

# A FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA FOR CANADA

Michael Ignatieff, the award-winning author, historian and Carr Professor of Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, in March presented the annual O.D. Skelton Memorial Lecture at Foreign Affairs Canada. His address was entitled *Peace, Order and Good Government: A Foreign Policy Agenda for Canada*. The following are excerpts.

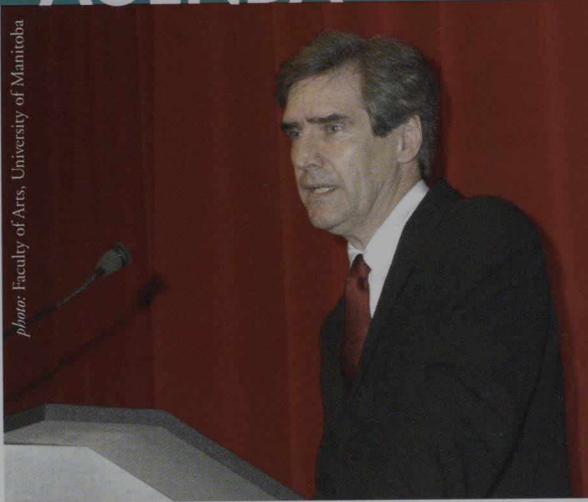


photo: Faculty of Arts, University of Manitoba

Professor Michael Ignatieff: Every country has to focus on what it does best.

For better—and sometimes for worse—peace, order and good government, and the institutions that anchor this creed in our national life, have been the guarantor of our national independence and our national distinctiveness. The success of this creed makes our country one of the most sought-after destinations for migration in the world. Our capacity to resolve our conflicts peacefully means that we have survived where many other multinational, multi-ethnic, regionalized societies have failed. For all our justified concerns about corruption in government, by the standards of Transparency International, Canada remains one of the best governed countries in the world. Our commitment to human rights, tolerance and diversity is not abstract and it is not optional: given how diverse we have become, it is the very condition of our survival as a distinct people. These ideas—peace, order and good government—are not just a cluster of values. They define our national interest. They are the precondition of our national independence.

If this way of reading our national interest and our values is correct, what are the implications for the public policy of our country overseas? How should these values and interests drive our engagement with the external world?

To answer this question, we need to identify the global trends that most deeply impinge upon our interests as a country and to specify the particular skills we can bring to the solution of the problems that threaten peace, order and good government in the world at large.

Every country has to focus on what it does best, where its comparative advantage lies. My suggestion is that Canada needs to do something about the long-standing—but

now decisive—crisis in state order that is sweeping the world, undermining peace, order and good government in as many as 30 of the world's states.

As long as ordinary people are misruled—whether in states collapsing into chaos or rigidifying into tyranny—they cannot benefit from globalization, technology, science and progress. Without states that work—states that deliver real security and real services to their people—the promise of globalization will remain a cruel sham. Without capable states, global governance is a fiction.

If this diagnosis of the vital security challenge before Canada is correct, then what policies do we need to develop to meet it?

The focus of our foreign policy should be to consolidate peace, order and good government as the *sine qua non* for stable states, enduring democracy and equitable development. Other countries will always have larger development budgets than we do, but few countries know as much as we do about the intimate causal relation between good government and good development. Just as other nations—like the Norwegians—have specialized in peace-making, through the Oslo process and the Sri Lankan processes, so we should specialize in a policy framework that brings all our “governance” activity together in a single powerful program of action.

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