

"Helpful Fixer or Hired Gun: Why Canada Goes Overseas."

By

Sean M. Maloney, PhD

IRPP conference,
"Challenges to Governance:
Military Interventions Abroad and Consensus at Home"
Montreal, Nov 2000

[DRAFT]

Copyright(c) 2000 by Sean M. Maloney.

Note: This is a working paper and is not to be quoted without the express permission of the author.

Introduction

There is a prevailing view outside of Canadian national security policy subculture that Canada is some sort of meek neutralist entity, an "unmilitary people," that only deploys force when pushed into it by other countries. What are the origins of this perception? One could point to the declarations of the academic and media punditocracy of the 1960s that Canada was a so-called 'Middle Power' not only in size but in the middle between the superpowers. The evolution of such thinking in the 1970s built on this idea. During the Trudeau era, it was fashionable to present Canada to the world as an honest broker or linchpin between the West and the Third World. In fact, the Trudeau government even explored declaring Canada a Third World country in 1977.¹ Canada was not the nasty United States and, in keeping with the doctrine that Canadians define themselves as 'not American', anything that was aggressive was deemed American and thus not Canadian.

¹.Sean M. Maloney, "Maple Leaf Over the Caribbean: Gunboat Diplomacy Canadian Style?" in Anne Griffith and Richard Gimblett (eds) Gunboat Diplomacy: The Canadian Navy as a Political Instrument (forthcoming).

The use of military force by Canada in the past was not congruent with this new image and, coupled with the '60s' generations' popular cultural product/ideology that you could avoid war in the future by not talking, thinking or planning for it, the history and motivation for Canada's overseas interventions were submerged at virtually all levels, from the public education system to NDHQ's operations planning section which completely atrophied during the 1970s. The eminent propagandist Gwynn Dyer even mused on several occasions that it was inconceivable to him that the security of Canada could rest on the Rhine or the Inner German Border.²

Canada projected power overseas for a wide variety of reasons, but many of them were in fact related to national self interest, and not always the manipulations of perfidious, imperial Brits or arrogant, messianic Yanks. In essence, Canada generally deploys forces overseas for reasons of Forward Security, a Canadian strategic tradition dating back to the 1800s. Forward Security is an ex post facto label placed on a series of actions which appear to fit into a similar category. It is not a policy, nor is it a strategy per se. Strategies and policies receive far more articulation but are difficult to transmit over time through successive generations of foreign policy and military people let alone changes in government.³ There is, however, a definite trajectory in Canadian national security policy and Forward Security is clearly part of it.

A note of caution: this study explores the evolution of the historical motivations for the commitment and deployment of Canadian military forces overseas for specific operations and conflicts. It does not seek to explain why Canadian forces remained committed to conflicts over the long duration as conflicts ebbed and flowed according to the fortunes of war or peace. It is easy to confuse the two.

Canadian National Security Policy: 1867-1900

². Gwynne Dyer and Tina Viljoen, The Defence of Canada: In the Arms of the Empire 1760-1939 (Toronto: Maclelland and Stewart, 1990)

³. The idea of a national strategic tradition emerges in Sir Julian Corbett's body of work dealing with British maritime and national strategy. Corbett's distillation was called Some Principles of Maritime Strategy (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989).

Besides the popular belief that Canada had and has isolationist tendencies, there are also continuing perceptions that Canada was some low-tech, unsophisticated colonial entity populated with a polyglot of people who have a collective inferiority complex, people that hew wood and draw water. The obvious logical extension of this in national security terms is that Canada was some small ship tossed upon the swells of the imperial ocean and obviously incapable of independent action. Let us dispose of these notions. To highlight how sophisticated Canadians actually were at the creation of the nation in 1867 and subsequent years, let us use modern terminology to describe the state of Canadian national security policy from Confederation to the Boer War prior to discussing the reasons for major Canadian deployments overseas.

If one country harbours and overtly supports an armed and organized body of people who bear allegiance to a third nation which is occupied by a fourth country and then permits this body of people to conduct guerrilla operations from it, we would call that **state-sponsored terrorism**. This is exactly what the Fenian Raids of 1866-67 were all about as IRA-affiliated groups attacked Canada in southern Quebec, New Brunswick, along the St Lawrence River, and the Niagara Frontier. Canada mobilized its forces to successfully fight off this external threat and placed diplomatic pressure through London on the United States to cease and desist.⁴

The deployment of two Canadian battalions during the Red River Expedition in 1870 certainly counts as a show of force in an **Aid of the Civil Power** operation, while the Northwest Rebellion of 1885 which involved could be compared with native disturbances in the 1990s at Oka, Ipperwash, Awkwasane or Gustafsen Lake or more exactly, the FLQ Crisis of 1970. Ottawa's response in 1885 amounted to **counterinsurgency** in any event. The creation of the paramilitary Northwest Mounted Police indicates that a colonial constabulary was necessary to project Canadian power into the vast space of the north west and to ensure that its constituent elements remained under Ottawa's control, not Washington's.⁵ Indeed, these operations were conducted under the policy of what historian Dr. Michael Hennessey refers to

⁴ George Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970) pp. 223-226.

⁵ See Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, *Prarie Fire: The 1885 North-West Rebellion* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1984).

as Canadian Turnerism: the Canadian national railroad as manifest destiny and a means to secure the northwest.

Certainly the employment of the North West Mounted Police to combat American whisky traders at Fort Whoop Up in southern Alberta and similar facilities in Saskatchewan resembles Drug Enforcement Agency operations against Columbian narco-para states in the late 1900s. If we view the use of liquor by these American entities to incite the native population in these regions so as to destabilize Canadian control over the territory, we might even view this as an **asymmetric threat**.

The peace between Canada and the United States during this time was bolstered by the deployment of British troops and Canadian-manned fortifications, with the promise of British strategic reinforcement from the home islands if the American hordes came across the border. It is conceivable that this constitutes an early form of **deterrence**: think of it as a reverse version of NATO's situation in Europe during the Cold War. It was coupled to a **strategic arms limitation** treaty and a **confidence building measures** regime called the Rush-Bagot Agreement whereby major warships from both sides were scuttled in 1815 to de-escalate the situation. Proto-CFE, anyone?⁶

A critical component of 1800s Canadian national security policy was **resource protection**. Most of the Canadian-American disputes during this latter part of that century revolved around fishing stocks and boundary issues. The origins of what would become the Canadian navy, it could be argued, came from a desire to ensure the economic viability of the Canadian fisheries.⁷ On the Alaskan border, resource protection took on equal importance. American prospectors were violating the boundary in the Yukon and threatening Canadian control over the goldfields in the region. The Yukon Field Force, in 1898, conducted what could only be called a **strategic deployment** from eastern Canada several thousand miles to the Yukon to deter illegal border activity and the provide aid of the civil power to the NWMP.⁸

⁶. Roger Sarty, The Maritime Defence of Canada (Toronto: CISS, 1996), Chapter 1; C.P. Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict Volume 1: 1867-1921 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984) Chapters 1 and 2.

⁷. Roger Sarty, The Maritime Defence of Canada (Toronto: CISS, 1996), Chapter 1.

⁸. See Breerton Greenhous (ed) Guarding the Goldfields: The Story of the Yukon Field Force (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1987) and Breerton Greenhous and W.J. McAndrew, "The

It should come as no surprise, then, that once Canadian territory in North America was secured that Canada looked overseas. As part of the British imperial economic system, there was a greater desire for greater participation, but the means was left up to Ottawa, not London. Ironically, the first Canadian overseas deployment was by a unit of Pontifical Zouaves raised in Quebec by the Pope for service against the Garibaldians in 1868. The first Imperial milestone, however, was the formation of a Canadian unit for Imperial service during the Indian Mutinies which could have been dispatched, if the situation was deemed serious enough, to any part of the empire in the 1880s. In effect, this regiment could possibly be considered a predecessor to NATO's ACE Mobile Force (Land) or Canada's UN Standby Battalion of the 1960s.⁹ In fact, the concept of a Canadian rapid deployment capability would find clear expression almost one hundred years later in the 1964 and 1994 Defence White Papers.

The second was the creation of a Canadian force to support the Nile Expedition to Khartoum in 1884-85. British operations in the region required mobility assistance and a requested went out for hardy Canadian personnel to move the Force to Khartoum up the Nile and its headwaters. A multi-racial (European descent and Caughnawaga indians) force of 386 men was recruited but not put in uniform. They functioned in a non-combatant support role, something we might refer to today as **alternate service delivery** or **commercialization of the theatre**.¹⁰ What were the motives for such involvement? The British expedition commander, Lord Wolseley, specifically requested Canadians based on his positive experiences with the Canadian contingent when he commanded the Red River Expedition. Lord Minto, the Governor General, supported the idea, but the level of Canadian enthusiasm in political and social circles was also high, mostly for patriotic reasons. Canada was asked to contribute a niche force because she could do something

Canadian Army Marches North: The Yukon Field Force 1898-1900," Canadian Defence Quarterly Vol. 10 No. 4 Spring 1981, pp. 30-41.

⁹ Stanley, Canada's Soldiers p. 270.

¹⁰ The idea of the Canadian Khartoum expedition as ASD was developed by one of my students, Mike R. Voith, who explored in an unpublished paper entitled "Canadian Voyageurs on the Nile 1884: An Early Example of the Use of Civilian Contractors by the Military" (March 2000).

the British could not. At the political level this could also be used as a lever in Imperial circles in the future.¹¹

The Khartoum operation was a military disaster which produced some public concern throughout the Empire and in Canada. The Canadian Government explored a private offer by a Canadian Militia colonel to raise a thousand-man battalion if the British conducted further operations in the Sudan. The project was not executed because the unit was not needed: It was, however, not a matter of opposition in Ottawa to such a deployment in principle.¹²

The background to the decision by the Canadian Government to participate in the South African war against the Boers (1899-1901) was a complex one. Domestic political factors were paramount: there was a majority of pro-Empire supporters, there was a minority of anti-British opposition. There was pressure from the Governor General who, at that time, was British. An election was in the offing, which complicated matters and amplified the rhetoric in both camps. The Laurier government, however, did examine the larger strategic issues of Canadian participation in an overseas expedition and found that there were significant Canadian interests involved.¹³

As part of the Empire, Canada was subject to whatever potential threats existed to it, both in a direct physical sense and in an economic sense. Maintaining a stable economic environment was good for Canada. Additionally, potential threats to Canadian territory existed during the myriad of Imperial crises which occurred throughout the latter part of the 1800s. Such crises included the Christmas Crisis of 1895 (which involved the United States); Venezuela; the war scares with Russia in 1878-1879 and 1898, the list was a long one. Canada was unwilling and perhaps incapable of defending Canadian soil and therefore Imperial Defence, an early version of collective defence, was the only option. The dues to belong to the collective defence club, however, included some participation in overseas operations.

¹¹. Norman Penlington, Canada and Imperialism, 1896-1899 (Toronto: U of T Press, 1965) pp. 138-140; Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict Vol 1 pp. 41-43.

¹². Donald C. Gordon, The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965) pp. 88-89.

¹³. Carmen Miller, Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War 1899-1902 (Kingston: McGill-Queens, 1993) Chapters 1 and 2.

Canadian citizens, with the exception of some people in Quebec, accepted this.¹⁴

The World Wars: 1914-1945

Canadian involvement in the First World War was an extension of an already established imperial relationship. In broad terms, the disruption of the European continent and its potential subjugation by the Kaiser and his allies would have a ripple effect on the Empire's economic system which would in turn affect Canada. For the Borden government, however, this appears to be a subliminal Canadian concern which was overshadowed by patriotic zeal in most of the country and by constitutional commitments related to imperial defence. Indeed, the Borden government gave the British a blank cheque and mobilized a massive field army virtually overnight. As with the Boer War, the bulk of public opinion supported the war effort and, in this case, so did the opposition in the House of Commons. The Canadian Expeditionary Force grew to five divisions and supporting troops to become one of the shock corps for the British Army on the Western Front, while Canadians contributed massively to the fledgling Royal Flying Corps. In retrospect, it is interesting to compare the brief discussion of the commitment of the second largest Canadian overseas contingent in the past one hundred years to the long drawn out, agonizing processes in which successive Canadian governments engage in today over the deployment of forces as small as twelve fighter-bombers or one or three ships.¹⁵

Most Canadians are unfamiliar with the deployment of a brigade-sized Canadian land contingent to invade Russia in 1918. The objective of that operation was for the western coalition (Britain, the United States, Canada, Japan, Czechoslovakia) to support anti-Bolshevik forces and keep Russia in the war against Germany. The motivation for Canadian participation in such operations was obvious in the context of the First World War: more

¹⁴. Ibid; Gordon, The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense Chapters 3 and 4; Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict Vol 1 Chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁵. Ronald G. Haycock, Sam Hughes: The Public Career of a Controversial Canadian 1885-1916 (Ottawa: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986) Chapter 11; Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict Vol 1 pp. 172-174.

Canadians would die if fresh German troops were put into the line while the British forces were in retreat. Other motivations were also apparent: Bolshevism was an ideological/economic threat to the world economic system dominated by the western powers in the post-First World War world and if the baby could be killed in the cradle, the world would be a better place. Unfortunately for millions of people, Western efforts failed.¹⁶

It is also not well known that Canada engaged in gunboat diplomacy in the interwar years once the Royal Canadian Navy was formed and ships acquired. Though many of the incidents have the appearance of comic opera, they presaged more sophisticated use of Canadian naval forces for diplomatic purposes later in the 1900s. The first recorded instance was in 1915 when the light cruiser HMCS Rainbow was dispatched to Mexico to exert a presence and protect the expatriate community in Mazatlan. The arrival of the Canadian cruiser HMCS Aurora in Costa Rica in 1921 was used by diplomats to achieve closure on a dispute involving the Royal Bank of Canada, British oil interests, and the government of Costa Rica.¹⁷

In 1932 the RCN destroyers HMCS Skeena and HMCS Vancouver were employed to exert a presence and land an armed shore party in El Salvador: there was a belief by diplomats in San Salvador that a Communist revolution was in progress which had the potential to threaten British Empire members' lives and property. The situation was not as bad as initially portrayed, however, and the ships departed. The deployment was conducted with the prodding of the Department of External Affairs: They viewed such a deployment in keeping with the Imperial economic relationship.¹⁸

The growing strength of totalitarian ideologies in the interwar period was not lost of Canadian policymakers, though due to the disastrous effects of the great Depression, they were not inclined to prepare for the inevitable conflict as Canadians fought to survive in mind and body throughout the Dirty Thirties. Unauthorized expeditions like the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion,

¹⁶. Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict Vol 1 pp.276-277; see also Roy Maclaren, Canadians in Russia 1918-1919 (Toronto: U of T Press, 1976) and John Swettenham, The Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1919 (Toronto: U of T Press, 1967).

¹⁷. Richard A. Preston, "The RCN and Gun-Boat Diplomacy in the Caribbean," Military Affairs April 1972, pp. 41-43.

¹⁸. *Ibid.*

the Canadian volunteer group in the Spanish Civil War, did not constitute an expression of Canadian national security policy.

Canada's deep involvement in the Second World War differed from her involvement in the First World War in a number of ways. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King believed, after the Munich crisis that Canadian involvement in the oncoming conflict was "a self evident national duty."¹⁹ In his view, any enemy would not distinguish between the subtleties inherent in the Commonwealth system: they would not see Canada as an independent entity and Canada would be lumped in with Great Britain. Put another way, ideological totalitarians would view any nation not of their persuasion as fair game, whether fully independent or not. As C.P. Stacey put it,

As long as Britain and France had secure control of Western Europe and the north Atlantic, Canada's safety and prosperity were assured. Her wheat and other products moved freely across a free sea to open markets abroad, particularly in the United Kingdom...While these liberal nations protected Canada's interests on the European flank, she was in the happy position of having a very satisfactory relationship with another great liberal community, the United States, on her continental border....Protected by British sea power and the French Army and by her established friendship with the United States, for generations Canada had been in the fortunate position of being able to avoid large expenditures in defence and she enjoyed a democratic form of government under which civil liberty was essentially secure. The rise of Hitler threatened all this.²⁰

Though isolationist officials tried to establish programmes whereby Canada would provide materiel and training to the Allies, there was no real option: Canada had to fight.²¹ The West was on the ropes. Once again, divisions of the Canadian Army deployed to Great Britain, the RCAF expanded to contribute to the strategic bomber offensive, and the RCN protected the vital sea lines of communications.

There is, however, the anomaly of the Hong Kong expedition in 1941. Canada was committed to the European war and virtually ignored

¹⁹. Robert Bothwell et al, Canada 1900-1945 (Toronto: U of T Press, 1987) p. 314.

²⁰.Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict Vol 2, p. 268.

²¹. J.L. Granatstein, Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government 1939-1945 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975) pp. 15-20.

developments in the Pacific. This is not surprising since the bulk of Canadian trade was in the Americans and in Europe. The British were in a quandary over their far eastern strategy and mistakenly believed that the significant and public reinforcement of Hong Kong might serve as a deterrent to any Japanese move against the colony. Back channel activity between a British military representative passing through Canada and a former Canadian classmate who happened to be the Chief of the General Staff resulted in pressure on the King government to commit a nearly brigade-sized force in the deterrent manouvre. Cajoling by the CGS, Lieutenant General Harry Crerar, a "man who had been beguiled into accommodating his British mentors," produced a catastrophe which resulted in the near annihilation and brutal imprisonment of the remnants of the Canadian Hong Kong force.²²

The Cold War: 1946-1990

The period in which Canada deployed forces overseas for the longest duration was the Cold War. Practically every case related to the larger trajectory of this subdued, hidden, but vital struggle. Unlike the other wars in the 1900s, the Cold War was a "war without battles," fought in the hearts, minds and psyches of the antagonists instead of the field:²³ Unless of course that field was in the Third World which saw incredible amounts of devastation in the proxy fighting that flowed around the nuclear-armed stalemate in Europe.

Canada's first overseas commitments were directly related to her position amongst the leadership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Prior to 1951, the prevailing view of the Canadian government under Mackenzie King and then Louis St Laurent was that the United Nations had failed as a collective security mechanism and that only a new but smaller organization, NATO, could guarantee the security of Canadian interests in the face of a new totalitarian threat, one which eventually would acquire the means to use atomic and thermonuclear weapons. Canada participated in the formulation of the North Atlantic Treaty and was in full accord with its famous Article 5,

²². Brereton Greenhous, "C" Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe 1941-1945 (Toronto: Dundurn, 1997) Chapter 2.

²³. Sean M. Maloney, War Without Battles: Canada's NATO Brigade in Germany 1951-1993 (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1997).

aggression against one member of NATO was aggression against all. Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester B. "Mike" Pearson and many of his advisors, however, was of the mind that Article 2, which emphasized non-military cooperation in NATO could become a viable means to secure western countries against Communism through economic cooperation and development. Military considerations took a back seat.²⁴

War, however, did not come to Europe. Communist forces attacked South Korea. The Korean conflict was seen within NATO circles as a feint to draw western strength away from Europe. In Canada, however, there was some debate. Motives for Canadian involvement initially were related to propping up the United Nations as a Cold War tool: the UN Secretary General Trygve Lie asked UN members for troops to fight in Korea, while the Americans were pressuring her allies to reinforce while they held the line with the south Koreans. The decrepit state of Canadian military forces meant that only three destroyers could be sent while a ground commitment was explored. Canada was attacked in the world press for sending a token limited liability force and for not living up to the rhetoric it espoused in the UN and NATO forums.²⁵

We must consider the possibility that national pride was a factor alongside those of containing Communist aggression and propping up western Europe when the decision to dispatch of 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group to Korea was made in Ottawa by the St Laurent government. It was not to be another Hong Kong, nor were back door cajolings taken into consideration as they had been in that affair: strict measures were taken to ensure Canadian forces would not be misused. Otherwise the already established strategic tradition of Canada fighting overseas to keep aggression away from North America and protect her markets was in play.²⁶

The decision to deploy Canadian land forces as a deterrent manouvre to western Europe as part of NATO's Integrated Force, was made almost by

²⁴. See Escott Reid, Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty 1947-1949 (Toronto: Maclelland and Stewart Press, 1977); John W. Holmes, The Shaping of the Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order 1943-1957 Volume 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

²⁵. David J. Bercuson, Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War (Toronto: U of T Press, 1999) Chapters 1 and 2.

²⁶. Herbert Fairlie Wood, Strange Battleground: The Official History of the Canadian Army in Korea (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966) pp. 22-25. See also Brook Claxton's unpublished memoir in his papers in the National Archives of Canada.

accident. It should be noted that the perception that the Canadian government was reluctant to become engaged overseas is an erroneous one. After Korea it was more a case of careful and slow analysis before deciding on the nature of the contribution. This was related to several factors, among them Canada could not maintain a fully mobilized military force on Second World War scales because of political repercussions in Quebec and the fact that the military had been cut to the bone by Mackenzie King to prevent the possibility of such action.

In any event, a pre-Korea planning exercise in which Canadian representatives participated produced an unapproved hypothetical NATO force structure. Under the pressure of Korea, this structure was implemented and Canada was asked to contribute a division. The Canadian government chose to commit one brigade group and raise two more but keep them based in Canada. Canada's credibility in the alliance was at stake both because of her initial minimalist contribution to Korea and the lack of a sufficient land force contribution to deter the Soviets after the Berlin Crisis. The government concluded that the threat to Europe was a real one and decided to commit 27 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group to NATO forces deterring Soviet moves in Europe. Canada could not stand idly by and casually throw away the all too recent sacrifice made by her soldiers, sailors, and airmen against the Nazi threat in Europe.²⁷

At the same time, a NATO air force planning exercise almost resulted in a similar situation until the Minister of Defence intruded and stopped it. After careful consideration, however, Canada committed an air division of 12 fighter squadrons to NATO. This was done for the same reasons as the decision to commit 27 Brigade, though there were ancillary industrial benefits since the F-86 fighter for the force was built in Canada and then exported in quantity to almost every NATO country.²⁸

The Cold War and Canadian Peacekeeping

²⁷. Sean M. Maloney, War Without Battles: Canada's NATO Brigade in Germany, 1951-1993 (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1997) Chapter 1.

²⁸. Sean M. Maloney, Learning to Love The Bomb: Canada's Cold War Strategy and Nuclear Weapons, 1951-1968 (forthcoming).

What of that vaunted and allegedly Canadian invention, UN peacekeeping? Every one of the UN peacekeeping and peace observation operations which Canada participated in from 1948 to 1968 were directly related to the Cold War game of position. Canadian analysis of NATO strategy (which, incidentally, Canada influenced in its formulation) suggested that a nuclear stalemate would grow deeper and deeper in Europe which would force the Soviets to accomplish their aims in other ways and areas, particularly in those areas peripheral to the NATO Area. One means by which such moves could be countered by the West was to ensure that the power vacuum generated by decolonization was replaced with entities friendly to the West or to generate stability in those areas using UN forces as the mechanism.²⁹

When we look at the pattern of Canadian UN deployments during the first 20 years of the Cold War, a definite pattern emerges. Canada deployed forces overseas for nuclear crisis stabilization (UNEF I in the Suez 1956 affair), to prop up a UN effort to prevent Soviet intervention in the Third World (ONUC in the Congo) or to prevent a crisis involving NATO allies from escalating to the point where it could be exploited by the Soviets (UNFICYP in Cyprus) to gain an advantageous position against NATO. If the Americans used the CIA to wage a twilight war against Communist expansion in the Third World, Canada used UN peacekeeping deployments as surrogates to achieve Canadian aims in that fight.³⁰

There is, of course, the anomaly of Canadian involvement in Indochina during this period. The International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC), a non-UN peace observation force established in 1954 that included several hundred Canadians, was also used by Canada and the West in an economy of force effort to contain Communism in Asia. After Korea and particularly after Dien Bien Phu, Western powers were less and less willing to commit forces to fight in Asia. The ICSC served as a means to stave off Communist interference for the time being. As we now know, it ultimately failed.³¹

Canadian peacekeeping deployments in the 1970s and 1980s were essentially extensions of those established in the 1950s and 1960s. For

²⁹. Sean M. Maloney, Canada and UN Peacekeeping: NATO's Cold War by Other Means, 1948-1978 (forthcoming).

³⁰. Ibid.

³¹. Ibid.

example, UNEF II, UNDOF, UNIFIL, and UNEF II's replacement, the non-UN MFO, were more developed incarnations and mutations of UNEF and UNTSO set in a more complex geostrategic space. Consequently, we should view Canadian contributions to these missions as expressions of Forward Security, though we should keep in mind that they were also used to stabilize the Middle East situation after the nearly-nuclear Yom Kippur War of 1973. Again, Canadian aims were related to the protection of Western interests both from a security and an economic standpoint within the umbrella of the Cold War.³²

Canada revived its gunboat diplomacy during the Trudeau era, particularly in the Caribbean. Canadian naval forces were employed on several occasions in the region to exert a Canadian presence or evacuate Canadian citizens. In other cases, particularly in Haiti in 1974, Canadian naval vessels carried out humanitarian aid operations to generate goodwill with the Haitian government so that Haiti would support Canadian initiatives in *la francophonie* designed to limit French interference in Canadian affairs. Canadian naval and land forces also exercises regularly in Jamaica to exert a stabilizing presence in that country which was in part related to Canadian regional commercial interests and economic competition with the United States. Many of these small-scale uses of military forces were used within the umbrella of the Trudeau Government's Third Option policy that is, catering to the Third World to develop markets which the United States and Europe had difficulty accessing because of Cold War bipolarity.³³

The New World Disorder: 1990-2000

The historical record is still under development for the 1990s and the variety of Canadian deployments which occurred during that decade. Therefore, analysis of exactly why Canada participated in certain deployments remains tentative. The popular notion that the end of the Cold War unleashed a world-wide orgy of anarchy is somewhat overblown.

³². Ibid.

³³. Sean M. Maloney, "Maple Leaf Over the Caribbean: Gunboat Diplomacy Canadian Style?" in Anne Griffith and Richard Gimblett (eds) Gunboat Diplomacy: The Canadian Navy as a Political Instrument (forthcoming).

Historically, the world witnessed what we would now call 'ethnic cleansing' in the late 1940s and throughout the Cold War period, though much of it was hidden away behind the Iron Curtain. Anarchy and racial violence was an ongoing staple on the African continent long before 1990: the Congo, Rhodesia, South Africa, and Mozambique are but some examples. We could even consider the Iraq-Kuwait conflict as an extension of existing tensions in that region. The situation in the Balkans could, however, reasonably be considered a direct result of the end of the Cold War.

What was different? There was a belief that the collapse of the Cold War bi-polar world system would free up the United Nations so that it could perform the functions that policymakers believed it was constructed for in 1945. Russia's pre-occupation with its domestic situation would perhaps contribute to more effective UN security instrumentation. There was also a greater willingness amongst some Western powers to back off and let the UN get involved. The Canadian peacekeeping myth now swung into full operation and the real reasons for Canadian involvement with UN peacekeeping, that is, power projection on behalf of NATO interests, was forgotten or at least deeply submerged in the halls of the Pearson building. There was now a significantly greater willingness to reactivity submit to UN requests for Canadian involvement: Isn't that what Canada just did? We've always done it, haven't we? After all, we invented peacekeeping, didn't we?³⁴

The seeds were laid in 1989 with the various peace observation deployments to Central America. The events of 1990, however, overshadowed them as the West developed means to respond to Iraqi aggression against Kuwait and the ensuing regional instability which affected world-wide economic stability. The response of the Canadian policymaking community was somewhat convoluted. A escalating series of military options were generated and presented to the Government. The Mulroney Government was, however, divided on the issue and received conflicting policy advice. One school of thought was that the dispatch of Canadian forces would damage Canada's (mythical) image as neutralist UN peacekeeper. This school of thought was successful in preventing full and effective participation in the ground and air

³⁴. Maloney, Canada and UN Peacekeeping Chapter 1, (forthcoming).

campaigns. Canadian prestige was damaged and this failure had an impact on future Canadian deployments.³⁵

It is becoming clearer that the myriad Canadian deployments to the Balkans were in part related to the damage caused by the minimalist Canadian participation in the Gulf coupled with the decision taken by senior bureaucrats in National Defence HQ to withdraw stationed Canadian forces from NATO in Europe. This last move damaged Canadian relations within NATO circles. The two items combined sent a message, perhaps inadvertently, that Canada was on the verge of isolationism, an isolationism on par with that implemented by the Mackenzie King government in the 1930s.

The Balkans Campaign and After

The first Canadian operation in the Balkans was Operation BOLSTER, which had 15 Canadian officers serving with the OSCE-mandated European Community Monitor Mission starting in 1991. This deployment was eventually followed by a mechanized infantry battalion in the spring of 1992 (Op HARMONY) to UNPROFOR I and a battlegroup based on an armoured regiment in the fall of 1992 (Op CAVALIER) to UNPROFOR II. A logistics battalion and a reduced brigade group headquarters was deployed in 1993 to support all of this. In time, Canada contributed a C-130 aircraft to the Sarajevo humanitarian airlift and then a destroyer or frigate (depending on the rotation) and two Aurora MPAs to Operation SHARP GUARD, the NATO-led but UN-mandated maritime interception operation in the Adriatic.

This significant Canadian involvement in the Balkans was not motivated by a few UN requests. Initial peacekeeping force concepts prior to UN involvement included a WEU force plan or perhaps an expanded ECMM mission (based on the OCSE). It was only after these options had been explored and rejected that a UN force concept was activated. In other words, the UN was the last resort, not the first. As with the UNTSO-UNEF I-UNEF II-MFO relationship, we should view Canadian participation in IFOR and SFOR as extensions of what Canada set out to do with the ECMM and

³⁵ Sean M. Maloney, "Missed Opportunity: Operation BROADSWORD, 4 Brigade, and the Gulf War, 1990-1991," Canadian Military History Spring 1995 Vol. 4 No. 1 pp. 36-46; Maloney, War Without Battles pp. 448-459.

UNPROFOR. It was a continuation of the realist tradition of Forward Security and not some expression of altruism.³⁶

In both quantitative and temporal senses, these commitments to the former Yugoslavia overshadowed any other Canadian overseas operation since the dispatch of 27 Brigade and 1 Air Division to NATO or the three destroyers and 25 Brigade to Korea. Why? Despite the ill-conceived, hasty and wrong-headed withdrawal from NATO in Europe, the realities of European stability and close relationship between the two continents dictated that Canada remain involved. The strategic tradition of forward operations to prevent overseas crises from affecting Canadian interests overrode the isolationist elements embedded deeply within the bureaucracy. There was serious concern that the rest of newly-freed Eastern Europe might follow Yugoslavia into the abyss and affect NATO members which would in turn involve Canada under Article 5, let alone having a negative impact on trade and other relationships.³⁷

Following the principle of forward operations does not explain Canadian participation elsewhere in the early to mid 1990s, however. If we examine the various UN-mandated operations in and around Haiti in the 1990s, Canada deployed a destroyer to conduct maritime interception and an airmobile light infantry battalion for almost three years. Canada also deployed a logistics unit to Cambodia, also under UN auspices (UNTAC). Canadian troops and observers deployed to Namibia (UNTAG) and Angola (UNAVEM). There was a plan to insert the Canadian Airborne Regiment into West Sahara for UN duty (Op PYTHON) in 1992, though it was not executed. A polyglot of Canadian support units deployed to place a band-aid over the gaping machete wound of the blood-drenched jungles of Rwanda in 1994-95 (UNAMIR). Canadian observers deployed to Mozambique in 1993-94 (ONUMOZ), and to Central America on a number of occasions from 1992 to 1997.

None of these operations have any direct bearing on traditional Canadian national security interests, though the Haiti operations were related to

³⁶. Sean M. Maloney, "Operation BOLSTER: Canada and the European Community Monitor Mission in Former Yugoslavia, 1991-92"; International Peacekeeping vol. 4 No. 1 Spring 1997 pp. 26-50. See the expanded version of this study of the same title produced by the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies which takes the ECMM story to 1995; see also Sean M. Maloney, The Hindrance of Military Operations Ashore: Canadian Participation in Operation SHARP GUARD 1993-1996 (Halifax: Dalhousie University Press, 2000).

³⁷. Ibid.

domestic political concerns. The refugee flow from Haiti to American-controlled areas posed significant domestic and international political problems for the United States and our assistance was requested. However, Ottawa was not operating in 'helpful fixer' mode: at least 60 000 votes from the Haitian émigré community in Montreal were at stake and the fact that there was an election in the offing played a strong role in the decision to have Canada deploy significant military forces to Haiti. Indeed, one naval analysis of Operation FORWARD ACTION, the Haiti maritime interception force which Canada contributed a destroyer, noted that aspects of the operation mandated by DFAIT were being done for the sake of "optics," an informal DND code-word for the use of military forces for political showmanship.³⁸

It is extremely difficult to explain what national interest the Canadian government had in deploying troops to Western Sahara, Cambodia, or Rwanda. Perhaps the historical record has yet to reveal hidden reasons: it certainly has for earlier Canadian peacekeeping operations.³⁹ Perhaps there was something more to them than just reactivity responding to UN New York's continual requests for Canadian participation.

It is more difficult to make the case for the deployment of significant Canadian forces to Somalia in 1993-94, forces which included the Canadian Airborne Regiment, helicopter support, and an operational support vessel. It is increasingly evident that the so-called "CNN factor" played a major role in motivating American involvement and this could account for Canadian involvement.

One study suggests that Canada was asked to participate by the Americans to broaden international support for American intervention. The study is unable to uncover, despite the mounds of documentation released for the Somalia Inquiry, why exactly the Canadian government was motivated to do so.⁴⁰ Was there some hidden geostrategic agenda in play relating to the Arabian Gulf or Middle East regions? Was Canada helping the Americans out

³⁸. Sean M. Maloney, "Maple Leaf Over the Caribbean: Gunboat Diplomacy Canadian Style?" in Anne Griffith and Richard Gimblett (eds) Gunboat Diplomacy: The Canadian Navy as a Political Instrument (forthcoming).

³⁹. See Maloney, Canada and UN Peacekeeping (forthcoming)

⁴⁰. This problem was explored by one of my students, Charles Oliviero, in an unpublished paper entitled "Somalia: Quiet Success or Loud Failure?" (May 1999); See also Jonathan Stevenson, Losing Mogadishu: Testing U.S. Policy in Somalia (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995).

of a jam? Was it a matter of pervasive amounts of manipulated images on the television influencing policymakers concerned about domestic political agendas?⁴¹

We must not discount the possible role of ego, hubris, and vanity as factors contributing to the decision to deploy Canadian forces overseas. The highly embarrassing Zaire expedition in 1996 (Operation ASSURANCE), called "the bungle in the jungle" by Canadian military personnel, demonstrated to the world that Canada was incapable of mounting and then leading a major international peacekeeping or humanitarian intervention operation.

One journalist argues that the motives for Canadian involvement in the Zaire operation flow from attempts by the Chretien government to secure a Nobel Peace Prize for foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy and/or Raymond Chretien and thus knight either of them as Mike Pearson's moral and spiritual successor, perhaps to validate the concept and main proponent of 'soft power,' or for domestic political consumption. He may well be correct.⁴²

It is appropriate to comment on the concept of 'soft power' and the potential role it may have playing in influencing some Canadian overseas deployments. Elevated to the status of a foreign policy by the bureaucracy and Canadian media punditocracy, but not explicitly explained in any public policy document, 'soft power' revolves around the belief that the utility of military force has declined since the end of the Cold War, non-governmental organizations are in the vanguard of international diplomacy, and that security should be focused on global human security not state power.⁴³

During the Cold war, Canada deployed military forces overseas within a defined strategic concept to deter communist aggression and stabilize parts of the world to prevent Canada from becoming a radioactive charcoal briquette *A Mari Usque Ad Mare*. What was 'soft power' supposed to achieve for Canada? Stabilize the world for globalized capitalism? Function as a newer version of Trudeau's Third Option so that Canada can economically penetrate the Third

⁴¹. I would strongly suggest that readers interested in pursuing these lines of thought examine Susan D. Moeller's Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁴². David Pugliese "Noble Fever," Saturday Night May 1997, pp. 52-62, 112.

⁴³. Joseph T. Jockel, The Canadian Forces: Hard Choices, Soft Power (Toronto: CISS, 1999) pp. 6-7.

World? Make the world a better place? Demonstrate something to our larger allies and trading partners? To ourselves?

'Soft power' has been used to justify a wide variety of Canadian overseas activity. One aspect which morphed out of the 'soft power' engine was the creation by National Defence (at the urging of DFAIT) of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in 1996. DART started off as a purely domestic rapid response assistance relief force consisting of 180 secondarily-tasked existing personnel from medical, signals, engineering units.⁴⁴

In time, DART or elements of it, would deploy to Zaire (1996), Honduras (1998), and Turkey (1999). The Honduras and Turkey operations were responses to non-man made disasters in permissive environments and could be classed alongside the multitude of humanitarian operations conducted by Canadian forces since the 1960s. However, those operations usually consisted of transport aircraft which would deliver supplies and depart. DART stayed on the ground: its mission was "to deploy and conduct humanitarian relief operations with the minimum viable operational capability in order to achieve the greatest possible impact."⁴⁵ In other words, DART had a limited capability deployed for a limited time in disaster zones which were massive. It is not difficult to view DART as an "optics" device within the context of greater global military participation in international humanitarian relief efforts. In fact, a number of large NGOs despise the DART's presence because to them it competes within the finite space of international press coverage which they use to acquire funds and self-perpetuate.⁴⁶

Unfortunately for the proponents of 'soft power' it became evident by 1999 that Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein and the rest of the violent world did not want to play by their rules. The continual vilification by the media and the international community of any and all ethnic Serbs in the Balkans in the early 1990s served to tilt the balance of impartiality over

⁴⁴. "Speaking notes for the Honourable David Collenette Minister of National Defence at an Announcement Concerning the Creation of a Canadian Forces Disaster Assistance Response Team, June 6, 1996."

⁴⁵. Briefing provided to the author by the Joint Force Headquarters 2 June 1997; see also Susan D. Moeller's [Compassion Fatigue](#).

⁴⁶. I am, however, hesitant to criticize the Canadian Forces men and women of DART who do their utmost beyond the limits of their capability to alleviate human suffering. I am not hesitant to criticize those in DFAIT and elsewhere who cynically forced the creation of the organization and at the same time would not provide the resources necessary for it to operate properly, purely for the purposes of "optics."

time. Atrocities conducted by the Croatians and non-Serbian Bosnians were wished away and overshadowed by bigger, more public ones which resembled the Holocaust: Srebrinica is an example. The Serbians did not help their case when they used disproportionately violent methods to maintain control over Kosovo and were unable to match the sophisticated Kosovar propaganda and information warfare effort. This in turn prompted Western governments already stung by the 'CNN effect' over Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda, to react with the appearance of vigorous and overwhelming military force to expunge those ghosts while at the same time the same people who criticized Western inaction in Africa criticized NATO for acting over Kosovo!⁴⁷

Canada's contradictory positions within the UN, NATO and in the Balkans could only be reconciled by actively participating in the attempts to stabilize the situation with a non-UN but ECMM-like force (the Kosovo Verification Mission), with the provision of a CF-18 squadron in the ground strike role (Op ECHO) and eventually with a Coyote recce squadron, a helicopter squadron, and a mechanized infantry battlegroup (Op KINETIC). Traditional impartial peacekeeping had failed on a grand scale and now a less impartial peacemaking mission was the only solution to containing Serbian aggression and trying to maintain the Canadian position in NATO and Europe on the one hand and maintaining the Canadian foreign policy continuity on the other. Operation ECHO and Operation KINETIC seemed to demonstrate that Canada did not, in fact, deploy overseas for reasons related to 'soft power': Canada deployed forces overseas to the Balkans to maintain stability in Europe for traditional reasons of forward security.

Once it appeared as though Canada was getting back to its roots in 1999, the winds shifted yet again. Canada embarked on a mission that even within the 'soft power' construct made little strategic sense. Unless one was a constant consumer of Noam Chomsky material, most people would not even know that Indonesia had been conducting rather brutal operations against the East Timor resistance since the 1970s. In time a UN-mandated but non-UN commanded international peace operation (INTERFET) was mounted. The

⁴⁷. This is my initial interpretation of one of the larger motives for the air campaign and it may change or expand over time when better information is available. A number of analysts tend to focus more specifically on what they see as American global hegemony and the warps and wavs of the American-European relationship. For these views see Tariq Ali (ed), Masters of the Universe? NATO's Balkans Crusade (New York: Verso, 2000)

Canadian government announced that 600 troops would be sent to East Timor as part of INTERFET. As DND planners scrambled to figure out how they could chop an existing unit to meet the Government's out-of-a-hat number, Axworthy told the public that Op TOUCAN was designed as an demonstration in human security.⁴⁸ He did not indicate that there were any other Canadian interests in play, though someday the historical record might reveal why Canadian forces were siphoned off from other vital missions or badly needed rest rotation and placed at risk on a small island in the Pacific.

Following Kosovo, there were whispers in the halls of Ottawa that the foreign affairs minister and others were concerned that too many Canadian 'peacekeepers' (ie: soldiers on peacekeeping duty) were wearing green helmets instead of blue ones. In fact, there were more Canadian personnel engaged in NATO operations in and around the Balkans than were engaged in UN operations elsewhere. This was considered a problem amongst those who believed that the New World Disorder should be handled by the UN and not NATO.⁴⁹ Within months, Canadian soldiers were deployed in limited numbers to UN operations in Sierra Leone, the Congo, and Ethiopia/Eritrea. As with Somalia, Zaire, West Sahara, Mozambique, Namibia and Rwanda, there has been no adequate public justification for these deployments. What exactly is the strategic rationale for them? Perhaps there is one or several, perhaps it or they remain a secret buried from the Canadian people in the depths of the Pearson building.

Conclusion

It is evident that there is a long standing Canadian strategic tradition of Forward Security, a tradition that started in the 1880s and remains in effect today. One difference between now and the past is that in the past Canadian policymakers eventually figured out that Canada had to have significant and capable forces in being to back up that policy if Canada was to achieve her national objectives: economic prosperity for all Canadians and the security of both. For the first two decades of the long Cold War, Canada maintained such

⁴⁸. "Speaking Points for The Honourable Art Eggleton Minister of National Defence Before a Joint Meeting of SCONDVA/SCOFIT Concerning Canada's Involvement in East Timor, September 17, 1999."

⁴⁹. Confidential interviews.

a capability. Unfortunately, a myth based on a Nobel Peace Prize took hold. This myth maintained that UN peacekeeping was the central pillar of Canadian national security policy and the repository of the bulk of the resources dedicated to it. The reality was that that pillar was actually NATO and other collective defence measures. Canada's strategic tradition, which has served her well for over one hundred years, was submerged in the fuzziness of the Canadian response to the New World Disorder which was hopelessly optimistic in clinging to the UN pillar. If we do not comprehend this, we are doomed to repeat missions like Somalia, or the Zairian "bungle in the jungle" on one hand, or Hong Kong and Dieppe on another.