

## Johnny Canuck versus Ookpik

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UN Peacekeeping as we knew it is dead. Despite this fact, hundreds of Canadian soldiers from the Kingston community continue to deploy to shattered countries on dangerous overseas missions every year. Why? Mike Blanchard's recent article on Canada and peacekeeping announced what many scholars in the national security field have known for years: that the UN peacekeeping culture generated by Canadian academic and cultural establishments is a hollow facade. The consequences of this are that Canadian soldiers are sometimes put at risk for dubious reasons which do not contribute to improving the global community as much as many would believe. If Blanchard had thoroughly researched his topic, he would have discovered that the case for this had been made more explicitly and effectively long before by commentators other than the ones he chose to use in his article.

The fashionable view promulgated by the Lloyd Axworthy regime in Foreign Affairs throughout the 1990s argued that the post-Cold War world was a new opportunity to base a national security policy on the UN and fuzzily-defined 'soft power' (lots of diplomatic talk, deploying constabulary police forces and disbursing large amounts of money) as opposed to those supposedly 'obsolete' means, the NATO and Canadian-American relationships and the use of nationally-directed violence to achieve national aims. Canada, the myth goes, is unique since the UN votes us the best country to live in and we commit troops to any and all UN operations since this is our internationalist duty to make the world a better place. Nobel Peace Prize Winner Lester B. Pearson said so, didn't he? In this fantasy Canada is some paragon of virtue, morally superior to other nations and doesn't do all those nasty things other nations do, particularly Americans, which we do not want to be like. One of the commentators Blanchard quotes even contributed to this mythmaking exercise in the 1990s when he was part of the national security policy establishment. Saul on the road to Damascus, perhaps?

'Feel good-ism' of the sort that has been childishly spoon-fed to the grown-up Canadian people over the past ten years will backfire dangerously unless some policymakers and cultural commentators start mainlining some hard reality. That reality is that the sole reason that the government of Canada exists is to ensure the physical security of Canadian citizens at home and abroad and the protection of their economic prosperity at home and abroad. We use military, economic, and diplomatic force to keep threats of all varieties at arms length away from North America. We also remain engaged overseas to ensure that

Canadian interests in select places are observed and protected. Maintaining this intricate web of interests in this globalized world is critical if Canada is not to become a low-tech economic backwater with a banana republic government. Engagement on all levels is the essence of a 100-year old Canadian strategic tradition called Forward Security.

If we have to use international organizations to achieve this, so be it. We should not allow these organizations to misuse the tools we provide them which means that Canada cannot just turn over such tools and sulk when things do not go our way as we did from time to time in the 1990s. We have to be active and effective players in the alliance game to get what we want. That means understanding the role and nature of military force, how it is applied, and not vacillating when it has to be used. It also means having the capability to act, to put our money where our mouth is. Wishing away the reality of projecting Canadian force and violence makes us ineffective in the eyes of our allies, adversaries (yes-Canada has them), and trading partners. We cannot always project a Canadian cultural context onto such people and organizations when dealing with them: we have to play by the world's rules, most of which do not recognize Canadian values as realistic or even legitimate.

One rule that all political entities do understand is the application of effective military power. Effectiveness comes from repeated demonstrations that our armed forces is capable of projecting power globally and that power can significantly contribute to the overall alliance, coalition or national endeavour to which Canada chooses to belong. How many Canadians know that the number of times Canadian forces have been used to project power overseas for national purposes since 1970 includes some eighty operations?

What little we have, however, is stretched dangerously thin. The armed forces needs more people, a continuation of the ongoing re-equipment programmes, and the ability to deploy globally. This means that Canada cannot rely on sub-contracted Russian ships and transport aircraft to move her forces to global hot spots. In the past, we had our own ships and aircraft. We could extract our people in an emergency and we could deploy around the world at times of our own choosing. Why must we rely on the whims of others to project force for our own interests?

Economic and physical security does not come from independently coddling the still-developing portions of the world: it comes from acting like the partner we are with our closest North American and European allies. It is, perhaps, useful to cloak such objectives in 'soft power' rhetoric but Axworthy and his cultural and academic supporters were only fooling themselves. None of our allies or adversaries view this as a strength. We are not engaged in a global Aikido match: this is more like extreme hockey. Despite the soft, fuzzy cultural lens placed over their protective visor, Canadians are good hockey players. We have fought wars, employed spies, stockpiled and even used weapons of mass destruction, used

manipulative economic pressure, propagandized, threatened, cajoled, blackmailed our allies and used practically every means necessary to achieve our security aims. During the last century, the existence of Canada was threatened by nuclear-armed totalitarianism and the government was morally bound to use whatever means necessary to secure its citizens from harm. The post-Cold War world is as dangerous, though the threats are more diffuse and harder to discern. Countering those threats, however, will require the application of some form of controlled Canadian military violence. This imperative will not change no matter what technological advances are made or whatever cultural spin is introduced to manipulate Canadian citizens into believing otherwise.

We should not shrink from examining and understanding the tools necessary to ensure our physical and economic survival in this dangerous world or pretend that they don't exist or that we are somehow morally superior because we supposedly don't engage in such behaviour. We should be the best we can at it. We have been before.

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