

## Afghanistan: A Case Study on Canada's International Policies

Simon Ketcheson

Canada's involvement in Afghanistan is the result of foreign policy decisions made by both Liberal and Conservative governments following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York City. These decisions have led Canada into a country that has been invaded and conquered numerous times, and is known as the "graveyard of empires". The international troops stationed there as part of the United States' War on Terror are experiencing difficulties implementing successful policies. One needs to look no further than the poppy eradication policy: the Senlis Council asserts that "the opium crisis in Afghanistan is worse than ever [...] five years ago, the total area of cultivated hectares of poppy was less than half of the current total".<sup>1</sup>

Canada's unyielding support for this War makes the issue an important one for all Canadians, and thus merits a closer examination. The war in Afghanistan and the larger War on Terror have important implications for Canada's international relations. Indeed, one may look at Afghanistan as part of a larger trend which involves the convergence of Canadian and American foreign policy. Michael Byers, a professor of political science at the University of British Columbia, asserts that "already, in Europe and elsewhere, Canadian foreign policy on some issues is seen as largely inseparable from that of the United States".<sup>2</sup> This paper aims to discuss this convergence in order to show the dependent nature of Canadian foreign policy upon that of the United States. Furthermore, it is shown that the War in Afghanistan is essentially against the interest of Canadians and that the choice to contribute has never been adequately debated in the Canadian public realm.

First, this paper discusses the emergence of a Canadian foreign policy following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror, with emphasis on integrationist policies or tendencies evidenced by the Canadian government. In the second section Canada's actual involvement in Afghanistan is examined through discussion of Canada's aid, operations, and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Finally, the domestic side of the war in Afghanistan is discussed, from the financial cost to Canadians to the impact of friendly fire incidents and other influences on public opinion of the war.

### THE 1994 WHITE PAPER

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Western world had to readjust its foreign policy. Gone was the arch-enemy which made policy-making a simple art of opposing communism wherever it appeared to rear its head. As early as 1994, the Government of Canada came out with a White Paper on defence. John Warnock, a former professor of political economy and sociology at the University of Regina, tells us this document concluded that the Canadian government needed to "support the United States through the continuation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), participation in [North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and] the continuation of the Canada-US Defence Production Sharing Agreement".<sup>3</sup> Although the main purpose for NATO's existence, the defence of Europe against the USSR, was no longer pertinent, the Canadian government decided to follow the lead of the United States and maintain NATO for future possible use. The Canada-US Defence Production Sharing Agreement is essentially an agreement which aims to maintain the balance of trade between the two countries by shifting production accordingly. Thus, beginning in the early 1990s, one can see the convergence of Canadian with American foreign policy in a post-Cold War environment.

<sup>1</sup> The Senlis Council. "Losing Hearts and Minds in Afghanistan". <[http://www.senliscouncil.net/documents/Canadian\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_October\\_2006](http://www.senliscouncil.net/documents/Canadian_Policy_Paper_October_2006)>

<sup>2</sup> Michael Byers. "Canadian armed forces under United States command," *International Journal*. Winter 2002-2003, pp. 89-114. (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs.) 93.

<sup>3</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.) 158.



## ARTICLE 5

Just twenty-four hours after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States approached NATO about invoking Article 5 of its Charter, which states that an armed attack on one member constitutes an attack on all members.<sup>4</sup> On October 4<sup>th</sup> the Secretary-General of NATO, George Robertson, announced that NATO was implementing Article 5, and it was not long until the Canadian government echoed this sentiment. John Warnock explains that the Chrétien government “strongly supported this decision”<sup>5</sup> and that on October 14<sup>th</sup>, Jean Chrétien announced that Canada was giving “unqualified support” for a “fight we did not pick but [will] finish”.<sup>6</sup> The immediate actions taken were to send Her Majesty’s Canadian Ship(s) *Halifax*, *Iroquois*, *Preserver*, *Vancouver* and *Charlottetown* to serve under American command in the both the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.<sup>7</sup> There was not a word of dissent or even a request for patience and planning when the United States decided upon its course of action. Although worldwide public opinion was riding high in favour of the United States in the months following 9/11, further discussion shows that the decision by Canada to unequivocally support the United States is part of a larger trend.

## THE THREE D’S

When Paul Martin was elected Prime Minister in late 2003, he launched a major review of Canadian foreign policy, released in 2005 as *The International Policy Statement*.<sup>8</sup> This statement iterated the “Three-D” approach to Canada’s foreign policy, which as then Defence Minister Bill Graham explains, “integrates defence, diplomacy and development assistance in our international operations”.<sup>9</sup>

Warnock goes as far as to say that “to no one’s surprise, these are also the major policy goals set forth by the US government”.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, there is a definite convergence of policy goals between the United States and Canada, especially in terms of defence. The ratio of military expenses to aid expenses in Afghanistan is “ten to one in favour of military spending”.<sup>11</sup> In fact, in 2005 the government announced an increase in defence spending of \$13 billion over a five-year period.<sup>12</sup>

“Beginning in the early 1990s, one can see the convergence of Canadian with American foreign policy in a post-Cold War environment.”

Furthermore, the 2005 *International Policy Statement*, although similar to the 1994 White Paper, differed in one major aspect – the “emphasis on

the intensity of the threats Canada faced in a post-9/11 world”.<sup>13</sup> The result of this emphasis was a drive to reconstitute the Canadian Forces and to co-operate militarily with the United States.

In the economic or development ‘D’ of the Three-D’s, there is also convergence. Consistent with Canada’s aid policy, Warnock explains that “most of the economic assistance the Canadian government is providing for Afghanistan is channeled through [institutions] like the World Bank and the [United Nations Development Programme]”.<sup>14</sup> He also notes that through this channeling of aid, Canada is essentially supporting the development programme set out by the United States for Afghanistan, which closely resembles a Washington Consensus style development programme. In relinquishing direct control of its aid and assistance, Canada is submitting itself to the policies and goals of other actors such as the United States, or the United Nations; in other words, those who control the aid programmes in general.

<sup>4</sup> Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang. *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar*. (Toronto: Viking Canada.)

<sup>5</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 157.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Brian W. Tomlin, Norman Hillmer and Fen Osler Hampson. *Canada’s International Policies: Agendas, Alternatives, and Politics*. (Toronto: Oxford University Press)

<sup>9</sup> Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre.) 43.

<sup>10</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 160.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 165.

<sup>12</sup> Brian W. Tomlin, Norman Hillmer and Fen Osler Hampson. *Canada’s International Policies: Agendas, Alternatives, and Politics*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 153.

<sup>14</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 168.



In the final aspect of the Three-D approach, diplomacy, there are a couple examples from Afghanistan which show how Canada subordinates itself to American policy. For instance, Warnock mentions bringing war criminals before the courts, for which there is "widespread support in Afghanistan"<sup>15</sup> and also the advancement of women's rights. The US government opposes efforts to bring war criminals, be they former regional warlords or members of past governments, to court.<sup>16</sup> The Canadian government also supports this position, and may indeed be employing "alleged war criminals as allies in its stabilization and reconstruction strategy".<sup>17</sup> Although they are but 'alleged' war criminals, the fact that the Canadian and American governments are unwilling to pursue the allegations does not aid their image in the eyes of the average Afghani. Secondly, the US imposed constitution follows basic Shariah law, meaning that women's rights are extremely limited. The Canadian government evidently supports this constitution, putting the effort to advance women's rights on the sideline. Warnock explains that "these policies show the extent to which the Liberal and Conservative governments in Ottawa have been willing to surrender basic liberal and human-rights ideals in order to support US foreign policy".<sup>18</sup>

### THE BONN AGREEMENT

In a further example of Canada's unwillingness to bring criminals to trial and uphold "basic liberal and human-rights ideals"<sup>19</sup>, one needs to look no further than the governments' unwavering support for the Bonn Agreement. On November 27, 2001 the United States brought together a group of Afghan representatives at Bonn in Germany, and the result was the appointment of Hamid Karzai as the new Afghan leader. In his article *Covering up Karzai & Co*, Arthur Kent, a Canadian journalist who writes for various Canadian and international newspapers, quotes Shukria Barakzai, a MP from Kabul as saying

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 163.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Skinner. "Afghanistan: Why Canada Should Withdraw Its Troops."

<[http://www.canadiansagainstawar.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=135&Itemid=52](http://www.canadiansagainstawar.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=135&Itemid=52)>

<sup>18</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 164.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

"the Bonn agreement was a very bad start for a new political life in Afghanistan, the old criminals were given new places".<sup>20</sup> Indeed, most information found that is not from official Canadian government sources decries the enormous amount of corruption present in the Karzai regime and generally in Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup> And yet the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade insists that "Canada stands firmly behind the Bonn Agreement as the greatest hope for establishing peace and security, reconstructing the country, re-establishing key institutions and protecting human rights".<sup>22</sup> Canada's unwillingness to challenge the Bonn agreement is yet another example of its acquiescence to American policy.

### NORTH AMERICAN INTEGRATION

On the home front, Canadian-American relations have taken a turn towards closer integration. Because of Canada's geographic proximity to, and economic dependence upon, the United States, this is hardly surprising. However, since the end of the Cold War and especially after 9/11 there has been even deeper integration, as "the US government could always count on the support of Canada and Israel, referred to as the 'safely predictable allies'".<sup>23</sup> After 9/11, the obvious course of action was to shore up security agreements between the two countries, and by December of 2001 the governments had issued a "Joint Statement of Cooperation on Border Security", and shortly thereafter signed an agreement for a "Smart Border for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". The Joint Statement recognised that "the economies of our respective sovereign nations are inextricably intertwined".<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Arthur Kent. "Covering Up Karzai & Co" <<http://www.global-sisterhood-network.org/content/view/1853/76/>>

<sup>21</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*, Michael Skinner. "Afghanistan: Why Canada Should Withdraw Its Troops.", Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. (Toronto: Dundurn Press.), Arthur Kent. "Covering Up Karzai & Co", Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?*

<sup>22</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. "Building Bridges in Afghanistan," *Canada World View* Autumn 2003, issue 20. <<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/Canada-magazine/issue20/01-title-en.asp>>

<sup>23</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 154.

<sup>24</sup> US Government. "Joint Statement on Cooperation on Border Security and Regional Migration Issues." <<http://ottawa.usembassy.gov/content/textonly.asp?section>>



Similarly, the Smart Border agreement is couched in terms of commerce and economic security in order to “guard Canadian economic security from a ‘Fortress America’ mentality south of the border”.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, John Warnock explains that the 9/11 attacks were “a window of opportunity for big business interests in Canada who wished to expand on the continental free trade agreements”.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, Warnock explains that the Canadian Conference of Chief Executives, which represents the 150 largest corporations in Canada, The Coalition for Secure and Trade-Efficient Borders, and the Canada-US partnership forum were all pushing for deeper integration with the United States – the ‘Big Idea.’ The Big Idea refers to the ever closer integration between the two countries, a process which would undoubtedly settle in favour of American interests. Andrew Jackson<sup>27</sup> discusses the fact that the European Union speaks with one voice at the WTO, and that conceivably the Big Idea would lead to the United States and Canada doing the same. It is simply hard to imagine Canada having much pull in an environment of deep economic integration. The Big Idea would subordinate Canadian economic interests into a broader North American context – limiting the choices for Canadian businesses in terms of exports and investment. Indeed Michael Byers tells us that the Bi-National Planning Group (BPG) report in 2006 sought “nothing less than the complete integration of Canada’s military, security and foreign policy into the decision-making and operating systems of the United States”.<sup>28</sup> Warnock also asserts that “in all the cooperative arrangements between [Canada and the United States], the United States is in full control”.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of integration of the Canadian Forces, the Bi-National Planning Group had many things to

assert. Michael Byers explains that “a remarkable aspect of the BPG report is how many of its recommendations concerned how best to persuade Canadians to accept further military integration”.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, in other areas this integration is also apparent. The creation of the United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM), which was negotiated between Canada and the United States shortly after the 9/11 attacks “placed Canadian Forces under the umbrella”<sup>31</sup> of the United States military. NORTHCOM built on the earlier North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), which, as Byers asserts “while supposedly based on an equality of the two countries [Canada and the U.S.], is always headed by a senior U.S. officer”.<sup>32</sup> He thus argues that the BPG, in supporting NORTHCOM, NORAD and further integration was “advocating co-operation at the level of a single, U.S.-dominated command for all of Canada’s territory and our surrounding seas”.<sup>33</sup> These military defence initiatives have increased the military integration of Canada into the military command structure of the United States. They also limit the ability of Canada, regardless of its actual military capabilities, to make separate decisions on where, when and how to deploy its own forces. Indeed, Byers asserts that these defence initiatives are “part of a deliberately fostered trend that includes Canada’s involvement in the U.S.-led counter-insurgency in southern Afghanistan”.<sup>34</sup>

## THE WAR ON TERROR AND AFGHANISTAN

The ‘War on Terror’ is an American concept, initiated by George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks. The war originally focused on Afghanistan, the country in which Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, was located. The Canadian government and Canadian Forces (CF) actively participate in this war through their contributions to the war in Afghanistan, in addition to intelligence sharing and other agreements. Warnock explains that this means “Canadian forces will follow where

=can\_usa&subsection1=borderissues&document=borderissues\_state ment\_120301>

<sup>25</sup> Brian W. Tomlin, Norman Hillmer and Fen Osler Hampson. *Canada’s International Policies: Agendas, Alternatives, and Politics*. 12.

<sup>26</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 158.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Jackson. “Why the ‘Big Idea’ is a Bad Idea.” Canadian Labour Congress. <<http://strategis.gc.ca/pics/ra/jackson1.pdf>>

<sup>28</sup> Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?* 174.

<sup>29</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 171.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?* 176.

<sup>31</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 176.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?* 176.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 174-5.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 177.



the US government leads".<sup>35</sup> This relationship has led to the aforementioned increase in military spending, and also a loss of decision-making capability for the Canadian government. Indeed, Byers explains that in developing the capabilities of the CF and of Canada's ability to intervene in humanitarian situations, Canada should "seek to do more than simply duplicate the military capabilities of the United States".<sup>36</sup> This duplication of American capabilities goes hand in hand with what Byers terms "interoperability"<sup>37</sup> – the necessity for the Canadian Forces to be interoperable with the United States military in order to cooperate with them in training exercises and in combat. Furthermore, Byers asserts that the consequences of Canadian participation in the War on Terror and in Afghanistan could be the "development of a Canadian Forces that is focused almost entirely [...] on aggressive missions conducted in concert with the United States".<sup>38</sup> By participating in the Afghan theatre of the War on Terror, Canada is consciously subordinating its military to that of the United States.

Officially, Canada is in Afghanistan in order to "prevent the relapse [of Afghanistan] into a failed state where the Taliban regains political control".<sup>39</sup> Immediately after 9/11, Peter Pigott, a former Department of Foreign Affairs employee and now full time writer, tells us that Canada was "in the forefront, committing its forces to oust the Taliban".<sup>40</sup> The Canadian Forces drew its contribution largely from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) regiment, in addition to the rapid deployment of Joint Task Force 2 Special Forces to aid in the early stages of the U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan.<sup>41</sup> Canada has essentially been directly involved with the war in Afghanistan since the very beginning in 2001.

## CANADIAN OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

Looking at Canadian operations in Afghanistan, one can see many similarities to the way in which the United States carries out its operations in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Byers explains that "civilian contractors are often sent with [the CF] to provide food and sanitation services, maintain and repair equipment and manage ammunition supplies".<sup>42</sup> This is concurrent with the United States' operations in Iraq, where private companies such as Halliburton, Blackwater, Bechtel and Fluor are given contracts to supply the United States military (2006b). Indeed, the Department of National Defence (DND) initiated the Contractor Augmentation Programme (CANCAP) in 2000.<sup>43</sup> The CANCAP programme aims to replace supportive operations such as food services, health services, and ammunition support, which were usually carried out by the military as a holistic part of its operations, with private companies which

---

"Canada should 'seek to do more than simply duplicate the military capabilities of the United States'."

render these services.<sup>44</sup> Pigott explains that "with so much of its military in Afghanistan, [the DND] now wanted private industry to be there, as well".<sup>45</sup> In particular, SNC Lavalin Pro-Fac, a Montreal based company, was awarded "CDN\$200 million to construct [Camp Julien, outside of Kabul] and manage its office, warehouse, laundry, maintenance, utilities, cleaning service, and food preparation".<sup>46</sup> Camp Julien was the "first large-scale camp largely run by a third party".<sup>47</sup> Thus one can see another convergence in military policy – the hiring of private contractors to carry out supply missions.

<sup>35</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 162.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?* 49.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>39</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 150.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 85.

<sup>41</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?* 179.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*.

<sup>44</sup> Department of National Defence. "Canadian Forces Contractor Augmentation Program."

<[http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Newsroom/view\\_news\\_e.asp?id=1409](http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=1409)>

<sup>45</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 93.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 93-4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 94.



## CANADA IN KANDAHAR

Furthermore, just as the United States is hiring 'private armies' in Iraq by employing security companies as mercenaries<sup>48</sup>, Canada has begun the same practice. Warnock explains that the Canadian members of the Strategic Advisory Team in Kandahar are "protected by a private British firm, Hart Security"<sup>49</sup> – a company that "worked for the apartheid government in South Africa".<sup>50</sup> It would seem that Canada is utterly incapable of developing any military practices separate from the United States, and with such similar ways of projecting our image, message and power across the globe, it is not hard to see how Canadian and American foreign policies are converging.

One positive example of Canadian policy in Afghanistan was the cantonment initiative. Cantonment is a term used to describe a temporary military quarters. This involved the stockpiling of heavy weaponry such as the tanks and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) that had been left behind by the retreating Soviets in the late 1980s. Nonetheless, Peter Pigott explains that it took "weeks and months to build a small international consensus that this was a policy initiative to pursue" and that "it took until the end of [2003] to get the first heavy weapons moving."<sup>51</sup> Not only was it difficult for the Canadians to convince others that this was an important facet of the demilitarization of Afghanistan – arguably an absolute necessity if Afghanistan is to be stabilized, but the initiative did not encompass the small arms and weapons that were used by warlords to control their regions and illegal narcotics operations.<sup>52</sup> This initiative demonstrates the reticence of the international community to pursue policies which have obvious import, and it also demonstrates Canada's difficulty and inability to actively pursue policies which it considers important.

When the first Canadian troops from Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry landed in Afghanistan, they were stationed in Kandahar as part of the U.S. counter-insurgency task force.<sup>53</sup> Then, "between August 2003 and October 2005, some six-thousand Canadian soldiers were rotated through Kabul"<sup>54</sup> at Camp Julien, in a more subdued peace-keeping role. The decision was subsequently made to return to Kandahar in 2005. Michael Byers explains that the motivation behind this decision was actually "amending the damage caused to the Canada-U.S. relationship by [the] refusal to participate in the Iraq War".<sup>55</sup> Indeed, it is readily admitted by the Canadian government that "Kandahar is one of the most difficult operating environments in the world"<sup>56</sup>, and yet, despite Canada's relatively limited military capability, the decision to send troops to the region was still made.

Another factor in the decision to return to Kandahar was the Chief of Defence Staff at the time, General Rick Hillier. Hillier held this position from 2004 until his retirement in July 2008. Pigott quotes Peggy Mason, a former U.N. disarmament ambassador who worked for Hillier as saying that Hillier "has a clear political agenda and he's been very successful at advancing it for some time now".<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Hillier was pivotal in getting Canada back into Kandahar, where he believed Canada would have a "chance to have sufficient profile".<sup>58</sup> The political role played by General Hillier is an indication of the preponderance of the military in the Three-D approach to foreign policy, in which spending is already heavily weighted towards the military.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Pigott describes Hillier as being "'American' style"<sup>60</sup> in his approach, thus potentially leading to further convergence between American and Canadian policy, given the influence that the American military holds in American policy.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?*

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 41-2.

<sup>56</sup> Government of Canada. "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan." <<http://www.afghanistan.gc.ca>>

<sup>57</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 104.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 103.

<sup>48</sup> Thabit A.J. Abdullah. *Dictatorship, Imperialism and Chaos: Iraq since 1989*.

<sup>49</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 163.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 97.

<sup>52</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*.



Another way that Canada has been involved in Kandahar is through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). There are currently twenty-six active PRTs in Afghanistan<sup>61</sup> which Pigott explains are "conceived as a way to integrate diplomats, development experts, police officers and 'military assets'".<sup>62</sup> As a matter of fact, PRTs owe their origin to U.S. military forces from Operation Enduring Freedom in early 2002, and it was not until 2004 that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) began to take control of various PRTs.<sup>63</sup> The Canadian team in Kandahar is "dominated by the military but includes representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs, CIDA and the RCMP".<sup>64</sup>

In a 2006 report, the Senlis Council, a European-based and funded think tank (more recently renamed the International Council on Security and Development or ICOS), is highly critical of Canada's PRT initiative owing to the fact that the PRT system was created by the U.S. military in an approach that "has failed to produce sustainable results in terms of security, stability and overall reconstruction".<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the Council decries the "dominantly military approach" of the PRTs which fail to "integrate humanitarian assistance, poverty relief and development".<sup>66</sup> Canada and other members of the ISAF are following a reconstruction effort originally conceived by the United States military, and although the approach has been criticised they have not sought other means to achieve their goals. Due to their highly military characteristics, the U.S. Institute of Peace explains that PRTs are "better suited to security-related tasks than to delivering development assistance".<sup>67</sup> The Institute goes so far as to recommend that PRTs be re-named 'Provincial Security Teams' because of this military orientation.<sup>68</sup>

## THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

There have been many official and unofficial estimates of the cost of the War in Afghanistan, but there has never been a coherent, straightforward announcement of these costs to Canadians. In the October 2008 report by the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) on the *Fiscal Impact of the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan*, it is explained that "Parliament has not yet been provided with annual estimates or the total costs of the operation incurred by all of the relevant departments".<sup>69</sup> Given the lack of information, even this official report can only postulate at the costs of the war, giving a discrepancy of CDN \$4.2 billion between its high and low estimates of the overall costs from 2001 to 2011.<sup>70</sup> This estimate, between \$13.92 and \$18.14 billion, is for a scenario in which the level of troop commitments remains the same at 2,500. Furthermore, in a report also released in October of 2008, the Rideau Institute on International Affairs, an Ottawa based public policy research group, estimated the costs of the war up until 2011 at \$28.4 billion!<sup>71</sup> This lack of coherent estimates or actual reporting of costs accrued makes public discourse on the costs of the war extremely difficult. Admittedly, it is not easy to gather all the required financial information into one easy estimate, but the Government of Canada may be considered responsible for not presenting the costs in an adequate and transparent manner to Canadians. The October PBO report explains that "CIDA DPRs [Departmental Performance Reports] do not provide annual spending in Afghanistan for individual projects" and that the DND does not release mission specific details and thus "it is impossible to determine how many reservists were deployed for each year of the mission; how much fuel was consumed; or the level of expenditure on equipment reset and betterment." Furthermore,

<sup>61</sup> USAID. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams."

<<http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Page.PRT.aspx>>

<sup>62</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 135.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 169.

<sup>65</sup> The Senlis Council. "Losing Hearts and Minds in Afghanistan".

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> United States Institute of Peace. "The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified." <<http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr152.html>>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. "Fiscal Impact of the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan".

<<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Sites/PBO-DPB/documents/Afghanistan%20-%20Fiscal%20Impact%20FINAL-E-WEB.pdf>>

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> The Rideau Institute. "The Cost of the War and the End of Peacekeeping: The Impact of Extending the Afghanistan Mission." <<http://www.rideauinstitute.ca/file-library/costofthewar.pdf>>



Veteran Affairs Canada “does not report basic financial data specific to the Afghanistan mission”.<sup>72</sup>

There is also the question of what exactly it is that Canada is funding. Beyond the costs of military operations, Canada contributes approximately \$100 million a year in aid.<sup>73</sup> This aid, though channeled through organizations such as the UN and the World Bank<sup>74</sup>, must pass through the Interior Ministry of the Karzai regime. Arthur Kent indicates that the UN-ministered Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) “has yet to come up with a way to place international aid directly into the hands of individual policemen”.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, he describes the fact that “so much international aid money has vanished into the concentric rings of corruption that make up the Karzai administration that no reliable estimate exists of its total dollar value”.<sup>76</sup> If Canada cannot put its funds to good use in Afghanistan, it is arguable that it should not be in the country, and that it should not be spending billions on military operations if the most basic aid initiatives are siphoned off into the ‘concentric rings of corruption’ present in the Afghan government. Canadian tax-payers are literally seeing their money disappear into Afghanistan.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Finally, the costs of the war are not only financial. “Sadly, the first [Canadian casualties in Afghanistan] were not from the Taliban”.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the Tarnak Farm incident, as it would come to be known, was the accidental bombing of Canadians on a training exercise by an American F-16 on April 12, 2002.<sup>78</sup> Pigott iterates another incident, on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006 when an American A-10 helicopter strafed a

Canadian Company in Kandahar province.<sup>79</sup> These two incidents provoked an outcry from the Canadian public. If the war in Afghanistan had been popular before these incidents, support certainly dropped immediately following them. Certainly in recent years, support for the war has been low, but even from the beginning John Warnock explains that “there was no indication that the public was willing to support a Canadian role in a long counterinsurgency war”.<sup>80</sup> He

---

“If Canada cannot put its funds to good use in Afghanistan, it is arguable that it should not be in the country”

furthermore cites two major polls taken, one in 2006 and one in 2008. The first, carried out by the Strategic Council – a market-research group based in Toronto – showed that 62 percent of Canadians supported a negotiated settlement with the Taliban, something the Harper government was completely unwilling to pursue at the time.<sup>81</sup> The second, taken in January 2008 by Angus

Reid Strategies, found that “61 percent of Canadians did not want to extend Canada’s military commitment [in Afghanistan] beyond the Feb. 2009 deadline”<sup>82</sup>, and yet the Canadian government decided to extend the deadline to 2011. As Pigott explains:

“To some, their country was wading deeper and deeper into the morass of Afghanistan without a clear mandate, something retired Major-General Lewis MacKenzie blamed on the fact that ‘the deployment was never debated in Parliament, nor was it explained to the Canadian public. As a result, there is a high level of confusion throughout the country regarding the mission...’”<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, Warnock agrees in that “the general public [...] has been left out of this debate”.<sup>84</sup> Public opinion is blatantly ignored in the formation of policy regarding Afghanistan – evidently higher concerns such as appeasing the United States must

<sup>72</sup> Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. “Fiscal Impact of the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan”.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Byers. *Intent for a Nation: What is Canada for?*

<sup>74</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*.

<sup>75</sup> Arthur Kent. “Covering Up Karzai & Co”

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 89.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 154.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 172.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 101.

<sup>84</sup> John W. Warnock. *Creating a Failed State: The US and Canada in Afghanistan*. 172.



come into play – and, as was evidenced above, the financial side of the war is not openly debated either. Arthur Kent goes as far as to say that “even the Kremlin was less manic in its information control during the Soviet occupation of the 1980s”.<sup>85</sup>

The Canadian public has been denied accurate information regarding nearly every aspect of the war in Afghanistan, and the implications are grave. According to the British Royal Statistical Society, “a Canadian soldier in Kandahar was nearly six times more likely to die in hostilities than an American soldier serving in Iraq”.<sup>86</sup> With the current economic climate, it may be easy to shunt aside debate on the war in Afghanistan in favour of issues which touch a little closer to home. However, nothing touches closer than those who lose family members in a war

of which few have a comprehensive understanding. In terms of acquiescence to the United States, as Michael Byers puts it “at issue here is not Canada’s legal sovereignty, but its practical sovereignty – its ability freely to make choices at the international level”.<sup>87</sup> Indeed there are many converging trends apparent, mostly in economic and militaristic terms. Again, arguments supporting economic integration are ever stronger in the face of a worldwide economic downturn. If Canada wishes to be distinguishable from the United States, it needs to re-examine its role in Afghanistan and begin redefining its foreign policy and its relationship with the United States. Although Canada is geographically reliant upon the United States, this is no reason to blindly follow wherever the U.S. may lead.

<sup>85</sup> Arthur Kent. “Covering Up Karzai & Co”

<sup>86</sup> Peter Pigott. *Canada in Afghanistan: The war so far*. 130.

<sup>87</sup> Michael Byers. “Canadian armed forces under United States command,” 93.

## Talking With Taliban:

### A Political Solution to a Political Problem.

NATO, Afghanistan and the Taliban's motivations to negotiate

Sarahh Irving

A political discourse with the Taliban has been advocated by many members of the international community as a way to end the War in Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai, the president of the Afghan state, has extended many gestures of reconciliation toward the Taliban and its members and has even personally assured the security of the Taliban 'Leader of the Faithful,' Mullah Muhammad Omar, if he were to return to Afghanistan and negotiate with the government.<sup>1</sup> Foreign actors in Afghanistan have also been speaking of political

settlements; Britain's Brigadier General Mark Carleton-Smith has reportedly said that, "If the Taliban were prepared to sit on the other side of the table and talk about a political settlement, then that's precisely the sort of progress that concludes insurgencies like this. That shouldn't make people uncomfortable."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately for those parties who are looking favourably upon open dialogue, not all actors have expressed their comfort with the idea. What is the likelihood that the Taliban, or NATO, will participate in this type of solution? Negotiating with the Taliban is becoming an increasingly desirable option as the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate in military effectiveness. These talks, if pursued, could be an important contemporary event leading to the success or failure

<sup>1</sup> BBC a. “Karzai offers Taleban safety deal.” *British Broadcasting Company*. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7732301.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7732301.stm) (November 24, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Telegraph. “War in Afghanistan cannot be won, British commander Brigadier Mark Carleton-Smith warns.” *Telegraph Media Group Limited*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/onthefrontline/3139702/War-in-Afghanistan-cannot-be-won-British-commander-Brigadier-Mark-Carleton-Smith-warns.html> (November 24, 2008).