

The Afghanistan Task Force and Prime Ministerial Leadership

Contemporary international developments are testing the capabilities of Western states like Canada to react effectively to the humanitarian and geo-strategic threats to global and regional stability. Frequently, the nature of these threats has required governments to consider a higher level of policy and inter-departmental integration in their efforts to rebuild failed states while fending off attacks from insurgencies. Research based on interviews with Cabinet Ministers and high-ranking bureaucrats close to the Afghanistan file indicates that Steven Harper seized the opportunity to reconstitute the relationship between the political executive and Ottawa's bureaucracies.

The recent re-shaping of Prime-Ministerial-bureaucratic mechanisms was made possible by the Manley Report of 2008 and soon after by the establishment of the PCO-based Afghanistan Task Force (ATF) which became the institutional mainspring driving the government's policies on Afghanistan. In implementing a plan to transform Canada's role in Afghanistan, the ATF – led by a small elite of highly-skilled and daring public servants and supported by both the Prime Minister and the Clerk of the Privy Council Office (PCO) – succeeded in re-wiring the lines of authority between the political executive and Ottawa's bureaucracies in order to achieve an unprecedented level of policy integration in Kandahar and in Ottawa.

This paper provides a preliminary overview of some of the consequences that Harper's unconventional policy-making approach is likely to have on foreign policy and any future civilian-military interventions undertaken by Canada. The lines between the political and the administrative in policy-making are less clear than ever before. Principles of horizontal governance advanced by the ATF to streamline inter-departmental activities in conjunction with vertical, top-down oversight by the Prime Minister challenge conventional trends in governance and accountability. However, principles of ministerial responsibility and the further centralization of the Prime Minister's authority over foreign policy must be weighed against the need for governments and political leaders to swiftly put into action rapid-reaction civilian-military responses to new forms of multi-dimensional insurgency warfare and humanitarian crises.

Harper in Power

Soon after coming to power in February 2006 power, Harper signalled that some significant changes in foreign policy were about to be made. The PM's foreign policy began to draw a clearer distinction between Canada's rivals and Canada's allies. In establishing a new foreign policy posture, Harper quickly served notice that DFAIT was under his direct scrutiny. The Conservative government's funding priorities reflected the demotion of the foreign affairs department. While DND received substantial funding increases, Foreign Affairs faced cuts to its budget.

Harper's support of the military and a more durable Canadian presence in Afghanistan 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 plain language Harper outlined three fundamental reasons for Canada's presence in the region despite the increasing dangers. The first had to do with safeguarding Canada's national interests, defined largely in strategic terms; the second reason focused on the importance Harper attached to having Canada play a leadership role in the Afghan intervention in reclaiming Canada's place in the world; and the third spoke of Canada's custom of helping the disadvantaged of the world. However, by the fall of 2006 Harper's determination to stay the course in his Afghan policy was tempered by changing realities on the ground. The rising toll of casualties – 36 soldiers and one diplomat – required justification in the context of the growing ruthlessness and tenacity exhibited by the insurgency. For Harper Canada's role as part of a larger NATO operation and Canada's commitment to multilateralism was being impeded because of weak and inconsistent commitments from some NATO members. 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. After 100 days as prime minister, Harper's unconventional but disciplined use of executive power was being rewarded. He had outmanoeuvred his parliamentary opposition and strengthening Canada's military presence in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, public uncertainty and confusion about the mission continued to persist.

The Pre-Manley Afghanistan Task Force and the Resurrection of DFAIT

Faced, on one hand, with the objective of maintaining Afghanistan as a foreign policy priority, and the attendant dangers posed by a bolder mission on the other, Harper understood it was time to re-focus his government's approach on the mission. Signalling to the public and the diplomatic community that an adjustment in the government's Afghanistan policy was forthcoming, Harper initiated a series of diplomatic changes beginning with an upgrading of Canada's diplomatic presence in Afghanistan by appointing Arif Lalani, a high-ranking diplomat and considered one of a number of young, rising stars in DFAIT as Canada's Ambassador to Afghanistan in Kabul in April of 2007. This appointment was made at the "EX 4" level of ambassadorship which gave Lalani the equivalent rank of an Ambassador in any major world capital.

The appointments of other key diplomatic players by the government coincided with an important institutional change: the creation of the Afghanistan Task Force (ATF) with DFAIT resurrected to play the lead department role. Central to the creation of this new task force was the appointment of David Mulroney as Associate Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Interdepartmental Coordinator for Afghanistan to lead this new entity. Prior to assuming his new duties, Mulroney had served as Harper's Foreign Affairs and Defence Policy Advisor in the PCO

after having already distinguished himself by rising swiftly up the ranks of DFAIT. The placement of the new Afghanistan Task Force (ATF) within the DFAIT structure appeared to be a logical and practical move that would be easily facilitated in view of DFAIT's history in leading on matters of foreign policy. However, requiring the new ATF to co-ordinate and develop policy on the Afghan mission was to prove to be a more difficult matter. Mulroney's overarching ATF was charged with the more challenging objective of improving the level of co-ordination between Canada's line departments. Besides overseeing and supporting the work of diplomats in theatre, Mulroney's ATF was responsible for ensuring that the work of CIDA, DND and DFAIT was in step with the government's strategic and international objectives which saw Afghanistan and the government's desire to play a leadership role on Afghanistan as central to Canada's diplomatic international engagements. At the policy-making centre of DFAIT's new ATF, Mulroney outlined the mandate of his Task Force in prophetic terms in the summer of 2007:

For me, the key question is: how do you develop the common narrative, how do you develop something that goes beyond an approach that is coordinated as 3D, to achieve a single narrative that everyone internalizes and says, 'that's the plan and here's how we're going to design our programming.' We all need to agree on the same objectives and the same metrics for success. It seems like a no-brainer to everybody out there. But inside this town and inside every capital city, it is a challenge.¹

The establishment of the Task Force brought some organizational clarity to the process of improving coordination between departments with a vested interest in the Afghanistan file. For one thing, all matters related to Afghanistan came under Mulroney's "single shop" within DFAIT.² Working closely with Lieutenant General Mike Gauthier of CEFCEM, Vincent Rigby ADM (Assistant Deputy Minister of Defence) of policy at DND, and Stephen Wallace, the newly-appointed Vice-President of the Afghanistan Task Force at CIDA in Ottawa and Brigadier-General Tim Grant of Task Force Kandahar and Ambassador Lalani in Kabul, Mulroney achieved some success in moving the process of developing and coordinating long-term planning and short term operations.³ Mulroney also initiated a parallel process of daily contacts between various components in the Foreign Affairs planning and operations hierarchy with their counterparts in DND, CIDA other federal agencies. Nevertheless for Mulroney and the DFAIT-based ATF, the obstacles and frustrations associated with policy integration and "departmentalism" would continue.

By advancing the use of public service expertise through the AFT as a means of renewing the focus on development assistance and diplomacy, Harper's "single pillar approach" on Afghanistan was being expanded. David Mulroney's appointment also brought some criticism from foreign policy specialists – particularly in DFAIT - who expressed reservations about placing these kinds of interdepartmental responsibilities at the doorstep of DFAIT. It was one

thing to see DFAIT described as the leading department on the Afghanistan file; however, it was another to recognize that the semi-autonomous Task Force's organizational structure would do little to enhance the power and prestige of DFAIT as it moved through the uncharted waters of a dangerous mandate. For Harper, already familiar with and impressed by Mulroney's foreign policy expertise while he was the Prime Minister's Foreign and Defence policy advisor in the PCO, the appointment of Mulroney was an acknowledgment by the Prime Minister of the necessity of rebalancing the Kandahar mission by positioning a top level diplomat at the forefront of a policy that, to this point, had been led by the DND and its formidable CDS, Rick Hillier. Harper had come to the realization that a novel policy approach on Afghanistan would have to be crafted. It would have to suite both his political instincts and sense of pragmatism that told him the effective reconfiguration of policy expertise in the public service could be mustered to advance his political fortunes, as well as a mission which he believed was critically important. In other words, his short experience as Prime Minister had taught Harper that a successful Afghanistan policy could no longer be driven by political/strategic principles alone.

Striking the Manley Panel

In calling for establishment of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan in the fall of 2007, Harper presented his government with the opportunity to re-energize his foreign policy on Afghanistan, and improve its communications with the public while searching for a consensus among the Canadian public. At the same time, there was some risk for Harper in striking the panel. It was an acknowledgement that his Afghanistan policy as well as his government were in peril. It was an admission that consensus-building and compromise within the broader policy-making community had become necessary. Initial attempts by Harper's PMO to leave as little as possible to chance by setting out specific terms of reference were quickly rebuffed by the Panel.⁴ While weighted in favour of a conservative-oriented members like Jake Epp (a Cabinet minister in Clark and Mulroney governments), Derek Burney (businessman, diplomat and former Canadian Ambassador to Washington), Paul Tellier (experienced high ranking bureaucrat and former Clerk of the Privy Council) and Pamela Wallin (former television broadcaster and journalist), the Panel's independent status was legitimized by the presence of its Chair, John Manley, a former high-ranking Liberal minister in Chretien's government.

The 21 January 2008 report set the stage for the March 16 parliamentary show-down which extended the life of 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. The Panel's recommendations 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 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 tightly-controlled communications policy.

Inside the Panel: the Panel's Secretariat

What has gone unrecognized in the analysis of the Manley Report is the critical role of the Panel's Secretariat in not only ensuring the success of the Manley Panel itself but also in helping to identify new policy-making avenues. A small but significant group of public servants in the Secretariat – the real engine of the panel - made it possible to articulate a surprisingly clear vision of Canada role in Afghanistan. Having been withdrawn from DFAIT in October 2007, David Mulrone was now appointed to lead the Panel's Secretariat. Mulrone surrounded himself with a small body of very talented and for the most part, young bright lights seconded from a cross-section of departments involved in the Afghanistan mission. They included Elissa Goldberg (Executive Director) from DFAIT, Colonel Michael Cessford (Special Advisor) from DND, Samuel Millar (Special Advisor) from CIDA, Sanjeev Chowdhury (Chief of Operations) from DFAIT and Elizabeth Thebaud (Administrator) also from CIDA. Besides providing strategic direction to the Panel, this select group of civil servants – armed with a strong grasp of the high-level intricacies of Ottawa's policy-making bureaucracies, highly attuned to the sensitivities of their political bosses, and willing to assume the risks of being an integral part of such a high profile endeavour – insiders agree, did a masterful job of coordinating a myriad of support and filtering functions which contributed directly to the quality and impact of the final report. The demands placed on the Secretariat were enormous; the time-frame for completion of its work was very narrow. The contribution and indirectly, influence that key members of the Secretariat had in shaping the Panel's report not only provided the government with the opportunity to pursue a more politically palatable policy on Afghanistan, it also opened the door to formulating and advancing a novel foreign policy-making approach that challenged Ottawa's policy-making orthodoxy.

The Manley Panel and a New Home for the ATF

Emerging from the backrooms of the Manley Panel, and making good on their detailed knowledge, expertise and inter-departmental contacts gained while immersed in the work of supporting the Panel, this new collection of public service policymakers were quickly moved to leading positions created to advance and implement the key elements of the report and the Harper government's refurbished "whole of government" (WoG) approach to Afghanistan. While the Panel findings complemented the already-existing "3D" concept, Manley went further by calling for the *integrated* use of diplomatic, development and defence instruments in setting out foreign policy objectives in Kandahar. This was a direct response to one of the fundamental shortcomings of the Mulroney ATF housed in DFAIT. While there were some improvements in coordination and cooperation between departments, the overall level of policy integration necessary to develop a "common narrative" and common objectives were not being achieved under the earlier organizational structure. There was a growing perception in Ottawa that DFAIT was not the best platform for delivering Manley's recommendations. DFAIT's weak performance in operationalizing the evacuation of Canadians during the Lebanon crisis did little to foster confidence in the department with Harper and the PMO. Furthermore, DFAIT's diplomatic culture presented its own problems. There was the view within DFAIT that it should be focusing on other priorities besides Afghanistan. Furthermore, there was a prevailing view that its diplomatic culture could not accept the idea that the organization should be on a "war footing" in fulfilling its newly-acquired institutional obligations.

There were other considerations at play. David Lynch, the Clerk of the PCO and Mulroney were not sufficiently satisfied with the operational support that DFAIT was able to provide to the ATF. "At this stage everybody was in agreement about the mission. However, what was needed was a coordinating body that was much more operational," noted a high ranking advisor in the PCO.⁵ It was also recognized by Harper and Lynch that the real need to drive interdepartmental coordination and collaboration would be more easily facilitated by the PCO, a smaller body better equipped to manage the different cultures, capacities and political priorities of the many departments connected to Canada's Afghanistan policy. Furthermore, for the PM and the Clerk the shift to the PCO was mutually beneficial. The PMO-PCO tandem represented the point at which high level bureaucrats are able to facilitate the greatest interaction with political staff because of the nature of their respective mandates and by the fact that both bodies are closer in size. Sparked by the Manley Report, and very much aware of the contribution and rapidly-gained expertise of key players in the Manley Panel Secretariat, Harper, with the strong support of the Clerk of the PCO, approved this important organizational shift. David Mulroney and others in the Secretariat were moved to the PCO to lead the newly-minted 26-member Afghanistan Task Force formally known as the "Afghanistan Task Force Secretariat." In cooperation with other relevant departments, the PCO was at the forefront of providing assistance to the ATF which mandated Manley's recommendations as follows:

- Strategic policy development and integration;
- Coordination of the Government's activities and operations in Afghanistan;
- Building coherence and consistency in communicating the mission to Canadians, international audiences and to Afghans; and
- Tracking implementation.⁶

In undertaking the recommendations, the ATF was given unprecedented autonomy and access to the Prime Minister, relevant Cabinet Ministers, as well as unparalleled influence over the shaping of the government's policy on Afghanistan. Smoothing the way for these changes was the Clerk of the PCO. In Ottawa it is understood that on a bureaucratic level, the PCO's response to central operational or program issues varied according to the Clerk of the day. As the leading proponent for the renewal of the public service, Lynch was very much aware that the level and breadth of expertise Harper would require to implement the WoG approach to the Afghanistan mission would serve to strengthen the PCO in particular, and the public service in general.

Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan (CCOA)

In addition to the afore-mentioned tasks, Mulroney's ATF was given the responsibility for providing secretariat support to the CCOA. The CCOA, in turn, would report regularly to the Prime Minister and Planning (and Priorities) Cabinet Committee. The original CCOA was chaired by Minister of International Trade David Emerson and included the Minister of National Defence Peter McKay, Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day, Minister of International Cooperation (CIDA) Beverly Oda and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Bernier. In announcing the first Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan on February 8, 2008, Harper indicated the new committee would be given the mandate to watch over security, development and defence issues relevant to Canada's mission. A clear signal to Ottawa of the importance of the ATF was the elevation of David Mulroney to the Deputy Minister rank as head of the 26-member ATF.

Mulroney's Task Force also took over the implementation of many of the specifics of the Manley panel that included enlarging the presence of civilians in theatre, the purchase of medium lift helicopters and "high performance Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV's) as well as the development of a clear system of "benchmarks and timelines" to measure the effectiveness of Canadian aid contributions in order to provide, in the words of the Manley Report, "the public with franker and more frequent reporting on events in Afghanistan."⁷

One of the key central objectives of the recommendations was for the government to establish a better balanced, and a more definable approach to Canada's contribution in the Afghanistan campaign. For Mulroney, it was now clear that he, the Clerk of the PCO and the Prime minister were on the same page. This new arrangement provided Mulroney and the AFT

with unprecedented leverage and power to take on the still formidable challenges of “departmentalism” as his ATF presided over the rechanneling of the post-Manley-inspired foreign policy on Afghanistan.

Horizontal Governance and the ATF

In working towards the achievement of military-civilian, inter-departmental policy and operational integration, Mulroney’s approach reflected the “horizontal governance” approach in making public policy. Rather than relying on traditional hierarchical approaches in the making of public policy, horizontal governance necessitates working through partnerships and networks which, advocates argue, leads to greater interdependence between the bureaucratic-political actors and speedier and more efficient policy making. Some theorists suggest that greater horizontality among actors, such as various public service departments, enhances partnerships and new opportunities in policy-making. Susan Phillips of the School of Public Policy and Administration at Carleton University explained its theoretical appeal in a growingly complex world that revolves around, “working through networks rather than hierarchies ... and takes advantage of the proliferation of policy tools that has occurred over the past several decades.”⁸ Understandably, the horizontal governance approach adopted in large measure by Mulroney and the ATF was seen as a threat and resented by many in the Ottawa bureaucratic establishment who had become comfortably ensconced in the traditional, hierarchical, planning and decision-making systems that were deeply imbedded in their respective bureaucracies silos.

The “First Piece of the Puzzle:” the RoCK - Speaking with One Canadian Voice

One of the more visible manifestations of the ATF’s power and influence was the authority given to the office of the Representative of Canada in Kandahar (RoCK) and the unprecedented level of integration that was forged between that newly-created office and Brig-Gen Denise Thompson’s Task Force Kandahar’s military forces. This new partnership highlighted greater and more direct field-level involvement in policy-making. Reporting to David Mulroney’s ATF in Ottawa and Canada’s Ambassador Arif Lalani in Kabul, Elissa Golberg, as the RoCK, was Canada’s senior civilian representative and principal interlocutor in the southern province of Kandahar. At 35 years of age, Golberg became one the principal catalysts in the drive to harmonize civilian-military policy in one of the most dangerous war zones in the world. To use Golberg’s words: “The first piece of the puzzle was in place.”⁹ In advancing the process of civilian-military integration, it was not only Golberg’s job to speak with one Canadian voice but to impose a more disciplined and rigorous interface between civilian agencies and military forces on the Kandahar team. This process had implications not only on Canadians serving in Kandahar but also on the formation of working relationships with ISAF members, international civilian agencies, as well as local elements of the provincial government. Of course, Golberg’s mandate presented field-level challenges to the planning and

decision-making systems of traditional line departments that, in her words, “mitigate against horizontality” and typically do not reward collaboration.¹⁰ The specific starting reference point for Golberg’s newly-assembled Kandahar team was the government’s recently-released 6 priorities to which the government was committed until 2011:

1. Enable the Afghan National Security Forces in Kandahar to sustain a more secure environment and promote law and order.
2. Strengthen Afghan institutional capacity to deliver core services and promote economic growth, enhancing the confidence of Kandaharis in their government.
3. Provide humanitarian assistance for extremely vulnerable people, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.
4. Enhance border security, with facilitation of bilateral dialogue between Afghan and Pakistani authorities.
5. Help advance Afghanistan’s capacity for democratic governance by contributing to effective, accountable public institutions and electoral processes.
6. Facilitate Afghan-led efforts toward political reconciliation.¹¹

The emergence of these six priorities only three months after the Manley Panel findings was illustrative of the speed and ingenuity that could be brought to bear by the ATF in developing common policy objectives that involved all of the government’s security, development and diplomatic apparatuses. It is important to note that the 6 priorities originated with an informal meeting of diplomatic, development and military officials based in Kandahar and Kabul hosted by Ambassador Lalani. Starting from a blank slate, the meeting produced the foundational draft that was then passed on to Mulroney’s ATF in Ottawa for review and refinement before going to the CCOA and Cabinet for approval in record speed.

Dubbed as “the Rock” over her 11 months in Kandahar, Golberg worked in tandem with Thompson as she presided over a civilian team of Corrections Canada officers, CSIS agents, Canadian police in addition to CIDA and DFAIT political and development personnel which expanded from 15 to 62 over her tenure. Not only was Golberg given the powers to oversee the integration of civilian-military activities in Kandahar, the RoCK was the only civilian who was given the authority to speak at ISAF meetings. The elevation of these kinds of civilian powers as well as having Golberg and Thompson share an office sent a clear message about the centrality of unifying the operational and policy objectives of all departments and agencies involved in the mission. This was by deliberate design Golberg explained “so all civilian-military staff could see we were a team and as recognition that the mission had not been appropriately weighted.”¹² This measure was more than symbolic. In operational terms, it was part of a policy spearheaded by Mulroney, Lalani and Golberg to get more civilians operating “outside the wire,” a necessary requirement for mission success and a response to Manley’s critique of previous civilian-development operations. Thompson, of course, appreciated the implications of this new relationship. The military’s political leverage in Ottawa and military success in the field were

now more closely linked to the performance of the civilian component of the mission. Inter-departmental initiatives were not new in Ottawa. “What was unusual here was the level it was formed” Thompson observed.¹³

In response to the bewildering array of complications and problems before them, Golberg and Thompson worked very well together in developing the Kandahar Action Plan (KAP) described by Golberg as “the first jointly developed and implemented integrated civil-military strategy.” From Golberg’s perspective the plan demonstrated “added value” when civilians became a significant part of the mission.¹⁴ Golberg described KAP as a “multi-national and multi-agency strategy based on priorities identified by Afghans and shared by Canada and its allies in Afghanistan.”¹⁵ Given that KAP placed particular emphasis on having civilians work actively outside the wire, it was understood that field generated input from Kabul and especially Kandahar would receive higher priority. In order to activate the KAP, a series of integrated teams, “Committees of Practice” were formed. A procedural template was into place with all meetings focused on the mission’s 6 priorities. It was not long before tightly knit, civil-military teams were sent out into the districts often operating out of the same forward operating bases as Canadian Forces units. Biweekly meetings between Corrections Services, the RCMP, CIDA, Public Safety Canada, and CSIS were also regularized by Golberg. During those meetings Thompson would take the lead on security issues while Golberg would take the lead on governance issues. Golberg, with Mulroney’s and Lalani’s backing, considered it important to establish a counterpoint to military policy and culture accustomed to taking the lead in war-zone conflicts. The integration of civilian-military operations also required that Golberg’s be given substantially improved financial authority and improved access to resources.

CIDA and Public Safety Canada

As the principal agency in charge of development and humanitarian policy, CIDA, like other departments, found itself working through the rigours of realigning its procedures and policies to more effectively comply with the government’s WoG approach on Afghanistan. While Lt. Gen. Gauthier from Ottawa and Brig. Gen. Thompson from Kandahar were at the forefront of overseeing the military component of integration, Stephen Wallace was the key figure in leading the reorganization of the development effort in Afghanistan. Like most upper level public servants working on the Afghanistan file, Wallace came to CIDA with broad experience in development work as well as familiarity with other federal bureaucracies. Like Mulroney, with whom he served on the Pre-Manley ATF, Wallace saw that simple multi-departmental coordination was not working well and would not support the policy changes outlined by Manley. Therefore, interdepartmental linkages had to taken to the next level: policy and operational integration. Policy and operational integration was predicated on establishing coherent policy platforms and communications for the benefit of CIDA’s bureaucratic partners as

well as the broad public which was demanding a clearer understanding of the mission. As Vice-President of the CIDA Afghanistan Task Force, Wallace could see that very significant sums of money were already flowing into Afghanistan through frameworks established by international consensus (primarily stemming from the Afghan Compact) but that in Canada's case they had to be more effectively adapted to national priorities. Speed and better targeting, Wallace noted, were most essential in delivering effective development programs on the ground. It was also clear to Wallace that achieving "unity of purpose" was now achievable due to the political consensus that had developed in Ottawa around the Manley recommendations. "Unity of purpose" also catalyzed a strong sense of purpose and commitment within Wallace's ATF in spite of a host of challenges such as civilian recruitment. Wallace's "unity of purpose" and a unified multi-departmental strategy on Afghanistan were a product of the common policy/operational pedestal shared by the Prime Minister (and PMO) and Mulroney's PCO-based ATF. The incorporation of accountability, using a system of "metrics" or milestones to measure CIDA's performance against the mission's 6 priorities, was strongly backed by Wallace. For Wallace following a common "process" was essential: "If you have to be accountable every month, then you've embedded rigour into the process."¹⁶ Like Mulroney as well, Wallace recognized the potentialities of a secular trend in the public service – issues were increasingly looked at as "horizontal issues." Wallace and his group were quick to admit that CIDA and other civilian components of the Kandahar mission had a lot to learn from the military's ability to organize and mount field operations. It was also appreciated that the field level perspective, particularly in a dangerous zone of conflict, is assumed to carry greater weight unless proven otherwise. From the past experience of Wallace and his CIDA ATF staff, civilians in theatre could not operate in a timely and effective manner because of ponderous policy vetting procedures based on vertically-based policy chambers within agencies, each isolated from the other. Wallace, like Mulroney and others in the ATF, understood the importance of advancing horizontally-based policy management in Ottawa and especially on the ground in Afghanistan. Of course these initiatives received the support of CIDA's Minister, Bev Oda, who was also a member of the CCOA.

While not in the public spotlight, Public Safety Canada faced a number of unique organizational challenges in its efforts to comply with the process of policy integration. Created in 2003, Public Safety Canada (PS) was created as an umbrella organization to improve coordination across all federal departments and agencies responsible for national security. The multiplicity of organizations under the PS portfolio itself presented another level of difficulty for officials in the department assigned to work with Mulroney's ATF in Ottawa and Golberg's organization in Kandahar. PS's primary task was to assist in reforming and upgrading the Afghanistan National Police (ANP), court system and prisons in Kandahar by providing governance, corrections and Canadian police specialists. For PS there was substantial increase in workload but without the assets commensurate with the additional burden. Both Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) and Deputy Ministers (DMs) from Public Safety as well as their counterparts from other department were meeting on a weekly basis with ATF/PCO officials in

Ottawa to integrate the work of some 50 police officers and 10 Corrections and Border Services officers into the civilian-military plans established by Golberg and Thompson in Kandahar. Before sending these specialists into the field, appropriate briefing and training sessions (including less formal “RoCK Talk” sessions) integrating specialists from all departments were organized on a regular basis.

Kristina Namiesnioski, Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), PS, described the internal and external process of adjusting to the WoG template as having worked better than many might have expected. From an administrative perspective it was useful in clearly identifying priorities that benefited from being narrowed even though they were cutting across different institutions within and outside of PS. The application of benchmarks contributed to the development of common objectives that were more measured and less inclined to be overly ambitious. To an extent the bureaucratic culture within PS had already been acclimatized to a multi-institutional integrative model based on the department’s central objective: to keep Canada safe from a range of threats, the primary one being the threat of terrorism. As Namiesnioski noted: “The process forced us to come together” in acknowledging the leading role played by Mulrone’s ATF.¹⁷ More importantly according to the ADM, “it forced a greater level of integration between the operational folks on the ground and the policy folks in Ottawa.”¹⁸

The process of integrating policy and operations did not always go smoothly. In the case of the RCMP there were some philosophic and bureaucratic impediments that had to be overcome. There was a tendency for the RCMP to equate itself to a military force. From the perspective of PS, the RCMP was not conducting police operations in Afghanistan but rather training and mentoring new recruits for the Afghanistan National Police. However, from the RCMP’s perspective, Canada had a vested interest in being in Afghanistan – a supplier of 65% of Canada’s heroin – besides helping to train police officers. Deputy Commissioner Raf Souccar, responsible for RCMP federal policing and international operations, framed the RCMP’s role in Afghanistan in these broader terms. “By helping the Afghans, we’re helping ourselves,” he observed as he drew a line between drugs, the manufacture of IEDs and the complexities of Canada’s mission in Afghanistan where the lines between criminality and politics were often blurred.¹⁹ The RCMP training strategy centered around the concept of “community policing” required police trainers (who carried weapons) to work outside the wire in order to be effective. This approach relied on negotiating well-coordinated security arrangements through the office of the RoCK and Brig-General Thompson which took some time due to the military’s limited resources. Problems were not only logistical in nature. A particular test of the process of policy/operational integration was the dispute between the RoCK and the RCMP over reporting protocol and line authority which through compromise was resolved.

The CIDA- PS cases indicate that the ATF-driven process was forcing all stakeholders to make hard cross-departmental decisions that before were thought to be practically unachievable. As this process began to take hold it was becoming increasingly difficult for agencies within

Public Safety and in Ottawa's bureaucracies in general to remain outside of the new, expanding policy grid centered around Mulroney's ATF.

Conclusions

Since coming to power in 2006 the Harper government has been at the centre of new foreign policy dynamics that have emerged from the Manley Panel Report of January 8, 2008. The PM's policy responses to the report have opened the door to a new dimension that has both challenged and supported the centralization of his power over the foreign policy making machinery in Ottawa. These developments – despite the critics who call for a return to a more inclusive parliamentary policy making role – are likely to have an impact on how foreign policy is made in the future.

The creation of the ATF constituted a transformation in the manner and speed by which foreign policy is made. While appearing to support what Savoie refers to as the domination of the centre, this transformation may have also inadvertently challenged the domination of the centre - the Prime Minister and his advisers – as well as how future governments will form foreign policy responses to international crisis that will demand quick and nimble action. At some point, temporary but decisive, synchronized governmental responses that cut across departmental divisions are likely to become common practice. The implications and issues raised by these looming possibilities lead us to a series of conclusions and questions about the shifting roles of actors and structures involved in the formulation of Canada's foreign policy.

This paper has shown that by regularizing better integrative policies, it is possible to develop coherent foreign policy in very short order. The reconstituted ATF was the principle instrument that forced some important changes in the foreign-policy making system. A high-ranking official in DFAIT described this period of transformation: "Working towards unity of purpose was not so much a matter of compromise, it was a matter of realigning your department to make it happen."²⁰ The restructuring pressed forward by Mulroney's Task Force and supported at the Deputy Minister level forced many differing institutional cultures to come together.

The establishment of the ATF was also a lesson in the importance of elevating the civilian profile in an anti-insurgency campaign that required a more balanced diplomatic, development and military involvement in a conflict zone. This required not only a re-balancing of civilian-military priorities but also a change in institutional mindsets and cultures especially when the work of diplomacy and development was moved to a volatile war zone where civilian-military distinctions and line department priorities were diminished. "Imagine out of an array of individuals and institutions trying to identify, recruit, and prepare people who have never been deployed before in the middle of an active insurgency where dangerous people are trying to kill

you” observed an official in Mulroney’s ATF.²¹ The prompt and close backing of the ATF and the CCOA on many of these types of micro-level matters is noteworthy. When it was necessary to sign off with or inform a minister, it was done very quickly. “The fact was when people’s lives were at stake, you get people going forward very quickly” explained the same official of the high level of cooperation and responsiveness that was achieved between departments when, for example, in recruiting, briefing and ultimately transforming a Millhaven prison guard or an RCMP corporal, you were transforming them into an international actor who is given the responsibility training prison guards or policemen in Kandahar City.

While the Manley Report served as the bureaucratic and political blueprint for the re-tooling of the PM’s policy on Afghanistan, one can not underestimate the impact of the lead groups of public servants associated with or directly involved in the work of the ATF in Ottawa, Canada’s Embassy in Kabul and the RoCK’s team in Kandahar in the policy making process. The courage, talents and resourcefulness of public servants operating under the coordination of the Elissa Golberg in Kandahar and Arif Lalani in Kabul in both implementing and influencing policy from the field where problems and issues required immediate and joint military-civilian action have set the bar higher in terms of future civilian-military expeditionary missions. Not only were the government’s 6 priorities rooted in the field, a series of joint military-civilian initiatives under the leadership of Golberg and Thompson succeeded in forging a workable integrated approach to planning and applying initiatives that stemmed from the realities of the situation in Kabul and Kandahar. In fact, the practice of field-level integration of policies and operations between departmental representatives and agencies was meeting less resistance in Kandahar (where civilians and the military shared common dangers and conditions) than in Ottawa where some departmental officials found it more difficult to see a devolution of their power and prestige.

Apart from having a definable geo-strategic vision of Canada in the international system, renewing Martin’s commitment to remain in Afghanistan and advocating for the need to strengthen Canada’s military, Harper came to power without a clear policy vision on Afghanistan. He knew from military briefings that continued military engagement would result in considerable casualties and escalating costs. Early in his mandate Harper understood that it would be necessary to strengthen Canada’s approach to the mission. By March of 2007 the appointments of Mulroney, Wallace and Lalani and others signalled Harper’s decision to turn to the bureaucracy to strengthen Canada’s presence in Afghanistan. Within the PMO justifiable concern had grown about a vacuum in the development, governance and diplomatic elements of Canada’s intervention. Hillier’s charisma, and the magnificent job Canadian forces had done in single-handedly defending and holding Kandahar in the face of serious Taliban intrusions in the summer of 2006 did not erase the overall sense of uncertainty and confusion around the mission. “This was Mr. Harper at his best – confronted by a problem he couldn’t solve himself.” recalled Derek Burney of the events and meetings leading to the establishment of the Manley Panel.²²

In the realm of foreign policy, Harper's decision to strike the Manley Panel proved to be the most important calculated gamble the Prime Minister had ever taken. It not only reaffirmed and reinvigorated Canada's commitment to a reconfigured mission – at that time the centerpiece of his foreign policy – it also kept his government in power. Both of these benefits must be set in the context of the timely intercession of a select group of exceptionally talented and bright bureaucratic risk takers - Canada's new mandarins - who took the lead in crafting and then guiding the implementation of a "new" foreign policy on Afghanistan based on a 90 page report for which they had provided invaluable assistance. This represented a revealing political dynamic in a minority government situation – one in which you have a government not enthusiastic about communicating about Afghanistan, but quite willing to do so via the Manley-mandated quarterly reports. Some have dismissed the reports as political documents facilitating political reporting to the public. Still, these reports have provided for an unparalleled level of transparency and coherence not possible without a significant degree of inter-departmental integration around commonly defined objectives. The other significant step overseen by Harper was the relocation of the ATF to the newly-empowered PCO and the presence of its Clerk, Kevin Lynch.

Tradition has dictated that the PCO is supposed to support Cabinet and the Prime Minister by providing non-partisan support and advice. However, one of the main reasons for moving the ATF from DFAIT to the PCO was precisely to improve the *operational* capabilities of the Task Force in order to advance the government's objectives. Evidence indicates that, at the very least, the line between support and operational functions has been blurred. There are, of course good reasons why the PCO – as the foundational body supporting the ATF in this case – does not normally become an agent of operations or an agent of change. Agents of change are the ministries (or lead departments) which are normally guided, supported and even challenged by the PCO, the chief enforcer in the public service. A merging of these two functions within the PCO poses both advantages and risks associated with this kind of centralizing of power. Both Harper and Lynch were willing to endure the consequent perception that the move to the PCO had politicized that agency. A plausible explanation has been given by some insiders: as a *task force* the ATF is by definition temporary and its exceptional powers, temporary. An uneasy imbalance was achieved. From the operational perspective, there were positives in successfully advancing an integrated mission which outweighed the short term negatives associated with, at worst, politicizing the PCO and at best, re-establishing the saliency of the bureaucracies in the policy-making process. Of course the ATF, as a secretariat of the PCO, assisted the Prime Minister and in particular, the CCOA in bringing to bear the entire machinery of government on the Afghanistan mission. The enhancement of PCO-ATF authority may have been undertaken within the parameters of the Manley Report. However, the level of empowerment granted the post-Manley PCO-based ATF was unparalleled. In short, by moving influential policy-makers from DFAIT to the PCO, the challenging function of the PCO may be called into question.

The CCOA, also spawned by the Manley Report, played a role in managing the Afghanistan file – primarily on the political level. Within the PMO it became evident that very little political monitoring of the file was necessary – not only because of Manley’s excellent job of articulating the parameters that the government needed to work within, but also because of the leadership provided by David Emerson as the Chair of the CCOA. In working exceptionally well with key members of the ATF like David Mulroney and Sanjeev Chowdhury who was Mulroney’s Director of Operations in the PCO, Emerson was instrumental in providing the political impetus, for example, in initiating and then obtaining Cabinet approval which, with unheard of speed, formalized the government’s six priorities and three signature projects (Dhala Dam project, polio eradication and school rehabilitation program) that were prepared for him by Chowdhury on the operational side of the ATF and David Muroney and Cindy Termorshuizen on the policy side.²³ It is ironic that although the Manley Report had called for the daily management of the file by the Prime Minister – in other words, having the PM lead the governmental side of the mission - Harper, contrary to the popular perception of a leader obsessed with controlling the government’s message, chose to delegate political authority on the file by placing it in the competent hands of Emerson with little if any interference from the PMO.²⁴

The dominance and impact of the small but very powerful CCOA and ATF over the process of integrating inter-departmental policies on Afghanistan together with the adoption of principles of horizontal management leads us to ponder the issue of ministerial responsibility. An argument can be made that the ATF undermined the principles of ministerial responsibility, a constitutional convention which stipulates that a cabinet minister bears the ultimate responsibility for the actions of his/her ministry or department. The ATF was mandated to manage and synthesize policies at the Deputy Minister level and lower. These policies were then funnelled through to the ATF and the CCOA whose decisions and recommendations carried greater weight with the PM and the PMO than those of individual Ministers representing Cabinet at large where approval was largely a formality. The principle of ministerial responsibility is very important as it guarantees that elected officials are directly answerable for each governmental decision. The principle motivates ministers to be more diligent in watching over activities within their departments. Ministerial responsibility also operates on the assumption that public servants should not take credit for the achievements of their department and that the line between the political executive and the bureaucracy needs to be preserved. The degree to which the creation of the very powerful ATF may have undermined the role of democracy by weakening the principle of ministerial responsibility and in so doing, has contributed to the further centralized Prime Ministerial power over foreign policy must be considered. However, in doing so, it is important not to dismiss the view that the “ATF model” may be an appropriate and legitimate enhancement of Prime Ministerial authority. A central question that needs to be considered is the extent to which Prime Ministerial authority should be legitimately calibrated to meet the unconventional challenges of anarchical forces that are fighting new types of multidimensional, unconventional insurgency warfare aimed at destabilizing weak states. One

might argue for the domination and power of the Prime Minister over critical areas of foreign policy as a logical manifestation of the changing nature of global threats he or she must face. This question provides an interesting contextual reference point in exploring the possibility of enhancing the authority of Prime Minister to put into play a rapid-reaction response foreign policy capable of organizing and deploying an integrated, civilian-military presence into the world's trouble spots.

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¹ David Mulroney, interviewed by Robert Parkins and Chris Thatcher, “Common Narrative: Canada’s integrated approach to Afghanistan,” *Vanguard*, July 2007.

² David Mulroney, interviewed by Robert Parkins and Chris Thatcher, “Common Narrative: Canada’s integrated approach to Afghanistan,” *Vanguard*, July 2007.

³ Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command (CEFCOM) is the unified command that is responsible for all Canadian Forces (CF) expeditionary operations.

⁴ Interview with Derek Burney, Ottawa, February 10, 2009.

⁵ Source confidential.

⁶ Government of Canada Privy Council Office, www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?lang=eng&page=secretariats&sub=afghanistan&doc

⁷ *Independent Panel on Canada’s Future Role in Afghanistan*, 2008, pg 38.

⁸ Susan D. Phillips, “The Myths of Horizontal Governance: Is the Third Sector Really a Partner?” School of Public Policy and Administration Carleton University Ottawa, 2004.

⁹ Interview Elissa Golberg, formerly Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Ottawa, June 9, 2010.

¹⁰ Interview Elissa Golberg, formerly Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Ottawa, June 9, 2010.

¹¹ *Canada’s Engagement in Afghanistan: Setting a Course to 2011*, June 2008.

¹² Interview Elissa Golberg, formerly Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Ottawa, June 9, 2010.

¹³ Interview with Brig-Gen Denis Thompson, former Commander Task Force Kandahar, Ottawa, June 2, 2010.

¹⁴ Interview Elissa Golberg, formerly Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Ottawa, June 9, 2010.

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- ¹⁵ Interview with Elissa Golberg, Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan, Government of Canada, December 2008 <http://www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/speeches-discours/yir-2.aspx?lang=en>.
- ¹⁶ Interview Stephen Wallace, former Vice-President of the CIDA Afghanistan Task Force, Ottawa, June 8, 2010.
- ¹⁷ Telephone Interview: Kristina Namiesnioski, Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Public Safety Canada (PS), June 17, 2010.
- ¹⁸ Telephone Interview: Kristina Namiesnioski, Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Public Safety Canada (PS), June 17, 2010.
- ¹⁹ Interview with Deputy Commissioner Raf Souccar, RCMP HQ, Ottawa, June 10, 2010.
- ²⁰ Confidential interview.
- ²¹ Interview source confidential.
- ²² Interview Derek Burney, Ottawa, February 17, 2010.
- ²³ Cindy Termorshuizen is now Canada's Deputy Ambassador in Kabul.
- ²⁴ Interview David Emerson, Vancouver, April 16, 2009.