

10. Canada and Its Values: Policy Priorities and Practice

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Hello, I'm John Kirton, Director of the G8 Research Group at the University of Toronto in Canada and your lead instructor for G8 Online 2002.

In this session, "Canada and its Values: Policy Priorities and Practice," we take a close look at the unifying values, current foreign policy priorities and recent international practices of this year's G8 host country, Canada.

This subject arouses considerable controversy. Most observers argue, in authentic **liberal-institutionalist** fashion, that Canada is best viewed as one of the world's purest middle powers. In this interpretation, Canada's fundamental values, shared with many similar middle powers, are its devotion to pragmatic compromise, formal international law and the broadly multilateral institutions of the United Nations. These provide safety for the world's weaker states (Stairs 1982). For others, Canada is one of the world's first polities heavily penetrated by **globalization**, but in this case a globalization that has America alone at its core. They offer a **peripheral dependent** portrait of a satellite Canada that is a small power vulnerable to its much more powerful neighbour, the United States, and thus tightly constrained by **American leadership** in the world. Still others see Canada as having emerged since the early 1970s as one of the world's major or "principal powers," seeking — as all major powers do — to shape a global order that reflects the distinctive values it cherishes at home. This **complex neorealist** perspective predicts that Canada will align with any other major power in order to advance its values, and will influence global concerts to have these values prevail in the new international order of a rapidly changing world. So is Canada, at heart, a **multilateralist** middle power, a small, dependent American satellite,

or a principal power practicing the diplomacy of **concert** to realize its distinctive national values abroad?

In this lecture I argue that Canada is best seen as a principal power. It is a country with distinctive, deeply embedded national values that are expressed in foreign policy priorities and practices quite different from those of the United States, Britain or like-minded middle powers elsewhere in the world.

A. Canada's Distinctive National Values

First, we ask, what are Canada's distinctive national values? What deep, durable values have led so many individuals to create Canada and come in such large numbers to the new country during the first and second great waves of globalization, when they could easily have chosen the richer, stronger and warmer United States next door? While Canadians and outsiders have long argued about this elusive essence of the Canadian "identity," there appear to be five core, enduring values that are grounded in Canada's constitution, that unify Canadians at home, and that set them all apart from the citizens of any other country in the world.

The first is **globalism** — a conviction that Canadians are an integral part of a completely connected global community. They most certainly were in the mid eighteenth century, when the country first took form as **British North America**, then a proud and prominent part of the British Empire, which then spanned the globe and included what is now the United States. Today, with a population of only 30 million — about one tenth that of the United States — Canadians still have a powerful incentive to look outward to the global community, to seek support for their accomplishments at home and to give expression to them abroad.

The second value is *multiculturalism*, with tolerance for diversity and a respect for the rights of minorities at its core. From the start, the British subjects who arrived to settle Canada had to seek a political accommodation with the French settlers who were already well established there. Moreover, both depended for survival in this harsh new northern land with the many aboriginal First Nations who had lived there for centuries before. This initial need to make a virtue of necessity and accept and later celebrate multiculturalism has been reinforced by successive waves of immigration from ever more diverse places around the world. Most immigrants have been quickly accepted as full citizens of Canada regardless of their bloodlines or place of birth. Thus, Canada has become a country of multicultural minorities, a condition that reinforces its sense of global connection and community to this day.

The third value is *openness* to the outside world, not only in the case of Canada's multicultural people but also for its dominant English and French languages, its common and civil law legal systems, ideas, education, goods, services, investment, finance and ecological flows. In this sense, Canada has long been fully globalized. In the economic sphere, for example, most of the goods and services produced by its private sector are now destined for the export market, primarily in the neighbouring United States.

The fourth value is *anti-militarism* — an aversion to military force in general and nuclear weapons in particular, as a way to exercise influence in the world. Since its Confederation in 1867, Canada has become one of the most successful territorially expansionist states in modern history, with a domain that now extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans and through the Arctic Ocean to the North Pole. But almost never did Canada acquire or keep this vast area through the use of military force. Canada has often used military force in combat situations abroad, for example, in Europe from 1914 to 1918, again from 1939 to 1945

and yet again from 1992 to 1995 (in the Balkans). It also did so in Korea from 1950 to 1954, the Persian Gulf from 1990 to 1991, Kosovo in 1999 and now in Afghanistan. But even though Canada was among the first countries capable of getting nuclear weapons of its own, way back in the late 1940s, it has chosen not to — then and ever since.

The fifth value is *environmentalism* — an enduring conviction on the part of virtually all Canadians that global environmental protection should be the first priority in Canadian foreign policy. Although Canada is one of the world's leaders in ecological and energy resources, it has a strong conservationist instinct, reflected, for example, in its instinctive aversion to exporting water in bulk form.

The sixth value is *egalitarianism* — a belief that a strong state must act to provide all its citizens with the high minimum standards of living and social services they require for a civilized life. This value is reflected in Canada's constitutionally entrenched equalization payments, in which are monies transferred by the federal government from the affluent provinces of oil-rich Alberta and high-tech Ontario to the eight less wealthy provinces and the three northern territories. Egalitarianism is also seen in the federal government's determination over the past decade to maintain a strong social net. This has prevented the current wave of globalization from creating new income inequalities between Canada's rich and poor citizens, even while the government has successfully reduced a substantial fiscal deficit to the point where Canada now sports the largest fiscal surplus, relative to GDP, on any country in the G7.

The sixth value is *international institutionalism* — a penchant for joining most new international institutions to connect Canada with others, and creating new ones, to enable Canada to shape global order as a whole. The **Commonwealth** connects Canada to more than 50 countries, almost all historically attached to Britain, that Canada has never considered foreign. Within the Commonwealth and in the

40 fellow members of **la Francophonie**, Canada has a privileged partnership, indeed a family bond, with a vast number of countries — overwhelmingly developing countries — around the world. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Organization on Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) are also part of Canada's rich array of global **minilateral** or **plurilateral** institutions with restricted membership, beyond the broadly multilateral United Nations system to which almost everyone belongs. Yet it is still only at the G7/G8 Summit where Canada is connected at the inner core with all of — and only — the other democratic major powers in the world.

B. Canada's Foreign Policy Priorities

These distinctive national values have found expression in Canada's formal foreign policy priorities. These priorities are outlined in the definitive statement on foreign policy entitled *Canada in the World: Canadian Foreign Policy Review*. It was issued by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's government in February 1995.

Its first priority, "the promotion of prosperity and employment," highlights the importance of international trade. This is a key component of Canada's openness and globalism. This priority is also seen as enhancing international stability and sustainable development, in keeping with Canada's anti-militarist approach to security and its embedded environmentalism.

The second priority is "the promotion of global peace as the key to protecting our security." This is seen as a prerequisite for economic growth and development, as addressing the new security threats of transborder mass migration, crime, disease, environment, overpopulation and underdevelopment, and as rendering Canadians more dependent on the security that others enjoy. Again, Canada's val-

ues of globalism, **openness**, environmentalism and anti-militarism are evident.

The third priority is "the projection of Canadian values and culture is important ... in the world." It identifies the following values as central to Canadian identity: democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the environment. It also highlights the vitality of Canada's culture, cultural diversity and Canadians social adaptability as key Canadian advantages.

These passages affirm Canada's sense of having distinctive values and of having these expressed in its foreign policy, with the values of environmentalism, multiculturalism, openness and egalitarianism at the core.

The 1995 statement also begins with a clear assertion of Canada's place in the world. It speaks of Canada as an open society that exerts global influence as a consequence of its privileged geographic position, its bicultural and multicultural personality, its non-colonizing history and "its active membership in key international groupings, for example, hosting the G-7 Summit this year [in Halifax in 1995]."

C. Canada's Foreign Policy in Practice

Such formal foreign policy priorities do not always translate easily into practice in a fast-changing world. But in Canada's case, they have proven to be a reliable guide to what Canada has done since Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's Liberal government took office in the autumn of 1993.

Canada has promoted prosperity and employment through trade by concluding the **North American Free Trade Agreement** (NAFTA) and the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations with the new **World Trade Organization** (WTO), by launching plurilateral free trade negotiations with its partners in APEC and in the Americas, and by reaching bilateral free trade agreements with several states in the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. It has contributed to global peace and security by fighting to protect endangered minorities in Kosovo in 1999, and

to reduce the threat of transnational terrorism at present in Afghanistan. And it has projected its values and culture abroad, in part by having the G8 at the 2000 Summit affirm the principle of cultural diversity and by fostering a new international institution to protect the diversity of cultural expression and language against the pressures of homogenization in a rapidly globalizing age.

All three of these priorities, and the values that support them, are likely to be evident in Canada's approach to, and the results of, the Kananaskis G8 Summit in June.

In our G8 Online sessions ahead, we will explore how these connections will be forged.

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Discussion Questions

1. What other distinctive national values does Canada have?
2. What distinctive national values do each of Canada's G8 partners have?
3. To what extent does Canadian foreign policy reflect Canada's distinctive national values, rather than its national interests or other factors?
4. How will and should Canada's value of "environmentalism" influence Canada's approach to the World Summit on Sustainable Development taking place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002?
5. Can Canada afford to leave any of the international institutions it is currently a member of? Which ones? What would the benefits and costs be?
6. What is the most and the least attractive feature of Canada?
7. If you were to write a new foreign policy statement for Canada right now, what would its priorities be and why?
2. Canada's current population is:
 - a. 3 million
 - b. 30 million
 - c. 300 million
 - d. 22.7 million
3. Canada's legal system is based on:
 - a. common law
 - b. civil law
 - c. both common and civil law
 - d. neither common nor civil law
4. Canada's major export market is in:
 - a. the United States
 - b. the European Union
 - c. Japan
 - d. Africa
5. Canada's year of Confederation was:
 - a. 1776
 - b. 1756
 - c. 1867
 - d. 1982
6. Canada went to war in the Persian Gulf in 1990 for the first time in:
 - a. 10 years
 - b. 17 years
 - c. 40 years
 - d. since World War One in 1914

Quiz

1. Those who see Canada as a middle power consider its foreign policy to be focused on, and attached to, the:
 - a. United States
 - b. Commonwealth
 - c. United Nations
 - d. Britain
7. The rich provinces that Canada's equalization system transfer money from are:
 - a. Ontario and Quebec
 - b. Ontario and Alberta
 - c. Alberta and British Columbia
 - d. British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador
8. NATO stand for:
 - a. North American Trade Organization
 - b. North African Timber Organization
 - c. North Atlantic Turbot Organization
 - d. North Atlantic Treaty Organization