

**IS PEACE JUST WISHFUL THINKING?**  
**Address by Hon. David Kilgour**  
**Un Colloque**  
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The word peace conveys different meanings depending on context; my talk will relate primarily to matters where the term is intended to convey the absence of violent conflict or unfair economic competition.

It will include some thoughts on democracy building; treating all peoples as equally important internationally; better explanations of crises to our respective publics; human rights, fair trade and other issues with China; and life with Russia today.

- 1. The community of democracies across the world must work harder, smarter and more effectively to promote the emergence of democracy everywhere for, among other compelling reasons, the sake of a more peaceful planet.**

A great European, Immanuel Kant, was the first thinker who noted in a book, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, that governments which are elected by people, i.e. democratic governments, do not go to war with each other. Today, the notion that democracies don't fight among themselves is known as "Democratic Peace Theory".

Some of the 40 or so dictators still in power are causing enormous damage both domestically and internationally. One study indicated that between 1816 and 1991 among the 353 conflicts classified as "major international wars" every one involved non-democracies as one or more of the participants. As not one war occurred between two democratic countries, one major lesson is clear: to prevent violence between nations, promote democracy.

EU member countries and Canada should be encouraging new, restored and emerging democracies effectively. Are our respective governments making it clear to the world's dictators that we stand with their respective peoples by adopting policies and actions which are supportive of civilian well-being and human rights and not complicit with tyrants of any political hue? Are our embassies and consulates actively encouraging the governments in such states to move in this direction, and encouraging their civil societies where they exist to implement the elements of democratic institutions? To be certain,

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democracy in its myriad forms does not imply any particular economic model. I might also add here that in most of the 67 dictatorships that have reportedly fallen since 1972 peaceful civic resistance--strikes, boycotts, protests, civil disobedience etc--was a strong causative factor.

**2. The United Nations and the world community as a whole must treat all peoples as having equal worth and importance.**

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This implies both major and subtle changes in policies and attitudes, but I'll attempt to illustrate the point only with the case of Burma (Myanmar). The military regimes, which have been running Burma's kind peoples and beautiful country ever deeper into the ground since 1962, have been among the most ruthless, violent and bloody in terms of systematic human rights violations, ignoring an HIV/AIDS epidemic, rampant human and narcotics trafficking and creating thousands upon thousands of internally-displaced persons and refugees.

Many ask why it took until Sept.15, 2006 for the UN Security Council to add Burma to its peace-making agenda. Will the permanent members of the Council with large commercial interests in Burma (China and France) now permit that body to do something effective about the chaos and military slaughter of civilians, such as referring members of the junta to the International Criminal Court and providing adequate protection to victim groups? Will the Council manage to free the Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest after more than ten very difficult years for this much-admired heroine of democracy? Can the rest of us across the world who are so troubled by the plight of 50 million Burmese now establish an effective coalition for a democratic Burma?

**3 World media, governments, educators and parliamentarians ought to explain better outbreaks of violence and their underlying causes to promote effective action by the international community and to avoid worsening such crises.**

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Consider, for example, the continuing catastrophe in Darfur. How many French, other European, and Canadian nationals know that hundreds of thousands of civilians of civilians throughout Sudan's Darfur province have died over the past four years, probably about half murdered by agents of the government in Khartoum and the rest from related causes such as starvation? How many of us know that girls as young as eight have been gang-raped by allies of the same racist dictatorship? How many still believe the self-serving nonsense that the tragedy unfolding in Darfur is only a "tribal war"? Where are most of the world's independent media--with the honourable exceptions of a few--while such atrocities continue unabated?

Where is the UN Security Council when needed? To be certain, the major obstacle to saving Darfur is indifference among leaders in too many governments, who were after Srebrenica and other atrocities prepared to intervene in Bosnia and Kosovo to stop

similarly-motivated violence in the 1990s, but will not yet do the same in Sudan. They justify their inaction partly by telling themselves that governments closer, having the means to stop the carnage, will not act. They wait and more people die every day.

**4. A major factor in peace is the world's largest remaining party dictatorship – China; world leaders should be calling now for action on the human rights and other commitments Beijing made to win the Olympic Games for 2008.**

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If things don't improve rapidly, I think there is a good possibility that various governments, NGOs and individuals will speak up on human rights and other issues in China even while the Olympics are underway in August, 2008. The genuine friends of the Chinese people around the world should thus remain engaged continuously with the government in Beijing, while at the same time endorsing its peaceful transformation to a democratic and open society, with all the essential features of any modern responsible country, including the rule of law.

The spectrum of EU-China relations is already deep and growing. For example, EU trade with China grew fully 25% in 2003 and was up nearly 40% in 2004, with two-way trade now in the 200 billion Euros range annually, albeit with the surplus hugely in China's favor. I understand that France's yearly deficit alone with China alone is now running at \$US 19 billion. How many lost French jobs are represented by this phenomenon?

Moreover, have EU governments, businesses and civil societies considered these factors:

- When Chinese manufacturers go after a specialty sector in virtually any country, the businesses in it and their employees suffer severe consequences. Take the Czech Republic: in late 2004, its unemployment rate rose to 9.5% - 541,675 jobless in a population of about ten million. In the case of South Africa, I'm told that at least 67,000 badly-needed textile jobs have been lost in recent years for the same reason. The textile industries world-wide are under enormous pressure, primarily because the economic system in place now in China-which I've termed 'carnivore capitalism'- exploits China's working people and their natural environment grievously.
- Canada's own trade deficit with China was in the \$Can17 billion range in 2004; this phenomenon could be costing Canadians more than 50,000 jobs yearly. It's good for fighting inflation, but at what other human costs? Only last week, Goodyear Tire near Montreal announced that it will stop tire production there, thereby terminating 800 livelihoods. Does any economist think this is sustainable over the longer term? Is the government of China, moreover, still subsidizing its exports through currency interventions and indirect grants, contrary to solemn obligations it gave to the World Trade Organization? Does the People's Bank of China, for example, accurately report its business affairs to its own people, foreign investors and the world?

- Have policy makers asked whether our respective private sector investments in China are exacerbating existing social inequalities there? In the case of the rural-urban disparity in incomes, one World Bank project discovered that in 35 poor rural areas four in ten children aged 7-15 received no schooling whatsoever.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Are cabinet ministers in Europe and Canada raising in a continuous way with the government of China concerns about basic human rights within that country? The annual human rights dialogues in some of our countries—and the larger international one held annually in Berne—appear for some observers to have become essentially meaningless charades. Moreover, will victims not feel forgotten when such talks take place behind closed doors?

What about China's probably best-known and most courageous lawyer, Gao Zhisheng, and his family? How can a lawyer be convicted in private, as he recently was, of "inciting subversion" by calling for independent judges, the rule of law, democracy and basic human rights in any country hosting the Olympic Games today? How can his wife and children be followed, harassed and even struck by squads of police who follow them constantly? If any more such abuses occur to any of them, I believe many governments, NGOs and individuals will speak out.

Independent observers of human rights in China, including a meeting of about twenty country heads of Amnesty International last year, concluded with much regret that since Hu Jintao became president in 2003 the overall situation has deteriorated significantly. Falun Gong, Uyghurs, democrats, Muslims, Christians, journalists, Tibetans, Buddhists, internet users—all and many others have experienced a worsened Party oppression. Permit me to provide a couple of thoughts about the repression of practitioners of Falun Gong and the Uyghurs (a longer statement is available on my website: [www.davidkilgour.com](http://www.davidkilgour.com)):

- Falun Gong: The independent study David Matas and I did last summer, which concluded to our great regret that the government of China and its agencies are stealing vital organs from Falun Gong prisoners of conscience on a large scale, can be found now in 18 languages at [www.organharvestinvestigation.net](http://www.organharvestinvestigation.net). We've also traveled as volunteers to about 30 national capitals since to raise awareness and pressure on the government in Beijing to stop the killing of some of its own citizens for profit immediately. A revised report which includes damning new evidence should be out later this month.
- Uyghurs (a 4000-year-old Turkish ethnic community living in central Asia): The continuing "strike hard" campaign against them from China's central government resulted in even more arrests during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Uyghur region. Religious and other repressions continue. For example, many Uyghurs are jobless, but the government in Beijing brought in many thousands of persons from the

mainland for the cotton harvest. The Uyghur language is barred from being taught in schools even though it is the official language of their region.

### **COMPREHENSIVE ENGAGEMENT**

Is it not time for a comprehensive engagement strategy, which calls for friendly cooperation with China's government, but also includes discussions on such issues as human rights, labour conditions, the rule of law and the natural environment? Over the longer term, our national interests are complementary. Ignoring or downplaying such matters does not encourage more responsible conduct.

- Better environmental practices: Take China's emissions of carbon dioxide, the most common greenhouse gas and the major cause of global warming. Over the next seven years, Beijing expects to commence operations in fully 562 coal-fired plants, which will be nearly half the world's total. An estimated 400,000 Chinese nationals already die annually from lung and heart diseases related to air pollution. Sixteen of the 20 most polluted cities in the world are in China. What is the government of China doing that is effective to combat global warming?
- Human Rights issues: Amnesty International has noted: "(T)rade contracts worth millions of US dollars are determining the European Union's policy on human rights in China" The same was equally true for Canada until Prime Minister Harper began last year to call for a more balanced approach to China.
- Why not offer incentives to reform? For example, India-with whom all democracies should seek a strategic relationship-should be invited to join the G-8 because it is a democracy with human rights standards, competing free media, rule of law and independent courts. Why don't EU members and Canada vigorously seek to increase trade with countries like India to further promote the democratic values they represent? Surprisingly, the last time I looked India accounted for only 1.7% of total EU trade, most of it coming from the UK. By positive actions, we indicate to China's government that progress in these areas is essential to acceptance in the responsible international community.

#### **5. Consider another major player in world peace - Russia**

Despite a long history of disagreement between the EU and Russia (Canada's other immediate neighbour) on human rights, bilateral trade is growing rapidly, especially in the energy sector. More than half of Russia's foreign trade now is with EU countries. Germany and Russia have agreed to build a gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea. Poland protested, saying that Russia is using its oil to apply political pressure on Europe. Moscow certainly does not want Europe to be more politically and economically involved with the former Soviet republics, especially in Central Asia. Turkey, as a prospective member of the EU, promises to bring better access to Central Asian regions, thus making Europeans less dependant on Russian oil.

In fact, the diplomacy of oil is becoming a powerful tool of political manipulation. And Russian political leadership demonstrates fluency in this new diplomatic language by threatening to discontinue oil supply or to increase prices to neighbouring nations if they happen to displease the Kremlin in one way or another.

Being dependent on Russian oil will probably make European leaders less willing to bring pressure on Russia on transparency and human rights violations. Yet the Russian leadership should be reminded, constantly, that Russia has belonged to the Council of Europe since 1996 and therefore must comply with the European Convention of Human Rights. Was not its membership bid based on the condition that it would meet the Council's standards for a pluralistic democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights? Some of us thought that improving its human rights record in Chechnya was the main condition of Russia's acceptance into the Assembly (Resolution 1055). Are enough governments speaking out about the decline of democracy and human rights in Russia? What are all our governments doing to register our continuing concern about the indicated murders of 43 journalists in Russia since 1993, including the much-respected Anna Politkovskaya?

Legitimacy in the eyes of the world is one of the central goals of diplomacy virtually everywhere today. A country's reputation is now connected with the degree that it can influence others. If in the past influence was mainly defined by nuclear arsenals, bombs and rockets, having them today is not enough to have real influence in the community of nations. Even the US has come to accept this new reality. The aura of legitimacy has become a very precious commodity, which the governments of Russia and China understand too.

Since there is realistically no probability that Russia will be evicted from the Council of Europe, where can constructive engagement be best employed? Strasbourg urged Moscow to join the International Criminal Court to make the country more accountable for its conduct in Chechnya and elsewhere. The court is becoming more important as an integral part of the structure of international law. Unfortunately, three out of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, Russia and the US) refuse to be accountable to the court, whose main objective is to punish perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

## **6. International Stability**

Unfortunately, many conflicts around the world are either exacerbated or proxies for the interests of other nations. Can democratic nations join to create a solid set of principles which ensure the sustainable growth of representative democracy and good governance across the world? How should those principles guide our relationships with other nations to ensure that the broadly-accepted principles which guide the international community today are not consistently compromised and ignored?

China and Russia are (with the US) adept at manipulating the international community through trade or access to oil and other natural resources. Can France, the EU, Canada and other nations willingly accept a political order in which major powers have different and often incompatible positions in their treatment of the environment, respect for rules and principles embedded in international law?

## CONCLUSION

The EU members and Canada should demonstrate stronger leadership in advancing the fundamental truths of peace so dear to us. We should stop allowing our foreign policies to be driven mostly by the profit expectations of multinationals or blatant often short-term self-interest. Economic policy and international policy should have separate foundations and different objectives.

The EU and Canada should promote the values of democracy, human dignity and respect for human rights everywhere. This is also our joint responsibility as members of the democratic community in the United Nations.

The United Nations itself must be reformed through expansion of the Security Council membership and transformation of the veto power.

All of us here in this hall today, whether civic organizations, elected officials, journalists or individuals, must play a proactive role in pressuring our respective governments to advance policies and decisions that promote peace, justice and democracy, both domestically and internationally.

You can call it idealism, but ideas do come to fruition one day. It was Europe and the Europeans who created the idea of Perpetual Peace. In the last century, this ideal was not taken seriously enough, and was often regarded as too idealistic. Yet ideas, their history, their maturation have tremendous power, as argued by your fellow French citizen and thinker Michel Foucault. Today, almost a hundred years after the creation of the League of Nation, the first international organization, we have come to understand that peace is not mere wishful thinking. It requires much hard work, patience, courage and principles shared by our peoples, civil societies and leaders. Canada and its citizens take these ideals very seriously. This makes Canada very close to Europe, despite the geographic distance between our continents.

Thank you.