⁵ Michael Walker, "Informed Self-Interest is Best Strategy for Canada and the World," *The Ottawa Citizen*, November 6, 1994, p.A9.

⁵⁶ Evan H. Potter, "Redesigning Canadian Diplomacy in an Age of Fiscal Austerity," in Fen Osler Hampson and Maureen Appel Molot (eds.), *Canada Among Nations 1996. Big Enough to be Heard*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press (1996), p. 23.

⁵⁷ Andrew F. Cooper, "In Search of Niches: Saying "Yes" and Saying "No" in Canada's International Relations," *Canadian Foreign Policy*, vol. 3 no. 3 (Winter 1995), p.2.

⁵⁸ Evan H. Potter, "Canada Must Become Expert in Niche Diplomacy," *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 15, 1996, p.A9.

- ⁵⁹ Idem.
- ⁶⁰ Potter, in *Canada Among Nations*, op. cit., p. 47.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., pp.34-35.
- ⁶² Potter, in the *Ottawa Citizen*, op.cit.
- ⁶³ Rudyard Griffiths, "The Day of Pearson Internationalism is Past," *Globe & Mail*, April 12, 1997, p.D3.
- ⁶⁴ April Lindgren, "Parties offer voters Clear Choices," *The Ottawa Citizen*, May 20, 1997, p.A17.
- ⁶⁵ *Canadian Foreign Policy: Dissenting Opinions and Appendices*, Ottawa, November 1994, pp.30-3 I
- ⁶⁶ See Lindgren, op.cit., and Joan Bryden, "Charest Tilts to the Right," *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 19, 1997, pp.A1,A2.
- ⁶⁷ See Newman, Peter C., *The Canadian Revolution: From Deference to Defiance*, Toronto. Penguin Books, 1995, and Neville, Neil, *The Decline Of Deference*, Peterborough, Broadview Press, 1996.
- ⁶⁸ According to many observers, the defeat of the government in the referendum on the Charlottetown constitutional accord in the fall of 1993 was a particularly spectacular illustration of this trend.
- ⁶⁹ *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 8, 1995, p.A6.
- ⁷⁰ David Bercuson, *Significant Incident: Canada's Army, the Airborne, and the Murder in Somalia*, Toronto, McLelland & Stewart, 1996.
- ⁷¹ Randall Denley, "After Years of Disgrace, DND should be Disbanded," *The Ottawa Citizen*, January 29, 1996, p.D1
- ⁷² Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- ⁷³ Mr. Robert White, *Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy*, June 9, 1994, pp.37:7-37:8.
- ⁷⁴ Michel Vastel, "Le 'petit gars de Shawinigan', c'est assez....," *Le droit*, 13 janvier 1994, p.17; and "Chrétien était mal préparé pour l'OTAN" (éditorial), *Le droit*, 13 janvier 1994, p.16.
- ⁷⁵ See for example Mr. Allan Gotlieb (April 26, 1994, pp.5:6-12); Mr. John Saul (April 26, 1994, pp.5:23-25); and Mr. Robert White (op.cit.), *Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy*.
- ⁷⁶ See Geoffrey Pearson and Nancy Gordon, "Shooting Oneself in the Head," in Fen Osler Hampson and Christopher Maule (eds.), *Global Jeopardy: Canada Among Nations 1993-94*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993, pp.57-81.
- ⁷⁷ The Liberal government has continued this trend. Recently the Conference of Defence Associations was told that it would not longer receive core funding from the government.
- ⁷⁸ Fen Osler Hampson and Christopher J. Maule, "Global Jeopardy," in Hampson and Maule (eds.), *Canada Among Nations 1993-94: Global Jeopardy*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press (1993), p. 8.
- ⁷⁹ Harald von Riekhoff and Maureen Appel Molot, "Introduction: A Part of the Peace," in Harald von Riekhoff and Maureen Appel Molot (eds.), *Canada Among Nations 1994. A Part of the Peace*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994.
- ⁸⁰ Department of National Defence, 1994 Defence White Paper. Ottawa: Government of Canada (1994).
- ⁸¹ Claire Turenne Sjolander, "Cashing in on the 'Peace Dividend': National Defence in the Post-Cold War World," in Gene Swimmer (ed.), *How Ottawa Spends 1996-97. Life under the knife*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997, p. 259.
- ⁸² Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Canada in the World. Government Statement*. Ottawa: Government of Canada (1995), p. ii.
- ⁸³ Department of National Defence, *Supra note 4*, pp. 1-5.
- ⁸⁴ Notes for an address by the Honourable André Ouellet, Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the Tabling in the House of Commons of the Government's Foreign Policy Statement, Ottawa, Ontario, February 7, 1995. 95/7 DFAIT Statement.
- ⁸⁵ Andrew Cohen, op.cit. pp. 4, 8.
- ⁸⁶ Fen Osler Hampson and Maureen Appel Molot, "Being Heard and the Role of Leadership," in Hampson and Molot (eds.), *Canada Among Nations 1996, Big Enough to be Heard*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press (1996), p. 10.
- ⁸⁷ John Hay, "Projecting Canadian Values and Culture: An Episode in the Making of Canadian Foreign Policy," *Canadian Foreign Policy*, vol. 3 no. 2 (Fall 1995), p. 21.
- ⁸⁸ "Radio Canada International will get new funding: Axworthy," *Canadian Press New-wire*, December 12, 1996.
- ⁸⁹ Op. cit., p. 25.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ The North-South Institute, "Anticipating the New ODA Cuts: Building Options for ODA Reform," report of a One-Day Workshop Cosponsored by the North-South Institute and the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, Ottawa: May 21 1996, p.3.

⁹² Foreign aid programs for Eastern Europe are funded by Foreign Affairs and administered by CIDA. They take the form of joint venture agreements often involving the private sector.

⁹³ Another example of the change in Canadian priorities is offered by the 1993 pullout of UNIDO, the United Nations agency in charge of industrial development in the third world. Canada argued that the organization was ill-managed and that its objectives could be better fulfilled by bilateral and other multilateral programs. This was the first time that Canada left a UN agency. It is interesting to compare Canada's behaviour in this case with the UNESCO crisis in 1984. Then, Canada refused to follow the United States and the United Kingdom in their boycott, stating that countries should push for reforms from within international organisations, not from without.

⁹⁴ André Ouellet, *DFAIT Statement*, (95/7) February 7, 1995, p. 1.

⁹⁵ André Ouellet, *DFAIT Statement*, (95/31) May 16, 1995, p. 2.

⁹⁶ Christine Stewart, *DFAIT Statement* (95/37) June 6, 1995, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Roy MacLaren, *DFAIT Statement*, (95/46) August 13, 1995.

⁹⁸ Douglas Alan Ross, "Canada and the World at Risk: Depression, War, and Isolationism for the 21st Century?" in *International Journal*, vol. 52 (Winter 1996-97), pp. 1-23 (p.1).

⁹⁹ Hampson and Molot, "Being Heard and the Role of Leadership," *op.cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰ Jane Boulden and David Cox, *The Guide to Canadian Policies on Arms Control, Disarmament, Defence and Conflict Resolution*, 1992. Ottawa: Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, 1992, p. 93.

¹⁰¹ Department of External Affairs and International Trade, *Statements and Speeches* (October 31, 1988), p.3.

¹⁰² Department of National Defence, *Supra note 4*, p. 13.

¹⁰³ Douglas Allan Ross, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.4

¹⁰⁵ Paul Koring, "Army unfit for Battle, Boyle says," *The Globe and Mail*, February 13, 1996, p. A1.

¹⁰⁶ See pages 30-33.

¹⁰⁷ Sjolander, *op.cit.*, p. 276.