



*True North In Canadian Public Policy*

# Commentary

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## What's a Middle Power to Do? Protecting What Matters in a Dangerous World

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I'd like to begin with a story. It has the merit of being a true story, but it is also a parable about the values that alone can ensure that the middle powers of the democratic world can and will protect their precious heritage.

The story came to me from a good friend who was brought as a young child from Holland, the country of his birth, to live in Canada. The story is of how his family chose to come to my country.

The liberation of the Netherlands from Nazi occupation was a job that fell to the Canadian forces in the Second World War. This job was carried out with typical Canadian effectiveness and self-effacement. The losses were considerable.

My friend's father was walking down the road not long after the Nazis were driven from Holland, and the sacrifices of Canada and its troops on behalf of that country were still fresh in his mind. Walking down the road in the opposite direction came a Canadian soldier. The Dutchman stopped the soldier and said, "You don't know me and I don't know you, but I know who you are and what you represent. You and your fellow Canadians came from across the Atlantic, from far away, knowing nothing of my country and having little at stake here. At great expense in blood and treasure you have freed us from cruel oppression, and I imagine

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you have lost friends and colleagues in the effort. The least I can do is to tell you how deeply grateful my fellow countrymen and I are for what you have done for us.”

According to my friend’s father, the Canadian just looked at him quite calmly, smiled, and said, “No need to thank me, sir. We had a job to do and we did it.” Then the soldier saluted and carried on down the road.

Apparently my friend’s father arrived home and announced to the family, “I think we have found the country where we must go to live.” My friend is now a distinguished member of the Canadian Parliament.

Now, please remember that this story might just as easily have been told by a Korean during the conflict in Korea and that Canadian soldier could just as easily have been my father in either case, since he served in both wars. This anonymous Canadian might almost have been quoting one of the great wartime leaders of the Argylls, the regiment of martyred Corporal Nathan Cirillo, who said his work was “to save lives, get a job done.” Talk about typical Canadian understatement.

Let me next deal with the issue of what I believe are the foundational values which shape beyond all doubt the character of Canada, a middle democratic power,<sup>1</sup> values whose integrity and defence are, I believe, what unites the countries of the Western alliance, an alliance which includes Korea, as well as Canada, the NATO countries, Japan, and several others around the globe.

We have a tendency, among friends in the international community, to invoke commonality of values at the drop of a hat. But do the common values that allegedly unite us exist outside of the pretty rhetoric of diplomatic speeches? I believe that they do, but that these values are not self-evident, nor easily described or understood. They certainly are not eternal verities, but are fragile human achievements that must be nurtured and protected; they are not unchangeable facts about the world.

Let me say at the outset that when we talk about these values as worth preserving and nurturing, we clearly mean something more than that we can and should trade with one another. After all, the language of trade agreements is one that can and does apply to our respective relationships with China and the other BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, and India), for example, at least as much as it does to our relationship with each other. I’d even argue that the economic imperative to trade with fast-growing developing countries is perhaps greater than to trade with mature, developed democracies, however much we should welcome the recent trade agreement negotiated with the EU. There is little difference between talking about free-trade between Canada and China or Canada and Korea or Canada and India. We have the same interest in creating stability and safety in global financial institutions based in Shanghai and Mumbai as we do for such institutions based in London, New York, or Frankfurt. So this is not what the shared values of democratic middle powers is really about, or else the diplomatic, economic, social, cultural, and military commitment that has traditionally bound us together in the postwar period is in deep trouble.

We’ve often heard that the relationship of shared values is based on freedom and democracy, but surely while this is closer to the truth, it doesn’t get us the whole way there. Hugo Chavez was democratically elected. The Castros think they have “freed” Cubans from US domination. The Iranian revolution served to “free” Iranians to live according to God’s law as revealed to Mohammed and as interpreted by a theocracy. These people all have the mere form of democracy and freedom; they do not have its precious essence.

We believe in a special kind of democracy, where even the will of the majority is bound by laws and rules. We believe, in other words, that even majorities may be wrong and there are certain things majorities ought not to be allowed to do, such as oppress minorities. This means that constitutionalism and the rule of law are an integral part of the values that should unite us.

We believe in the supremacy of the individual, so that collective freedoms, such as freedom from Yankee domination or capitalist exploitation or want or sin cannot replace or substitute for freedom of conscience, association, thought, and action. We believe in freedom, not just for itself, but because *freedom is the indispensable condition of the fully human life*, in which we make choices for ourselves based on our own beliefs, experiences, and priorities, not on those of dictators, mullahs, caudillos, or even benevolent bureaucrats. Freedom is the essential means to the full flowering of the individual, to living a life of dignity and worth, and that is the highest good at which society can aim.

Note, in passing, that this view holds that freedom is more valuable than prosperity. It's not that we are opposed to prosperity, and indeed we have an empirically well-grounded claim for thinking that freedom promotes prosperity compared to less free societies in the long run. But we do not believe that freedom and prosperity are denominated in a common currency and therefore we do not believe that an increase in prosperity compensates you for a loss of freedom. A loss of freedom leaves you less free, full stop. Now I think it is a matter of empirical fact that freedom also confers prosperity and that this is not a trade-off that we are required to make. On the contrary, it is my view that the default position of humanity is not prosperity, but poverty, and that therefore what needs to be explained is not why some people are poor, but rather why anyone is prosperous. Moreover it is the countries that have achieved high levels of freedom and the rule of law and all the other things that distinguish Canada that escaped poverty first and most comprehensively and who have blazed a bright trail for others to follow. And those who have followed that trail, as I believe South Korea has done, for example, have all found that it led to this combination of freedom and prosperity which we enjoy and that the rest of the world seeks, frequently in all the wrong places.

## Asian Values or Liberal Democracy?

Let me open a parenthesis here and look at an objection that some will raise in the face of this argument that the Western alliance represents a coming together of like-minded nations from around the world in support and defence of values that lay claim to being universal, of being fitted not just to a few societies because of their ethnic and historical connection to the Western political and philosophical tradition, but applicable to all human beings because they are the values best suited to a universal human nature.

This claim of the universal applicability and appeal of the values I've described is contested, by among others, those who argue that there is a distinctive set of Asian values. "Asian values" is a notion promoted most notably by former Singaporean prime minister Lee Kuan Yew who made the case that Western concepts of democracy and human rights were ill-suited to Asian cultures that had a more authoritarian conception that was equally valid and perhaps even more successful. One of the starkest statements of this philosophy came from that great political philosopher and film star Jackie Chan, who in 2009 said,<sup>2</sup>

"I'm not sure if it is good to have freedom or not," [Chan] said. "I'm really confused now. If you are too free, you are like the way Hong Kong is now. It's very chaotic. Taiwan is also chaotic." He added: "I'm gradually beginning to feel that we Chinese need to be controlled. If we are not being controlled, we'll just do what we want."

I'll mention, just by the way, that this idea of the existence of Asian values and their potential superiority to Western ones is one I encounter frequently among Western businessmen who are agog at the success China and some other authoritarian societies in Asia enjoy in pushing forward immense and ambitious projects such as the Three Gorges dam or the vast expansion of Chinese cities. In the face of big Chinese thinking and success, goes this refrain, Canada and other Western societies seem sclerotic and incapable of grand ambition. I can usually put a stop to this line of thinking by mildly observing that it is quite amazing what you can accomplish in a society that makes widespread use of firing squads.

There are many ways to refute the Asian values thesis, but I'll just mention three: 1) what Asians actually say; 2) the success of the East Asian counter-examples; and 3) the testimony of Asian leaders who reject the Asian values thesis.

Let's start with what Asians actually tell pollsters about their values and whether they conform to the wishes of their authoritarian rulers or reflect their aspiration to join the ranks of societies that protect and nurture the individual and operate under the rule of law.<sup>3</sup> According to one exhaustive survey of values, with polling that includes East Asia as well as many democracies on the Pacific Rim and in Europe:

In summary, in contrast to the previous claims that East Asian political cultures lean toward authoritarian regime forms, the emerging consensus from cross-national survey research is that democratic aspirations are widely endorsed across contemporary East Asia – even in several non-democracies . . .

Later the authors conclude their article by saying:

Our research should, at the least, contribute empirical evidence to other criticisms of the 'Asian values' thesis, which claims that Confucian traditions and the resulting social authority relations are a significant impediment to democratization in Asia. [The many opinion samples we have reviewed here] point to a pattern of social authority norms in East Asia that is not dramatically different from the established Western democracies of the Pacific Rim (or Europe). Moreover, other recent opinion surveys in East Asia are providing evidence that supports the findings presented here. Thus, the cultural explanation for the place of Asia and, more specifically, countries with a Confucian tradition, in current history seems to be much weaker when viewed in terms of this evidence from public opinion surveys. National levels of authority orientations within East Asia are not strongly linked to a Confucian heritage, and are not markedly different from the Western democracies of the Pacific Rim.

Let's talk now about the East Asian counter-examples that demonstrate the compatibility of Asian culture with the universalist aspirations of genuine democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. For me the obvious counter-examples are Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and Hong Kong, although there are others I could also cite, such as Mongolia, Indonesia, or the Philippines, clearly picking their way gingerly to these values despite having little historical experience of them.

Now please note that I am not saying that the transition has always been smooth or easy or without deplorable incidents and behaviours along the way. Many of these societies went through authoritarian periods, have had or continue to have unacceptable levels of corruption and so forth. Some of them, such as Korea, came into the Western orbit through historical accident, not at the outset because they aspired to appropriate for themselves the values we are discussing. But when we see the unprecedented success these societies enjoy and the speed with which they achieved that success in the postwar world, and when we see the determined embrace of liberal democracy by their people, and how increased material success has gone hand in hand with increasing liberalisation of institutions and regimes, there can be little doubt as to why authoritarian regimes want to put about the idea that these societies have somehow sold out and adopted foreign values and failed to be true to their authentic inner authoritarian.

Hong Kong in particular may deserve a moment's reflection. That city is the undeniable proof that there is nothing culturally specific about so-called Western values. Hong Kong's Chinese population prospered under the British colonial regime because that regime brought with it the rules and behaviours that, as I have insisted repeatedly, confer success on people. Yes, when the British left they had not yet achieved full

democracy, but they were on their way there and had achieved almost all of the other allied values that underpin the success I am referring to: the rule of law, non-corrupt judiciary, stability of property, non-arbitrary rule, widespread and respected civil liberties, and all the rest. And the demonstrations in Hong Kong in support of the extension of democracy, demonstrations led chiefly by young Chinese, show clearly where the city's residents believe the future lies.

With regard to the testimony of Asian leaders on the Asian values question, I don't have space for a full survey but think it most appropriate in this context to quote former Korean president Kim Dae-jung. President Kim was the recipient of the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize and was graced in his lifetime with the accolade of "Asia's Nelson Mandela" for his longstanding opposition to authoritarian rule and his Sunshine Policy toward North Korea. In a rebuttal to Lee Kuan Yew's defence of authoritarianism published in *Foreign Affairs* magazine in 1994,<sup>4</sup> President Kim, after celebrating the fact that there were more genuine democracies in Asia than the world average, writes:

Asia should lose no time in firmly establishing democracy and strengthening human rights. The biggest obstacle is not its cultural heritage but the resistance of authoritarian rulers and their apologists. Asia has much to offer the rest of the world; its rich heritage of democracy-oriented philosophies and traditions can make a significant contribution to the evolution of global democracy. Culture is not necessarily our destiny. Democracy is.

## Sacrificing for What Matters

I have now spent a great deal of time talking about the values that characterize the societies of the Western alliance domestically, how we organize ourselves and the kinds of institutions and behaviours that mark us out as distinct from our opponents and competitors around the world. But there is another value which I have so far set aside and which I want now to weave into the discussion because it is the one that makes our values relevant not only for each of us in our separate national lives, but is the key one that makes us an effective force for the defence, preservation, and spreading of those values to all those who wish to adopt them. It is the value that is essential to the Western alliance forming not merely a group of like-minded countries, not merely a trading bloc, not merely countries that look a lot like each other in the cold grey dawn, but countries that form a moral community, a value whose essence is summed up for me in the story I related at the beginning of this piece, a value to which we now turn.

That is the value of self-sacrifice, the belief that because individual liberty and responsibility for self is the highest good, and because limited government and constitutional democracy and the rule of law are the essential means to those ends, that we are all prepared to make sacrifices in order to preserve and protect that good and those institutions. As Prime Minister Stephen Harper so movingly remarked in his funeral oration for Corporal Cirillo, "Corporal Cirillo knew what all those men and women who died before him [in the service of Canada] also knew. The only values really worth living for are those worth dying for." Moreover we are not content merely to protect them for ourselves here in Canada, but we are prepared to do what we can to ensure that those who yearn for freedom shall not see it wrenched away by freedom's opponents.

Thus it was that when Europe was engulfed by Nazism and Fascism, the entire democratic world – Britain, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and others – rose up and, at great cost to themselves, rescued Europe, to the wonderment of my friend's father. Thus it was when the Soviet Union threatened all the values I've described that link the liberal democracies, politicians like former trade union leader Ernest Bevin in the UK convinced his former members that they needed to sacrifice, through higher defence spending, a nuclear deterrent, and membership in NATO. Thus it was that Canada and the US, among many others, rallied to the defence of South Korea when Russia and its proxy China tried to invade the south in defiance of the postwar status quo. Thus it was that Canada and the US put military bases in Germany for the sole purpose of guaranteeing that if Soviet

tanks rolled into Western Europe, they could not advance without attacking our two countries as well. We put ourselves intentionally in harm's way as a sacrifice to protect shared values. Thus it was that, decades later, a number of Western European leaders made big political sacrifices in order to support US policy in Europe designed to turn the heat up on the USSR, such as the stationing of cruise missiles, policies that ultimately resulted in the failure of that society and a vast expansion of human freedom.

Note that most of this was not the "military solution" that US President Barack Obama so reviles. But note too that it was a solution that depended unequivocally on a demonstrated willingness to use the military solution when all else fails. Red lines, and the willingness to enforce them, were key. I'll come back to red lines in a moment.

## **Is the World a Dangerous Place?**

For now, remembering that splendid legacy of sacrifice in the name of our values, brings us, at long last, to the central issue of this piece: how do Canada, as a middle power, and other similar liberal-democratic middle powers, protect ourselves from those who wish us ill, who believe that our way of life is an affront to their ambitions and most cherished beliefs, while not ourselves damaging or endangering the very things that we wish to protect?

Perhaps the first question I need to address here is whether in fact the world *is* a dangerous place, as the title of this article claims, and particularly a dangerous place for our liberal-democratic values.

I don't think that it takes much imagination to see the dangers that lie in wait for us, whether it is the nuclear proliferation threatened by rogue states, or the slaughter of innocents in the Middle East, or China's ban of exports of rare earths, a dagger aimed at the industrial heart of several Western-allied nations in East Asia, or China's effort to achieve regional dominance in the waters of East Asia after centuries of freedom of the seas guaranteed first by Britain and now by the US, or many other threats I could mention.

Let me focus for a moment on just one of these threats: the re-emergence of Russia, not as a Communist power, but as a self-conscious re-invention of itself as a geo-political polar opposite to the US. Russia has been deeply offended by its loss of prestige in the world, and especially in the eyes of its old adversary, the United States. When President Obama told Russians that he regarded them as a mere "regional power," they realized that they were now humiliatingly seen as a kind of Brazil with ageing nukes.

President Vladimir Putin has, with infinite cunning and forethought, used Russians' deep patriotism as the foundation of a military and diplomatic resurgence. Unrestrained by mere considerations of democracy or the rule of law, he has used the US's and the West's current weakness and vacillation against it by bold and imaginative strokes: seizing the initiative in Syria, frightening NATO from extending itself to Georgia and Ukraine, grabbing Crimea, igniting an explosive regional conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and using its natural gas as a bludgeon against countries unwise enough to become dependent on it.

Nor do they have just the US in their sights. They continue to occupy pieces of Georgia and Moldova and while they may not actually annex parts of Eastern Ukraine, they have effectively guaranteed that a country that had been about to move firmly into the Western orbit will now spend years as a conflict-riven disaster zone. The pressure on former member-states of the USSR to join Russian-dominated clubs like the Commonwealth of Independent States is relentless.

Russia is thus once again posing to the West the issue of the sacrifices we can and should be prepared to make to protect fundamental values like freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. It doesn't matter that Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia are places many of us would be hard-pressed to find on the map, although it is undeniably

true that our interests prevent us from putting everything on the line in defence of small isolated players as yet uncommitted or only marginally committed to our values when Russia appears prepared to put everything on the line. The point is that every success for Russia in its aggressive expansionist policies is an incitement for them to up the pressure yet further. Moreover the world's other bullies are watching closely and are encouraged in their own aggression by the success they see flowing from Russia's belligerency.

That does not mean, of course, that every problem must be met with a military solution. As I've already suggested, the military solution is almost never necessary when your level of resolve demonstrates that it will be used if less dangerous measures do not produce the desired result. We must be prepared to sacrifice some energy security and some business in order to take vigorous economic and diplomatic steps to punish Russian aggression, for example, including painful and effective sanctions. We must be prepared to face down Russian displeasure and welcome countries like Ukraine into the Western orbit. Remember it was Ukraine's clear desire to sign an association agreement with the EU, and to cement its progress toward the West, that unleashed Russia's reprehensible behaviour. We must be prepared to withstand Chinese displeasure over rules on investment in natural resources or our criticism of its human rights record. And when necessary we must be prepared to take military action against those, such as ISIS, who refuse to recognize the most basic constraints on their behaviour and decimate innocents.

## The Indispensable Nation

Now we come to the United States, the indispensable nation. It is indispensable in this context because among the postwar community of like-minded nations that I have been discussing, the US has been the reliable provider of the intellectual and political leadership and the military might necessary to rally those countries to action in the face of threats. US leadership of what we used to call the free world was simply a given and it was based on a bipartisan commitment in Washington. In fact it was the Republicans that had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, out of a Fortress America isolationism, by a Democratic Party that took the US into the Second World War and helped to create the postwar institutions such as NATO, the UN, the World Bank, and others that promised a world safe for liberal democracy.

One of the most articulate defenders of that role was Democratic President John F. Kennedy. Under Kennedy, whatever his flaws, we saw on the international stage the deployment of US power in pursuit of the best of US values.

In his inaugural speech Kennedy committed the US to a stance whose power still reverberates down the years: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

He meant what he said. Like it or not, he stood firm against Soviet intimidation in Europe and Vietnam. He took the world to the brink of nuclear war to stare down Nikita Khrushchev over the Cuban missile crisis. He laid down markers about the kind of behaviour that was compatible with peace and prosperity in the world and held to account regimes that failed those tests, including militarily where necessary.

I am sorry to report that under President Obama things could hardly be more different. Today the US seeks no burden and accepts little responsibility, and its status as a global superpower dwindles daily from disuse. Its president is largely unwilling to exercise that power to hold the world's villains in check and far too willing to dismiss the work and sacrifice of allies if he can ingratiate himself with those who are hostile to US interests.

The examples are legion, ranging from his shameful treatment of Poland and the Czech Republic over anti-missile defence to his unseemly haste to extricate himself prematurely even from the "good" war he himself declared Afghanistan to be. Tehran's duplicitous mullahs are today almost certainly playing him for a fool over their nuclear ambitions. Putin outmanoeuvred Obama on Crimea and then Ukraine.

But one of the most dangerous and egregious examples is what happened in Syria.

Obama claims that US diplomacy triumphed over the issue of the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. He had made the regime's use of such weapons a "red line" whose crossing would bring US retribution down on Assad's head. The regime then repeatedly crossed that line and Obama prevaricated by seeking unnecessary Congressional approval for military action. When he couldn't get it (itself a scandalous failure of leadership) he fell in with a Russian plan to relieve Syria of its chemical weapons.

But the red line was not about the weapons. The red line was about the kind of behaviour that the US found acceptable in Damascus. Obama in effect warned Assad that any regime that used chemical weapons against its own civilian population put itself beyond the pale and that the US would punish lapses, by military action if need be. The mere removal of the chemical weapons is not a punishment for Assad's bad behaviour, but in effect the signalling that such bad behaviour now attracts no serious consequences. And what did Obama say about the issue in his State of the Union speech this year?

"We will continue to work with the international community to usher in the future the Syrian people deserve – a future free of dictatorship, terror, and fear." In other words, a chilling rhetorical flight of fancy totally divorced from the reality of one of the worst humanitarian disasters of our times. Dictators the world over could be heard breathing a sigh of relief. Obama even allowed Putin to manoeuvre him into a face-saving deal over chemical weapons that may have resulted in their destruction (although I am skeptical) but left President Assad completely unpunished and unrepentant for their use, while reports continue to emerge of his use of other chemical weapons such as chlorine gas.

As JFK knew, world peace and stability often hangs by US willingness to enforce many red lines. There is such a line between the Koreas, another surrounding Israel, a third separating Japan and Taiwan from China. On one side of each such line the enemies of liberal democracy brood darkly, held in check chiefly by the fear of US retribution.

If you were on the right side of those lines under Kennedy, you knew US power was your friend. Under Obama, it is the people on the wrong side of those lines who have taken heart because the signs are increasingly clear that today's commander-in-chief believes that fine words and sentiments ought to be enough to police bad behaviour. As a direct result Japan is rearming, many Middle Eastern regimes are seeking nuclear weapons, the "good" opposition in Syria has essentially been displaced by Islamic extremists, and a resurgent Russia tweaks the US eagle's beak at every opportunity. In Iraq and Syria, in the face of ISIS's threat to civilized values and to thousands of innocents, Obama has once again responded more with fine words than with determined concerted action. According to a joke recently circulating among Kurds in the region, they couldn't tell whether the Americans were not fighting while pretending to fight – or fighting while pretending not to fight. And even though their presence has grown modestly in recent weeks, it is clear that the Obama administration's commitment remains far more rhetorical than real.

It is too early to tell whether the Obama administration's abdication of international leadership of the liberal democracies is now an enduring feature of US foreign policy or merely an aberration. The signs at the moment are equivocal. On the one hand we have the clearly expressed disquiet of US public opinion in the face of ISIS abuses and the widespread support for intervention. On the other hand the bipartisan coalition of political leaders committed to the defence of liberal democracy that included Democrats like Sam Nunn and Scoop Jackson as well as Republicans like Barry Goldwater and John McCain is a fading memory. Democrats have largely jumped ship, while one of the rising stars of Republicanism is the neo-isolationist Senator Rand Paul.

## The Free Rider Problem

Of course it is also true that the US has often, and rightly, felt that much was expected of it and not much given in return. Canada, along with many of the middle powers of the liberal democracies, has often called upon this community to take action, but been unwilling to put into it the investment in economic resolve, diplomatic commitment, domestic security arrangements, arms, and people proportionate to the benefit we derive. The US has shouldered the burden.

I have been critical of Obama's overblown rhetoric and anaemic actions, so I must be consistent and say that Canada in recent years has talked a good game but has failed to deliver. Just recently the Conference of Defence Associations rightly criticized the current government for starving the Canadian armed forces of the troops and materiel needed to be an effective fighting force. If Canada wants to see leadership from its fellow democracies and particularly the middle powers, it must itself lead by example and in so doing demonstrate to the US that those who benefit from that country's commitment to the world do so not as dependent but ungrateful vassals but rather as countries that carry their own weight in the alliance.

I suspect that as the middle powers like Canada see the US confirm its extreme reluctance to do more than talk about international security, they will do more out of self-interest in any case, as countries like Japan are doing and I suspect a lot of former Soviet vassal states such as Poland and the Baltics are also doing.

But as middle powers we need to do more to get the US to re-engage. It is, after all, *still* the indispensable nation. In that regard I note the irony of the fact that while there is an international club for just about everything – one for former members of the British Empire, one for countries that speak French or aspire to do so, one for big economies, many for the developing world – there is no club that brings together the liberal democracies in a commitment to defend themselves and to co-ordinate their efforts to protect and nurture their values as they spread to other societies across the globe. Once upon a time in the rubble of the Second World War the victorious liberal-democracies could think that was the role of the UN, but the explosion of the number of autocratic countries in the world and the institutional failure of the Security Council have long since put paid to that dream.

In the face of the Soviet threat the phrase we used was “collective security”. NATO was an effective response but today is too limited geographically and some of the members are increasingly doubtfully committed to the values of liberal democracy. Collective security is what we still need today, however much the context may have evolved. But whereas the US effortlessly provided the leadership that was needed, it may now fall to the middle powers, countries such as Canada, Australia, Japan, Britain, and others to coax the US back. We middle powers cannot achieve what needs to be done alone, but we can help to create the conditions in which the indispensable nation once more welcomes rather than resentfully resisting the responsibility that great power inevitably brings in its wake. And we need to do more to bring middle powers like India into our community of like-minded nations with which it shares so much.

My view is that the decisions ahead of us will not just be driven by what we want, or what we would do in a world that contained no threats to us. But that is not our world, and many of our actions will be driven by the threatening behaviour of others. We (by which I mean we bearers of liberal-democratic values) are constantly faced with regimes and peoples who are in absolutely no doubt about the values they embrace, and who demonstrate a willingness to make great sacrifices to preserve and promote those values at home and to project those values abroad. There are tests of strength going on all the time between our liberal-democratic world and the Russians over Ukraine or energy supplies; or with the Iranians and the North Koreans over nuclear proliferation; or with international terrorist groups over our ability and that of innocent local populations to live free from attack; or with the Chinese over currency manipulation or dominance in the Asian seas or control over natural resources around the world.

The US will continue to be the world's greatest superpower but it is undeniable that its *relative* power is receding. The prosperous industrial liberal-democratic middle powers will be vital in the years to come for no one will be able to shoulder the burden alone.

## What's at Stake for Liberal Democracy

In conclusion, let me underline yet again what the stakes are. We are not talking about free trade or open skies or sound banking regimes. Desirable as they are, we can have them with anyone. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), as desirable as it is, is only a side show. Yes, it is driven by the need for like-minded countries to set reasoned trading rules before China becomes so powerful that it can set the rules unilaterally. But the TPP rests chiefly on economic self-interest, a self-interest we share with many nations not themselves liberal democracies.

Precisely for that reason, however, they cannot form the core of the relationship that binds the liberal democracies, and in particular the liberal-democratic middle powers. Remember, there can be no trade-off between prosperity and freedom. So what will determine the worth and the longevity of the liberal-democratic world will be the extent to which it represents people willing to sacrifice for important moral values, such as freedom and personal responsibility and genuine democracy, even in the face of political opposition at home. Americans today worry that engagement with the world weakens the US at home, and so are tempted by isolationism and protectionism. Much of Europe's governing class fears the reaction of a population too dependent on the state's benevolence to answer any call to sacrifice on freedom's behalf. Many of the liberal democratic middle powers of Asia fear offending the rising power of the Chinese dragon.

When we act together we, the liberal democratic nations, are the world's hope for freedom and progress. When we go our separate ways those who do not share our values can more easily tempt us with offers of increased prosperity in exchange for compromise on foundational moral issues. It used to be that the governing class in its entirety saw this with great clarity throughout the democratic world, but that certainty has been frayed over recent years.

Can the liberal-democracies summon up this level of moral courage today in defence of their values and interests? On the answer to this question much depends. The answer is not yet no, but neither is it clearly yes. It is a resounding maybe. If we truly believe in a moral community of democracies devoted to the fullest flowering of the individual, and if we also believe that the world is full of people and regimes who do not wish that project success, then every one of us has a heavy burden of responsibility to ensure that this great project does not fail because we were not up to the task of explaining and defending it. For make no mistake: If we fail, then when the next great challenge arises to our shared moral values, there may well be no Canadian for my friend's father to meet on the road in the Netherlands.

## Endnotes

- 1 I don't propose to get into a very complicated discussion of what constitutes a "middle power". For the purposes of this article, I am implicitly assuming that there are three kinds of countries. There are superpowers characterized by major economies with international presence, significant population, major military and diplomatic capability (that they have a track record of being willing to use and can project globally, not just regionally), and nuclear weapons. The US is undeniably in this category, China is increasingly so and Russia still is but is in danger of falling out because of its economic weakness. France and Britain could be in or out of this club depending on your mood on any given day but I think are mostly out. India has nukes and military and diplomatic capacity but these are more regional than global in nature and its weak economy also contributes to making it a rising regional power that can aspire to superpowerdom but has not achieved it. The second group, the middle powers, would be mostly the members of the G20 who don't belong in the superpower category, plus a few smaller countries (New Zealand, the Scandinavian countries, and the Netherlands would be examples) with developed industrial economies and that punch above their weight in world affairs for various reasons. The third group is everybody else. I don't want to get detained by questions of who belongs in the middle power category since there will always be marginal cases about which reasonable people can disagree. The categories, however, seem to me to be generally sound. For the purposes of this *Commentary*, the only thing that matters is to establish that Canada is a middle power and that there are other middle powers with values and interests similar to Canada's. Note I do not consider the EU to be a power at all in this sense. It could conceivably become one, but that is some little way in the future.
- 2 Noah Smith, October 3, 2014, "On 'Asian Values'." Available at <http://noahpinionblog.blogspot.ca/2014/10/on-asian-values.html>, accessed on November 4th, 2014.
- 3 Russell J. Dalton and Nhu-Ngoc T. Ong, 2005, "Authority Orientations and Democratic Attitudes: A Test of the 'Asian Values' Hypothesis," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 6 (2): 1–21.
- 4 Kim Dae-jung, 1994, "Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values," *Foreign Affairs* November/December. Available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/50557/kim-dae-jung/is-culture-destiny-the-myth-of-asias-anti-democratic-values>, accessed on November 4th, 2014.

## About the Author

### BRIAN LEE CROWLEY

Brian Lee Crowley has headed up the Macdonald-Laurier Institute (MLI) in Ottawa since its inception in March of 2010, coming to the role after a long and distinguished record in the think tank world. He was the founder of the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS) in Halifax, one of the country's leading regional think tanks. He is a former Salvatori Fellow at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC and is a Senior Fellow at the Galen Institute in Washington. In addition, he advises several think tanks in Canada, France, and Nigeria.



Crowley has published numerous books, most recently *Northern Light: Lessons for America from Canada's Fiscal Fix*, which he co-authored with Robert P. Murphy and Niels Veldhuis and two bestsellers: *Fearful Symmetry: the fall and rise of Canada's founding values* (2009) and MLI's first book, *The Canadian Century; Moving Out of America's Shadow*, which he co-authored with Jason Clemens and Niels Veldhuis.

Crowley twice won the Sir Antony Fisher Award for excellence in think tank publications for his health care work and in 2011 accepted the award for a third time for MLI's book, *The Canadian Century*.

From 2006–08 Crowley was the Clifford Clark Visiting Economist with the federal Department of Finance. He has also headed the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC), and has taught politics, economics, and philosophy at various universities in Canada and Europe.

Crowley is a frequent commentator on political and economic issues across all media. He holds degrees from McGill and the London School of Economics, including a doctorate in political economy from the latter.



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- *Hill Times* says Brian Lee Crowley is one of the 100 most influential people in Ottawa.
- The *Wall Street Journal*, the *Economist*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post* and many other leading national and international publications have quoted the Institute's work.



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