

GLOBAL CURRENTS

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A Newsletter on Canada and the World
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**Liberal**

► THE CASE FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Public diplomacy – the practice of a government communicating directly with the citizens of foreign countries – is an important tool for a country like Canada. First, the nature of Canada’s open economy means that our reputation abroad matters a great deal – not just in the eyes of foreign governments, but of the people they represent. Second, Canada does not have a tremendous amount of ‘hard power’, meaning that it is important for us to use indirect channels of communication in sharing our views and getting our point across on the world stage. Third, we happen to have an incredibly rich and vibrant culture to draw on in expressing our shared values and beliefs.

From Radio Canada International’s first broadcasts in 1945, to our com-

vestment and create favourable environments for our products in overseas markets. Indeed, countries like the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States have been moving in precisely the opposite direction as Canada, redoubling their efforts to promote public diplomacy by expanding their international broadcasting budgets and launching new efforts to attract foreign students and skilled workers.

If Canada is to keep up with the rest of the world we must do more than simply reaffirm our commitment to public diplomacy - we must challenge ourselves to redefine how public diplomacy works.

The spread of social networking, the rise of digital radio, and the advent of citizen journalism have created a new class of



Practicing some public diplomacy of my own at a seminar on Canada’s role in the world.

audience while also allowing for greater interaction and inclusiveness between Canadians and the rest of the world. Initiatives such as RCI’s Viva program, which uses the internet to reach out to new and prospective immigrants in Canada is a

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mitment to the promotion of arts and culture, to the thousands of academic exchanges that take place every year, public diplomacy has played a key role in helping establish Canada’s positive reputation abroad. A poll commissioned last year by the Program on International Policy Attitudes in 30 countries found that along with Japan, Canada was one of only two countries in the world that a majority of respondents agreed had a positive influence in the world.

It is unfortunate therefore to see our government’s cooling to public diplomacy. In a quiet but steady reversal from previous governments, the current government has been dismantling Canada’s public diplomacy infrastructure. Funding for Radio Canada International has remained stagnant while millions of dollars have been slashed from the Department of Foreign Affairs’ work and study abroad programs.

Canada relegates public diplomacy to the background at its own peril. Failing to communicate to the world’s population why Canada matters makes it harder for us to attract skilled workers and students, bring in foreign in-

potential ambassadors across the country. Academic networks, Canadian businesses and even Facebook groups are all helping Canada create direct links with the rest of the world on a scale and with permutations that were scarcely imaginable a decade ago.

This transformation comes with inherent risks and challenges. Such a wide diversity of views and opinions risks creating a cacophony, muddling Canada’s voice at a time of increasing competition for the attention of foreign audiences. This is why the Canadian government should re-imagine its role from being the sole producer of public diplomacy towards that of being an active leader and coordinator. We should be at the forefront of fostering and promoting these new networks and cultural transmission channels in a way that reinforces Canadian values and foreign policy objectives.

Doing so first requires bolstering the government’s traditional public diplomacy tools. Expanding Radio Canada International’s mandate is a start. RCI and other Canadian broadcasters should be encouraged to take advantage of new media and create content and broadcasting opportunities to reach an ever-wider

good example of the kinds of initiatives we should be exploring.

At the same time, the Canadian government must play a stronger role in supporting the efforts of non-governmental actors in sharing their experience, opinions and know how with the world. By identifying best practices, by making it easier for foreigners to come work and study in Canada, and providing more opportunities for our schools, sports and arts communities, NGOs, and private sector to shine on the world stage, our government can be a powerful force in marshalling two of our biggest resources, our people and our culture.

Public diplomacy is by no means a substitute for traditional forms of international diplomacy. But time and experience have shown us that if properly nurtured, public diplomacy can be incredibly effective in increasing the reach and potency of our foreign policy objectives while at the same time empowering Canadians to learn more about the world and their ability to make a difference in it.

► CANADA AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

By Lloyd Axworthy

Canadians are living in a world full of challenges that transcend the ability of individual states, no matter how powerful, to manage. Two of the most dangerous global risks shared by the international community are the increasing threat of nuclear proliferation which puts our very existence in jeopardy, and climate change which threatens no less than a meltdown of the global ecology with its attendant consequences of massive migration, disease and food insecurity.

The enormity of these and other global crises are forcing us and the rest of the international community into uncharted territory, raising serious questions about how we should respond to protect people when their lives are at stake.

Unfortunately, present Canadian foreign policy is preoccupied with an agenda set by the Bush administration and its anti-terrorist, military adventurism, and border protection mentality. We have not been an active player in forging collaborative international initiatives based on human security that must be developed if we are to find ways of protecting humankind from calamity. This was most recently illustrated by the situation in Burma where cyclone Nargis battered the people of that beleaguered country, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands and threatening many more lives with the arrival of waterborne



Lloyd Axworthy

disease and food shortage. The humanitarian catastrophe was intensified when Burma's ruling military junta thwarted the timely arrival of international aid and support.

In response to this appalling behaviour, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner rightfully suggested that in denying their people access to life-saving assistance, the junta were committing a crime against humanity and he called upon the UN Security Council to pass a resolution that would invoke the principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the Burmese people.

The concept of R2P was given life in 2001 by the Canadian-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, our response to humanity's failure to deal with the numerous mass murders, genocides, and ethnic cleansings that marked the end of the last century. Unanimously endorsed by world leaders at the 2005 UN World Summit, R2P declares that when a country is unwilling or unable to fulfill its primary responsibility to protect its citizens from mass atrocity or catastrophe – or if it is in fact the perpetrator – then the international community, with Security Council authorization, must assume this role.

Minister Kouchner's comments ignited a worldwide debate about whether R2P should apply to situations generated by natural disasters. The argument that this new Canadian-inspired doctrine should apply only to cases where innocent people were threatened by genocide or violent crimes against humanity is not accurate. When Mr. Chrétien's government launched the R2P commission it was based on the broad human security principle and not restricted to just one area of risk. There should be no confusion: there is no moral distinction between the death of an innocent person by AK-47 or machete, and dying in a cholera epidemic

or from hunger brought about by the refusal to permit comprehensive international aid.

Nor should there be any misconceptions about the variety of means by which the international community can intervene to uphold R2P. R2P is much more than military intervention, which it considers to be an absolute last resort. R2P comprises a versatile toolbox of political, economic and diplomatic measures to pressure governments, while building their capacity to exercise their responsibility to protect their citizens.

Canadians will increasingly be forced to respond to 'problems without passports', as Kofi Annan has called them. We are already seeing a mass influx of 'climate migrants' from rural Bangladesh to overcrowded urban centres, the shrinking of global food stocks and soaring prices which are causing riots in the streets of Egypt, Indonesia and Haiti, and the tragedy of Darfur, clearly fuelled by drought and loss of arable land brought on by climate change.

Canada has an opportunity to play a leading role in mapping a way forward. Just as we advocated for solutions in the face of the failure of the international community to deal with humanitarian atrocities in the 1990s, we must again take the initiative by establishing a new international commission that will update and revise the purpose of R2P and the means of its implementation. We must restore Canada's role as an innovator and convenor in the global community and help chart a fresh course to prepare us for these new threats and challenges.

Liberals have an opportunity to build on their historic leadership and vision for Canada's foreign affairs agenda while reinvigorating Canada's international presence in the process.

The Hon. Lloyd Axworthy is a former Foreign Affairs minister and current president of the University of Winnipeg

► HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREE TRADE

By The Hon. Navdeep Bains

Canada needs to trade in order to generate economic wealth and maintain a high quality of life for its citizens. Successive governments of all political stripes have recognized this fact and as a result Canada has signed numerous free trade agreements designed to open markets and encourage growth.

Negotiating trade deals, however, is an expensive and time-consuming affair. Governments have to prioritize, and carefully select the countries that they will focus on. Agreements have political, social and economic

implications for both countries, so all these elements have to be taken into account when allocating scarce resources.

Human Rights Watch, the country leads the world in the killing of labour leaders. Few of these cases are ever solved. Of the 2,100 labour murders since 1991, only 37 have ended in convictions. The culprits are widely believed to be the country's shadowy paramilitary organizations.

What makes the situation even worse is that the groups seem to have direct links to high-level government officials with allegations touching some of the Colombian President's closest advisors. All of these are serious considerations and yet the Conservative

House of Commons' Standing Committee on International Trade, submitted a report outlining what the Government should do to address issues of human rights and the environment before a deal with Colombia is signed. The Government undermined this work by concluding an agreement only two weeks prior to the release of the report. However the deal has yet to be formally signed and we strongly encourage the Government to address the issues in the report if they want the support of Parliament.

Canada is a trading nation but one of the most important things we export is our

“Our country needs a principled trade policy that balances economic opportunities with a respect for fundamental freedoms.”

Which brings us to Colombia.

In June 2007, the Minister of International Trade announced the start of trade negotiations with Colombia. Representing 0.1% of our total exports, Colombia does not rank high on the list of Canadian export markets. A trade agreement may well change that, but economic considerations form only part of the rationale to begin talks. The start of negotiations was conveniently timed to precede the Prime Minister's visit to the country. All very nice material for speeches and toasts, but beyond the state dinners lies a darker side to these talks. Colombia is widely seen as having one of the worst human rights records in the western hemisphere. According to

Government is not even paying them lip service. The Prime Minister went as far as suggesting that it was 'ridiculous' to address human rights considerations in the context of this deal.

This was not the view held by the U.S. Congress, who voted to suspend consideration of a Free Trade Agreement with Colombia until these issues are addressed. During a speech in New York, the Prime Minister implored the United States to reconsider this decision and ratify the agreement. President Bush seized on this support and quoted Mr. Harper in a speech of his own. Inexplicably both George Bush and Stephen Harper seem committed to working together to get these deals signed as soon as possible regardless of human rights concerns. "I support free trade and believe in its benefits but I will not blindly approve of negotiations which completely ignore issues of human rights." In June, the

values. Our country needs a principled trade policy that balances economic opportunities with a respect for fundamental freedoms. Canadians need to know who we're doing business with.

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Hon. Navdeep Singh Bains, P.C., M.P.

► HOW SRI LANKA'S WAR UNDERMINES DEMOCRACY

The UN's humanitarian agency has declared Sri Lanka one of the world's most dangerous place for aid workers and journalists. It is also a terrifying place to be a soldier. Violence is spiralling upwards. Though reports of the exact number of dead and wounded vary considerably, there is no disputing the fact that thousands of soldiers on both sides have been killed or injured

this year alone. Sri Lanka's already horrific war is entering a quantitatively new phase.

The LTTE emerged in the 1970s against a backdrop of mounting grievances in the north and east over declining access to language, employment and political rights. A radical leftist group – the People's Liberation Front or JVP - composed

primarily of disgruntled southerners raised similar concerns, albeit from a different perspective.

The response of the Sri Lankan government to these grievances was as swift as it was severe. It has waged a virtually uninterrupted military campaign against the LTTE since the early 1980s. The LTTE, a merciless armed group, has engaged in

brutal attacks against civilians and assassinations of their opponents. A conservative estimate puts the number of deaths in the fighting at 75,000. The government also launched aggressive counter-insurgency operations against the JVP. An estimated 60,000 civilians died over a two year period in the late eighties before JVP made its transition to politics. Such vicious wars are inevitably accompanied by creeping authoritarianism from above and pervasive fear from below. In addition to the growing role afforded to the military and the introduction of emergency regulations, the government has also clamped down on independent oversight bodies and press freedoms.

War-related militarization has far-reaching implications for democracy. Symptoms include sky-rocketing military spending and related racketeering. The current Minister of Defence Gotabhaya Rajapaksa's determination to 'win' the conflict militarily is matched by an equally impressive will to spend. Defence expenditures in 2007 were more than 50 per cent higher than in the previous year (rising to USD1.2 billion). They are expected to grow by another 20 per cent in 2008 to USD 1.48 billion. Defence now accounts for some 20 per cent of all public spending. While Western governments have been unanimous in their labelling of the LTTE as a terrorist organization

(the LTTE practices suicide bombings and recruits child soldiers), they have also been critical of the Sri Lankan government. This in turn has led the Sri Lankan government to seek more support from China and Pakistan. Iran is now the country's largest investor. These governments are far less likely to criticise Colombo for a democratic deficit.

There is much that the warring parties in Sri Lanka can do to reverse the growing democratic deficit. A complete ceasefire and a return of the government, the LTTE and others to the negotiating table could potentially reverse the escalation in war casualties on both sides. Thousands of civilians have been violently killed and displaced since the resumption of war. Re-engaging independent monitors and getting them on the ground is critical to rebuilding confidence.

Protecting the essential freedoms of civilians is a cornerstone of a robust democracy. There are many practical steps that can be taken to expand the democratic space. These range from re-establishing a credible Human Rights Commission to cooperating with



With Anton Balasingham during peace talks

United Nations human rights mechanisms. The Sri Lankan government would also do well to implement the recommendations of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings.

Sri Lanka's standing as a model democracy in South Asia is suffering under the weight of war. The warning signs are clear. In 2006, the Worldwide Press Freedom index placed Sri Lanka between Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Likewise, Transparency International consistently reports corruption at the highest levels of executive and legislative government. The relentless conflict continues. Democracy itself hangs in the balance.

Above all, Sri Lankans need to be able to imagine a country where mutual respect, new forms of autonomy and shared governance, and an abandonment of extremist ideologies are possible. It will require extraordinary courage and determination to get there. The alternative – more death, more repression, more corruption, deeper economic stagnation – must not be allowed to continue.

Canada can hardly be indifferent to this conflict. Our own experience with federalism and conflict prevention, our deep attachment to pluralism, and our ties to this troubled country, should push us to far more active engagement.

► GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Canada urgently needs a national strategy for research and international education. Our ability to compete on the world stage depends on our success in sending Canadian students to work and study abroad, attracting foreign students to come to Canada, and promoting Canadian universities' presence overseas. Yet we lack a coherent national framework of how to achieve these goals.

As I argued in my 2005 report on higher education in Ontario, studying abroad or in an internationally diverse campus at home is an intensely enriching experience. Students gain a better understanding of Canada's place in the world and forge networks with their peers

from other countries. Universities and colleges reap the benefits of new ideas and ways of thinking, leading to new patents, collaborations and technological breakthroughs. Indeed, our entire country benefits from international education - the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) estimates that foreign students contribute over \$5 billion a year to the Canadian economy.

Yet despite the clear value of international education, Canada lags behind most OECD countries in key metrics. Recent studies show that less than 1% of Canadian students participate in overseas exchanges, a level 8 times lower

than the European average. Moreover, Canada receives fewer than 3% of the estimated 2.7 million international students that study abroad every year. That puts us in the same league as New Zealand, a country with only one sixth Canada's population. According to the AUCC, per student funding in Canada for higher education is \$9,000 lower than in the United States, a striking figure considering our country once enjoyed a \$2,000 advantage in per student funding in 1980.

To its credit, the Conservative government has taken some positive steps towards addressing this growing challenge. It has eased restrictions on allowing foreign students to work off campus, amended the

Post Graduation Work Permit Program to make it easier for foreign students to find work in Canada, and renewed funding for Canada's research chairs and millennium scholarships.

These measures, however fall well short of a national strategy. A large part of the hundreds of millions of dollars of 'new' funding announced by the government this year is actually money that is being restored from cuts they made two years ago. Recycled money and piecemeal reforms are not what will move our country forward.

The Canadian government must instead set out a clear vision outlining our goals and priorities as a nation. The vision should give shape to a collaborative framework between the provinces and the federal government. Though higher education is a provincial responsibility,

term funding they require to remain competitive on the international stage.

A first target should be increasing the number of Canadian students who study overseas. The recent collapse of Canada's Commonwealth scholarships program is a disgrace and has raised serious questions at home and abroad about our commitment to international education. I believe any student wishing to study abroad should have access to enough grants and loans to cover his or her tuition and living costs while overseas. We must push the private sector to become an active contributor to this effort given the tremendous benefit they gain from an internationally experienced workforce.

We must also do more to fund students coming to study in Canada. Recent changes allowing foreign students to

secondary education in China has nearly tripled in the last decade and India has plans to open close to a dozen new campuses for its prestigious Indian Institute of Management and Indian Institute of Technology over the next five years.

These developments drive home the importance of creating opportunities for Canadian universities to establish research partnerships, joint degrees, satellite campuses or to offer technical expertise. Already, individual universities and colleges across the country have made significant headway in this regard and should be commended for their efforts. Yet without a serious federal partner, our universities will face needless obstacles in capitalizing on their hard work.

Successfully leveraging our expertise in higher education requires careful thought at the national level. It is im-

“A COHERENT AND TRULY NATIONAL VISION OF OUR HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY IS LONG OVERDUE.”

the federal government can and should be an active partner through granting agencies, loans programs and transfers payments. The federal government missed an important opportunity to create such a framework in 2006 when it snubbed a plan submitted by premiers Charest and McGuinty on behalf of the Council of Federations.

The federal government must also be a reliable partner to our universities and colleges. By setting clear targets and goals, we will be in a better position to provide higher education institutions with the legislative support and long-

work off campus are helpful, but more must be done to streamline the process and ensure a competitive turnaround time in getting qualified foreign students permanent residency status. Incentives and grants should also be offered to high performing foreign students to stay in Canada to continue their research and build their networks.

It is also important to look beyond the numbers game of students coming in and out of Canada. Countries like India and China are increasingly providing incentives for their students to get their education in-country. Spending on post-

portant to fully understand the higher education priorities being set in countries like India and China and ensure we put forward a strategy that responds to their goals while showcasing Canada's most successful institutions and research centres in these areas.

Sending Canadian students abroad, welcoming foreign students to our universities and expanding our overseas presence are deeply intertwined goals that cut across various levels of government. A coherent and truly national vision reflecting the needs and responsibilities of key stakeholders is long overdue.



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