

**Summary of eDiscussion Policy Position Papers
on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament**
Policy Research Division, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
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From September 25th to December 1st, 2006, college and university students were invited to submit policy position papers to Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada on the issue of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. Webcast interviews with various experts on the topic were hosted on the site to stimulate and inform debate. Nine policy papers received from five different Canadian universities are summarized here. The three policy position papers received from universities located in Colombia, Australia and Venezuela are not included in this summary for Canadian international policy development purposes. Nonetheless, these three papers are posted on our resources page, as they present interesting views and can stimulate debate.

Below is a summary of some of the major questions, disagreements and recommendations that emerged in the policy position papers:

Nuclear Disarmament

All papers addressing the question of nuclear proliferation underlined the importance of Canada supporting nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and being a moral leader in that area. Yet, some papers highlighted the fact that, during class debates, participants did not agree on the need for total disarmament. A policy position paper from Carleton University underscored the two positions that were defended: "As long as nuclear arms remain in existence, the threat to states around the globe remains equally imminent in light of the mass destruction capabilities of such weapons. While it is clear that warmongering and arms races are not desirable or pleasant, many advocate nuclear capacity as desirable in the sense that it ultimately eliminates the incentive to resort to war (...)."

A paper from the University of Moncton mentioned the unparalleled destruction of nuclear weapons was the reason why this issue should be kept at the forefront of the international agenda.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

Policy position papers noted the importance for Canada to stand up for the principles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Two papers brought up the need to revise the Treaty and most wanted to see the countries outside the NPT brought in.

Canada's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) indicated an interesting dilemma according to some papers: "While Canada is a signatory to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Canada's membership in NATO renders it as a nation which considers nuclear arms as necessary to national defence." It was thus thought that Canada should promote nuclear non-proliferation inside NATO and influence NATO countries to adhere to the principles of the NPT. Some participants also wanted to see Canada encouraging NATO to withdraw the last tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. This would "build confidence in non-nuclear weapon states of the dedication and adherence of NATO member states to the principles behind the NPT".

Canada's response to nuclear threats

Most papers proposed ways for Canada to work towards nuclear non-proliferation on the international scene. Unanimously, the papers highlighted the fact that as a middle power, Canada could use its influence through a multinational framework, in particular inside the United Nations.

The recent nuclear test in North Korea was presented as a serious threat for Canada's security in a paper from Carleton University. It was proposed that the Canadian response be firm and aim towards disarming North Korea. The paper also mentioned that Canada should endorse the efforts of the six party talks. A paper from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) proposed that Canada maintain a dialogue with "rogue states".

Another paper from Carleton University noted that Canada, as any other state, was threatened by the mere existence of nuclear weapons. That threat, in the participants' point of view, was made more acute for Canada "as a neighbour and major ally of the United States particularly given the various strategic conflicts which the US is frequently engaged in" such as the nuclear capacities of North Korea and Iran. The best approach for Canada, the participants mentioned, is to pursue and promote bilateral and multilateral talks amongst parties to prevent any escalation that might lead to a nuclear arms race.

Small arms and light weapons (SALW)

Papers that were focused on small arms and light weapons (SALW) underlined the need for better arms control and more transparency at the national and international levels. Tighter border control, the creation of buy-back and micro-disarmament programs and the address of this issue at the United Nations were some of the ideas advanced in order to attain these goals. A paper from Cape Breton University expressed the need for the Canadian government to establish a National Arms Body to monitor and track Canada's exports of small arms and light weapons. UQAM's proposal was an international register to monitor the international arsenal of SALW. A paper from the University of Ottawa brought up

the initiation of awareness campaigns within conflict-affected areas as a way to reduce the social acceptance of small arms and light weapons.

Addressing age and gender issues related to SALW

Papers from UQAM and Carleton University addressed the question of child soldiers. They expressed a great concern over the use of children in armed conflicts and called for Canada to keep a strong position against the use of children as soldiers. The papers mentioned the importance of treating the root causes of the conflicts to eliminate the need for child soldiers. They also underlined the importance of making human security a priority in war torn regions and noted that addressing the problem at the UN was crucial to keep the issue on the international agenda.

Participants proposed other ways for Canada to tackle this question. The Carleton paper mentioned: "Monitoring and reporting on these issues should be the main methods where Canada can produce results. Simple advocacy of these policies will not be sufficient to deter these detrimental activities. It has become increasingly important to implement a system of checks and balances (...)." Programs to disarm and rehabilitate children trapped in armed conflicts were a proposition made in UQAM's paper.

The issue of landmines has also been addressed. Educational programs were proposed as a solution to disseminate information to women and children and ensure they are aware of the dangers posed by landmines.

Official response by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada

This summary of the policy position papers received during the eDiscussion on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament is currently being reviewed by policy planners within Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. Their response will be posted on the Canadian International Policy site in January 2007.