

Notes for a Presentation

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Check Against Delivery

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Today, I am going to assert four points and substantiate them as much as time and reality permit.

1. That effective multilateral governance is not just a means to an end but, for the foreseeable future, an end in itself.
2. That although there is more to multilateral governance than the United Nations, the UN remains central to multilateral governance and is a more effective organization than its critics admit, but less effective than the world needs it to be.
3. That despite the profound discord between member countries, innovations in the way the world does multilateral business, including at the UN, are actually happening, but need to go further, and
4. That there is not much on record at this stage in the tenure of “Canada’s new government” on what priority it attaches to multilateral governance.

Multilateral Governance as an End in Itself

The conventional wisdom in Canada has been that multilateral governance, especially the United Nations, but to a lesser extent, also the Bretton Woods organizations, in fact most of the institutions, treaties, norms and networks that make up the multilateral framework —some think “patchwork” would be a better metaphor—is just a means to an end. This view is true as far as it goes-- but it does not go very far. Of course multilateral governance is a means to an end!

In this case, the end is the protection of people and the promotion of their economic and social well being, including the sustainability of their environment, not something that, for all their proclaimed jaundice towards politics and politicians, most Canadians are prepared to regard as elective. Given the well-documented slaughters of the innocent down through history until the present day, the prevention or inhibition of such inhumanity is more than just elective. It is a necessity and, in that respect, an end in itself. This is a fairly obvious point but there are those for whom the means-to-an-end thesis seems to be a proxy for something else—a world view that does not have multilateral governance at the centre of it, and that does not want the UN at the heart of it. In this view, the UN is one instrument among several, just a means to an end. The subtext is that multilateral cooperation is actually dispensable because other effective instruments are to hand, notably coalitions-of-the-willing and neo-imperialism.

In the Canadian context, I suspect the means-to-an-end thesis is, also, a proxy for something a bit more idiosyncratic, the sixty plus year old United-Nations-versus-United-States argument. This yin and yang of international

political and security relations runs on a kind of circadian rhythm in Canada, fuelled by periodic academic debate at home and episodic culture wars in the United States. In Canada, this dichotomy seems to be felt most strongly by academics, sometimes politicians and occasionally Ambassadors and generals, people who regard themselves as realists, or continentalists, or even bilateralists, people who seem to regard multilateral cooperation as elective, at best, and a nuisance at worst, a kind of Lloyd-Axworthian distraction from the most important job at hand—managing relations with Washington. Get that relationship right, their argument goes, and nothing else matters. The argument is half right.

Getting that relationship right is “job one” for any Canadian government, although the responsibility for doing so does not reside in Ottawa alone. It takes two to Tango, and Washington usually calls the tune. But the reality is that it is just not the only job, and that plenty of other things do matter. This side of the next millennium, provided the next and last battle at Armageddon is not fought sooner, the world is unlikely to be populated by angels, and it will therefore need rules, laws, treaties and norms, as well as the power to see them respected. In other words, it will need governing. But who should govern it? We all should. The fate of those not interested in international politics, as in national politics, is to be governed by those who are.

The Iraq experience suggests that single superpower governance is considerably better in theory than in practice. A multinational poll released this week by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org, in cooperation with polling organizations around the world, pretty much confirms my own assessment derived from my experience at the UN and elsewhere. The poll found that publics around the world reject the idea that the United States should act as pre-eminent world leader. Most say that the United States plays the role of world policeman more than it should, fails to take their country’s interests into account and cannot be trusted to act responsibly. The poll, also, found that most Americans do not think the United States should act as the world’s preeminent leader and prefer a more cooperative approach to international governance. They, also, believe the United States plays the role of world policeman more than it should. But the survey also finds that majorities in most countries want the United States to participate in international efforts to address world problems.

As the world does not want to be governed by Washington, and as most Americans do not want Washington to try to govern the world, notwithstanding the imperial dreams of the Neo-Cons, and their mini-Con Canadian wannabe’s, multilateral cooperation is more or less the world’s default position. There is, also, the increasingly powerful argument that over-arching global problems can best be managed by global institutions. That is not to say that for most countries, relations with Washington are not their top priority. Relations with Washington are vitally important, and for many, including obviously Canada, they are the most important. (That is not the case for Moscow, Berlin and Paris, and quite

possibly Beijing, as their opposition to the Iraq war made clear.) But it does mean there is no viable alternative to working together to govern ourselves.

The question is, how? In my judgment, the large multilateral organizations are and will likely remain indispensable, with the US at the centre of them, albeit not always at their head, provided that they reinvent themselves as they go along.

The United Nations as Innovator

The United Nations is currently the principal instrument of international governance, sometimes more respected for what it represents than for what it does. I know first-hand that the United Nations has all the problems you would expect a 60-year-old club to have, from quarrelsome members to petty corruption. The worst failures have been conscience-shocking, notably in Pol Pot's Cambodia and Slobodan Milosevic's Yugoslavia. Worst of all has been Rwanda where, while 800,000 people were being systematically slaughtered, Security Council members, notably the United States, played legal word-games in order not to trigger their obligations to stop it under the Genocide Convention. The Council figuratively split hairs while the genocidaires literally split heads. Now it is the hundreds of thousands of innocents of Darfur who struggle for some sort of purchase on the world's apparently teflon conscience. The UN secretariat has forced the world to see this unfolding tragedy but the reactions of most UN member governments have been, literally, unconscionable, a kind of collective ADD.

More generally, the organization is hamstrung by a profound lack of consensus within the international community on what the most important issues are, let alone on what to do about them. Most fundamentally, in the post-Iraq war environment, trust has evaporated. For most UN members it was not 9/11 that changed everything—it was 3/17, the invasion of Iraq over the opposition of the vast majority of the UN membership and in violation of the UN Charter.

The attacks on 9/11, in our northern minds, elevated terrorism to the top of the world's preoccupations. According to the US National Counter Terrorism Centre, 14,618 individuals were killed worldwide as a result of incidents of terrorism in 2005 and 20,498 were killed by terrorists in 2006. Consider, however, what the world looks like from the perspective of Third World countries:

- in 2004, natural disasters killed nearly 240,000 people, the vast majority in poorer countries.
- In 2005, small arms and light weapons killed at least 300,000 people, predominantly in the poorer countries.

- Intra-state conflict caused the deaths of 100's of thousands more, notably in Africa.
- Pregnancy-related complications killed more than 500,000 women, 99% of them in the Third World.
- In 2005, Malaria killed one million people, mostly in the poorest countries of the South, and
- In 2005, HIV-AIDS killed almost three million people, again overwhelmingly in the Third World

Terrorism's death toll is very small in comparison. For the great bulk of the UN membership the priorities of the UN are, or should be, very different from those presumed by some of the richer countries. The world has not yet fully assimilated former Secretary General Kofi Annan's insight that there is no security without development, no development without security, and no security or development without human rights protection, His corollary, that multilateral cooperation is essential to the achievement of all three, has not been fully assimilated, either.

The North-South divide has replaced the East-West divide. The divisions between North and South are playing out in classic theoretical fashion at the UN. The South is uniting against the hegemon. The results for the UN are often negative and sometimes paralyzing. Part of the reason the UN General Assembly makes some of the otherwise inexplicable decisions it makes is because the poorer countries value unity over substance on many issues. The poorer countries stick together especially on management reform where concessions to the Secretary General are seen as concessions to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who are presumed to have undue influence over him by virtue of the selection process. A Price Waterhouse Coopers report on the UN found that the UN was the only organization it knew of that insisted on making its program and budget decisions exclusively in plenary session, by all 192 members. With the major exception of the Security Council, specifically its five permanent members, small groups representing the whole are anathema to the overall membership.

Canada is a member of the Western Europe and Others Group, affectionately known as WEOG, which exists for electoral purposes only. Canada is, also, a member of the CANZ group with Australia and New Zealand, which is respected for its competence and constructive engagement, and whose views are always welcomed but only occasionally determinant.

Regional facilitators and "friends" and other groups are sometimes, employed to ease negotiations in the General Assembly and in major

negotiations but with only limited success. Most groupings are not geography-based, but political or economic; the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the G77 are the principal examples.

Bloc to bloc negotiations have become standard practice in New York. The bane of existence for Canadian Ambassadors is the practice of the 35 (+/-) members of the EU negotiating behind closed doors with the 130 plus non-aligned movement on Arab-Israeli issues, negotiations that outsiders can only indirectly influence, but which they are expected to endorse without quibble or delay.

The UN has other problems. The old Human Rights Commission had become a caricature of itself, with human rights abusers seeking membership so they could deflect attention from themselves, often onto Israel. Its replacement, the Human Rights Council, has been disappointing so far.

There have been scandals, too, although fewer and less serious than the Wall Street Journal and a handful of right wing American Senators and some of the more fevered neo-cons would have the world believe. In the Oil-for-Food program "scandal", sensationalist headlines notwithstanding, far less money ended up in UN officials' pockets than ended up in advertisers' pockets in Canada's sponsorship scandal. One UN secretariat official has been indicted, accused of defrauding the program of \$140,000, which is less money than Paul Wolfowitz's girlfriend gets in a year. (The same people who brayed after Kofi Annan's resignation are stoutly defending Mr. Wolfowitz.)

Even one fraud is unacceptable at the UN or anywhere else, of course, but the figures do help to place the scandal in perspective. Saddam Hussein's billion dollar kick-back schemes with western companies, well known to the Security Council membership, were the responsibility of member countries and were beyond the control of the secretariat. But, in any case, even they seem insignificant compared to the disappearance of the \$9 billion that the UN Oil for Food Program turned over to the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority, who lost it.

The United Nations does suffer from structural problems that make accountability difficult, even in some respects, impossible. The UN has more of the attributes of a club than of a government or an enterprise. The General Assembly is not a Parliament and the Security Council is not a cabinet. Unlike national governments or private corporations, there is no executive. No one is in charge of the entire operation, literally, and thus, no one is entirely accountable for it. According to Article 97 of the Charter, the Secretary General is the Chief Administrative Officer, not the Chief Executive Officer, a designation that was made deliberately by the Charter's framers. Despite the best efforts of some Secretaries General, especially Dag Hammarskold and more recently Kofi Annan, to enlarge the powers of their office, the Secretary General remains more Secretary than General.

So there are problems at the UN and they are important ones and difficult to fix. Still, while the world's aspirations for the United Nations have often exceeded the organization's grasp, it has, nevertheless, served its membership reasonably well, and sometimes, very well, certainly better than the politically motivated "UN-bashers" would have the world believe. Since its creation, the UN has given birth to a body of international law that stigmatizes aggression and creates a strong norm against it. Although the Cold War saw international law breached by both sides, the norm against aggression has come to be much more respected than not. Since the end of the Cold War, according to the Human Security Report of 2005, the number of armed conflicts around the world has declined by more than 40%, for which pro-active UN prevention efforts by the UN are given a large measure of the credit.

Member countries have been much readier to authorize the use force to stop *internal* conflicts. From 1945 until 1989, there were 13 UN military operations. Since then, there have been 43 military interventions under UN auspices, and the UN's annual peacekeeping budget has grown to over \$5 billion. Through the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN has helped the world limit the number of nuclear weapons states to nine—the five major powers and four others. President Kennedy expected there to be 25-30 nuclear-armed states by the mid-70s.

The UN has helped the world to feed its hungry, shelter its dispossessed, minister to its sick and educate and inoculate its children. More mundanely, the UN has regulated the world's air travel, coordinated its mail services, overseen its patents system, regulated its shipping and apportioned its electromagnetic spectrum, among many other unsung but necessary tasks.

The UN Reinvents Itself

Overlooked in the recriminations stimulated largely by differences over the Iraq war and the Oil for Food Program is the fact that the UN has been re-inventing itself. The UN has served as mid-wife in the births of more than 100 countries, the great majority of which came into being peacefully. It has also supervised scores of elections and otherwise helped many members make transitions to democracy. According to Freedom House, over two-thirds of UN member countries are now full or partial democracies. The passage of a half dozen core human rights treaties and their progressive assimilation into domestic laws has made it possible for an increasing share of the world's people to live in dignity and safety. The Globe and Mail article today (27 April, 2007) that compares prisoner monitoring agreements in Afghanistan, provides an example of how international treaties become reflected in countries' behaviour on human rights.

An extensive international criminal justice system has developed under UN auspices, a major innovation foreseen nowhere in the original Charter. Its reach is world-wide and, for the first time, the world's monsters can no longer sleep soundly in their beds, confident that they are immune to prosecution. It is truly significant and highly satisfying that Charles Taylor, responsible for the atrocities in Sierra Leone, is being tried before a UN court and Joseph Kony, head of the murderous Lord's Resistance Army of child soldiers in the jungles of Uganda, is attempting to negotiate immunity from prosecution by the International Criminal Court. Sudanese officials are also seeking immunity, thus far futilely, for the atrocities they have perpetrated in Darfur. Further, it was to the UN that Lebanon turned for the investigation of the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri; it may well be that the UN will be asked to set up a special court for this case.

The UN has given birth to concepts we now take for granted such as sustainable development. Scores of environmental treaties have been concluded under UN auspices, from protecting the ozone layer to climate change. Perhaps the most visible recent UN innovation has been the creation of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The office organized the massive international relief response to the Indonesian earthquake and Tsunami and to numerous other humanitarian crises spawned by major natural disasters and complex emergencies. The UN has launched a Peacebuilding initiative to help countries back from the abyss of failure and conflict, a task the Rand Corporation found that the UN did better than member countries have. A standing police capability for the UN is being created, to complement UN military actions. At the 2005 summit, the UN meeting at head of state and government level, endorsed, "the Responsibility to Protect", the Lloyd Axworthy-initiated idea launched in the aftermath of Srebrenica and Rwanda.

Thirteen counter-terrorism treaties have been concluded by the General Assembly, despite the UN's regrettable inability to agree on a definition of terrorism, a failing shared by the Canadian Parliament. The UN Security Council has twice "legislated" the proscription of cooperation with terrorists, making decisions under Chapter VII of the Charter that have the force of law in all member countries. All told, over 500 multilateral treaties have been concluded under UN auspices.

The point is that from counter-terrorism treaties, to human rights conventions, to the support of democracy, good governance and promotion of the rule of law, to disaster relief, to sustainable development, to helping states rebuild after conflict, the UN has taken very significant strides into the 21st century.

The UN is performing a role that is valued by its members. Polling conducted for the BBC World Service in 2006 by GlobeScan and the Program on

International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland indicates that, while support for the United Nations on the part of the public around the world has flagged somewhat in recent years as the organization has struggled with intractable issues, with the sole exception of Iraq the people in every country polled, including the United States, had more positive views of the UN than negative and, in many cases, much more positive views. The most important major international issues continue to be brought to the UN for deliberation, e.g., the Israeli-Lebanese war and the Iranian nuclear program.

The UN is not going to hell in a hand basket.

Adapting to Changing Times

But like all organizations the UN needs to adapt to changing times and to innovate. Ideas for how to do so are not lacking even if the most recent summit missed an opportunity to go quite far, primarily because the Iraq war, among other things, had paralyzed cooperation.

The Secretary General's High Level Panel proposed wide-ranging reforms, as did the then Secretary General, Kofi Annan, himself, and the organization will return to some of them eventually when greater trust is restored. Some in this audience favour injecting more NGO expertise into UN deliberations, the recommendations of another blue ribbon group, the Cordoso Commission, named after the former President of Brazil, who headed it. That is already happening in a limited way in New York and it is probably one of the reasons that the UN has not been the subject of protest to the same extent as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have. But member states can be expected to proceed with considerable caution on NGO participation. For one thing, the institution is an intergovernmental group in its Charter and its operations. For another, many developing countries see NGO's as rich country entities, dominating their poorer cousins financially, pursuing agendas that promote alien agendas that could further diminish those countries' already limited powers. For example, in Sierra Leone, the attitudes of local and foreign NGOs regarding the appropriate treatment of child soldiers were very different.

Some non-Western countries fear the NGO's because they perceive them as promoting western values, especially on reproductive health and other social issues, notably gay rights. Others fear faith-based NGO's and their influence in the opposite direction. Not all NGO's can be assumed to be progressive in the terms of this gathering: the National Rifle Association is an NGO and had a restraining effect on UN efforts to constrain small arms transfers. Nor is it certain that big pharma and big tobacco could be expected to play what people in this audience might consider progressive roles. Parliamentarians from around the world are seeking greater roles in the UN. Some would like to turn the General Assembly into a kind of global parliament. Others, particularly certain Washington

think-tanks, would like to democratize multilateral cooperation, by replacing the UN with a new institution comprised exclusively of democracies. Others, me included, would like to see a democracy group form inside the UN, where it could be a voice of democratic governments and, possibly, induce more democratic behaviour on the part of others, akin to what the EU has done through its enlargement process.

One of the biggest difficulties the world faces is overcoming its major divisions to deal with common problems, such as climate change. Former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin had one such idea how to break global deadlocks [the subject of his Gow lecture later that day]. He advocated creating a group of 20 major countries that would seek consensus among themselves on issues such as climate change and then import that consensus into the 192 member General Assembly for consideration. This idea is still worthy of promotion and if the Canadian government does not do so, others probably will.

The lesson to take away from this lengthy explication is that the UN is not the corrupt, incompetent, basket-case of an organization that its critics maintain. It is doing a far better job than its critics contend and even than its defenders know. There has been a surprising amount of innovation but it cannot simply command consensus among its members on the major issues of the day.

Canada's New Government and Multilateral Governance

It is not surprising, since "Canada's New (minority) Government" has only had about a year in office, that its declaratory record on multilateral cooperation is sparse. As a result, in order to see what the government thinks, it is necessary to piece together the government's statements and actions about and in international for a, especially the UN, even if that yields only a partial mosaic. Prime Minister Harper duly attended the G8 meeting last summer in Russia and the UN General Debate in New York last fall. At the UN, his speech focused mainly on Afghanistan, saying that the UN's mission was "Canada's mission. He made it clear then, as he has since, that he was standing by the UN mission in Afghanistan. At New York, and in his handful of other speeches about foreign policy, he has not revealed a great deal about his attitude towards the organization, itself, beyond calls for management reform and accountability, (a sentiment his accountability-minded government has yet to express about the World Bank and its beleaguered President Bush-appointed president).

Positions the government has taken in New York on Middle East votes have accelerated the pro-Israel predisposition of its predecessor, affecting attitudes towards Canada in New York. The stance of the Prime Minister on the Lebanon-Israel conflict last summer took sparse account of the UN Charter and international law, as did his apparent blaming of the UN for an Israeli attack in Southern Lebanon that killed UN personnel, including a Canadian soldier. In

doing so he, also, did not acknowledge the UN's roll in monitoring armed conflict. Beyond New York, the government's decision to grant Quebec's wish for autonomous representation at UNESCO risks diluting Canada's impact in that forum and other UN and multilateral bodies, as well, particularly if UNESCO representation is allowed to become the new floor of Quebec demands for separate representation abroad, rather than the ceiling.

The sentiment in the Prime Minister's speeches about making Canada a leader again on the word stage is a departure from past self-deprecation, if a little exaggerated at this stage as regards Canada's energy superpower status. The government has given substance to its leadership aspiration in its budget decisions to re-equip the Canadian Armed Forces, at last. Without serious military capability, Canada's rhetoric about human security and protecting civilians can be painfully empty. At the same time, because military capability is necessary but not sufficient for leadership, it is disappointing that the government is cutting diplomatic spending back, particularly as diplomacy already accounts for only a tiny fraction of government spending and delivers more security at the margin than defence spending does. How these changes will impact on Canada's multilateral acceptance and performance remains to be seen

Canadians would not have to divine the government's foreign policy in this way if the Canadian electoral process took more cognizance of the world, and its ability to intrude on Canadian interests. Last year, in the four debates among the candidates for Prime Minister in the run up to the federal election, not a single question was asked about foreign affairs. And yet Prime Ministers typically find themselves spending more time on international events than on any other subject. Mr. Chrétien made the crucial decision not to send troops to Iraq. Mr. Martin made the fateful decision to send troops to Kandahar. Mr. Harper extended the troops' stay in Kandahar and, five months into his mandate, was confronted with an unexpected war in the Middle East, with Canadian citizens caught on both sides.

All of these Prime Ministers have had to make decisions that bore direct on the security of Canadians. Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Martin had both published foreign policy reviews that gave some inkling of their views, as had Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Trudeau before them. Such reviews are notoriously difficult enterprises. (I "penned" the foreign policy review of the Mulroney Government in 1984, which immediately upon publication went onto life support!) The authors of Mr. Martin's Government's policy review struggled to satisfy everyone who thought he or she had the right to give directions. But foreign policy reviews do have the benefit of making Cabinets think about what they believe in and of informing Canadians what their leaders think about foreign affairs, at least at the time they are published. Mr. Harper, understandably enough for a Prime Minister with a minority government, has not produced such a document. But, still, it's a dangerous world and Canadians need to know more about what their leader thinks than they do now.

Considering that foreign policy is not just a “nice-to-do”; not just a sideline, not just an after-thought, and is learned on the job only at considerable risk, is it unreasonable to think that international experience should be a prerequisite for the job of the Prime Minister, so that he or she is ready for whatever events follow? As regards the comparatively inexperienced Harper government, it is still early days, and there is time to adjust to the challenges of governing, so long as too many hostages are not given to fortune in the meantime.

Conclusion

Effective multilateral governance is not just a means to an end but, for the foreseeable future, will be an end in itself, if the world is to continue to progress towards civilization. Although there is more to multilateral governance than the United Nations, the UN remains central to it. The UN is a more effective organization than its critics admit, but less effective than the world needs it to be. Despite the profound discord between UN member countries, innovations in the way the world does multilateral business, including at the UN, are happening, but they need to continue and to go further. The record is still sparse on the priority that “Canada’s (inexperienced) new government” attaches to multilateral governance, although a policy mosaic can be pieced together. In this globalizing day and age, Canadians would do well to take the guess work out of determining what their governments think and insist on more international experience on the part of their leaders as a qualification for the job. As a minimum, Canadians need to demand that foreign policy be part of the leadership debates as it is in other democracies with obligations to help manage the world and aspirations to even limited leadership.

Thank You.