

[Note: This article was written in late 1997 and submitted to International Journal for publication. It was rejected by the reviewers who asserted that the global situation had stabilized by then and therefore what I had to say was alarmist and unnecessary. Two years later, we plunged into Kosovo and two years after that, we were at war with al Qaeda. The Chretien Government then scrambled to develop some of the structures I recommended herein and the Martin Government is still working (in 2004) on revamping national security policy machinery to deal with the new era we are in.]

"Strategic Policy: What is it and Why Should Canadians Give a Damn?"

By Sean M. Maloney, PhD

The public debate in January 1997 over the enforced wrap up of the Somalia inquiry will continue throughout this election year. We are, by now, used to the four stereotypes generated by this quagmire: a corrupt military lead by penny-pinching politicians and self-interested bureaucrats pursued by the shark-like media. We need only add the naval-gazing public to this list to round it out. Let's face it: the Somalia inquiry bogged down and missed the boat. Somalia is the result of an absence of strategic policy as much as the actions of two out of control airborne soldiers. We the citizens, the bureaucrats, the politicians, the soldiers, and the media are all responsible for this. We have allowed ourselves to become rudderless in the post-Cold War period because the complexities of having to deal with that reality appear to insurmountable, beyond Canada's control and potentially expensive in what is portrayed as an increasingly strained economic situation. Canadians are by their nature conservative folk and we do not handle change as well as other Western societies. There is not even a consensus among media pundits, academics, and policymakers as to what the future strategic environment will be.

You might be wondering why this discussion uses the term 'strategic policy' instead of foreign policy or defence policy. These two terms are far too limiting. They omit the vital third leg, economics. They imply that foreign policy and defence policy are completely separate things. Furthermore, the term 'defence policy' is too Orwellian (like the 'Ministry of Peace' which is responsible for war in the world of 1984) and does not convey the essential elements of offensive action which is integral to military and diplomatic operations. Canadians have adopted the myth that Canadian actions must always be defensive in nature. This naive view must be discarded as it is dangerously misleading one. A strategic policy therefore blends economic, military, and diplomatic elements into one agreed-to vision from which all economic, military, and diplomatic activity flows. A strategic policy is not wholly static and remains subject to modification from time to time.

Unfortunately, Canadians tend to confuse our strategic tradition with a strategic policy. Canadian strategic tradition in the 20th Century has three components:1

1) Canada generally does not act alone due to her size. She will operate within the bounds of a coalition or alliance like the Entente in the First World War, the United Nations in the Second World War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations during the Cold War.

2) Canada retains the principle of forward operations. The objective of Canadian involvement in a conflict will be to maintain the economic and physical safety of the Canadian people by keeping conflicts away from North America. During the First and Second World Wars, Canada sent land and air forces to Europe to defeat the enemy there and used naval forces to ensure that the vital sea lines of communications in the Atlantic were kept open. In the Cold War, Canada deployed land and air forces to Europe and naval forces in the Atlantic to contain and deter Soviet expansion, while peacekeeping forces were deployed to peripheral flash points to contain volatile situations before they produced superpower crisis and escalation.

3) Canada continually strives for relative military autonomy. Since Canada forces will not be as large as her alliance partners, Canada will be unable to dramatically influence the ebb and flow of alliance policy. However, since Canada is a sovereign nation and domestic political support could be lost if Canada soldiers, sailors, and airmen are misused by other alliance partners (as in the cases of Hong Kong (1941) and Dieppe (1942)), Canada must retain some form of operational control over her forces. Canada will therefore produce a small but highly-trained and possibly highly-specialized forces so that control can be achieved through the medium of integrated alliance headquarters and command organizations.

This strategic tradition is useful only in that it provides a generalized framework for understanding Canadian behaviour during the 20th Century and probably will serve as a framework for future behaviour. It is not a strategic policy, which is a far more specific and integrated series of precepts.

Canada did, in fact, possess a coherent strategic policy in the 1950s and 1960s. We agreed to and adopted the NATO consensus of the pattern of Cold War conflict, that is, the West had to deter the Soviets from expanding into Western Europe and if deterrence failed, be prepared to fight and survive a conventional and then nuclear war. Peacekeeping operations were integral to preventing brush fire wars from developing into conflagrations. Canadian diplomatic efforts were primarily focused on maintaining the NATO alliance and containing third world conflict (arms control was a secondary activity). Canadian military efforts consisted of highly-trained forces which were specifically structured and deployed to meet a wide range of contingencies: from peripheral peacekeeping operations to offensive nuclear weapons use. Canadian economic policy was generally

quite capable of providing for the forces needed to cover the spectrum of conflict (the Avro Arrow affair notwithstanding) was capable of resisting bloc obsolescence, and kept Canadian workers employed while at the same time keeping the standard of living at elevated levels. Canadian policymakers of the day understood the need for a vertically-integrated strategic policy which would govern capital acquisition, force structuring and use, and diplomatic initiatives. They understood that the primary aim was to prevent war by being able to defuse crises and also by being able to fight it effectively if necessary. They projected Canadian military, diplomatic, and economic power around the world. This intricate system was, unfortunately, dismantled in the 1970's. Though attempts were made to re-discover a strategic policy in the 1980s, the collapse of Communism militated against them. We have been struggling ever since.

An incomplete historical understanding of Canadian strategic tradition and policy compounded the situation and has produced a number of myths which aggravate our attempts to realize a new Canadian strategic policy. The most dangerous myth is that we do not need standing and effective military power and the ability to project that power on a moment's notice. This myth emanates from a series of unsupportable but popular beliefs:

- 1) There is no direct threat to Canadian territory (except from the Americans and there is no defence against them anyway).
- 2) Canada does not have interests outside of the UN context, the UN context does not have a requirement for the use of force and Canadian forces should therefore be constabulary in nature.
- 3) Canadians by their nature abhor the use force and will go to great lengths to resolve conflict peacefully without threat of violence; aggressive international behaviour is an exclusively American trait and runs counter to the Canadian national psyche.

These beliefs run counter to the Canadian historical record and are the product of emotional wishful thinking and a repressed neo-colonial attitude, not reality.

The first two beliefs belie an understanding of the role of international trade in the maintenance of the nation's economic well-being and the projection of diplomatic and military power necessary to support and promote such trade (and even internal trade when fishery matters are included). It ignores potential and real threats to the deeply-rooted cultural connections between Canada and her European allies and the new cultural connections with non-European peoples who constitute a growing proportion of our population. It ignores the global information environment in which a 14-year old hacker has the ability to render a nation's banking system helpless. It ignores ballistic missile technology proliferation and the ability of a psychopathic religious cult or a corrupt Middle East dictator to utilize weapons of mass destruction against a civilian populations or military forces.

As for Canadian nature, we have proven to be quite adept at using force from the level of the individual to the societal level. The formation of the Canadian Corps in the First World War, probably the most effective fighting formation of that war (which, incidentally, was quite proficient at the use of chemical weapons to support its operations), was not the product of a society consisting of hand-wringing appeasers. The grim professionalism demonstrated by the members of No. 1 Air Division, RCAF during the Cold War in their preparations (ie: real, implied force) to use megaton-yield nuclear weapons against the Warsaw Pact is also at variance with the belief that 'peace loving' is synonymous with an inability to use violence if necessary. As for more recent examples we have only to look at the Medak Pocket operation conducted by the Canadian Army in Croatia during the so-called peacekeeping operation there in 1993.

One unfortunate consequence of the myth is that the Canadian people and policymakers have been lulled into believing that a clear, definable threat (either First World War or Cold War-style) must be a pre-requisite for the establishment and maintenance of a clearly-defined Canadian strategic policy. Without a strategic policy, Canada 'just' has to maintain a small, partially-effective capability to participate in low intensity UN activities and this satisfies minimalist expectations as to Canada's participation in the international community.

This 'Ostrich scenario' is the easy road for almost all concerned. It is cheap: everybody likes cheap (except the military leadership because they implicitly understand that cheap equals ineffective, even though they are incapable of saying so publically). It is benign and unthreatening and thus caters to the myth. It is easy to understand: international trade and alliance politics are deemed too complicated (and possibly divisive) for public consumption. Most importantly, the Ostrich scenario does not require its adherents to admit or even consider that world conflict might, at some point in the future, escalate to total conflict thus requiring a total response.

Unfortunately for those pushing the Ostrich scenario, the world is not run by the UN, nor, thankfully, will it ever be. The UN does not exist to protect Canadian interests: it exists to protect its own interests and to serve as a forum for certain diplomatic problems and crises that cannot be resolved at other levels or using other means. It has many positive characteristics which Canada can and has in the past been able to use to Canadian advantage (like keeping two mutual NATO allies apart in Cyprus, helping our NATO allies withdraw gracefully from Suez, filling a power vacuum left by another NATO ally, Belgium in the Congo, and preventing instability in the former Yugoslavia on NATO's southern flank from spreading northwards during a period of extreme uncertainty). It should not be Canada's strategic *raison d'etre* for the UN is only one of a variety of avenues and a potentially limited one at that.

One impediment to realizing a Canadian strategic policy in the post-Cold War period has been touched on earlier: the apparent lack of a definable threat. We must understand the nature of a future threat. It is, of course, impossible to predict with 100% accuracy the exact nature of a threat in the near or distant future. We can, however, make some useful and reliable

assumptions. Let us progress from the general to the specific.

The most important tool in understanding a threat is to possess a pessimistic perspective of human nature. Most humans are not enlightened, kind, caring individuals interested in the 'community of man' or similar utopian conditions. Humans are competitive creatures who will use a variety of lethal and non-lethal means to achieve their aims. The degree and extent of lethality is generally determined by what extent specific societies have developed and incorporated the rule of law into their political cultures to limit lethality.

Historian Donald Kagan developed a compelling argument that the most fundamental cause of conflict is "the competition for power."² In his view, power is a neutral thing and it is necessary "to bring about desired ends." The use of power is integral to why peoples and nations go to war. Kagan argues that there are three reasons for this: honour, fear, and interest (He specifically qualifies 'honour' to include esteem, just due, regard, respect and prestige as opposed to mere fame and glory). Honour is, according to Kagan, usually the decisive factor in initiating violent conflict. These are undeniable human qualities and they will not change.

Do we honestly believe that the strategic environment of the future will be any different? We pretend to more enlightened than our ancestors and the grafting of the 'infobahn', satellite communications, and space travel to idealistic aspirations about bringing mankind closer together will prevent or limit violent competition. This is an impossible dream to achieve, though it may be worth striving for. Having our strategic policymakers continually influenced by this long-term idealistic world view will only lead to disaster for Canada. Our policy analysts and implementors must learn to drop down to a lowest common denominator to learn what makes our potential enemies tick. High-minded babbling about improving the overall 'world condition' for improvement's sake does not contribute to such analysis.

We have in our lifetime seen a dramatic shift in the so-called world power balance. It would be too much of a diversion to explore why this happened, but we know what the immediate effects were: widespread instability in political and economic realms.

The historical pattern, as British historian Paul Kennedy argues, rotates between power equilibrium in which great power conflict is minimized (by various deterrent and economic factors) but low intensity conflicts proliferate and power imbalance, in which great powers trade blows either decisively or indecisively. American historians William Strauss and Neil Howe see a four-phase historical pattern in which a high point (a victory) is reached, there is a reaction against the social environment produced by the high, followed by an unravelling of that environment, which in turn leads to a crisis which is resolved by a victory and so on. Kennedy sees some form of great power conflict some time after the year 2000, while Strauss and Howe place their protracted Crisis period sometime between 2005 and 2025.³

We are, in effect, in an inter-war period.

Canada has had two of these inter-war periods during this century. How

Canadian policymakers responded to these periods had a direct impact on the lives of Canadian soldiers and Canadian prestige. It took Canada from 1939 to 1943 to bring its forces up to the numbers and fighting standard necessary to combat Fascism and the nation had to endure Hong Kong and Dieppe in the meantime. At the start of the Cold War it took over a year to bring our forces up to standard to fight in Korea and to deter Communist expansionism in Europe. Canada was for a variety of reasons unable to effectively contribute to the Gulf War and relied on a minimalist contribution. We have the means today of avoiding similar awkward situations in the future. Keep in mind that Canadian interests, lives, and prestige will be on the line and that these are not mutually exclusive categories.

There are certain minimum requirements necessary to keep our forces prepared. We have fallen below those requirements. The expediant solution to this problem is to adopt a minimalist attitude: "Don't go. Do not use military force. Do not risk Canadian lives for Canadian interests." This sort of response is favoured by policymakers that are more concerned with short-term domestic political factors (like re-election, media image, and partisan political posturing) rather than the true interests of the Canadian people. We must accept the fact that we are a sovereign nation with global interests and global responsibilities. We cannot expect our allies to do our work for us and at the same time claim that we are a sovereign nation. We have gotten away with the minimum in the 1970s and 1980s because we could, particularly during the last half of the Cold War. We got away with it during the Gulf War. This is not mature behaviour for a sovereign nation. It demeans our prestige, our sense of self, and our national image; it also adversely affects our economic well being.

What minimum requirements and capabilities should Canada possess to function in the world of today and in the future? There are two ways of determining this. The first method is to try and predict the specific nature of future conflicts and structure our diplomatic, economic, and military efforts to meet them. This is a dangerous proposition, since the degree of specificity will be high and extremely difficult to predict. We could develop a strategic policy and the tools for carrying it out which are inflexible and limit our ability to respond to crises.

The second method is to recognize that though we are not capable of predicting specific requirements, there are certain minimum requirements which can be realized which will provide Canada with the flexibility that she will need to deal with the future and that certain realistic but general scenarios can be generated to act as a framework for these capabilities. Keep in mind that the purpose of maintaining a military is to provide the policymakers with as many options as possible so that larger Canadian objectives can be met effectively and to provide Canadian diplomats with as wide a variety of Canadian responses to crisis situations as possible. Note that this sort of thinking is radically different from those who argue that the sovereignty mission should be the predominant expression of Canadian power projection. Power projection assumes that Canada has interests outside of North America and its adjacent sea areas.

What exactly are Canadian interests? We actually possess one general type of interest: a national interest, which is defined as anything that "helps the nation to survive or flourish."⁴ Prime Minister Louis St Laurent laid out ideal foundations for the Canadian national interest in 1947 and they have not changed dramatically since. They are:⁵

1) National Unity: Our external policy shall not destroy our unity. No policy can be regarded as wise which divides the people whose efforts and resources must put it into effect.

2) Political Liberty: The greatest safeguard against the aggressive policies of any government is the freely expressed judgement of its own people. We have consistently sought and found our friends amongst those of like political traditions. We have realized that a threat to the liberty of Western Europe, where our political ideas were nurtured, was a threat to our own way of life.

3) The Rule of Law in National and International Affairs: The freedom of nations depends on the rule of law amongst states.

4) The Values of Christian Civilization: No foreign policy is consistent nor coherent over a period of years unless it is based upon some conception of human values.

5) The Acceptance of International Responsibility in Keeping with our Conception of our Role in World Affairs: Security for this country lies in the development of a firm structure of international organizations.

By extension, then, Canada desires a stable world within which Canada can exercise trade and thereby permit her citizens to economically and culturally prosper. In one sense Canadian interests are to develop, sustain, and protect our international and intranational trade. Canada is not capable of economic (and cultural) self-sustainment. She is part of a world community and must participate within it. The degree of participation is subject to some debate. The nation conducts 80% of its trade with the United States and this statistic is used by some to foster a quasi-isolationist mentality. Canada must develop other international sources of trade to act as a counterbalance to potential American dominance in all areas. We will never be able to completely reduce American economic penetration, but we can develop alternatives to it.

Canada must, therefore, participate in global trade. The concrete expressions of this include diplomatic and economic representation, direct Canadian investment overseas, Canadians working in foreign lands and the ability to transport goods and services globally. More intangibly, the Canadian economy is tied into the global electronic information and currency exchange. As a consequence, Canadian interests are physically located around the world and are vulnerable to any form of crisis. Canadian economic exchange is interweaved with the global exchange and it too is

vulnerable if another member which Canada is trading with is threatened.

Canada therefore has two types of overlapping interests: ideal interests and economic interests. They go hand in hand. We are interested in a stable world so that our people can economically and personally prosper. We are not on some idealistic crusade to save humanity from itself.

There is, naturally, the complicating question of national self respect. Canadians have a poor national self image due in part to our colonial past and in part to our size relative to our closest neighbor and ally. We have brainwashed ourselves into believing that we do not have any real interests since we allegedly cannot compete with or significantly influence the American behemoth's behaviour. We still exhibit residual colonial thinking which produces dependency, an almost learned helplessness in the face of great power dominance. Canada sometimes behaves like a child, "If you won't let me play, I'll take my toys home" (examples include our withdrawal from NATO stationed forces in Europe, withdrawal from the European Community Monitor Mission in Yugoslavia, and the minimalist Canadian IFOR/SFOR contribution). This sort of behaviour and the effects it produces on the national psyche will be reduced with the recognition of the Canadian national interest through the implementation of a Canadian strategic policy and the tools to carry it out.

Canada must have to tools to do the following things:

1) The ability to continually assess the world situation as it affects the Canadian national interest: We must have a national, independent, effective, global intelligence collection and analysis capability which has direct input into our policymaking process.

2) The ability to intervene diplomatically in all sorts of crisis (both direct threat and economic) situations affecting the Canadian national interest: Canada must have an effective, elite, educated, and astute diplomatic corps that has extremely close liaison with Canadian elected-political, economic and military policymakers. Canadian representation abroad should be expanded.

3) The ability to intervene militarily in a wide variety of conflict situations affecting the Canadian national interest: We must have a military that is capable of providing policymakers a wide range of effective policy options that involve the use of force to protect our interests and our people overseas. The intervention capability must be capable of operating independently as well as within an alliance or coalition environment.

4) An aggressive international economic policy to develop strong, two-way global links which benefits Canada: We need the ability to intervene quickly and effectively to exploit trade vacuums produced by changes in the international power balance or in markets.

5) The will to intervene: Policymakers must educate themselves to

understand the nature of and limitations of the tools at their disposal so that these tools can be employed correctly and effectively. They should actively limit the potential effects of partisan political posturing on their deliberations.

Canada currently possesses none of these tools. Our existing organizations from which we will have to construct them from suffer from lack of strategic direction, neglected maintenance, bureaucratic factionalism, and the downsizing craze of the early 1990's.

As the inter-war period continues towards future crises, our ability to develop these tools will progressively be reduced. They cannot be created overnight. At one point (the 1950s) Canada possessed most of these tools, but they were neglected in the 1970s initially by willful ignorance and later through atrophication and rust out. We need these tools to develop the economic and social endurance and stamina to cushion our people from the effects of any future crises as well as to effectively respond to them and we must start now.

We must distinguish between the future policy environment and potential future conflict environment. Our ability to develop a military force structure and diplomatic support structures should rest on a firm understanding of the spectrum of conflict and how it might affect our national interest. In 1966, the Mobile Command staff developed a Canadian spectrum of conflict to serve in part to illustrate the types of force options that Canada might have to employ or participate in. These gradations include: 6 the maintenance of law and order in Canada (aid to the civil power); truce supervision and peace restoration (traditional peacekeeping); counterinsurgency and guerilla warfare (low intensity warfare); limited warfare (mid- to high- intensity conventional warfare) and nuclear warfare (tactical, theatre, and strategic).

Today's spectrum should be similar. To the maintenance of law and order band, we should add sovereignty protection operations. A new band should be created between low intensity conflict and limited warfare to account for wider peacekeeping operations like UNPROFOR; it should be called Low Intensity Operations which would include armed humanitarian assistance. Another new band should be added between limited warfare and nuclear warfare, that is, one to account for the use of chemical weapons and/or extremely limited small-scale nuclear weapons use by either allied and/or enemy forces. The belief that nuclear weapons and their use is a Cold War anachronism is a very dangerous and short sighted belief. Canadian policymakers and military forces should be prepared to operate in all of these environments.

Some of these broad-band categories break down even further. Canada should have the ability to respond to terrorist incidents outside Canada. We should not be dependent on our allies to extract (either through diplomatic initiatives or military force as in a non-combatant evacuation operation) Canadian diplomats, tourists, and workers from crisis situations around the world.

From this we can generate a number of generic scenarios in which

Canada will need the ability to effectively use force.

1. These factors are based on the introduction of the author's in-process PhD dissertation which deals with Canadian strategic policy in the 1950s and 1960s.
2. Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1995) p. 6.
3. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987); William Strauss and Neil Howe, *The Fourth Turning: What the Cycles of History Tell Us About America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997). Note that both books are controversial and have produced fairly heated debate. Please focus on the general descriptions of the theory, as opposed to the details. A good critique of Kennedy is Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990)
4. Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary of Political Thought* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982) p. 314.
5. Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson* Volume 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973) pp. 26-27.
6. See Dan Loomis, *Not Much Glory: Quelling the FLQ* (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1984) pp. 113-122.