

A COOPERATIVE FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD

As the world faces ecological and public health emergencies that know no borders, few things are more important than cooperative foreign relations with countries working toward effective responses.

Creating truly cooperative relations will involve radical changes in Canada's foreign policy and in the institutions of international governance. Contrary to Canadians' self-image, Canadian foreign policy has not been chiefly about peace, democracy, sustainable development and peacekeeping. Rather, Canada's foreign policy has deepened inequality, supported US government aggression, and exported our economy of extraction, with dire consequences for people and the planet.

Our governments sell arms to Saudi Arabia, help to overthrow democratically elected leaders, support oppressive states, vote against resolutions supporting human rights at the UN General Assembly, and fail perennially to meet our climate commitments. No wonder we have twice failed to win a seat at the United Nations Security Council.

Along with other wealthy states and multinational corporations, Canada has also contributed to the subversion of the institutions of international governance.

Canadians must face up to this state of affairs.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Relations between nations have long been about domination, oppression and exploitation, as well as resistance to these injustices.

This dynamic has generated the conflicts of modern times – its world wars, cold wars and hot wars. It has led to the development of weapons of unthinkable destructive capacity – nuclear, chemical and biological – and perverted the cause of peace. It has depleted the earth's resources, unbalanced its ecology and led to climate change, all for the benefit of tiny numbers of the uber-wealthy – and to the detriment of earth itself.

Canada's contribution to this has been far from negligible. Founded as a white settler society based on the seizure of Indigenous peoples' lands, it occupied a favoured niche in the British Empire. Surpluses generated from Britain's non-settler colonies, such as British India or the Caribbean, powered much of Canada's industrialization beginning in the late nineteenth century. The Empire provided markets for its chiefly extractive and agricultural exports and a protective umbrella under which Canadian capitalists could venture abroad to places such as the Caribbean.

Majority World: There are many ways of referring to the poorer countries of the world. We choose the term Majority World to underline the facts of gross international inequality. The Majority Countries, former colonies or semi-colonies, remain poor while the Minority World of the rich countries, composed of former colonisers and their white settler colonies, appropriates the bulk of the world's income. This remains true even though some countries of the Majority World have been growing more robustly. While these emerging economies may grow in economic size, the gap in per capita income has remained persistent.

After the Second World War and the onset of decolonization that began unwinding the British Empire, Canada turned to the powerful United States. In the post-war period, Canada's leaders fostered and deepened Canada's economic dependence on the United States – a dependence that benefitted capitalists and the rich to the detriment of the Canadian people.

The same groups also benefited from the U.S. government's relentless efforts to dominate the world economy.

More recently, some have questioned these links, including Canada's membership in NATO. However, the impetus has come chiefly from Canada's increasingly assertive capitalists wishing to pursue their own autonomous international agenda.

This history has left us initiating, supporting or acquiescing in illegal wars and sanctions and supporting dubious organizations. Our corporations, particularly mining and financial, have created and sustained the structures of an unequal world economy. They have violated human rights extensively. Our foreign policy has supported them. In the name of promoting democracy and human rights, we have supported authoritarian or only nominally democratic regimes that work in the interests of powerful international corporations, including Canadian ones.

Such domination elicits resistance, resentment and rivalry. The resulting international relations also make common international action to address global problems difficult, if not impossible. It is therefore imperative that we change those relations.

Climate action has long remained well short of what is necessary despite high profile international meetings and accords. Global warming has led to fears about new wars over water or rising sea levels. The current conjuncture of the pandemic, the ecological emergency and rising international tensions with new cold wars against Russia and China, is already dangerous.

Rising tensions between nuclear-armed powers make it extraordinarily so. Those tensions have prompted the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists to move its "Doomsday Clock" to 100 seconds to midnight – the closest we have ever been to Armageddon. A new nuclear arms race has begun. Nuclear armed states have flouted the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)'s disarmament provisions and have perverted it into a means for perpetuating shoring up and policing an unequal nuclear order. All of this is barely discussed by Canada's mainstream politicians, even though these dangers are of the utmost gravity.

Such international relations are outmoded in our increasingly multipolar world. They expose the hypocrisy of Western relations with the Majority World. For decades, Western countries have claimed to desire and support their development but have worked instead to deepen their subordination and exploitation. The current development of some of these states, and their accompanying prominence on the international stage, are met by Western aggression, culminating in the current, very dangerous, new cold war against China that the US has launched.

CANADA MUST HAVE NO PART IN THIS OR ANY OTHER COLD WAR

If the world is multipolar today, it is because, despite their power and its formidable exertion, the rich countries of the world have not been able to quell the defiance of countries that challenged them, from little Cuba to (now) mighty China.

The international relations of the past will only embroil our world in even more conflict and prevent it from meeting pressing challenges – responding to the pandemic and the ecological emergency effectively, preventing a renewed nuclear arms race and another major war and, not least, advancing just green wellbeing on a world scale.

Multipolarity today means that a greater number of countries, pursuing a greater diversity of economic models, constitute poles of power in the international system. This situation demands that all countries respect other countries' sovereign right to organise their economies as best suits them in addressing the needs of their people on the basis of the resources – material and cultural – they possess or can obtain

through relations of mutual benefit. This includes respecting the sovereign rights of countries such as China or Cuba, Vietnam or Venezuela that have historically evolved very different economic and political systems than ours.

What We Propose

We propose to end Canada's contribution to outmoded and dangerous structures and practices in international relations. In their place, we propose to set Canada on a new path of international engagement, one that leads the world as a whole towards just green wellbeing.

- We will refocus all aspects of our international engagement – diplomatic, military, and trade and aid related – to reflect a spirit of international cooperation, the importance of international law, beginning with respect for the sovereignty of nations, while working constantly to improve existing frameworks for all of them.
- We will promote human rights and democracy within this framework and engage in international cooperative dialogue about its meaning, rather than seeking to impose western interpretations, or worse, seeking to impose rights- and democracy-violating economic orders.
- We will prioritise and encourage cooperative and non-violent solutions for all international problems.
- We will pursue disarmament vigorously, beginning with nuclear disarmament. We will also restrict and then eliminate the arms trade, take defence production into public ownership to ensure that the profit motive never again drives war, and encourage other countries to do the same.
- We will work to reform the leading institutions of international governance – the United Nations and its affiliates, including the International Criminal Court – to make them more democratic and end their domination by western countries and corporations.
- We will demand reform of the existing institutions of international economic governance – such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization – to make them democratic and respectful of the sovereignty of nations and to gear them to promote just green wellbeing in all countries. We will, at the same time, promote the development of alternative institutions.
- We will oppose the imposition of austerity by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, other Western and Western dominated agencies and will advocate for the elimination of excessive, unpayable debt.
- We will breathe new life into multilateralism in all international forums by rejecting previous approaches that have proved obstacles to agreement with the Majority World and benefited only the corporations and not the people of Canada.
- We will withdraw from international alliances that perpetuate the structures of imperial domination or, if possible, we will reorient them towards those that facilitate the emergence of a democratic and multipolar world of just green wellbeing.

How We will Achieve Our Proposed Goals

To these ends, we propose a radical overhaul and reorientation of the two main government departments – Global Affairs Canada and National Defence – that manage our international relations, replacing them with three new departments.

1. The new Department of Cooperative International Relations.

This will orient our foreign policy towards the promotion of peace, sustainable development, addressing the ecological emergency in cooperation with other like-minded countries, a rules based international order, the reform of existing international institutions and the promotion of new ones to reflect the emerging multipolar world and to take it in the direction of international just green wellbeing. It will:

- work to return United Nations and its wide array of institutions to their original goals of promoting international democracy and peace and away from domination by Western countries, particularly the US, the West, western corporations and private institutions;
- initiate a move away from traditional alliances and institutions now playing a leading role in making the world a more dangerous, rather than a safer place;
- promote international law, including international human rights law, by applying it without bias or discrimination;
- renounce the irrational criticism of countries that exercise their sovereign right to run their economies as they see fit;
- prioritise addressing the ecological and public health emergencies, promoting international social justice, and international peaceful cooperation across the range of spheres of human activity; and
- put Canada in the forefront of countries enabling a peaceful, secure, green and progressive international order.

2. The Ministry of National Defence will become the new Department of Peace and National Defense

It will reorient Canada's defense policy away from aggressive wars and towards the defence of Canada, disaster relief and humanitarian aid, and UN-mandated peacekeeping with transparency and democratic control. The new Department will:

- Organise Canada's withdrawal from NATO; reorganise the provision of national defence outside it and convert Canada's armed forces to strictly defence functions and those of UN-mandated peacekeeping, disaster relief and humanitarian aid on the invitation of governments;
- move away from entanglements that oblige us to engage in foreign conflict controlled by others;
- take defence production into public ownership;
- refuse to spend billions on military hardware from abroad; and
- ensure that these monies are spent on promoting peace and disentangling Canada and the rest of the world from military conflicts.

3. The new Department of Trade and Development

Necessitated by the new centrality of trade and Majority World countries in the Multipolar World, this will rest on the recognition that trade, development and aid cannot be separated. Trade relations have historically been a central element in 'how rich countries got rich and why poor countries stay poor'.

Our trade policy will be committed to promoting international equality and development. Trade has also harmed Canada. We may be a trading nation but our entrenched trading patterns have involved selling raw products and leaving it to others to benefit from the value-added jobs that come with finished products. This too must change. The new Department will:

- promote a new paradigm of Canadian trade and international aid that seeks to promote development rather than the interests of Canadian corporations abroad;
- put Canada's trade relations on a new foundation from which its trade and investment arrangements promote international equality, ecological sustainability and respect for national sovereignty;
- recognise the right of nations to organise their economies in ways that best suit their national goals, including those of providing the full range of human rights, including rights to decent jobs, income, housing, education and health;
- promote a circular international economy;

- aim to diversify Canada’s trade and investment links to reduce its reliance on the US and refuse to be involved in the latter’s trade and technology wars;
- seek to reduce Canada’s dependence on exports of unprocessed or minimally processed raw materials abroad;
- recognise that neither the needs of rich countries like Canada nor the development needs of Majority World Countries are served by ‘free trade’ and that international trade is currently managed to benefit rich minorities at the expense of the people;
- commit to manage our trade in the interests of people and the planet over profits;
- make the management of trade and investment policy for popular welfare, environmental protection and green industrial policy the cornerstone of Canadian policy and accept the right of other sovereign nations to pursue similar policies; and
- refocus our development assistance through genuine collaboration with developing countries that is aimed at improving their productive, technological and skills capacities, their ability to improve the material, educational and cultural well-being of their populations and making their economies more sustainable.

Specifically,

4. The Department of Cooperative International Relations, in alliances with likeminded countries on each issue where necessary, will do the following:

1. Take immediate action to ensure that Canada exceeds its weak Paris Accord commitments and responds more effectively to the ecological emergency by cutting net emissions to zero by 2030, or come close to it, completing the task soon thereafter, as is prescribed by our equitable share of the remaining global carbon budget (for details see ‘The Ecological Emergency’, our ecology platform document). We will also provide financial and technological aid to help Majority World countries meet and exceed their emission targets.
2. Support the United Nations while working to reform it on many fronts, including accountability, transparency and equal sovereignty. We will work to review and revise the UN’s role in the 21st Century. This review will encompass reforms to the Security Council, the General Assembly and other UN bodies such as the World Health Organization, the International Criminal Court and the International Labour Organization. The aim will be to return the UN to its multilateral roots based on equal sovereignty by removing measures that have displaced equal sovereignty in favour of domination of Western countries and corporations, including the following:
 - a. Remove the veto power of the five Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council.
 - b. Reform the UN’s funding to confine it to that provided by member states and ensure that funding commitments are honoured.
 - c. End the practice of rich countries paying poor ones to fight under UN auspices: this will ensure more responsible decision making about the deployment of UN troops.
3. Initiate Canada’s diplomatic withdrawal from NATO and NORAD over a 5-year period.
4. Take the lead in forging new alliance(s) of non-belligerent, peace-promoting states.
5. Demand that the International Criminal Court (ICC) end its exclusive focus on war crimes committed by the American government’s official enemies, and that the ICC hold American war criminals and those from other Western states and their proxies equally accountable for their crimes.

6. Work to reform institutions of international economic governance, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, to reflect the principles of equity and democracy, the vulnerability of poor countries and the centrality of social justice and ecological sustainability.
7. Join and promote new institutions of international economic governance, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the BRICS bank and relevant bilateral and plurilateral agreements between countries for progressive purposes, and work to protect Canada from increasingly capricious US international financial and payments institutions.
8. Condemn the Lima Group and withdraw Canada from it immediately.
9. Impose political, military and economic sanctions on Israel for its illegal occupation and settlement.
10. Commit to imposing sanctions against all human rights violators. Sanctions should be universally applied, wherever there is persuasive evidence of human rights abuses, but only after dialogue and diplomacy have failed. Sanctions must be targeted at individual violators and must be designed to avoid harm to innocent populations.
11. End Canada's acquiescence in the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran and the Trump administration's inhuman sanctions on Iran, Cuba and Venezuela.
12. Reverse the Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism that is so clearly manifested by Canada's foreign policy towards predominantly Muslim and Arab states.
13. Take a decisive stance against far-right regimes around the world, including those of Modi and Bolsonaro.
14. Restore diplomatic relations with Iran, ending our complicity in US-led efforts to subjugate the Iranian people under the guise of democracy building.
15. Repair relations with China by releasing Huawei executive Meng Wangzhou and negotiating for the return of two Canadians detained in China.
16. Impose bans on the importation of products made in any illegal settlements.
17. Align ourselves and work with the most progressive political forces on the planet: to find innovative ways to promote international dialogue and action for peace, sustainability, democracy, Human Rights and national sovereignty.
18. Ensure our diplomats and other representatives are trained to make greater efforts to listen and understand the concerns and positions of people in other countries and end the practice of rewarding political allies with diplomatic postings and thoroughly professionalize our diplomatic corps.

5. The Department of Peace and National Defence will do the following:

1. Reduce military spending by 50% and authorise the reallocation of the funds as aid to nations that are on the frontline of the climate crisis.
2. Phase out the Canadian military over a 5-year period and replace it with a Defence, Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Aid Force (DPHAF). Its sole functions will be to:
 - a. defend Canada's borders and territorial waters;
 - b. participate in UN mandated peace-keeping missions abroad; and

- c. provide emergency humanitarian assistance domestically and internationally, including in conflict zones, on the invitation of the internationally recognized government of the conflict zone.
- 3. Accede immediately to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
- 4. Take the lead in nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons, without which the NPT is simply a means to maintain the unequal nuclear order.
- 5. Initiate Canada's withdrawal from NATO military operations immediately and from NATO and NORAD over a 5-year period, to focus on the defense of Canada and international UN mandated peacekeeping.
- 6. Increase funding to the Canadian coast guard to patrol Canada's territorial waters and to ensure that those waters are being used in compliance with Canadian and international law, including restrictions on fishing, pollution and resource extraction.
- 7. Cancel the Saudi arms deal immediately and impose a ban on trading in arms with Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt and all other states whose governments are engaged in violations of human rights.
- 8. Review Canada's export control list (ECL) exemption for military exports to the USA in order to increase Canada's compliance with international arms trade agreements.
- 9. Eliminate that list altogether within 3 years and impose a ban on military exports, including those to the United States.
- 10. Take the Canadian arms industry into public ownership and phase-out production of all arms, except for those items needed to support United Nations Peacekeeping activities and for internal security, while ensuring that workers are redeployed to comparable civilian positions.

6. The Department of Trade and Development will do the following:

- 1. Make the diversification of Canada's international trade relations its top priority.
- 2. Provide incentives to increase the value-added components of production to increase "Made in Canada" products, processes and components.
- 3. Abrogate all Investor State Dispute Mechanisms in our international agreements unilaterally.
- 4. Stop aid and investment in fossil fuels production.
- 5. Advocate for the introduction of a "Tobin tax" on international monetary transactions to reduce market volatility and fund reductions in international poverty.
- 6. Refuse to use labour, human rights and environmental, healthcare or social services standards to deny poor countries access to our markets.
- 7. Support, instead, rights to education, health and basic services by providing Majority World governments with grants and loans for these purposes.
- 8. Help Majority World countries tax their richer citizens and foreign corporations on their territory more effectively to increase their revenues.
- 9. Support trade unions through, for example, collaboration with the International Labour Organization to promote workers' rights at home and abroad, including rights to collective bargaining and good pay, working conditions, social services and other basic needs.

10. Support the United Nations in introducing a binding international treaty on business and human rights to make companies legally accountable for human rights or environmental abuses abroad, whether in their own operations or their supply chains.
11. Rapidly increase Development Assistance to the internationally agreed target of 0.7% of GDP and disburse it, in negotiation with recipient countries, for the purposes of fighting poverty, promoting sustainable development, responding to the ecological emergency, providing social services, promoting gender justice and promoting equality, aiding sustainable agriculture and promoting food sovereignty.
12. Enforce international Human Rights laws and other laws and regulations that promote Indigenous rights, Workers' Rights and gender equality.
13. Support efforts world-wide to fight discrimination of all kinds, including racism in all its forms, religious bigotry, misogyny and discrimination against gender and sexual orientation choices.

Ultimately, we will have both the courage to imagine a world that is peaceful, just and sustainable, and the determination to make that world a reality for our children.

