



## **Briefing Note on Canada-U.S. Security Issues**

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### **Background/ Introduction:**

Civil society brings a somewhat different perspective to the discussion of security issues between Canada and the New American Empire. Civil society is a term to describe groups such as non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and advocacy groups, but also includes major categories such as women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, trade unions, and faith-based organisations. The perspective of civil society on security is important because it is based on values that may conflict with the interests of government or the private sector. While no one can speak on behalf of all the diverse interests of civil society, the majority of civil society organisations advocate for a common set of values which I will outline. These include respect for the natural environment and human rights, especially rights of women, children, and minorities. Civil society supports participatory democracy, international law, non-violent conflict resolution, social justice and equity for the disadvantaged. They place human security above the security of the nation state and they reject the notion that one nation has the right to dominate others to protect its interests.

As a long time disarmament activist, I have been able to observe the dramatic rise in the influence of civil society organisations nationally and internationally since the early 1980s. I am the immediate Past President of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the organisation that won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. Twenty years ago, when I began working in the physicians' movement, NGOs were regarded as well-meaning amateurs who should stay out of the way of the professionals. Over time, international NGOs have developed specialised expertise and have become highly valued participants at UN conferences and national consultations.

Civil society brings a great diversity of perspectives to the deliberations of national governments and the United Nations. The numbers of NGOs associated with the UN has grown to more than 30,000. The dramatic growth in civil society involvement in social issues is in part a result of increasing public dissatisfaction with elected officials and their general lack of accountability to the public, and in part a result of more people wanting to participate in decisions that affect them. Although NGOs do not have official power in decision-making, they have the power to convince by argument, research, and example.

Civil society represents the long view in a world where decision makers operate on a four year political cycle. Civil society organisations do not stand to benefit financially from the work they

do and are not competing for power with governments, but are trying to influence the direction of governments toward a world that is just, peaceful and protective of the planet.

## **Key Issues**

Even Americans now refer to the U.S. as an Empire. Recognizing the excesses of empires throughout history, we must place those insights into the contemporary setting of a fragile planet at the limits of its capacity to cope. As we face global warming, overpopulation, resource depletion, pollution, and the effects of HIV/AIDS, we should experience deep anxiety about what possibilities actually exist for Canada to continue to hold a world view that is markedly different from that of the U.S. Is it our role to be like the Quakers, speaking truth to power? Or is it our role to join the most powerful nation in world history and wilfully ignore the likely effects of militarism and domination carried to their global extreme?

Civil society is clearly not in favour of supporting military empires, no matter what nation is on top. The only world that can survive is a world of peoples cooperating under international law, striving together to save the natural environment, and struggling to protect the most vulnerable populations.

### **A. Non-Military Threats to Canadian Security:**

Although discussions of security for the next 10-15 years usually focus on military issues, other security threats are intruding on the public consciousness. "Is there going to be enough food and water for us? Will we have homes? Will we all have access to health care? How will we plan a collective response to catastrophic extremes of weather and forest fires? Will we have meaningful work opportunities? Will we still have a participatory democracy, a credible justice system, and civil liberties?"

The answers to these questions are profoundly affected by U.S. policies because our futures are bound up together. Canada's security depends upon international cooperation and a robust system of international law. The issues of water supply, pollution, employment and civil liberties affect people on both sides of the border and must be addressed jointly. The current U.S. Administration has undermined the United Nations and international law by their rejection of the Kyoto protocols, their intransigence on the elimination of nuclear weapons, their choice to attack Iraq instead of continuing the UN weapons inspections and their rejection of the International Criminal Court, the CTBT and the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions.

Canadians have no enemies. We are seen as honest brokers in international affairs, a country that tries to build consensus and cooperation rather than confrontation. Civil society supports these efforts. We support Canadian Peacekeepers, foreign aid and Canadian assistance in post-war situations to help establish elections and functioning police and justice systems. We support Canadian diplomacy at the United Nations, where our delegations have tried to advance the elimination of nuclear weapons and other disarmament agreements. Civil society initiated the Campaign to Ban Landmines and then worked in partnership with the Government on the Ottawa Process that resulted in the Landmines Treaty.

## **B. Military risks to security**

### **1. Nuclear Weapons**

For Canada there are risks inherent in being a close ally of the U.S. Our proximity means that an attack on the U.S. using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons could have devastating effects on Canadian territory. The greatest danger we face is not that North Korea will launch a nuclear missile against Los Angeles, it is the danger posed by 30,000 nuclear weapons held by the other eight nuclear weapons states. Despite the “unequivocal commitment to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons” made by the nuclear weapons states in 2000, (and withdrawn by President George W. Bush) some 4000 nuclear weapons are still kept on high alert (launch on warning) between the U.S. and Russia. Today the risk of accidental or inadvertent launch of a missile is much more likely than a deliberate attack, but the risk of a terrorist attack has brought a new factor into the equation. The consequences of an unauthorized launch could be catastrophic. Gen Lee Butler (U.S. ret.) told the Canadian Parliament that when he was head of U.S. Strategic Command, if a missile appeared to be coming toward the U.S., the response would be the retaliatory launch of 10,000 missiles against Russia. Bruce Blair, Director of the U.S. Center for Defence Information states that in spite of all the positive changes in U.S.-Russian relations, the Pentagon still focuses on Russia as the major threat to the U.S.

Nuclear war remains the only thing that could wipe out human life in an afternoon. Whether or not Canadian cities and military bases were targeted, an exchange of hundreds or thousands of nuclear explosions between the U.S. and Russia would be likely to trigger nuclear winter. Scientists predict that the fires and large amounts of debris sent into the atmosphere would be carried around the earth, blocking out the sun and causing a drop in temperature that would lead to massive crop failures in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

The United States is the major obstacle to meaningful negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Currently, the U.S. is working on the development of mini-nukes and nuclear bunker-buster bombs for battlefield use. Canada is in the contradictory position of supporting the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, while also supporting NATO in its policy of retaining nuclear weapons as a centrepiece of their defence, including continuing the option of first use. The Russian arsenal is aging and deteriorating, but the U.S., in what seems a very short-sighted step, has cut its financial assistance for decommissioning Russian nuclear weapons through the U.S.-Russia Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.

### **2. Ballistic Missile Defence**

The expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars on systems to try to shoot down a small number of missiles is the fulfilment of a dream of many successive U.S. leaders. It is hard to imagine a nation choosing to attack the U.S. with missiles because the retaliation would ensure complete destruction of their country. Terrorists who are willing to commit suicide would not use a missile to carry a bomb when there are many easier ways to transport a nuclear bomb if that were their intent.

Prime Minister Martin has stated that Canada will not join the U.S. Missile Defence Program if it is going to lead to weapons in space. It seems disingenuous to think that BMD does not mean weapons in space when the U.S. Space Command website clearly indicates that its mission is the

full spectrum military dominance of the planet from outer space <sup>(1)</sup>. Such a blatantly aggressive mission statement would raise enormous hostility if it were on a Chinese or Russian website. Furthermore, a land and sea based system has been discredited by the majority of scientists in the U.S. and Canada. Both the Canadian and American professional associations of physicists have issued statements that BMD is scientifically unsound <sup>(2)</sup>. In addition to outlining the scientific reasons that BMD will not be effective in preventing a missile attack, the report indicates that

An ICBM which did not have its munition incapacitated by an interceptor hit would continue on a ballistic trajectory and impact earth short of the target. For both North Korea and Iran, the likely area of impact includes Canada. This risk is inherent to boost-phase missile defence.

The Canadian Pugwash Group has raised the serious question of the threat that an intercept vehicle would pose to commercial aircraft and to communication satellites <sup>(3)</sup>. There have been a series of accidents in which commercial aircraft have been downed by missiles because of errors in interpreting radar signals. How could aviation safety be guaranteed when the Pentagon admits that radar is the weakest link in the development of BMD?

Canadian involvement in BMD would mean Canada becoming a target. Even more significantly, joining the U.S. BMD would mean adopting a different world view. It would mean agreeing that security is best ensured by massive military technology. The Canadian public certainly does not believe this. Polls indicate that 69% of Canadians reject any involvement in BMD. Civil society is convinced that increased cooperation between nations, support for the UN and the use of police actions to stop terrorism are better responses than an increased reliance on military might.

### **3. Terrorism**

Although Canada has no state enemies, a world-wide network of non-state terrorists presents Canada with a security challenge. A collaborative approach for the U.S. and Canada would be the most effective response, but such an approach stumbles on U.S. exceptionalism. In the tragic attack of 9/11, some 3000 Americans died. People the world over showed their shock and outrage at the deaths of innocent people. They did, however, point out that at the same time, wars in other countries kill 3000 people every four days, but those deaths do not evoke global outrage or worldwide action. The notion that only American lives count has also been demonstrated in the reporting of deaths in Iraq. U.S. military deaths are counted, but not the deaths of private contractors and mercenaries and, since the occupation, it is no longer permitted for records to be kept of Iraqi deaths.

The worldwide war on terror affects every country, but it has actually increased terrorism. The U.S. Government appears to be committed to the unrealistic goal of making the U.S. invulnerable, and it appears to be willing to give up its own civil liberties and ours in that quest. The U.S. Patriot Act undermines centuries of human rights legislation and its effects on Canada are the subject of intense discussion.

The risk of a terrorist attack in Canada is significant and this risk must be taken very seriously, especially with respect to nuclear power plants where an attack could be catastrophic. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has stated that nuclear power plants were not

constructed to withstand a 747 crashing into them. Specific measures must be taken immediately to protect nuclear power plants and nuclear materials from terrorists.

On the other hand, we must note that compared to other threats, the number of people in the world killed by terrorists is small, and the impact limited in area. The most effective actions against terrorists are those carried out by integrated international police and intelligence agencies. Even the threats of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists must be dealt with by police actions, not by bombing from 35,000 ft. in the hopes of hitting a terrorist cell. The most effective means to ensure that nuclear weapons do not fall into the hands of terrorists or unstable states is to move rapidly to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. Secure means must be developed to dismantle and dispose of nuclear weapons, and fissile materials must be tightly controlled under international supervision. Unfortunately, the country that defies international consensus on the elimination of nuclear weapons is the U.S., the very country that stands to gain the most by removing this possible terrorist weapon.

#### **4. Biological and Chemical Weapons**

The U.S. Government frequently raises the possibility of a terrorist attack using weapons of mass destruction, but instead of agreeing to international treaties that would make such weapons illegal, they are choosing to try to guess which biological agents a terrorist might choose among many, and planning mass inoculations. Physicians advise that the best protection for the population is a strong system of public health facilities with capacity to mobilise quickly to respond to complex emergencies. The public health systems in both Canada and the U.S. have struggled under debilitating cut-backs for years. In the U.S., monies that would have gone to public health have been diverted to the programs to respond to chemical and biological attacks. Without the foundation of a highly functioning public system, the emergency programs cannot be effective.

#### **5. Depleted Uranium**

Both Canadian and American troops and civilians have been exposed to depleted uranium in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. Uranium is both a chemical and a radiological toxin when inhaled or swallowed. Reports of DU in water supplies, the air and sand in these battlegrounds, even after ten years, are of deep concern. The findings of uranium in the urine of veterans who are ill raise very troubling questions that must be answered by independent scientific studies on veterans and local populations. In the meantime, the use of depleted uranium in war must be banned. Canada should refuse to send troops to fields where the use of DU is planned. All Canadians who have served in areas where DU has been used must be tested and followed for signs of illness resulting from exposure to this material. The studies on veterans should be independent of the military and should be published in the open scientific literature. The legacy of the U.S. spreading radioactive waste over vast areas of several countries is likely to be even more disgraceful than that of Agent Orange in Vietnam.

#### **Role of civil society in security.**

How can civil society make a difference to the security of Canada and the U.S.? Let me discuss two ways that people can work, in addition to advocacy.

1. Civil society can work to make democracy stronger and more representative of the views of ordinary people. In Canada, campaign reform has been enacted to limit the influence of big money on candidates running for election. In the U.S., the influence of corporate lobbying on decision-makers is enormous. The Clean Elections movement is changing that in a few states <sup>(4)</sup>. Candidates for state-wide offices are free from the race for corporate dollars because in 1996 the Maine Voters for Clean Elections succeeded in getting the legislature to pass an initiative to provide full public financing for campaigns. Candidates could choose to get competitive amounts of money from the state instead of having to seek corporate donations. In the last state election in Maine, 75% of candidates for the Senate and 50% of those for the House ran clean. Similar legislation has been passed in Arizona, Vermont, North Carolina and New Mexico. As a result, Arizona has been able to enact a discount prescription drug program and Maine has made great strides in providing health care coverage.

Decreasing the influence of the military industrial complex could make a significant difference to the decisions made about military expenditures and perhaps even disarmament if the Clean Elections movement spreads to the federal arena.

2. The involvement of civil society in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, and building peace-capacity is part of a multi-dimensional approach to prevent armed conflict. The contribution of skilled specialists in these fields is well recognized by the United Nations. The involvement of NGOs in peacebuilding provides a complement to Canadian armed forces participation in Peacekeeping missions abroad. A commitment to involve women in all phases of conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation has been passed unanimously by the Security Council in Resolution 1325<sup>(5)</sup>. This resolution has not yet been implemented.

Canada convened the Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty to address the question of when if ever it might be appropriate for one state to intervene militarily in another state for humanitarian purposes. The Commission's 2001 report, "Responsibility to Protect"<sup>(6)</sup> concluded that state sovereignty is not an absolute right but rather a privilege accorded to a state provided that it protects all its citizens. In the event a state is unable or unwilling to protect all its citizens, that responsibility falls to the international community primarily under the auspices of the U.N. The report cautions against military intervention except in the most dire circumstances of genocide and then only under the right authority. The Report recommends the Security Council of the U.N. as the authority, but in the event that the S.C. did not act, that the General Assembly meet under a Uniting for Peace resolution in order to make a decision in a timely fashion. The Report emphasises that before any military action, all other means must be tried to bring a state into compliance with global norms. In any case, the goal must be to protect the citizens, not to change a regime. The Report clearly states that the intervention should not cause more damage than non-intervention. I believe that those who claim that the report could be used to justify the bombing and invasion of Iraq are distorting the provisions outlined.

Civil society organisations generally support the recommendations of the "Responsibility to Protect" and encourage the Canadian Government to advance the work of the Commission, with the proviso that the recommendations not be used to justify military action that is outside the UN and clearly against the provisions of the Report.

### **Recommendations for the Canadian Government:**

1. Use diplomacy to encourage U.S. to rejoin the community of nations. We must have good relations with our powerful neighbour, and it is not necessary to act as if we are morally superior. It is possible, nonetheless, to stand for high principles and refuse to collaborate with actions that undermine the UN and international law.
2. Support efforts to increase understanding between Americans and Canadians through media, the arts, academic exchanges and dialogue. These efforts are often pursued by civil society organisations and their impact can be greatly facilitated by governments.
3. Increase support for the implementation of Responsibility to Protect and reject attempts to use the Report to justify military intervention instead of non-violent alternatives.
4. Do not join the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defence program.
5. Insist that NATO remove nuclear weapons from its defence policies and that it support the elimination of nuclear weapons.
6. Maintain Canadian military as separate from U.S., with specialised training in peacekeeping, and nation building. This would complement the U.S. military rather incorporate Canadian armed forces in U.S. offensive actions.
7. Reject the U.S. plans for domination of world from outer space.
8. Lead UN reform to make the Security Council more democratic.
9. Advance the implementation S.C. Resolution 1325 to involve women in all phases of peace processes.
10. Increase the involvement of civil society in security issues: continue to include NGO representatives on UN delegations; support conferences to increase public understanding of security issues and alternatives to war; support NGO work on security issues; revise Canadian charity laws to permit greater advocacy by charitable organisations, in line with other countries. The present limit of 10% of budget hinders the ability of charities to advocate for solutions to social problems <sup>(7)</sup>.
11. Support international law.
12. Develop a National Emergency Response Corps under the Department of National Defence to respond to environmental disasters in Canada. This unarmed service would be highly trained and well equipped to deal with earthquakes, radiation or chemical accidents, ice storms, hurricanes, floods and forest fires, in support of local authorities <sup>(8)</sup>.
13. Develop a tool kit for assisting countries at risk - nation building, justice system, economic development, elections, role of women, peace capacity i.e the “Responsibility to Protect” agenda.

14. Encourage the U.S. to engage in nation-building that will improve the lives of the poor in unstable countries.

15. Be the change we want to see in the world (Gandhi) - we are a role model that does influence many Americans.

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