

Toronto Symposium on Human Security and EU-Canada Relations  
University of Toronto, June 6-7, 2005

## What is Human Cultural Security Politics?

With Special Reference to the European Union and Canada

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0 (Intro)

In this lecture I want to answer to three questions:

- (1) How can we understand the relationship between culture and politics today?
- (2) What is the role of human security in this?
- (3) What are the implications for Canada and the EU?

## I (Notions of Culture and Politics)

In the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century three phenomena are coining global politics: a) capitalism has become global; b) the demographic split between poor countries with an increasing population and rich countries with a decreasing population; c) technological change, especially the internet, which is reinforcing the two other developments.

In order to analyse the relationship between culture and politics in this context one has to find notions which go beyond an understanding of culture as being specific to one given nation-state or to one given national society. The “classical” definition of political culture in Western political science during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was to define political culture as “the specifically political orientations - attitudes towards the political system and its various parts” (Almond/Verba, p.12). To me this seems to be insufficient today because it presupposes the empirical observation of individuals within one given national society only and because it neglects the material aspect of culture, namely “cultural goods”.

So if we reject this definition as being too narrow we have to look for a broader concept of culture. A broad notion of culture, however, needs always one or more specific differentiations, like the distinction between base and superstructure or between material and intellectual culture in various Marxist schools. This distinction would not have been accepted by Marx himself. In his famous comparison of the work of a bee and a human architect in Volume 1 of “Capital” Marx himself said (Marx. p. 174):

“We pre-suppose labour in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.”

Taking Marx seriously means to me to go beyond established Marxism and to look at more dialectical cultural concepts. To me the East German scholar Dietrich Mühlberg has made a most helpful suggestion. To Mühlberg culture has to be differentiated into an objective and a subjective culture. The objective culture is both the material and intellectual cultural heritage, which is subjectively appropriated by the subjective culture of present generations. Thus, culture is regarded as a continuous process of change (see Mühlberg). In addition, “cultural goods” are seen as important, culture is not reduced to intellectual culture.

But where is politics? In Almond/Verba a narrow understanding of politics was related to a narrow definition of culture. In Mühlberg we find probably the best dialectical definition of culture, but politics is dealt with only implicitly. Therefore, I’m suggesting to adopt Raymond Williams’ notion of culture.

For Raymond Williams politics is at the heart of culture. Williams regards culture both as a “whole way of life” and as “signifying set of symbols”, for instance art. It is also a complexity of hegemony. Hegemony supposes the existence of something, which is not merely secondary or superstructural. It constitutes the substance and limits of common sense for most people under its sway. That means, that culture and art are political by definition. In addition, culture is not only political, but also historical. It is historical in so far as Williams

differentiates a dominant, an alternative and a oppositional culture within a given culture. Social and hegemonial change and interaction, repression and incorporation between these parts of culture lead to new configurations. What may have been alternative yesterday, may become dominant tomorrow. All cultures have residual and emergent forms.

According to Williams, " in any society, in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant,... which are not merely abstract, but which are organized and lived" (Williams 1980 , p.38). The alternative and oppositional cultures to the dominant culture are hard to define: " There is a simple theoretical distinction between alternative and oppositional, that is to say between someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it, and someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change the society in its light...But it is often a very narrow line , in reality " (ibidem pp.41-42). Williams - like his most important fellow thinker in cultural theory, Pierre Bourdieu (see Bourdieu, Eagleton) - conceived his concept of culture and politics in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Is it still valid at the beginning of the new millenium?

I think, yes, it is , as a concept. But the big difference to Williams and Bourdieu today is that we cannot accept the nation-state only as a framework for political action. We have to modify those concepts in order to grasp the current reality.

If we want to use Williams' dialectical concept of culture and politics today we have to deal with a universal dominant culture of globalized capitalism. To quote Stephen Clarkson : "If the consequent dedication to competition, glorification of consumption, commodification of culture, denigration of community, and blurring of national identities are given freer reign in the new North America than on other continents as the transnational corporation becomes the lead force defining public values, the North American model will distinguish itself as giving the greatest leeway for the market to produce social norms and discipline governments" (Clarkson 2000, p.19). To me this is an astute description of the dominant culture of globalizing capitalism.

This dominant culture is in a hegemonial struggle confronted with the oppositional cultures of *Jihad* or Islamic fundamentalism and the alternative cultures of Attac and the World Social Fora.. To me it is important that the political and cultural interaction between those three cultures by production, integration, and repression is not reduced to binary models such as the "clash of civilizations" (Huntingdon) or even "Jihad vs. Mc,World" (Benjamin Barber, see Goytisolo). If we look for an instrument for a global cultural "trialogue" we have to turn to a cultural understanding of human security. Doing this we should not forget Mühlberg's emphasis on the objective culture as cultural achievement of previous generations.

## II (Human Security)

In his most enlightening analysis of human security at the 2005 Berlin Symposium Alex Macleod concluded : " The most successful way of coming to grips with human security questions is through prevention, particularly through aid and development programmes, carried out by national governments , NGOs and the UN and its specialised agencies" (Macleod, p.8).

I agree fully, but I have two questions. First, what would be the special cultural component? Secondly, Canada would be subsumed under "national governments". But what about the EU?

Regarding the first question, I suggest to link the human security discussion to the discussion of “public goods” and “global governance”. Here I’m following Elmar Altvater. and the Commission on Human Security (see Altvater , Commission 2003) Altvater argues, that human rights are universal and not revocable and reducable. Human security, however, can be produced under various historical, economic, and cultural conditions. Only if human security supports them, human rights can be realized. This can be done through the provision of public goods, not by a military fight against terror, “which becomes a threat to human security and human rights. Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo are the most macaber symbols for this” (Altvater, p.2). Public goods are goods necessary for those parts of human life, in which individuals or groups are not capable to mobilize resources for education, health, old age, nutrition, housing, and water supply. In other words: public goods include also cultural goods, human security politics include cultural and artistic action.

From my point of view this linkage of human rights, human security, and public goods is necessary for a global political “trialogue” between dominant, alternative, and oppositional cultures. It implies broad notions of culture, politics, and human security without forgetting the specific most basic civil prerequisites of human life. This civil and cultural human security is probably much more promising than a militant fight against terror.

### III (Consequences for Canada and the EU)

Let’s now address the other question: can there be a special role in human security politics for the EU compared to Canada?

Canada and the EU started an explicit dialogue on human security already in the nineties and issued a joint statement on human security on June 26, 2000. This dialogue has been restricted to clearly defined policy areas, especially de-mining and the trade in small arms and light weapons (see Gransow).

As successful as this field of cooperation has been , the question is, however, whether Canada and the EU should broaden its dialogue on human security. The difficulty with this is first the structural difference. Canada is a nation-state and a self-styled “soft” or “middle power” (see Bredow 2003 and Clarkson’s upcoming paper at this conference). The EU is more than an international organization but less than a federated state (see Almond/Dalton).

The second difficulty is the approach to human security. Canada was among those, who introduced the concept to the world and is still a member of the Human Security Network. The EU doesn’t use the concept in its new constitutional treaty and is not a member of the Human Security Network.

### IV (Conclusion and Questions)

To sum up the answers to my three initial questions I would say tentatively:

(1) To me neither the American political science approach to political culture as well as the traditional Marxist concepts are sufficient for the cultural-political challenges of the 21th century. The approaches of “cultural materialism” , however , as developed by Pierre Bourdieu, Dietrich Mühlberg, and Raymond Williams, can be useful for an analysis of the international relationship between culture and politics, because they don’t see culture as an object of politics, but politics as a part of culture.

(2) In the “trialogue” between dominant, alternative, and oppositional cultures on a global level the topic of human security is most important if it is linked to debate about public goods, including cultural goods. Therefore artists can become an integral part of human cultural security politics and not just a cultural *accessoire* for narrowly defined politics.

(3) Canada and the EU had a dialogue about human security since the nineties and will probably continue this more or less reluctantly restricted to small clearly defined areas such as de-mining or illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

This summary leads me to three new questions:

(1) Should Canada revitalize and broaden its human security policy?

(2) Should Canada and the EU revitalize their dialogue on human security and broaden their concept? Should they include “culture “, “public goods” and “global governance”?

(3) If so, should the EU try to learn from Canada not only in regard to de-mining, but also in the field of multi-culturalism. The EU is at the crossroads between widening and deepening (see Gransow 2004). It cannot become wider without becoming less deeper. An increased integration of the EU beyond the current EU-25 might presuppose a kind of multi-culturalism, where the Canadian experience can be helpful.

(4) The “Barcelona Report” (see Bredow 2005) calls for civil-military “Human Security Response Taskforce” of 15,000 men and women. What about a “Human Security Cultural Taskforce” instead of new EU battle-groups under the command of national governments? In which areas should this taskforce be active? Following suggestions from a person working for the European Commission there could be three:

- a) securing human/cultural sites in case of conflict,
- b) securing human identities in cases of conflict, including gender identities;
- c) securing of cultural values, including environmental aspects.

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