
IN OUR OWN NAME
PROMOTING PEACE THROUGH JUSTICE
Reflections on Canada's Role in the World

Inter Pares Occasional Papers Series

Inter Pares is a Canadian organization dedicated to promoting international social justice. In Canada and overseas we work to build understanding about the causes and effects of poverty and injustice, and the need for social change. We support communities in developing countries to create healthy, safe and secure futures. We support people's struggles for self-determination and their efforts to challenge structural obstacles to change and their alternative development approaches.

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Promoting Peace Through Justice

Reflections on Canada's Role in the World

Presented to The Hon. Bill Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs
A response to *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy* (DFAIT, Jan. 2003)
by Inter Pares, Ottawa, April 2003

This paper is a contribution to discussions concerning Canada's critical role in the world, initiated by the Hon. Bill Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his call for a "Dialogue on Foreign Affairs" in late January, 2003.¹ The reflections in this paper emerge from Inter Pares' direct international experience over almost thirty years.

As a general framework for Canada's action in the world, *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy*, is a document about values and goals. Canadians may find much in the document which, if acted on, would make them proud; they may as easily find considerations that will raise concern that it may not always be principle that will guide Canada's choices.

The dialogue is explicitly premised on the particular values and culture that Canadians cherish, and upon which Canada's actions in the world are based. The values include shared security and prosperity, tolerance and respect for diversity, democracy and the realization of human rights, and opportunity and equal justice for all. These are certainly values that most Canadians like to see as being at the core of Canadian society, and our actions in the world. From Inter Pares' experience in Africa, Asia and Latin America over many years, we know of course that these values are ideals as often betrayed as honoured. Still, they remain important guides for all of us struggling to find a principled way in the world.

Asserting a Values-driven Foreign Policy

When we talk of the values held up in the Minister's paper, we need to remember that these values are not specifically Canadian, nor even especially Canadian. And these values are not uniquely Judeo-Christian values, or "western" values. Rather these are values that are at the authentic core of virtually all of the spiritual and cultural traditions that infuse this country with its energy and vitality and hope. To the extent that these values are now "Canadian", they are inherited from the many cultures and spiritual traditions that are integrated within Canadian society. We have to remember this especially now, as our government, acting as a partner in an ongoing "war against terrorism", restricts

civil rights of Canadians and other legal residents of Canada on the basis of their country of origin and ethnicity – specifically through Bill C-36 and Bill C-17.

A Dialogue on Foreign Policy declares that [in] an increasingly integrated world, there are new possibilities for Canada to make a difference through our influence and our action... Canadians recognize that doing what is right for others is most often in our own long-term self-interest... Our future is inextricably linked to the future of others beyond our borders.

Most Canadians would agree. And in these troubled days, many, many Canadians would also argue that such values and principles should guide the Canadian government in maintaining the more courageous course of working for peace, when others have fallen into line with the call to arms.

The paper on Canada's foreign policy talks of working "with the U.S. and other allies to protect the values that we hold in common, such as freedom, tolerance and respect for cultural diversity." It is a huge question today whether the "U.S. and other allies", let alone Canada itself, hold these values dear and in-common. In any case, we have to recognize that we cannot protect these values except by unequivocally asserting them and practising them. If we suspend these values with the excuse of defending them, then by our own actions, the values are already defeated and indefensible.

If we suspend our values with the excuse of defending them, then by our own actions, our values are already defeated.

The moment of truth for our principles and values is the precise moment when they are under threat, since that is the moment when they must be applied. In the face of insanity and inhumanity, only maintaining our own humanity and sanity can ensure that sanity and humanity will prevail. This is the lesson of history.

Terrorism, Militarism and Peace

A theme that courses through the government's call to dialogue is the theme of terrorism. It is the phenomenon of international terrorism that apparently merits the claim that the "the world has changed" and we need to rethink our role in it.

Terrorism is a construct as much of propaganda as analysis. The category "terrorist" is a category so large and unsubtle that it obscures reality and important definitions and distinctions that make analysis and constructive action possible. Regardless of the function and usefulness of the construct, terrorism itself is not new, but as old as oppression and resistance, and war itself. Nor is it more common and pervasive today than at other times in history. It has merely come closer to home for some of us.

The scourge of the planet is not terrorism, but militarism. What we call terrorism is a logical and inevitable extension of the increasingly pervasive militarism that has been promoted in the decades since the end of World War Two. Terrorism is a product of militarism, and a tool of militarism. There are millions in Canada, in Europe, and throughout the world, who recognize this and are rising in peaceful resistance and dissent. This citizen uprising includes tens of millions in the burgeoning anti-war movement in the United States itself, who are leading the campaign against war and the ideology of militarism embraced by the present administration in Washington.

Militarism in the world, they argue, must be challenged by the relentless promotion and practice of peace. Canada has the opportunity to do so – fundamentally, forcefully, courageously. Action for peace is required by our government, as well as by Canadian citizens who are now resisting in the street.

The epithet hurled at those who argue against war is the charge of "appeasement" – of ducking obligation at the moment of greatest peril. Let us be clear. The logic of militarism today is not the logic of 1939. It is the logic of 1945. It is the cynical and terrible logic of Hiroshima. It

is the logic of xenophobia, of ethnicity, and nationalism. This logic is not one of liberation and peace, but rather of unconstrained power and dominance. It is the logic of absolute war. It is a zero-sum logic that can only lead to global cataclysm.

Addressing the Root-causes of Violent Conflict

A Dialogue on Foreign Policy asks us to answer the questions:

In promoting the security of Canadians, where should our priorities lie? Should Canada give a higher priority to military combat operations... Or should we focus on broader security measures, such as combating environmental degradation and the spread of infectious disease? What should be our distinctive role in promoting global security? How does the military best serve Canada's foreign policy objectives: though national and continental defense; combat missions in support of international coalitions; peacekeeping; all of the above? Should Canada do more to address conditions giving rise to conflict and insecurity beyond our borders?

Our unequivocal answer is that Canada must do more to address the conditions that give rise to conflict and insecurity beyond, and even within, our borders. A central dilemma of national and international governance today is the uncontrolled expansion of militarization throughout the globe. Related to this dangerous phenomenon is the economic and social destruction worldwide brought about by technological change, the monopoly market, and the unprecedented concentration of unregulated and unaccountable corporate wealth and power, and the attendant erosion of the mediating effect of legitimate states.

This paper is being written at a moment when we are staggered by ever-increasing violence around the globe, and look forward to more violence still, as the dogs of war pace and prowl, stripping their enemies of humanity while pleading the righteousness of aggression. This young millennium – a millennium that was promised to offer the dividends of peace – has been marked by the most intense militarization that the planet has ever seen, a militarization that is, for the first time, truly global. This is the new significance of "globalization".

Canada is and has been a partner in this militarization and needs to reflect deeply on whether this is the road we wish to continue to travel.

This militarization is not only the phenomenon of pervasive global military build-up and influence. It is the imposition of military logic, and the power of arms, to contain deep social and political contradictions that demand global understanding, tolerance, and justice to reconcile and resolve.

Canada has the opportunity to challenge militarism through the relentless promotion and practice of peace.

Militarization is a process of control – social control and mind control, as much as physical coercion. It is said that the first casualty of war is truth. In fact, the first casualty of war is civil liberty – the indispensable liberty of each of us to know the truth, to speak the truth, and to act on the truth as free and conscious citizens. Militarization and freedom cannot co-exist. The right arm of militarization is propaganda, and propaganda also is its shield. It is for this reason that military means so rarely bring about the goals of freedom that are so often used rhetorically to justify aggression.

And so today – in Canada just as certainly as in the rest of the world – we find that misinformation is so pervasive that it is difficult for citizens to trust any source, even to trust our own minds. And misinformation is not merely the resort of government. The concentration of media in the hands of singular ideological interests has transformed major information outlets into platforms for polemic, prejudice, and paranoia.

At the same time, however, we are also seeing a profound mobilization worldwide of free citizens joining together to repudiate militarism, propaganda, and the erosion of freedom and human rights. These are people who are taking their free voice to declare: “Not in our name, this violence, this aggression – not in our name!”

The Roots of Peace

Inter Pares acts in common cause with organizations around the world who are part of this mobilization and whose mission is to promote peace and freedom in their communities, their nations, and internationally. This is not merely a process of resistance. It is a positive project to re-invent peace and freedom in our societies and in all that we do, acting in our own name, and in common cause with others who have chosen to reclaim the authority of responsible citizenship.

Peace is rooted in justice. It is rooted in the principle of self-determination of all people and peoples, free of coercion, acting in their own name. Peace implies, therefore, profound respect for people, their places, their ideas, their aspirations, and their actions to realize the world they imagine. Peace means the acceptance and nurturance of diversity. It means openness to the other. Peace means dialogue, within and among diverse societies and cultures.

Peace is also rooted in civic responsibility and accountability, where governments are accountable to citizens, and

citizens are responsible to each other. Peace can only be consolidated and protected if people have been able to create the norms and mechanisms to express their aspirations and resolve differences to determine common interests and courses of action that secure livelihoods, families, communities, cultures, and nations.

The ground of peace is affinity. It is cultivated by making connections, across space and time and culture. It is nurtured in a myriad of actions taken every day by citizens working together to make the world a safe and caring place to create and sustain livelihoods and community, in mutuality and social solidarity.

These are the values that should guide Canada’s foreign policy, and should be the standard against which our foreign policy is judged, day-in and day-out.

Without Equity, No Peace... Without Peace, No Security

The task of establishing global equity, then, is key to Canada’s foreign policy goals. No one imagines that this can be anything but a long and incremental process. The eradication of global inequities is a challenge unlike any that humankind has undertaken in history. At the same time, it is clear that to reduce poverty in any significant measure, we must implement policies and programs that are focused on ultimately eradicating it permanently and absolutely, everywhere on the planet. This implies an emphasis on profound international cooperation in Canadian foreign policy through all available means of cultural, political, technical and economic interaction and exchange – including trade, but not only trade; including aid, but not only aid.

The world we live in includes enclaves of deep poverty and enclaves of extravagant affluence. Even as the actual people who are poor change, poverty as a phenomenon remains entrenched and structurally reinforced in our societies and in the world. Poverty everywhere is embedded within economic, political and social structures that determine that many – in some places, the majority – will be poor, and that the poor will be a permanent fixture within the economic system.

In this sense, poverty is not “the poor”. Poverty is the conditions that the poor live, and the experience that forms their lives. To eradicate poverty and other inequities requires a transformation of the structures that ensure that some will always be poor, and that the wealth of some is dependent upon the scarcity of others. The means to achieve this have not yet been invented, although there are experiences and models from which to learn, both in the negative and in the positive. It is an historical project to create the universal will to achieve this goal, and to invent

Peace is rooted in justice, civic responsibility, and government accountability.

the means to achieve it. In this context, the government has to make explicit that Canada's ultimate goal in its foreign policy is the eradication of global inequities, and promote a broad public debate about how this can be achieved.

Promoting Equality

The principle of human equality as a goal of global development is the foundation of the United Nations and its conventions, and a principle to which the Canadian government, and Canadians in general, have ascribed for half a century. In the context of the present policy dialogue, this principle is translated into the critical function of promoting equity in economic growth, in the distribution of national wealth and "global public goods", and in broadening the base of economic and social opportunity.

At the heart of this issue are the concrete policies and programs required to reduce and ultimately eradicate poverty and, in this context, the imperative to introduce equality and equity as integral to all strategies predicated on promoting economic growth. All evidence is that this is far more easily said than done. Current debates will have to focus very practically on how Canadian foreign policies on development assistance, trade, and multilateral financial governance, promote or undermine equitable distribution of the benefits of global economic growth.

Equally important, these debates will need to address underlying dilemmas concerning the relative weight and emphasis of "growth-oriented" economic strategies, in relation to other strategies and interventions. Relying solely on economic growth will not resolve the present crisis of global poverty, nor can it eradicate poverty in the long-term. This implies that we need an ongoing public policy debate beyond the present consultation to focus on some very complex questions not addressed in *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy*:

- What are the economic, political, and social strategies that are critical to the structural transformations required to eradicate global inequity in this century?
- How does the Canadian government intend to promote these strategies through its own programs and policies?
- How does the Canadian government intend to integrate internal policy processes to ensure that policies and programs implemented by one

department of government do not erode, and even negate, the benefits promoted by the policies and programs of other arms?

A comprehensive and formal parliamentary review of Canada's future relations with the world and our commitment to global peace and justice is required to augment, elaborate, and refine the definition of the "interests", issues and options at play. It would be an important and timely opportunity to clarify throughout all government departments the goals and policies that Canada is developing to address these issues.

Coherent Politics, and Policy Coherence

The issue of policy coherence therefore has to be at the heart of discussions about Canada's foreign policy. If foreign policy is to be dynamic, timely, coherent and knowledge-based, all departments have to be held accountable for the impact of their policies and programs on the overall goals of Canada's foreign policy. The perspectives of all departments that presently enjoy sway in Canada's foreign policy should be tested against the standard of policy coherence. They need to be called on to defend their performance in this sphere that is so critical to the future of Canada and our role in the world.

Conflicts of Interest

There are many difficult challenges for Canadians and our government in launching a new era of internationalism focused on the eradication of violence and injustice. Of all the challenges that we face together, the most immediate, and perhaps the most difficult, will be confronting the deep conflicts of interest that Canada experiences in contemplating a program of profound common cause with the people of the world. This is where issues such as trade, immigration, health, the environment, and security – the long-term interests that our government states Canada shares with other countries – become two-edged. That these issues can be said, in some sense, to be shared, does not at all mean that our interests are common. To the contrary.

For example, one of the shared interests that the government identifies is trade. But we often use the term "trade" uncritically, as though "trade" were an unqualified good. It is useful to remember that trade originally assumed an exchange of goods of roughly equal value, in which the traders more-or-less broke even, according to their own values, wants and needs. What is called "trade" today – as in "Canada's trade interests" – is not trade at all, but commerce (things are bought and sold, not "traded"); and it is often aggressively unequal and extractive commerce at that.

We need a public policy debate to focus on some very complex questions not addressed in A Dialogue on Foreign Policy.

International trade has little positive developmental benefit to a poor country where the balance of “trade” is wildly negative – that is, when the country imports much more than it sells externally, and the greatest proportion of private capital is kept in foreign-owned banks, often even banks outside the country. The result is a recurring and cumulative net loss of capital, and usually of human capital as well. This is doubly and terminally so if export production and commerce are emphasized at the expense of the local economy and market – noting that the successful examples of significant and permanent national economic “development” in this century, including Japan, have been built on developing and serving the local market as a first priority.²

Trade, security, and migration represent just a few examples of the conflicts of interest that Canada must address and resolve.

Canada’s interests in trade are not necessarily the same as the interests of the countries of the “global south” – the so-called Third World. Indeed, there is usually a mighty conflict of interest, conflict which overlaps with other spheres as well. In the area of “security”, for example, Canada promotes peace, while continuing to nurture and protect a significant industry that manufactures and exports military equipment. In the area of health, Canada aggressively defends and protects the patent protection of the pharmaceutical giants to the detriment of the capacity of countries in the south to develop their own generic pharmaceutical production for domestic and regional markets.

In regard to migration, Canada’s immigration policies proactively seek out and siphon off the very best-trained and dynamic professionals of other countries, yet we collaborate with other industrialized nations to put in place severe impediments to immigration and refugee flows, and militarize our borders to restrict access for the poorest and most desperate.

These are just a few obvious examples of conflicts of interest that need to be addressed and reconciled if Canada is to seriously engage in a renewed and just relationship with the rest of the world, and honour its commitment to the task of promoting peace and global justice. There are other examples, and new issues are certain to arise. It is our common challenge to courageously confront these issues so that the choices and options are scrutinized openly, and the government and its various departments are held accountable to processes of internal consistency and coherence.

Canadian Civil Society

There is an integral and independent role for Canadian civil society in Canada’s relations with the world and in the project to build global peace and justice. The case has been made many times. Most importantly, the case is made every day in the activities in Canada and around the world by Canadian civil society actors – a broad range of faith-based institutions, labour unions, community-based organizations, other third sector institutions and associations, as well as NGOs – and will continue to be made in the profound common cause relationships among these organizations and their colleagues and counterparts around the globe. These relationships are long-standing, and durable; they have survived many transitions, and will survive many more.

At the same time, in the context of a review of Canada’s relationship in the world, it is essential to consider and assess the relationship of the government with Canadian civil society organizations, and its support for these Canadian organizations and institutions in their relationship with grass-roots organizations, NGOs and NGIs around the world.

Many of the issues and “lessons” that presently frame the discourse on global justice and peace come from the experience, formulations and challenges of the non-government sector. While Canada’s relationships at the institutional and diplomatic level are constantly in transition, the on-the-ground presence of Canadian NGOs and NGIs – including their alliances and their knowledge of local history and conditions – represents a constant in Canada’s international relations, upon which the government often relies when global events force them to focus on specific countries or regions.

Resistance to Change

We know that to eradicate injustice and entrenched violence, or even to reduce them significantly, will mean to confront the power and privilege of entrenched interests that will not surrender their privilege easily. There is deep and violent resistance to the struggle for justice and equality, and as serious progress is made in promoting these values in societies around the world, we can anticipate that the resistance of state and non-state actors will become stronger and more forceful. That is, as we commit ourselves to the eradication of injustice and entrenched repression, we can expect increased and intensified conflict where we work, and where we are engaged with government and citizen actors promoting fundamental change.

If we are to embark seriously on this challenge, we have to do so with the awareness that it will require resolute courage

and conviction in our solidarity and accompaniment of those with whom we have engaged. The people who experience the brunt of the violent resistance to social change are not those from afar who support change processes with political solidarity and a little money. The violence is experienced by local organizations themselves, by the impoverished who resist their oppression and mobilize for change, and by public officials who dare to take sides with the poor and who advocate economic and social measures in the interest of the poor.

Promoting Human Rights

Engaging in the commitment to eradicate injustice and repression also means making a commitment to protect and defend those whose actions and activities we are supporting, whether in national or local governments, or in citizens' organizations and institutions. This means being present; it means participating in common cause in the processes we have endorsed and supported. It means being clear that we have taken sides with those who have embraced the struggle against poverty and repression.

Justice, and the eradication of violence, are a matter of basic universal human rights, not of charity, nor of mere humanitarian impulse. The implication is that the political and ethical axis of Canada's relationship with the world has to be human rights, rather than charity and humanitarianism, or some vague commitment to "development".

This implies a protagonist role for Canadians and the Canadian government, in promoting justice and in protecting and defending rights. This element needs to be explicit in the goals and guidelines for the various departments of the Government of Canada, and become a measure of progress or failure in implementing governmental programs.

The implication is that the political and ethical axis of Canada's relationship with the world has to be human rights.

Dilemmas and Opportunities

A critical point where the interests of Canadian citizens, civil society organizations, and our government converge is at the intersection of our various concrete activities to bring about progressive change in the world. This is the ground where our dilemmas are experienced and opportunities shared. In our relationships in the world, and our commitment to foundations of permanent global peace and justice, the way forward for Canadians and for our government is neither unambiguous, nor simple. The

imperatives are far more clear than the means. To engage meaningfully implies not only changing the world, but accepting the implications of these changes for ourselves, and working together to making the world a better place, for others, and for ourselves.

Endnotes

¹ A Dialogue on Foreign Policy, DFAIT, January 2003, <http://www.foreign-policy-dialogue.ca/>

² See Oscar Ugarteche, *The False Dilemma: Globalization, Opportunity or Threat*, translated by Mark Fried, ZED Books and Inter Pares, London, 2000.



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