

# The Politics of Self-righteousness: Canada's Foreign Policy and the Human Security Agenda

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## Abstract

*'Human security' has become a buzzword of post-Cold War global security governance. By subscribing to the human security leitmotif, Canada has actively participated in the construction of meaning that is attached to and associated with the term. However, it has done so primarily on a rhetorical level by appealing to the myth of Canada's 'golden era' in the 1950s and its self-understanding as a 'peacekeeper', 'do-gooder', 'honest broker' and 'helpful fixer'. It is through this emotionally appealing character that the Canadian human security agenda successfully reconstructed a common national identity notwithstanding the agenda's inconsistencies and severe cuts of its foreign policy budget.*

## Canada's Foreign Policy Myth

Canada's largest book retailer, Indigo, has recently been running a campaign arguing that "the world needs more Canada". The ingredient of Canada that the world needs – and, hence, currently lacks – is in that case: books. Unsurprisingly, however, the slogan also resonates perfectly with a broader Canadian self-perception of its role in the world<sup>1</sup> and especially its appraisal of the so-called '*golden era*', the time when the Canadian diplomatic corps was regarded the finest in the world and the country was doing good all over the globe, as a peacekeeper, a generous donor, a brave soldier or an honest broker (Cohen 2003, Welsh 2005). At least, so does the official myth go. It would need too much time and space here to evaluate how close to reality this self-image comes. Nonetheless this self-perception nicely serves as a starting point for locating Canada's foreign policy under Lloyd Axworthy, subsumed under the label of *human security*, and for placing it in the broader context of Canada's external relations since the end of World War II. Since that time two issues have been crucial for the formulation of the country's foreign policy, namely (a) its relationship with its Southern neighbour, and (b) the question of national unity and a common national identity (Keating 2002: 1, Stevenson 2000: 91). However, these two linkages cannot be illustrated without briefly elaborating on human security as a – at least rhetorical – new form of foreign policy (also see Bosold and von Bredow 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> As a footnote in the literal sense: you get nearly 30.000 hits for that phrase on Google.com.

## Human Security: A Conceptual Reformulation of Foreign Policy

As far as the repeated use of human security is concerned it has been widely accepted that former foreign minister Axworthy introduced the term as a new *leitmotif* of Canada's foreign policy (Axworthy 1997, 1999, 2001; Hampson et al. 2001; Donaghy 2003). In doing so, he made resemblance to what had been defined some two years earlier by the publication of the 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme which had defined human security vaguely as being both, 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' (UNDP 1994).<sup>2</sup> The revolutionary idea behind human security was the reconceptualisation of security in the sense that the referent object – that is the object to be protected – should shift from the state to the individual. In doing so, humans should become protected from physical violence – freedom from fear – as well empowered to provide for their basic human needs – freedom from want (Paris 2001). In the early years Canada's human security policy officially pursued an agenda of both components of human security but eventually ended up defining human security as noting but freedom from fear (MacLean 2000). I will argue that it did so because it (a) lacked the resources to pursue a broader agenda, (b) was able to present the human security agenda as a logical continuation of its foreign policy since the end of the Second World War and (c) could hence successfully strengthen its national identity and the domestic danger of further fragmentation. Looking at the domestic, hemispheric and global contexts of Canada's foreign policy of the 1990s is thus a good starting point for understanding the use of human security foremost as an agenda to reaffirm Canada's national identity. Especially when one considers that the 'real' dangers to the country's territorial integrity – that is national security – had vanished due to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

## The Context of Canada's Foreign Policy in the 1990s

As most politicians also Canadian decision makers had to come to grips with a huge array of new developments and challenges in the early 1990s as is indicated in Table 1. As far as the above mentioned and two most fundamental dimensions of Canadian foreign policy are concerned, the country's relationship with the US at that time was (and, today still is) one of

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<sup>2</sup> The term had been coined prior to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (MacFarlane and Khong 2006: 148) and included seven areas of security concerns, namely: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security (UNDP 1994: 24-25).

a simultaneous pushing and pulling. While the economic integration through NAFTA brought Canada closer to the US, a process of political alienation made Canada on the one hand “invisible and inaudible in Washington” (Mahant and Mount 1999) and on the other hand saw the country pursuing policies that its southern neighbour disapproved of or simply ignored, such as the Kyoto Protocol or the efforts to establish an International Criminal Court (ICC). Together with the domestic challenge in form of the – eventually unsuccessful – 1995 referendum in Québec to gain sovereignty and a too idealistic (or even: naïve) perception that the end of bipolarity would allow for a *peace dividend* Canada, ironically, like all other countries in the West faced a serious identity crisis. It was less threatened in its territorial integrity than ever before since the early 1940s, yet its decision-makers and population felt a deep sense of insecurity. David Campbell puts it this way:

“In the West (and, of course in Canada, too; D.B.), the cold war was an ensemble of practices in which an interpretation of danger crystallized around objectifications of communism and the Soviet Union. [...] In consequence, through a series of ritualized performances, each of which constituted a foundation that was subject to recurrent augmentation, the figuration of difference as otherness in the cold war rendered a contingent identity. [...] The vast majority of states [...] that exist as states [do so; D.B.] only by virtue of their ability to constitute themselves as imagined communities. Central to the process of imagination has been the operation of discourses of danger which, by virtue of telling us what to fear, have been able to fix who ‘we’ are” (Campbell 1998: 169-170).

While this identity crisis was reflected in the official discourse, as I will illustrate soon, the ‘objective’ decrease of military threats as well as the domestic economic downturn led to significant cuts in the foreign policy and defence budgets and an ‘economisation’ of foreign policy. The latter point became most famously visible through the so-called *Team Canada* trade promotion missions of the Prime Ministers and the Premiers (Cohen 2003: 101ff., Keating 2002: 193-194). Put differently: while the human security agenda – as we will see – illustrated increasing commitment, inventiveness and activism, the financial means to back up the agenda were reduced.<sup>3</sup> One has to bear these figures in mind, when it comes to an

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<sup>3</sup> In terms of the three main areas of Canada’s foreign and security policy, three indicators deserve special attention here: (a) the ministerial budget of DFAIT, (b) Canada’s contribution of Official Development Aid (ODA) and (c) its military budget. In all sectors the 1990s and early 2000s saw significant cuts. In that period the downsizing of the foreign affairs budget equalled 25% and personnel was reduced by 13% while the number of missions abroad grew by 12% (Daudelin 2005: 116-117, Cohen 2003: 137ff.). Simultaneously, the percentage of Canadian development aid has been cut from .46% at the beginning of the 1990s to .24% in 2002/03 in percentage of the national budget (see Copeland 2001: 166-167, Cohen 2003: 86, Welsh 2004: 219). The military budget – which is needed to train and deploy peacekeepers – decreased by 23% between 1993 and 1998 and in 2002 ranked third last among NATO members only before Luxemburg and the Netherlands with a share of 1.1% of its GNP

appraisal of Canada's human security agenda. What's more, one has to think more profoundly about the nature of security to understand its impact on identity formation.

**Table 1: Levels and Dimensions influencing Canadian identity:**

	Domestic Level	Hemispheric Level	Global Level
Political Dimension	Québec Referendum	US interests shift towards Mexico	Civil Wars, Failed States, Feeling of Uncertainty
> <i>Fragmentation</i>			
Economic Dimension	Period of Budget Cuts, Economic Reforms and Financial Austerity	Regional Integration through NAFTA	Team Canada missions, IT-revolution, free trade agenda
> <i>Globalisation</i>			
Security Dimension	Decrease in Spending and Size of the Military	Decreasing Importance of North American Defence Cooperation (NORAD)	Withdrawal from Europe, Expectation of a Peace Dividend
> <i>End of the East-West Conflict / Cold War</i>			
>> <i>Feeling of Insecurity, Identity Crisis</i>			

### *The 'Securitisation' of the Human Security Agenda*

Invoking the term 'security' as such is a political speech act which refers to a conceived 'threat' that shall be reduced or eradicated by a policy that by itself will represent a result of that prior political act (Wæver 1995, Buzan et al. 1998, Buzan and Wæver 2003). It is noteworthy that for the speech act to succeed, it is irrelevant whether the threat is 'real' or not (it is already debatable, in many cases, if that is possible on epistemological grounds). As Buzan et al. put it in writing on the issue of security and the political process:

"Security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. Securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization. [...] 'Security' therefore is a self-referential practice, because it is in that practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat" (Buzan et al. 1998: 23-24).

If the mechanism of *how* to present or frame issues in terms of security has been illustrated, it becomes more important to see *whether* the argument for making something a security

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(Cohen 2003: 47). In addition, Canada provided 10% of all peacekeepers in the Cold War period. Although the missions have significantly increased after 1990 (which automatically results in a decreased overall share of Canadian peacekeepers) the country has fallen behind countries such as Ghana, Jordan, Nepal and Portugal and, in 2001, had but a number of 263 blue helmets on duty. That means, it was the 25<sup>th</sup> largest contributor (Cohen 2003: 66-67). Over the last five years DFAIT has received an annual \$10 million for its Human Security Program (Greenhill 2005: 20).

issue has been accepted or not. For discourse analysts, that is, whether the *uptake* has taken place (Blommaert 2005: 43, Donahue and Prosser 1997: 8f.):

“A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization—this is a *securitizing move*, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such” (Buzan et al 1998: 25).

Framed in this way, it becomes clear, that invoking a notion such as *human security* represents a ‘securitising move’ in that human insecurity (as opposed to human security) in its various aspects, issues and facets is presented as a threat which, eventually, becomes part of a discourse, and thus a dialogical practice. A successful ‘securitisation’ in that sense, however, does only mean that the audience (that is, domestically, the Canadian public) acknowledges or affirms the existence of the formulated threat. Thus, ‘securitisation’ only represents the successful *definition* of a threat, not the practice through which (human) ‘security’ is to be *achieved*.<sup>4</sup> My argument here is that especially then-foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy, by continuously invoking the term *human security* in his speeches and relating it to traditional aspects of Canadian foreign policy since the end of the second World War, such as *peacekeeping* or *multilateralism*, has tried to securitise a united Canadian identity<sup>5</sup> on the domestic level because the Canadian human security agenda included significant portions of Canadian foreign policy behaviour that – following the logic of an international structural change due to the end of bipolarity – had to be transformed but preserved in its core, be it the means (e.g. peacekeeping) or identity-related aspects (e.g. Canadian values). However, since the human security agenda is far from being a stable, clearly-defined policy agenda, Canadian human security policy always had to *sell* the changes on the agenda and its inconsistencies as a result of external factors the country had to act upon. Moreover, it had to be framed in a way that was conducive to affirm ingredients of national identity. This

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<sup>4</sup> I owe this point to Felix Ciuta (2004).

<sup>5</sup> This aspect, however, needs further commenting because of two reasons. First, identity is a locally produced feeling of belonging to a community or socially constructed group (see Bauman 2001) that is in constant flux and therefore, by definition, can be stabilised on a long-term basis only through the process of successful (re)construction. However, this is a claim that, according to its critics, the Copenhagen School misses. Its securitisation theory assumes that identity is to be observed within a framework that presumes a fixed actor identity (Buzan and Waever 1997, McSweeney 1996, 1999). My heuristic argument here is that despite the changes every utterance in the official human security discourse is dependent on a set of identity-affirming and identity-constructing patterns. Therefore, I can trace patterns of Canadian identity by documenting securitised parts of the agenda as well as contested ones because the latter will depend on arguments that are inseparably related to Canadian identity.

can be analysed by looking at the speech-acts, i.e. securitising moves in Canada's foreign policy discourse.<sup>6</sup>

### *Linking Human Security to the 'Golden Era' Myth*

For the human security discourse to be successful in Canada, it was thus important to introduce the term in relation with and complementary to the existing foreign policy context and national foreign policy 'myth'. This myth had largely been created throughout the period of the East-West-conflict in being a reliable (in Canada's self-perception: the most reliable) ally of the United States, however, differing from the neighbour to the south with relation to the conduct of its foreign policy in being multilateral and inventive. Hence, Canada was seeking new solutions to international problems and crises together with other partners, primarily within the UN. Especially the 'invention' of peacekeeping through then-foreign minister Lester B. Pearson in the Suez-Crisis 1956 (with the creation of the first peacekeeping mission UNEF, the United Nations Emergency Force) and Canada's role and expertise in disarmament issues and continuous support for human rights have shaped the self-understanding of Canadian foreign policy identity in being a 'helpful fixer', 'honest broker' and 'international do-gooder' (Cooper 1997, Nossal 1997, Melakopides 1998, Keating 2002, von Bredow 2003). One rather trivial example of that self-understanding can be found on the back of the Canadian 10\$-bill that shows a peacekeeper and the accompanying motto "Au service de la paix — In the service of peace".<sup>7</sup> In addition, this self-understanding of being a state that serves as a role model for the rest of the world has had a tremendous impact in that the country has been depending on domestic support for its foreign policy. Given the fact that Canada's unity has been challenged continuously (e.g. by the Québec referenda in 1980 and 1995), foreign policy has had a long tradition of uniting the country. Prime Minister St. Laurent stated as early as 1947:

"We Canadians of English and French origin have embarked on the *joint* task of building a nation. One aspect of our *common enterprise* is our external relations. [...] The first general principle upon which I think we are agreed is that our external policies shall not destroy our *unity*" (St. Laurent in Blanchette 2000: 3, emphasis added).

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<sup>6</sup> It might be noteworthy, that by successfully making 'securitising moves' with regard to 'human security issues' the authority to define human security and the very use of the term becomes 'securitised', too.

<sup>7</sup> Additional background information on that can be found on the website of the Bank of Canada: <[http://www.bankofcanada.ca/en/banknotes/general/character/background\\_10\\_peacekeeping.html](http://www.bankofcanada.ca/en/banknotes/general/character/background_10_peacekeeping.html)>, accessed 14 August 2006. Also see Thomsen and Hynek 2006.

The foreign policy review of 1995 “Canada in the World” (shortly released after the failed referendum on Québec sovereignty) – the official government statement on foreign policy – argued along the same lines and linked the existent foreign policy and security discourse with the issue of unity:

“The measure of *our success* in this world will be *our ability* as a society to effectively focus our international efforts in a spirit of *shared* enterprise (emphasis added).”

This attempt to (re)unite the country in order to be successful in the international sphere was further stressed in the second paragraph which enumerates the *shared* values and links their preservation to the projection on the international level:

[...] Successful promotion of our values - respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and the environment - will make an important contribution to international security in the face of new threats to stability. Acceptance of such values abroad will help safeguard the quality of life at home: Canada is not an island able to resist a world community that devalued beliefs central to our identity” (DFAIT 1995: Summary).

After the link between the domestic (inside) and the international (outside) had been created, the notion of human security became associated with already existing features of Canadian diplomatic and foreign policy tradition:

“Because of the transnational or global nature of the threats, human security demands cooperative international action. Canada will continue to work with others in a variety of fora to address these issues. [...] Problems such as environmental degradation and growing disparities between rich and poor affect human security around the world and are areas where Canada can make an effective contribution by promoting sustainable development through its program of development cooperation.” (DFAIT 1995: ch. 4).

“International Assistance also contributes to global security by tackling many key threats to human security, such as the abuse of human rights, disease, environmental degradation, population growth and the widening gap between rich and poor. Finally, it is one of the clearest international expressions of Canadian values and culture - of Canadians' desire to help the less fortunate and of their strong sense of social justice - and an effective means of sharing these values with the rest of the world” (DFAIT 1995: ch. 6).

It is interesting to see, that the definition or description of human security here was more in line with the initial thoughts and ideas of the term as they were presented internationally by the UNDP report (1994) and domestically by Jorge Nef (1999<sup>8</sup>). Yet, this definition failed in receiving substantial support by the public, thus leaving it to Axworthy and his successors

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<sup>8</sup> This being the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his book that was initially published in 1995 by the above mentioned International Development Research Centre.

to define 'human security' in a Canadian context (see Hampson et al., 2001; Rioux 2001; Ross 2001; Donaghy 2003).

### *Axworthy's Securitizing Moves*

After assuming office, Axworthy was in the beginning reluctant to use the term 'human security'. However, much of what should become part of the 'human security agenda' was named in earlier statements. According to an article in the Toronto Star, Axworthy's top priorities at the outset of his term in office were forging a "coherent 'peace-building' policy out of the government's ad-hoc approach to peacekeeping and conflict resolution abroad". In addition, it was what he called "an international information strategy". For him "information is [sic] becoming a major tool in foreign policy but again, we have ad hoc responses" (Thompson 1996). By the end of 1997 though, the efforts to negotiate a treaty to ban landmines and the human security paradigm became to represent two sides of the same coin. Especially in the Canadian discussion, the successful negotiation of the Ottawa treaty (and later on the creation of the ICC) has later been presented as a model for human security, both in terms of *practice*, that is what Hampson and Reid (2003) call 'human security negotiations', and in terms of a new *moral/ethical complex* (see the contributions in Irwin 2003).<sup>9</sup> How Axworthy understood human security and in how far that understanding was related to Canada's prior international experiences becomes more obvious looking at the way he described his human security agenda to the United Nations General Assembly:

"Changing times have set us a new and broader agenda, which includes focussing on the security needs of the individual – in other words, sustainable human security. [...] in the aftermath of the Cold War, we have re-examined and redefined the dimensions of international security to embrace the concept of sustainable human security. There has been a recognition that human rights and fundamental freedoms, the right to live in dignity, with adequate food, shelter, health and education services, and under the rule of law and good governance, are as important to global peace as disarmament measures" (Axworthy 1996d).

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<sup>9</sup> Though, coming back to the creation of the human security agenda, it is noteworthy that the foreign minister initially never referred to landmines as an issue of human security when talking about the issue. He did not even use the term in his speeches in 1996 and early 1997 (Axworthy 1996a, b, c; 1997 a, b, c). It was not before he clearly foresaw that an international ban on anti-personnel mines was to be achieved, that he talked about 'human security' with reference to landmines. Moreover, in the early days he always used the term by adding the adjective 'sustainable' (Axworthy 1997 a, b, c). Hence, one might argue, that for the human security agenda to be announced it needed a litmus test, which, in that case, was the Ottawa treaty. Eventually, early speeches of Axworthy seemed to reflect the ongoing discussions on landmines in the UN Security Council. There, landmines had been conceived of foremost as a danger to peacekeepers. Axworthy also stressed that aspect when he told his audiences that de-mining was the primary objective of Canada's policy (1996b).

In describing human security in that way, Axworthy explicitly located human security within the context of UNDP's initial conceptualization that saw human security as being linked to human rights and human development<sup>10</sup>. Implicitly, he associated these issues with Canada's policy expertise of the past decades, something that is more obvious in his Winnipeg address three months later:

"In recent years the world has experienced a profound geopolitical shift. The tectonic plates of international relations have realigned themselves and, as always when two plates meet, huge forces have been unleashed.

[...] During the Cold War, when Canada acted to preserve peace and security internationally, it was within clear limits and constraints. We sent peacekeepers; we negotiated disarmament treaties. [...] Now security has become something much broader. [...] It is increasingly clear that preserving 'human security' – human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity – is as important to global peace as arms control and disarmament. It is in response to the need to preserve human security that the notion of peacebuilding has emerged. [...] If there is one conclusion that I have drawn from our consultations to date, it is that Canadians remain committed to an active, internationalist foreign policy. The issues and the setting may have changed, but Canadian support for an activist, middle-power approach is as strong as it was 40 years ago, when we launched the first peacekeeping force" (Axworthy 1996c).

It should be obvious, that Axworthy's arguments here tried to (re)affirm existing features of a Canadian foreign policy identity, while externalising the factors which might have necessitated a reformulation of the policy. This was expressed, most obviously here, by referring to the changing environment as one of mechanistic causalities where 'tectonic shifts' had taken place and 'huge forces' had been 'unleashed'. In terms of the link between Canada's present behaviour in the international realm and its past experiences the list of issues under the human security rubric were always discursively connected to Canada's diplomatic and foreign policy tradition. One example being the obvious link between the 'old' form of *peacekeeping* and the 'new' form of *peacebuilding* and the subsequent characteristics of that new peacebuilding enterprise which derive from the aforementioned list of human security issues. His seminal 1997 article "Canada and human security: the need for leadership", which was published in the country's flagship journal *International Journal*, represented only a slightly different line:

"The Cold War concept of security emphasized the prevention of interstate conflict in order to avoid the perennial danger of escalation. [...] It is now clear that this approach to security was inadequate to foster stability and peace. Canada and a small number of

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<sup>10</sup> Probably even unintentionally indicated by the prefix 'sustainable'. On the golden triangle of human dignity – human security, human development and human rights – see de Gaay Fortman 2004: 5-15).

like-minded countries such as Norway and the Netherlands began to reassess the traditional concept of security in order to identify those variables beyond arms control/disarmament which effect peace and stability. From this reconsideration emerged the concept of 'human security'" (Axworthy 1997: 183ff.).

Instead of perceiving crude forces responsible for the post-Cold War turmoil, he now stated that the old concept of security was too narrowly defined to be adequate for the new realities. In addition, another historic analogy to the 'golden era' of the human security agenda was made in the same text:

[...] Lester B. Pearson, Canada's secretary of state for external affairs, summed up this policy [improving international governance] in 1948 when he stated that Canada could not escape the results and obligations that flow from the interdependence of nations. But this internationalist vocation also provided Canadians with something enormously valuable: *it contributed to a uniquely Canadian identity and a sense of Canada's place in the world.* The question for the future is how to build on Canadian foreign policy traditions so as to adapt Canada's international contribution to this changing world. [...] Canada [...] is already actively engaged in a number of key areas: peacebuilding, peacekeeping, disarmament, particularly the campaign against anti-personal landmines; [...] " (ibid.: 184, emphasis added).

Not only did Axworthy mention the relationship of Canada's foreign policy and its national identity. His list of current activities also can be read as a move to securitise current policies against the background of an era that successfully united Canadians *and* where Canada 'made a difference' in the world. It must have been at that time, however, that the budgetary means to uphold his activist rhetoric started to crumble, since the first ministerial document exclusively devoted to human security – and entitled "Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World" (DFAIT 1999) – presented a much narrower picture of what the term actually meant. In the document, the experiences of the human security agenda, namely the Ottawa Convention to Ban Anti-Personal Landmines (signed in December 1997<sup>11</sup>) and the creation of the International Criminal Court<sup>12</sup> were referred to as "two initiatives in particular [...]" that "have demonstrated the potential of a people-centred approach to security" (DFAIT 1999: 4). By arguing that "...practice has led theory", theoretical reflections made earlier (that is, *before* the 'two initiatives') were used for arguing that a rethinking of the early statements on human security had been necessary. This was made referring to the UNDP report of 1994:

<sup>11</sup> More information can be gathered from the website of the ICBL at <<http://www.icbl.org/treaty/>> (accessed 28 September 2005).

<sup>12</sup> The statute Rome Statute was established on 17 July 1998, further information can be obtained at <<http://www.icc-cpi.int/about.html>> (accessed 28 September 2005).

“The very breadth of the UNDP approach, however, made it unwieldy as a policy instrument. Equally important, in emphasizing the threats associated with underdevelopment, the report largely ignored the continuing human insecurity resulting from violent conflict. [...] Over the past two years the concept of human security has increasingly centred on the human costs of violent conflict” (DFAIT 1999: 3-4).

Put differently, human security had ceded to be equivalent with “human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity” (Axworthy 1996c) – because financial resources were lacking. Rather, these issues now represented ‘dimensions’ of human security:

“The range of potential threats to human security should not be narrowly conceived. While the safety of people is obviously at grave risk in situations of armed conflict, a human security approach is not simply synonymous with humanitarian action. It highlights the need to address the root causes of insecurity and to help ensure people’s future safety. There are also human security dimensions to a broad range of challenges, such as gross violations of human rights, environmental degradation, terrorism, transnational organized crime, gender-based violence, infectious diseases and natural disasters. The widespread social unrest and violence that often accompanies economic crises demonstrates that there are clear economic underpinnings to human security.” (DFAIT 1999: 5).

Stating that “human security does not supplant national security” (ibid.: 6) and “[...] human security and human development are mutually reinforcing, though distinct” (ibid.: 7) allowed for the silent retreat of the foreign policy department from its initial broad understanding of human security and maintained the positive connotation and the national support of its human security agenda. In addition, it allowed the discursive reformulation of human security to add new aspects to the narrowed agenda: “Ensuring human security can involve the use of coercive measures, including sanctions and military force, as in Bosnia and Kosovo” and reiterates the uncoupling and continuous re-linking of human security with new issues since “[...] security policies must be integrated much more closely with strategies for promoting human rights, democracy, and development” (ibid.: 8). Again, this indicated a half-hearted attempt to reconcile the old definitions and the new policies. Briefly summed up, human security started being a broad and potentially costly post-Cold War security agenda that focussed on general individual well-being and was firstly transformed to a post-conflict agenda of peace-building. Due to budget constraints it was later narrowed to media-friendly and inexpensive campaigns of international humanitarian law treaties in the form of the Ottawa treaty and the Rome Statute – both based on a substantial input of

the non-governmental sector – and ended up as a policy of traditional security policy by bombing Serbia in the Kosovo war in form of a ‘human security air campaign’.

### *Securitisation? Uptakes and Caveats*

Given the numbers and length of existing articles and surveys on the results of Axworthy’s ‘human securitisation campaigns’, the following analysis concentrates on the contestation of some of the claims Axworthy made over the years with regard to his ‘human security agenda’. It is interesting to see, that the continuation of a Canadian involvement abroad and an internationalist foreign policy was taken up and affirmed without preliminary limitations. This can also be observed as a consistent feature of public opinion, where 78% of persons recently interviewed stated that their country had “played an important role in the world” and 88% indicating that they were interested “in events or issues on the international scene” (Innovative Research Group 2004: 6, 10). Furthermore, the idea of wielding ‘soft power’ – another synonym for Canada’s human security policy – was supported by nearly 70% of Canadians and more than 75% of Francophones.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the overall securitisation of the human security agenda can be described as successful, since most criticisms had rather minor objections against the agenda as such. As far as the new character of the human security agenda is concerned one critic argued that it was rather a continuation of the former foreign policy:

“Lloyd Axworthy, [...] s’était, jusqu’à la récente crise, présenté comme un visionnaire, un leader [...]. Il faisait appel à ‘la sécurité humaine’, un concept [...] que l’on vendait comme nouveau. En réalité, on l’avait emprunté au gouvernement précédent en prenant soin de le ré-étiqueter pour faire croire à l’innovation et à l’héroïsme” (Michaud 1999).

In terms of issues, however, there was a significant scepticism on the fact that human security and the use of force could be reconciled as Axworthy had claimed in case of Kosovo. His critics argued that:

“On est tout de même en droit de se demander, à la lumière des événements au Kosovo, si le concept de sécurité humaine, que notre gouvernement considère comme la figure de proue de sa politique étrangère, est viable. [...] Malgré tout, l’implication canadienne au Kosovo correspondait plus à un concept de sécurité traditionnelle [...]. L’esprit de la sécurité humaine est plus proche de l’espoir lié aux droits de la personne que du fracas des bombardements” (Geiser 1999).

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<sup>13</sup> The question asked for the approval or disapproval of the statement “Canada should focus its international efforts on working with non-governmental organizations to build support for specific solutions to key problems, like the ban on landmines, and not try and do so many other things” (Innovative Research Group 2004: 21).

Besides these criticisms which argued that Axworthy was trying to 'sell' an 'old security policy' as a new 'human security policy', other critics complained that there was no mandate of the UN for the Kosovo intervention (Spector 1999) and an unwillingness to sacrifice 'peace-enforcers', thus, lives of soldiers, by fighting the Kosovo war exclusively by air strikes on civilian and military targets (Bowes 2001). Daudelin (2000) sums that aspect up in stating: "The idea that the protection of human rights might lead to killing innocent people does not fit readily in the starkly black-and-white moral universe in which the human-security agenda was originally framed." Eventually, the 'human security agenda' earned criticism because the ambitions could not be met with an adequate amount of financial resources and material capabilities.

"Axworthy argues that 'seismic shifts...have shaken the tectonic plates of world affairs' since the Cold War ended. Whatever that means, it sounds serious. [...] it's still a nasty world out there, where sheer clout is respected more than good intentions. That's clout, spelled c-a-s-h, for diplomacy and the firepower to back it up. Promoting Canada's interests, which include helping the United Nations [...] requires investing in more than speech writers" (Barthos 1998).

This perception of human security as mere rhetoric was widely shared by others. Clark (1999) writes that "our defence capability has shrivelled. [...] our help to poor countries has been cut sharply", Winsor (1999) adds, that "Mr. Axworthy has also come in for criticism from some academic analysts who argue soft power works only if it is backed up with muscle", this being itself an 'uptake' of Hampson and Oliver (1998) and Nossal (1998/99). Apart from the perception that 'human security' does not work with 'soft power' alone but also needs hard power, thus military power (which is itself an argument that runs counter to those criticising the use of military force in Kosovo) Axworthy's arguments for the general aims of the 'human security agenda' became affirmed:

"So defending 'human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity,' become important even in regions far from our borders, Axworthy told the National Forum on Foreign Policy last week. It's as close to a set of principles as we're likely to get to replace the bipolar thinking that shaped policy in the Cold War era. This analysis has prompted the Chretien Liberals to spend much of the past year, Axworthy's first as foreign minister, cautiously expanding this country's involvement abroad, and taking on the associated risks. [...] Our cutbacks to foreign aid are a disgrace. And we could be a lot tougher criticizing countries like China, where human rights are routinely ignored (Barthos 1996).

This is an aspect that received further support, in that case from Speirs (1997) who wrote “[...] foreign policy is more than serving Canada’s short-term economic self-interest”.

## Conclusion

To sum up, the observation can be made that Canada’s human security agenda became narrower over the years, and the securitisation of the agenda more intensely linked to appealing to Canada’s foreign policy tradition thereby (re)creating a Canadian *identity*, with passages, such as the following, taking for granted that a situation of human security existed at the ‘home front’:

“building an effective, democratic state that values its own people and protects minorities is a central strategy for human security. At the same time, improving the human security of its people strengthens the legitimacy, stability, and security of a state [...] Where human security exists as a fact [...] these conditions can be attribute in large measure to the effective governance of states” (ibid.: 6).

Mark Neufeld’s argumentation that ‘human security’ was never intended to represent a new type of (an international security) game, let alone to play any role on the international scene arrives at a similar conclusion when he writes that:

“In sum, in the internationalized state, the function of Foreign Affairs is neither to participate in the international(ized) decision-making process nor to act as a transmission belt into the domestic economy, but rather to provide a legitimating discourse in support of an increasingly fragile domestic hegemony” (Neufeld 2004: 120).<sup>14</sup>

Further support for that thesis can be derived from a look at the meta-discourse on human security. In general, criticism never culminated in asking whether the *ends* of the human security agenda were justified (justifiable), rather the *means* were seen as inappropriate. Either, because hard power seemed to be lacking or because one resorted to military force in the Balkans. Or, because rhetoric on human rights was not defended rigorously or human development and foreign aid policies were not backed up with the necessary financial means. Another aspect of the means were to be seen in what the foreign minister referred to as *practice* (Axworthy 1997f, 1998a, b; DFAIT 1999), which included new actors operating in new multilateral settings, summed up by the statement that “due to the complexity of contemporary challenges [...] effective interventions involve a diverse range of actors including states, multilateral organizations, and civil society groups” (DFAIT 1999: 8). The

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<sup>14</sup> Another article, that is different in its focus, but similar in its findings on the substantiveness of Canada’s human security agenda, is Grayson (2004).

fact that the domestic Canadian discourse revolved around the means may also explain that the changes that occurred *on* the agenda (such as the inclusion of the use of force as a possible means of a human security policy, see DFAIT 1999) may have weakened the initial coherence of the arguments but never risked a perception of a human security agenda that might have represented a historic discontinuity as far as the country's foreign policy was concerned. It seems that this preservation of Canadian (righteous) self-perception is here to stay: "Canadians take pride in what we do in the world. [...] Daily while at Foreign Affairs I saw how little separates what we do inside our border from what happens outside an vice versa" (Axworthy 2003: 1).

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