

Circa 2014-2015

Some Directions for an Alternative Canadian Foreign Policy

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Speaking notes

Group of 78 Luncheon Speaker Series

May 27, 2014

Introduction: Many think that Canada's foreign policy has veered in a direction that betrays our past and mortgages our future. This article suggests alternative directions. It takes its themes from a recent publication of the World Federalists of Canada entitled: *the United Nations and Canada: What Canada has done and should be doing at the UN*. This booklet written by former ministers and ambassadors, heads of NGOs and leading academics provides a plethora of ideas for rethinking Canada's foreign policy especially with regard to multilateralism and the UN.

At the outset, however, it should be noted that this proposal only presents 'some directions' – it does not purport to be an entire foreign policy. To get the whole package, we must consult Canadians. Public discussion is the first element of an alternative policy that will include principles, norms, and an enquiring system for effective social learning about international relations (Paquet 2012: 79). The manner in which Prime Minister Stephen Harper conducts his foreign relations harks back to the monarchical system where policies were elaborated, in secret, by a tiny elite and then dictated to the unwashed. Canada must elaborate an effective, on-going system of public deliberations and parliamentary debates about international relations

The first question, of course is "an alternative to what". For an introduction to Canada's current foreign policy, about which the Harper government has been rather stingy when it comes to informing the public, I have turned to the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark's recent book, *How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change*. In this book he has a chapter on 'Canada's Policy Today'. As a former Prime Minister and long serving Foreign Minister as well as coming from a Conservative tradition, Mr. Clark has excellent credentials for providing us an overview of Canada's foreign policy at the present time. Most of the following part is taken directly from him and then up-date by recent media commentary.

Canada's Foreign Policy under the Harper Government: Clark starts off by reminding us that international issues have played virtually no part in the elections won by Stephen Harper, nor in the platforms or prominent policy positions of his Conservative party. Nonetheless, his party has encouraged a more aggressive, macho

characterization of Canada's role in the world and stepped up Canada's profile as a war-fighting nation with considerably increased defence spending. Even so, there is no coherent and consistent approach to defence policy. Jack Granatstein is quoted as saying that the government has no defence policy. As a counterpart, there has been a steady and deliberate decline in the funding and priority assigned to Canada's diplomatic and development capacity. Except for technical editing of documents produced elsewhere, advice of officials in the Foreign Affairs Department is generally not sought on crucial issues and, when offered, is usually discounted or rejected. The Conservatives wanted a harder-line position reflecting what Harper referred to as a "principled foreign policy" – presumably meaning that previous Canadian international relations had been unprincipled.

The Harper government explicitly rejects even-handedness in the Middle East. "Israel has no greater friend in the world today than Canada" Foreign Minister John Baird told the American Jewish Committee. Harper's hostility toward the United Nations, Clark maintains, is framed regularly in the context of solidarity with Israel. And yet this is precisely the time when Israel could benefit most from constructive examination of its options, the author suggests. On the other hand, in the fields of the environment and international development Canada has become a denier and an outlier.

One of Clark's major themes is that this government has been steering steadily and quietly away from traditionally important areas of Canadian concern – diplomacy, pursuing broad multilateral relations, partnerships with civil society and NGO's, international development and fighting poverty, a balanced role in the Middle East and robust support for the United Nations. Harper maintains he doesn't want "to court every dictator with a vote at the UN". Also at the UN, our participation in peacekeeping missions has fallen from first place when it began to fifty-fifth in 2012. One would think that in a proudly democratic society like Canada, the reasons for these changes should be stated clearly and justified in open debate. This has not been how Harper conducts his foreign policy. Clark points out that this is a notoriously controlling prime minister, who dominates his government's domestic and international policy more rigorously than any of his predecessors. The instinct to marginalize or repudiate past successes and to treat respected NGO's as adversaries, not allies, is risking Canada's international reputation. "Canada now talks more than we act and our tone is almost adolescent – forceful, certain, enthusiastic, combative, full of sound and fury" (p.100).

In the *Toronto Star* the journalist Haroon Siddiqui summarizes Clark's arguments in an article entitled, "Harper has ignored Canadian ways while destroying our reputation". He says of Clark's book, "It's a damning critique of how Harper has changed Canada's image in the world, from a nation admired for its sophistication in mediating, peacekeeping, and working co-operatively in multilateral institutions to one that's belligerent, divisive and dismissive of the United Nations and other international

institutions, such as the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, and the Organization of American States”.

Just to make sure we do not miss the point, Peter Jones, an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa, headlined his editorial page article in the *Globe and Mail*, “Canada’s bitter, small-minded foreign policy”. In it, Jones points out essentially that. “A predictable world order where things like trade and security play out according to rules ... is a world in which smaller countries have a better chance of advancing their interests. This is quiet painstaking work ...” The Conservatives, he says have stood this policy on its head with a policy centred on angry assertions of simplistic moral absolutes and the party’s short-term, narrowly defined domestic political interests and negative campaigning.”

But, we must be careful. Perhaps there is another point of view that we should not ignore. Michael Den Tandt, writing in the *Ottawa Citizen* suggests Harper’s Conservatives may be closer to the ‘Main Street’ than their critics. In a sense this is only to be expected after 10 years of the Conservatives control of the government apparatus with its influence on the media and public opinion. But he also points out that the ‘Reputation Institute’s’ list of the world’s most reputable countries has placed Canada at the top for the past three years. Den Tandt claims people he speaks to tend to agree with the government supporting democratic Israel and opposing theocratic Iran, being cautious about Chinese resource companies, and joining the 2011 Libya campaign etc. He warns that millions think the Conservative policies are the “least bad”. It is useful for us to keep this thought in mind.

His *Citizen* mate, Terry Glavin, ridicules the UN. He recalls that despite the Syrian debacle, its president, Bashar Assad was welcomed as a judge on UNESCO’s human rights panel, and Iran was “absurdly” named president of the UN Conference on Disarmament, China sat on the UN Human Rights Council and Zimbabwe’s “thug regime” of Robert Mugabe was awarded a global conference on tourism. Even if all this does not make us think the UN is useless, it does remind us why so many sometimes find it ridiculous.

In a year end summary of Baird’s foreign policy shifts, Lee Berthiaume reported in the *Citizen* that according to Baird, critics who claim the Conservatives are selling out for the almighty dollar are just “extremist fear mongers”. Baird was responding to critics who think the Conservative government’s ‘historic shift’ to entrench “economic diplomacy as the driving force in Canada’s approach to the world” will turn Canadian diplomats into mercenaries for private business. This was in addition to reports of Canadian arms sales to unstable countries in order to help make Canada a global arms exporter. Baird replied, “Our economic interests are big, substantial, important, but they’re not all our interests... the difference is that our envoys will now have trade and

commerce embedded in their minds as a **top objective** alongside the other issues they are working on.”

A 2014 report of Globe journalist John Ibbitson’s speech on the “Conservative transformation of Canada’s foreign policy” focused on the five major planks of Harper’s policies. They confirm all of the foregoing. The first and most important plank is that Conservative foreign policy must reflect the interests and values of the “Conservative coalition” (rural and suburban Ontario, Prairie dwellers and rural and suburban British Columbians, in sum what we might call aspirational immigrants and the suburban middle class). Second, increased funding should make the Canadian military a source of pride. As an aside, it should be noted that Harper increased military spending from 0.9 per cent of GDP to 1.3 per cent but it is now back down to 1 per cent of GDP. The third plank is that foreign policy should bolster patriotic pride (e.g. the military and the Arctic) – as though our foreign policy in the past had not been renowned for doing just this. Fourth, we should only deal with those multilateral institutions that are perceived by the government as being in our national interest – not “just being part of the gang”. This, says Ibbitson, cost Canada a seat on the UN Security Council. Fifth, the top priority is trade. Another contentious shift has been unilateral support for Israel, which Ibbitson suggests is “partisan pandering”.

Colin Robertson, writing in a 3 D’s Blog for the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, attempts to make what one might consider as a balanced summary of some of the main elements of the Harper Government’s foreign policy. “Harper aims to position Canada as a ‘rising power’ (based on our geo-strategic position complemented by our resources and pluralism). While protecting our privileged access to the U.S., his government is actively seeking new markets for our goods and resources. It draws on our pluralistic population with family entries to every nation on earth especially in an ascending Asia.”

Harper’s binary approach is brash, with little respect for diplomatic politesse, reports Robertson. On supporting Israel, Harper is unequivocal. He is also doubtful about the value of multilateralism and the norms of international law. He does not aspire to middle rank. Harper has rearmed the Canadian forces and placed economic diplomacy at the centre. Immigration must serve Canadian interests. Development aid is integrated to trade and commerce. With government acting as an enabler for the free market, his principal policy goal – in his own mind -- is to build the Canadian economy. Bilateral and multilateral relations are focused on those forums where there can be economic gains.

Harper’s political goal is to polarize Canadian politics into a right-left contest to eliminate the centre-straddling Liberal party. He will build a conservative Canada by shifting power to the West, and enlisting new Canadians who favour less government and emphasise law and order.

Not everything has gone as planned, concludes Colin Robertson. Moving in lockstep with the United States on climate change has withered. Actively supporting democracy abroad in Palestine, Afghanistan and the Arab spring has fallen apart. Baird's 'dignity agenda' is now mostly words. One wonders if the merger with trade and commerce will continue to embrace 'development' in the future. And it is difficult to see how Harper can achieve his ultimate goal of a 'rising power' without shelving his binary approach and embracing pragmatism, compromise and diplomatic politesse. What goes around comes around.

An alternative foreign policy: national interests and international cooperation:

One must come to the conclusion that there is another way of doing Canadian foreign policy that is more in tune with the aspirations of Canadians and their traditions. A country's foreign policy should aim to protect and project its interests, values, identity and security on the international scene and toward other states. How a country does this – by hard or soft power, by bluster or influence, by threats or negotiation, individually or in cooperation with others – is a matter for governmental decisions.

But this leaves up in the air the question of what are 'national interests'. In part it depends on who is doing the defining. Often it fluctuates between seeking power and seeking good. Until Harper turned our politics up-side-down to reflect his narrow, domestic political constituencies and his personal ideology, there was a long Canadian tradition of international 'prudence'. It was a stance fashioned over six decades by both Liberals and Conservatives and our highly respected diplomatic corps. It was designed to reflect our history of conciliation, our values of pluralism and mutual aid, and also our geo-political position, surrounded by great powers but ourselves having great wealth and resources. In other words, Canada's 'relative power' dictates prudence. So, if we want our foreign policy to reflect the Canadian character and correspond to our position in the world, how can we adopt a modern version of our traditional stance?

Here is what the authors of the UN and Canada project have to propose. Let us start by reminding ourselves of Canada's contributions to the international community. A quick list will suffice:

- The drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by John Humphrey of McGill University.
- Lester Pearson's resolution of the 1956 Suez Crisis with the invention of peace-keeping forces.
- John Diefenbaker worked hard to see South Africa expelled the Commonwealth.
- A Canadian, Maurice Strong was the driving force behind the Rio Summit on Environment and Development.
- The 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

- Brian Mulroney's leading role in the fight against apartheid and in the creation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.
- Paul Martin's ideas for the creation of the G20.
- Ambassador Philippe Kirsch's instrumental role in giving birth to the International Criminal Court.
- The determination of Lloyd Axworthy and Jean Chretien to pioneer the Ottawa Land Mines Treaty, the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) doctrine and the opening up of the Security Council.
- Canadians such as Ambassador Robert Fowler and Ian Smiley have attacked the blood diamonds issue and other have done the same for the cause of child soldiers.

Now, as we shall see, our human rights and 'rule of law' reputation has been undermined by Stephen Harper, both at home and abroad.

Perhaps the first question we might ask ourselves is whether we should be cooperating with other countries or going it alone. Harper's practice of going it alone has cost us friends in Africa, the developing world, the Islamic states and even in the U.S. Our authors are of the opinion that our own interests are best served when we work with others. To be best informed and included in the debate, it is preferable to be in the tent with a voice than to be outside the tent sulking in a corner. The present United Nations and especially the Security Council are the result of a century of slow evolution of international organizations. It may not seem like much, but finally having a place where there is a focus for diplomacy 24-7 has saved the world from all sorts of fisticuffs and added to our security. When we had our seat on the Security Council, Canada was one of the 15 most informed and active countries participating in global deliberations and decisions.

In an increasingly interdependent world, it is in our own interest to be active in the UN where the debates are held and the decisions are made. But there is more to it than that. Canada has to be seen to adopt positions on international issues that are good for the world just as they are good for us. Self-interest 'properly understood' means appreciating that the interests of others – that is the global good – is in fact a precondition for one's own ultimate well-being. In a sense, it is just being pragmatic. The Harper government's so called "principled foreign policy" which focuses narrowly on short term and mainly commercial or domestic issues, actually works against us because we lose the opportunity to influence world events that may advance our own interests. This is why, over the years, successive Canadian government – pre-Harper – have decided to participate actively in many international fora such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Francophonie and, more recently, the G-7 and G-20,

among others. It was not just to attend but to defend our interests in the institutions that decide on the global issues of our time.

As a fundamental part of an alternate foreign policy, Canada has to start thinking about regaining its status in these multilateral fora and eventually our seat on the United Nations Security Council. Our overriding interest and objective is the sort of stable, peaceful, rule-based international order that can allow us to work for peace, human security, human rights and justice. **Our government could start by having a more compassionate understanding of the various different approaches to world problems. More balance, more listening, and less stridency would once again make us more acceptable in these institutions that are our windows on the world and a symbol of our global citizenship.** This is how we gained our reputation as a fair but firm and balanced country that was sensitive to others. Such a change in stance could be followed up with an effort to enhance multilateral institutions. The government could sponsor a public review of all the organizations of which Canada is a member, starting with their objectives and mandates and going on to their performance and their degree of delivery of useful public goods. Perhaps we could do this with a representative array of friendly countries.

The United Nations and its Specialized Agencies

The foregoing explains the underlying conditions that demand a change in the fundamentals of our foreign policy. Let us now turn to some of the particular policies Canada should be fostering. To start with the very practical, let us talk about what makes the world go round. Despite the headlines focussing on stories on conflict, the real international story should be about cooperation. The reality is that our world functions pretty well on a day- to-day basis because of the many United Nations specialized agencies focusing on everything from mail, communications and airlines to health, agriculture, trade and education. Take, for example, the International Civil Aviation Association (ICAO) operating out of Montreal, which facilitates the free flow of thousands of international flights every day. Airlines carry 2.5 billion passengers per year. ICAO has to deal with security and safety standards. It must set reasonable and acceptable rules that are adhered to by everyone and then must control their implementation and monitor their compliance. Moreover, it must furnish technical assistance and airport up-grading to states that do not have the resources or expertise. Thanks to its standards, the number of fatal accidents is actually dropping. These services are universally enjoyed but rarely recognized. Now, in addition, ICAO is also focusing on reducing greenhouse gas emissions through fuel efficiency and alternative fuels. Canada sponsored the first resolution on non-smoking in planes.

There are only 15 international specialized agencies in the UN family and Canada is fortunate enough to have had one of them since 1947. ICAO has attracted nine other

international aviation organizations to establish offices in Montreal. These in turn have attracted several other international agencies. Some 1,500 high level delegates attend ICAO meetings plus those of the other agencies. Together they contribute mightily to Montreal's business tourism. Because our governments were not paying sufficient attention, Canada almost lost it all in 2013 when Doha, Qatar made a bid for the international organization by offering better conditions. As several times before, it was only after last minute lobbying by Montreal, Quebec and the airline industry that our **governments finally woke up to the importance of UN specialized agencies and offered better housing and financial and fiscal conditions. Hosting conditions and other formalities must be up-dated on a regular basis. Canadians and all three levels of their governments must be continuously aware not only of the political benefits of the UN and its specialized agencies but also of their very practical benefits.**

Defence and Security:

Defence is another very practical aspect of foreign policy. I am talking about 'defence' writ large as in the term 'security'. In recent years, 'security' has been given a triple definition: 'national security', 'global security' and 'human security'. The Harper government has restricted its definition of defence to the narrow concept of national security. To start with, Harper followed the Liberal lead in refurbishing the Canadian armed forces and contributing strongly to the UN/NATO operation in Afghanistan. But then the Conservatives decided they had to mutate Canada into a war-fighting state and turned its back on peacekeeping traditions. We can even see this in the Conservative's vaunted '**Northern Vision**'. In 2007 Harper promised an Arctic port at Nanisivik, the construction of eight Arctic patrol ships and an up-grade of our fleet of ice-breakers. Six years later, nothing has been done except to make a start on the first highway to the Arctic. While Canada blusters, Russia has moved ahead on all fronts.

Harper has worked to make polar sovereignty a foremost priority. There are triple goals: keeping control over the 1,500 kilometer Northwest Passage as global warming opens the possibility of shipping (52 vessels made full transits in 2012 and 2013); preparing for resource development; and cultivating a Conservative legacy as a champion of the North. But the leitmotif is sovereignty. As Harper told Steven Chase of the *Globe and Mail*, "The government's position is unequivocal. Canada's Arctic is sovereign territory." To which northern specialists, Heather Exner-Pirot and Joel Plouffe respond, "**It is in Canada's interest to use its position to advance common interests in the circumpolar world. But Prime Minister Harper's sovereignty rhetoric is proving detrimental to Canada's ability to do so.**"

In reality, in his Northern policy, Harper has been building on the shoulders of previous Canadian governments and diplomats who negotiated the UN Convention on the Law of

the Sea which gives Arctic coastal states the right to enact laws against maritime pollution. In addition, Article 76 of the Convention, accords coastal states rights over “an extended continental shelf” beyond 200 nautical miles. Countries wishing to make this claim must submit supporting scientific evidence. Norway filed its claim in 2006. But despite Harper’s recent claim of the North Pole, Canada still has not made a complete submission. Time is running out. But even more, there is a strong questioning of the relevance of basing development of the North simply on notions of sovereignty. The people of the North would like to see transport and living subsidies that would make living in the Arctic region more economical and open it to development projects. Also, it has been said that only one thing can overcome the challenges of weather and distance in the great white North, and that is ‘cooperation’. In an era of global politics, Harper’s ‘sovereignty’ rhetoric is out-of-date. **It is our increasing isolationism that is most dangerous to Canada’s interest in the Arctic. Perhaps the best way to use our claim of sovereignty would be to cooperate with the others in the Arctic Council to advance our common interests.**

The Conservatives are also trying to change Canadian military perspectives by spending wild amounts of money on historical wars. Canadians never needed to be told that whenever required they were great warriors. Everyone who has read a little of our history or watched TV knows that perfectly well. But the question then becomes: why bet all our money on just one horse? **Why are we incapable of contributing both to national defence and, via peacekeeping, to global security?** And I do mean both. With the cuts to the defence budget in 2013 we can see the Conservative’s ardour for supporting our military forces is cooling. **Never again should a Canadian government let our forces be under-resourced. But this does not mean we should neglect peacekeeping.**

Peacekeeping, pre-Harper, had a place of pride in Canadian history and identity. Canadian soldiers were at the forefront of world order, contributing to peace in war-torn lands. Where once we contributed 3,000 troops, we now provide only about 60 of the 80,000 strong UN military missions. When the Conservatives came to power, they immediately withdrew our 200 logisticians from the sensitive Golan Heights between Israel and Syria. More recently there has been a major decline in training and education and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre has been closed.

We must once again ramp up our peacekeeping capacity. It requires specialized training as it is a more complex and conceptually challenging task than war-fighting. Special skills required include negotiation, conflict management and resolution, understanding UN procedures and lessons from past peacekeeping missions. In addition, Canadian logistical, communications, transport and linguistic skills would be a bonus for the UN. A concerted effort is needed to revitalize the peacekeeping skills of Canadian forces, alongside or in parallel with the war-fighting

capacities. This will contribute to Canada's aims of enhancing a stable, peaceful, and rules-based international order as well as making our army useful on a continuing basis. We would also gain more influence and renewed pride.

Another potential aspect of global security would be Canadian contributions to the design and creation of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS).

Everyone who has thought about a stronger, more effective United Nations has included in their shopping list an autonomous military capacity so the UN would be less dependent on the goodwill of a few states and better able to respond to emergencies before they get out of hand. For 50 years, successive Canadian governments accorded a high priority to the prevention of war. Now **is not** the time to abandon such a noble goal. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has recently cautioned that "the world is over-armed and peace is under-funded." But states are unlikely to abandon their means of self-protection in the absence of alternate means for security in the international community. We may recall that the King of England was not able to enforce the end of dueling until the country was equipped with the world's first police force – the London 'Bobbies'.

So it is now, internationally. If we want to prevent armed conflicts and curb massive military spending we must have an international police force – an emergency peace service. This UNEPS would be a rapidly deployable, first-responder to help stop smouldering conflicts, protect civilians, and address human needs in conflict areas. The idea is that it would be small, around 15,000 personnel, voluntary, and composed of police, military and civil administrators. But these are only first thoughts. Canada should again lead in developing more detailed plans for a UNEPS and help to attract a global constituency of support.

There are two other contributions Canada can make to global and human security. First, there is the prime requirement that **Canada get back into the business of promoting the principle of 'the responsibility to protect' (R2P)**. In our human security initiative, Canada was the prime mover for helping to establish the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty which launched the R2P idea. The importance of the R2P principle cannot be overstated. The idea that sovereignty is not immutable but can be divided and carries responsibilities is the single most important principle in the 21st century. It will carry the world from inter-state politics (internationalism) toward world governance (globalism). Since the intervention in Libya in 2011, R2P has become a regular topic of discussion but, the Conservatives have ordained that our diplomats are somewhat absent from current debates. Russia and China are wary of foreign intervention (unless it is their's) and the U.S. is growing weary of being the world's policeman. In an alternative foreign policy, it is up to countries like Canada to take steps to: a) help establish the criteria for R2P interventions by the UN, b) emphasize early warning and prevention, c) demand the creation of a standing, rapid-reaction UN force,

and d) work for the limitation of the veto powers of the permanent five Security Council members who are blocking R2P.

Second, as another support for global security, it is claimed **that Canada should once again become active in the limitation and eventual abolition of nuclear arms.**

Again the main problem is the intransigence of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Despite cuts to 'superfluous' nuclear arsenals, there are still 17,000 nuclear weapons hanging around and it is estimated the permanent five intend to spend \$1 trillion on their modernization during the next decade. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has presented a Five-Point Plan for Nuclear Weapons as a step-by-step approach to an eventual nuclear ban. Many states have voted to start work towards a new Convention but Canada has been resistant to such forward-minded thinking. In two parliamentary forums, **members from all political parties expressed a common desire for the Canadian government to host a meeting of like-minded governments to continue preparatory work for a global ban on nuclear weapons.**

Human Rights and the Rule of Law:

The gradual spread of the notion of a universal concept of human rights has been one of the world's great achievements since World War 2. Of course, human rights are dependent on law-based regimes for their respect and on international organizations for the propagation. This was best symbolized by the protest movement cry, "No justice, no peace". And yet the Harper government is guilty of turning its back on the very institutions that have made human rights possible at a time when there are still too many human rights violations and too many horror stories. There is no state without fault. **An alternate foreign policy would have as its goal to strengthen the implementation procedures and the oversight mechanisms for human rights.** This cannot be done by individual states – only by multiple states and the global community working together. In fact, each state should start by cleaning its own stable.

Canada has been accused of undermining its own human rights values and the rule of law. Some examples:

- The failure to protect in any way the child soldier, Omar Khadr.
- Willingness to accept information obtained by torture.
- Failure to take effective action to stop violence against indigenous females.
- The transfer of Afghan detainees in violation of humanitarian law.
- Draconian refugee legislation (omnibus Bill C-31) concerning detention and discriminatory treatment for those arriving by irregular means. Depriving impoverished refugee claimants of health benefits.
- Funding cuts and loss of charitable status for organizations advocating rights.
- Failure to monitor international rights abuses by Canadian resource companies.

- Proposing legislation that would gut the intention of the Cluster Munitions Treaty.
- Slashing the gender equality architecture in Canada
- Reduced presence in support of woman's rights -- as in the weak version of the Canadian 2012 resolution on women's reproductive rights at the UN, which does not list critical sexual and reproductive health services.

What would an alternative foreign policy do? It would reverse all these pernicious trends of the Conservative government. Canada would once again work together with other states and NGOs to advance the cause of peace, justice and human rights.

Human rights and the rule of law should also guide our policy with regard to **Israel**. The Israeli author Ari Shavit has warned that Israel needs to confront the “moral, demographic and political disaster” that is the military occupation of Arab lands and the expansion of Israeli settlements. These two practices go against international law and Palestinian rights. Unlike other international leaders, Harper steadfastly refused to bring up these issues on his recent trip to Israel. It is here that Harper has most obdurately reversed Canada's balanced foreign policy as a ‘helpful fixer’ in the Middle East, as elsewhere. One wonders why? Some suggest it is for electoral advantage. It indeed appears true from the Conservatives efforts to woo Jewish voters and turn their money away from the Liberals. But even the Conservatives know there are more Muslims in Canada than Jews. So there must be more to it than that. Harper has indicated it comes in part from a strong personal instinct. Jeffrey Simpson writes in *The Globe and Mail* that it comes from Harper's ‘Manichean’ view of the world, seeing it simply as a battle of good and evil – a binary view of which we have often accused the Americans. In an interview with *The Ottawa Citizen* on the eve of Prime Minister Harper's trip to Israel and the Middle East, Jason Kenney, Employment Minister, said Canada has a ‘moral obligation’ to support a secure homeland for Israel in its daily existential struggle for survival and stop the rise of “new anti-Semitism”. In the end, Harper has intentionally reversed Canada's traditional ‘balanced’ policy because he mistakenly believed it was a ‘Liberal’ policy.

All Canadian governments have always supported Israel's right to exist in security ever since the first UN vote on the State of Israel in 1947. What has changed is Harper's single –minded, abrasive support of Israel right or wrong. The problem with this is that it is neither in Canada's interest nor in the interest of effective diplomacy. Our interest, as a country with both Arab and Jewish citizens is not to work for either one but to strive for a more secure Middle East for the good of everyone. It is un-Canadian for either of these groups to seek Canadian support for a foreign government. Harper's unilateral policy increases a sense of division that fuels strife. As retired diplomat Jeremy Kinsman has written in the *National Post*, “Helping Israelis find an equitable solution,

rather than mere cheerleading, is what friends are for". A diplomatic role for Canada would be for us to seek to work with others in a complex situation – even if our influence in the region is minimal. Now, according to Kinsman, "We're out of it", because we are no longer trusted by the Americans or by 57 members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

In his speech to the Knesset, to bolster his support for the "Jewish State" of Israel, Harper particularly insisted on the arrival of a "new strain of anti-Semitism". This strain, Harper claims, turns anger from the Jewish race/religion to the State of Israel. Thus, for Harper, criticizing Israel is tantamount to being anti-Semitic and full of hate. This is sheer nonsense. It is quite possible to be critical of Israeli policies without being anti-Israel. Canadians are critical of many countries, even their own. Many different people criticise Israel. As Tom Friedman wrote in the *New York Times*, "If Israel doesn't stop the settlement madness, denying the Palestinians a West bank state, it will fit the caricature of its worst enemies" (quoted in Kinsman). What we see here is another example of Harper's divisive politics. To make his point, he insinuates that anyone who disagrees with him is his enemy. He vituperates against a 'balanced' approach to foreign policy as "weak and wrong" and "moral relativism". He finds "dark corners" in civil society, on campuses and at the United Nations. This is an obvious attempt to paint everyone who disagrees with him on Israel as racist, full of hatred. The opposite is the truth. It is those who truly admire Israel for its culture and courage who are most upset when they think some Israeli politicians are not behaving in the country's best interests. There is a final issue. André Pratte of *La Presse* headlined his January 21st editorial, "**In whose name is Harper talking?**" **He is right. The Prime Minister has never deigned to discuss his Israel policy with Parliament or the Canadian people. It is simply dictated. Canada would be much better advised to return to doing the best it can, as a respected honest broker.**

Humanitarian Aid:

It is ironical, but even under the Harper Conservatives the favoured channel by far for Canadian government humanitarian dollars is the United Nations. Humanitarian aid goes both to natural disasters and human conflict zones in situations fraught with chaos, starvation and violence. When such emergencies occur, donors look for the best and fastest ways of delivering assistance. About 10 per cent goes through the Red Cross, 25 percent through NGOs and the bulk, usually more than half, through the UN. The main UN, on-the-ground, agencies are the World Food Program, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Childrens' Fund (UNICEF), the Development Program (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – among others. The UN is also responsible for coordination through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and also for information, advance warning and research. We all know from the media that relief efforts are always under-funded and often leave

much to be desired. All the more reason, then that **an alternate foreign policy would be working hand and fist to strengthen and improve the UN's herculean responses to humanitarian need.**

But there is more to humanitarian assistance than disaster aid. In the long run there is also on-going hunger, poverty, unemployment, sickness, lack of education and a myriad other challenges. Some 15 years ago, the world set out to tackle the UN's Millennium Development Goals to lessen poverty, promote gender equality and ensure sustainable development. There have been some successes. Now we must tackle the post-2015 development agenda. An ambitious report delivered to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described five priority 'transformative shifts' for post-2015:

- Leave no one behind
- Put sustainable development at the core
- Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth
- Build peace and effective, open and accountable public institutions
- Forge a new global partnership

There will be other reports and recommendations before a consensus plan is achieved.

But these 'transformative shifts' show us just how great is the task before us. In an alternative foreign policy the government of **Canada will play a leading role in tackling the world's problems in cooperation with other countries. To do this Canada has to be active where the debates are held and the decisions made.**

Canada has a great team of diplomats, legal minds, public servants, financial specialists, committed civil society leaders and academics whose life in service for a better world has given them great experience and potential to help others. People like Simon Hacker who Patrick Martin of the Globe and Mail profiled in the January 17 edition. From South-Western Ontario, Simon is a humanitarian logistician who coordinates food aid for the four million Syrians that the UN World Food Programme has identified as being at risk. As the article says, "Every day thousands of humanitarian workers risk their lives to help the most vulnerable, sometimes paying the ultimate price". Canada has much to offer in a world wracked by poverty, inequalities and injustice. **The aim of a new development policy should be to help others -- and not ourselves through sales contracts and trade negotiations.** Of course, there are many other UN organizations in which Canadians make outstanding contributions such as the World Meteorological Organization, the World Health Organization and the Agricultural Organization. The Canadian government's job is to encourage the contributions of its citizens and to provide leadership and investment for the post-2015 agenda.

New global institutions:

Last but not least, when all is said and done, there is one central element that is necessary for an alternate foreign policy. **The global challenges we face, from poverty to climate change, have one common denominator: the world is incapable of taking authoritative, legitimate decisions that will command respect and be adhered to. UN reform is the one common problem upon which we should all focus as a basis for improving the world. Rethinking the United Nations ought to become a central program of the Department of Foreign Affairs.**

But, this cannot be done at the whim of a minister. The Department should be initiating a quasi-constitutional process with the intention of encouraging other 'like-minded' countries to follow suit. We need a publicly supported process to provide legitimated policies to foreign affairs ministries. We can learn from 'deliberative democracy' exercises about how to be both effective and inclusive. This process of democratic assemblies was developed over the past two decades to be both educative and participative and to bring informed public input to policy making.

The task is to settle on a critical analysis of world problems, a set of objectives and values for world governance, the definition of new, democratic global institutions, and a path for achieving them -- accompanied by an outreach program of education and communications.

Canada can help develop a constituency and a community of practice that values cooperation and global governance. If we put our heads together as suggested at the outset we will come up with a plan. Reform will not be easy. It will be opposed by those who have an interest in war rather than peace; those who feel more secure in their narrow national vision; and those who dislike "rule by the ignorant mob." I am convinced they will be outweighed by those everywhere who are wise enough to recognize that the world will learn to govern itself or it will self-destruct.

State governments will require a vibrant ally to move toward new democratic global institutions. That ally is civil society, meaning national associations or what are called non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – that is all organized society between the market place and government. Civil society will also be required for the democratic vision that is essential to maintaining the kind of sustained support that the post-2015 agenda will need. Governments alone are not up to this task. There must be a global partnership for a meaningful, sustained multi-stakeholder dialogue to produce consensus based decisions that will attract popular buy-in. The Harper government has tended to make an enemy of any civil society organization that does not strictly adhere to the party line. Either they destroy the organization, cut off its funding or take away its charitable status. Nonetheless, a vibrant and independent civil society has always been an essential prerequisite for effective, stable, and participatory democracies. There has to be an opening up of political space not just for the private

sector but other actors. **This will also include continuous public debates about Canada's international relations.** An alternate foreign policy will promote a minimum set of rights and supports to provide an enabling environment for civil society at home and abroad.

End note:

Let me end with a very brief summary of the principal elements of an alternative foreign policy for Canada. As I summarize these proposals, it is worth emphasizing that I am aware that there are numerous other significant elements of an alternate foreign policy that I have not been able to cover here. Sustainable economic policies, environmental and climate change priorities, the arms trade and international crime and terrorism, and balanced immigration and trade policies should obviously be included. However, from the perspective of Canada's multilateral orientations, here is what we propose.

- There was a long Canadian tradition of international 'prudence' dictated by our 'relative power'
- Our authors are of the opinion that our own interests are best served when we work with others.
- In an increasingly interdependent world it is in our own interest to be in the international forums where the debates are held and the decisions are made.
- Canada has to start thinking about regaining its status in the multilateral fora and eventually our seat on the United Nations Security Council. More balance, more listening, and less stridency would once again make us more acceptable.
- Such a change in stance could be followed up with an effort to enhance multilateral institutions by the government sponsoring a public review of all the organizations of which Canada is a member.
- Hosting conditions and other formalities for international organizations like ICAO must be up-dated on a regular basis. All three levels of governments must be continuously aware not only of the political benefits of the UN and its agencies but also of their very practical advantages.
- In an era of global politics, Harper's 'sovereignty' rhetoric is out-of-date. The best way to use our claims of sovereignty would be to cooperate with the others in the Arctic Council to advance our common interests.
- Never again should a Canadian government let our military forces be under-resourced.
- A concerted effort is needed to revitalize the peacekeeping skills of Canadian forces, alongside or in parallel with their war-fighting capacities.
- To limit armed conflicts and curb massive military spending, Canada must help to design a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS).

- With regard to the ‘responsibility to protect’ principle, it is up to countries like Canada to take steps to: a) help establish the criteria for R2P interventions by the UN, b) emphasize early warning and prevention, c) demand the creation of a standing, rapid-reaction UN force, and d) work for the limitation of the veto powers of the permanent five Security Council members who are blocking progress.
- In two parliamentary forums, members from all political parties expressed a common desire for the Canadian government to host a meeting of like-minded governments to continue preparatory work for a global ban on nuclear weapons.
- An alternate foreign policy would have as its goal to strengthen the implementation procedures and the oversight mechanisms for global human rights.
- Human rights and the rule of law should also guide our policy with regard to Israel.
- An alternate foreign policy would be working hard to strengthen and improve the UN’s herculean responses to humanitarian need.
- Canada has much to offer in a world wracked by poverty, inequalities and injustice. The Canadian government’s job is to encourage the contributions of its citizens and to provide leadership and investment for the post-2015 agenda.
- Rethinking the United Nations and imagining new global institutions ought to become a central program of the Department of Foreign Affairs. We need a publicly supported process to provide legitimated policies for global governance.
- A vibrant and independent civil society has always been an essential prerequisite for effective, stable, and participatory democracies. There has to be an opening up of political space not just for the private sector but other actors.

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May, 2014