

Canada's international do-gooder image shattered: Ottawa Loses Bid for UN Security Council

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Global Research, October 21, 2010

21 October 2010

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [United Nations](#)

Canada's international do-gooder image was shattered when it lost its bid for a UN Security Council seat

The humiliating withdrawal by Canada from the race with Germany and Portugal for a coveted place on the United Nations Security Council revealed what close observers have long known — that the current Conservative government in Ottawa has nothing but disdain for the [world's tattered peacekeeper](#) and would most likely just use its seat to serve US and Israel's agenda. Four years of Stephen Harper's government was enough for the world to turn its back on a once beloved peacenik.

Dubai's police chief's announcement Monday that Canada is covering up its arrest of a suspect in Israel's assassination of Palestinian leader Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in the UAE in January merely confirms the world's distrust.

Canada has served on the SC many times in the past, once each decade since the 1950s, and was never refused when it ran for a seat. It carved out a highly respected role: the good cop to its southern neighbour's bad cop. It refused to break relations with Cuba after the 1959 revolution, refused to send troops to Vietnam (unlike another privileged ex-British colony Australia), recognised China in 1970, and refused to send troops to Iraq in 2003 despite intense pressure from US president George Bush.

One of Canada's finest moments was Lester Pearson's Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for negotiating the withdrawal from Egypt's Sinai of Israeli troops, replaced by UN peacekeepers, including, yes, Canadians. Israel killed the 14 UN soldiers caught there during its invasion of Sinai in 1967, though that did not prompt Pearson to return his prize for helping create a no man's land that proved to be easy prey for the Israelis.

How did the present sorry state of affairs come to pass? Canadian Conservatives from the days of Confederation in 1867 until relatively recently stood for an independent Canada, and old-time Conservatives today are as shocked as anyone. The only arguably great Conservative leader since Confederation, John Diefenbaker, refused to station US nuclear weapons on Canadian soil, defying a furious US president Kennedy.

But the old Progressive Conservative Party was hijacked in 2003 by predominantly small-town right-wingers, boosted by the rising evangelical Christian movement, a repeat of what happened to the US Republican Party in the 1990s. The fiasco at the UN was "the world's response to a Canadian foreign policy designed to please the most reactionary, short-sighted sectors of the Conservative Party's base — evangelical Christian Zionists, extreme

right-wing Jews, Islamophobes, the military-industrial-academic-complex, mining and oil executives and old Cold-Warriors,” writes Yves Engler, author of *Canada and Israel: Building Apartheid*.

In every corner of the world, [Ottawa is now following US neocon policies](#), as if scripted in Bush’s Washington. On environment and the world economy, over the past four year Harper’s government has

- blocked former British PM Gordon Brown’s global tax on international financial transactions
- refused to recognise the human right to water
- refused to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- blocked consensus at the Rotterdam Convention to ban the toxin chrysotile asbestos
- supported the environmentally disastrous “tar sands” oil extraction project
- blocked a binding commitment on rich countries to reduce carbon emissions. It even suggested the Kyoto Protocol be scrapped at a UN climate conference session in Bangkok last year, prompting dozens of delegates to walk out in protest.

Over 3,000 Canadian mines operate in Latin America, Africa (especially the Congo), India and other unfortunate third world venues, and are far and away the world’s worst offenders in terms of environmental destruction and human rights abuses, according to the Canadian Centre for the Study of Resource Conflict, but these companies are the Conservatives’ close friends and supporters. At the G8 in June, the Conservatives used Canada’s prominence as host to call in the G8 to criticise war-wracked Congo for its meagre attempts to gain a greater share of its vast mineral wealth, which is virtually untaxed and has been stolen from under the Congolese for more than a century.

Targetting poor Congo elsewhere, Ottawa obstructed international efforts to reschedule Congo’s foreign debt, the legacy of three decades of US-backed Joseph Mobuto’s dictatorship. Canadian officials “have a problem with what’s happened with a Canadian company,” Congolese Information Minister Lambert Mende said, referring to his government’s move to revoke a Canadian mining concession acquired during the 1998-2003 war. “The Canadian government wants to use the Paris Club [of debtor nations] in order to resolve a particular problem.”

The Conservatives love the mining companies so much they have even stalled a Liberal proposal that the mining companies themselves agreed to at their Mining Association of Canada under pressure from civil society groups “to make diplomatic and financial support for resource companies operating overseas contingent upon socially responsible conduct”. The Conservatives nod and wink that it’s enough to rely on “voluntary standards” to improve Canadian mining companies’ notorious behaviour.

The relations between Harper’s Conservatives and Bush’s Republicans were so close, there was serious speculation that then-foreign minister Peter MacKay was having a love affair with his US counterpart secretary of state Condoleezza Rice. Moving on from his Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Romeo was made minister of defence in 2008, where he resolved to spend \$400 billion over 25 years to increase Canada’s armed forces in line with US-NATO demands.

In 2009, the so-called Canadian Afghan detainee abuse scandal erupted, when Canadian diplomat in Afghanistan Richard Colvin, appalled by his own complicity there in the torture

of hundreds if not thousands of innocent Afghans, [blew the whistle](#). He submitted documents to a House of Commons Committee proving both Harper and MacKay knew of the torture. Even now, Canadian Joint Task Force 2 commandos regularly take part in illegal night-time assassination raids.

The government's answer? Declare the documents top secret and dismiss parliament, just [as it did in 2008](#) when the opposition agreed to join forces and replace the minority Conservative government, as is their right in a parliamentary democracy.

"It's hard to find a [country friendlier to Israel than Canada](#) these days," chirps Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman. Stephen Harper's Conservatives

- called Israel's 2006 invasion of Lebanon a "measured response" (Two Canadian UN peacekeepers were targeted and killed by Israeli in the invasion. Harper refused to protest, asking rhetorically in parliament what they were doing there in the first place.)
- refused to condemn the invasion of Gaza in December 2008 or the siege of Gaza (the only "Nay" at the UN Human Rights Council)
- refused to condemn the Israeli murder of nine members of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in May
- opposed an attempted IAEA probe of Israel's nuclear facilities as part of an effort to create a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East.
- cut off UN humanitarian aid to Gaza because it was going through the Hamas government there.

That \$15 million for UNRWA-Gaza was not actually cancelled by Harper; it was cleverly transferred to Operation PROTEUS, a plan to train a Palestinian security force "to ensure that the Palestinian Authority maintains control of the West Bank against Hamas," according to Canadian Ambassador to Israel Jon Allen. Boasts Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Americas Peter Kent, this is the country's "second largest deployment after Afghanistan".

While Canada trains police to contain Palestinian anger, it is rapidly expanding relations with the Palestinians' colonial masters. Minister of International Trade Peter Van Loan just held talks in Tel Aviv to further expand the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement. Already robust, Canadian-Israeli trade has more than doubled since its implementation in 1997. Canada even allows goods manufactured in occupied territories by illegal settlers to be labelled "Made in Israel".

Canada and Israel signed a far-reaching public security cooperation "partnership" in 2008 to "protect their respective countries' population, assets and interests from common threats". Israel security agents now officially assist the RCMP and CSIS in profiling Canadians citizens who are Muslims and monitoring individuals and/or organisations in Canada involved in supporting the rights of Palestinians. The [barring of British MP George Galloway](#) from entering Canada in 2009 was surely at the behest of now official Mossad advisers.

Not only did Congo get a drubbing at the G8 in Toronto this June, so did Iran. Kent told his confreres, "It's a matter of timing and it's a matter of how long we can wait without taking more serious pre-emptive action." Read: Off with their heads! "An attack on Israel would be considered an attack on Canada." Read: Canada is a province of Israel. Canadian naval vessels are already "exercising" off Iran's coast, waiting for the fun to begin.

Harper and MacKay have hosted NATO Arctic war games aimed at the "aggressive" Russians, and announced plans to spend \$9 billion to buy F-35 joint strike "stealth" fighter jets to "meet the threats of the 21st century".

The militarisation of Canadian foreign policy extends from the Arctic to earthquake-wracked Haiti, which got 2,000 Canadian troops within hours, bumping several Heavy Urban Search Rescue Teams, which were left behind. Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon later explained that the teams were not needed. Canada was part of the coup that overthrew and exiled Haiti's elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, and the Conservatives happily support the ban on his political party Fanmi Lavalits in upcoming elections. Similar to its policy in Palestine, Ottawa is spending tens of millions of dollars to train Haitian prison guards and police.

Like its policy in Haiti, Ottawa implicitly supported the coup against left-leaning Honduran president Manuel Zelaya in 2009 and continues to provide aid and train its military. Canada was the only country that did not explicitly call for Zelaya's return to power — even Obama did that much.

"Americas" Foreign Minister Kent's kudos are for Colombia and his criticism is aimed at Venezuela: "Democratic space within Venezuela has been shrinking and in this election year, Canada is very concerned about the rights of all Venezuelans to participate in the democratic process." Venezuela's Ambassador to the Organisation of American States Roy Matos was nonplussed: "I am talking of a Canada governed by an ultra right that closed its parliament for months to evade an investigation over the violation of human rights — I am talking about torture and assassinations by its soldiers in Afghanistan."

I need not continue this sad litany. If you want to know Harper's position on any foreign policy issue, just ask: "What would Bush say?" or in the case of MacKay, "What would Condie say?" Of course, even before this neocon rape of Canada's body politic, Canadian foreign policy never really strayed very far into the woods. The Pearson legacy of "humanitarian imperialism" endures in his Liberal successors Trudeau, Chretien and now Michael Ignatieff, though the latter, as an American scholar and supporter of the Iraq invasion, is surely pushing the limits.

It's not even clear that Harper gave a hoot about the UNSC seat. Was there any soul-searching after the defeat? Perhaps a belated acknowledgment that Canada has veered just a tad from its purported role as everyone's favourite peacenik? No. Instead, the Conservatives attacked stuffed-shirt Ignatieff for scuttling the bid with his criticisms of "Canadian" foreign policy, though no one at the UN needed any prompting, and there is absolutely nothing "Canadian" about what Harper's neocon crew are up to.

Israeli-American analyst Israel Matzav laments, "Canada's candidacy was voted down because of its close relations with Israel." Perhaps Matzav, Harper and the like should smell the coffee percolating around the world these days. Israeli colonialism and US neocolonialism are increasingly out of favour, at last.

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