

Canada should endorse and actively champion the principle that it is only by unequivocally and consistently embracing the full range of universal human rights standards that governments will provide true and sustainable security for their people.

– Dialogue participant

Dialogue respondents strongly urge that the security of individuals as well as states should be an ongoing priority of Canadian foreign policy. They recognize that Canada already has a significant international record in human security, notably through the campaigns for a ban on antipersonnel landmines and for the creation of the International Criminal Court. A broad conception of security as a human-centred protection of basic rights resonates strongly with Canadians, and respondents often urge Canada to act vigorously in the cause of international human rights and democratic freedoms. They also emphasize that the security needs and rights of women and children must be given special attention.

Many contributors stress that the defence of human security and rights should go beyond civil and political protections (peacekeeping forces, police, etc.) to address underlying socio-economic, cultural, environmental and other conditions associated with serious rights violations and violent instability in some regions of the world. There is broad support for Canada to be active in helping to bring about the development of stable democratic civil societies.

Relations with the United States

Canada is dependent on our closest ally, and yes these strong ties should be maintained.

Canada must, however, remain true to the values and beliefs of its own people.

– Dialogue participant

Most Dialogue participants recognize that our relations with the United States are a fundamental foreign policy priority in virtue of our geography and the

countless social, economic and security ties binding our countries. Views diverge on the extent to which Canada should support U.S. positions internationally or chart a more distinctly Canadian course. Views also diverge on how much “margin of manoeuvre” is needed to maintain our sovereign capacity for choice—though Canada’s choices should not be defined either as simply following U.S. policies or diverging out of a specious independence.

Most participants recognize that our two countries share many cooperative goals within and beyond North America, and there are many occasions when our two countries’ values and interests coincide; but there are some issues (examples frequently cited were the Kyoto Accord and the International Criminal Court) on which Canada must set its own course. Many contributors express confidence that the close Canada-U.S. relationship can cope with occasional disputes or strains as long as differences are clearly and respectfully presented; this point is especially emphasized by private-sector and provincial government respondents, who express concerns about economic access and security issues.

Some participants raise concerns about the degree of Canada’s dependence on U.S. markets, and about military and other aspects of continental integration. Others argue that Canada should use its geographic position to build a North American partnership that can be an influential asset in wider aspects of international relations.

Effective Multilateralism and Governance

Canadians, in orientation, as well as increasingly in demographics, are internationalists. ... it is essential that Canada work with others to enhance multilateral frameworks and institutions, both contributing energetically to the further development of global norms and investing in renewed institutions. The first priority is to restore the credibility and effectiveness of the UN and its agencies.

– Dialogue participant