

“Realistic Intervention, Finally.”

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Canada's new declaratory foreign and national security policy, A Role of Pride and Influence in the World is a significant improvement over its anemic predecessor policies circa 1994-95. Indeed, the many authors have clearly responded to the criticisms made by Douglas Bland, Don Macnamara and myself of those early attempts to substitute vague platitudes, mirrors and smoke for hard decisions and action. A Role of Pride and Influence and its associated documents accepts, finally, several critical things. First, Canada is not a neutral, impartial player on the world scene and the UN is not the primary means by which we should engage the world. Second, Canada's policies are, in fact, interest-driven, not solely based on vaguely-identified values. Third, we will no longer pretend that lethal force has no role to play in achieving Canadian national objectives. Indeed, the identification in A Role of Pride and Influence of those national objectives, economic prosperity and the security of Canada, coupled to the concept of forward security (dubbed “forward presence” in the policy documents) has been lifted nearly verbatim from a 2001 article which appeared in IRPP's Policy Options.

There are, of course, the usual hat-tipping paragraphs to developmental aid and arms control, but the policy is very clear: Canada will intervene to stabilize failing, fragile, and failed states to prevent their use as base areas for international terrorists and suggests that we will intervene to prevent such entities from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. To wit: “the Canadian Forces stand ready to participate in military missions against terrorist networks or states who harbour them” and

“In making a distinctive contribution to a safer world, we will rely heavily on the Canadian Forces.”

Of note, the recognition in the documents that Canada's special operations forces (the JTF-2 unit) exist and that we will make use of them is a significant divergence from previous over-emphasis on deploying the Disaster Assistance Response Team to hand out teddy-bears.

Indeed, the acceptance by the government and the bureaucracy that “peacekeeping” is dead and stabilization operations are and will be the order of the day is another significant victory for those critics who have sought for years to have this obsolete paens to the mythology of 1956 discredited and removed to the dust bin of history. Stabilization operations, preceded by combat operations and then followed by institution-building, is a realistic acknowledgement of the types of operations that the Canadian Forces and other government departments will engage in and that single mission types and the false dichotomy of “warfighting” versus “peacekeeping” is a thing of the past. We are in a period akin to the Cold War: no war, no peace. This is the environment and we have to live in it.

Where the paper errs (in addition an incorrect assertion that Mike Pearson invented peacekeeping) is its subtext that economic inequality created by globalization creates the threats that are arrayed against us and that development is what we really want to be doing if we weren't forced to do lethal, interventative things. A throwback to the obsolete Cold War leftist notions which still dominate elements within Foreign Affairs and particularly CIDA, this should have been rectified by the more realistic elements within the PCO before publication (Perhaps a new government will make the necessary changes). On the other hand, the recognition that economic engagement involving Canadian corporations and

business plays a legitimate role in prevention and nation-building tends to offset foreign aid concepts emergent from the Disco Age.

In its failure to address the elements that create “failed and fragile states,” the new policy ignores the critical roles that leadership and ideology (whether cloaked as “religion” or not) play in the creation of totalitarian movements which in turn spawn terror and attach themselves, parasite-like, to living states. Yes, certain economic conditions are a breeding ground for this sort of activity (Germany in the 1920s) but power can be seized (Cambodia, 1977, former Yugoslavia 1990s) or situations artificially created to induce terror leading to a seizure of power (Afghanistan 1979, Rwanda 1994). Abject poverty played little or no role in these tragedies: pride, arrogance, power, and will did. Canada may have to consider its potential role with others in the international community in the elimination of certain personalities and groups before they can launch genocidal and terroristic programmes. Fortunately, the new policy leaves the door open to this perhaps necessary activity. As the A Role of Pride and Influence cleverly states, “we acknowledge that any successful framework of global governance incorporates power as well as rules.”

Some words. Some sentiments. Will the Government pay for it?