Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development
Centre canadien pour le développement de la politique étrangère

125 Sussex Dr. Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

CANADIAN PEACEBUILDING IN THE MIDDLE EAST: CASE STUDY OF THE CANADA FUND IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE AND JORDAN

Tami Amanda Jacoby, University of Alberta

Fall 2000

1006.13E

ISBN: E2-246/2000E-IN
0-662-30170-6

Tel.: (613) 944-8278
Internet address: http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca Fax: (613) 944-0687

CANADIAN PEACEBUILDING IN THE MIDDLE EAST: CASE STUDY OF THE CANADA FUND IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE AND JORDAN

Tami Amanda Jacoby

Post-Cold War Canadian foreign policy is characterized by new methods and philosophies of engagement in international zones of conflict. This reorientation takes place against the background of new forms of armed conflict and new sources of insecurity in the international system in the last few decades. In the past, Canada's stature in diplomatic and peacekeeping initiatives was attributed to its designation as a "middle power" (Cooper, Higgot & Nossal, 1999), and its reputation for impartiality in international disputes. Traditional Canadian peacekeeping was generally limited to third party intervention in wars between states, such as mediating between hostile parties, bringing them to the negotiating table, and helping to monitor a negotiated settlement.

By way of contrast, post-Cold War Canadian initiatives differ both in scope and context. First, they address protracted armed conflicts that take place not only between states, but also conflicts of an ethnic/communal and/or tribal nature that occur within and across state borders. Second, they involve not only the military aspects of conflicts, but also the socio-political issues related both to conflict and peace negotiations in post-conflict situations. The current international context has brought about new challenges and opportunities for Canadian foreign policy development. This article explores the transition in Canadian foreign policy from peacekeeping to peacebuilding based on a case study of the Canada Fund for Dialogue and Development (CFDD) in Israel/Palestine and Jordan. The primary intent of this fund in the Middle East is to promote mutual respect and understanding through dialogue on issues related to the Peace Process between Israelis and Arabs.[1] The intention of this research is to determine the extent to which Canadian-funded projects have fulfilled these goals. This study is based on fieldwork in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, and a series of interviews conducted by the author, between July 10 and August 10, 2000 in the field. The unique contribution of this research to Canadian foreign policy development is in assessing how a particular initiative has played out in a specific zone of conflict and in relation to the local and indigenous concerns of recipients of Canadian funding. This methodology is intended to provide necessary feedback into the policy process for enhancement of future foreign policy goals in a way that weds the interests of both the Canadian government and local allies in the field.

The first section of this article looks back at Canada's traditional involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict as a way to distinguish the current transition from Canadian peacekeeping to peacebuilding. In the second section, the current objectives of Canadian involvement in international zones of conflict are examined with the Middle East as the immediate framework of analysis. The third section evaluates the specific case of the CFDD in Israel/Palestine and Jordan.

[1] Canada Fund for Dialogue and Development brochure, Canadian Embassy, Tel Aviv.

Finally, the last section examines issues deserving further consideration with respect to the CFDD, and offers policy recommendations intended to enhance Canada's support for inter-ethnic dialogue, both in the Middle East and worldwide.

(1) Canadian Peacekeeping in the Middle East - Historical Background:

Canada has traditionally recognized the Middle East as a region of global strategic significance. Since the start, Canada's involvement in the Middle East has been closely attenuated with efforts to mediate a negotiated settlement to the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Canada's traditional peacekeeping role in the Middle East has involved mediating between states, engaging in high-level diplomacy, and providing military troops to monitor and/or enforce border settlements, security zones, cease-fires, and other official agreements.

In the past fifty years, Canada has witnessed five major Arab-Israeli wars, along with serious military engagements, and continual border squirmishes between Israel and the Arab states. In the pre-state period, when tensions over land between Jewish and Arab communities were heightened, Canada became involved in the debate over the future of the British Mandate in Palestine (1918-1948). The United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947, which proposed the Partition of Palestine into two separate states, one Arab and one Jewish. Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson, played a significant role in mobilizing support for this Partition Plan. However, upon departure of the British and the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the regular armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq advanced into Israel and subsequent fierce and intermittent fighting ensued. Following the 1948 War, Canada supported international control of Jerusalem and called upon both Arab and Jewish forces to stop fighting and resolve their dispute peacefully. Canada also became a key player in the Palestinian refugee problem established by the War, acting as the fourth largest contributor of material support for 1948 refugees.

Since the UN partition debate and the pre-state period, Canada has served as a third party mediator in all military disputes involving Arab and Jews in the Middle East. For example, in 1956, Canada participated in the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) stationed along the border between Egypt and Israel following the Suez War in which Egyptian President Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Lester B. Pearson's role in this peacekeeping effort was honoured with a Nobel Peace Prize. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Canada helped mobilize support for Security Council Resolution 242 which called for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 War in exchange for a formal peace negotiation and permanent borders between the parties. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Canada participated in the resumed UN peacekeeping force in the Sinai Desert and in the UN Disengagement Observation Force on the Golan Heights, positioned on the border between Israel and Syria. This early history of Canadian involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict reveals Canada's position as a mediator in inter-state military disputes. This peacekeeping role was appropriate for a period in which inter-state hostilities governed the region.

However, the start of the Middle East Peace Process in 1991[2] brought about new opportunities and challenges for extra-regional involvement in the Middle East. One of Canada's most significant roles has been as Gavel-holder of the Refugee Working Group (RWG), a committee designed to deal primarily with the plight and humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees. In this role, Canada has continued its commitment to social, political and economic issues such as family reunification, public health, child welfare, and development.[3] Canada has also been involved in other multilateral endeavors, such as the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group, for which Canada chairs the discussion on Maritime Confidence-Building Measures, and Canada has held workshops for Middle Eastern naval forces.[4]

In addition to these diplomatic endeavors, Canada has increasingly focussed on civil society and non-governmental organisations as allies in the attempt to establish peace in the region. This reorientation of foreign policy objectives is particularly important at a time when rejectionist and radical fundamentalist movements have mobilized on both sides as negotiations at the state level fail to bear fruit. Political polarization in both Arab and Israeli societies has further problematized the Peace Process by creating a backlash against inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation at the societal level. The continuation of protracted conditions of conflict and terrorist activities during the Peace Process era present serious obstacles for third party intervention. These circumstances have necessitated new thinking about Canadian foreign policy vis-a-vis the Middle East. The following section outlines the ideological shift in Canadian foreign policy from the diplomatic to the grassroots level as a theoretical framework through which to consider the viability of the CFDD in Israel/Palestine and Jordan.

(2) Canadian Peacebuilding in the Post-Cold War Era:

In the post-Cold War era, Canadian foreign policy has undergone two major paradigm shifts. The first is characterized by a transition from peacekeeping to "peacebuilding" (Stephenson, 1998: 65), while the second is defined by a shift from national security to a human security agenda. Both initiatives draw from a long history of human rights and development practices as they have evolved over many years through such organisations as the United Nations and other international development agencies (DFAIT, 1999; Owens & Arneil, 1999; Heinbecker, 1999).

The first shift in Canadian foreign policy is an attempt to move away from the traditional Cold War doctrine of deterrence, i.e., containing, managing or moderating hostilities through the threat to use military force. An example of the traditional approach in the Middle East was the first case

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[2] In 1991, the Madrid Peace Conference set the stage for a series of bilateral and multilateral negotiations between Israel, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and the Palestinians. Canada has been a consistent and active non-regional participant on the multilateral track.

[3] Since the establishment of the RWG, Canada led a series of international missions to Jordan (1994 & 1996), to refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza (1998), and to Lebanon (1994 &1997) to obtain first hand information about conditions in the refugee camps as well as to publicize the issue to the international community.

[4] In addition, Canada is a member of the Multilateral Steering Group, which oversees all five working groups.

in which armed UN peacekeeping troops were deployed to the region during the Suez Crisis of 1956. Their role was to supervise a cease-fire between states, Egypt on one side and Britain, France and Israel on the other. By way of contrast with conventional deterrence, current Canadian foreign policy vis-a-vis international conflict resolution relies on the notion of peacebuilding rather than peacekeeping. Theoretically, peacebuilding is designed to respond to the more complex nature of today's missions in war-torn societies. Peacebuilding is intended to constitute a more proactive strategy that addresses the root causes of conflict, rather than act as a reaction to the immediate crisis (Hay, 1999). Canadian efforts to prevent a renewal of hostilities in conflict zones have extended far beyond cease-fire agreements between states, to such activities as participation in broad-scale democratic institution building, civil society empowerment, inter-communal cooperation, and the promotion of long-term stability in ethnically divided societies. The peacebuilding paradigm also commits to building local capacity in civil institutions and infusing greater input from civilian actors (for example, civilian police) in the diplomatic resolution of conflict through cooperation with local communities, moderate leaderships, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), youth, and women.

The second, albeit parallel, paradigm shift in Canadian foreign policy is the move from national security to a human security agenda. Despite its critics (see Nossal, 1998), human security has come to represent a broad policy and philosophy of engagement for Canada in the international arena seeking to develop in tandem with the new peacebuilding concept.[5] Human security is defined as a shift in analysis from states to human beings, taking individuals and their communities, rather than states and national boundaries, as the central point of reference for global peace and security. Human security seeks to enlarge the agenda of security by including non-military issues such as human rights, sustainable development, gender equality, cultural diversity, and the environment.[6] The CFDD is a policy intended to operationalize Canada's commitment both to peacebuilding and human security. The following section examines the concrete benefits and challenges of the CFDD in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, and evaluates the extent to which the outcomes of CFDD projects have fulfilled Canadian foreign policy objectives.

(3) CFDD in Israel/Palestine and Jordan:

On October 30, 1996, Canada launched the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative, a broad framework of principals and practices intended to coordinate Canadian peacebuilding capabilities, and strengthen Canadian peacebuilding initiatives abroad.[7] The Canada Fund for Dialogue and Development (CFDD) represents one of the key components of Canadian peacebuilding that was incorporated into the Peacebuilding Initiative. The CFDD was established

[5] "Human Security is most closely associated with the goals of Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy.
[6] Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World, DFAIT, 1999.
[7] The Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative is a joint project of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The CFDD is funded primarily by CIDA and administered through DFAIT (local Canadian embassies).

in 1992 as a means to support the Middle East Peace Process through Israeli-Arab dialogue. Since 1992, over 70 short-term projects involving Israelis, Palestinians, Egyptians and Jordanians have been funded. Phase 1 of the CFDD ran from 1992 to 1994. Phase 2 ran from 1994 to 1999. And Phase 3 was scheduled to commence in May, 1999 but was frozen for administrative purposes, in particular after difficulties arose in assessing results of the programs within the framework of CIDA's "results-based management".[8]

The particular challenge for dialogue posed by the Middle East is a region marred by over fifty years of protracted warfare through which generations have grown up in an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance. The idea behind the CFDD is that these attitudes are deeply rooted and cannot be eradicated by the official political process between states. Rather, the CFDD seeks to provide opportunities for former warring peoples to come together at the grassroots level, and attempt to dismantle long-standing psychological barriers, jealousies and enemy images through dialogue. To this end, the CFDD has funded a large series of short-term, cross-cultural activities in its first two phases, ranging from leadership training seminars in conflict resolution, a theatre project, a solar energy conference, media and journalism programs, and environmental summer camps for youth. These projects have been highly successful and reflect an appreciation for the role that civil society plays, particularly through education and media, in support of the diplomatic process. The participants, ranging from women's groups, sports clubs, and youth activities, are intended to represent this grassroots constituency. However, questions have arisen about the impact of these programs beyond the experiences of the immediate participants.

(4) Issues and Policy Recommendations for the CFDD:

A case study of the CFDD in Israel/Palestine and Jordan reveals a series of challenges necessitating further consideration, in terms of administration, project design, impact, recruitment, and participation. From 1993 to 1996, during the initial period after the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestinians (1993), with the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (1993) and the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel (1994), many locals were willing to participate in joint projects. However, since 1997, the ebb and flow of the Peace Process has caused public opinion, particularly Palestinian and Jordanian, to retreat. This development presents a serious challenge to the CFDD. The following are a series of reasons given by participants for the limitations on dialogue in Israel/Palestine and Jordan.

(1) While many of the programs funded by CFDD have been successful, particularly in the area of education, media, journalism and governance, one of the major issues raised by participants of dialogue is that many projects funded by the CFDD have been limited largely to intellectuals, professionals, elites, and people in positions of political power. For example, of the four projects funded by CFDD in Jordan, one was conducted by the Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy (an institution established by royal decree with Prince Hassan acting as

[8] Ms. Manon Dumas, Second Secretary and Vice Consul, Canadian Embassy in Tel Aviv, in interview with Jacoby, July 18, 2000, in Jerusalem, in English.

Chairman of the Board of Trustees). This type of quasi-governmental organisation under the patronage of the royal family (Hashemite monarchy) obviously does not represent the grassroots in Jordan.[9] In the Israeli/Palestinian context, CFDD funded a Young Women's Leadership Seminar conducted by the Jerusalem Link, a relatively successful Israeli-Palestinian women's joint venture, that nevertheless has admitted to problems of elitism both in its membership and Board of Directors.[10] Another example of an Israeli-Palestinian project is the Israeli-Palestinian Chemical Accident Prevention and Response Program organised by the Israeli Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), a public policy think tank that "concentrates on the professional context" of environmental issues.[11] While these groups do important work, they grapple with difficulties in reaching a larger, not-elitist and/or non-professional, constituency. For this reason, their programs have a limited downstream impact. The objective of the CFDD to fund projects with ripple effects is problematized by such cases where the activity together, i.e., the dialogue, becomes an end in itself and funding is limited to high-level meetings, salaries, travel and incidentals.[12]

(2) A second major obstacle to CFDD projects is the exclusive focus on Israeli-Arab dialogue. There is a tremendous social and political pressure on activists not to engage in such inter-ethnic dialogue. In Israel, the pressure against dialogue is relatively negligent since the state provides a range of democratic freedoms, at least for its Jewish citizens. However, in the Jordanian and Palestinian contexts, dialogue often runs a fundamental risk for the individual or organisation involved. For example, a growing anti-normalization tendency in Jordan is represented by powerful professional associations and unions to which all professionals (lawyers, doctors, journalists, etc.) must belong in order to work in their field. This movement has constituted a major disincentive for Jordanians to engage in dialogue with Israelis. In fact, individuals have been blacklisted for such activities in the past, resulting in their inability to work in their professions in Jordan thereafter. For this reason, not a single project proposal has been funded by CFDD in Jordan since 1994, despite the availability of funds. As well, Islamist fundamentalist movements in Palestine, such as *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad, and other rejectionist groups, have threatened Palestinian activists with personal harm and injury for engaging in dialogue with Israelis. Palestinians have been called "collaborators" and "traitors" for dealing with Israelis, particularly during periods when Israel continues to commit human rights violations in the occupied territories (home demolitions, confiscation of ID cards, closure, detainment of political prisoners, etc.).

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[9] Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber argues that the Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy is a non-governmental organisation despite the fact that it is partly funded by government and has "exceedingly limited" grassroots outreach, in interview with Jacoby, July 25, 2000, in Amman, Jordan, in English.

[10] Terry Greenblatt, Director of *Bat Shalom* of the Jerusalem Link, in interview with Jacoby, July 30, 2000 in West Jerusalem, Israel, in English.

[11] Robin Twite, Director, Environmental Programs, IPCRI, in interview with Jacoby, July 28, 2000, in West Jerusalem, in English.

[12] Robin Twite, IPCRI, in interview with Jacoby, July 28, 2000, West Jerusalem, Israel, in English.

(3) A third limitation on the CFDD is CIDA's own mandate going into Phase 3. Jonathan Laine, Deputy Head and Head of AID in the Canadian Representative Office in Ramallah, Palestine, points out that "official CIDA policy equates peace with the official Peace Process", particularly the Oslo II Agreement, a highly controversial process that has failed in many of its key objectives.[13] However, as a result of the absence of "quantifiable results" in Phase 1 and 2, of the CFDD, emphasis in Phase 3 will be more closely linked to the five final status issues (Jerusalem, final borders, waters, refugees and Jewish settlement) of the peace negotiations. Laine argues that important areas that have the potential to influence public opinion such as education, governance, and the media are not final status issues, and thus their exclusion from the next phase of CIDA funding is a problematic issue that needs further evaluation.

(4) The last major issue raised by the participants, particularly the Palestinians, is the reproduction of power and domination in CFDD projects themselves, related in part to the use of language. For example, the application process to CFDD funding is in English. In Israel, English is taught as a second language from primary school onwards. However, in Jordan and Palestine, command of the English language (speaking, reading and writing) is mostly limited to elites. The application process therefore, prejudices the average Palestinian who either does not speak English or is illiterate. Naseef Mu'allam, Director of the Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy, argues that as a result, "most projects have been dominated by Israelis, both in terms of submitting a proposal, designing the activity, and receiving funding" to the detriment of equality, respect and joint benefit for all.[14]

Policy recommendations:

In light of the aforementioned challenges to CFDD projects in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, the following is a list of concrete policy recommendations:

(1) In order to reach the grassroots, it is necessary for CFDD funding to become a more proactive process. This may be problematic during a time of scarce resources and "donor fatigue" since it would involve larger staffing of individuals that would venture out into the field to actively recruit participants. However, a good strategy in Palestine and Jordan would be to focus on organisations and established structures such as schools, clubs, mosques, and neighborhood groups that already have their own mass constituencies in place. Since many of these grassroots organisations tend to be conservative with respect to dialogue with Israel, it would be useful to conduct an initial phase of projects on a unilateral basis (intra-Arab). These projects may involve a range of activities that both encourage the participants to express their fears of normalization,

[13] Jonathan Laine, Deputy Head and Head of Aid, Canadian Representative Office, in interview with Jacoby, August 8, Ramallah, Palestine, in English.
[14] Naseef Mu'allam, Director, Palestinian Centre for Peace and Democracy, in interview with Jacoby, August 3, 2000, *Dahiet al-Bareed* (Israeli checkpoint), East Jerusalem, West Bank, in English.

and learn about the other side and its reality in order to debunk negative images and monolithic stereotypes. These activities would then promote the positive aspects of engaging in peace activism. After this initial reorientation phase, Palestinian and Jordanian participants may be more open to dialogue with Israelis.

(2) Another way to reach the grassroots would be to focus on projects that take place outside the urban areas of Jerusalem and Ramallah, and focus instead on smaller villages and refugee camps in rural areas where people from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to reside. In these contexts, it is also important to focus on children and youth, those impressionable groups that may not as yet have deeply-rooted views and may have a greater capacity than older generations to change their views. For this reason, CFDD must continue to reach into the public school systems (not only private schools) and find teachers that are willing to reorient their curriculum, texts, and topics to support peace.

(3) A third recommendation is that CFDD must fully recognize that Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians have different interests in dialogue, and different stakes when participating in joint programs. For example, Israelis can generally dialogue without fear of retribution and are thus generally more interested in the social aspects of joint programs, i.e., getting to know the other. However, Palestinians are more interested in political change because of their more immediate problems, and thus they focus on trying to convince their Israeli counterparts to pressure the Israeli government. It is essential for CFDD to ensure that expectations of the joint programs are not presented unrealistically. Joint facilitators of the CFDD-funded "Double Perspectives in the Teaching of History" at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, School for Peace, suggest that CFDD should include projects that focus not only on commonality, but also on difference. The reason is that "while the former sustains the status quo, the latter helps the weaker groups".[15] Due to the high risk for Palestinians and Jordanians engaged in dialogue, it is necessary for CFDD as an institution to seek confidentiality for participants by pressuring governments and legal systems to democratize and ensure freedom of movement, expression, and association.

(4) The more direct focus on final status issues planned for Phase 3 of CFDD funding should be reconsidered. The main reason is that the purpose of these small projects is to widen the circle of people interested in peace. In order to change public opinion and reach large numbers of people, it is necessary to focus on the dissemination of information. As mentioned, this step may be accomplished by continuing to focus on projects involving media, journalism, and education, rather than foreign policy options such as the final status negotiations. CFDD may want to invest in disseminating a newsletter, magazine, or posters about the benefits of joint programs throughout the immediate region (both urban and rural) in order to enhance this goal.

(5) CFDD-funded projects should ensure full equality for their participants in terms of access to information and language. For example, CFDD could disseminate project applications and

[15] Sigalit Givon and Ahmed Hijazi, Project Facilitators, in interview with Jacoby, August 2, Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, School for Peace, Israel, in Hebrew.

guidelines in Hebrew and Arabic, and provide simultaneous translation throughout all the activities. CFDD should also ensure full equality in terms of participation, project design and benefit. Palestinian participants expressed concern that projects with Israelis often reproduced the occupier-occupied relationship of the larger political context due to Israeli domination of the application process and joint activity, the location of the activity in Israel, and dissemination of funding through the Israeli organisation. In order to redress this concern, it is essential that both groups discuss ideas together, write proposals together, share funding, and divide the activities equally in both geographical areas in order to achieve mutual economic benefits (for example, hotels, food, and other incidentals).[16]

(6) The last policy prescription addresses the CFDD priority for projects that offer sustained and ongoing institutional relationships. It is necessary to have a more rigorous follow-up process indicating how the project outcomes will be disseminated into the community and how the joint relationships will be sustained into the future. For example, CFDD may wish to inquire about how the organisations will secure matched funding for future projects or CFDD may wish to participate more closely with other international donors to finance longer-term projects.

Concluding Remarks:

This article has explored the transition in Canadian foreign policy from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, and from national security to human security, based on a case study of the CFDD in Israel/Palestine and Jordan. Fieldwork in these areas in the year 2000 revealed a series of challenges and opportunities related to the CFDD in terms of its mandate, administration, and concrete experiences of the participants. While many of the projects have been successful in fulfilling their stated objectives, there continue to be concerns about the viability of such projects during a period in which the peace negotiations have consistently faltered and public opinion in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan has become more wary of inter-ethnic dialogue. While the intentions of peacebuilding and human security are positive and essential to the establishment of peaceful relations between peoples in the region, not only between governments, there are significant obstacles that lie in the way of joint peace activism. The future of Canadian involvement in the Middle East will depend to a large extent on refining its administration of such programs as the CFDD and participating more closely with other international donors. While difficult to quantify, the programs underwritten by such concepts as human security and peacebuilding are essential for empowering civil society and generating grassroots support for the diplomatic process, without which peace in inter-ethnic conflict zones may be unattainable in the long-term.

[16] As suggested by Naseef Mu'allam in his own research, "Palestinian Israeli Civil Society Co-operative Activities", unpublished manuscript, prepared for Helsinki Workshop, November 27-28, 1999.

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