

Canadian Foreign Policies Since September 11: Implications for Canada in North America in the World

John Kirton, University of Toronto

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Introduction

The shocking events of September 11 appear to have brought a self evident need for a rapid redefinition of prevailing Canadian foreign policy priorities. They have moved to the compelling centre of public attention and the policy agenda the issues of combating terrorism, its financing, perpetrators and supporters, of securing Canadians and their civil liberties in their North American homeland, of mobilizing military and political investments for the global campaign, and of sustaining the prosperity required to realize these objectives over the long haul.

Yet these immediate challenges really represent a reaffirmation rather than a repudiation of the Canadian foreign policy approach that had prevailed prior to September 11th. They thus require a reinvestment into, and reinforcement of, the pre-existing priorities, rather than a redefinition or a sharp shift into different directions.

Indeed, they give new life to the February 1995 Statement's call for Canada to exercise global leadership through the G7 and similar limited membership institutions. They enrich the Statement's specified priorities of promoting prosperity through trade, promoting

global peace to protect Canadian security, and projecting Canadian values and culture abroad. They also reinforce the recent moves to reinvest in the Canadian military and on the Prime Minister's desire to expand Canadian official development assistance. They require, above all, that all Canadians and their government recognize that this is "our war" against global terrorism and its causes, and a war to which Canada can and should make a leading distinctive contribution in a comprehensive, long-term campaign.

1. This is Our War

The first step is to affirm at the highest level that this is indeed "our war", even more than liberating Kosovo in 1999 was. The number of innocent Canadian civilians knowingly murdered at the World Trade Centre, in accordance with the earlier "fatwahs" calling for the death of Americans, their allies and the Jews leave no doubt that Canadians and their deepest values are deliberate central targets rather than incidental collateral damage in the terrorists war. The challenge is thus primarily one of responding to an attack on Canadians and thus Canada, rather than managing relations with the United States as they conduct "their war."

2. Canadian Leadership is Required

Canada response to this act of war against it should be one of proactive, assertive leadership, rather than waiting for requests from the United States to take the lead in defining the issues and the options at hand. Despite the lost opportunities of the initial

phase, it is not too late to mount such leadership. For this is destined to be and should be a long campaign, and one which includes central conflict prevention component – ensuring that September 11-like acts never happen again. Complete eradication of global terrorism and its causes we must now recognize the only appropriate response.

3. Canada Should Make a Distinctive Contribution

This will require Canada to make a distinctive contribution, and one rather different than that we have pursued since 1978, when we helped lead the G7 Summit into its effective program against “skyjacking”. It includes making major military contributions in combat situations in distant theatre, and in rapidly rebuilding the capabilities required to do so. It means reinforcing Canada’s classic instruments for exercising influence, such as professional diplomacy, international institutional leadership and summitry, rather than rushing into creating alien add-ons such as a separate overseas offensive intelligence service. It means affirming such values as the rights of minorities, global environmental protection, debt relief for the poorest, generous official development assistance, and refugees relief and resettlement. And it means saying to our coalition partners, now that you have our significant and distinctive contribution, you must call us to your councils that govern the war and ensuing peace, and work with us to bring such councils to life.

4. Treat Canadians and Americans Equally.

Within Canada and the Canadian-American relationship, the proper principle is to accord equal treatment to Canadians and Americans, for our sake as well as theirs. For example, Canadians departing from Pearson airport have a right to feel as secure when they are flying to destinations within Canada as they do when they fly on aircraft replete with marshals to Reagan National airport in the capital of the United States.

Across the border, equal treatment means more vigorous efforts to assemble the facts and deliver the message that a more closed or costly border across a now integrated North America is as problematic for a now equally vulnerable United States as it is for Canada's is. The message should be "keep it open for your own sake, to fuel the economy needed to win our war abroad."

5. Activate the North American Advantage

In putting this principle of equality into practice, we need wherever possible to bring the Mexicans along with us, in a trilateral all North American approach. Elsewhere we should ensure that our Canada-U.S. only solutions are constructed in a such a way that make it easy for Mexico to soon join in. For a United States that still feels insecure about its southern border and a Canada cut off from Mexico a cost we should not have to pay.

Here the first task is to activate the North America advantage, in the first instance by employing the array of NAFTA institutions we have. For example, Mr. Pettigrew could suggest to a trade-liberalizing Robert Zoellick and sympathetic Mexican trade minister

that the NAFTA Free Trade Council issue a statement affirming the principle of more open and more secure borders, and thus help combat the pressures toward national closure that other ministers acting unilaterally produce. They could call a special session of the Council to see how this principle could be given practical expression at an early date. They could use some of the dozens of NAFTA institutions for this purpose, perhaps beginning with the Land Transportation Subcommittee and its highly successful Working Group on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods. Mr. Manley could consider how earlier moves to build a North American architecture beyond NAFTA might provide a foundation or model for other moves. For example, might a trilateral meeting of a new North American Homeland Defence Council or Committee be a useful move, not the least in assuring Americans and Canadians that Canada is doing its all-American best to keep the United States secure from unwanted penetration and supplied with the components it need to keep the US economy alive?

In the absence of a North American Commission for Health Co-operation, could the Commission for Environmental Co-operation, following the precautionary principle, be given a role in regard to the scientific and other aspects of biological and chemical elements that have legitimate environmental as well as health dimensions – the dual use bio-invasion-bio-terrorism agenda. The CEC could also make the point that open borders are needed for environmental as well as economic reasons, to stop the pollution from trucks idling endlessly at the border waiting to get through.

A clear opportunity lies in the field of energy. September 11 calls for a more energetic and high profile approach to North American energy co-operation that that allowed through the Working Group created at Quebec City last April. Movement here would help Canada protect ANWAR and its environs as an ecological sanctuary, and provide a development stimulus that Canada and its regions now badly need. It could also give a North American caucus group a more unified and influential voice in wider dialogues, in support of new region-wide longer-term objectives rather than older national short terms ones.

In addition it could mean more robust bilateral Canada-Mexican cooperation. Thus could start but not end with developing Canadian supply channels directly with Mexico and other countries, in part to relieve the burden on the traditional but now congested transshipment routes through a border burdened United States.

6. Play the Good International Host

Beyond North America, the formula of adopting displaced multilateral or plurilateral meetings, pioneered by Paul Martin with the G20, IMFC and World Bank in Ottawa last weekend, could have a broader application. At the leaders level, the now cancelled Commonwealth and francophone summits, and conceivably even the World Summit on Sustainable Development scheduled for Johannesburg in September 2002 may be looking for a new host. Canada could offer to bear the burden.

Creating new as well as hosting old international institutions could add distinctive value as well. At the Rome G8 Foreign Ministers meeting in Rome Mr. Manley was charged, as incoming chair, with implementing the outreach commitment to involve the broader international community in the G8's work. While the traditional G8 dinner in New York on the eve the opening of the United Nations General Assembly was the natural starting point to implement that commitment, there is good reason to follow-up with such a session in nearby Canada soon. It would give outside, consequential countries, starting with Turkey, another chance to show their solidarity with the coalition, involve them more closely in the collective effort, and generate movement in political fields beyond those dealt with in the G20. It might even mark the start of a foreign ministers G20, with an ongoing role in the campaign against terrorism. Such a meeting could show if some might be ready to be included in an expanded version of the G8 ministerial forum for counter-terrorism, created in Ottawa just before Canada's previous year as G7 host.

7. Energize the G8

Canada should also use its prerogatives at host to put the G8 system to greater work. One easy move is to take up President Bush's campaign suggestion and call a meeting of G8 Energy Ministers, where Russia, Britain and the others could define a collective approach to the energy insecurities they and other feel and might face.

Another useful move would be to call a special session of G8 foreign ministers to focus on key issues. A strong candidate would be conflict prevention, focused now on ensuring

that once the terrorist network and its in place supporters are eliminated, the world will not be faced with successors mobilized and organized from the angry dispossessed.

Most broadly, borrowing from the political process employed to provide political oversight and direction to the war in Kosovo, it could well be G8 foreign ministers, perhaps at times with their development and defence colleagues, that should and could take the lead in collectively devising a comprehensive strategy for the final phase of the current counter-terrorism campaign, for this conflict prevention follow-on and for what could lie ahead. It is in Canada's interests to have such councils or caucus groups to be called to, and to have them well before June when g8 leaders meet in Kananaskis

8. Reinvest in Canadian Diplomacy

Finally, there is an urgent need to reinvest in Canadian diplomacy and its network abroad, as much as in the defence and development domains. More political and public diplomacy officers and military attaches at post abroad in the most affected regions, able to develop relationships with the locals and meet continuously with G8, Commonwealth and francophonie colleagues would be a precious resources. For it is these diplomats that are the first line of defence, in gathering the intelligence, incubating the habit of consultation and consensus, and delivering the relief and refugees operations we will need if this war of legitimacy is to be won.