

Dal Grauer Lecture
Canada's Foreign Policy: Does the public have a say?

Address to the Vancouver Institute
September 15, 2007

Jennifer M. Welsh

INTRODUCTION

Many thanks for that kind introduction, and for the great honour to speak in the series inspired by Dal Grauer – someone who was committed to both his community and the broader value of public education (most symbolically, of course, in his role as Chancellor of this prestigious University). I do in fact share one thing in common with the late Mr. Grauer: we were both Rhodes Scholars at Oxford. We started our time there, however, 60 years apart – he arriving in 1927 and I in 1987. For Dal Grauer, the global context was very much a calm before a coming storm: the global financial system was stumbling along before its big crash, and the global political system was rumbling under the pressure of communism's ascendancy, the isolationism of the United States, the failure of international institutions to manage rising threats, and the revisionism of a Germany that would once again flex its muscles. The world in 1987 looked much different: communism was dying, the U.S. was about to begin its era of triumphalism, the United Nations was entering a period of optimism about its capacity to manage peace and security, and Germany was about to be reunified – without incurring the fear of its European neighbours.

In 2007, 20 years after I started my degree in Oxford, the global context has shifted again. The role of the United States is again uncertain. The institutions that have governed us for half a century are under strain. And the global economy is experiencing ominous shocks that suggest some kind of 'correction' is coming. I will touch on some of these themes this evening. But more specifically, I want to engage with you in thinking about the connection between the public and foreign policy. As you may have picked up from my brief biography, I have become deeply committed over the past few years to discussing with Canadians across this country – and not just within the ivory towers of academic institutions – about our role in the world. And it seems the backdrop for this discussion gets more interesting, but also more complex, with each passing day.

In fact, the past year has witnessed an important development in the post-Cold War history of Canadian democracy. Whereas much of the political theatre in our country over the past two decades has been dominated by the themes of national unity, the state of our healthcare system or resource sharing between the feds and the provinces, international affairs has at best played a supporting role. In fact, the old adage that 'all politics is local' seems tailor-made for Canada.

Not so since the summer of 2006. Whether it was the war in Lebanon, Iran's defiance of the United Nations Security Council, the Harper Government's stance on Hamas and the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, or the Canadian military's deployment to Afghanistan, the printing presses and airwaves were inundated by things foreign. Many Canadians, taking time away from the barbecues to participate in call-in shows, demonstrated just how hot and bothered they were by these events. More significantly, the popularity of Prime Minister Harper's minority government became directly linked to his perceived shift away from Canada's 'traditional stand' on global issues – so much so that on the day after Labour Day, the Bloc Quebecois called for an emergency debate on the direction of Canada's foreign policy. Today, as we know, the very fate of the minority government could hang on its stance towards the war in Afghanistan. And the question of whether, and how, Canada might extend its presence there after the expiration of the NATO mandate in February 2009 has become a domestic political issue.

The debate that is going on in our country - during the first ground war Canadians have seen since the Korean War of the 1950s and the largest development assistance program Canada has ever mobilized - has taken on quite an unusual quality. We had become accustomed to seeing a broad middle agreement on what Canada should do outside its frontiers. We had also been used to certain accepted 'truths' about ourselves as generous, fair-minded peacekeepers – welcomed when we travel abroad. But some of these mythologies are breaking down. So too is the comfortable consensus that underpinned it.

Given the Prime Minister's powerful role in articulating foreign policy, and his relative lack of exposure to international affairs before assuming office, it is worth asking what kind of strategy on Canada's role in the world is driving his Office and his Government. From what I can glean, looking at Conservative reactions to last year's International Policy Statement of the then Martin government and writings by close advisors, there is heavy emphasis on what we - in my field, International Relations - call the 'national interest'.

But what exactly is that national interest? What is, and should be, Canada's global role?

Many outsiders have been giving us unsolicited advice. Bob Geldof - the rock singer turned advocate for Africa – argued during the Glen Eagles summit of 2005 that Canada, as one of the only G8 countries with a budget surplus, can and should be a key part of the campaign to bring the peoples of Africa into the 21st century. The writer Jeremy Rifkin believes Canada's role is to be the bridge between Europe and the U.S., encapsulating the best of the European and American dreams. Alternatively, the former U.S. Ambassador to Canada, Paul Cellucci, counselled us to reinvest in our military – particularly in the area of strategic lift – so that we can deploy our troops in combat and peacekeeping missions that complement the objectives of U.S. foreign policy. The latest word came from the outgoing French President Jacques Chirac, who has called upon us to reclaim our 'green' credentials and make good on the promises of the Kyoto Protocol. All interesting views, to be sure!

I share the view, expressed most elegantly by Andrew Cohen (2003), that Canada is not playing the global role it once did. Part of this decline is due to changes beyond our control, most obviously the fact that we now live in a world of over 190 states, far more than existed during the heyday of our middle power years. But part of this stems from decisions that our political leaders and elites have made, allowing our core assets to atrophy. We are still resting on our past laurels, but only just. The cracks are beginning to show - whether literally, in the condition of our military equipment, or figuratively, in terms of our diplomatic influence. More troubling, those outside of Canada are starting to notice. When Canadian political leaders emphasize (rightly) the responsibilities of Western countries to protect civilians from violence and mass violations of their human rights – otherwise known as the ‘responsibility to protect’ - they also face questions about what Canada will do, beyond words, to meet that responsibility. Canada’s current economic and political standing still gives it the freedom to make choices about how it will contribute globally. But the landscape is shifting before our very eyes.

In the contemporary debate about Canada’s role in the world, there is a chorus of voices proclaiming we have paid too much attention to cosmopolitan values (the ‘other’) in our foreign policy, and not enough to the national interest (the ‘self’).

It is true that the word ‘interest’ doesn’t roll off the Canadian tongue very easily. Our foreign policy statements often give the impression that Canada floats above the grubby and corrupt world of power politics. While other countries have interests, we have values. It is also true that the moralistic streak in Canadian foreign policy has irritated our southern neighbour, leading one former U.S. secretary of state to refer to Canada as the “Stern Daughter of the Voice of God”.¹

Since 9/11, a number of Canadian commentators have called for a softening of this stern voice. Thomas Axworthy argues that Canada is damaging its all-important relationship with the United States through its ‘all talk no action’ approach to foreign policy. We might feel virtuous, Axworthy claims, but – in a nice twist on Ralph Emerson – “virtue is not reward enough.”² We need to get back to basics, and reinvest in the things that serve Canadian interests. Allan Gotlieb decries the tendency of Canadian foreign policy to oscillate between realism and romanticism. In Gotlieb’s view, Canadian policymakers must break away from the romantic utopianism that puts the United Nations, rule-making, and the promotion of the country’s values at the top of the foreign policy agenda. In today’s world of uncertainty and turmoil, he argues, “Canada must adopt a reality-based foreign policy by responding to the imperatives of geography, history and economics”.³ Jack Granatstein’s line is even tougher. His target is the Lloyd Axworthy era in Canadian foreign policy, which was marked by its pursuit of a human security agenda. During this period, Granatstein suggests, we allowed our ‘hard’ foreign

¹ Andrew Cohen, *While Canada Slept: How we lost our place in the world* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 2003), p. 158.

² Thomas Axworthy, ‘On Being An Ally: Why Virtue Is Not Reward Enough’, Address to the Institute for Research on Public Policy, Ottawa, 1 April 2004.

³ Allan Gotlieb, ‘Romanticism and Realism in Canada’s Foreign Policy’, C.D.Howe Institute Benefactors Lecture, Toronto, 3 November 2004, p. 4.

policy assets, particularly the Canadian military, to decline. According to Granatstein, Canada must not mistake “its loudly professed values” for its national interests. “Moral earnestness and the loud preaching of our values will not suffice to protect us in this new century”.⁴

There are four main points I want to make about the call for greater realism and attention to the national interest in Canadian foreign policy. The first and second challenge the juxtaposition of values and interests, and call for a new and more expansive notion of the ‘national interest’. The third and fourth unpack the idea of a ‘national interest’ in today’s world, and suggest that the public needs to become more integral to that interest. This is true not just of the Canadian public, which must be connected to foreign policy in new and innovative ways, but also to the publics of other countries, who must increasingly become the concern of our foreign policy.

VALUES AND INTERESTS: A FALSE DICHOTOMY

So, my first main point this evening concerns the tendency of many recent critics of Canadian foreign policy to champion interests over values. As tempting as the interests-before-values mantra is, it is futile to think we can abandon a values-based agenda. We live in a democratic society, where the values and principles we stand for will inevitably form part of our activities on the international stage.

Values help to forge cohesion across a huge territorial mass and diverse population. They help to make both collective action, and collective judgment, possible. Furthermore, far from being an irritant to Washington, as those like Granatstein suggest, values-based perspectives can make an impact, even in the Canada-U.S. relationship. The defining factor will be whether such views are merely rhetorical jibes, or whether they backed up by concrete ideas and policy commitments. During Canada’s latest term on the UN Security Council, in 1999-2000, our representatives pursued policies that were grounded in Canadian values, such as the creation of the International Criminal Court and the Kimberley Process on conflict diamonds. While our perspective sometimes clashed with that of the U.S., our two governments ‘agreed to disagree’ and did not allow these differences to overshadow the larger set of issues on which Canada and the U.S. do agree.

Finally, the values Canada projects globally help to define who we are. Foreign policy is partly an exercise in forging national identity. Rather than trying to deny or hide this fact, we should recognize this as part and parcel of our contemporary world. Consider the United States, which portrays itself as the leader of the free world, or China, which defines itself as the guardian of the developing world. It is artificial to juxtapose interests and values, as if the former were selfish and narrow, and the latter ethical and internationalist. In reality, values and interests work much more in tandem.

⁴ J.L. Granatstein, ‘The Importance of Being Less Earnest’, C.D. Howe Institute Benefactors Lecture, Toronto, 21 October 2003, p. 27.

It is curious that commentators think that Canada is unique in swinging between realism and idealism, or that the concern with values is somehow a peculiarly Canadian problem. Countless books and articles have been written over the course of the last century on precisely the same oscillation in U.S. foreign policy. In fact, the nexus between values and interests is something that the United States instinctively understands and employs in its own foreign policy. Despite the widely held view that President George W. Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy was a defense of 'realism' and unilateralism, the document actually lacked any careful and coherent articulation of U.S. national interests. Instead, it is dominated by the notions of freedom and democracy, and links these historical themes of U.S. foreign policy with a new willingness to use power to project them. The more recent National Security Strategy, of 2006, is even more lyrical in its freedom agenda, and makes a very close connection between values and interests:

It is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world. In the world today, the fundamental character of regimes matters as much as the distribution of power among them...The United States has long championed freedom because doing so reflects our values and advances our interests. It reflects our values because we believe the desire for freedom lives in every human heart and the imperative of human dignity transcends all nations and cultures. Championing freedom advances our interests because the survival of liberty at home increasingly depends on the success of liberty abroad.⁵

Indeed, Canada is living next to a colossus which has today – perhaps more so than in three decades – a profoundly values-based foreign policy. Is this the time to become silent about values? Should we allow the Bush Administration to define these notions? Or do we too have something to say?

The real question, of course, is which values we want embody and integrate into our foreign policy. Earlier this year, when the Harper Government conducted focus groups on Canada's mission in Afghanistan, it found that members of the public were distinctly uncomfortable about casting the objectives in Afghanistan in terms of notions like freedom and democracy. For the participants in the focus groups, these things seemed 'too American'. Instead, they preferred descriptions of the mission which emphasized concrete development objectives, such as rebuilding roads or setting up schools to educate Afghan women.

This small vignette raises two important questions. First, why do many Canadians (though clearly not all) seem to be uncomfortable with the idea of promoting liberal political values? Democracy is certainly not the monopoly of the United States; indeed,

⁵ See *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, March 2006), available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf>>;

India is the world's largest democracy. Is it a function of a deeper Canadian sensibility, to value pluralism? And second, if development objectives seem to gain wider acclaim from Canadians, how (if at all) can these be translated into a value? Is the goal here about promoting very basic human rights, such as protection from violence, food and shelter? Unfortunately, I don't (yet) have an answer to these questions, but they urgently need addressing, particularly in the context of our country's role in securing and reconstructing Afghanistan.

THE WIDENING OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST

My second point, which leads into the theme in the title of my lecture, probes more deeply into what we mean by the 'national interest'. The national interest proponents I referred to tend to assume that such interests are obvious and objective: if only we would recognize them, we would have a coherent foreign policy. But just as values can conflict, so too can interests: for example, protecting Canadian farmers versus lowering tariff barriers globally to bring about greater prosperity.

National interests don't fall from the sky. They are constructed by particular processes, people, and institutions.⁶ The Minister of Foreign Affairs doesn't arrive in her office on her first day of the job, only to be presented with a simple handbook laying out the core features of Canada's national interest. Rather, these interests are under constant construction, and it is analytically problematic to assume that this is a neutral and straightforward process. The 'realists' may believe that Canada's national interests are practical and self-evident. But beyond the dictum to pursue prosperity and security - which seems pretty uncontroversial - what are the particular interests of Canada in an interdependent world? Those who dare, for example, to suggest that Canada might have an interest in pursuing trade and investment opportunities outside of the United States are often branded as promoters of the Trudeau-era 'third option'. But aren't such considerations also part of a prudent calculation of the long-term national interest? We are, after all, no longer the number one supplier of goods and services to the United States (the European Union and China have surpassed us). Nor is it clear that the marginal benefit of increased efforts to promote trade and investment in the U.S. is greater than it would be for similar efforts in a major developing-country market.

The other 'reality' to acknowledge is that countries find themselves sharing mutual interests more often than ever before. This is especially true for our commercial interests. In the end, old parochial conceptions of the national interest are difficult to maintain when the challenges we face are interrelated, and when no one state - acting on its own - can make itself invulnerable. A key strength of Tony Blair's tenure as Prime Minister was his ability to communicate to the British people about the challenges and opportunities of an interdependent world. One of his strategies was to expand and deepen the traditional notion of the 'national interest', and to demonstrate how values and interests work together. For example, during the Kosovo crisis in 1999, Blair contended that a response to ethnic cleansing could be compatible with the national

⁶ For more on the process of defining the national interest, see Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

interest once the notion of 'nation' was widened to include the principles that Britain stood for. Britain, as a 'civilised nation', had an obligation to respond and demonstrate horror in the face of 'uncivilised' action. In a similar way, Blair's New Labour Government argued that changes in the international system, driven by the forces of globalisation, necessitated a wider conception of the national interest.

There are two implications of this logic: first, transnational forces (such as crime, the drugs trade, or weapons proliferation) become part of the national security agenda; and second, pursuit of the national interest requires steps to minimise the causes and effects of political and economic instability around the globe. This is why, for example, providing assistance to so-called failed or failing states should not necessarily be seen as a squishy foreign policy ideal. Rather, it could be argued that it is firmly in the Canadian national interest to contribute to the creation of stronger and more capable states. As 9/11 showed us, weak states have as great a capacity to hurt us as strong states.

Let more leadership, more communication, and more education will be required if the Canadian public is to fully embrace a 21st century conception of the national interest. A nation-wide poll taken in late February of 2006 showed that while 90% of Canadians were aware of our Afghan mission and 73% said they had a "strong emotional connection" with the troops in Kandahar, most Canadians still appear to be confused about the nature of the deployment. Roughly 70% of respondents said they think the troops' main role is peacekeeping, while only 26% said they think their primary role is combat. (And on every question in the survey, support was softest in Quebec).

The reality, as we all know, is somewhere in the middle. The Afghan mission combines reconstruction work with combat in a highly novel way for the Canadian military. Ultimately, the mission is about supporting the growth and stability of Afghanistan's institutions, but 'on the ground' this means battling a determined and ruthless insurgency. Far from engaging in Pearsonian peacekeeping, our soldiers in Afghanistan are warding off attacks by members of the Taliban, who, having regrouped in Pakistan, are continuing to challenge Afghan leader Hamid Karzai's hold on power. In order to sustain the necessary public support for such a mission, our government must continue to be clear about why we should assume those risks. And that rationale only makes sense, in my view, if it combines interests and values.

More controversially, supporting the growth and stability of Afghanistan's institutions will increasingly mean supporting political engagement. In other words, as the University of Toronto's Janice Stein has recently argued, the solution to the instability cannot be found solely 'on the ground' in Southern Afghanistan; it is also dependent on political negotiations between President Karzai and his enemies in Kabul.⁷ And this includes members of the Taliban. I hasten to add that this is a complex task: the Taliban is extremely fragmented, and its public spokesmen have made stringent demands before any peace talks can occur (the withdrawal of all foreign troops and the creation of an 'Islamic' constitution in Afghanistan).

⁷ Janice Gross Stein, 'Afghan reality: talking to the enemy', *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, 30 August 2007.

In light of the complexity I've outlined, and the level of Canadian commitment to Afghanistan, we need a 'real' debate on Afghanistan, rather than the simplistic black and white discussion we have thus far been presented with. A colleague of mine (who is a former Canadian diplomat and now the director of a non-profit operating in Afghanistan) has usefully set out the two questions that should drive that debate. The first question – is Afghanistan important to Canada? – is one that our political leaders must dare to address more directly. But the second question – are we doing any good in Afghanistan? – requires input from a variety of corners. Diplomats. Aid workers. Scholars. This second question really demands some facts, and some data.⁸ These are things that not only the government, but concerned members of the Canadian public, can chew on.

INVOLVING THE PUBLIC IN ARTICULATING THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Given the public's intense interest in the Afghan campaign, it's worth asking just how much of a duty a government has to consult that public in the formation of its foreign policy. To put it another way, how integral is the Canadian public to the articulation of the Canadian national interest? This brings me to the core of comments this afternoon: to the connection between the public and foreign policy.

We need to remember here how relatively new this question is. International policy, practiced by a professional foreign service, has in historical terms been a pretty closed business. The ethos of our foreign service, as we know, was handed down from the Europeans, and we inherited their suspicion of popular involvement in foreign affairs. Picture in your mind the erudite and sophisticated Henry Kissinger, who always seemed to sigh with frustration when he realized that foreign policy actually had to be approved through democratic processes – something that in many instances cramped his style. It is the view of many, not just Kissinger, that international affairs – particularly in the realm of security – are exceedingly complex, requiring flexibility and compromise and nuance.

As a result, the traditional policy process has looked something like this: the policy advisors inside government (whether bureaucrats or specialist political advisors) conduct a strategic analysis, which involves assessing the global context, and a country's strengths and weaknesses. Second, they identify particular threats and opportunities facing that country. And finally, they produce a discussion paper which is designed to inform a series of interested parties, both within government and outside it, and which is eventually approved by the political hierarchy and presented to parliament.⁹ This process, it should be remembered, is carried out in relative isolation –

⁸ Scott Gilmore, 'A real Afghanistan debate', *Ottawa Citizen*, Ottawa, 10 September 2007.

⁹ For an elaboration on this 'policy black box', see Christopher Ankensen, 'A Review of International Policy Making Approaches: The Case of the United Kingdom and Australia', available at http://international.gc.ca/arms/research/ankensen_2004/menu-en.asp. Ankensen provides a summary of two important attempts at public consultation: the 1998 Strategic Defence Review in the UK, and the preparation for the Australian Defence White Paper in 2000. The latter effort involved the establishment of a Defence Community Consultation Team, which met for 9 weeks and traveled across Australia. Twenty-eight special 'town hall' meetings were organized with members of the general public.

particularly from other government departments and the wider public. It is also frequently assumed that public opinion is too volatile, too incoherent, and too timid about international involvement to form a basis on which foreign policy can be fashioned.

Since the end of the Cold War, and the democratic transformations that have occurred around the world, there has been greater concern for how the publics of democratic states can be engaged more directly in the foreign policies of their countries. In Canada, this dialogue is still relatively new – much of it can be traced to the election of the Liberal government in 1993, and its Red Book commitment to ‘an open process for foreign policy-making’. This commitment was implemented through a major review of foreign policy, published in 1995, which was preceded by a National Forum on Canada’s International Relations. (One of the recommendations of that Forum was that the process be repeated annually, and for several years it was done so through the Centre for Foreign Policy Development – an office established within Foreign Affairs to encourage public inputs into the foreign policy process.)

But where does that Centre stand today? Well, when you ‘google’ it, don’t find it. And when you type in its old webpage, the message ‘page cannot be found’ comes up! It seems that our current government is rethinking the wisdom and means of engaging the public in foreign policy, particularly in the context of its minority government status. But this doesn’t mean that private Canadians have stopped thinking about how to do it: in particular, I want to draw attention to a very interesting initiative, under the auspices of Simon Fraser University’s Morris Wosk Centre for Dialogue, which brings together scholars, business, ethnic leaders, and public servants in creating what it calls a ‘new narrative for Canada’s international policy’. The project is called Canada’s World: A Citizens’ Dialogue for Defining Canada’s International Policy. It is a 3-year dialogue with Canadians designed to develop a vision for Canada’s international role and to share that vision with key decision-makers. Broadly inclusive, it involves scholars, businesspeople, civil society leaders, diaspora communities, youth, and public servants. The process begins with regional dialogues across the country, followed by a virtual discussion of options and ideas on line. The final phase is a 5-day national dialogue which will generate options that can be communicated to decision-makers.

As the drivers of this initiative point out, there are a number of reasons why public engagement in foreign policy is particularly important for Canada right now:

The first, as I hinted at earlier, is that there is a growing gap between the perception of what Canada does in the world and the actual reality of our country’s place in the world – our influence and contribution are declining.

Secondly, there is a pressing need to increase the number of Canadians who think and care about international policy. Despite being one of the most globalized countries in the world, with a significant immigrant makeup, the debate about international affairs in Canada is still confined to a small few. Moreover, many of our business, political and civil society leaders are still far too parochial in their view of our country’s opportunities

and responsibilities.

Yet, as should be clear from recent developments, each and every Canadian has a personal stake in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy, whether we think of environmental protection, the creation of a more equitable international trading system, and the consolidation of peace in former zones of conflict.

Third, the discussions that are occurring around international policy are becoming increasingly polarized (we see this particularly with respect to the war in Afghanistan, and our relationship to the United States). This fact makes it particularly vital that policy-makers seek out real facts, and real expertise – wherever it may be found. – so that some of the grey, and not just the black and white, is informing our country's direction. It is obvious, but needs repeating, that this expertise does not exist only inside the corridors of government.

It should also be added here that Canadian public on foreign issues is not as fickle and timid as the traditional model of diplomacy and foreign policy-making would have us believe. Scholars Pierre Martin and Michel Fortman found in their study of public opinion in the 1990s that Canadian support for internationalism remained firm throughout that decade, despite some of the challenges encountered by UN missions in the field. In particular, they show that Canadians' support for their military's involvement in peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans was stable between 1992 and 1997 (even though, as we know, crises elsewhere – such as in Somalia – were subjecting the Canadian Forces to deep scrutiny). It is also interesting that in the level of its support for the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, the Canadian public was among the highest of all the NATO members (even though, arguably, Canada was one of the least directly affected by the crisis in terms of strategic interests). Thus, as these two scholars conclude, Canadian public opinion in the 1990s was “more resilient in its internationalism than many commentators have noted”.¹⁰

The fourth driving factor in favour of engaging the public is that our perceptions of ourselves as a country are evolving. When we think of what constitutes Canada, we think first and foremost of our territory and our people.

But both of these notions are in flux. With respect to territory, it is clear that our borders are more porous, and parts of our geography subject to new pressures (we see this particularly in the Canadian North). And with respect to people, we know that globalization and migration are changing our makeup and making it harder and harder to talk of one coherent ‘Canadian public’.

In particular, Canada's multiculturalism – while a defining feature of our polity and a source of great pride – makes the task of articulating a single national interest much more complex. Immigrants to this country have multiple allegiances, are transnational in their ties, and pluralistic in their world view. I believe, however, that we should see this as a strength – rather than as an unhelpful intrusion into the business of foreign policy.

¹⁰ Pierre Martin and Michel Fortman, ‘Public Opinion: Obstacle, Partner, or Scapegoat?’, *Policy Options* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2001), p. 71.

Indeed, we could begin to see ourselves as innovators: just as we have been in the forefront of creating a multicultural society, so too could we be at the forefront of thinking through how to create a foreign policy that can respond to that reality.

The fifth reason why it is crucial to think harder about public engagement in foreign policy is that the nature of government decision-making is changing. At the political level, minority governments have less time to devote to critical and long term thinking about foreign policy. Political manoeuvring absorbs much of the attention that would otherwise be devoted to fashioning strategy. In the process, there have been a number of 'policy casualties': issues and relationships that require, but have not received, sustained attention. (Two examples: the Canada-China relationship and the future of the principle of the 'responsibility to protect'.) Minority parliaments, as we know all too well, also face strong short-term incentives to play domestic politics with international affairs.

Ordinarily, the bureaucracy would provide a stabilizing influence, but change is underway here too. The locus of decision-making has been shifting within the civil service. Continued centralization of authority in the Prime Minister's Office and Privy Council Office has limited traditional channels of influence. Foreign Affairs Canada now plays a much-diminished role in setting Canada's international agenda. CIDA has recently been subjected to sustained and strident criticism. The Department of Defence has courted controversy by walking the fine line between providing impartial advice and playing partisan politics. In short, the relative importance of those actors charged with setting Canadian foreign policy has altered substantially in the last fifteen years.

The final reason why a more proactive approach needs to be taken to public engagement is that our experience in doing so is still limited – and we need to learn more. To date, there have been only a few public consultations organized by Foreign Affairs as part of policy reviews, or in the run up to important conferences such as the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001. Not surprisingly, the results of those efforts have been mixed.

So what has been learned? First, there has been much talking and passive listening on the part of the formal decision-makers, but still very little engagement; the latter should involve what one shrewd analyst of policy-making, John Hay, calls 'sustained partnerships of policy advocacy'¹¹ (an example of success: completion and implementation of the Landmines Convention; an example of failure: efforts to negotiate a multilateral agreement on investment).

Second, public consultation needs to happen at every stage, from problem identification and policy formulation to execution and evaluation. Indeed, it must be remembered that consultation is also a way of informing the public; it can help to reinforce policy decisions with greater legitimacy. When information is provided in a reliable and transparent way, it can reduce hostility even among those who at the end of the day will

¹¹ John B. Hay, 'Practising Democratic Foreign Policy: DFAIT's Consultations with Canadians', *Canadian Foreign Policy*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Fall 2000), p. 124.

still disagree with a particular policy: 'When skeptics are fully informed of the pros and cons and compromises of policy, they are more likely to accept its legitimacy, if not its wisdom.'¹²

The third lesson from past consultation is that issues are interconnected. Policy-makers might like to talk to the public about discrete issues (and of course the division of the bureaucracy into separate silos reinforces this), but 'ordinary' civilians don't see them that way. So, for example, it has become a commonplace to say that 'nothing is just trade anymore': labour and environmental standards, along with human rights concerns, are inextricably part of the impact of trade agreements.

Fourth, public participation is not necessarily a 'good' in itself. The quality of information and debate also matters. This may sound incredibly anti-democratic, so let me explain what I mean. Those who have been involved in consultative processes have observed that sometimes efforts at public involvement politicize issues, rather than contribute to better policy. So, for example, during the Australian government's consultations prior to its 2000 Defence White Paper, critics of John Howard insisted that the public engagement strategy was merely an attempt to reinforce the Prime Minister's tougher stance on security and that many of the same 'usual suspects' came out to the town hall meetings.

And a final lesson: when we think about public consultation, representation is a huge challenge. Given that we can't consult each and every Canadian on every policy issue, how do we involve the public? Take two issues by way of example. The first is the involvement of non-governmental organizations, or 'NGOs'. While an important part of the consultation picture, these groups are not always representative or fully accountable. Many of the recent summits, as we have seen, have made a greater effort to involve organized civil society groups – giving them a level of influence they did not have before. But by the same token, this places a greater responsibility upon such groups, and subjects them to some tough questioning - about their relations with parliamentarians, about the extent to which they reflect the views and interests of citizens, and whether their tools of outreach are getting their message across effectively and influencing decisions for the greater good.

In this context, it is valuable to remember the observations of the Canadian political scientist Denis Stairs, who reviewed the Canadian government's attempts to consult the public in the run-up to the Seattle Summit of 1999. In Stairs' view, attempts at public consultation must nurture our existing political institutions, rather than undermine them. Often, this means that the appropriate target for the public's political representations on contentious issues of principle are not public servants – i.e., those in Foreign Affairs Canada – but the politicians. And the place for those attempts to exert influence is the public domain, through political parties - not 'behind the scenes', closed-door meetings.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

To put it another way: lobbying the bureaucracy cannot be a way to compensate for failing to have one's policy preferences win out on election day.¹³

A second issue of representation is the involvement of ethnic or diaspora organizations. Do members of the public want to be identified with their ethnic tag, or is their identity more complex? Some would argue that 'we risk halving our horizons in foreign policy by seeing diversity through the lens of homogenizing, unique identities such as "the Haitian diaspora," or more recently "Muslim," when in fact people ... actually have multiple identities and affiliations¹⁴ (e.g., Canadian, Ontarian, African, East African, Tanzanian, Immigrant, Male, Heterosexual, etc.). This fact is particularly worth heeding when, as Amartya Sen has argued, reasoning and choice are relevant for identity. There are also legitimate questions to be raised about how well Canada's multicultural model is actually working, and whether it can be harnessed in its current form toward the formation of foreign policy.

REACING OUT TO NEW CONSTITUENCIES THROUGH PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Before I conclude, I want to raise a fourth point – which is a slightly different way of thinking about the connection between the public and foreign policy. 'The public' in this sense is not the Canadian public, but the publics of other countries.

The events of September 11th, 2001 intensified the move towards the practice of what is referred to in my field of International Relations as 'public diplomacy'. According to one of the most prolific writers on public diplomacy, Daryl Copeland, PD is the sum of efforts by government to promote policies and interests abroad by influencing international public opinion. These efforts go well beyond the classic diplomacy tools of communiqués and aide memories. They also go beyond state-to-state contact through designated channels. Instead, foreign ministries operating abroad are devising programmes and forging complex coalitions involving non-state actors and the wider public.¹⁵ Thus, while the old "club model" of diplomacy involves diplomats meeting other diplomats or government representatives, the new "network model" of diplomacy involves engagement with a much wider array of players both within the host country and beyond.¹⁶

This new diplomacy can be seen clearly in the first major speech of Britain's new Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, who has publicly claimed that foreign policy must be more about influencing public opinion than just about negotiating behind closed doors. Miliband's July 19th speech was co-hosted by Avaaz.org – an on-line global activist network that is not even a year old, but boasts over 1 million members – and Chatham

¹³Denis Stairs, 'Foreign Policy Consultations in a Globalizing World: The case of Canada, the WTO, and the Shenanigans in Seattle', *Policy Matters*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (2000).

¹⁴Farouk Shamas Jiwa, 'Minority Views: What should be the role of Canada's diasporas in shaping foreign policy?', *Literary Review of Canada*, Vol. 15, No. 6 (July/August 2007).

¹⁵Daryl Copeland, 'New rabbits, old hats: International policy and Canada's foreign service in an era of diminished diplomatic resources', *International Journal*, (Summer 2005), pp. 743-762 (pp. 749-50).

¹⁶Jorge Heine, 'On the Manner of Practising the New Diplomacy', The Centre of International Governance Innovation, Working Paper No. 11, October 2006.

House – an institute which is home to prominent figures in business, academia, and public life who have an interest in international affairs. In a demonstration that the Foreign Secretary values global public opinion almost as much as Britain’s elite, Miliband took questions from Avaaz members and accepted a book of advice and warnings about British foreign policy.¹⁷

The implementers of public diplomacy are typically Communications and Cultural relations bureaus, public affairs units, and public diplomats. Their work involves analysis of audiences and trends, the use of new and conventional media, the cultivation of journalists and opinion leaders, and the crafting of particular messages. In this context, writes Copeland, “diplomats start to look less like decorous messengers, ‘envoys of the sovereign, extraordinary and plenipotentiary’, and more like streetwise, cross-cultural lobbyists.”¹⁸ The promoters of PD like to say that it is not simply another program in Foreign Affairs, but a completely new paradigm for foreign policy. And it is undeniable that PD addresses some of the biggest changes in the landscape of our contemporary world: globalization and the compression of time and space through modern media; the empowerment of individuals through information technology; the new security environment, which involves non-state actors such as terrorist groups and non-state-based threats, such as climate change; and the mismatch between national power and the scale of global problems.

PD has received intense criticism of late, given its association with the Bush Administration’s attempts to improve its image in the Arab and Islamic worlds – through the creation of Arab-language U.S. radio stations and the provision of soccer balls to young Afghans. But it’s important that we don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. In the interconnected world we live in – and especially in the case of a country such as Canada, which lacks significant economic and military power – the image that a country projects abroad is integral to foreign policy success. And as past initiatives such as the Landmines Campaign illustrate, the effective exercise of influence is increasingly related to our ability to manage networks and shape opinion.

I am not suggesting that formal, inter-state diplomacy isn’t necessary (our diplomats still need their special passports!). But I am arguing that it is no longer sufficient when we seek to influence foreign governments. Today, that power is partly dependent on our ability to influence the publics of other countries. (If you think, for example, of the dispute Canada had with Spain over North Atlantic fisheries, you’ll remember that we only really got traction when we moved the contest into the court of public opinion, through the efforts of then Fisheries Minister Brian Tobin.) In attempting to promote Canada’s interests, values, and policies, our representatives also need to be much bolder. The crowded arena of public diplomacy does not lend itself to the modesty and understatement which is characteristic of so many Canadians.

¹⁷ See a webcast of David Miliband’s address on the ‘New Diplomacy’ at http://www.avaaz.org/en/miliband_webcast.

¹⁸ Copeland, *op.cit.*, p. 754.

CONCLUSION

But above all, we need to remember that PD is not just for designated officers. It is for EVERYONE representing Canada. As I've tried to argue in my writing and speaking, globally our country is embodied not just by Canada with a capital C – the corporate entity represented by government officials – but also by Canadians. In short, foreign policy is no longer something others do, 'out there'. Many corners of what we call 'the public', whether individuals or organizations, make a vital contribution to it – because so many of us have a global component to our everyday lives. This is something I passionately believe – and it also makes me more optimistic about our future. Because, in the end, if government was the sum total of what we could do in the world, we would be forgiven for being just a little bit dejected.