

"Et Tu, Lloyd?: Honourable Men, Lions, and Human Security."

or:

"Lloyd Axworthy: It's Been a Slice."

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The current spate of laudatory pronouncements on Lloyd Axworthy's accomplishments (Richard Gwyn's "Axworthy made a difference," Toronto Star 20 September is merely one) is reaching nauseating proportions. Such pronouncements smack of a collective pat on the back by the usual suspects for good ole' Lloyd (who was just misunderstood and screwed over by the Americans, right?) rather than cold, hard, reasoned analysis of the short and long term implications of Axworthy's agenda on Canada's ability to conduct foreign policy and international trade in the new millennium.

Gwyn's barely-concealed attempt to depict Axworthy as Mike Pearson's moral successor is a paean to long-lost mythological age in which Canada the so-called 'Middle Power' was portrayed as the world's peacekeeper, almost aloof from Cold War politics. Pearson was in fact a pro-NATO Cold War realist who advocated that the UN repeatedly intervene in the Third World with military forces to forestall Soviet meddling in areas critical to the deterrent effort. Pearson also ensured that Canada's armed forces possessed up to date equipment, including thermonuclear weapons for offensive nuclear strike operations in Europe, and that the United States' Strategic Air Command's bombers have a safe haven in Canada protected by nuclear-equipped Canadian interceptors in the event of a Soviet attack. There is no way in Hades that Lloyd Axworthy would have countenanced such behaviour.

It should also be noted for the record that the concept of 'human security' which Axworthy bludgeoned us and our allies with in the 1990s was developed within External Affairs during the 1960s and similar verbiage shows up in public documents from the period. The creation of the Canadian International Development Agency was in part due to Cold War objectives of raising the standard of living in the Third World to prevent revolutions that would establish regimes unfriendly to Canadian interests. It is not a new concept and it was not necessarily intended to be completely altruistic. It was, however,

coordinated with the other aspects of Canadian national security policy and the correct priorities were adhered to, that is, hard power came first, soft power came second.

Axworthy, on the other hand, initiated his soft power agenda without adequate consultation or coordination with other government departments engaged in formulating and implementing national security policy. His public clashes with National Defence over the details of the land mines issue and the Army Cadet/child soldier issue were minor compared to the embarrassing split which developed over National Missile Defence and generated problems with our closest ally and, incidentally, trading partner. Attempting to alter NATO nuclear strategy on his own using Canada's alleged moral superiority was a project of Sisyphusian proportions. His public flip-flops on the use of force over Kosovo betrays a lack of understanding of how military force should be applied to achieve Canadian aims and how that force is coordinated with our other efforts. The ad hoc (but effective) implementation of human security measures carried out in Kosovo without adequate direction and support from Fort Pearson is a credit to those participating in such operations, not to the policy's mouthpiece comfortably ensconced in Ottawa or the Liu Centre.

In another un-Pearson like move, Axworthy temporarily stepped off his moral high horse to deliver an unwarranted and vicious attack against political scientist Kim Nossal, who had merely critiqued the concept of soft power and its applicability to Canada's national security policy. This attack was an insult to those of us who, in addition to observing, analyzing, and providing commentary, care very deeply about exactly how and why Canadian soldiers are deployed to various regions of our global village and put at risk to express our national security policy.

Axworthy's comment to the Ottawa press corps that he might write a book should not come as a surprise. Trudeau's foreign policy doyen, Ivan Head, also crafted a similar apologia. Mike Pearson, however, wrote several think pieces, most of which operated from a realist approach, and none of which were ex-post facto self-justification. If Axworthy thinks that he will become some academician Maximus for human security and the betterment of the human condition, he is sorely mistaken. The mean-spirited tone of the Nossal rebuttal will not go down well if he chooses to employ it again.

In time, historians (perhaps even myself or one of my current crop of graduate students) will delve into the archives, reconstruct the email, interview those who were in positions to observe events as they unfolded and develop insight into the internal debates over Soft Power and how well it was coordinated with other aspects of Canadian national security policy. What will the verdict be? Clearly Axworthy was no Mike Pearson.

Welcome to the arena, Lloyd. SPQR.

