

Results-based Diplomacy

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LIKE MANY OTHER FOREIGN MINISTRIES, THE CANADIAN DEPARTMENT OF Foreign Affairs and International Trade is coping with continuous change. In this chapter, I would like to explore how we are using the reality of change to move towards a results-based diplomacy.

I should note that while I am writing from the Canadian perspective and experience, I believe that much of what I have to say will find a certain resonance with my colleagues from other foreign ministries.

While we acknowledge that the political environment, both domestically and internationally, is a driving force for change within the foreign ministry, we found we also needed a close diagnostic of the problems within the inherited structure of our foreign ministry, and we needed a plan to attain a strategic coherence as we went about implementing change. In terms of the Canadian experience, I hope to give a synopsis of where we are along this route, with an emphasis on achieving coherence, getting results, and ensuring that our foreign ministry represents the perspectives and priorities of the whole of government. I will also attempt to point out some of our next steps as well as the challenges we face in this endeavour.

In any analysis of a foreign ministry today, we must take into account the changing international landscape. We are being faced with a multiplicity of actors brought about by more countries and the dissolution of monolithic blocs at the end of the cold war. The power centers are shifting, with Brazil, Russia, India, and China taking on new significance in geopolitical considerations.

The new global challenges now facing us include terrorism, environmental concerns, and health security. While these challenges may not be really new, we are living in an era of a media that brings these issues immediately to the laptop, the television and the ipod. We must also take into account the complexity of influences brought about by a dominant superpower and shifting regional centers.

Within Canada, we find ourselves facing change as well. Canadians have become much more aware, concerned and active internationally. We find that other government departments and other levels of government such as provinces and cities have developed their own international agendas, often in isolation from the official foreign policy of the federal government.

These drivers of change in turn bring about demands that a renewed diplomatic service must address. These include a greater coherence within the foreign ministry to address the multiplicity of actors both at home and abroad. A strengthened policy capacity is needed to address horizontal issues and enhanced advocacy to deal with the complexity of influence.

We need a closer engagement with Canadian citizens and a better service delivery to meet the demand of an increasingly diverse population with international linkages and interests, and we need to be able to better deliver our programs in an era of domestic and international interdependence.

Looking at the departmental structure which we inherited, we found significant problems. Among others we identified the loss of geographic capacity with functional branches dominating the bilateral agenda (for example, our concern over India's nuclear ambitions so dominated our agenda that we missed other opportunities for fruitful dialogue).

We realized that our department was often operating in silos with little dialogue between branches, which led to an inability to focus (even at the country level). The traditional Headquarters/Mission relationship was highly symmetrical, with headquarters creating policy, and missions implementing it. We found that all missions, regardless of size and importance, received more or less the same missives and taskings from headquarters. Perhaps most damaging was the severe curtailing of mission creativity which leads to the development of *localitis* and the promotion of the particular bilateral relationship as an end in itself outside of any context of national strategy or priorities.

We found that the foreign ministry was in a growing confrontational relationship with domestic departments who were eager to further develop

the international aspects of their own set of priorities. We realized that our ability to plan programs to support foreign policy (as opposed to development) priorities was severely limited. We noted that evolving and new important issues (environment, health security, etc) had no place in traditional structures. Perhaps most significantly, we found that at the very core of all of this lay a lack of clear foreign policy priorities.

We also noted an inability or a reluctance to effectively embrace new technologies such as the Internet as a diplomatic tool, or using the Intranet to build collaborative networks.

While our own analysis indicated that change was necessary, there were also changes being imposed upon us. Successive governments in the last few years have altered the structure and mandate of the foreign ministry.

In 2004 the trade ministry was separated from the foreign policy function, creating Foreign Affairs Canada and International Trade Canada. Earlier in 2006 a new government reunited the two, but not quite in the same configuration. While these structural changes may have been disruptive, they also provided an impetus to reconsider the essential role that both sides of the foreign ministry faced.

During this period we identified six imperatives for change:

- Strengthen our policy capacity
- Renew core professional skills
- Increase agility, reduce rigidity
- Maximize assets in the field
- Connect with wider networks
- Mainstream public diplomacy

We also restructured internally, collapsing our regional geographic branches into a North American branch and a Bilateral Affairs branch which would allow more coherent planning and a reallocation of resources according to shifting needs and priorities. A Global Issues branch was also created to unite the various functional divisions that dealt with cross-cutting issues.

During this process we defined the core mandate of the Foreign Ministry function as:

- *An interpreter* of international events and trends for the government and for Canadians, recognizing the growing importance of globalization on Canadians' daily life;
- *An articulator* of a distinctive Canadian foreign policy which expresses Canadians' view of the world in which they wish to live;

- *An integrator* of the government's international agenda and its representation abroad;
- *An advocate* of Canada's values and interests in the international arena;
- *A provider* of world-class consular and passport services to Canadians;
- And a responsible *steward* of public funds, charged with delivering common services abroad on behalf of all government departments.

In addition to the mandate we also considered what the deliverables of a refocused and re-equipped foreign ministry would be, and these included:

- **Delivering results** vis-à-vis the government's international agenda, with particular attention to the priorities and international role of the Prime Minister,
- **Analysing and interpreting** international developments that affect Canada as a whole,
- **Ensuring the development and execution of Canada's foreign policy**, notably on issues of international peace and security, international economic relations and global issues,
- **Employing the new diplomacy to promote and defend Canada's interests** in other countries and in international organizations,
- **Harmonizing and coordinating the activities of federal departments and agencies** at country/regional level and in international fora,
- **Assisting Canadians abroad,**

Now I would like to describe how we are getting along in this process.

We have implemented a Country Strategy process to set overall strategic goals and priorities for each of our missions abroad. I will return to this in a moment.

We have developed a significant programming role. The Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) is now planning strategically to identify areas in which Canada can play a meaningful role in failed and fragile states, in counter-terrorism capacity building, and in human security initiatives.

The transfer of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives from our development agency to the foreign ministry gives new programming capacity and allows embassies to strategically support local initiatives in countries of accreditation which are in line with Canadian values and priorities.

Programming funds can help us build the whole of government strategies and capabilities. The global issues branch is coordinating economic, environmental, aboriginal, scientific, and international organization

issues. Most importantly we have refocused our resources on priorities and results.

We can already see the cascading effect of this focus as our e-communications and public diplomacy activities are being aligned more closely to priorities. From what seemed like a plethora of competing priorities, we are working to bring coherence to our international agenda.

We found that we had to first of all address the discipline of internal coherence—making our own short list of priorities. With these in mind, we could develop all of the government country strategies, coordinated by geographic branches and missions, and all of the government multilateral strategies coordinated by functional branches and missions.

We must then ensure that Heads of Mission and missions focused their resources on promoting interests as defined by those strategies, not just on promoting the bilateral relationship.

So, how do we transfer all of this into results-based diplomacy?

First of all, the priorities set in broadly consulted Country Strategies become the base line for the embassies and missions with consequential considerations. With these strategies, the allocation and reallocation of funds and human resources can be based on priorities and on actions to meet these priorities. This demands that missions develop strategic objectives with clear action plans.

It follows that strategic advocacy, public diplomacy plans, and our Internet presence must support and flow from these objectives. Reporting agreements not only ensure a follow-up on priorities but also limit unnecessary or overly lengthy reports. The aim is to bring about a more proactive diplomacy, not simply reporting on the status quo but getting out of the office, using our resources, public diplomacy, the Canada Fund, our web presence, and other tools to try and help influence events and deliver on the country strategy action plan.

Heads of Mission now receive mandate letters based on the strategies and priorities as outlined in the country strategy. At a time of transition, hand-over notes are expected to clearly outline the current status of the strategy, action plan, and consequential considerations. Performance management assessments of heads of mission are being made in the light of strategies, reporting, and operating procedures.

Country strategies are assessed in light of clear and comparable criteria. Mid-year reviews allow for not only fine-tuning strategies, but also for re-allocations where appropriate. We are rationalizing the reporting of

consulates through embassies to ensure coherence and a chain of responsibility for country strategies.

The Country Strategy Process is the key to much of our renewed focus on priorities and results. While it is part of a wider 'Alignment' agenda to ensure that priorities are focused upon, it is *the* part that our diplomats abroad are responsible for.

To recap:

- The country strategies are consequential and reallocation is based on priorities and action plans defined by these strategies.
- The country strategies are not simply an option; every mission has to produce one.
- The country strategies ensure that Head of Mission objectives are aligned to Whole of Government agenda, and Performance Management Assessments reflect these priorities.
- Mission categorization ensures that strategies are not one-size-fits-all but tailored to the category of the respective mission.
- The Country strategy is the basis for advocacy, public diplomacy, Internet presence and other planning, and these program elements are judged against the country strategy.
- It is expected that there will be a full involvement of partners and of functional branches in the process.

Ensuring the participation of the whole of government in the process may not be easy but is essential for the long-term credibility of the foreign ministry's ability to speak for the country. Regular dialogue with partner departments on international issues affecting their concerns is a starting point, not an end in itself.

Opening up Head of Mission assignments to executives from partner departments encourages the cross-pollination of experience that can bring new life to international concerns of domestic departments. Ensuring that reporting agreements cover partner interests in a clear and concise manner goes a long way to building the relationship.

The foreign ministry assists other branches of government by coordinating tasking to posts—ensuring that the request is precise, focused and targeted to get the best results without over-burdening posts with trivial or unnecessary requests. By inviting partner departments to participation in mid-year reviews of country strategies, we can ensure their continued interest and involvement. We are working to better

integrate internationally focused web content from partners in our mission websites.

We are working to better equip our diplomats through enhanced training and support including mandatory training programs for all heads of mission and all program managers. Training is focused on planning and results-based management skills as well as on diplomacy. We need to ensure the skills are there to move us away from reactive crisis management. We can no longer simply deliver technical skills; we must also influence a way of thinking. We are enhancing foreign-language training and cross-cultural awareness.

We have also moved to take into account that most of our posts are considered to be at some level of hardship, whereas our Foreign Service directives in the past have been geared toward the classic mission in a Western capital.

Hardship and danger are very real for many of our diplomats, a fact that was brought home to Canadians with the loss of diplomat Glen Berry, who was killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan.

I want to stress that we are by no means finished in our quest for coherence and results-based diplomacy. We are very much still working on getting it right.

Recent structural changes mean that we need to reintegrate trade and foreign policy into one department. We realize that ensuring buy-in by partners is a long-term endeavor. We have found that the best way to exploit our network of missions is not through central direction but through a collaborative effort and co-option of our dispersed capabilities, allowing the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish in a coherent manner.

A culture of performance and priority in the foreign ministry is taking root but needs to be cultivated. We are committed to continuing the renewal of the Political, Economic, and Public Affairs (PERPA) function in light of country strategies. The Management and Consular functions must be renewed and better integrated into the departmental structure. And we need to continue the development of effective and targeted web-based diplomacy.

The challenges we face include implementing the priorities of a new government, our third in three years. We must also address the reorganization fatigue that is setting in as changes seem circular to many (DFAIT to FAC to DFAIT again...). In the face of process fatigue we must work

to maintain consistency and to keep the discipline necessary to stay the course.

Any meaningful change will face some internal resistance and inertia. By making strategies consequential and related to performance, we can influence a change in behavior.

We must continue our efforts to smooth out some difficult relationships with central agencies, which have been clouded by old perceptions of the foreign ministry, and we must also realize that limited resource allocations will require further hard decisions.

Yet these challenges are also opportunities to demonstrate that we can apply new rigor to the foreign ministry by focusing on priorities and results. We know that many of our colleagues from other foreign ministries have faced similar challenges, and we look forward to the sharing of strategies and experiences.