

Canada's Heart of Darkness. Democracy and Civility Foregone?

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Once upon a time, Canada was able to create the illusion that it was the “peaceable kingdom”, an illusion accepted domestically and arguably by most of the rest of the world. This history has been well discredited with newer historical research outlining how Canada’s position as a “peacekeeper,” generally under UN auspices, remained effectively within the realm of U.S. foreign policy, just with a kinder gentler face.

Over the past decade, Canada has made a clear and distinct turn towards its inner ‘heart of darkness’, becoming much more overt about its right wing militarized alignment with the U.S. empire and its demands. It has done so to the extent of front-running – or trying to out do – the hubris and arrogance of the U.S. in its declamations of its self-righteousness concerning international affairs (with similar impacts on domestic affairs).

Much if not all of this is due to Canada’s (neo)Conservative government under Stephen Harper. Harper himself has declared that Canada will be a different nation when he is finished with his reign of office. Harper’s background is of a fundamentalist-dominionist Christian ideology that he himself hides reasonably well but which shows up quite frequently in his supporters and in caucus. He is determined to create a domestic order that is ruled by giving freedom to corporations, in alliance with the banksters, to do as they require to harvest the wealth of the country for their own benefit.

The two recent attacks on uniformed Canadian soldiers by ‘lone wolf’ attackers is well known at least to those attending to western media. It was the latest incident on Parliament Hill with the murder of an Honour Guard at Ottawa’s War Memorial that has created the most significant response.

The government response while rightly denouncing the violence of the actions highlights some of the double standards and the direction that the current government wants to go. Many of the comments used descriptors such as “unexpected,” “shocking,” “senseless,” and “we’ll never be the same.”

What the comments truly highlight is the ignorance of the speakers concerning Canada’s role in global affairs historically and within current events in the Middle East. Some kind of action like this was probably very much expected (otherwise, why a watch list of 90+ individuals?), and while the act of murder is a shock to those witnessing it and suffering from it, it is not a shock in the political usage of the word. Senseless, yes, for those not cognizant of the various psychological combinations of disempowerment, drugs, alienation, and religious dogma. But the ‘senselessness’ goes deeper into Canada’s changing role in world affairs.

When Harper spoke to Parliament the day after the Ottawa killing, he spoke of the support he had received from other countries, mentioning by name the UK, Australia, the U.S. and Israel. An interesting conglomeration – of settler colonial states birthed by the racist empire of the British. Perhaps this is taking it too far, but it is as only as far as Harper has gone with his more militant foreign policy.

Without qualification Harper supports Israel's ongoing use of warfare against the people of Gaza, supports the ideology of Israel's foundational myths, and supports its actions in the West Bank and Jerusalem. He supported the U.S. in their role in destroying the government of Libya, to the extent of honouring the jet fighter pilots who bombed army units and infrastructure well beyond the intent of a 'no fly zone'. He has sided with the other minions of the western powers in demonizing Putin while supporting the neo-Nazis in the Ukraine who overthrew a duly – if corrupt – elected government.

Ironically he has supported the U.S. in Syria by backing the Islamist militants trying to overthrow Assad, who have morphed into ISIS which is supported and supplied by Saudi Arabia and Qatar among other Arab countries who are our supposed allies. And these militants had morphed into shape from the U.S.' obliteration of the Iraqi state, following its lack of success in Afghanistan. Turkey, a fellow NATO ally member, has until recently allowed ISIS to beat up on the Kurds as it plays out a triple game in the region without too much concern for which militant is the good guy or the bad guy.

These are Canada's actions in the world today. Backing the U.S. in its increasing desperation to save its global hegemony, supporting autocratic monarchies (FYI – Saudi Arabia beheaded 26 people in August using only the authority of Wahhabi religious law to do so), supporting the attempts to revive the Cold War mythology of the evils of Russia and Putin, accusing them of threatening "NATO's doorstep" when it is NATO that has advanced 700 km towards the Russian border, and supporting the ongoing colonial-settler apartheid of Israel.

And then we wonder why Canada has suffered these attacks. The 'senseless' aspect of it all is Canada's role in global affairs. Various pundits in Canada are arguing about the significance of these events, in particular because the Harper regime was intending to introduce new legislation to give CSIS (Canada's security services) and the RCMP (its national police force) and other police more surveillance powers and more powers of pre-emptive interventions.

Current Justice Minister Peter MacKay has defended the idea of new legislation allowing greater surveillance for terrorists, adding that it also allows for more surveillance of undefined criminal acts. With the current governments mind-set that could easily become translated to mean people who are protesting against corporations, for the environment, against government initiatives in general. To the pundits credit on CBC, they agreed that the idea was far too open and intrusive.

One of the pundits argued that Canadians would normalize the surveillance as the U.S. and the UK people had done, without changing the essence of democracy in those countries. It is easily arguable that true democracy does not exist in either of those countries as they are mainly controlled by the corporate-military-political elites. Sure, we all have a vote, but the real deals are made behind closed doors in secret meetings, a distinct lack of surveillance there.

One of the more ironic comments from a pundit returns to the idea of the violence of the people who committed these acts of terror. After mentioning briefly several violent acts by different people in the U.S. and Canada, Muslim and Christian alike, he said it was the “willingness to use violence that unites them.”

That sadly returns the argument back to the countries that gave verbal sympathy to the Canadian government after the second killing. It is these very countries, on a much larger scale, that have an underlying violence that unites them. Violence used domestically during their years of formation, violence ongoing against subjugated racial/religious groups, violence against other countries who are made to appear as the evil ‘other’ and thus to be destroyed or violently contained.

Final picture, of Justice Minister MacKay wearing a t-shirt printed with a high powered automatic rifle at a Conservative fundraiser supported by the National Firearms Association. Ironically, that same association does not want the surveillance bill, C-13, to pass, “We think that this is probably the most draconian step towards police interference in people’s lives since George Orwell revealed the potential for it when he wrote 1984.”

It comes full circle to the vanished illusion of the “peaceable kingdom.” Canada’s democracy and civility is a tarnished and cracked veneer disguising an underlying racial prejudice and fear of the ‘other’, a legacy of colonial-settler violence inherited from the British empire. Stephen Harper and his (neo) Conservative government have exposed these flaws in our supposedly democratic civilizational superiority with his violence towards the people of the world and the violence towards the land and people domestically. Our inner heart of darkness has been revealed.

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