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THE FUTURE OF CANADA'S PARTICIPATION IN BALKANS PEACE OPERATIONS³¹

Canada's participation in the war on terror in Afghanistan and its relative success could precipitate a withdrawal of committed troops from the Balkans and other missions. Using recent official figures and pronouncements, I will seek to demonstrate that there is a fundamental paradigm shift at work in Canadian defence thinking both at all echelons of the defence bureaucracy, but also in the public mind as well.

This paradigm shift revolves around the resolution of the dilemma of "deep" versus "broad" participation in multilateral and collective operations in favour of "deep" involvement. On paper, this problem never actually existed. A succession of Defence White Papers going back to 1964 (there were only two published since then) has always advocated that participation in collective defence or peacekeeping missions would be linked to the national interest and implemented within the strict limitations of financial and human resources.

In fact, that has never been the case. Since 1956, Canada has participated in 90 of 113 UN missions, and in all 4 NATO missions in the Balkans. Since the end of the Cold War, close to 7% of the available force (some 4000 per-

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sonnel out of a 55000 regular force structure at any given time) has been employed in overseas missions, a cost amounting to close to 9% of the defence budget. Missions have been deployed on all 5 continents. This excludes domestic missions, such as aid to the civil powers (the 1990 Oka Crisis) and disaster relief, in which the Canadian Forces have been asked to engage in the Manitoba floods, the Quebec ice storm, the Toronto and Nova Scotia snow and wind storm, and British Columbia wildfires. Very few nations can boast of such relative numbers, and with the onset of the war on terror and the change in the type of mission, these numbers can only grow, and Canada notices it cannot follow in its own example anymore. For the first time, Canada must be selective of its missions.

Since 1956, Canada applied a principle of “broad” participation, in obedience to the National Defence Act (which all but forces participation in UN and NATO missions) and in standing violation of its own national security concepts and military force structure development and strategy (the continuing irony of the Canadian Forces is that it sends 7% of its troops on all 5 continents although it has abdicated a transoceanic lifting capability in the mid 1970s, in other words, that it maintains a territorial defence structure, but is employed as an expeditionary force). By definition, “broad” participation acts on a wide political and geographic scope, with inherently limited capabilities, for unlimited duration, and are usually UN-, NATO- or lead-nation propelled. Broad participation stems from the sometimes illusory perception that Canada can wrest influence as honest broker and mediator, and as separator of belligerents in Cold War Third World conflicts that threatened to escalate tensions between the Superpowers. With the end of the Cold War and the multiplication of complex missions, Canada has also multiplied its involvement, but without realizing that participation did not develop the same political leverage as during the Cold War. Broad participation is therefore characterized by poorly staffed missions and assignments hinging on an antiquated perception of the national interest. There is no leverage anymore because there are no Superpowers to separate, and so the planet cannot be grateful for Canada’s cooperative involvement in preventing a nuclear war through Third World peacekeeping. In fairness, the same

could be said of countless other countries that have made a vocation of peacekeeping. This role has perpetuated the myth in the domestic and international psyche that Canada was *only* good at peacekeeping.

Since December 2001, the situation has changed. “Deep” participation is required for the pursuit of the war on terror. Defined by lots of dedicated capabilities, limited in time but of substantial duration, under Canadian command and control, and linked with a renewed perception of the national interest that sees bilateral relations with the United States as paramount, Canada is slowly coming to grips with the reality that it has to deepen its commitments of highly capable fighting troops and is a reliable partner with the United States. The model for this is the International Stability in Afghanistan Force (ISAF), co-led with Germany. But this is a costly mission, which threatens to siphon away capabilities from other important areas, such as the Balkans. The Kabul theatre of operations is more peaceful than it has ever been in the last 25 years. No longer do people stroll around with anti-tank rocket or rocket-propelled grenade launchers, or even AK-47 assault rifles. The place remains dangerous, but while nearly everyone is armed to the teeth, heavy weapons harvests continue to yield fruits thanks to a considerate and comprehensive human intelligence effort. This is due to the fact that the Canadian Forces in theatre have managed to elicit the feeling that they are not an occupation force. For example, soldiers routinely accompany children at risk of violence to school. But the CF is not comprised of social workers; if occasional and hitherto parsimonious firepower is used, the demonstration of force is made in such a way as to lead the potential aggressor to know that he has been spotted, and that not relenting will mean assured destruction. The way in which the point is made is as important as making the point that the forces in presence are serious in achieving the objective of a peaceful and stable capital. Elsewhere in the country, Combined Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) participates in activities to rid the countryside of the remaining Taliban with coalition forces led by the United States.

What this does is convince the civilian side in the defence establishment what the military always knew; the CF can combine coercive action with

rebuilding effectively. This is important because it is the manifestation of the reconciliation actions based on the assessment of the actual national interest. Canada must participate in the war because any sense of insecurity on the part of its southern neighbour will affect trade between the two, as closed borders will undeniably affect Canadian security as trade inflows are choked. The consequence is that although the financial and human resources limitations remain, decision-makers must put in practice the theory professed in White Papers on Defence, avoid open-ended commitments, or commitments less directly connected with the reassessment of the national interest. Prestige, gratitude and benevolence from peacekeeping missions may have brought material advantages to Canada during the Cold War, but no more. Instead prestige is bestowed, gratitude expressed when a coercive contribution is made on the side of the more powerful partner of the transatlantic alliance. The national interest is best served by trading participation for influence in decisions. For Canada, this must be participation in opposition to demonstrable and clear threats, such as terrorism.

The consequences are that the costs associated with ISAF and JTF2 missions in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf lead decision-makers to question the wisdom of for example sprinkling 250 soldiers over 3 or 4 missions on 2 continents. Former Defence Minister McCallum was heard saying that he would much rather send a lot of troops at a single spot. This view is shared by the Chief of Defence Staff, for whom efficiency and quality of life issues must be balanced. In other words, Canada is thinking of deepening its participation in specific missions and considers withdrawing from others.

Another consequence is a steadily increasing budget to fight terrorism. In 1994, the annual defence budget stood at \$12 billion CDN (8 billion USD). In 2004, it stands at 13.3 billion CDN (still 8 billion US, thanks to the drop in currency) and although this represents a steady increase of 130 million dollars every year, a dollar from 1994 won't buy the same amount ten years later. So the commitment shouldn't be exaggerated as far as the CF are concerned. Still, the relevance of the argument stems from the fact that the Treasury Board has earmarked \$600 million CDN for the pursuit of security

activities for FY 04-05. In addition, Canada has developed a new security policy which links immigration, intelligence and prosecution functions together. Finally, a new Defence White Paper is due soon, which should reiterate what the previous pronouncements have made, but with emphasis on fighting terrorism and the new security environment characterized in part by and enlarged NATO. Canadian defence policy will remain dependent on the priorities and caprices of domestic politics, and so the paradigmatic shift in thinking to which I am alluding here should not be exaggerated. Nevertheless, there is the feeling that academic, political and military thinking are, for the first time in many years, being reconciled.

Lately, Canadian Defence has been pressed to rearrange its orders of prioritization. Collective security remains paramount, so ISAF is the single most important mission at the present moment. Hemispheric security challenges are better addressed than they ever have; during this winter's crisis in Haiti, Canada contributed a small company to re-establish order (some 450 troops) but deployment is slated to last only until June 2004. Finally, there is more qualitative Canadian content. Canada rotates leadership of ISAF with Germany, but a maritime mission that is little known about is currently operating in the Persian Gulf, where a Canadian Commander leads a maritime task force where Italy, the Netherlands and the United States are clearly under Canadian command. For the length of deployment in 2002, Canadian ships have boarded, intercepted or diverted suspicious ships and watercrafts on 6000 occasions, while the remaining 6000 events were spread over the Dutch, Italian and American participants. Meanwhile, other missions are being terminated, not renewed or scaled down. This includes missions in the Balkans, which represent the single largest overseas Canadian contingent after Afghanistan.

European security and participation in NATO remains a priority for Canada, but the arguments above demonstrate that more emphasis may be put on activities affecting relations with the United States. And so, Canada is scaling down its commitment, according to a predictable timetable, in anticipation of a European takeover.

At a moment when tensions are flaring up again in Kosovo, and when suspected war criminals remain on the run, protected by their communities, one would be permitted to ask whether it is wise to leave the Balkans at a juncture where meaningful stability is so near at hand. On going tensions and the propensity of ethnic groups to resort to violence rather than to the (still fledgling) courts means that the continued dissolution of international presence could create a power and authority vacuum. The expected European participation (some 7500 troops for the region, compared to the 12000 now in Bosnia only, for example) may not be sufficient to meet the challenge of extremists. There are furthermore no indigenous plans to complement the European participation in a way to prevent danger.

If tensions reemerge and a potent military presence is nowhere to be found, NGOs that contribute to the basic needs of populations while national governments are still developing the means and structures to cater to necessities by themselves, will be tempted to leave, thus arresting development, or imposing insurmountable stress on nascent national service structures.

The presence of hundreds of NGOs, thousands of relief and humanitarian workers, in addition to some 15000 foreign troops, all well-paid, continue to contribute to local economies, which, although its perverse effects have been well documented, is better than nothing. Without the economic inflow of foreign salaries, local entrepreneurs could face a local recession, or worse, resort to the mafia-style “economy of depredation” that was prevalent during the war. Faced with idleness, some could be tempted to profit by indulging in chaos.

It could also trigger a new brain drain, where locally-engaged NGO workers (translators, staffers and office workers) who enjoyed above-average pay, and developed significant multinational experience, would be tempted to emigrate or ply their trade elsewhere. The more tragic consequence of this is that these are the young individuals that harbour feelings of tolerance and that better manifest “Atlantic virtues”. Their departure would create a fur-

ther void which would probably be filled by people whose creeds and beliefs do not mirror that of Europe or the Atlantic community. In other words, the very like-mindedness essential for European integration could elude the region for many more years, as the potential leadership becomes one of an exclusionary nature.

The reality of Western withdrawal from the Balkans could lead other nations to apply the same logic as Canada. In a context of troubled transatlantic relations, the necessity to retain the good favours of the indispensable partner, the United States, could lead Europeans to also trade their participation for influence. If the United States thinks that its security is more threatened by Islamic extremists than by the potential destabilizing effects of the European Balkans under tension, the likelihood is that the next time, they will be left alone to the all-consuming fire of mutual hatred, as the international community focuses on Middle Eastern terrorism.

More than ever, the Balkan people, their leaders, are engaged in a race against time. Develop their own integrative solutions, or remain mired on the door step of Europe. They must do so less and less without the benefit of international help. Not because they have failed so far, but precisely because they have partially succeeded and that the perception of the threat to the West does not come from neighbouring Balkans on the breaking point today, but from terrorists on the run farther a field in Arabia. Whatever their choice is, they will not affect the perception of the threat in the United States specifically. If they choose integration, they should make that choice clear now. This choice could be implemented by the establishment of credible and independent police forces to complement the European contingent. If Europe is serious in taking over the development process, it should concentrate on providing funds to cover salaries of judges and law enforcement officials to remove the temptation of corruption. The rule of law should be made manifest by the presence and engagement of law enforcement officials, not least because it is badly needed objectively for any functioning nation, but because it is needed to remove the impulse that Balkan people have shown to take the law of an eye-for-eye, tooth-for-tooth literally in

their own hands, as demonstrated in Kosovo in March. If they don't choose integration, the Balkans could be left alone, as the war against terrorism – under any definition– promises to be a long drawn out affair.

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