

3. Hidden in Plain View: Canadian Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945

Greg Donaghy

I am not a nuclear historian, but nuclear questions so permeate world affairs after 1945 that I am constantly forced to wrestle with them in studying Canadian foreign policy. The implications of reflecting on my experience are disheartening.

Paradoxically, the very ubiquity of the nuclear question has perhaps obscured it from view as one of the central preoccupations of postwar Canadian diplomacy. Certainly, several generations of diplomats and politicians have made it their business to work as strong a voice as possible in the socioeconomic and political nuclear landscapes emerging after 1945. Nuclear anxieties lurk in the background of Canada's long history of "five eyes" intelligence sharing, in the lengthy but unsatisfying struggles for a voice in US strategic deliberations, and in the almost endless search for nuclear disarmament. Indeed, that hallmark of postwar Canadian foreign policy – peacekeeping – often includes an unspoken nuclear dimension.

Parallel concerns over the shape of nuclear markets – for reactors and expertise and for uranium – helped define Canadian aid policy in India and Pakistan in the 1950s and are woven through my work on the history of the Department of External Affairs in the mid-1970s. Precise documentation is often elusive, but the dynamic of the larger story is not unknown, just uncomfortable: Canadians (and we are probably not alone) willingly ignored our historic nuclear landscapes because they illuminate a world irrevocably beyond our control.

A Note from the Editor

Greg Donaghy wrote this concept note before his retirement as Head of the Historical Section of Global Affairs Canada (known for a long time in his tenure as External Affairs); the note was intended as the nucleus of his contribution to this collection. He then began a career as research professor in the Department of History at Carleton University in Ottawa. His death at age 59 in July 2020 is a great loss: colleagues spoke of his long tradition of “understated collaboration,” a tradition from which I too have benefitted. For personal detail on Greg Donaghy's life and work, see Robert Bothwell, John English, and Norman Hillmer, “Celebrating Greg Donaghy,” *International Journal* (Toronto) December 2020, vol. 75 (4), 464-470.