

***Gendered Discourses, Gendered Practices:  
Feminists (Re)Write Canadian Foreign Policy Roundtable***

A report for the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

Claire Turenne Sjolander (University of Ottawa)  
Heather Smith (University of Northern British Columbia)  
Deborah Stienstra (University of Winnipeg)

"A humane world where people can live in security and dignity, free from poverty and despair, is still a dream for many but should be enjoyed by all. In such a world, every individual would be guaranteed freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to develop fully their human potential.

Building human security is essential to achieving this goal. In essence, human security means freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety or even their lives. Human security has become both a new measure of global security and a new agenda for global action."<sup>1</sup>

Canadian foreign policy increasingly appears to be driven by these moral pronouncements, heralding a brave new world of peace and security for all. Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy's rhetorical obsessions with human security, soft power, and capacity building suggest a new, more inclusive and people-focussed foreign policy. International crusades, from the ban on anti-personnel landmines to the creation of an International Criminal Court, from a campaign against the transfer of small arms to the protection of children, are at the heart of this new, more humane, foreign policy agenda.

But who constitutes the "human" in this more humane agenda? Axworthy's claims to motherhood and apple pie notwithstanding, the human security agenda and all that is related to it continues to be defined by (mostly masculinist) state constructs. This research collection seeks to deconstruct the gendered nature of discourse on and about Canadian foreign policy. In so doing, it asks the fundamental question of what constitutes foreign policy as *policy*. What makes foreign policy "different" from other policy spheres? How do definitions of what is deemed to be foreign policy-*relevant* keep gender / women out of analyses? Why should feminists bother with the study of Canadian foreign policy at all, given its inherently statist and institutionalist biases?

With these questions as a backdrop, round table participants met twice -- in Winnipeg in May 2000, and in Quebec City in July, 2000. The goal of the roundtable was to discuss how to

---

<sup>1</sup>Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *News Release* No. 117, May 20, 1999 ("A perspective on human security" -- Chairman's summary, Lysøen, Norway, 20 May 1999).