



The SPP and war

Endorsing U.S. foreign policy and fighting U.S. wars

The Security and Prosperity Partnership commits Canada to even closer foreign policy integration with the U.S. At the launch of the SPP in 2005, leaders said they wanted to, “establish a common approach to security to protect North America from external threats.” A common approach to external threats clearly requires a common perception of those threats, and eventually a common response. In the U.S., that response has been to fight illegal wars abroad and to scale back civil liberties at home. Not surprisingly, in light of the SPP and other post-9/11 efforts to harmonize U.S. and Canadian security priorities, this is also becoming the Canadian model – despite overwhelming public hostility to U.S. foreign policy.

Afghanistan: “retribution” for 9/11

Current support for the war in Afghanistan hinges on the notion that Canada is there to provide aid and help to rebuild a shattered country. But we must not forget that Canada joined the U.S. attack on Afghanistan (dubbed “Enduring Freedom”) in 2002 for very different reasons. “After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington, Canada made a significant military commitment to the campaign against terrorism to *demonstrate solidarity with our allies* and our resolve to improve international security,” claimed the Canadian Forces at the time (*italics ours*). Since then, Canadian officials have plugged this war-fighting commitment in an effort to gain respect in Washington. Just this year, Defence Minister Gordon O’Connor told Canadian soldiers that we were in Afghanistan as “retribution” for 9/11.

Getting closer to Uncle Sam

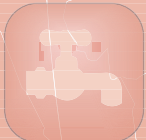
In September 2006, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) released a 2006-07 report on plans and priorities that repeatedly claimed that “greater collaboration with the United States” was strategic priority number one. Among other consequences, “greater collaboration” involves continuing to “support and encourage the United States in its indispensable role in promoting the Middle East peace process,” and balancing “American priorities with traditional Canadian foreign policy . . . in dealing with the security and reconstruction needs of Iraq and the challenge posed by Iran.” Not surprisingly, despite Canadian public opinion being split on the issue, Prime Minister Harper was the most outspoken supporter of Israel in its 2006 bombing of Lebanon and continues to toe the U.S. line on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The corporate lobby and military integration

The 2006-07 DFAIT report on plans and priorities clearly shows that Canada is making significant changes to its foreign and military policy in order to secure its trading relationship with the United States. This is exactly the kind of trade-off the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE)—architects of the SPP in Canada—has been plugging for the past four years. Even DFAIT’s report acknowledges this. Based on a University of Ottawa study from October 2005, the report says, “83 per cent [of Canadians] said the Canadian government should pursue an independent foreign policy, even if this leads to problems with the United States.” It’s no wonder the government is keeping quiet about the SPP in light of such obvious opposition to the agenda behind it.

An end to peacekeeping

The military component of Canada’s closer relationship with the U.S. is outlined in an October 2006 report commissioned by the Council of Canadians called *Marching Orders: How Canada abandoned peacekeeping – and why the UN needs us now more than ever*. Author Steven Staples explains how the transformation



of Canada's military began under the previous Liberal government but has sped up under the Conservatives. Military and government officials are working hard to convince Canadians that there is no longer a need for peacekeepers today, and that Canada is best served, in the words of our current ambassador to the U.S. Michael Wilson, as "an active contributor and partner in the war on terror, particularly with our activities in Afghanistan."

Spending billions on U.S. war technology

More proof of this military move toward total Canada-U.S. alignment surfaced in a December 4, 2006 *National Post* article on Canada's Defence Capability Plan for the next 20 years. The plan states "that the United States will remain our principal defence and security partner," even if "no large-scale conventional military threat to Canada currently exists." Despite a lack of any major threat, according to the *Post*, our government is spending billions of dollars on new heavy military machinery, most of it from U.S. companies, in order to remain a key player in the U.S.-led "war on terror."

A "legal black hole"

At home in the U.S., the "war on terror" has meant a scaling back of civil liberties. The U.S. Military Commissions Act of 2006 strips all non-U.S. citizens, including Canadians, of their constitutional right to a fair trial. It grants the U.S. president the authority to detain non-citizens indefinitely, without charge, and "to interpret the meaning and application of the Geneva Conventions" as they relate to torture. The Act also "allows detainees to be sentenced to death based on testimony literally beaten out of witnesses [and] grants officials in the Bush Administration a retroactive 'get out of jail free' card for war crimes," according to the American Civil Liberties Union. Unlike other U.S. allies, Canada has refused to condemn the Military Commissions Act or the Guantanamo Bay prison, which critics have called a "legal black hole." Such silence in the face of moral abuses is a price of deep integration and partnerships like the SPP.

We need an independent foreign policy

Fighting illegal wars abroad based on "retribution" and scaling back rights at home: are these the kinds of policies Canadians want their own government to adopt? Not according to most polls. But despite public opinion, our government is forging ahead with a Security and Prosperity Partnership agenda that encourages a common North American foreign policy.

The Council of Canadians believes that Canada must move away from its increasingly uncritical support for and integration with U.S. foreign and military policies and reclaim the valued role of an independent, middle power committed to UN-sanctioned peacekeeping. As a first step, we are therefore calling for the immediate, safe and orderly withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan and a return to Canada fulfilling its traditional international role of peacekeeper. Only as a promoter of peace and an upholder of peacekeeping can we hope to perform the constructive, independent role required of us in the world.

Are you concerned about the SPP? Visit www.canadians.org, or phone us at 1-800-387-7177, for more information on what you can do to fight deep integration.