

Why was an unlikely coalition of NGOs, humanitarian organizations and non-major powers able to advance the agenda so significantly in an area seen, until recently, as a backwater of disarmament efforts? The answer, I believe, lies in the growing importance of 'soft power' internationally.

As you are probably aware, Joseph Nye used this term at the start of the decade to define an increasingly important aspect of the conduct of international relations in a globalized, integrated world - the power to co-opt, rather than coerce, others to your agenda and goals. In Nye's view, military and economic power, while still important, did not have the overwhelming pre-eminence they once had. Instead, the ability to communicate, negotiate, mobilize opinion, work within multilateral bodies and promote international initiatives was increasingly effective in achieving international outcomes.

Soft power is particularly useful in addressing the many pressing problems that do not pit one state against another, but rather a group of states against some transnational threat to human security. When there is mutual benefit to finding a solution, skills in coalition-building become increasingly important. This was the case in the landmines campaign, where major exporters and major users worked together to establish a new international norm that stigmatized these weapons.

Mr. Axworthy went on to argue the same rationale and the same approach for the International Criminal Court.

At the Rome Conference, Canada continued to play a key role. Philippe Kirsch, a seasoned Canadian diplomat was elected chair of the committee of the whole. Throughout the five weeks, he worked long hours to forge a text which would attract majority approval, without sacrificing the key principles essential for an effective court.

On Friday, July 17 he put a final draft to the conference and to everyone's surprise it was approved by a vote of 120 to 7, with France and Russia finally on side, but with the U.S., China and a few others opposed. Canada's team of Kirsch, Alan Kessel, John Holmes, Dom Perigoff, and Daryl Robinson played an outstanding role and, of course, the Minister was a key figure throughout. The next challenge is to get the required 60 ratifications and to draft the rules of evidence and procedure. Our Centre and the international coalition will be active in this phase as well - and hopefully will continue to work with the Canadian government in accordance with their policy of "human security and soft power."

It is understood, however, that Canada will only make a difference if there is a strong constituency in Canada supporting international human rights, which lobbies the Canadian government to take strong positions at the UN and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, it is my observation that such a constituency in Canada has declined over the last ten years. I was absolutely shocked during the federal election last year when there was absolutely no mention of any foreign policy question, including international human rights during the televised leaders' debates: no remarks by the leaders, and no questions from the journalists or the audience, in either the English or the French debate.