

Notes for a Presentation

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**to the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan/
Panel indépendant sur le rôle futur du Canada en Afghanistan**

November 17, 2007

Ottawa,

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Purpose

This paper advocates a Canadian strategy for Afghanistan and suggests some basic policy elements.

Contentions

- Although the situation is deteriorating, it is not lost.
- But NATO/the UN cannot succeed by business as usual; a much greater effort is needed, proportionate to that of the Balkans.
- Canada's contribution to success can be important albeit not decisive
- However, Canada's contribution to failure, by pulling out prematurely and accelerating the deterioration of the security deterioration, could be decisive.
- None of the four options is satisfactory. Security is the sine qua non in Afghanistan and none of the four options can itself deliver it.
- The best option is to maintain the current combat and training roles, albeit refined and enhanced, while transiting as circumstances permit to a training focus.

Policy

- Assess before Autumn, 2008, on the basis of results achieved on the ground and prospects for enlarging the international effort, whether to continue the mission
- If neither the results nor the increased international effort are encouraging, which means that the mission cannot succeed, Option 4 becomes inevitable.

Assumptions

- The majority of Afghans, who have suffered enormously from 30 years of war and repression, on top of centuries of feudalism, need and want foreign help, including Canadian help.
- Afghanistan is not Iraq; it is a NATO-led, UN-authorized mission and the local population has not yet given up on it, although their expectations are not being met.
- Canadians are not pacifists and will support Canada's military/aid/diplomacy effort so long as they believe it is necessary, affordable, effective, and not just serving Washington's agenda.
- Pakistan remains a key to the outcome, whoever is in office there. The NATO/Canadian effort will be fruitless unless the infiltration of Taliban from Pakistan is curtailed

Strategic Interests and Human Values: Why Afghanistan Matters

- To support Canadian national security purposes, by
 - promoting stability in a dangerous region with several actual nuclear-armed states and one potential one.
 - by assisting the Afghans, to stop the Taliban resurgence
 - by denying safe havens to international terrorists, notably Al Qaeda
 - making multilateral cooperation work and demonstrating that the UN and NATO can successfully assist failed and failing states and protect populations
 - by curtailing the growing production of opium and illegal drugs
- To promote Canadian human security purposes, by
 - alleviating poverty in one of the small handful of very poorest countries on earth
 - promoting greater respect for basic human rights for all Afghans, including more access to education and health care for women and girls

Possible Canadian Government Action

A. Diplomacy

1. Invest much greater effort in the diplomatic leg of Canadian foreign policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan
2. Promote creation of a contact group of major troop-contributing and aid-donor countries to harmonize and coordinate activities and to generate political impetus to the international effort, as was done in the Balkans.
3. Mount a major diplomatic campaign (including visits by the Prime Minister, etc.,) in Washington, Brussels (NATO), New York (UN) and potential troop-contributing capitals (Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Nigeria, Brazil, Argentina) to promote a doubling of the military and economic assistance effort. (More boots on the ground means, inter alia, less recourse to air-power with its too often indiscriminate effects on the population)
4. Enlist allies to conduct much more aggressive bilateral diplomacy vis-à-vis Islamabad to cooperate in curtailing infiltration across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.
5. With the cooperation of the international community, press Kabul and Islamabad, and possibly Delhi, to address the core causes of instability between Afghanistan and Pakistan.
6. Urge that a major, respected, Brahimi-like, figure be appointed by the UN to oversee all intergovernmental activities (UN and NATO) in Afghanistan, to bring greater unity of purpose to international efforts and to liaise with President Karzai.

B. Military/Security

1. Immediately review our military tactics to ensure that they continue to serve our strategic interests, especially as regards the protection of civilians caught up in conflict (the major priority stressed in the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency [COIN] Manual, 2007).

2. Further upgrade Canada's military capacity and equipment, including helicopters, so that Canadian forces have greater mobility and a longer reach and are subject to fewer dangers in transit.
3. Redouble the international effort to train the Afghan National Army, including embedding Canadian personnel in Afghan units, where and when appropriate.
4. Press the Afghan government and Kandahar authorities to re-orient the focus of their police and auxiliaries from counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism to upholding the rule of law.
7. Reinforce capacity-building especially as regards the security organs of the state, particularly by stepping up the training of police, judges, prosecutors, and corrections officers, (each one a Canadian strength).
8. Fund directly the employment of impoverished young men by the Security services to separate them from the Taliban and drug lords.
9. Review the advisability of two command structures in Afghanistan.
10. Ensure that JTF2 operates in accordance with Canadian purposes.

C. Humanitarian and Development

1. By the Spring of 2008, re-assess the Canadian aid effort in Afghanistan, our largest in the world, to determine whether and, if so, for how long Canada should continue to contribute to the international humanitarian and development effort in Afghanistan at the elevated level now prevailing
2. Concentrate Canadian aid and humanitarian efforts in Kandahar to the maximum extent that circumstances allow and, to the extent possible, reverse the 80-20 ratio in favour of Kabul and the rest of the country
3. In the short term, prioritize visible humanitarian relief and re-construction projects in order both to help people and to ensure that Canada (not just third parties spending Canadian money without attribution) is seen to be making a difference in people's lives there,

4. Make assistance to the agricultural sector a priority, subsidizing local agricultural production to make legal crops more viable alternatives to poppies for impoverished farmers, and to alleviate food shortages.
5. Consider the advisability of advocating licensing to control poppy production (not eradication, and not aerial spraying crops)

D. Governance

1. Make the Ambassador the senior Canadian representative in Afghanistan and the chief Canadian spokesperson “in country”.
2. Make the Afghanistan file “job one” for all ministers with major international portfolios.
3. Transfer the Task Force (under current leadership) to PCO to enhance its authority and reduce current interdepartmental frictions.
4. Insist that departments and agencies, especially CIDA, be on the same page particularly as regards the importance of short-term, visible action.
5. Enlist the cooperation of the Canadian private sector in Afghanistan.

Communications/Other

1. Communicate much more openly, frankly, honestly and frequently with Canadians to explain what is being done, and why.
2. Make much greater use of credible Afghanistan voices in Canada, including expats but especially visitors.
3. Create a special program to employ the expertise of expatriate Afghans in Afghanistan.
6. Direct the Pearson Peacekeeping School, or the Royal Military College, to train Canadian forces officers, development officials, diplomats and civil society personnel together to work more effectively with each other in conflict circumstances.

Benchmarks of Success in the Short to Medium Term

- A population that continues to welcome a Canadian presence
- A government in Kabul
 - more nearly capable, with continuing but diminishing outside help, of assuring the security of its citizens, including protecting the population from the Taliban and local predators.
 - increasingly capable, in cooperation with regional, local and tribal entities, and with outside help, of meeting the basic human needs of the population, especially as regards employment, health care and education, including for women and girls.
 - willing and able to promote the rule of law and the protection of basic rights, including women's rights,
- A functioning economy
 - increasingly capable of feeding the population
 - increasingly capable of delivering basic goods and services, including water and electricity
- A drug trade that is brought under control

Appendix I

Background

Afghanistan is not Iraq; foreign troops went there initially in a legal war of self-defence, and remain there under a UN mandate and in response to the request of a legally elected, internationally recognized government. To the extent that it is discernible, Afghan public opinion does still support the presence of foreign troops, although that support is not evenly distributed across the country's 34 provinces and is likely weakest in the East and

South where the insurgency and fighting are most intense. Many Afghans in those regions, especially, feel their security to be precarious in the face of the Taliban insurgency, the inadequacy of national security institutions and foreign, particularly American, military actions that have caused considerable civilian casualties as counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics action has been prioritized over human security, economic development and the inculcation of the rule of law. Further, in part because of the American invasion of Iraq and in part because of chequered performance by the international community, inadequate resources have been allocated to secure the country, rebuild its institutions, train its officials and assist the impoverished. Poppy production presents a major dilemma, at once a generator of funds for organized crime, a cause of corruption in the government, and a not readily replaced means of subsistence for many among Afghanistan's impoverished rural multitudes. The result is a situation in Afghanistan that is not as good as it could and should be after five years of effort but not irretrievably lost, either. It is one that requires doing more and better on the part of the international community if it is to succeed.

Considerations for Canada

It is clear that the attempt to help Afghanistan has not failed. It is equally clear that if the current deterioration is to be reversed, much more needs to be done by the international community. There will have to be both internal and external initiatives, and results. Internally, a much greater emphasis will need to be put on human security, including satisfying basic human needs, education and governance, and protecting people from the predations of the Taliban and war lords and the corruption of Afghan officials. Internationally, much more aggressive diplomacy is necessary vis-à-vis Afghan's neighbours, especially Pakistan, the international donor community, NATO and other troop-contributing countries and the United States. At the same time, the insurgency, which is not a classical national liberation effort but rather a mix of Taliban, drug gangs and other criminals and tribal leaders, will have to be militarily contained and reversed.

In order to generate and sustain the support of Canadians for such exceptional effort in Afghanistan, any government must demonstrate corresponding clarity about its objectives, while exercising realism as regards both potential results and the time frame to achieve them. There are good Canadian reasons, both as regards interests and values, for Canada to make a major effort in Afghanistan, including:

- recent history, and the necessity of preventing Afghanistan from becoming again a base for international terrorism,
- human security, and the protection of one of the most vulnerable societies on earth,

- stability, or at least not further instability in a country that borders on three nuclear-weapons states and at least one aspirant,
- the illicit drugs trade, and the need eventually to diminish Afghanistan's major importance as a source of heroin
- humanitarian intervention, and the demonstration effect, positive or negative, vis-à-vis other crises elsewhere,
- multilateral cooperation, and the importance to Canada of the UN and NATO succeeding and being seen to do so.

Diplomacy, Defence and Development

The three D's approach has clearly not worked as well as hoped. For all the academic fascination with the three D approach, the departments in fact are not very practiced at interoperability with each other, or with NGOs in the field. Cultures in each of the three organizations are very different. Enhanced, common training is needed to make all three more effective.

Further, the imbalance between the D's has been profound, with the Canadian Forces far outnumbering the CIDA and Foreign Affairs members, a situation not foreseen when the concept was launched. When the Canadian casualty rate spiked, restrictions were placed on civilian movement, worsening the imbalance and hindering the ramping up of the CIDA effort, in particular. CIDA needed time to staff up in the face of a major, unanticipated priority

CIDA which tends to operate on the basis of multi-year plans. CIDA and DND have been on different pages with respect to the urgency and the priority to place on projects in Kandahar, as opposed to more broadly in Afghanistan. This is partly a product of CIDA's modus operandi, which is to work through NGOs and international organizations, neither of whose efforts were necessarily concentrated in the relatively dangerous south. As a consequence there was less visible credit to Canada in Kandahar ("no flags" according to General Fraser) than the military wanted to see; they know they must win "hearts and minds" to prevail,. Further, CIDA operates with relatively distant time horizons, which do not deliver results that are valuable in a conflict context. The military find corner-cutting a necessary means to an end in war zones. To be effective in these circumstances, CIDA needs to be allowed greater latitude for risk management. More fundamentally, it needs to see itself as an instrument of Canadian foreign policy, albeit with a development vocation.

Diplomacy vis-à-vis Pakistan, the United States, NATO and Others

Canada has two sources of leverage:

- we are making a major financial and a disproportionate military contribution , in operational terms, to the common effort, which is very much in NATO's interests and gives us standing with our allies and others, and,
- If we did not get reasonable satisfaction, Canadian withdrawal would send international shock waves

We may have made a commitment to Afghanistan and its long-suffering people but it was not open-ended whatever our allies and others did or did not do.

The cross-border insurgency from Pakistan must be stopped or dramatically curtailed or the Taliban will ultimately prevail. The country that is key to stopping it is obviously Pakistan. The leadership resides there, recruitment is conducted there and insurgents get training and rest and rehabilitation there when needed. Pakistani President Musharraf's protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, most informed opinion accepts that the Pakistani Government at least tolerates the insurgency but more likely is (not very secretly) supporting and promoting it. A few lower echelon Taliban officials but no senior leaders have been arrested. Indeed, some opponents of the Taliban have been arrested and portrayed as insurgents.

Prior to his latest suspension of the Constitution, at least, Musharraf had persuaded Washington both that he was indispensable in the search for Bin Laden and Al Qaeda and that he was all that stands between radical Islamists and their control of Pakistan and its nuclear capability. The British and others share the nuclear concern and believe Musharraf's cooperation is necessary to staunch their home-grown radical Islamist terrorists with their Pakistani antecedents. For Washington and London, and quite possibly Paris and Berlin, too, the infiltration into Afghanistan is the lesser of evils. It is a double game that is costing Canada dearly.

Canada is not able on its own to bring the Pakistani Government to curtail support for the Taliban infiltration. We should not shrink from pressing our case aggressively direct in Islamabad, we should use the opportunities available to us to name and shame Pakistan in the United Nations councils. But our focus should be on Washington and to somewhat lesser degrees, on NATO and on European capitols to get them to carry the message for us. We need to promote three ideas.

- It is in no one's interests (except possibly Pakistan's) for Afghanistan to slide back into anarchy or Taliban rule.
- Musharraf can curtail the cross-border infiltration, in part by arresting senior Taliban figures residing in Quetta and elsewhere in Pakistan.
- Musharraf is not in the jeopardy that he wants the west to believe he is; in Pakistani elections the religious parties have attracted a small fraction of the vote, which is an accurate reflection of their support in the population according to expert opinion.

An important but secondary objective would be to draw attention, at first privately and, if that were unavailing, publicly, to the sources of Taliban funding coming from the Persian Gulf including Saudi Arabia, in an effort to stem the flow.

To make these points effectively, existing diplomatic vehicles must be used and new ones created

- In the first instance, Canada needs to exploit its close relationship with Washington
- We need to make much more aggressive use of the UN Security Council. Canada should be prepared to be vocal about the insurgency and what Pakistan can do about it—naming and shaming Pakistan.
- We need to keep the pressure on at the NATO Council to persuade, cajole or blackmail our allies into doing more.
- We need to advocate the creation of a Contact Group of major military and aid donors both to coordinate diplomatic strategy and to reconcile inconsistent donor policies for example on the eradication of poppies.
- Ultimately, we should press the UN to convene a major international conference, involving Afghanistan, its immediate neighbours and major troop and aid contributors, to take stock of the situation and to establish a process to begin to address the sources of instability affecting Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Diplomacy vis-à-vis Afghanistan

It is only partly the fault of the Afghan leadership that Afghanistan is in the situation it is in today. The US was the dominant international partner and it missed a golden opportunity to make a difference in ordinary Afghans' lives by allowing itself to be distracted by Iraq, by eschewing nation-building in the early years, by focussing on Kabul and the eastern border to the exclusion of other regions, by prioritizing the "War on Terror"

over the establishment of the rule of law, by ignoring the incipient insurgency, and by insisting on poppy eradication despite the absence of any other viable means of subsistence for many impoverished Afghans. Other donors and troop contributors raised few effective objections to these policies, committed far fewer funds themselves than needed and disbursed even less, often through contractors and subcontractors who creamed off large overheads. Similarly, thanks to the persistence of the idea of a “light footprint”, the international military forces allocated to Afghanistan were fewer than a third of those assigned to Bosnia and even to Kosovo, a mere province of Serbia.

At the same time, the Afghan Government does bear some of the responsibility for the situation the country is in. The Afghan people want security from predators wherever they come from but the army and police have been prioritizing counter-terror efforts over the rule of law. The Afghan Government, partly because of the inadequacy of the international response, has allowed War Lords, who were relatively weak in 2001, to regroup. Power has migrated back to Mullahs, major land-owners, tribal authorities and village chiefs in a country where the nation is strong but the state weak. Economic leadership has been chequered and the Afghan National Police and the Ministry of the Interior have been weakened by bad appointments and inadequate training, which drug gangs exploit and the Taliban exploits.

Vis-à-vis Afghanistan, we need to put stronger emphasis on human security, that is, on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and from predators. We need to make a major effort needs to assist the Afghans establish the rule of law in their country, by stepping up the training of judges, prosecutors and corrections officers, all three Canadian strengths. Efforts by others to train police seem to have had poor results; there may be scope for a greater RCMP role. We need to help the Afghans build the capacity to govern themselves, especially to develop a trained public service, another area of Canadian comparative advantage. The Afghan National Army albeit still too small, has been a bright spot thus far but it needs training and equipping. Here too Canada could help and eventually perhaps embed Canadian personnel in Afghan units to facilitate defence outside urban areas. The rich West has allowed the Afghan authorities to be outbid by the Taliban for the services of impoverished young men; Afghan plans to recruit auxiliary police personnel would be cost effective, if they did not excite anxiety in the rest of the country mindful of the aftermath of the American support of the Mujahideen.

Opium and Poppy Production

According to the World Bank, the magnitude and importance of Afghanistan's opium economy are virtually unprecedented and unique in global experience ---it has been roughly estimated as 27% of total drug-inclusive GDP. The sheer size and illicit nature of the opium economy mean that not surprisingly, it infiltrates and seriously affects Afghanistan's economy, state, society, and politics. It generates large amounts of effective demand in the economy, provides incomes and employment including in rural areas (even though most of the final "value" from Afghan opium accrues outside the country), and supports the balance of payments and indirectly (through Customs duties on drug-financed imports) government revenues. The opium economy by all accounts is a massive source of corruption and undermines public institutions especially in (but not limited to) the security and justice sectors. There are worrying signs of infiltration by the drug industry into higher levels of government and into the emergent politics of the country. Thus it is widely considered to be one of the greatest threats to state-building, reconstruction, and development in Afghanistan.

To say that the problem is easier described than resolved is a major understatement. In some areas, eradication programs have been effective but production has simultaneously increased in others. Overall the situation is out of control and there is little consensus on what to do about it. The US favours eradication as does, at least notionally, the Government of Afghanistan. The US is pressing for aerial spraying that the Government of Afghanistan and others are resisting, believing spraying would merely impoverish farmers, direct their sympathies to the Taliban and, as a result, increase the danger NATO, including Canadian, forces face. Nor is it clear that spraying would be in the best health interests of poor farmers who have little or no access to health care. Some, including the Senlis Council, argue that poppy production should be licensed (not legalized) and the international market for licit production, which is tightly controlled by treaties, be opened to Afghan production, particularly as there appears to be unmet demand in the Third World. Others argue that the huge Afghan supply would overwhelm licit demand. According to the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, there is a current global oversupply of opium-based products from existing licit producers. Pouring vastly more legal opium into the world system would cause prices to plummet, making the illicit trade that much more attractive to farmers. The Senlis Council has advocated launching a pilot project to test the licensing approach.

Communications

Two aspects of communications are crucially important and need to be managed simultaneously:

- domestic communications, and

- strategic communications

Domestic communications will make or break the effort to assist Afghanistan. Communications efforts by the government need to be honest and frank, frequent and open. Canadians are not comfortable with the level of casualties they are seeing, on both sides, but they are not pacifists, either, and will support the government if they believe that the policy being followed is necessary and effective. If they conclude that the effort cannot succeed or that the costs are going to be extravagantly disproportionate to the Canadian objectives, or if the Canadian Government is not levelling with them or is trying too hard to please Washington, support will evaporate.

Strategic communications entail the sending of signals to the other side. The Taliban, which many experts do not consider a very formidable military force, knows that it wins by fighting – prevailing in battle if possible and losing if necessary. Losing large numbers of recruits is strategically neither here nor there. It is the fact of battles that is the message to the Canadian and western publics. Similarly, unity and resolve must be communicated back, a tricky proposition given the imperfect agreement that inevitably exists among western countries on Afghanistan and the risk of echoing unconvincing American posturing on Iraq.

Annex II

Frequently Asked Questions and Some responses.

Why Are Canadian Troops Taking So Many Casualties? Why Are the Dutch suffering fewer casualties?

The Canadian Forces, like the British, are in an inherently more dangerous region than the Dutch are. According to the UN, the strategy of the Taliban is to take Kandahar and, in doing so, to unsettle the population, destabilize the Karzai Government and precipitate a nation-wide crisis. The Canadian Forces represent a major obstacle to this objective.

Further, Kandahar province, unlike xx has a border with Pakistan. Expert opinion believes the insurgency is directed by the Taliban leadership resident in Quetta, which is only about 125 Kilometres from Kandahar. There is ample evidence that the Taliban insurgents receive training and refuge across the border from the Canadian area and that Pakistani efforts to close the border range from inadequate to unhelpful. (See Musharraf motives below)

Are Canadian forces, perhaps under the influence of the Americans, abandoning peacekeeping for a combat role?

There is not much scope in Kandahar province for a classic peacekeeping mission (indeed there are very few classical UN peacekeeping missions anywhere anymore; almost all have mandates and Rules of engagement that permit them to fight). In any case, there is no peace between the Afghan Government and the Taliban; the latter's objectives appear to require the downfall of the former. The tactics of the Taliban include terrorism, executing teachers and government officials, intimidation of Afghan security personnel by threatening the families of "collaborators", burning schools, etc. Their methods are both home grown and imported from the Iraq conflict—extortion, kidnapping and murder, suicide bombing and improvised explosive devices.

The Taliban come to fight. In order to provide minimum security to the local population, without which economic and social development will not happen, and to retain the population's loyalty, the Canadian Forces assist the nascent Afghan National Army (ANA) in resisting them. How they resist them is a military judgment but whether the Canadians can operate effectively without emulating American tactics is an issue for clarification. It is doubtful, nevertheless, that the ANA will soon have the strength or NATO sufficient "boots on the ground" to be able successfully to affect a more static defence of protecting Afghan towns and villages.

To what extent are the forces the Canadians are fighting really Taliban and to what extent are they local Pashtun youth and farmers fed up with by the incompetence of the Kabul Government and the predations and corruption of the Afghan National Police?

The Taliban do recruit people who are disaffected by the inadequacies and corruption of the Kabul Government. Further, Pashtuns are found on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border in the Kandahar region and share many affinities. Additionally, Afghans have been known to manipulate foreign forces to settle scores. The situation is very complex and the Forces have to rely on the best intelligence they can get and generate themselves.

Are the Afghans not famously xenophobic and do they not just want foreign, including Canadian, troops out?

British General David Richards, NATO's top commander in Afghanistan, said in October that the country was approaching a tipping point and warned that if life doesn't get better over the winter Afghans would likely switch their allegiance to resurgent Taliban militants. On the other hand, the UN disagrees. According to Chris Alexander,

“there isn't sophisticated nation-wide polling data, but there is public opinion research and all of it points to some quite remarkable results, remarkable in that I think most people would not expect them.... In many parts of the country the most popular partner of Afghanistan is the United States... The United Nations, the World Bank, UNHCR enjoy very high approval ratings in Afghanistan... [I]n both houses of Parliament it's been very clear that both the members of Parliament and their constituents want the ... NATO-led ISAF mission to continue. And I think one of the clearest ways of measuring this popularity is by taking note of the fact that there isn't really a voice or a political force in Afghanistan that openly opposes the presence of NATO.... people consider the Taliban threat a live threat, a threat to their life and limb, to their livelihoods. And that, I think, will extend the legitimacy of an international military presence until the Taliban is subdued as a military force.”

Why is Pakistan supporting the Taliban Insurgency into Afghanistan?

Musharraf has his reasons for trying to neutralize or at least diminish Afghanistan. For one thing, Pakistan is a strong state, but a weak nation, an artificial construct born of the end of the British Empire, with unresolved borders with India and Afghanistan. Having lost Bangladesh, some in Pakistan see fusion with some or all of Afghanistan as a means of rebuilding a critical mass and gaining greater strategic depth vis-à-vis India. Further, the de facto border between the two countries cuts the Pashtun tribes in two and raises the prospect

of an eventual Pashtunistan, further diminishing Pakistan. The Pakistani intelligence services have tried to sterilize Pashtun nationalism with Islamic fundamentalism, including the Taliban. Moreover, Afghanistan has, itself, never recognized the border, which it thinks should encompass all Pashtuns, inside Afghanistan. To succeed, any diplomacy vis-à-vis Islamabad is going to have to understand these motivations.