

**Summary of eDiscussion on Security
Policy Research Division, Foreign Affairs Canada
March 10, 2005.**

From January 24 to February 25, 2005, Canadians were invited to share their thoughts on Canadian and global security through the Canadian International Policy site. Webcast interviews with various experts on the topic were hosted on the site to stimulate and inform the debate. In all, 60 responses were received, with an average length of 500 words. Participants included academics, students, representatives from the NGO community and other Canadians. Below is a summary of their key arguments:

In general, participants championed the allocation of more resources to Canadian intelligence, security, diplomatic and military agencies. This reflects a larger consensus on the need for a more proactive Canadian approach to domestic and global security threats.

Below is a summary of some of the major questions, disagreements and recommendations that emerged during the debate:

Root causes of terrorism

“Disparity is the most important security issue facing all of us. The unequal distribution of resources and the inefficient systems of redistribution place more than half of the world’s population in desperate conditions. Desperate people do desperate things to remedy their suffering.”

Participants felt that Canada could play an important role in anticipating and reducing threats to global security by addressing the root causes of terrorism.

The notion that poverty and global inequality were catalysts for terrorism was widely held, with one notable exception. Supporters of this idea felt that Canada should devote greater resources and expertise to global poverty reduction, while abandoning unfair trade practices that sustain global economic disparities. Canada, it was suggested, should also play a leadership role by forgiving the debt of the world’s poorest countries.

Several participants viewed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a central cause of terrorism. One individual argued that disregard for international law in this conflict by western powers demonstrated to Muslim communities that the present legal framework would not protect them. This double-standard was identified as a root cause of efforts to overthrow the existing international order through violent means. To remedy this, the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel was described as essential. It was also recommended that Canada serve as a staunch advocate of the fair and consistent application of international law. On this last point, one participant lamented what he viewed as the recent abandonment of Canada’s balanced voting record in the UN General Assembly with regard to Israel.

An assertive US foreign policy was also seen as a mobilizing force for international terrorists. Respondents recommended that Canada maintain a distance from the US fight on terrorism and the war in Iraq, worrying that these were fueling the resolve of antagonists to resort to terrorism in retaliation

Finally, failed and failing states were portrayed as incubators for extremism and international terrorism. One participant warned that we must not confuse poor states with failing states, although the two may overlap. As a response to the problem of failed and failing states, Canada's 3D approach (diplomacy, development and defense) was seen as appropriate, yet in need of greater resources to be successful.

The role of multilateral institutions in security

Most respondents felt that multilateralism should be a key component of Canada's approach to security. The eDiscussion gave rise to several proposals on how the multilateral system might be reformed to best address security issues:

One recommendation suggested integrating NATO forces into the UN, affording the latter the military tools it requires to address threats to global security.

Another participant advocated EU representation on the UNSC to reflect deepening EU integration. This would involve removing the current European veto-holding members and replacing them with an EU member to avoid the overrepresentation of EU states in a reformed Security Council. Averting such an imbalance was deemed fundamental to the legitimacy of the any Canadian policy of multilateralism in the area of security.

Finally, concerns were also raised that the L20 would not differ substantively from an enlarged, 15-member UNSC. Instead, it was recommended that Canada engage in ad-hoc multilateral coalitions with like-minded countries such as the Scandinavian states and the Netherlands. These coalitions could leverage their credibility and positions as ideas-brokers to develop and advance innovations such as a treaty on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The above notwithstanding, multilateral institutions were depicted by some as ill-suited to the task of managing global and Canadian security. One participant described multilateralism as "self-marginalizing," suggesting it fosters indecision, while compromising Canada's ability to act as a leader in the struggle against global security threats. Another participant chastised the UN for being "irredeemably corrupt" and inefficient.

Full service military vs. robust peacekeeping force

"In order to deal with the threats that Canada now faces, post-9/11, such as terrorism ...it is necessary not only to deal with the root causes that allow terrorism and terrorist thinking to thrive but also to have the capacity to deal with threats that may occur in spite of diplomacy, humanitarian aid, economic assistance."

Participants agreed on the need for a more robust Canadian military. Hard power was viewed as an essential complement to soft power and was described as crucial to the credibility of Canadian ideas on security such as R2P. There was, however, disagreement on the shape that a revitalized Canadian military should take.

While some participants argued that Canada should create a full-service military, others felt that involvement in a full-scale conventional war is unlikely. Critics of a full-service Canadian military saw it as too expensive and out of step with Canadian public opinion on defense. They went on to describe Canadians as reluctant about military spending in

general but proud of their role as international peacekeepers. In line with this, they felt Canada should focus its military investments in rapid-response peacekeeping units, while maintaining specialized combat brigades that could be quickly deployed to 'hotspots' around the world when peacekeeping forces prove inappropriate.

Internal Security

On Canadian domestic security, participants suggested improvements in immigration, refugee and consular services, to enable the efficient identification of high-risk individuals. It was felt that current staffing provisions are inadequate to process the volume of applications. In addition, one participant commented on the need for the government to better engage Canadian citizens in its efforts to identify threats.

Technological innovations such as a DNA registry of Canadians, or a national identity card with biometric features were also proposed. Finally, "cyber-terror" and "cyber-crime" were viewed as areas requiring a more concerted response.

Global trends

Throughout the eDiscussion, participants underlined the significance of external factors affecting Canadian security. The issues they anticipated include: 1) tensions between immigrant communities and citizens of their European host countries, 2) the long-term impact of HIV/AIDS on African states and 3) major demographic shifts issuing largely from Chinese and Indian migration. Participants stressed the need for the Canadian government to understand the possible security threats and attendant policy implications of these emerging issues.

BMD

"Like NPT, BMD could be used as a tool to limit proliferation and intimidation through inclusion and transparency."

Most of the eDiscussion occurred before the government's decision not to participate in the US BMD proposal. Consequently, many comments focused on whether or not Canada should participate. Several participants worried that BMD would spur an arms race that would imperil global security. The technical effectiveness of BMD technology was called into question by most participants who commented on missile defense, yet, despite this, there seemed to be some support for the proposal.

One individual suggested that a refusal to join BMD would imply that Canadians were not serious about ensuring continental security, thereby souring relations with the US. Others, however, saw the exclusivity of the BMD proposal as its major fault. While the accuracy of BMD technology was cited as a major drawback, these individuals felt that, pending assurances regarding BMD technology, Canada should advocate the inclusion of all countries with nuclear and/or ballistic threat capabilities into a missile defense shield – and the exclusion of certain "rogue states" such as North Korea and Iran. They argued that a shared missile defense system would diminish strategic arms competition, while increasing the ability of member states to persuade would-be nuclear powers to forego such capabilities.

Foreign Affairs Reply to Summary

The above summary of views presented during the eDiscussion on Security has been received within Foreign Affairs Canada and is currently being reviewed by policy planners.

Their response will be posted on the Canadian International Policy site in late March. It will provide Canadians with reactions to the summarized ideas and background information on current Canadian initiatives/approaches on security.