

"Input" of foreign policy to immigration equation

By Constantine Passaris

Immigration has always been a topic of considerable debate and controversy in Canada. There is no doubt that the flow of people from one country to another is a field of enquiry that encompasses numerous aspects and consequences. Little time and effort have been spent, however, in analyzing the multitude of political, social, cultural, psychological and demographic considerations that have been and will continue to be an integral part of the immigration equation. One such evaluative impasse has been and continues to be the powerlessness of national reviews on immigration policy to wrestle with the political ramifications of this important debate. Seldom have the implications of Canada's immigration policy been discussed within the broader framework of the political cosmos. The correlation that exists between Canada's foreign policy and the course of its immigration policy appears to have been totally neglected. It would appear a paramount issue for consideration, therefore, that Canada's external relations and its stature as a prominent member of the international community of nations be brought into a proper perspective when discussing the full impact of a certain course of immigration policy. Although this endeavour will prove to be like sailing over uncharted waters, it is these international consequences of Canadian immigration policy that I intend to discuss in the ensuing pages.

It seems to me that any serious consideration of the pertinent immigration issues should encompass the domain of foreign policy. An analysis of Canada's current foreign policy would, therefore be, most appropriate. Canada's foreign policy derives its validity from the degree of its relevance to contemporary national interests and objectives. In this regard, foreign policy is expected to conform with the principal national goals set by the Federal Government. Currently, these goals are: (1) that Canada continues as an independent political entity; (2) that Canadians reap the benefits of enhanced

prosperity, broadly defined; and (3) that the Canadian identity and purpose are preserved through an enriched life, with a positive contribution to humanity at large.

Internal policies

One crucial element in the interdependence of national interests and objectives with foreign policy considerations is the degree to which Canada's international relations may be affected by the pursuit of shortsighted internal policies. In terms of immigration policy, this cause and effect consequence is not readily observable at first glance. On closer examination, however, one finds that, although the multifaceted immigration question may appear to have direct internal political, economic and social considerations, there are also direct repercussions from Canada's international obligations and its image and credibility within the international community of nations.

Three aspects of Canadian foreign policy that appear to be directly relevant to the immigration question remain obscure in the current national review. Such aspects of foreign policy as global population pressures, development assistance, the "brain drain" and refugee policy remain unexamined in any depth or rigour. Furthermore, the Green Paper on immigration and population and the subsequent report on immigration by the Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on Immigration only fleetingly discuss these important areas of immigration policy as they affect Canada's international obligations.

Immigration can affect international credibility

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