

THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER

Recent commentaries by Martin Shadwick in *Canadian Military Journal* have looked at the potential for lessons to be learned as Canadian defence planners consider the merits of undertaking a fresh defence policy review. While there may indeed be some useful lessons to be learned, Canadian policy makers should beware: 'the grass is always greener'.

Australia's recent White Paper on defence, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*, seems remarkably positive at first glance, and one may be impressed with the promises of funding and the many references to keeping up with the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). It bears striking similarities to Canada's 1987 White Paper, *Challenge and Commitment*, including the introduction of a ten-year capability plan without the promise of actual funding beyond the next budget, and that may prove to be its main weakness. (One year budgets are financial constraints that Canada, New Zealand and Australia have in common.) In Canada's case, the government's enthusiasm for closing the commitment-capability gap soon waned, and fiscal realities were recognized in the following budget. The Australian government's commitment to its plan has yet to stand the test of time, but Australian defence critics have warned that funding could easily disappear in a future budget, or indeed, in the event of a change of government. Then too, while the White Paper acknowledges the importance of the RMA, it does little to address the major issues. In particular, the new policy falls short of developing innovative operational concepts, and it completely ignores the requirement for the organizational change that an RMA demands.

Australia's White Paper also promises to increase the overall Regular Force from 51,500 to 54,000. Unfortunately, this must happen in a domestic environment where retention and recruiting in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is at an all-time low. Furthermore, this promise runs contrary to a procurement plan based on funding that can only be realized from savings in personnel costs.

Equipment procurement promises are a large part of Australia's new policy. However, the government has detailed the platforms to be procured, rather than identify an effects-based procurement strategy more suitable for the RMA. The procurement strategy itself is very ambitious, given Australia's track record for falling behind in its major procurement projects such as the Collins-class submarine project.

Some of Australia's new policy conflicts with the reality of its force structure. The new White Paper does acknowledge certain capability gaps, but it also fails to recognize others. The Army, composed primarily of

three brigades, looks good on paper, but it is certainly not in a position to deploy a full brigade on operations for a prolonged period while at the same time deploying a battle group to another operation, as required by the White Paper. The Brisbane-based 7 Brigade is an integrated Reserve/Regular Force formation somewhat similar to the outdated Canadian concept of '10/90 battalions'. Of the other two brigades, 1 Brigade in Darwin has only one Regular Force battalion, and 3 Brigade in Townsville is based on three light infantry battalions, only one of which can be mounted in M113 APCs. The Australian Army has only one regular armoured regiment, and one regular artillery regiment to support all three of its brigades. While these shortfalls are fully recognized by the Army, it may be some time before they are rectified.

New Zealand's new approach to defence policy has been to go it alone. They have all but abandoned any commitment to the Australia New Zealand United States (ANZUS) alliance. The new policy is independent, but so much so that it is no longer in alignment with the country's own foreign policy of engagement in the region. Shadwick has quite correctly indicated that "... the New Zealand experience provides sobering evidence of how quickly a military establishment can devolve." He also makes it clear that if Canada follows this example, "'New Zealandization' of the Canadian Forces would not be far behind."

Why is Canada so different? Albeit a middle power similar in size to Australia, Canada is unique given its geographic proximity to the United States and its formal defence ties to Europe based on NATO membership. In effect, the Canadian commitments to NORAD and NATO make defence policy much easier to deal with, even if the global strategic situation is in flux. Only Trudeau's government dared to tamper with these commitments and, in the end, even Trudeau came to understand the importance and worth of Canada's involvement in these alliances. Furthermore, Canada is not located on the doorstep of instability as Australia is in South East Asia. Australia has Indonesia to deal with, which is akin to Canada having the Balkans on its doorstep.

The most important lesson we can draw from both Australia and New Zealand, is that a formal defence policy review is needed now to ensure that the Canadian Forces are focused on what they must be prepared to do in the years ahead in order to meet our foreign and defence policy commitments in an unstable world. Defence policies from 'down under' are suitable for 'down under', not for the 'Great White North'.

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THE END OF INNOCENCE

The Dantesque tragedy that took place on 11 September, live and before our very eyes, will remain forever engraved in our collective memory. A world collapsed along with the World Trade Centre towers, and a new world, whose *modus operandi* we do not yet know, is emerging. No matter what the nature of this new world, the United States certainly does not intend to leave these savage acts unpunished; President George Bush declared war against international terrorism, a decision supported by a host of allies. This war will not take the form of quick, intense strikes over a limited period of time. It is necessary to confront an enemy who does not in any way respect the accepted norms of warfare, who pays no attention to the law of armed conflicts, and who does not bother with rules of engagement. This elusive and amorphous enemy will have to be clearly identified and thoroughly rooted out; bin Laden is in fact only the tip of the iceberg. The campaign will in all likelihood be long, dirty, ferocious and bloody.

Seeing 'Fortress America' shaken to its foundations in this way is striking because the very heart of the United States was attacked, not by traditional arms — for which the powerful American military machine was well prepared — but by asymmetrical means. Still numb from some forty years of Cold War, political leaders, analysts and strategists have had to awaken suddenly to the hard realities of indirect strategy, of which terrorism is only the most violent form. Asymmetric threats are not new. The elephants used by Hannibal during his invasion of Italy in 218 BC certainly constituted an asymmetric threat to his enemies. Asymmetric threats have also been the subject of many conferences and investigations since the end of the Cold War. However, the conclusions and recommendations of these studies went virtually unheeded at a time when the 'peace dividends' brought about by the end of East-West tensions disrupted the budgets allotted to organizations responsible for defence and security.

On 11 September, terrorists attacked the weakest line of resistance in American power. While strategists are still influenced by the doctrine of attrition warfare, which was characteristic of Cold War tactics and which anticipated the clashing of iron and fire of large armies launched on European plains, the terrorists struck the core of the United States with an act that caused true strategic dislocation of our neighbour to the south. In his book *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, published in 1941, Sir Basil Liddell Hart, who, among others, propounded the indirect approach, explains how such a strategic dislocation can be brought about. He maintains that in the physical realm, it is first and foremost the result of a movement that upsets the enemy and forces an abrupt change of front; the result of an act that divides the enemy and jeopardizes the resupply of troops, or endangers the routes used to retreat, if necessary, and to regroup, either on their bases or in their territory. In the psychological realm, dislocation results from the impact of the physical results listed above on the mind of the leader. This impact is greater if the

leader suddenly realizes he is in a position of inferiority, and feels unable to oppose enemy movement — in short, if he feels trapped. The images shown and the statements heard in the media following the terrorist attacks suggest that the Americans indeed experienced strategic dislocation — the very aim of the indirect approach.

Today, as the whole world ponders the outcome of the American counter-attack, it is instructive to consider the teachings of another great military thinker, whose strategy is based primarily on the knowledge of the enemy and his weaknesses. The rich teachings of Sun Tsu, a Chinese general who lived in the 4th century BC, apply perfectly to the new strategic realities.

Sun Tsu affirms, among other things, that leaders must distinguish between what is possible and what is not, and must never undertake anything that cannot be brought to a successful conclusion. He also maintains that while waging a hundred battles and winning a hundred victories is good, that is not the best outcome. Immobilizing the enemy army without a battle is best. According to Sun Tsu, in acting this way, a general aligns his conduct with Heaven and Earth, whose actions strive towards the production and conservation of things rather than in their destruction. Heaven would never approve of human bloodshed: Heaven gives life to men and it alone has the power to take it away. Being victorious without waging battle, then, is most desirable. The great generals achieve this, according to Chinese strategy, by determining the enemy's strategies, by making his projects abort, by planting discord among his allies, by always keeping him on guard, by depriving him of foreign aid, and by removing all opportunity for action that could be advantageous. Sun Tsu is coming back into vogue today since the principles of manoeuvre warfare, which seem to be replacing the principles of attrition warfare, are being taught in all major military schools. There will be great pressure on American leaders for blood to be shed; this is an inevitable result of the shock felt by a public traumatized by the terrorist attacks. The options available to the American government were either a traditional military counter-attack, accompanied by missile launchings, air attacks, and possibly a land campaign, or an indirect approach — far more secretive and furtive — but potentially more effective in the long term in thwarting international terrorism, whose fanatics make use of the precepts of indirect warfare. It would be advisable not to sacrifice the teachings of Sun Tsu too quickly on the altar of a traditional reprisal covered in full by the media, which would satisfy inflamed public opinion for a short while, but which, in the long term, could jeopardize the achievement of the ultimate goal desired by the Americans and endorsed their allies. Above all, the strategy and the heart of the terrorist movement must be properly identified and dealt with appropriately. Sun Tse maintains that it is of the highest importance to attack the strategy of the enemy. Using classical techniques against an enemy who has adopted an indirect strategy is an option that may need

to be reconsidered in light of the teachings of strategists who have examined those particular methods and the best ways to counter them.

Many commentators and experts are trying to find an explanation for this surprise attack. The dust had not yet settled around the collapsed World Trade Centre towers when people began expressing opinions: it was American policy in the Middle East, the evil effects of globalization, or Western disregard for the problems of the poor. Some lines of thinking even went back to the Crusades. The secret services were accused; border security agencies, immigration services, airport security, everything was called into question. Faced with this veritable witch hunt, it must be remembered that we have the security that we deserve. It is clear (even more so since 11 September) that the defence and security of a country must be the top priorities of a government, coming well before the economy, culture or the environment. Moreover, the government must be spurred on, or at least supported, in this direction by society. How much room is there for the Canadian government to manoeuvre when, for instance, according to polls conducted in 1998 by *The Globe and Mail*, the public prefers to support anything, even grants for film production, rather than increased spending on defence

equipment? As Martin Shadwick indicated in the Summer 2000 issue of *Canadian Military Journal*, Canadians are decidedly fickle: many of them would like to have a global security and human security role for their country and their armed forces, but are prone to writer's cramp when it comes to signing the cheques for the maintenance of a credible defence establishment.

The events of last September have led us to a crossroads. Things have indeed changed since the era when Senator Raoul Dandurand, who led the Canadian delegation at the 5th assembly of the League of Nations in 1924, described Canada as a fireproof house, very far from anything flammable. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, the time has now come to ask yourself not what the organizations responsible for the defence and security of our country can do for us, but rather, what we can and must do for the defence and security of Canada. *Je me souviens*. (Lest we forget).

Editor's Note: This essay was written on 17 September 2001.

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WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE CANADIAN ARMY?

In light of recent events, the utility of conventional ground forces is increasingly in question. On one hand, they cannot defend people or places from terrorist attack. No number of armed troops in New York or Washington (or even Boston) could have prevented the atrocities of September 11. On the other hand, the reprisals of late have focused on airpower and standoff systems. Clearly, there will need to be some element of 'boots on the ground', but those boots are likely to be worn by specialist (if not special in the military sense of the word) forces. Where does that leave 'general purpose combat-capable' troops, like those of the Canadian Army?

It may well be that, as some have feared, general purpose means 'jack of all trades and master of none'. This fact, combined with the relatively small size of the Canadian Army, may mean that it will sit this one out, just as it did in the Gulf War. It is instructive to look at these two operations with an eye to the significance of our absence. What that may mean is that the CF has 'general purposed' itself out of any meaningful role for the foreseeable future. (There remains one role, but I will get to that a bit later.)

Just as it can be said that 'the state is too big to solve small problems, and too small to solve big ones', the Canadian Army may be too 'general purpose' to be of any use in specialized missions, and too small to be used in larger general purpose ones. The reasons why we chose to sit out the Gulf War are many, and they range from the political to the military, from informed theories to urban legends. By missing out on the land operations of the Gulf War and any future operations in Afghanistan or elsewhere, Canada (and many others, it must be said) makes a statement. That statement says two things: First, 'we cannot operate on this scale alongside the best in the world'. This in no way detracts from the prowess of the individual soldiers in the army, but does reflect on the collective capabilities that are missing in the land component of the Forces. Take for example the lack of any kind of strategic lift, or any real 3rd or 4th level field-deployable logistics, or rapid reaction/insertion capability, or armed, let alone attack, helicopters. Add to this the crippling disjuncture between garrison and operation structures and you have a recipe for slow, cumbersome and vulnerable unit. 'Ad hocery' may well be a testament to Canadian flexibility and a 'can do' attitude, but as other thinkers have reminded us, "Hope is not a method."

The second message that sitting out sends is, 'when we say combat capable, we are stressing the

potential, not the actual'. No one would deny that the Canadian Army could protect itself in the face of sporadic aggression in hostile situations like those found in Somalia or the Medak Pocket. But these operations saw combat as an afterthought, not as the main reason for being.

One result of the Canadian Army's absence might be a reappraisal of its role. In this era of 'new war', are more specialized troops needed, along the lines of an SAS or beefed up JTF 2, with more training in battlefield operations, and not so much in hostage rescue and urban counter-terrorism? Should there be a 'green' aspect to the largely 'black' Joint Task Force? If so, should units be re-rolled to provide this extra muscle and expertise? Or should the number of soldiers be increased? Of course, these kinds of questions cannot be examined in isolation; the small 'p' politics of budgets needs to be taken into account. If the Air Force can say, "Hey, we're the ones that are on alert, patrolling the domestic airspace and dropping relief supplies over Afghanistan," and the Navy says, "Our frigates are the only ones in the world able to integrate into US carrier groups," then extra soldiers will not come at the expense of existing aircrew or sailors.

Perhaps the Army won't like this very much, but what has been seen as the saving grace of the Army for the past decade or so will now be its undoing. Used as a reason for better personal equipment and conditions of employment and pay, the gift horse of robust peacekeeping is now revealing its ugly teeth. Maybe, unwittingly, the Canadian Army has slowly become a constabulary force, ready and able to conduct peace operations, even those requiring limited combat, but has ceased to be useful for very much else. Years of neglect in training above the unit level, an operational tempo that necessitates a focus on peacekeeping rotations, and the lack of recent experience in large conventional combat operations, may mean that the Canadian Army is nearly undeployable.

Like Scrooge's third ghost, perhaps this is an overly pessimistic vision of what might be rather than anything in the here and now or in the predestined future. If that is so, it will take a large amount of positive planning and determined activity to provide for an alternative outlook.

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