

**Political Leadership and Shifts in Canadian Foreign Policy: Interventions in  
Yugoslavia and Afghanistan**

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This paper represents a preliminary foray into the significance of political leadership as a central determinant of change in Canadian foreign policy. As such it will not adopt an arbitrary or restrictive definition of the rather indefinable and contested concept of political leadership. However, the concept of political leadership will be understood to encompass a process used by governments to preside over public policy and “the question of who controls the outcome of public policy decisions within a state and how they do so” will encompass this study.<sup>1</sup> Also important is the degree to which political leaders – individuals in higher positions of authority – are capable of determining the foreign policy decision-making process. It is understood that individual leaders do not enjoy complete autonomy in shaping policy outcomes. Nevertheless, in terms of assessing shifts in Canadian foreign policy since the 1980’s, the increasing centrality of political leadership in the process of making foreign policy has become more evident. Canada’s role in the Yugoslav intervention of the early nineties attested to the formidable role of political leadership in initiating and managing a shift in Canadian foreign policy from a reliance on *peacekeeping* to an acceptance of an interventionist form of *peacemaking* as a means of bolstering multilateralism and advancing the cause of human rights. This first shift has set the stage for yet another significant departure from Canada’s traditional and comfortable position as a middle power peacekeeper. In the case of Yugoslav intervention the Prime Minister’s power was fully exercised in challenging the doctrine of non-intervention and expanding the acceptable parameters of intervention. As in the case of Yugoslav intervention, the role of political leadership in Canada’s Afghan intervention will be examined as the central determinant of another shift from peacemaking to war making in the interest of not only buttressing the cause of multilateralism and human rights but advancing Canada’s strategic interests.

## **Mulroney Leadership**

### *Creating a New Policy Environment*

One of the first clear indicators of a change in the priorities of Canadian foreign policy was Mulroney’s September 1991 Stanford University speech. The speech not only called openly for a more forceful international response to the early signs of political disaster in Yugoslavia, but a rethinking and revision of conventional views associated with the dominance of non-intervention and sovereignty. The Stanford message was buttressed by Clark’s replacement, Barbara McDougall, who was communicating the same message to the UN and other international bodies. Speeches and policy statements from the prime minister and his minister of external affairs revealed that the government would not be limited by sovereignty sensitivities and international barriers protecting the domestic affairs of states. These policy principles and thinking were further amplified and strengthened by the government as Canada immersed itself more deeply into the Yugoslav intervention.

### *Institutionalizing Multilateral Links*

Two policy instruments served to promote the Mulroney government's goal of institutionalizing multilateral intervention soon after it recognized the dangers posed by the Yugoslav crises as it escalated to violent conflict in the late summer of 1991. The CSCE and the NATO quickly became the central platforms upon which the government developed a policy that not only sought the reformation of NATO and the CSCE but also the *institutionalization* of international intervention. This policy was a product of the ineffectiveness of the early institutional responses to the crisis from NATO, the EC, the CSCE and the UN. Working closely with NATO, Canadian policy-makers identified with and supported an important turning point in NATO's transformation, the 1991 Rome Declaration on Peace and Cooperation. In supporting this new security arrangement the Mulroney government saw the opportunity to develop a framework that would see a host of multilateral institutions other actors create formal structures, channels and policies that would complement each other in order to facilitate stability and defuse "violent nationalism."

### *Reshaping NATO*

At the outset of the Yugoslav crisis Mulroney and McDougall, in conjunction with a more strongly developed CSCE, envisaged a new role for NATO. The decision by NATO in early 1992 to take on a peacekeeping role on a case-by-case basis served as a significant precedent. For an organization that was searching for a new post-Cold War identity, NATO and the CSCE could become a source of stability in the anarchy of the post-Cold War era. The alliance was prepared to move beyond defending its borders to providing military muscle to the work of the CSCE. For Mulroney and McDougall the strengthening and linkages between these two institutions was an integral part of their strategy to move NATO to peacekeeping and then peacemaking. Yugoslavia became the staging ground. The concept of strengthening multilateral linkages materialized with NATO's agreement to establish closer and more formalized channels with the UN when in July of 1992 NATO agreed to take part in "Operation Sea Monitor" by monitoring compliance with SCR 713 and 757. By the end of 1992 NATO planners had already completed plans to enforce a no-fly zone in Bosnia based on SCR 781. In fact, Mulroney had called upon NATO to consider committing a large force that would enforce, on the behalf of the UN, a peace plan drawn up by Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen. Considerable effort was invested by Canadian officials in establishing an appropriate command structure for a possible large-scale NATO peace enforcement operation. The concept of using NATO to "subcontract" UN sponsored peacekeeping initiatives was strongly promoted by the Mulroney government while Canada's NATO delegation was directed to promote arrangements to improve coordination between members. Canada's strong backing of an expanding NATO role in Yugoslavia was perhaps best illustrated by Canada's support for a "masked" NATO operation in Bosnia. In facilitating the deployment of one of NATO's mobile communications battalions to Sarajevo. Mulroney was very much aware of the political significance of this operation. Canada's NATO delegation succeeded in implementing a coordinated mechanism to deal with cost-sharing and other logistical arrangements between NATO members. It is important to note that

the deployment of this unit took place in advance of any formal mandate from the UN. In other words, the Mulroney government, privately, appreciated the importance of establishing a NATO presence as expeditiously as possible in order to pre-empt any logistical and bureaucratic stumbling blocks that could stall or undermine the operation. For the Mulroney government political imperatives took precedent over operational concerns in order to achieve an expanded NATO role in Yugoslavia.

### *Institutionalizing Human Rights and the CSCE*

A similar policy theme was pursued by the Conservative government in stressing the significance of the human rights dimension in promoting European security and stability through strengthening the institutional character of the CSCE and challenging fundamental European assumptions about state sovereignty. The Conservatives had begun to promote the greater renewal and institutionalization of the CSCE process before the disintegration of the Yugoslavia. Canadian policy-makers, initially under the direction of Joe Clark and then Canada's new secretary of state for external affairs, Barbara McDougall, called for a series of initiatives including the regularization of ministerial meetings, the establishment of a CSCE Assembly and conflict prevention offices in Europe, fact-finding missions directed to investigate, in an unprecedented way, the internal affairs of states even, in some cases, without the consent of the state. In fact, the first fact-finding and "confidence-building" CSCE mission into Kosovo, strongly supported by McDougall and led by a Canadian diplomat set an important precedent for the CSCE in creating a new, more intrusive role in Yugoslavia.

### *Institutional(UN) Lethargy*

With the Yugoslav civil war teetering out of control by early 1991, Mulroney saw the worsening Yugoslav crisis as an opportunity to establish his authority over foreign policy. Impatient with international inactivity and prepared to accept the risks involved, Mulroney directed his UN delegation to step up efforts to address the worsening crisis. The prime minister's letter of 20 September 1991 to the Secretary General urged the Security Council to call an emergency meeting to address the worsening crisis. In his letter Mulroney urged the Security Council to call an emergency meeting to address the worsening situation in Yugoslavia and offered Canadian forces as part of a UN peacekeeping contingent. Mulroney's proposal was not welcomed by most Western states as well as many non-aligned members of the UN. Nevertheless, assisted by the prime minister's close friendship with Yves Fortier, Canada's UN Ambassador, Mulroney's determination was rewarded with the placement of Yugoslavia at the top of the Security Council agenda. This diplomatic offensive directed by the prime minister was complemented by a 25 September speech given by his new minister of external affairs, Barbara McDougall. Besides challenging the concept of sovereignty, McDougall reiterated Canada's interest in contributing to a peacekeeping force and noted that it was time for the UN to "open our horizons a bit on what peacekeeping and peacemaking means."

### *Challenging DEA and DND*

It is evident that Mulroney's leadership benefited not only from his initiatives vis-à-vis the UN and other multilateral institutions, but also from the weakening resistance to his interventionist initiatives within the external affairs and defence establishments. Mulroney challenged the traditional balance between political leadership and making foreign policy. Because the Department of External Affairs (DEA) enjoyed a privileged place in the foreign policy making process, political leaders relied heavily on its expertise and typically deferred to its recommendations. At the same time, the department was also recognized for being cautious and conformist, and often from the perspective of the Conservatives, Liberal-friendly. More importantly from the PM's perspective, the external affairs bureaucracy had been caught by surprise at the rapidly changing international environment after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent threats to security posed by intra-state conflict. While External Affairs dutifully monitored and reported on the disintegration of the Yugoslav state, it was not inclined to advise the prime minister to break through diplomatic conventions and challenge some of the fundamental principle of the sovereignty of the state in order to resolve conflict.

In the case of the Department of National Defence (DND), it was weakened by years of budget cuts, general neglect, and a sense of bureaucratic ambivalence about its place in foreign policy. The prime minister also understood that for DND the possibility of foreign intervention involving Canadian forces would likely mean budgetary improvements, a rejuvenated role for the military, and consequently, a bureaucracy more compliant with his wishes. In the final analysis Mulroney came to terms with a foreign policy apparatus defined by conventionalism and international inaction by fully exercising his prime ministerial prerogative. While elements of the government's foreign policy bureaucracy were displeased with the prime minister's prerogative to diminish their influence, the political leadership exercised by Mulroney and McDougall did take hold as the DEA and DND bureaucracies recognized that the Prime Minister's policy initiatives towards Yugoslavia presented new opportunities to reshape a more active foreign policy presence. They, like the prime minister, understood that various segments of the foreign policy-making establishment would be at the forefront of a daring and more risky foreign policy.

### *Canadian Forces on the Ground*

Mulroney's role in leading a call for robust intervention in Yugoslavia extended beyond the upgrading and reform of multilateral institutions and approaches to intra-state conflict. The Mulroney government's diplomatic and political initiatives were paralleled by another demonstration of a change in Canadian foreign policy – specifically, the Canadian military's role in at least two UNPROFOR operations in the former Yugoslavia. Soon after a UN request for the deployment of Canadian troops, the prime minister announced on 10 June 1992 the use Canadian peacekeepers to secure Sarajevo airport. In spite of attempts by Serb militias to stop the Canadian convey, an ultimatum from Canadian forces led to an agreement which allowed a convoy of over eight hundred

peacekeepers to proceed to Sarajevo and occupy the airport of the besieged city on 2 July 1992. The more aggressive posture of Canadian soldiers protecting the airport was accompanied by modified rules of engagement, the inclusion of missile-equipped armoured personnel carriers and the timely use of a shoot-first policy which signalled a willingness by the military and political leadership to overstep the traditional constraints of UN operations. As a consequence the sniping and shelling of Canadians at the airport dropped dramatically which allowed airlifts to Sarajevo to resume. In view of the special importance of Canada's Sarajevo operation, Mulroney and his cabinet were following on an hourly basis the progress made by Canadian forces.

The second operation, involved the designation and defence of the first UN "safe-area" in Srebrenica, a small town in eastern Bosnia. Even before the early spring of 1993 Mulroney cabinet became aware of reports from Lieutenant-General Phillipe Morillon, commander of UN forces in Bosnia, that humanitarian aid convoys were facing increasing difficulty getting through to a number of Bosnian Muslim communities in the wake of a large Bosnian Serb offensive. The Mulroney government, like senior military officials, also understood that "there appeared to be a great deal of heel-dragging on the part of senior [UN] military and political officials in Zagreb and the same degree of heel-dragging in New York."<sup>2</sup> Facing indecision from the UN headquarters in Zagreb and New York, and the belief that his UN superiors would not order him to go to Srebrenica, Morillon - along with reconnaissance personnel from Canada's Bravo Company as well as French and British security escorts - made his way through to the besieged town where, on his own initiative, he raised the UN flag. The small contingent of Canadians was left behind succeeded in drawing international attention to plight of refugees streaming into Srebrenica and prompting the UN to broker a ceasefire which allowed for an advance Canadian contingent, in early April of 1993, to establish a larger UN presence in Srebrenica. On 16 April the Security Council, invoking Chapter VII, declared Srebrenica a "safe area." With the passage of SCR 819, a further 139 Canadian soldiers and armoured vehicles arrived in Srebrenica on 18 April. The UN order for Canadian forces now numbering 330 to defend Srebrenica was interpreted by Canadian forces on the ground in aggressive terms - force would be met with force. By allowing Canadian troops to be placed in this "safe haven," the Mulroney government exhibited a readiness to compel the UN and the international community to intervene more decisively by employing its forces as a UN "trip wire" in the words of one of the Canadians in Srebrenica.

In both the Sarajevo and Srebrenica operations, lower level commanders on the ground were given the opportunity to interpret their UN mandates in more aggressive terms. Cases of Canadian commanders stretching UN mandates can be found in other parts of Yugoslavia., most notably the September 1993 four-day battle between Canadian and Croatian forces in the Medak Pocket, an area in which Croatian troops conducted their own version of ethnic cleansing against the local Serb population. This not to mention the approval by the Mulroney government to employ its secret Joint Task Force II units to conduct secret operations - not approved by the UN - in the former Yugoslavia.

### *Politicizing the Process of Making Foreign Policy*

There were early indications of Mulroney's intentions to dominate the foreign policy decision-making process when he came to power. Early in his tenure Mulroney enhanced the power of two of his executive supporting agencies, the PCO and PMO to the detriment of the Department of External Affairs. By expanding the PMO Mulroney not only emphasized the growing political dominance of PMO operations, he personalized his control over foreign policy. Similarly, by appointing political advisors like Dalton Camp as Senior Policy advisor in the PCO, Mulroney had created a second countervailing presence through which more dangerous foreign policy initiative could be more effectively guided and coordinated. In recalling the initiatives by Canadian forces to open up Sarajevo airport and establish the Srebrenica safe haven, a senior member of the PCO recalled that Mulroney "would always want to hear from DND Chief of Staff details of the operational aspects where Canadian peacekeepers were involved." (Source confidential) Mulroney's chief foreign policy advisor in the PCO, Paul Heinbecker, noted that "the prime minister was under no illusions as to the dangers inherent in those operations."<sup>3</sup> Critics suggested that the prime minister was establishing a quasi presidential system by concentrating real power in the hands of executive appointees and away from Parliament and his cabinet ministers. It has been argued, for example, that by instructing Canada's ambassador to the UN to break the bureaucratic logjam that impeded prompt UN action on an escalating crisis in Yugoslavia, he was going beyond the need to salvage the institutional credibility of the UN or being seen as a world statesman. It had become personal to him.

### **Chrétien Leadership**

Upon assuming power in November 1993 Jean Chrétien's Liberal government made it clear that it was not going to follow the new foreign policy pathway cleared by his Conservative predecessor. The Liberal Party's "Red Book" outlined the main foreign policy-related thrusts of the government: the cancellation of desperately-needed, new helicopters, reducing the size of the armed forces and increasing the power of MP's. The Chrétien government quickly demonstrated a disinterest in following the interventionist policies of the Mulroney government. Early in its mandate, the Liberal government's retrenchment was evident during parliamentary debates on the role of Canadian peacekeeping. Not comfortable with maintaining a Canadian presence in Bosnia, Chrétien adopted a low profile posture on Canada's role in future events in the Balkans. The "new ethic of intervention" was replaced by a more cautious approach to multilateralism and a return to the less dangerous ground of conventional peacekeeping. In marked departure from Mulroney, Chrétien left the management of foreign policy to his minister of foreign affairs. Yugoslavia, for Chrétien, presented the spectacle of an involvement that was endless, as well as militarily and politically unsustainable. In relinquishing direct control over levers of foreign policy, Chrétien signalled a preference, at least as far as matters of intervention were concerned, to have his minister of external

affairs be largely responsible for a policy of gradual disengagement, and to allow for the re-emergence of the foreign affairs bureaucracy.

### *Prelude to Afghanistan*

Chrétien's cautious approach to the Yugoslav and subsequently Kosovo interventions of the mid-nineties set the foreign policy tone of his government's response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and the calls for Canada to join the United States in taking action against the perpetrators. While announcing that "We will stand in solidarity with the Americans,"<sup>4</sup> the reaction of the PM to the attack was guarded: it was premature for Canada to commit its forces to a US-led military attack either against those responsible for the attack or states providing a sanctuary for them, but at the same time, Ottawa would not refuse an American request for assistance. In a 7 October 2001 address following US-British air strikes in Afghanistan, Chrétien announced that the US had requested that Canada contribute to the international military coalition against terrorism. After consulting about Canada's military capabilities with Chief of Defence Staff Chrétien issued an order to units of the Canadian military to mobilize soon after assuring President Bush by phone that "Canada stands shoulder-to-shoulder with him and the American people" and that Canada would be part of the British-US coalition "every step of the way."<sup>5</sup> Chrétien would not be pinned down as to what kind of help Canada would provide the US and Britain. Quick to sound a cautionary note, Defence Minister Eggleton revealed that although an undisclosed number of soldiers had been put on alert or "standby", it did not necessarily follow that they would be put into action. In addition to the Prime Minister's standby order, the Minister of Defence hinted strongly that members of the military's elite commando unit, Joint Task Force 2, could be used to support US and British special forces units in Afghanistan. Support from the Conservative and Alliance opposition for greater Canadian assistance to the Americans was evident. However, the NDP was quick to condemn initial US and British missile attacks against bin Laden's training camps and other military targets in Afghanistan as well as any forthcoming Canadian participation in American-led military action. The prime minister in promising a "take note" debate in Parliament on 15 October 2001 and a series of legislative steps to deal with terrorism concluded his address to Canadians by reminding his countrymen that although the campaign against terrorism would not be painless, it won.

In an opening speech before a special House of Commons debate on Canada's involvement in military action in Afghanistan, Chrétien's words were monumental in their imagery. The prime minister described the war as "the first great struggle for justice of the 21st century."<sup>6</sup> He warned Canadians that it would be a long fight without unconditional surrender from the enemy or victory parades, and that victory would ultimately be "complete."

It is not entirely clear that in committing Canada to standing "shoulder to shoulder" with the US Chrétien was fully prepared to confront the implications of the new threat on Western security imposed by 9/11. In terms of foreign policy options, the implications of a new role for Canada loomed dangerously before the Prime Minister. It

was one thing to volunteer Canadian assistance to the US and its coalition partners as a “hauler, helper and flank watcher”; it was another matter entirely for Canada to take on new and dangerous military and political commitments to go after Bin Laden’s terrorist forces and remove the Taliban regime from power in Afghanistan. Recognizing the importance of gaining some moral authority domestically and internationally through participating in the coalition on one hand and the dangers of joining the battle against terrorism on the other, the Chrétien government remained steadfastly ambiguous about its role.

### *The Commitment-Capability Gap*

A “commitment-capability gap” became evident soon after the Prime Minister’s prompt pledge of assistance to the coalition in the form of a readiness to deploy approximately 2000 soldiers, a small fleet of six ships and a few large aircraft to be a part of the US and British-led campaign against bin Laden and the Taliban regime. While the Alliance and Conservative parties quickly lined up in support of a part for Canada to play in the six member military coalition against international terrorism, they soon brought to light the Liberal budget cuts of the mid-1990’s which were about to limit Canada’s military and political capabilities to participate in overseas operations.

The operational role of Canadian forces that were to be sent to Afghanistan continued to remain unclear and uncertain. Soon after placing 1000 troops from the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry on 48 hour alert, the Defence Minister offered the probability of a modified role of limited duration - despite complaints from the military that the battalion was undermanned - to secure transportation routes and supply humanitarian assistance to Afghans – not to fight a war. Defence analysts were quick to point out that the government was down-playing the intrinsic dangers of this type of complicated deployment which was placing unreasonable demands on the military. Aware that Canadian forces were being stretched too thin and fearful of a longer-term entanglement, Eggleton cautioned that an Afghanistan intervention was not “intended to be the beginning of a long-term peacekeeping operation.”<sup>7</sup> Most striking of all was the Minister’s position that the uncertainty of Canada’s commitment was due to limited resources and capabilities. More embarrassing yet for the military was the Prime Minister’s announcement, in a speech to the military on 22 November 2001, that the troops were now being held back because it was important to “get the mission right” before deployment. Furthermore, Chrétien informed the troops that their primary task would be supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance and that Canadians “do not want to have a big fight there. We want to bring peace and happiness as much as possible.” As one paratrooper put it, troops felt frustrated for not being “considered good enough to be sent in first,” especially after learning of comments by the prime minister and his defence minister that Canadian forces would be withdrawn if they were confronted with full-blown combat. In the words of another frustrated member of Princess Patricia’s “I don’t think they (political leaders) have a good understanding of

what armies are for. It's like asking a policeman to run the other way if he sees a bank robbery." Damaging to the military and to Canada's foreign reputation was Chrétien's poor choice of words, deliberate or not, that suggested that Canadian troops were not up to the task of being put in danger. It is thought that it is the responsibility of political leaders to motivate their soldiers in preparation for deployment. The emotional gulf between the political leadership of Chrétien and the Canadian forces reflected doubt about the prime minister's handling of foreign policy matters and the genuineness of his government's pledge "to waging liberal democracy's war against terrorism."<sup>8</sup>

In terms of managing foreign policy the optics were not impressive. In a span of three months – from the 9/11 attack – beginning with the Prime Minister's strong words about the necessity and justness of Canada being "part of an unprecedented coalition of nations that has come together to fight terrorism," bolstered further by John Manley's unequivocal declaration soon after that "Canada is at war against terrorism" the government's message was transformed by the middle of November 2001 into tentative support for an ill-defined "stabilization" force. One of the first signs of this transformation was the Prime Minister's delaying of standby order of 14 November. There is reason to believe that "getting the mission right" had more to do with delaying and minimizing the political danger and unpredictability of having Canadian soldiers involved in combat by waiting until the military situation in Afghanistan had been stabilized by someone else rather than ensuring that Canadian troops were operationally prepared.

The deployment of Canada's naval contribution which joined the American naval task force was another illustration of Chrétien's policy of limiting Canada's intervention in Afghanistan. Few Canadians were aware, for example, that Canadian liaison officers were attached to two US flag ships in order to notify US commanding officers should their orders contravene the Canadian rules of engagement which did not allow "offensive" operations. In this way diplomatic niceties and "shoulder to shoulder" declarations by the Liberal government disguised Chrétien's fear not only of military entanglement for which Canada did not possess adequate resources but also what has been described by many as a visceral dislike in the Liberal government of the Bush administration. Feeling the criticism for the under funding of the military – even from the Liberal-dominated House of Commons committee on defence – Chrétien used a year-end CTV interview to defend his policies on Afghanistan by describing the defence industry and its lobbyists as the source of the attacks on his government. More specifically, he suggested that diverting additional public money on a "bunch of guys ... who are representing those who sell armaments" would come at the expense of funding on health care and the underprivileged.<sup>9</sup>

While appealing perhaps to domestic sentiments, Chrétien's statements also revealed a mindset that characterized the military as perpetually complaining of under funding. His military points of reference also revealed both a shallow understanding of defence and military policy and/or a willingness to misrepresent the military's position. By reducing complex defence policy requirements down to issues such as the obsolescence of tanks and assertions that profit-oriented defence lobbyists were in danger

of harming Canada's health system, Chrétien was willing to disregard even many of his own MP's and the Liberal-led Commons committee on defence which had reported on numerous occasions that a shortage of funds was seriously undermining Canada's military capabilities. The Liberal government had reduced spending by 23% and had reduced the size of the regular forces from 75,000 to 60,000 since 1994. The PM's view that the military was "well-equipped" were even at odds with the Auditor General's report that Canada's few aging aircraft and helicopters left Canadian forces short of being combat capable.

Of considerable embarrassment to the Chrétien government – somewhat split on how to commit to Afghanistan – was the knowledge that should the government commit to a traditional peacekeeping operation, let alone a war-making one, it would likely fall short of the necessary equipment and resources necessary to sustain an effective intervention, thereby further undermining what was left of Canada's international reputation and credibility as a "peacekeeper." Although the government decided in early January of 2002 to send Canadian troops – formally described as a stabilization force – to participate in Operation Apollo, the nature and mandate of the deployment remained unclear to the government and the Canadian public. On the other hand, John Manley's view of Canada's participation in the operation was quite clear. In sending 750 soldiers to Kandahar under Article 51 of the UN Charter, Manley indicated that Canada's unit would include a variety of tasks ranging from the delivery of humanitarian assistance to active combat operations. Some 50 members of Canada's JTF-2 anti-terrorist unit had already been working with US Special Forces in Kandahar.

Chrétien's political leadership was tested again in terms of rules and obligations regarding the status of prisoners captured by coalition forces and other military matters. Evidence suggests that the Prime Minister, never comfortable with the Afghanistan file and disinterested in operational matters, was not interested in being kept in the loop regarding matters related to prisoners, secret Joint Task Force 2 operations and other sensitive militarily-related issues. It was understood Chrétien, fearful of a deeper involvement in Afghanistan, was not a hands-on leader particularly where military matters were concerned, and that he, like many political leaders, considered themselves better off to remain ignorant of secret or extremely dangerous initiatives, thereby allowing them to appear blameless should those operations fail or prove to be too costly. At the same time, political leaders, in times of war, are expected to be aware of the darker or more sensitive side of military actions. Conversely, it is not unusual for a prime minister not to keep informed because it diminishes accountability at both the executive level of government but also at the military level of leadership. Further troubling is that prime ministerial disinterest in critical details of foreign policy can contribute to the distancing and consequent miscommunications that may take place between departments responsible for forging foreign policy.

Another indicator of Chrétien's interest in stepping back from Canada's involvement in Afghanistan was what might be considered his premature disbanding of his government's 10-member Cabinet Committee on Public security and Anti-Terrorism before Christmas of 2001. On 7 October 2001 Foreign Affairs Minister John Manley

was appointed by the PM to chair this committee which was designed as a kind of priorities and planning committee which co-ordinated Canada's international and domestic response to the 9/11 attacks. Non-member Cabinet ministers complained of being marginalized and members complained of cabinet colleagues interfering in the affairs of their ministries, while the PMO was displeased that the security committee was undermining its power and influence. Furthermore, the committee which saw frank exchanges of viewpoints reminiscent of traditional collective decision-making by cabinet raised Manley's profile much to the displeasure of cabinet rivals. The disbanding of this committee which had begun to upstage the Prime Minister was paralleled by lethargic efforts on the part of the government to update Canadians on the government's objective and efforts.

### *Framing the Debate and Public Opinion*

One of the more important aspects of political leadership is framing the debate that surrounds difficult and complex foreign policy issues. This process is joined by the general public, special interest groups, the media, governmental bureaucracies as well as academia of course. Since the government and political leaders are highly dependent on public support of their policies, the manner in which the debate is framed becomes a central concern for Chrétien.

The replacement of Manley in early 2002 with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bill Graham, signalled the Prime Minister's wish to reframe the foreign policy debate from a focus on the *real politique* imperatives of following the US lead on the war on terror to a foreign policy based on "visions" and idealism. Proponents of a military and strategic perspective have suggested that statements by Chrétien were not congruent with the new realities of the international affairs.

The Prime Minister's part in framing the foreign policy debate surrounding Canada's intervention in Afghanistan was revealed in a variety of statements and views which were often communicated poorly. In his April 2002 remarks before the House on the deaths of four Canadian soldiers by friendly fire Chrétien's mechanical delivery, from a brief prepared text, was criticised by many as being monotonous and emotionless and, therefore, out of touch with the grief felt by Canada's small but tightly-knit military community. His qualities of leadership and communications were also judged to be suspect on numerous occasions such as during a CBC interview in which he described as "scary" his obligation to authorize the shooting down of a Korean airliner over Canada by US fighters should the plane be judged as being under the control of hijackers. He went on to offer a sophomoric geopolitical analysis informing the Canadian public of the dangers of humiliating Third World peoples, and the thought that September 11 had to be understood as the product of the inappropriate use of Western power and wealth against others less fortunate. He also referred to earlier statements to the moguls of Wall Street: "When you are powerful like you are, you guys, it is time to be nice". On more than one occasion PMO has had to issue edited versions of the prime ministers thoughts. In the words of one columnist, Robert Fulford, "Chatter about who is rich and who isn't has no

meaning until you consider specifics. The Prime Minister's statements on the CBC far from contributing to the discussion of world affairs, amounted to no more than reflexes, twitches of the mind. It's appalling to think he's spent four decades in public affairs without learning how to formulate a few thoughts on matters he claims to care about."<sup>10</sup> His view of connecting what happened at New York's ground zero with "the tragic consequences of the grinding misery of failed states in faraway places" as he described the situation in a short speech before a half empty UN general Assembly on 17 September 2002 was considered by many as overly simplistic. Essentially the speech represented an attempt to distance himself from the American position on combating terrorism and was, in particular, aimed at that segment of Canada's popular opinion known to be disdainful of American wealth and power. Signalling the division within the Liberal government was the spectre that same week of some Liberal MPs publicly voicing criticisms of the evils of the Bush administration policy on Afghanistan and Iraq. As opposed to the new "first strike" foreign policy doctrine adopted by the US, Chrétien's views about global terrorism spawned by poverty reflected the different direction Chrétien's policy on Afghanistan was headed, or so one might think. Earlier during an anti-poverty conference in Mexico Chrétien's message was reversed when he stated: "You cannot make a link between poverty and terrorism because bin Laden apparently was very rich." The absence of consistency and clarity of the prime minister's statements served to spotlight an underlying agenda which sought to avoid a clear stand.

Part of the problem in expressing and following a coherent and consistent foreign policy path on Afghanistan also stemmed from the fact that the Liberal government had failed to conduct a full policy review. There was some consistency in one area and that was Canadian support of American initiatives conducted through the United Nations. What can be implied from statements on Afghanistan from Chrétien and Graham was that Canada was willing to support nearly any Security Council decision as long as that decision has been reached multilaterally. Martin Rudner, like other foreign policy analysts described that approach as a poor excuse for foreign policy: "That is an absurdity in terms of Canadian security interests. After all, what is the UN Security Council? It is five [permanent] countries. We have interests too. Those five countries aren't five Moseses coming down from Mount Sinai, each carrying the tablet."<sup>11</sup>

Chrétien's reluctance to commissioning a foreign/defence policy review can be attributed in part to what has been described as the Liberal government's institutional antipathy towards military matters. The last review completed under Mulroney was ignored by Chrétien who assumed that Canada's military would be a peacekeeping one. Chrétien's views found a home in the considerable influence of Lloyd Axworthy, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs whose impact on Ottawa's defence and foreign policy was considerable in advocating the downgrading of the status of Canadian Forces as he promoted his policy of "soft power." Even in terms of conventional peacekeeping contributions of the time and contrary to the self-image of Canadians, this country's actual contributions to peacekeeping operations globally were near the bottom of the list of contributors. The question was whether or not Canadians had perceived international threat since 9/11 as having now changed enough to warrant a more aggressive and vigilant response and a higher level of military preparedness. Certainly in the immediate

aftermath and shock of 9/11 in Canada there appeared to be a surprisingly high level of acknowledgement that Western forces would not only be required to undertake peacekeeping operations, but increasingly peacemaking and other offensive modes of intervention. Such a capability for Canada would require a truly self-sufficient battle group with adequate supporting resources.

Early in 2003 it was announced that Canada was sending troops to Afghanistan the United Nations-mandated security force based in Kabul. Canada's new defence minister John McCallum announced on 12 February 2003 that Canadian forces would send up to 2000 soldiers to join the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) established in Kabul in 2001. While formed under the UN, ISAF was essentially a counter-insurgency force rather than a peacekeeping operation. More to the point, Canada's agreement to join allowed the Chrétien government the opportunity to plausibly argue that Canada did not have the resources to contribute to a US-led war against Iraq. As noted earlier Canada had sent an 800-member battalion from Princess Patricia's Light Infantry on a combat mission to southern part of Afghanistan the previous summer. However, because National Defence was unable to supply replacements they were withdrawn from Afghanistan after a six-month deployment. In the final analysis, the Chrétien government's decision to send a battle group and brigade-level headquarters of some 1,500 soldiers to Kabul to join the UN-approved stabilization mission in Kabul in the summer 2003 placed increasing stress on the military in terms of troop burnout and the feasibility of fielding combat-ready units in the future – a warning echoed by the commander of Canada's army, before the House of Commons defence committee. In the commander's words the mission put the "overall cohesion and stability of the army" in jeopardy and made evident the uneasy tension between the prime minister, minister of defence and the military leadership – all locked in an uneasy balance of power – in the absence of clear political leadership and a coherent foreign policy on intervention.

The reality, at this point, was that Canadian forces were designated as a counter-insurgency, not a peacekeeping force. Despite its discomfort with the nature of the operations in which Canadian troops were participating, the Chrétien government was willing to take the chance that going to Afghanistan was going to be less dangerous than participating in the invasion of Iraq. Chrétien, in effect, used Canada's contribution to Afghanistan as a means of avoiding sending the army into actual combat in Iraq. As for the government's supposed increase in defence spending, it even fell short of sustaining a "peacekeeping" role. From the political perspective of the Chrétien government it was necessary to reduce the military's budget in the 1990's in response to its political promises and the public clamour for health spending. Chrétien also understood that his government's policy of weakening Canada's military was made possible by a Canadian public willing to disregard Canada's weak contribution to NATO in terms of defence spending and willing to adopt the view that NATO had become irrelevant in the post-cold world. For Chrétien domestic political interests simply trumped Canada's foreign policy interests.

## **The Martin Leadership**

Even as Paul Martin was giving his acceptance speech after an acrimonious Liberal leadership convention it was transparent that he wanted to see an adjustment to Canada's foreign and defence policies and a change in tone and approach regarding Canada's intervention in Afghanistan. A Martin government, the new leader of the Liberal party had already hinted, was prepared to consider an expanded role for Canadian forces in Afghanistan given the successes of Kabul mission to that point. In mid-October of 2003 the UN Security Council had voted in favour of expanding peacekeeping and security operations beyond Kabul with the support of NATO. Although ever-mindful of the military's concern as to Canada's ability to meet future ISAF commitments, the new Liberal leader and soon to be Prime Minister appeared open to extending Canada's mission beyond the August 2004 deadline.

By January of 2004 Prime Minister Martin had further distanced himself from Chrétien by promising a full foreign and defence policy review but would not call for an increase in military spending until its completion in the fall of 2004. More significant perhaps was the emotional tone Martin struck when discussing the death of Cpl. Jamie Murphy in a suicide bombing in Kabul a few days earlier. Visibly moved by the loss of Cpl. Murphy, Martin acknowledged that Canada and Canadians had an international responsibility to support the Afghan mission. A few days later in a moving tribute to Corporal Murphy at CFB Trenton, Martin and his defence minister and Chief of Defence Staff as well as other dignitaries shook the hands of the soldiers who accompanied Cpl Murphy's body home.

Paul Martin came to office challenging Canadians to enlarge their vision and to set higher goals. In the realm of foreign policy, Martin offered the public a vision of Canada playing a more spirited role in international relations "... far greater than our size might suggest in shaping the nature and direction of the change that is required," the same high-minded theme which was echoed in the throne speech.<sup>12</sup> However, Martin's motivational skills were not matched by his budget, which in terms of defence spending, provided for modest increase on the military, hardly enough to enhance Canada "pride and influence" overseas. Having painted himself into a corner as a leader in support of re-invigorating the military and a more activist foreign policy vision, Martin was not in the position to concede to the Canadian public and opposition that Canada's intervention was becoming less a matter of keeping the peace and ever so gradually more to do with going to war. The implication in terms of Prime Ministerial leadership was that the Afghan mission was drifting out of control – even as it was announced that Canada's mission would be extended beyond the August 2004 and that Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier, an up and coming commander, was given command of ISAF in Kabul. Prime Minister Martin had crossed an important policy-making juncture adopted by Chrétien.

As for the long-anticipated foreign/defence policy review, once again, it was no longer a high priority for a minority government that might not see its completion while in power. During the election campaign Party leaders did not accentuate foreign policy /defence policy differences. Yet it is interesting to note that before the election Martin

certainly displayed a more hawkish bent than his predecessor, Jean Chrétien, for whom Martin was prepared to sacrifice military spending in order to reduce the deficit. Further promises of increased funding, most analysts concluded, would not address the fundamental structural decline of the military. Compounding the problem was the absence of clear visions about the role that Canadians wanted their military to play as well as the absence of a broader, more contemporary determination of Canada's foreign policy objectives. The classic Liberal party dictum "run to the left, govern to the right" was played out again – with the Conservative position based more clearly and squarely on support for a stronger military. Those Canadian politicians on the left side of the ideological spectrum identified with the military in its peacekeeping, blue beret role. Beyond that role, Canadian forces by definition were seen as pawns of American interests.

Finally, both the Liberal and Conservative leaders contained their defence and foreign policy platforms along the peacekeeping-peacemaking spectrum. For Canadians like Jack Granatstein, the myth of peacekeeping remained a potent force in Canadian politics especially for a public unaware that Canada has become a minor contributor to international missions and that the international environment and the nature of the missions, typified by Afghanistan, has changed quite dramatically from the Pearson era. As a small town newspaper editorial stated it succinctly: "What we do now is what used to be called fighting wars."<sup>13</sup>

From the standpoint of assessing political leadership and Canada's role in the Afghan intervention, the campaign and election represented a lost opportunity to indulge in a thorough examination of foreign and defence policy. Emerging from the election with a minority government, Martin advanced the cause of nation-building, peace building in Afghanistan, policing operations in Haiti and the idea of the Canada Corps– a "foreign policy of niches" as described by Andrew Cohen. At the same time Martin was capable of using historical invocations such as the three D's of Canada's internationalism – defence, diplomacy, and development rooted firmly in the concept of 'peace, order and good government" a distinguishing constitutional objective that has often been reflected our international objectives. In short, foreign policy was seen by Martin as an area where he could distinguish himself – "by showing ambition and imagination" – even in a minority government.<sup>14</sup> Cohen's sense of optimism about the new foreign policy under Martin was not shared. David Ljunggard of the *Windsor Star*, for example, depicted Martin's foreign policy as one that "has largely bobbed on the surface of current events, with Ottawa seemingly content to let the latest drama and tragedy dictate where we should be paying attention."<sup>15</sup> While the well-intentioned Martin was recognized as a keen observer of international affairs, eager to travel internationally and almost obsessed with being everywhere in order to promote the message that Canada's uniqueness could "make a difference," inspirational rhetoric was not met by substantive action.

In terms of Martin's vision for the UN, the prime minister viewed established principles of sovereignty and non-intervention as being outdated where humanitarian intervention was concerned. and that the most effective means of freeing victims of oppression and genocide was for Western states to "take matters into their own hands" as

was done in Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo. Among other initiatives designed to revitalize the UN, Martin revived a concept advanced earlier by Mulroney who challenged the UN to take a more assertive role in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere. Martin proposed the idea of a model for collective intervention by which the Security Council, empowered with establishing new thresholds by which threatened civilian populations, could be provided with proportionate military or civilian protection. Challenging Martin's vision and Ottawa's dominant foreign policy tradition for the UN was the view that saw Canadian leaders has having for too long been naïvely devoted to the United Nations and that the UN-mandated dispatching of Canadian troops to humanitarian wars.

### *The Rise of Military Leadership*

Martin's foreign policy makeover involved not only persuading the Bush administration that Canada was prepared to undertake a redirection of its anti-terrorism policies, but also strengthening the Liberal government's relations with Canada's military after decades of neglect by government. Martin, more than his predecessor, appreciated the importance of symbolic gestures. In a gesture of reconciliation Martin, upon being sworn in as PM, made it a point to visit with staff at national defence headquarters. In another sign of respect and recognition of the growing importance of the military to his foreign policy aspirations, Martin did what Prime Ministers rarely do and that is to appear on military bases as he did on 15 April 2004. What was most significant about his speech at CFB Gagetown, besides news of a plan to purchase new equipment, was the message that Canada was committed to the Afghanistan intervention for the long haul. In communicating his vision that Canada must become a leader in responding to global crisis, Martin acknowledged that a stronger military was essential in realizing his international objectives when he added: "We must do more than simply stand for our ideals. We must back them up with action. In this, a modern and relevant Canadian Forces is absolutely critical."<sup>16</sup> Upon his appointment as Chief of Defence Staff in January 2005 Lt-General Rick Hillier, who had led the NATO mission in Afghanistan, won praise from Martin who described Hillier as personifying what Canadians wanted in a military leader. "He has extensive experience, he has a very broad vision which certainly, I believe, will strike a resonant chord with Canadians and obviously with the Forces."<sup>17</sup> At the time the Prime Minister made this announcement, it is not likely he foresaw the extent to which his words would ring true. Hillier's ability to articulate his broad vision was immediately apparent when he offered the view that for the next generation Canadian interests were threatened primarily by failed states which often serve as bases for terrorism.

Hillier did not wait long to publicize key elements of his vision in a speech on 14 April 2005, interestingly, a week before the Martin government planned to unveil its International Policy Statement intended to outline the role to be played by the military, diplomacy, international assistance and business in projecting Canada's foreign policy interests. Not only was the new Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) prepared to be critical of earlier military leadership, he marked out a clear starting point for Canada's new military and its bold role in making foreign policy. Of particular significance and in a subtle departure from any previous CDS, Hillier announced a vision of Canada's armed forces

re-positioned to play the role as the main instrument of foreign policy. During his speech to the Conference of Defence Associations he stated: “Actions will speak louder than words. Now we deploy around the world – yes, with our values – but because of our interests.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, what he was prepared to present and promote was the importance of Canada’s interests in conjunction with Canada’s internationalist values.

### *Crossing the Rubicon into Kandahar*

By the summer of 2005 it had become clear to Canadian policy makers that Martin’s willingness to deploy 1500 soldiers to Kandahar in February 2005, the most dangerous and important region of Afghanistan in terms stopping the Taliban and defending the Karzai government, represented a major change in Canada’s role in the NATO-led operation. This relocation of Canadian forces also spotlighted the central importance of the role political leadership in presiding over this monumental decision. In spite of Defence Minister Bill Graham’s claims, largely for public consumption, that Canada’s new role in Kandahar was simply a continuation of Canada’s involvement in efforts at rebuilding Afghanistan. it was certainly understood within government that Canadian forces would likely be fighting along side of American forces in their attempt to stop a revived Taliban insurgency. It was also understood by insiders that the move to Kandahar was, in part, a form of compensating the US for the Martin government’s decision not to join the US in missile defence. The decision by Martin to go to Kandahar also served as another test of his commitment to give Canada’s military the funds required to do its job.

The decision to go to Kandahar also stemmed from a change in the leadership of Canada’s military. Canada’s new role, political and military, in Kandahar was made possible by the appointment of operationally-experienced Rick Hillier, known as a “soldiers’s soldier” as Chief of Defence Staff – a position usually filled by high ranking officers based on their bureaucratic credentials. Hillier was an outspoken officer who rarely minced words: “detestable murders and scumbags” was his famous description of the Taliban and al-Qaeda insurgency soon after assuming his new post. He did not mind reminding Canadians that one of the jobs of the armed forces was “to be able to kill people.” Interestingly, Hillier’s candid appraisal of the terrorist enemy received the backing of Martin when he stated “The point he is simply making is we are at war with terrorism and we’re not going to let them win.”<sup>19</sup> Hillier’s blunt words were not softened by Defence Minister Graham’s office. Martin was equally supportive of Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan’s comments about Canadians being “psychologically unprepared for a terrorist attack.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, Canadians should realize that they are targets of terrorists and, therefore, should not become complacent about that threat. Certainly Hillier’s message and language sparked considerable debate among Canadians – particularly between those who interpreted them as reminiscent of the warmongering language of the Bush administration and those Canadians who saw a refreshing honesty being communicated by Canada’s military leadership.

Canada's decision to go to Kandahar was also marked by Defence Minister Graham's discussions with NATO in the spring of 2005. Those discussions established an understanding by NATO that the southern region of Afghanistan posed the greatest threat to the stability of the country. "Most members of cabinet and caucus were supportive. For those who understand the strategic nature of our commitment to NATO and what we're trying to achieve there, it becomes obvious" noted Graham. Describing his recommendation to the PM as "unfinished business" with the goal of advancing Canada's strategic objective of establishing a secure Afghan state, Graham successfully presented the position to the PM that Canada could not walk away from the job of stabilizing Afghanistan until that task was completed. Again, it is important to note that Graham used the term "strategic objective" in supporting and explaining Canada's move to Kandahar. Central to this pivotal moment were the assurances provided by Graham to Martin that Canadian forces would have the necessary troops and resources to react to other international trouble spots if required. "The Prime Minister was satisfied when we had the discussion around this that this was not tying our hands from not ever being able to do anything else," Graham reported. Significant as well were cabinet discussion which acknowledged the new dangers posed by the Kandahar intervention, an operation that would involve the hunting of Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in the region. "This is riskier and it's a more pointy-ended mission than some. But its goal is no different than others, which is to create stability in a region that we've strategic investment to make sure we can leave that country in a position we don't have to worry about it anymore," stated Graham.<sup>21</sup> For the PM committed to a larger role for Canada on the international stage, the Kandahar mission was to provide tangible evidence of Canada's international role and continued commitment to Canada's multilateralist tradition. What was also understood, of course, was that the Kandahar mission could also open the door to a drift away from that tradition.

Hillier's presentation to cabinet on 14 November 2005, was further illustrative of the CDS's determination to press his agenda forward with full speed. His role in contributing to the development of the new Defence Policy report reflected the position of a military leader with a clear blueprint for the transformation of the armed forces. In pressing cabinet to fast-track the purchase of new equipment – in particular a new fleet of heavy-lift helicopters and transport planes – Hillier was in a position to remind cabinet of spending promises made in the federal budget and the Martin government's recently issued defence policy paper, a document created by Defence Minister Graham and General Hillier. His "tough message" to cabinet emphasised that a failure to meet new equipment requirements would not only compromise the safety of his troops and the effectiveness of current operations, it could seriously harm Canada's foreign policy commitments and image. Playing hard ball with cabinet was effective for Hillier as he and cabinet understood the political fallout that would face the government due to the greater use of roadside bombs and mines by the insurgency around Kandahar. Improved air capability would allow Canadian forces to avoid the scale of IED casualties and ambushes experienced by Americans in Iraq. While Defence Minister Graham had given his support in hastening the purchase of this equipment, Graham, supported by a number of cabinet ministers, also indicated that the government would not likely fast-track procurement procedures. Understanding that these procurement procedures and rules –

overseen largely by Public works - would result in extensive delays, in the case of the tactical-lift planes and helicopters, Hillier pressed for the fast-tracking of the \$12-billion purchase of Lockheed Martin's new C-130J Hercules transports and Boeing's Chinook helicopter by bypassing the conventional open-tendering process. Displaying his political astuteness and aware of the enormous cost to the taxpayer posed by such a purchase from the American arms industry, Hillier informed cabinet that \$5.8 billion of the \$12.2 billion price tag would include a comprehensive, long-term maintenance plan that would be diverted to Canadian companies. Although Hillier's message to cabinet did not result in the fast-tracking of much needed equipment, it did illustrate the military's new-found confidence and aptitude in publicly exerting considerable pressure on Martin's cabinet. In so doing, Hillier had at least succeeded in raising public and political expectations about improving the capability of the military to follow through on the government's new Defence Policy Statement, a document co-authored by Graham and Hillier.

### *Prelude to an Election*

With the federal election set for 26 January 2006, a preference by Canadians for minority governments seemed to be in evidence. Minority governments in the post-Chrétien government have also highlighted the precarious role of political leadership in overseeing Canada's Afghan intervention. It should, therefore, not be surprising that the Martin government had in some areas chosen to associate itself more closely with the US, while in others such as missile defence, it stood apart from Washington. The resolve by Martin's minority government to improve relations with the US and to stay firm to its commitment to see Afghanistan stabilized by spearheading NATO's presence in southern Afghanistan was noteworthy. At the same time, political leaders have been averse to making Canada's presence in Afghanistan an issue in the election campaign. This aversion has been attributed to a form of respect for the perilous job Canadian troops are doing and a recognition that under these circumstances most Canadians, however uncomfortable or unclear they are about the mission, are able to offer support, however tepid, for the mission. The grim logic of going to Afghanistan to win the approval of the US was understandable. On the other hand, as to the question of what Canadian boots on the ground will accomplish and at what price, there is a line of thinking that sees the sleepwalking Canadian public reaching a mutual accommodation<sup>1</sup> with political leadership which has found it more politically expedient to avoid engaging the public in a debate about Canada's role in Afghanistan, especially during an election campaign.

Nevertheless, it remains surprising that during the election campaign preceding one of Canada's largest and most dangerous military missions since the Korean War, there was the absence of a formal parliamentary motion, full public debate and a clear, defining statement from the Martin government advancing Canada's goals in preparing to send troops to Kandahar. Successive governments – certainly since the 1990's and the metamorphosis of peacekeeping into peacemaking - have been reluctant to encourage public discourse or to present more clearly defined goals when Canadian soldiers have been ordered to intervene in foreign conflicts. The Liberal government had, for example, prepared a document representing the government's plan in Afghanistan in 2002 titled

“Strategic Objectives of the Canadian Forces and the Government of Canada”. However, that document would not be released under access to information procedures due to Cabinet confidentiality. After all, as Kim Nossal has observed: “This is all about being able to sell a combat mission to a hugely sceptical Canadian public.” Some have described this phenomenon of avoiding to talk about why exactly we are there as a kind of “conspiracy of silence among Canada’s political elite.”<sup>22</sup> Apart from a poorly-attended, evening Parliamentary take-note debate on 15 November 2005, which received little media attention, hardly any time was spent on the issue in the House. It can be noted as well that there were critics of the Martin government who recognized that it would have been very easy for Martin, in the midst of an election campaign to decline the perilous Kandahar mission citing cost, a shortage of military resources, the potential for high casualties and by falling back on the familiar anti-American, anti-war sentiment within the Liberal caucus. Instead, Martin took a stand with the objective of serving notice that Canada was capable of taking its international responsibilities seriously. The seriousness of Canada’s presence in Afghanistan struck home when on 16 January 2005, a high ranking Foreign Affairs official was killed and three Canadian soldiers seriously injured by a car bomb explosion in Kandahar. This deadly incident came with the realization that Canada was at war and provided the Martin’s Liberal minority government with another opportunity to retreat from its NATO commitment. Instead, both Liberal leader Paul Martin and Conservative leader Stephen Harper re-affirmed their commitment to remain, with NDP leader Jack Layton offering muted approval of continuing with the mission.

Haunted by domestic scandals, victimized by his own budget slashing of an already emaciated military, weakened by inter-party divisions and hampered by a foreign policy vacuum, Paul Martin’s enthusiasm and willingness to elevate Canada’s foreign policy presence were not enough to prevent a Conservative victory and a drifting foreign policy on Afghanistan from being set on a new course by two forces, Steven Harper and Rick Hillier.

## **Harper in Power**

January 26, 2006 heralded the arrival of Stephen Harper’s minority government to power in Ottawa. Harper’s political transformation into a moderate, small-c conservative, coupled with his more disciplined and tactically-honed leadership and election strategy, based on an integrity platform contributed to the defeat of Martin’s Liberals. Soon after assuming power Harper’s government faced a variety of contentious domestic issues. At the same time, it soon became evident that the conflict in Afghanistan would become the single most defining issue of his leadership and be portentous of a further shift in Canadian foreign policy. As in the previous election campaign, there was little mention of foreign policy and Canada’s impending commitment to the Kandahar area - during the election campaign which brought Harper to power. However, from many quarters, public and governmental, a prevailing theme was building - Canadian troops specifically and the Canadians in general deserved a greater measure of political leadership. To this point most of that leadership and direction was coming from Rick Hillier and from Brigadier-

General David Fraser, commander of the multinational brigade in Kandahar. Clear political leadership in terms of how victory or progress was to be measured was absent as well.

Prime Minister Harper's political leadership was put to the test almost immediately. It was evident that Harper wanted to enlarge his control the politics of his minority government and its commitment to go into Kandahar. Early in his mandate Harper defended his position that the government and the public at large should display unequivocal support for the dangerous mission. For this reason Harper closed the door on the Liberal's demand for a parliamentary debate on the deployment of Canadian forces to Afghanistan: "You do not send men and women into harms way in a dangerous mission with the support of our party and other Canadians and then decide, once you're over there, that you're not sure you should have sent them," he stated.<sup>23</sup> Harper's attempt to put his critics and the Opposition on the defensive in this matter provided some time for his fledgling government to organize itself. It also provided greater time and space for Hillier to carry the government's torch by making a series of presentations that communicated to the public the virtues of rebuilding Afghanistan as a Canadian priority. In doing so, Hillier was not shy about exercising his parameters of power and crossing the grey line between military and political jurisdiction as was the case when he offered his opinion that it would probably require a 10-year commitment from Canadian forces to complete the job of rebuilding Afghanistan. Whether Hillier's appraisal was an honest observation or a calculated move to advance the military's agenda, it had the effect of making it more difficult for Harper's minority government to side step the issue of the duration and possible extension of Canada's commitment to the Kandahar mission. The CDS's observations also served as a public reminder to the Conservatives of their pledge to increase spending on defence. More important, Hillier's appraisal was seen as a challenge to a Prime Minister very focused on establishing tight controls over his government. Harper understood that it would not be prudent at the time for his government to review Martin government's commitments to Afghanistan and reminded the public that "decisions on deployments are always made in the end by civilian authorities, the elected democratic authority of the country." Mindful that he would need the support and expertise of his highly competent CDS, Martin added: "I know that our military people will give us the best advice." From the outset Harper was committed to advancing a more muscular foreign policy stance and displayed a visceral identification with taking a stronger stand against the perceived threat of international terrorism. "Canadians don't cut and run at the first sign of trouble," he announced. "That's not the nature of this country. And when we send troops into the field, I expect Canadians to support those troops."<sup>24</sup> To retreat at the first signs of difficulty and sacrifice was considered by Harper an unprincipled betrayal of the very soldiers his government, ordered into combat. On another level Harper's statement represented an emotional challenge thrown at the Canadian conscience at a time when 10 Canadian soldiers and a diplomat had lost their lives since Canada's arrival in Afghanistan four years earlier. Moreover, Harper's rhetoric also showed his political adeptness in positioning his agenda in the wake of commitments made by the previous government. In this way, he was able to deny the Opposition the opportunity a debate on Canada's Kandahar commitment

while at the same time, calling for Liberal support for the Kandahar mission because it was the Liberal government that had approved that mission in the previous year.

### *Playing Politics with Politics*

Harper's support of the military and a prolonged Canadian presence was highlighted by his surprise 15 March 2006 visit to Kandahar. In a speech aimed at fellow Canadians and the military, Harper staked out his government's rationale for Canada's role in Afghanistan in a tone that emphasized that Canada would not be dissuaded from completing its objective of stabilizing the country. In plain language Harper outlined three fundamental reasons for Canada's presence in the region despite the increasing dangers. The first reason was to safeguard Canada's national interests. It is important to note that the Prime Minister led his speech with an emphasis on defending Canada's national interests in strategic terms. Should the Taliban and al-Qaeda re-establish themselves in Afghanistan, Harper declared, the implications to international security and Canada's part in maintaining it, would be horrendous. Closing down what was once one of the leading spawning grounds for terrorism overseas, Harper asserted, was more effective than trying to defend against it in North America. In accusing the previous Liberal government of failing to explain Canada's mission in Afghanistan, Harper was not averse to correlating Canada's presence in the very area from which the Taliban-supported al-Qaeda masterminded the 9/11 attacks and those Canadians, "ordinary people" with "...families, partners, children, with dreams of the future" who lost their lives at the World Trade Center. The second reason for Canada's presence had to do with the importance the Prime Minister placed on having Canada play a leadership role in the Afghan intervention. Here Harper invoked Canada's history of international involvements both as a defender of freedom and as peacekeeper. Canadian troops had fought in two world wars, participated in the UN's defence of South Korea, played a leading role in the Balkans and contributed to the overthrow of the Taliban regime. However, with the underfunding and emasculation of Canada's military, Canada's once meaningful place in world affairs was lost. As Harper put it: "You can't lead from the bleachers." Canada would make a difference "not [by] carping from the sidelines, but [by] taking a stand on the big issues that matter in the world." Therefore, for Harper, Afghanistan, represented an opportunity to demonstrate what Canada could do to reclaim its place in the world. Harper spoke of Canada's custom of helping the disadvantaged of the world when he outlined the third reason: Afghanistan should matter to Canadians. References were made to the devastation and poverty facing Afghans who would not be able to rebuild their country if their efforts were being sabotaged by insurgents and terrorists. Canadian troops were there to provide them with security as well as humanitarian assistance. The rights of Afghans to vote freely, give their children an education, and regain for women rights that had been taken from them during Taliban rule were, in the Prime Minister's eyes, rights worth standing up for in the best traditions of Canada: "... stepping up to the plate, and doing good when good is required." A *Globe and Mail* editorial was highly complimentary of the message delivered to the troops and Canadians because it was in step with Canada's history and "core values" and in defence of freedom and democracy. 25

Although employing strong language and a personalized assurances that Canadians would not run away from the conflict in Afghanistan “as long as I’m leading the country.”<sup>26</sup> Harper remained publicly non-committal about extending Canada’s presence in Kandahar once its current tour-of-duty ended in the following February. In expounding on the correlation between the level of casualties and the possibility of extending Canada’s stay, Harper downplayed the issue of casualties as one of a list of factors that would determine the nature and duration of Canada’s mission. While acknowledging casualties were a factor, the Prime Minister indicated that the “bigger factor” was “what you’re getting for that.” In other words, it was also necessary to put casualties in the context of the goals and achievements that were being achieved by the mission. Revealing his determination to see Canada stay the course in Afghanistan, Harper concluded: “In fact, they [higher casualties] may be the beginning of the end of the military conflict.: Following his speech Harper undertook a whirlwind of activities: visits with troops and a tour of Kandahar itself which included a stop at Canada’s 250 member PRT – the “humanitarian face” of the government’ military efforts in Afghanistan, and meetings with the governor of Kandahar province and a respected Imam. After spending the night with a JTF2 unit in an undisclosed location, Harper then flew to Kabul the next day to meet with Afghani President Hamid Karzai.

Harper’s meetings with Karzai – for Harper the first official meeting with a foreign leader since taking office and a day later with Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, - were particularly illustrative of the importance the Prime Minister attached to securing a deeper and longer-term role for Canada in Afghanistan. In meeting with Karzai, Harper not only re-affirmed Canada’s support of the Afghan President but also used the opportunity to undermine his critics in Parliament. In an effort to outmanoeuvre the Liberal Opposition into supporting his commitments to Afghanistan, Harper informed the Afghan leader and the press that Canada’s commitment to Afghanistan was contingent on whether or not the opposition Liberals would support his Afghan initiatives. The message to the Liberals not to endanger Canada’s mission was intended to buttress his earlier message to the troops that he and Canadians would not “cut and run.” Tactics of this kind were not only intended to apply political pressure on the Liberal-New Democrat-Bloc opposition to support his commitment to Afghanistan but also to legitimize the nature of that commitment. “Our two principle military objectives, “ Harper explained, “ are to fight terrorism, fight the forces of terror here, and to reduce the threat, and the second is to aid the Afghan forces in fighting it themselves.”<sup>27</sup> Harper was not only interested obtaining breathing space to secure a longer-term presence in Afghanistan, it was also important for him to win approval of a military presence capable, firstly, of defeating the insurgency, after which humanitarian and developmental operations would fall into place. Very simply, Canada’s humanitarian and diplomatic contribution to Afghanistan was dependent on the extent to which the military was successful at winning greater security. Harper’s meeting with the Pakistani Prime Minister in Islamabad went to heart of the Prime Minister’s investment in the Kandahar region when he addressed the matter of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border with Aziz. His meeting with Aziz also served notice of Harper’s interest in and appreciation of the diplomatic and strategic implications of the area on Canada’s role in Kandahar. Harper’s meeting with Aziz also allowed Harper to play a diplomatic role in bringing Afghani and

Pakistani leaders together to engage constructively in doing more to combating terrorism around the border region in particular – after repeated complaints from the Karzai government that Pakistani authorities were not doing enough to curb the activities of the insurgents and their supporters in the south-west border region of Pakistan. While Mr. Aziz’s assurances that Pakistan was working hard on the issue were not particularly convincing, the PMO for example, saw the Prime Minister’s meeting with Aziz as a positive signal that it was the intention of the Canadian government to remain in Afghanistan over the longer term and that more public diplomat initiatives by Canadian leaders, in tandem with tougher military initiatives under NATO auspices, would eventually tip the balance against the insurgency and its terrorist support networks.

Harper’s visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan was accompanied by some measure of consensus and support for Canada’s mission. Even from the Liberals who were entering a leadership contest there was a reversal from earlier calls for a parliamentary debate. Leadership contenders like Stephan Dion and Michael Ignatieff placed themselves squarely behind the government in rejecting a parliamentary vote and in the process isolating the NDP whose opposition to the war had become more vocal. These kinds of vacillations by the Opposition, on one hand, served to strengthen the conservative government’s position on Afghanistan, and on the other, added to public ambiguity about Canada’s role in the country. Polls conducted immediately after the Prime Ministers visit indicated a measured improvement in popular support for the deployment while the same polls continued to reveal public confusion about the nature and objectives of Canada’s mission.

Early in April Harper earned some public approval for reversing his position and agreeing to a Parliamentary debate on Canada’s military intervention in Afghanistan. It was hoped that the debate on 10 April 2006, was to be more than a “rally-around-the-flag” event. Committed to a dangerous combat mission, soon to be under NATO mandate, it was important for the government and opposition to undertake this serious parliamentary deliberation so that Canadians would have a clearer picture of the nature and duration of Canada’s presence in Afghanistan. It was to be appropriate platform for the government to make its case that the mission was consistent with Canadian values and interests; that it was assisting a failed state in recovering from tyranny and civil war; and that it was protecting Canadians by entering into combat and thereby denying the Taliban and its extremist supporters a base of operation. Most important, from Harper’s perspective, it could prepare the ground for an extension of the mission and it would provide an opportunity to win over the approximately 40% of Canadians who believe Canada has no business being in Afghanistan.

The debate and the Prime Minister’s rationale for agreeing to it tell us more about the political leadership exhibited by Harper. Initially, his decision was broadly applauded as being principled – reflective of a leader who was respectful of parliamentary democracy and unafraid of facing the scrutiny of the people’s representatives. The context in which the debate was set, however, suggested that Harper had more to gain than lose by agreeing to the debate. Simply speaking, the Prime Minister went along with the debate because he could predict its outcome. To begin with, the debate was a “take note debate” with no vote to follow and was scheduled for just one evening. Any criticism from the

Liberals was likely to be muted as the Party – divided on the Afghanistan mission itself - was in the process of finding a leader. It was entirely predictable session: the opposition asked some tough questions; all four parties voiced their support for Canadian troops; the Minister of Defence reminded the House that Canada’s “security begins very far from our borders;” the Prime Minister signalled strongly that it was his policy to see Canada in Afghanistan for a longer term; and the opposition demanded a vote on any future deployments. No doubt the Prime Minister appreciated a Liberal MP’s axiom on the debate: “In the House, we tell each other what we already know.”<sup>28</sup>

In creating and developing an environment receptive to his foreign policy agenda Harper invested heavily in elevating the status of Canada’s military. On 13 April 2006, he became the first prime minister to preside over a graduation ceremony at CFB Wainwright, Alberta. Acknowledging criticism of Canada’s role in Afghanistan and despite mounting casualties, Harper’s words to the graduates, besides echoing his pledge to remain in Afghanistan, suggested that their profession separated and elevated them as special citizens and members of his political constituency who understood the saliency of their mission: “But I know you think differently. You are citizens, but you are more. You are soldiers and as such you are leaders for all of us.”<sup>29</sup>

Harper’s predisposition to manipulate events was not always successful. When facing the spectre of rising casualties, he ordered that official mourning ceremonies be toned down. Since 2002 the prime minister, opposition leaders, the defence minister and chief of defence typically attended ceremonies at CFB Trenton. In addition the Peace Tower flag was lowered to half mast. Harper’s decision received a mixed response from the public with many viewing it as a cynical attempt to control the media’s coverage of news unfavourable to the government; others saw it as a reasonable response by government in setting the appropriate tone in contrast to the kind of dramatized headlines found in the media. For most Canadians this issue had more to do with being told the truth than formal ceremonies and what to do with the flag. As for the Harper government, it made it clear it would not overreact to casualties. To the surprise of many – including Hillier, the government went further by deciding to prohibit the public and media from viewing the repatriation ceremony of 25 April 2006 for four soldiers killed in Afghanistan. Harper found himself under growing criticism, even within his own party and among the families of deceased soldiers. Harper’s response to growing wave of criticism in the House of Commons was indicative of his obsessiveness with limiting media access and remaining unbending in the face of criticism. Further undermining his leadership on this issue was the Prime Minister’s eventual announcement that it was his Minister of Defence, Gordon O’Connor, who initiated the decision on limiting media access and ending the practice of flying the flag at half mast.

Whether or not his policies on repatriation and the flag were out of step, were of lesser concern for Harper than achieving the ultimate goal of securing a long term, robust commitment to Afghanistan. Public opinion, his longer-term calculations told him, would eventually be brought around with the successes that commitment would entail. Again, Harper demonstrated a sharp command political tactics and a willingness to strike suddenly. NATO’s request for Canada to assume command of the entire Afghan mission

in 2008, provided the prime minister with an ideal opportunity to deepen Canada's commitment to the Afghan conflict by announcing on 15 May 2006, the government's decision to hold a vote on an two-year extension to Canadian mission.

Harper understood that although the Parliamentary vote of May 17 was non-binding, it would send the right kind of message domestically and internationally about Canada's commitment to rebuild Afghanistan. Furthermore, Harper anticipated that his unexpected call for a non-binding vote, on the heels of the April 10 "debate," would give his critics the impression of a supportive parliamentary consensus and at the same time, accentuate internal Liberal divisions on the Afghan issue. Harper's willingness to corner his political opposition in this way suggested the extent to which he was prepared to use his style of Machiavellian politics to pursue a more robust military intervention in Afghanistan and a majority government in Ottawa. On the same day that saw the rushed and highly-charged debate over extending the Afghanistan mission until 2009 and the Conservative minority government win a non-binding vote 149 to 145, the 17<sup>th</sup> Canadian casualty and first female combat death<sup>30</sup> was announced in Ottawa. It was also the day in which Paul Martin chose to skip the vote on extending the mission his party had originally launched. The debate did not represent thoughtful and thorough consideration of a pivotal foreign policy initiative. A less than admirable style of leadership was also exercised by a divided opposition fearful of a foreign entanglement as well as an election on the issue. As for Harper, his political gamble had paid off. He had engineered "priceless political cover" under which he could more freely pursue his foreign policy objectives. The minority Conservatives were in a good position to win a majority government in spite of taking some big chances on domestic issues and starting a cold war with parliament's press gallery. Not to be forgotten was the surprising upsurge of Tory support – at the expense of the Liberals – in Quebec which could soften that province's traditional reluctance to support Canada's wars in the past. After 100 days as prime minister, Harper's unconventional but disciplined use of executive power was being rewarded.

It has often been said that most prime ministers wish to mark their contribution to foreign policy. Just after some six months in power Harper also signalled that some significant changes in how foreign policy was being made and presented. Harper made his support of Israel unequivocal. His government declared the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam a terrorist organization. His first foreign journey, as noted, was a visit to his troops in Afghanistan and the first foreign visitor to Ottawa was the Australian prime minister who gave a pro-American speech to parliament. From shifting its attention from China to Japan, Harper's government communicated its displeasure with China's human rights policies. This refocusing of foreign policy by Harper drew a clearer distinction between Canada's rivals and Canada's allies. It is indicative of a movement away from Canada's traditional role as a neutral middle power and the further downgrading of the Department of Foreign Affairs. A particular incident was particularly illustrative of Harper's commanding tone and new approach to foreign policy. At the start of Harper's first foreign policy briefings, the deputy minister of external affairs began his presentation with: "The longstanding Canadian position ..." at which point the prime minister interjected: "Stop right there. We are going to look at every issue on its merits."

According to an unidentified federal official: Previous (Liberal) governments had two questions: 'is this consistent with Canada's previous positions?' and 'Is this consistent with the international consensus?' Now the question is 'Why are we doing this?'"<sup>31</sup> The Conservative government's funding priorities also reflected the demotion of the foreign affairs department. While DND received substantial funding increases, foreign affairs faced cuts to its budget.

Any drop in public support for his policy on Afghanistan or criticism of his stand on Middle Eastern events did not shake his resolve to stay the course. Responding to criticisms from Canada's Lebanese-Palestinian communities and others for his support for Israel, condemnation of Hezbollah and his pursuance of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, Harper remained unbending when he stated: "Canadians want to see peace and stability in the Middle East. Canadians are not neutral on terrorism or on terrorist groups, and Canadians want us to work with the international community to develop position that can lead us to a durable and lasting peace."<sup>32</sup> The government, he continued to re-iterate, would not change its position based on polls. Neither would it be bound by party divisions as was shown in Harper's decision to reach across party lines – with the approval of Bill Graham - by appointing a Liberal MP and a prominent Muslim Canadian of Pakistani origin, Wajid Khan, as his adviser on the Middle East and Afghanistan. Besides acting as the prime minister's advisor, Khan was tasked with traveling to the region as the prime minister's envoy as well preparing a report to the PM by October 1. Once again, Harper had succeeded in exercising a cunning strategy by using the Liberals to deflect criticism of and advance his own policies.

With the fall of 2006 approaching Harper's determination to stay the course in his Afghan policy was determined by his policies on NATO an increasingly important player in determining the success or failure of his Kandahar initiative. The rising toll of casualties – 36 soldiers and one diplomat – by mid-September needed to be justified in the context of the greater ruthlessness exhibited by the insurgency and in the context of the importance of being a part of a larger a larger NATO operation and the continuation of Canada's commitment to multilateralism. The "political cover" Harper had created by deftly manipulating parliament into supporting and extending the mission was not enough to sustain the necessary level of public support for Canada's role in Afghanistan. The deaths of Canadian soldiers by suicide bombings and IED's was becoming increasingly difficult to defend and explain on the basis of the nobility of the NATO cause and evilness of the insurgents.

The centrality of the Prime Minister's Afghanistan policy to his domestic and foreign policy ambitions was emphasised by Harper's decision to give his first speech on the subject to the UN on 22 September 2006. In his speech Harper linked Canada's more muscular role and declining domestic support for the mission to the credibility of the UN. Apart from brief mention of problems in Haiti, Sudan's Darfur region, Iran's nuclear build-up and the need for UN reform, Harper paid little attention to a variety of other global issues – including the concept of the "responsibility to protect" - typically addressed by previous Prime Minister's. In what has been described a clear and eloquent speech before the General Assembly Harper defended Canada's Afghan mission and

warned that the credibility of the UN as a beacon of human rights and peace was linked to the success of Canada's efforts in Afghanistan. From Harper's perspective it was the responsibility of the UN to help defeat terrorism in both military and humanitarian terms. In calling for accelerated reform of the UN the Prime Minister called on the organization to develop stronger mechanisms of peace enforcement and international security. In this context Harper's message to the UN was direct – the UN would not be able to contribute to the defeat of terrorism unless the institution was willing and capable of undergoing reform. In more immediate terms, in speaking to the UN and the Economic Club of New York, he reminded his listeners that it was his intention for Canada to be an international player, independent of the US administration. In doing its part in the battle against terrorism and as an emerging energy superpower, Canada, in return, expected its sovereignty (re: the North West Passage) and national interests to be respected by the US and other powers.

Harper's concern about the credibility and effectiveness of the UN was paralleled by worries about NATO's role in Afghanistan. While the Prime Minister was giving speeches before the UN and a business club in New York, his foreign minister, Peter McKay, was meeting with NATO foreign ministers in New York on 21 September 2006, to press the alliance for its greater presence in southern Afghanistan. Recognizing that NATO had reached an important "tipping point" as Roland Paris has described it, and knowing that NATO had only two options in Afghanistan – undertake a build-up of resources or plan a phased withdrawal – Harper possessed some leverage to press NATO members into adopting a strengthening of NATO's presence in Afghanistan. The pivotal importance of the NATO meeting in Riga on 28 November 2006 was not lost on alliance members, Canada's Prime Minister and certainly those who sent a suicide bomber to crash his minivan into a Canadian Forces troop carrier near Kandahar. The blast which claimed the lives of two Canadian soldiers sent a message to NATO members testing their resolve and commitment in Afghanistan. The attack on Canadian troops, Harper understood, was also meant to further accentuate the split in the alliance between those members like Canada which were absorbing a higher rate of casualties because of their commitment to a combat role in Afghanistan and those, like Germany, Italy and Spain, which were deployed in the relative safety of the north and who had placed restrictions on the troops which prevented them from fighting the insurgency in any meaningful way. Harper, with the support of Dutch, British and US leaders pressed certain alliance members – Germany in particular - to lift their caveats restricting the activities of their troops. Harper's efforts resulted in limited progress – a reduction in the number of caveats that could translate into a small increase in the number of troops available to the mission. In the end Canada's prime minister and other like-minded leaders won to a modest compromise – an agreement by members to respond to any emergency circumstances faced by NATO forces in the field, as well as an agreement to provide Canada with access to additional helicopters. The outcome of the Riga summit, Harper and Hillier understood, was a setback for the military's plans to solidify gains by the troops in their September offensive and the opportunity to step up and expand reconstruction and development efforts which in turn would have improved the domestic support of Canadians for the mission.

By the end of 2006 with pressure mounting from the opposition Liberals and NDP for Canada to either withdraw from the mission entirely or reduce the mission to a humanitarian one, the spectre of an election bringing down a minority government on Afghanistan resurfaced. In the face of this pressure Harper revealed both a dogged determination and a sense of fatalism which said something about his leadership in presenting himself as the principled leader making tough and not always popular decisions:

If ultimately I were brought down on that, I can live with myself. I could not live with myself making a decision on Canada's role in the world and defence interests if I knew I had done that for political reasons that were the wrong reasons. That I could not live with.

Once again, in moments of crisis, Harper's tendency to evoke conservative moral principles, patriotism and loyalty came to the fore when he admitted that his most troubling fear was the possibility that the sacrifices of Canadian troops lost in Afghanistan may have been in vain. In describing the most difficult part of his job – phoning the families of deceased soldiers – he noted: “I have to tell you that what they ask of me, in almost every case, is the assurance that the government will not, because of political pressure, abandon a mission their sons or daughters believed in and were prepared to give their lives for.” At the same time Harper took the opportunity to criticise the Liberal and Bloc demand to “rebalance the mission “as naive and irresponsible.” 2006 ended with the Prime Minister placing phone calls over Christmas to Canadians serving in Afghanistan – the first on Christmas eve to Canada's reconstruction team, the second, on Christmas morning to Canadian troops at Kandahar Air Field.<sup>33</sup>

On 16 March 2008, by a vote of 198 -77 the House of Commons voted – in what Harper declared was a confidence vote - to extend Canada's Afghan mission to 2011 marking what was going to be a clear indication of Harper's leadership in moving Canada's Kandahar intervention in a direction most Canadians had not anticipated when Canadian forces first set foot in Afghanistan. The vote represented the culmination of intense year-long political activity by the Harper government aimed at encasing Canada's commitment to re-constituting a failed state and in the process, nudging Canada towards an important shift in foreign policy. The fact that the mission was extended was quite clear. In winning an extension of the mission to 2011 – on condition that NATO allies contribute reinforcements – Harper continued to exhibit tenacity, ruthless tactical opportunism and when necessary, a willingness to display flexibility and find compromise. In drawing support from the opposition Liberals, the Conservatives were able to overcome the objections of the NDP and Bloc Quebecois. However, the vote and the Conservative motion represented an ambiguous compromise with both the Harper and Dion claiming victory. Once again the Liberals saved the government from defeat and themselves from an election. The Liberals understood the motion to mean that Canadian troops will end their combat against insurgents after 2009 and shift their focus on development, reconstruction and stepping up their training of the Afghan army. On the other hand, while the Harper government's motion indicated that the military mission

will be modified in 2009, it left it open to the military commanders to decide on the appropriate level of military engagement deemed necessary.

Most important for Harper the parliamentary compromise, in the short term provided him with an ultimatum to take to the April 2008 NATO meeting in Bucharest: an additional 1000 troops, the use of helicopters and aerial reconnaissance drones or face Canada's withdrawal from a combat role in Afghanistan. Essential to the success of Harper's Afghan strategy, not to speak of appeasing an ambivalent public was the maintenance of viable multilateral role for Canada to play within a NATO and a UN prepared to take on many of the new security challenges of the post-9/11 era. A growing perception among Canadians (and privately within the organization) was that NATO – divided by competing goals and plagued by apathy - was not performing as well as expected. Central to the question of Canada's role in the alliance was the unequal contribution of members to the more dangerous and casualty-prone job of fighting the Taliban. Having committed itself to a parliamentary vote to extend the mission beyond 2009, the Harper government had begun to signal the alliance that it expected a deeper commitment from NATO for the Afghanistan mission and a greater contribution from individual members especially in the more dangerous areas of the south.

In terms of its domestic audience, by the summer of 2007 the government had begun to place more emphasis on communicating the important developmental and human rights work being conducted under NATO auspices – aware that it was largely in that context that Canadians would be willing to support a longer-term mission. At the same time, there was public acknowledgement from NATO's Secretary-General that the Afghan mission would require the long term presence of the alliance in training Afghan security forces, reconstruction and building national institutions. At the Prime Minister's Harper's throne speech, with Hillier by his side, the government repeated its continued involvement in training Afghan forces in Kandahar, a job that could not be completed by 2009. Later, in attempting to pressure NATO in providing Canadians operating out of Kandahar Harper openly linked in very blunt terms his political survival with not only NATO's willingness to comply with Canadian requests for additional NATO support, but as well, the relevance of the organization itself.

Harper's undiplomatic observation about NATO's survivability was facilitated by his adroit move to establish a non-partisan panel to assist in developing a consensus among Canadians on how to proceed in Afghanistan. The establishment of the panel, which he had called for in the fall of 2007 also allowed Harper to suggest that it was responding to the perceived need to improve the government's ability to improve communications with the public while searching for a consensus among the Canadian public. By striking the five-member panel Harper again exhibited a well-honed "off-loading" technique as some have termed it to deflect criticisms of his policy on Afghanistan. At the same time, it was an acknowledgment that the survival of his Afghan policy required the appearance of consensus building and compromise in order to give the appearance at least of including a broader constituency in making foreign policy. Harper left as little as possible to chance when set out a clear terms of reference – four options - within which the panel would operate. Titled "The Independent Panel on

Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan" the panel could only be described as "independent" in broadest sense of the word. Chaired by the Liberal hawk John Manley and weighted in favour of more conservative-oriented members like Jake Epp, Derek Burney and Paul Tellier, the 21 January 2008 report set the stage for the March 16 parliamentary show-down which extended the Kandahar mission and Harper's government. It criticized the Harper government for not being open and frank about the nature of the mission and its accomplishments, and the Liberals for playing political games. To some extent it proved useful in providing a common platform on which a badly divided parliament could come closer together. It gave the Harper Conservatives the ammunition to use against its reluctant NATO partners, while providing the Liberals with a way of backing away from Dion's insistence on terminating Canada's combat role by February 2009. The report also reiterated the Conservatives call for the critical need for transport helicopters to reduce danger posed by roadside bombs – responsible for most of Canada's 77 military casualties. In addition, the report suggested that the Liberal demand to end Canada's combat mission by February 2009 as lacking logic and dishonourable to the sacrifices already made. CIDA's reconstruction efforts, limited by restrictive regulations, were criticized as well. The key finding for the Harper government was a blunt demand for NATO to secure 1,000 additional soldiers for the southern region of Afghanistan by February 2009. Manley did not miss the opportunity to be highly critical of some NATO members for living in a "delusional world" in not acknowledging their responsibilities to the mission in Afghanistan. In short, for the Harper government, the Manley report represented more positives than negatives – even in terms of calling on the Harper government to open up the government's secretive communications policy, a policy which lent itself to Harper's style and approach to making foreign policy.

Even as he was calling for the formation of an "independent" panel to examine Canada's role in Afghanistan, Harper had begun to modulate his approach to advancing his foreign policy goals and objectives in general as well as his specific objective of extending and deepening Canada's commitment to the Kandahar operation. This modulation involved both maintaining his government's alliance with the military, while at the same time, finding a more useful and politically attractive role for the ministry of foreign affairs in supporting Harper's foreign policy initiatives. In the process, however, Harper would not be relinquishing his tight control over foreign policy or losing sight of his objectives even after he had declared that Canadian troops would remain in Afghanistan only if Canadian would support military action against the Taliban-sponsored insurgency. Likewise the perceived shift in Harper's rhetoric about a 'new mission' and the need to acquire a parliamentary consensus needs to be understood in the context of tactical politics honed while in opposition. The image of Canada's top general, Rick Hillier, in lock-step with Harper, discussing a re-focus on training Afghan troops to do the job performed by Canadians, should be not be interpreted simply as an attempt by the government to find a protective political consensus. It is also the product of temporary tactical consolidation initiated and plotted by an extraordinarily patient Prime Minister with an unfinished agenda.

In January 2007 the appointment by the Prime Minister of David Mulroney, a career diplomat, as both co-ordinator of the government's initiatives in Afghanistan and Harper's own foreign policy adviser was another example of a modification in the tenor of the Harper government's policies on aid and diplomacy. In having Mulroney coordinate the inter-departmental Afghan initiatives, Harper indicated that having solidified the pre-eminence of his relationship with the military, it was time to resurrect a neglected foreign policy bureaucracy that would be used to enhance a foreign policy driven by himself and Hillier. Harper's choice of a senior, former diplomat and ambassador, Nichel de Salaberry, to improve the co-ordination of Canada's reconstruction efforts was a further indication of the Prime Minister's immediate focus on improving the public relations aspect of Canada's mission. The "single pillar approach" to Afghanistan which had driven Harper's earlier initiatives was being expanded by the re-employment and advancement of foreign policy expertise. With a renewed focus on development assistance and diplomacy Harper was able to counter opposition criticism and to present the public with the image of a more balanced foreign policy posture in Afghanistan. While Harper was willing to promote a more well-rounded impression of his foreign policy initiatives and new announcements about substantial increases in government funding for development purposes, he and his government were not detracted from maintaining a hard line toward Pakistan where people inside and outside of government were known to support the Taliban.

The image of a less edgy and more multi-faceted foreign policy approach toward Afghanistan did little to de-rail Harper's primary objective as witnessed by Harper's second visit to Afghanistan on 23 May 2007. While not employing the "cut and run" idiom of his first visit, Harper message was even more resolute. "We can't just put down our weapons and hope for peace" Harper stated to the cheers from the troops and in obvious reference to his parliamentary opposition.<sup>34</sup> Surrounded by a protective force of more than 100 members of Quebec's Van Doos, aid workers and diplomats, Harper made a special point of visiting with Canada's PRT in downtown Kandahar which was followed by a short helicopter ride to a Canadian operating base at Ma'sum Gahr. Not only was it important for Harper to be seen as a Prime Minister, in the protective company of a famous Quebec regiment, on the front-lines of the war in which the military was seriously engaged, it was also important to sustain a positive political image of the military's leadership. Political expediency dictated that the Prime Minister would even have to replace his loyal but error-prone Minister of Defence, Gordon O'Connor, whose poor communication skills and poor relationship with Rick Hillier were becoming too much of a public-relations liability at a time it was necessary for the government to present a more enlightened-looking Afghan policy to the public. Having someone who could better manage the defence portfolio in political terms, and present a united message was precisely what Peter Mackay, shifted from foreign affairs, was able to provide. McKay's replacement as Foreign Affairs Minister, Maxine Bernier, was viewed by Harper as an able communicator who would be able to stick to his government's message. Also, in assigning the foreign affairs portfolio to Bernier, Harper was clearly cognisant of the benefits of having a Quebec minister manage the Afghanistan file. Here again, it would be a mistake to interpret a cabinet shuffle to mean a change in the overall agenda of the Harper government. "We're here to continue our efforts to realize all the

work that we've started ... and add on a perspective that is long-term.”<sup>35</sup> Harper observed after the cabinet shuffle. Upon assuming their new position both ministers were at pains to downplay the question of extending the Kandahar mission and promoted the humanitarian aspects of Canada's mission while emphasising the importance of communicating the successes of Canada's efforts. Heading into the fall of 2007, Harper's strategy of simultaneously reframing his government's commitment to Afghanistan, NATO and the UN, on one hand, and preparing the groundwork for a parliamentary showdown and possible election on the other, was managed surprisingly well by Harper. The tactical groundwork had been laid for the Prime Minister's call for the establishment of an independent panel, a panel designed to contain and refocus the Afghanistan debate in a manner and direction congruent with Harper's foreign policy goals and objectives.

## Conclusions

In its time Canada's intervention in the former Yugoslav was regarded as dangerous and bold. Although international conditions and domestic support presented a window of opportunity for the establishment of a more invasive foreign policy, it was the decisive, focused and opportunistic political leadership of Brian Mulroney immediately prior to and during the Yugoslav crisis that proved to be the decisive factor in displacing *peacekeeping* with *peacemaking* as the more effective multilateral means of intervening in humanitarian crisis and intra-state conflicts in the post Cold War world. Here was a prime minister who sought to be on center stage, who had worked effectively with his majority government and ministers for Canada to play assertive part in the Balkans, thereby moving Canada from a long-held acceptance of neutrality-based peacekeeping to the more dangerous zone of intrusive peacemaking and enforcement. Shaped by the old politics of the early post-Duplessis era, highly social, openly ambitious, and a networker, Mulroney led his party and the government from the middle. In terms of foreign policy, he is remembered for his “pals diplomacy” with Regan and Bush and opening the door to free trade. However, it is peculiar that he is not remembered for an activism that pushed Canada and its foreign policy bureaucracy and an often lethargic international community to challenge the principles of state sovereignty very often – as was the case in the former Yugoslavia – on the back of an under-funded and under-appreciated military which was all too often more than willing to take on its new, more aggressive role. In presiding over this shift in Canadian foreign policy it was also necessary for him to politicize and centralize the foreign policy making process over which he had gained fairly tight control from Ottawa's powerful bureaucratic mandarins in order to distinguish it from the ingrained orthodoxy of the time. Although Mulroney strengthened the PMO, his control over foreign policy was not so tight as to exclude effective ministers of external affairs like the well-respected Joe Clark who paved the way for an inexperienced Barbara McDougall who pursued her portfolio with considerable passion particularly in the area of human rights. Mulroney's success in managing the shift in foreign policy must also be attributed to his willingness to allow the same hostile bureaucracy, many of whom were of a younger generation which favoured a “more globally oriented, aggressive policy” to get on side with Mulroney's Yugoslav initiatives. In the final analysis, what

defined his political leadership and his redirection of Canadian foreign policy was both opportunism - in exploiting a European vacuum made possible by American disinterest and European ineptitude in dealing with the crisis - and the ambition to be seen reshaping the times. <sup>36</sup>

Chrétien's part in leading Canada into Afghanistan revealed a Prime Minister moulded largely by Canada's domestic experience, a disinterest in the world stage and a mistrust of world powers and international entanglements. His evolution as a political leader suggested that however limited his intellectual interests and range were, he was a most capable political survivor who understood how to keep himself and his party in power. While not an isolationist, he preferred the safety of Canadian foreign policy orthodoxy and was unwilling to test Canada's foreign and defence policy limitations. Canadian historian Mark Proudman has observed that the Chretien government, like many previous governments, view Canada's policy on defence, for example, in terms of "talking points" rather than as a means of defeating enemies. Proudman, like others, suggest that Canadian government's and any internal cabinet debates are focused instead on two factors when evaluating military interventions: the domestic and international constituencies. It is in this context that Chrétien's (and Martin's) leadership can be framed as an elaborate exercise in creating certain intended perceptions in those constituencies. In presiding over Canada's initial intervention in Afghanistan, Jean Chrétien, the street-fighting and politically savvy politician, was not interested in moving the yard sticks and challenging those parameters in the manner of a statesman.

On an emotional level, Chrétien did not connect in a heartfelt manner to the tragedy of the 9/11 experience as he and his ministers went through the motions of proclaiming Canadian-American solidarity. Michael Bliss, another Canadian historian, went further by accusing the Chrétien government in particular of intentionally weakening Canada's Armed forces in order to avoid having to make increasingly difficult foreign policy decisions, especially in the post-Cold War environment. Much of the evidence provided in this paper supports Bliss's assessment. The deliberate policy of keeping Canada's military weak and avoiding new international realities by sidestepping the need for a foreign and defence policy review was not just a matter of ensuring that Canadians would not gain new weaponry at the expense of hospital beds and social programs. It also served the convenient political purpose of limiting the scope of this country's foreign policy endeavours. At the same time, by denying support to the Iraq war or a more muscular Afghanistan role, the Prime Minister avoided the pitfall of alienating the Liberal government's anti-American and Quebec supporters. The opportunity to deploy a small counter-insurgency force in the guise of a peacekeeping force, sanctioned by the UN, provided the most defensible compromise for the Chrétien Liberals. Ironically, in a few short years the wisdom of Chrétien's decision, which was based as well on his poor grasp of military affairs, would come back to haunt his successor and contribute to a foreign policy vacuum at least where Afghanistan is concerned. Certainly Chrétien's decision to allow Canadian troops to intervene in Afghanistan as a "peacekeeping" force, was more an expression of appeasing the US and NATO allies as well as reinforcing domestic support than it was one based on Canada's

military capabilities and the new and unfamiliar geo-strategic/security dangers of an Afghanistan as a home to international terrorism and a slowly resurgent insurgency.

While Chrétien's strategy appeared to be a clever political ruse, it came with the enormous price of not only leaving his successor and hated Liberal rival with the difficulty of finding replacement troops among NATO members, but also the absence of an exit strategy and weakened US-Canada relations which eventually contributed to Canada's deeper immersion into Afghanistan under Paul Martin. Jean Chretien has often been credited with displaying sound political leadership in skilfully keeping Canada out of Iraq and limiting Canada's intervention in Afghanistan. In retrospect, however, there is evidence to propose that prime ministerial neglect of the Afghan file served to reduce policy options available to Martin while expanding those available to an emboldened Stephen Harper.

In specific terms by choosing to ignore the military's warnings about very limited resources and the potential dangers that the ISAF intervention represented, Chrétien had trapped his arch-rival and successor, Paul Martin and his Defence Minister, David Pratt, in a precarious position. Instead of being able to maximize Canada's international prestige by choosing a mission that could be accomplished quickly, and forcefully, Martin appeared unwilling and/or unable to alter the course that Canada's involvement in Afghanistan was taking. It is likely that Martin underestimated the dangers he was facing in attempting to resurrect a policy on Afghanistan that would re-establish Canada's prestige and relevance in international relations. Interested in world affairs, Martin appeared genuine in his goal to re-establish Canada's foreign policy credentials and to re-engage Canada internationally by improving this country's military capabilities and by enhancing multilateral institutions, especially NATO and the UN. Martin was prepared to admit publicly what Chrétien could not and that was that Canada was hardly able to support a small peacekeeping initiative and that it was necessary to restore Canada's military. The elevation of the military and Rick Hillier as Canada's new CDS was broadly recognized as an important first step aimed in the right direction.

The absence in Canada of a more thorough and open debate on the root causes of 9/11 and a requisite Canada's foreign policy response provided political leadership with some opportunity to define and guide this country's foreign policy. The relationship between the public's opinion on the "war on terror" and the perception that al-Qaeda, international terrorists and their sympathizers can be appeased or antagonized by the nature of governmental policy on terrorism is an interesting one and has a bearing on how political leadership is played out and analyzed. As posed by Norman Spector: "Who would have known that [Paul Martin] would be comfortable with [Rick Hillier's] view that terrorists detest Canadians because of our freedoms, our society and our liberties? ... Judging from the tabloid talk of Chief of the Defence Staff Rick Hillier, we have as much need for leadership as do our cousins across the pond. No doubt the general is concerned about motivating his troops prior to a dangerous mission – not to speak of preparing Canadians for the likelihood of casualties."<sup>37</sup> In Hillier's mind the hunting down of terrorists in Afghanistan will avert terrorist attacks in Canada. Do Canadians see this kind of a correlation? A substantial number of Canadians are unable or unwilling to connect those dots. More appealing to the general public is the view that it was the policies of the

US and its allies which were largely responsible for spawning terrorism and the upsurge of insurgencies.

The public's adherence to this vision was breached by the emergence of a charismatic military leader with strong and clear views about the role of the military in projecting a different Canadian foreign policy abroad where threats to security and intra-state conflict were concerned. Those supporting Hillier's contribution to foreign policy highlight his ability to inject a realistic attitude about the nature of military force and terrorism and their place in Canadian politics and foreign policy-making. This perspective emphasises the responsibility for all states to contribute the necessary combat capability to defend multilateralism and to protect a state's security interests as well. Although it recognizes the legitimacy of conventional peacekeeping, it serves as a public reminder that the peace and values Canadians enjoy, were initially paid for by earlier generations of young men and women. To some extent Hillier's statements called into question the moral superiority assumed by those advocating the neutrality and humanitarianism of peacekeeping over the self interest of security or choosing a side when one is threatened. This kind of leadership is new to Canada, or at least has not been evident since the end of WWII and the Korean War. Proponents of this view argued that by sending Canadian forces to Kandahar to fight the Taliban, the government is being forced into recognizing that sometimes malevolence has to be defeated. From the perspective of political leadership, Hillier's views served two purposes. First there is the "just-in-case" objective. By expounding bluntly on the true nature of war Hillier has provided a wakeup call for Canadians. Canadians needed to be conditioned to the new realities of threats to our security and the real cost - human and financial - they entail. For Martin, Hillier's comments served the purpose of communicating an understanding that would not be politically prudent for a Canadian prime minister of Martin's political lineage to enunciate, at least publicly. In this way Hillier's comments served the mutual interests of both him and the prime minister. From the perspective of the CDS his pronouncements constituted a platform on which to reacquaint Canadians to Canada's historical contributions to fighting wars and greater familiarity with military matters; for Martin they represented a military leader of considerable popularity and vision capable not only of "selling" a controversial mission to the public but also, of delivering a difficult message and preparing Canadians for the hard veracities of the Kandahar mission and beyond. In either case, the Pearsonian peacekeeping tradition whereby Canadians saw themselves as neutral, honest brokers and fixers committed to the diplomacy of finding the roots of conflict - in economic and social injustice, was now being cast against the harsh international realities of multilateral institutions and political leadership not up to the task of coping effectively with new threats to international security.

The parliamentary compromise of 16 March 2008 has left unresolved this paper's assertion that political leadership (or its absence) by our last three prime ministers has been a central factor in a foreign policy shift from *peacemaking* to *war making*. Nevertheless, in drawing some conclusions about Canada's intervention in Afghanistan, it can be posited that Canada's current prime minister remains poised to reposition Canadian policy to a more aggressive, militarily-directed and strategically inspired

intervention which was made possible by the weak political leadership exercised by Chrétien and Martin.

Stephen Harper's leadership stands out in sharp contrast to both Chrétien and Martin. Compensating for his lack of experience and absence of personal charisma, Harper's managerial competence complemented his ideological predisposition to shift the country's center of gravity in social terms from universal programs to individual choice, in political terms from centralized federalism to decentralized federalism and in military terms, from "values" to "interests." In seeking to move Canada toward a more individualistic social order, he is also seeking to reposition Canadian foreign policy to be less reliant on embracing humanitarian principles and peacekeeping to a more aggressive, militaristic posture driven in larger measure than before by national and strategic interests. This is not to suggest that he has not been any less sensitive to domestic imperatives than his predecessors where Quebec and Afghanistan are concerned. However, in marching to the tune of a different drummer, quickly grasping the levers of power and commanding center stage at the expense of his ministers, Harper has placed himself in the position to more effectively preside over the future direction of Canada's intervention in Afghanistan. In presiding over Canada's "metamorphosis from peacekeeper to enforcer" Harper has demonstrated managerial competence but at the expense of reducing the role and prestige of his ministers.<sup>38</sup> By assuming personal interest of the Afghanistan file and relocating it in the PMO, Harper has shown that he is prepared to take the risks associated with ignoring an essential principle of cabinet government in order to achieve his objectives in Kandahar. Other prime minister's have sent troops in harms way – Harper, however, is the first modern day leader to make a military intervention such a central part of his government's existence. In doing so, Harper has chosen to also take the risk of remaining distrustful, albeit with some modifications, of senior public servants and true to the ideological predisposition of his neo-conservative roots that call upon him to revamp Canada's foreign policy landscape. Besides remaining on course and imposing a disciplined and highly scripted approach to policy-making on his government, Harper, in order to advance his own agenda more effectively, was equally as determined to exercise a greater deal of control over the media by limiting its access to the corridors of power. Without attempting to radiate the warmth or enthusiasm of Martin or the folksy charm of Chrétien, Harper has ignored conventional wisdom by snubbing and restricting the Ottawa media and replacing it with a highly centralized communications strategy designed to "get the message out." By surrounding himself with visual props and symbols, Harper has also shown a propensity for staging events – such as was the case of his visits to Afghanistan for example - that are important to his cause. In bucking conventional approaches to making foreign policy, Harper has also distinguished himself from previous prime minister's who favoured "the safety of international consensus to the dangers of high profile positions."<sup>39</sup>

Whatever credit or discredit Harper deserves in exercising political leadership has to be examined in the context of the emergence of General Rick Hillier on the foreign policy making stage. In a few short years, he, perhaps more than any other leader, single-handedly, spearheaded a monumental change in Canada's military and political environment, prior to his arrival, known to incubate a general distrust and unawareness

of most things military or strategic. For most younger Canadians Canada's place as a peacekeeper provided the only context for this country's military presence and relevance. That context provided a younger generation of Canadians with a noble safe haven from the ugliness of war and conflict at least until the end of the Cold War. Previous to Hillier Canada's military leadership, apart from a few individuals like Lewis MacKenzie and Romeo Dallaire, was nondescript, subservient and isolated from our daily lives by our political culture. With the arrival of Hillier Canadians were surprised to see a sometimes crude but ultimately highly skilled manipulator of the political system who was more than able in courting his political masters while remaining devoted to his mission of remaking Canada's military into an institution evoking pride among Canadians and respect internationally. Hillier "has achieved the rare status of celebrity-soldier, thanks to his passionate salesmanship of the war in Afghanistan, and his down-to-earth Newfoundland charm and wit." In large measure Hillier has been successful in not only schooling Canadians but also politicians about the contribution the Armed Forces are making to their lives, and to the formulation and execution of the kind of foreign policy Canadians may want or need. "He is the best combination I have seen of a soldier's soldier – the men and women in uniform identify strongly with him – and of a proponent to the public and Parliament of the military's mission and responsibilities." Hugh Segal, senator and chairman of the Senate's foreign affairs committee has noted. In emerging as the driving force behind the transformation of Canadian foreign policy, Hillier brought with him a more focused view of Canada's future after 9/11 and sharper communication skills than his political bosses. Astutely aware of making some in Ottawa uncomfortable by his charismatic presence and earlier tendency of getting ahead of government policies, Hillier has also shown wisdom in knowing when to reign in those tendencies. Ultimately, he has been the key advocate and architect of Canada's first *war-making* operation in five decades. Whatever foreign policy success or failure will arise from the mission, he will share with Stephen Harper. What is certain is that both have a larger vision of a real transformation of a foreign and defence policy befitting a G-8 nation. For Hillier that new vision evokes what he has described as the "Vimy effect" - a means by which Canada's military and foreign policy focus will be returned back to the future. "The geopolitical strategic implications of Vimy, carry on to this day," Hillier has stated. "What we want to do is sort ourselves out in such a manner and do our jobs in such a manner that the geopolitical strategic implications for Canada will resonate from every tactical job that we do."<sup>40</sup> By starting a revolution within the military, Hillier is also responsible for a spill over into other aspects of how Canadians see the world and themselves. In critiquing *The Unexpected War*, an insightful study of how a dysfunctional government deepened Canada's involvement in Afghanistan, Margaret Wentz captured what may be the essential issue here - the decisions to go to war in Afghanistan had less to do with that foreboding land than it had to do with us.<sup>41</sup>

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