

# A Tale of Two Shirts: Public Discourse and Canadian Foreign Policy<sup>1</sup>

Mark Neufeld  
Global Politics  
Trent University  
mneufeld@trentu.ca

Ogni rapporto de “egemonia” è necessariamente un rapporto pedagogico e si verifica non solo nell’interno di una nazione...ma nell’ intero campo internazionale e mondiale...

Antonio Gramsci<sup>2</sup>

Intellectuals are increasingly common in Canadian public discourse. This is not an accident. Various incentives are in place to promote the activities and formation of public intellectuals. This holds as well for international affairs.

In the 1980s, the recently established Canadian Institute of Peace and Security – an outgrowth of the Trudeau Peace Initiative – instituted a programme to bring journalists to the institute for a period of six months.<sup>3</sup> The idea was to take public commentators and, by improving their understanding of global issues, turn them into bone fide public “intellectuals”. Though CIIPS is now defunct, this strategy remains in place elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

The other strategy to create public intellectuals is to move private intellectuals – e.g., academics – into the public realm. Arguably, this is been a

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared for the May, 2009 annual general meeting of ISA-Canada in Ottawa. I thank the SSHRC for their support.

<sup>2</sup> “Every relationship of “hegemony” is by necessity a pedagogical relationship ... and is established not only at a national level but in the international and global domain as a whole....” (my translation, with valuable assistance from Julian Ammirante). See Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere* (Torino: Einaudi editore 2007), Volume secondo, Quaderno 10 (XXXIII) [Notebook 10, 1933], § (44) Introduzione allo studio della filosofia, p. 1331.

<sup>3</sup> As I recall, *Le Devoir’s* foreign affairs specialist, Joclyn Coulon, was the first inductee.

<sup>4</sup> More recently, journalist Avril Benoit, formerly of the CBC, now of Medecins sans frontières, recounted for me her mind-expanding experience while on a one-year fellowship to study global issues at the University of Toronto

strategy of SSHRC for years, though with questionable success. Other organizations have had more.

In this paper I will examine two public intellectuals of the second type – that is, university academics prominent in the public debates: Jack Granatstein and Michael Byers. I will look at the specific assumptions that inform their arguments. However, I will place them in a broader context by drawing on the framework of Gramscian hegemony. Without the latter, I argue, we risk missing the real significance of the kind of public interventions made by public intellectuals such as these. I will start with Jack Granatstein.

Jack Granatstein: “It’s YOUR War, Stupid!”

“There’s nothing improper about educating Canadians ...”<sup>5</sup>

This was Jack Granatstein’s very public response to a public charge that he was engaged in an indoctrination campaign. We will return to the charge, and his response. First, however, we should review his interventions in the public realm.

Following an academic career as an historian (York University), Granatstein has become a leading public intellectual on foreign and defence issues. He is the public face of the Conference of Defence Associations, a private interest group engaged in lobbying and public education efforts. In his capacity, Granatstein writes op eds, and engages in public speaking and debates. Most recently, Granatstein has synthesized his views into the form of a book – *Whose War Is It?: How Canada Can Survive in the Post-9/11 World*<sup>6</sup> – which provides an excellent introduction to his thought.

Granatstein’s argument can be summed up as follows:

i) Canada is at war with Islamic fundamentalist jihadists. Their attack on the Twin Towers was simultaneously and equally an attack on Canada and Canadians. As the antipathy of the jihadists for the west is rooted in a hostility to our way of life, there is no possibility of dialogue or accommodation. The only option is to meet like with like – i.e., a military counter-offensive.

ii) Unfortunately with respect to (i) Canada’s capabilities in terms of foreign and defence issues are grossly inadequate. The Canadian military is quite simply

---

<sup>5</sup> Jack Granatstein, *Globe and Mail*, Feb. 27, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> (Harper Collins: Toronto, 2008).

too small and grossly under-equipped. As a consequence, Canada is unable to meet its international obligations much less satisfy the basic requirements of any modern state to defend its national interest (defined, minimally, as its territory, citizenry, and political order).

iii) The current state of affairs is the result of long-standing active neglect of our national interest and capabilities. At one level, this neglect can be understood as the result of the decisions of a succession of politicians and state leaders of various politics stripes. At another, however, the root of the problem must be located in society itself, to wit:

iv) An influx of immigrants with values foreign and inimical to the Canadian polity and to Canada's national interest. Worse, over time, these values are allowed to stand unchallenged, sheltered behind the protective barrier of multiculturalism.

v) A second group whose values reflect a failure to assimilate into the Canadian mainstream – Lord Durham's efforts notwithstanding – is that of Quebecers. Canada has been held hostage to "pacifist quebec". Furthermore, there is no clear solution to this problem as Quebecers continue to form a sizable part of the population and so Canada must somehow accommodate their foreign values.

vi) Finally, even those holding more properly Canadian values suffer from an irrational Anti-Americanism (ironic, given it is the American shield which defends us more than our own military). As a consequence, even those Canadians who support the military in the same breath tie its hands by affirming that Canada's "peacekeeping" tradition must dictate the appropriate application of Canada's military expertise.

Commentary:

Granatstein's training is that of an historian – accordingly, those looking for any kind of engagement with theory will be disappointed. Indeed, typical of the adherents of his profession, he makes little or no effort even to draw out and make his assumptions explicit. We shall have to do it for him.

To begin, with his emphasis on states as actors and their pursuit of national interest, realism is clearly his underlying framework. A Hobbesian conception of the war of "all against all" is the backdrop for state action.

At the same time, his realism is of a curious type. First, the realist tradition recognizes a wide range of possible national interests – these, however, fall across a spectrum of salience. At one end are vital interests – defence of

territory, population, and political institutions.. At the other end are interests that are not vital. They have only “prestige” value (having, for example, to do with reputation). It is important to distinguish them, argue traditional realists, since only the former call for “coercive diplomacy” (force). Indeed, to engage in military action over prestige issues is the worst kind of folly.

Of course, one can always try to portray prestige issues as vital interest to legitimize force. One can recall, for example, the rather strained efforts to convince Americans that if the North Vietnamese were not engaged and defeated in South-East Asia, “tomorrow they will be on the beaches of California”. Of course, traditional realists like Morgenthau never fell for this sophistry and remained a vociferous critique of US involvement in Vietnam in realist terms: i.e., that developments there did not threaten US vital interests (territory, population, political system).

By extension, it is not hard to imagine how Morgenthau would respond to Granatstein’s arguments. Pace Granatstein’s assertions, the Taliban are not poised to invade Canada, subjugate its citizenry, seize its territory, or replace its form of government. Nor is it in a position to do so to any other NATO ally. The war in Afghanistan, in traditional realist terms at least, is NOT our war.

To manage prestige issues, what is required, following classical realism, is not force but “prudential diplomacy”. Granatstein, however, argues that diplomacy is not possible given the gulf in values between the West and Rest.. Furthermore, promoting diplomacy at all costs can lead us to fail to take sides with right against evil.

In this sense, Granatstein’s arguments owe less to realism than to Huntington’s neo-idealist “Clash of Civilizations” thesis, with a radical incommensurability posited between Islamic values and Western ones. There is also an element of John Foster Dulles’ insistence that this is a world divided between good and evil, a position of neutrality is inherently immoral. What is common to both is a refusal to acknowledge that the history of Western actions might be part of the reason that movements such as Al Qaeda exist in the first place.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> The point can be illustrated as follows: I have a small Toronto-style backyard. I wanted a swimming pool but there was no room. Then one day, while my Muslim neighbour was out of town, I knocked down the fence between our properties, put in a pool that spans both our backyards, and re-erected the fence, this time cutting off my neighbour’s access to his property. I then invited my friends over for a pool-party. When my neighbour returned and saw what I had done, he erupted in a public display of anger. When my friends ask why my neighbour was so exorcised, I replied as follows: “It’s a clash of civilizations, really. He doesn’t like my religion, my politics, or the way I let my wife dress. And

There is an irony here. Granatstein is highly critical of Axworthy's efforts to champion R2P – Responsibility to Protect – a new doctrine, promoted at the level of the UN, where saving people and communities would be the priority. The context for such interventions would be “failed states” – a state **whose central government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical ability to control** much of its territory. Replace the word “control” with “defend”, however, and it can be argued that Granatstein's thesis is that Canada is a “failed state” – perhaps not a failed state in its totality, but rather a selectively failed state in a critical dimension: in this case, foreign and defence policy.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, unlike with R2P, Granatstein is not calling for UN-sponsored intervention (though, one does get the feeling that, as a last-resort, a US-led, NATO-sponsored intervention to “slap some sense into us” would not be entirely unwelcome).<sup>9</sup> Rather, he puts his energies into public education efforts, trying, as it were, to change Canada from the bottom up. Assessing the salience and meaning of those efforts will be the focus of a later section of the paper. First, however, we turn to the contributions of Michael Byers.

Michael Byers:

“Much of what human beings take to be immutable about political systems ... exists principally at the level of ideas.”

*Intent For A Nation: A relentlessly optimistic manifesto for Canada's role in the world*<sup>10</sup>

At first glance, it would appear that Michael Byers will be offering a radically-incommensurable analysis and set of policy recommendations. No shrinking violet, he has been described as the “angry academic voice of Canadian foreign policy”<sup>11</sup> And so combustible are the views of

---

now he's threatening me... honestly, who can understand these people? There really is no way of reasoning with them...force is all they understand....”

<sup>8</sup> One is reminded of Stephen Harper's judgement that Canada is a “failed European welfare state”.

<sup>9</sup> A quote from the *Calgary Herald*, featured on the book's cover, characterizes *Whose War is It* as “a short, sharp reality slap to Canadians...”

<sup>10</sup> Toronto: Douglas McIntyre, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> The characterization is Michael Valpy's.

Granatstein and Byers, that a public debate on foreign policy between the two organized by the Department of Foreign Affairs was cancelled out of the fear that it would prove too “political”,<sup>12</sup>

There are clear substantive differences. Unlike Granatstein, Byers does not believe the Taliban pose a direct risk to Canada, either militarily or politically:

The Taliban do not pose a threat to the existence of Canada. They are not about to invade. Nor are they developing weapons of mass destruction or missiles capable of reaching North America. The Al-Qaeda elements sheltering behind the Taliban to no pose an existential threat to Canada either....<sup>13</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Byers questions the continuing presence of Canadian forces in Afghanistan (though he does leave open later involvement as peacekeepers or development workers).

Ultimately, many of Byers' recommendations in *Intent for a Nation* remain at a very general level making it hard to know where to situate them theoretically and politically. Luckily, an earlier book provides invaluable – and ultimately, disquieting - guidance in this regard. Though trained as an international lawyer, Byers has taken at least some politics and international relations theory courses. As a consequence, in his *Custom, Power, and the Power of Rules: International Relations and Customary International Law*<sup>14</sup>, Byers offers a critique of mainstream international relations theory and, implicitly, hints at where he locates himself within it.<sup>15</sup>

Significantly, Byers acknowledges he accepts the following three assumptions:

---

<sup>12</sup> Heaven knows, the last thing we need in the Pearson building is an intrusion of politics. In this case, however – and given the conservative nature of both of their interventions (see below) – their exclusion is doubly ironic. Which leads to a further question: is irony any more welcome in the Pearson building than politics? But I digress....

<sup>13</sup> *Intent*, 44-45.

<sup>14</sup> Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> It should be stressed that the range of theory reviewed is from (neo) realism clear all the way over to (neo)idealism. Neo-marxist (e.g., neo-Gramscian) or feminist treatments of international law are touched on only in passing (the latter) or not at all (the former).

- i) states are the principal actors in world politics; the proper focus is on states relating to one another – how the logic of domestic politics affects state action on the global stage is not his concern
- ii) power determines – law must be accepted by the state to be efficacious
- iii) national (self)- interest is the proper category to formulate and conduct state action<sup>16</sup>

To his credit, Byers recognizes assumption three is quintessentially realist - he seems less clear about the fact that one and two are as well.

Byers seems confused on other theoretical points as well. He expresses reservations about Waltzian neo-realism, with its emphasis on structural anarchy – an emphasis which makes it difficult to bridge the gap between IR and International Law. On the hand, Byers is much more comfortable with the English School, whose openness to talking about the institutions (e.g., law) that help constitute a “society of states”<sup>17</sup> is clearly more conducive to Byers’ orientation.

What is important to stress here, however, is that, as Claire Cutler has demonstrated, the “neo-grotians” who comprise the English School accept virtually all of the central assumptions of realism – as such, they are better understood and a sub-tradition within realism - alongside, for example, the more bellicose Hobbesian variant - rather than an alternative to it.<sup>18</sup>

Understanding Byers to be a kind of realist is important since it directs us to be cautious about exaggerating the gulf between his views and Granatstein. It has at least two other implications as well.. First it helps us understand the fact that speaks regularly in terms of national interest: “Clearly, we do have a **national interest** in containing Al-Qaeda”.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, it has long been recognized that realist assumptions tend to direct analytical attention away from actors and processes inside the “black box” of the state. States and their leaders are the recognized leaders of realism. In this regard, it is significant that when Byers critiques

---

<sup>16</sup> pp. 13-15.

<sup>17</sup> See Hedley Bull, Martin Wight.

<sup>18</sup> A. Claire Cutler, “The ‘Grotian tradition’ in international relations”, *Review of International Studies* 17 (1991), pp. 41-65.

<sup>19</sup> *Intent*, p. 45. emphasis added.

trends within Canadian foreign policy of which he is not enamoured, he regularly pins the blame on high-ranking politicians<sup>20</sup> and/ or civil servants.<sup>21</sup> Social forces do not really figure as determinants of state action.

With this, albeit, rather bare-bones overview of Byers' work, we can move now to a more sustained comparison of the work of the public intellectuals under review here, I will offer, as well, an interpretation of the significance of their efforts in terms of broader society trends.

### Comparing and Locating:

I want to begin with the question of values and interests. Purportedly this is the major divide between the two thinkers, at least according to Granatstein, who is scathing in his sarcastic depiction of those who privilege mere "values" over "national interests":

What matters to us is that old cliché – our strength is as the strength of ten because our hearts are pure. We have no goals against other states, no historic grievances, no vaunted ambitions. **We do not even have national interests, but only values** such as tolerance, gender equity, multiculturalism, good governance and general all-round wholesomeness.<sup>22</sup>

Byers, on the other hand, is ostensibly exactly the kind of values-oriented, national interest-denying thinking despised by Granatstein. To wit, the blurb on the back jacket of *Intent for a Nation*, taken from the *Globe and Mail*, affirming that what Byers offers is "a passionate and cheerful call for international action, **based on a diligent reading of our values....**"

Upon closer examination, however, the point is somewhat murky. Let us start with Granatstein. Notwithstanding his insistence that a clear-headed assessment of national interests must guide policy, values play an

---

<sup>20</sup> See introduction.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Byers implicitly chastises "civil servants" for what they did to the language of the landmines convention, originally drafted by Axworthy. Further, he accuses them of subordinating Canada to a US agenda: "Since when had the Canadian foreign service stopped pursuing an independent, made-in-Canada foreign policy?" p. 189.

<sup>22</sup> *Whose War*, p. 53, emphasis added.

absolutely critical role in his work. When confronted with the Afghan mission, its costs, both human and financial, its open-endedness, and the doubts about its potential for success that come with any clear-headed assessment of the campaign, Granatstein's defence of the mission is overwhelmingly framed in value terms. Canada's participation is vital, he argues, because it is an expression of patriotism, a demonstration of pride in our military, a public commitment to our allies, a sign of our bravery and dependability as a country – a country that knows how to fight and has too much self-respect to cut and run.

The latter may be values worth living up to - but they are not national interests defined as power as traditionally understood. As such, the debate would seem to be as much about differing sets of values as one between values and interests.

Byers, on the hand, extols the set of values Granatstein belittles above. He is not opposed, however, to invoking national interest as well. Particularly telling is a conversation he had with Michael Valpy. When asked what kind of debate we should be having about Afghanistan, Byers answered as follows:

On whether the mission is succeeding. And realistically on what are the prospects for success and how do we measure success? And is it worth the cost inclusive of Canadian soldiers' lives?

I've been pushing this point for a year, that you don't need to have any particular ideological or moral perspective to realize that any kind of decision like this **should be analyzed in cost-benefit terms**, and we haven't done that, largely because it's become so mixed up with domestic politics.<sup>23</sup>

In sum, on this most important point Byers advocates an assessment that is framed, not in terms of values (e.g., democracy-promotion, development), but rather hard-headed interests ostensibly outside the realm of values and ideology, and not held hostage to any special interests within society at large. Granatstein should be appreciative since what Byers offers is exactly the kind of utility-maximizing cost-benefit analysis that Granatstein advocates but has difficulty delivering because of his commitment to conservative values.

---

<sup>23</sup> 'This is Stephen Harper's war', *Globe and Mail*, August 18, 2007, emphasis added.

This brings us to our second point – ethics. For where Byers is wrong is in suggesting that this kind of analysis does, in fact, take us outside the realm of values and norms. In fact, what Byers is advocating here is the application of what Chomsky has termed “the pragmatic criterion”. This standard judges a foreign policy initiative to be wrong – pragmatically - if i) it is not in a state’s interests and ii) if it is not achievable given the capabilities at hand. As Chomsky notes, this kind of reasoning is one which a NAZI general might well have used to try to persuade his Führer that the invasion of the USSR would be a mistake. What it means, however, is that should one be able to demonstrate that such a policy **would** be in one’s interest and that it **would** be successful, then there is no reason why it should not be pursued.

As such, the pragmatic criterion is to be distinguished from ethical reasoning that says something may be wrong even if it does serve one’s interest and even if it stands to succeed. Taking the swimming pool example earlier, even it can be argued that a swimming pool serves my interests (it does) and that my initiative to secure the land needed to install one will be successful (less certain in Toronto, but in some places quite possible, given police and judicial corruption), one might still argue it is wrong on the grounds that it is wrong to steal from one’s neighbour.<sup>24</sup>

Put simply, Byers’ non-ideological cost-benefit analysis directs our attention away from important ethical considerations, not the least of which are whether Canada has the legal or ethical right to have invaded and occupied Afghanistan in the first place.<sup>25</sup> This is a curious position for someone committed to a defence – and export – of progressive Canadian values.<sup>26</sup> It is also a worrying development if it is, in fact, motivated by a

---

<sup>24</sup> Or indeed, that stealing is wrong in general. Another anecdote may help clarify this point. A number of years ago, when my son was quite young, I noticed him walking strangely as we exited the grocery store. Upon examination, I found he had stuffed his pants pockets with candy while I was bagging the groceries. When I confronted him on his theft, he responded i) he really wanted the candy (i.e., it was in his interest to take it), ii) no one had seen him (i.e., he could get away with it). He was, however, able to see the limitations of this kind of ethical reasoning when I countered that even if he wanted the candy and even if he could get away with stealing it, it was still wrong to steal. That so many adults in positions of responsibility – including someone as thoughtful as Byers – seem incapable of that kind of recognition, raises serious questions about the true impact of higher education on the capacity to engage in ethical reasoning.

<sup>25</sup> As Byers himself acknowledges, the UN resolutions did not authorize an invasion of Afghanistan.

<sup>26</sup> See *Intent*. Chapter 10.

desire to make his positions more palatable to his conservative interlocuteurs.

Granatstein's efforts have also raised ethical questions. In February of 2008, Amir Attaran, a Professor and Canada Research Chair at the University of Ottawa accused the Conference of Defence Associations (CDA) of "producing propaganda".<sup>27</sup> Attaran pointed out that in the previous year the CDA received a \$500,000 "grant" from the Department of National Defence (DND). Furthermore, the money came with conditions: to receive the money, CDA was required to "support activities that give evidence of contributing to Canada's national policies". In other words, affirmed Attaran, if the CDA's activities "were neutral and unbiased, or even-handedly supported and questioned government policy, DND would refuse to pay".

Granatstein contested this characterization of the CDA, arguing it provided objective information that support of the goal of an informed and educated public on defence matters.<sup>28</sup> While not denying that DND is the financial sponsor of the CDA, he nonetheless argued that the arguments advanced by the CDA were in no way a reflection of a DND agenda.

In response, Attaran pointed out that Granatstein is no neutral observer in this matter – in fact, he is the leading public spokesperson for the CDA. Furthermore, in the same way the CDA failed to be upfront about the fact that it received half a million DND dollars in 2007, so Granatstein failed to disclose the fact that he had recently received a \$5000 award from the CDA.<sup>29</sup>

The question of financial support and its power to influence intellectuals and the positions they take publicly is nothing new – it remains relevant, however, to any consideration of public intellectuals and their claims to unbiased objectivity.

---

<sup>27</sup> "When think-tanks produce propaganda", Amir Attaran, *Globe and Mail*, February 21, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> "There's nothing improper about educating Canadians on defence", *Globe and Mail*, February 27, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Granatstein is not the only intellectual to take money from the Department of National Defence. Attaran lists the following institutional recipients of DND funding, through the latter's Security and Defence Forum: York University (\$580,000), UQAM (\$630,000), Wilfrid Laurier University (\$630,000), Université Laval (\$655,000), McGill (\$680,000), UBC (\$680,000), University of Manitoba (\$680,000), UNB (\$680,000), Carleton University (\$780,000), Dalhousie University (\$780,000), University of Calgary (\$780,000) and Queen's University (\$1,480,000).

## Hegemony and Foreign Policy Debates:

There is a final issue that needs to be addressed – that of the social function of the kind of public interventions we have been examining. If one were to ask Byers and Granatstein what the social significance of their interventions is, I suspect they would offer similar answers – that their interventions serve to raise the level of public discourse and with it the level of public understanding of defence and foreign policy issues. In short, the main function is pedagogical.

This is not wrong. However, as the quote from Gramsci at the beginning of this paper suggests, the pedagogical function of public intellectuals must also be seen as linked to the construction of hegemony.

I want to cut into this issue by referring to a debate that has resurfaced in recent months regarding Canadian political culture. Specifically, Stephen Harper asserted that Canadians have become more conservative over the past 20 years. In fact, as Murray Dobbin has noted, that what careful studies of Canadian studies reveal is that there is a growing gulf between the countries elites – which are becoming more conservative – and the overwhelming majority of Canadians who stick “tenaciously to the view that what government can be and should be is a force for good”.<sup>30</sup>

What Canadians have lost is not their attachment to progressive politics but rather their faith that their politics will find expression in elite-directed public policy. Nor should this be surprising, given the concerted efforts to dismantle and hollow-out the welfare state over the past two decades.

In this regard, foreign policy discourse has a central role to play. For neoliberals who find their political home within the Liberal Party of Canada and New Democratic Party – and here, Byers stands as a good example - a progressive foreign policy discourse always links Canada’s “good global citizen” behaviour with its just and humane society, where the former is represented as the natural outgrowth of the latter. Our efforts in the realm of development, it is argued, grow out of our domestic priority on social equality and economic growth which benefits all; our efforts in the realm of peacekeeping and human rights promotion similarly grow out of our domestic commitments to peace, order and good government.

---

<sup>30</sup> Murray Dobbin, “Canadians more conservative?”, *Toronto Star*, September 29, 2008.

The function of this mode of discourse in terms of the construction and reinforcement of neoliberal hegemony is central. To the degree that the public can be “educated” to focus on our “progressive” foreign policy record<sup>31</sup> - and by extension, on the domestic social and political arrangements of which our foreign policy is the natural expression – the record of neoliberals in dismantling the very societal arrangements they claim underlie Canada’s progressive foreign policy is pushed out of view.<sup>32</sup> As such, the neoliberal progressive foreign policy discourse is an ideological slight-of-hand that serves to immunize the neoliberal record – both foreign and domestic - from critical examination.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, polls show Canadians do support a foreign policy based around progressive values such as peacekeeping (not war-fighting) and development (not trade liberalization). And this leads, I think to the frustration of neoconservatives like Jack Granatstein. Neoconservatives are arguably greatly frustrated by the continuing societal resistance to further attacks on what remains of the welfare state. For them, it is not enough that the glass is half empty: they want to drain it completely. They suspect – and I think, correctly – that the public’s support for a progressive foreign policy is a displaced support for progressive public policy domestically, and, as such, serves to buttress societal resistance to further attacks on the welfare state. Hence Granatstein’s frustration with the attachment of Canadians to “values” (more properly, progressive values he does not share) rather than interests (as our elites define them).

As such, Canadians need to be educated – in this case, however, not educated to see our foreign policy as the natural expression of progressive domestic social and political arrangements (which, ironically, no longer exist). Rather Canadians must be re-educated to see the international realm in line with neo-realist assumptions – that is, as a place

---

<sup>31</sup> A record which is, in fact, considerably less progressive than is usually admitted. See, for example, the critique of the Pearsonian tradition, in M. Neufeld, “Unhappy is the Land”, available at [www.trentu.ca/globalpolitics](http://www.trentu.ca/globalpolitics).

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd Axworthy, for example, before becoming Foreign Minister where he promoted a convention on landmines and R2P, was Minister of Social Affairs where he stood by ineffectually as Paul Martin began the gutting process that has led to the growing gap between rich and poor.

<sup>33</sup> Byers’ characterization of our domestic arrangements is striking: “We’ve got one of the highest standards of living” combined with “a fully functioning public health care system”. Are there no street people in Vancouver? Do people have no trouble finding a family doctor on the far side of the Rockies? Have none of his friends or family spent time in a hospital lately? Are we living in the same country?

of strategic “self-help” interactions between rational utility-maximizing units. This re-education process must entail, therefore, demonstrating that past foreign-policy initiatives not crafted in line with this understanding (e.g., peacekeeping, development) are of limited use. Just as crucially, however, bringing Canadians to see the international realm as a realm of strategic interaction characterized by “self-help” is a crucial step in bringing them to a similar understanding of the domestic realm. “There is no such thing as society”, Margaret Thatcher affirmed famously: there are only rational-utility maximizing individuals who can look for help to no one but themselves. And once this understanding is shared widely, the bottom half of the welfare-state glass can finally be drained with a minimum of resistance.

### Conclusion: A Tale of Two Shirts

Recently, a friend, who was less than enamoured with my collection of shirts, offered to take me shopping to procure something more stylish. I agreed, albeit reluctantly. We entered a store in the Bloor-Yong area of Toronto and stood in the atrium waiting for our eyes to adjust to the low-level lighting. An enthusiastic salesperson approached us and, upon learning about the nature of our quest, pointed to the “men’s shirt section” at the far end of the store.

At this point, my helpful friend turned to me and said: “you wait here”. I did as I was instructed and watched her and the salesperson walk off together. I watched them from afar as they worked their way down the racks of shirts, stopping occasionally to gesture in my direction and consult.

Finally they reappeared, the salesperson holding two shirts. “Go ahead and choose”, urged my friend. “Do you have a preference?”, I asked, as I examined what was being proffered to me. Though the two shirts were not identical, I couldn’t help but notice they were very similar. “No”, she said, “no preference – you have total choice”.

I choose the one on the left, and in so doing brought our expedition to a happy conclusion. As I was paying, however, a question did arise in my mind: wouldn’t having “total choice” mean having the opportunity to review ALL of the options? Wouldn’t it mean being in a position to choose ANY shirt I liked?

Of course, that is how a stable, effective hegemony functions. This can be seen most clearly in terms of our domestic electoral practices. “You wait here”, we are told. We then stand in the atrium of politics and watch our

elites and their helpers, with an occasional gesture in our direction, examine the political options which they judge suitable. “Go ahead and choose”, we are told on election day. “You have total choice”. Still, as we examine the limited number of political options held out to us – options which, while not identical, are awfully similar – can we be faulted for wondering if maybe, just maybe, there are more choices in existence than the ones we are being allowed to consider? Indeed, might it be the widening suspicion – suspicions that occur to us as we pay the bill - that our choices are not so free as we are led to believe that has led to a growing number of Canadians to choose not to vote at all?<sup>34</sup>

In conclusion, what holds for the domestic realm holds for the international as well. The foreign policy shirts we are being urged to buy at the behest of salespeople like Byers and Granatstein – while not identical - are, nonetheless in their construction (a dubious mix of “values”, “interests” and ethical frameworks with more holes than a fishnet tank-top) and in their effects (reinforcement of the dismantling of equity-enhancing domestic arrangements) very similar. And while it may be true that we have “total choice’ as to which shirt we choose to buy, it is equally true that there are more foreign-policy shirts to be considered than those which Byers and Granatstein are holding out. The question is, how do we go about gaining access to them?

---

<sup>34</sup> Of course, it is the same mainstream intellectuals, who help to limit electoral choice that, in the aftermath of elections showing the steady decline in voter participation, chastise the voters for failing to match their enthusiasm for electoral democracy.