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# Values and Interests in Foreign Policy Making

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## Values and Interests in Foreign Policy Making

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### Abstract:

Why should Canadians, Australians or anyone else care about human rights atrocities, health epidemics, environmental catastrophes, weapons proliferation or any other problems afflicting faraway countries when they do not have any direct or immediate impact on our own physical security or economic prosperity, viz. our traditionally defined national interests? Are concerns about ‘value’ issues just optional add-ons to states’ foreign policy? This paper spells out my long-held belief, which has its origins in the Pearsonian liberal tradition, that there is a third kind of national interest which every country should pursue: being, and being seen to be, a good international citizen. My argument – which I illustrate with reference to issues such as nuclear disarmament, aid policy, the treatment of asylum seekers, and the responsibility to protect populations against genocide and other crimes against humanity – is that acting as a good international citizen wins hard-headed reputational and reciprocal-action returns, and as such bridges the gulf between idealism and realism by giving realists good reasons for behaving like idealists.

(This paper was adapted from the author’s lecture, delivered in his capacity as the 2016–17 Simons Visiting Chair in International Law and Human Security, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, 15 September 2016.)

### About the author:

Gareth Evans is Chancellor and an Honorary Professorial Fellow of the Australian National University. He was a Cabinet Minister in the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments in Australia in 1983–96, and in 1988–96 Australia’s Foreign Minister. In 2000–09 he was President and CEO of the International Crisis Group, the independent global conflict prevention and resolution organisation. He has written or edited 12 books, including *Nuclear Weapons: The State of Play 2015* (co-author), and *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All* (2009). He co-chaired the Canada-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2000–01), and the Australia-Japan sponsored International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (2008–10), and currently co-chairs the International Advisory Board of the New-York based Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. Prof. the Hon Gareth Evans is one of The Simons Foundation's Peace Leaders.

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## Values and Interests in Foreign Policy Making

Why should any country care about human rights atrocities, health epidemics, environmental catastrophes, weapons proliferation or any other problems afflicting faraway countries when they do not have any direct or immediate impact on its own security or prosperity? Should Canadians or Australians care about Islamic State terrorism in Syria and Iraq only because extreme jihadist movements of this kind may recruit deluded young men who may return to threaten our homeland security?

Should either of us care about asylum seekers from both countries drowning at sea as they try to flee to Europe? Should Australians care about refugees from Afghanistan and Iran and Sri Lanka only because they might become queue-jumping asylum seekers threatening our territorial integrity by arriving by boat? Should Australians or Canadians care about the catastrophic humanitarian risks of any nuclear weapons exchange, only when our great security protector and ally, the US, tells us that it is OK to care? Should any of us care about Ebola outbreaks in West Africa only because the disease might turn up on our shores?

Of course it is the primary business of any country's foreign policy to advance and protect the national interest: we should be neither naïve nor defensive about this. But I have long been concerned that foreign policymakers, and those in the media and elsewhere who influence them, far too often think of national interests *only* in terms of the familiar duo of security and prosperity – geopolitical, strategic, physical security-related interests on the one hand, and trade, investment, and prosperity-related interests on the other.

For policymakers to take this traditional, narrow view of national interests does not necessarily mean that they will ignore entirely the essentially moral issues that I listed – atrocity crimes, poverty, disease, the grinding misery of displacement, the use of chemical weapons, the awful human cost of natural disasters, or the risk of deadly conflict in faraway places. Sometimes governments *do* make commitments which cannot easily be characterised as advancing the traditional security–prosperity duo, and explain them in terms of meeting international legal

obligations, or – more often – as *value* issues: doing the right thing simply because it *is* the right thing. It's not in fact unusual for Australian or Canadian governments, like others, to act in a value-driven way – not least in offering relief in response to natural disasters like tidal waves in Aceh or earthquakes in Nepal or Haiti. And in doing so they will often find themselves reflecting genuine community sentiment: Canadians and Australians are certainly as compassionate as anyone else in the world when their attention is engaged on humanitarian issues.

Many such values-motivated decisions have been made over the years by governments on both sides of politics but, that said, I think the evidence is that rather more of them can be expected from governing parties with a strong liberal internationalist tradition, like my Australian Labor Party or the Liberal Party here in Canada. I hope I won't offend anyone here if I say, in this respect, that in a world rather starved of good news stories in recent times – with international headlines dominated by the likes of Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Brexit, the mess in the Middle East, and China-fuelled anxiety about stability in East Asia – one of the most comforting things to have happened is that, since your change of government last year, Canadians seem to be again behaving like Canadians.

But the trouble is that even when governments, of whatever political colour, do act decently, most of the time these actions are seen, by themselves as others, as discretionary additions – not as engaging in the core, hard-headed business of foreign policy, with these issues being given the same kind of priority as the advancement and protection of the traditional security–prosperity duo.

This has wider implications for effective foreign policymaking. If governments don't think of these responses as core foreign policy business, fitting squarely, when properly understood, within a national interests rather than just values-based framework, they get increasingly drawn into the kind of *ad hocery* which has characterised the conduct, for governments in I think both our countries, but certainly in Australia, of so much of our international relations as well as domestic policy in recent years – lacking any kind of shape and coherence, lurching erratically from one position to another, and picking up and dropping aid commitments and treaty negotiation commitments and principled positions on policy issues like climate change as the domestic mood is perceived to change.

For both sides of politics in Australia, and I will leave you to make your own judgements about Canada, far too much current foreign policymaking is wet-finger-in-the-air stuff, driven by domestic political priorities, paying more attention to opinion polls and focus groups – and the sometimes idiosyncratic predilections and prejudices of party leaders (for too many of whom foreign policy is *terra incognita* before they get the job, but that doesn't stop them) – than intelligent analysis and systematic priority setting. While complete bipartisanship in this area is probably unachievable, given the long histories and distinctive cultures of the different major parties in both our countries, it is certainly the case in Australia that we have often found common cause in the past, and I have continued to argue that we should try to find as much as we possibly can in the future, not least since it is well-established that foreign policy issues are not usually vote-changers for most voters.

## **Good International Citizenship**

This brings us squarely to the idea of good international citizenship. I think the best way of finding common cause – common ground across party lines – is for policymakers in every country to go back to basics: focusing on what are our real national interests, our capacity to advance and protect them, and the priorities for action that follow from that. I have long argued that instead of thinking of national interests in just the two bundles of security and prosperity, we need to think in terms of every country having a *third* national interest, viz. that in *being, and being seen to be, a good international citizen*.

At the heart of good international citizenship, as I at least have thought of it, is a state being willing to engage in cooperative international action to advance global public goods, or – putting it another way – to help resolve what Kofi Annan used to describe as “problems without passports”: those which are by their nature beyond the capacity of any one state, however great and powerful, to individually solve. We are talking here about that familiar list again: such issues as achieving a clean and safe global environment; a world free of health pandemics, out of control cross-border population flows, international trafficking of drugs and people, and extreme poverty; a world without cross border terrorism; and a world on its way to abolishing all weapons of mass destruction.

When I first started saying, shortly after I became Australia's Foreign Minister in 1988, that every country had a national interest in being, and being seen to be, a good international citizen, I was not conscious of that phrase having been used by anyone before me, and indeed it does not seem to have been, at least in the written public record, although it is sometimes attributed to the great Liberal Canadian Prime Minister of the 1960s, Lester Pearson. I was simply groping for a way of articulating the sentiment that "purposes beyond ourselves" – in that wonderful phrase of the world-recognized Australian international relations scholar, Hedley Bull – were really at the heart of every country's core national interests, rather than being some kind of boy-scout-good-deeds afterthought to the real business of state.

I was unhappy with the idea that it was "Australian values" or "US values" or some superior brand of morality that was the motivator for some states being more willing than others to wrestle with what were coming to be called "transnational", or "global public goods", or "global commons" issues: this was just too self-satisfied for words. Moreover, if good international behaviour was simply some kind of charitable impulse, that was an impulse that would often have difficulty surviving the rigours of domestic political debate. Politics is a cynical, as well as bloody and dangerous, trade, often with very limited tolerance for embracing what cannot be described in hard-headed national interest terms.

I wanted, in short, to somehow square the circle between realists and idealists by finding a way of making the point that idealism could in fact be realistic. And I have tried to do that by making the point that there are two very hard-headed returns for a state being seen to be a good international citizen. First, enhancement of that state's international *reputation*, is bound to work, over time, to its economic and security advantage: the Scandinavians, in particular have long understood this – think of squeaky-clean Sweden becoming one of the world's biggest armaments sellers! And second, getting the benefit of *reciprocity*: foreign policymakers are no more immune to ordinary human instincts than anyone else, and if I take your problems seriously, you are that much more likely to help me solve mine: my help for you today in solving your terrorism problem or environmental problem or piracy problem might reasonably lead you to be willing tomorrow to help solve my refugees problem, or at least vote for me for a major international position like a seat on the Security Council.



In Australia, this approach became a core part of our foreign policy discourse in the Hawke and Keating governments from 1988 onwards, but was explicitly rejected by the conservative Howard government which followed, in favour of “advancing Australian values” language. It was then resurrected by the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments of 2007–13, but has subsequently dropped out of sight again under the Abbott and Turnbull governments which have neither embraced nor disavowed it. In Canada, although “good international citizenship” language occasionally appears in political debate and commentary – and may well have been around as early as the 1960s with Lester Pearson – I am not aware of it ever having been embraced as a kind of national interest in its own right.

Internationally, my concept of good international citizenship as a core national interest has won a degree of recognition in the academic literature.<sup>1</sup> But it cannot be claimed to have yet gained much traction with governments, despite my own multiple efforts over the years to persuade many of them around the world that they would have a much easier time selling multilateral commitments to sceptical domestic audiences if they worked harder at explaining the reputational and reciprocity benefits involved. Being the incorrigible optimist I am, I continue to try to make the case for reconceptualising national interests, and continue to live in hope that one day this idea will find its time has come.

So what does a state have to do to be and be seen to be a good international citizen? What does it mean in practical policymaking terms to give “good international citizenship” equal billing as a national interest alongside national security and national prosperity? A useful recent analysis by Sydney University’s Dr Alison Pert, in her book *Australia as a Good International Citizen*,<sup>2</sup> suggests that, in general terms, the two key benchmarks are engagement with international law (encompassing both compliance with existing law and commitment to improving its content), and multilateralism (encompassing participation in international institutions like the UN and G20, overseas aid performance, and visible commitment to cooperative multilateral problem-solving more generally).

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Nicholas J. Wheeler and Tim Dunne, “Good International Citizenship: Aa Third Way for British Foreign Policy”, *International Affairs* 74/4 (1998): 847–870.

<sup>2</sup> Alison Pert, *Australia as a Good International Citizen*, Sydney: The Federation Press (2014).

The utility of these formulations are that they are precise enough, and readily researchable enough, to enable detailed comparative analysis, either of different states, or different governments within a particular state. And I'm pleased to report that in judging the performance against these two benchmarks of all Australian governments since Federation in 1901, in what I think will be seen as a measured and not at all partisan analysis, my own prejudices were confirmed in her conclusion that good international citizenship was most evident in Australia's history during the periods of Dr Evatt's tenure as Foreign Minister, the Whitlam government, the Hawke-Keating governments of which I was a member, and the first Rudd government!

Moving from generalities to specifics, it has to be acknowledged that being a good international citizen in practice often involves making difficult choices, because in the real world of foreign policymaking, traditionally defined national interests are often in tension with more broadly defined international values. So to explain more precisely the approach I am advocating, let me take four different areas where these issues regularly arise – development assistance policy, responding to human rights violations inside another sovereign state, responding to asylum seekers, and nuclear disarmament – and discuss in each case how the relevant interests and values might be reconciled.

## **Development Assistance**

Many development practitioners and theorists are deeply uncomfortable with the notion that aid programs and projects should have to be able to be characterised as serving the national interests of the donor state. They are driven primarily by a values-focused, humanitarian impulse. You give aid to alleviate poverty, suffering and misery, and create economic opportunity. You do it to improve people's lives, because it is the right thing to do. The only interests that really matter are those of the people you are trying to help.

But in the unsentimental real world of policymaking, especially when budgets are under stress, it is very difficult to persuade governments to allocate significant resources to aid unless this can be credibly argued to advance some clearly defined national interest. Voters may be seen as having charitable instincts, but the argument will be that their primary instinct is that charity

begins at home. The bean-counters will demand that something more hard-headed than a generalised sense of moral obligation be advanced to justify major expenditure.

In recent years both major Australian parties, following a trend evident in policy statements coming out of the UK and US, have recognised the need to build national interest considerations into their published aid policies. In none of these position papers, however, is there a very clear or systematic statement of the relationship between interests and values in aid policy formulation. Lip-service is paid both to the traditional preoccupation of the development community with poverty reduction, and the contemporary preoccupation of governmental policymakers with promoting national interests, without explaining with any precision how each approach might be consistent with the other.

That task becomes a lot easier if one approaches it from the starting point that good international citizenship is a national interest in its own right. When understood in this way, it becomes clear that just about any aid program that is well-targeted, well-resourced and well-implemented, is *prima facie* capable of serving the donor country's national interest. For a start there are many different ways, both directly and indirectly – and I will spell them out in a moment – in which aid programs can properly be characterised as serving traditional security and economic interests. But, beyond these situations, it is also the case that a program which seems on its face to confer no such benefit at all on the donor – and I'll give some examples of this too in a moment – may nonetheless very clearly advance its national interest in being and being seen to be a good international citizen, and as such generate bankable returns in terms of general reputation and a sense of reciprocal obligation on the part of the recipient.

Traditionally defined national *security* interests can be advanced in multiple ways by aid programs of different kinds. Public health strategies can work directly to stop the spread of infectious diseases to our shores. Poverty alleviation strategies can serve our interests indirectly by helping to prevent uncontrolled economically driven migration flows and to the extent that poverty (although this particular connection deserves much more close critical analysis than it usually gets) itself breeds terrorism or conflict-driven refugee outflows. And governance, rule of law and human rights protection strategies can also serve our security interests indirectly to the

extent that they avoid state failure, and in turn the conflict-driven refugee outflows and terrorist-breeding potential associated with that.

Traditionally defined national *economic* interests can also manifestly be advanced in a number of different ways by various development assistance strategies. Poverty alleviation and growth promotion strategies are likely to work indirectly increase trade, including in educational services; the provision of scholarships to study in the donor country directly benefits its education providers; and the provision of goods and services – whether for poverty alleviation or public health or governance programs – by donors is likely to directly benefit national contractors.

But it is not only in these fairly obvious ways that the national interest can be advanced by aid programs. An Australian poverty alleviation program in West Africa, very far from our shores, will be extremely unlikely to produce any security or economic returns, direct or indirect, short-term or long-term, for us. And the same may be true, for us, for earthquake disaster relief in Haiti. But these are things that not only can and should be done for their own sake, because of the decent values they embody, but which will in fact – by burnishing our good international citizen credentials – win us over time reputational and reciprocity returns.

Three general concluding points before moving on from aid. First, to be worth doing at all, any development assistance program of any kind must be well-targeted, well-designed, and sufficiently resourced to make an impact. Second, it is entirely reasonable to demand, as donor governments will, that every aid project have a national interest rationale, but as I hope I have made clear, there *is* a national interest rationale – in security, economic or good international citizenship terms – for just about any well-designed project. Third, resource constraints will always mean that priorities have to be set, and this may well involve a concentration of donor resources in particular regions (e.g. in Australia's case, South East Asia and the Pacific) – but a good spread of aid programs worldwide is very desirable, and provided one or other of the three national interest characterizations I have described apply, any such aid program is defensible. (With one caveat: I would not want to have to defend any aid project on the *sole* ground that it benefited the donor country's own contractors!)

## Human Rights

A recurring dilemma for any government of any decency at all is how to respond to serious human rights violations occurring inside another sovereign state. It is not only a matter of decent values sometimes being in tension with traditionally defined national security or economic interests, although that will sometimes seem to be the case because of the fear so many governments have (usually in my view unfounded) that by raising human rights issues with some misbehaving state they will prejudice economic relations or create new security problems.

It is often also just a matter of deciding what, in all the circumstances, is the most *sensible* thing to do if one wants to effectively promote human rights values. My Golden Rule in this respect, and I think this is what good international citizenship entails in this context, has always been this. Do that which is productive; minimise, but don't entirely exclude, doing that which is *unproductive*; and avoid at all costs doing that which is *counterproductive*.

There are plenty of ways in which governments like ours, in Australia and Canada, can contribute productively to ending human rights abuses, and indeed we have worked closely together in the past on some of the best examples of this. I think in this respect of the work that Bob Hawke and Brian Mulroney did together as Prime Ministers, and Joe Clark and I did together as Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, in developing and advocating globally for the financial sanctions regime that was ultimately so critical in bringing down South Africa's apartheid regime. And I think of the Canada-initiated International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which I co-chaired on Lloyd Axworthy's invitation, which succeeded in building a whole new international consensus on the hugely controversial issue of responding to mass atrocity crimes occurring behind state borders by changing the language and focus of the debate away from "the right to intervene" to "the responsibility to protect" (R2P<sup>3</sup>).

I should add in this respect that looking at issues through an R2P lens – which is essentially a good international citizenship lens – can be a helpful way of resolving some other dilemmas which governments like ours face, in particular whether we should intervene militarily in some foreign conflict or crisis situation. We have both had to face that situation with our

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://web.archive.org/web/20070731161527/http://www.iciss-ciise.gc.ca/report2-en.asp>.

current interventions in Iraq and Syria. I am afraid that, supporter of the US alliance though I may be, I have to say that the worst possible reason for such a military commitment is that our great and powerful friend wants us to do this, or we think it wants us to do it (or, perhaps, because we want the US to want us to do it): “Whither thou goest, there I go” might be good theology, but it is not great foreign policy for a country that values its independence.

Almost as bad a national security-interest reason for this kind of intervention is to “drain the regional swamp of terrorists”: when this enterprise, desirable as it is, moves beyond containment to destruction, with all the collateral civilian damage that is bound to be involved, this always runs the risk of recruiting more to the extremist cause than it kills. By far the most defensible, and I think politically saleable, ground for intervention is one that focuses on the good international citizenship pillar of our national interest: our collective humanitarian responsibility to protect innocent civilians at risk of mass atrocity crimes from Islamist extremists.

Sometimes the actions that our governments take in responding to human rights violations in other countries are manifestly *unproductive*, but that doesn’t mean they should not be engaged in at all, if only on a modest scale. I took that view when I was Foreign Minister, regularly instructing my often rather unhappy diplomats to make representations to their host country counterparts in relation to Amnesty International-supplied advice about imminent executions or particular political prisoners. I don’t think we had any impact in other than a tiny handful of the hundreds of cases raised, other than to make – I think usefully – clear that at least someone in the wider international community was watching and monitoring these countries’ behaviour. In my long experience of making these and other kinds of human rights demarches to unsympathetic governments, I can remember causing a fair degree of discomfort and on occasion irritation, but never to the point of this having any subsequent adverse impact on Australia’s economic or security interests: these risks tend to be much exaggerated. And if this kind of international attention makes governments who behave badly feel even just a little discomfited, that is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

What clearly has to be avoided by governments, however enthusiastically they might want to demonstrate their good international citizenship credentials, is human rights activity that

is manifestly *counterproductive* for the people sought to be helped. Although preference that many governments express for “quiet diplomacy” on these matters tends to infuriate NGOs, this is not always a cynical cover for not making any waves at all: it can sometimes be the only sensible way to proceed, because noisy diplomacy can seriously stiffen resistance. One recent example of that may have been Indonesian President Jokowi’s determination, in the face of a strong and public Australian campaign, to proceed with the execution of convicted drug offenders: he simply did not wish to be visibly seen to be yielding to international pressure.

Another example that will live long in my memory is how close we came in 1994 – after years of quietly working with my Indonesian Foreign Minister counterpart Ali Alatas to achieve it – to a major autonomy package for the brutally suppressed people of East Timor. It was on the verge of being announced by President Suharto at that year’s APEC meeting – until a well-intentioned statement from President Bill Clinton in Jakarta designed to pressure Suharto into accepting such a package produced, as this kind of diplomacy sometimes does, precisely the opposite result.

## **Asylum Seekers**

The issue of how to respond to a big influx of people fleeing the horror and misery of war and political persecution and seeking political asylum in neighbouring countries is one that Canada, because of its geography, may have been able to largely avoid. But it has of course been a huge issue in Europe, and it has been a significant issue in Australia, although even when our “boat people” problem was at its height – with thousands in transit and hundreds dying at sea – it paled almost into insignificance compared with the hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and other would-be migrants continuing to cross the Mediterranean into Europe, and the many thousands who have been lost at sea in the process.

The Australian response to this issue in recent years is not one in which I, or a great many of my compatriots, take any pride, with both sides of politics engaged in a populist race to the bottom. We refuse now to allow any arrivals – however *prima facie* credible their claim to satisfy asylum criteria – to be even processed in Australia; we send them to hell-hole offshore

processing and detention centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea's Manus Island; and even if they are eventually determined to be refugees, refuse to allow any of them to settle in Australia.

The argument is dressed up in a moral cloak – the necessity to have in place very powerful deterrents to travel to Australia if the people smugglers are to no longer be able to ply their awful trade and boat people deaths at sea are to once and for all be stopped. But the political appeal both sides of politics have been making is more cynical, and based essentially on wanting to be seen to be protecting traditional national interests – to address the security risks associated with possible Islamist extremists sneaking in under the cover of seeking asylum, or the economic impact of large numbers of unwanted arrivals competing for increasingly scarce jobs. Good international citizenship has been conspicuous by its total absence, and Australia's international reputation has taken a battering as a result.

While no-one denies that the asylum seeker problem anywhere is capable of a simple solution, if one approaches it through a good international citizenship lens, giving proper weight to both respect for international law and to cooperative multilateral problem-solving, at least the basic elements of an appropriate response are evident. And – when the problem is on the relatively modest scale we are experiencing it in Australia – it is a response that is relatively quickly and inexpensively deliverable in practice.

Such an approach would involve first, providing resources (and countries like Australia and Canada should be generous in this respect) to countries of first arrival, to enable them to process applicants for refugee status quickly and efficiently and accommodate them meanwhile in decent facilities; and second, ensuring orderly resettlement in any country willing to take them of those who do establish their right to asylum, with countries like Australia very significantly increasing its annual intake quotas – as Canada now indeed has – to enable the queues to move quickly (and, again, with financial assistance being given by those countries who can afford it to resettlement countries who can't).

At least in the case of Australia, it also makes sense in practice – and is defensible in principle in this context of orderly and quick processing – to directly stop the people smugglers, and the deaths at sea inevitably associated with them, by allowing properly conducted naval turn-



backs of such boats back into the territorial waters from which they originated, with this being done in close cooperation with the Indonesian or other country officials involved.

My country's approach to the asylum seeker problem has been cynical, heartless and shameful. It's not too late to recover ground, the good international citizenship principle points the way, and it would be very much in our national interests, broadly defined, for it to be followed here.

## **Nuclear Disarmament**

From a values-based good international citizenship perspective, there is not much room for argument about nuclear weapons. They are the most indiscriminately inhumane weapons ever devised, and the only ones capable of destroying life on this planet as we know it. There is compelling scientific reason to believe that a nuclear exchange of just 50 weapons – in, say, a war between India and Pakistan, which is unhappily not unthinkable – would have just that effect. And there are still well over 15,000 such weapons in the global stockpile, with a combined destructive capability of over 100,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs. The world would be infinitely safer and saner without them.

While, on even the most optimistic view, complete elimination is decades away – not least because problems of verifying and enforcing a global zero compact are a long way from solution – there is every reason to start the process right now. And certainly to dramatically reduce stockpiles, dramatically reduce deployments, dramatically reduce the number of weapons on high-alert launch status, and get every nuclear-armed state doctrinally committed to No First Use – all of which President Obama came into office wanting to do, and still wants to do, along with bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into full force and effect.

But Obama, unhappily, will leave office with none of these objectives achieved. The trouble is that there are an army of policy makers, in all the nuclear-armed states and in all too many of their allies, for whom the issue is seen as a contest between unrealistically high-minded values and hard-headed national security interests, the argument being that as much as we might ideally wish for the elimination of nuclear weapons, nuclear deterrence continues to work and it

is dangerous to take even a step in that direction. This is a totally wrong-headed argument, for reasons that I and many others have spelt out in detail elsewhere, but which boil down essentially to this: weapons which everyone knows cannot be used in any context without committing not only homicide but national suicide, are not in practice much of a deterrent at all.

And even if they did operate, at least during the Cold War years, to induce a little more caution into the behaviour of the antagonistic weapon states, the reality is – as has been pointed out over and over again by those super-hard-headed realists Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, Bill Perry and Sam Nunn in their famous series of Wall Street Journal op-eds over the last ten years – in the contemporary world the enormous risks associated with the possession and use, with inadvertent use through human or system error a greater risk than deliberate use, far outweigh any conceivable advantage associated with their retention. So it is not a matter of having to *weigh* values against traditional national interests when it comes to nuclear weapons: there are simply no good national security grounds for any state possessing them. Nor is there any good national security interest ground for any state not possessing nuclear weapons relying on an ally who does: there is absolutely no reason to believe that Japan or South Korea, or any of the Central and East European NATO members, or for that matter Australia and Canada, need US nuclear weapons for their protection, given Washington's mighty conventional-weapons capability to deal for the foreseeable future with any threat contingency any of us might face.

Notwithstanding the force of these arguments, nuclear disarmament is another issue on which Australia (and I'll come back to Canada in a few moments) has not covered itself with much distinction in recent times – despite the lip-service that both sides of politics have always paid to the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons; despite our participation under both of them in several middle power groupings notionally committed to that cause; and despite the quite active leadership role that Labor governments have played in the past trying to advance a practical disarmament agenda (especially by establishing the Canberra Commission in 1996 and the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which I co-chaired in 2009).

Where we have most spectacularly sold ourselves short in recent years, and undermined much of the international credibility won by the Canberra and ICNND Commissions, has been in

our official response, under our conservative coalition government, to the hugely welcome rebirth in 2013 of an international movement campaigning against the catastrophic humanitarian and human rights impact of any nuclear weapons use, which at three major international conferences in Norway, Mexico and Austria, and at a series of UN meetings has won strong support from a great many governments and from civil society organizations worldwide.

Our recent lack of any kind of serious commitment to nuclear disarmament was prominently on display during the meeting of the UN's First Committee in New York in October 2015, when we took what our Chinese colleagues might have called a "Four Noes" position in voting negatively on four important new humanitarian-impact related resolutions coming before it.

Our first "No" was to vote against the Austria-led "Humanitarian Pledge" initiative, calling for a commitment "to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons", supported by 128 other nations. Our second "No" was to abstain on a second Austrian resolution, supported by 136 members, stating "that it is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances", our particular objection being to the last phrase. As Sweden pointedly asked us: "When would it be in the interest of humanity that nuclear weapons are used? Under what circumstances?"

Our third "No" was to vote against a South African resolution, supported by 124 states, which declared nuclear weapons to be "inherently immoral" – on the ground that this, like the Austrian resolutions, sought "to marginalize and delegitimize certain policy perspectives and positions." To which the only possible reply is: "exactly". And our fourth "No" was to oppose a Mexican resolution, seeking to establish a General Assembly "open-ended working group" to "negotiate with a view to reaching agreement on concrete and effective legal measures to achieve nuclear disarmament"; and abstaining even when the draft was amended to substitute "substantively address" rather than "negotiate", in a resolution which attracted 135 member states.

In all these enterprises Australia was either the leading, or a leading, voice in a group of around twenty states, most believing themselves to be protected by the US nuclear umbrella, all anxious to claim a continuing major security role for nuclear weapons, and none of them willing

to do anything which might even help *begin* a process of drafting a treaty for their elimination. All this was bad enough, but the icing on this rather unpalatable cake came just last month in Geneva when Australia led an effort to derail the report of the Open Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament<sup>4</sup> – established last year against our opposition, as just described – which recommended the commencement next year of a negotiating process designed to establish a legal route to ultimate disarmament, albeit with no expectation that any such result would be other than in the distant future. The report had been carefully negotiated and was expected to pass by consensus, but Australia objected and forced a vote – with the result that it still carried with 68 in favour, but now with 22 states on the record against and 13 abstaining.

For those of you who might have been hoping that I would now be able to compare Australia's shame in all of this with Canada's enlightenment, I am afraid that I have to report that, in all the votes I have described, both in last year's first Committee and now again in the Geneva vote last month, Canada followed us every step of the way, with the new Trudeau government, despite the proud nuclear disarmament role and reputation of Trudeau senior back in the 1980s, following every line of the script of its Harper predecessor. As Douglas Roche rather politely reported this state of affairs in a piece in *The Hill Times* on 24 August, this is an issue on which Justin Trudeau "seems disengaged".

## Conclusion

Nobody, least of all me, suggests that approaching foreign policymaking through the lens of good international citizenship is going to provide anything like all the answers we need in wrestling with complex problems of the kind I have been discussing. But it does give us, I believe, a much more helpful framework for dealing with the complexities of the highly interdependent world of the 21st century, with its multitude of transnational issues only capable of being solved by cooperative multilateralism, than an approach which focuses almost wholly on traditional, narrowly defined, security and economic interests.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.unog.ch/oewg-ndn> or <http://www.baselpeaceoffice.org/article/un-body-adopts-report-advancing-nuclear-disarmament-negotiations>.

And focusing attention on what it means to be, and be seen to be, a good international citizen also sets us a challenge. Countries with Australia's and Canada's general record and reputation as energetic, creative middle powers which have on many occasions in the past played a world-leading role in international diplomacy – in institution building, and on peace and security and other issues – ought perhaps to be setting our sights rather higher, and acting rather more generously to those who share our common humanity around the world, than we have tended to do in recent times. I hope very much that is a challenge which both sides of politics – progressive or conservative, left or right of centre – when they find themselves in government, will all now rise to meet.