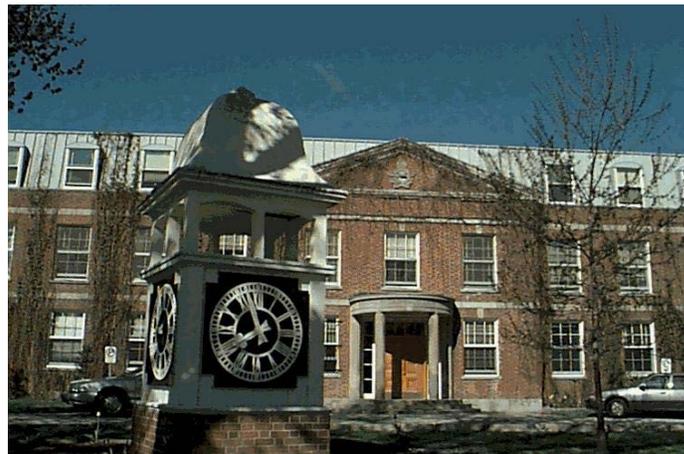


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**MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL:
FINDING DIRECTION FOR MILITARY PLANNERS FROM CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY ON ISRAEL**

Major R. Marois

JCSP 40

Exercise Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE

JCSP 40

2013 – 2014

SOLO FLIGHT

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By Major R. Marois

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The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events.

- Sir Winston Churchill

When Prime Minister Stephen Harper spoke at the Knesset on 20 January 2014, he put a capstone on a series of political moves which positioned Canada firmly and unequivocally side-by-side with the State of Israel: “Through fire and water, Canada will stand with you.”¹ For Canadian military planners, should this constitute a requirement to shift focus towards preparing for potential military operations in the Middle East in the event of a crisis involving Israel? In 2010, then Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Kent stated that Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s policy towards Israel has been “...quite clear...” in that “...for some time now [he] has regularly stated that an attack on Israel would be considered an attack on Canada.”² There are no treaty arrangements between Canada and Israel, such as Article 5 of the The North Atlantic Treaty³ that would require an automatic response to an attack on Israel⁴ but what are the military implications of this statement? In 2014, the Chief of Force Development prepared a draft of a document which describes the Future Security Environment (FSE) out to 2040. A section of this document outlines the instability and threats to global security in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Specifically, there is concern expressed about the threats against

¹ Prime Minister of Canada, "PM Addresses the Knesset in Jerusalem: 20 January 2014," <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2014/01/20/pm-addresses-knesset-injerusalem> (accessed 01/31, 2014).

² Steven Chase, ""An Attack on Israel would be Considered an Attack on Canada"," *The Globe and Mail*, sec. Foreign Policy, February 16, 2010, 2010.

³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The North Atlantic Treaty," http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm (2014). “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

⁴ Kim Richard Nossal, *Primat Der Wahlurne: Explaining Stephen Harper's Foreign Policy* (Toronto: International Studies Association, 2014), 10.

Israel posed by Iran, from the latter's pursuit of nuclear weapons, its extremely aggressive rhetoric toward the existence of Israel, and its support to terrorist organizations as HAMAS and Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ). As a result of these threats, Israel has indicated that a unilateral attack on Iran is a possibility.⁵ Facing these looming crises, should CAF operational planners be considering an immediate shift in preparedness of Canada's military power to align with the government's assertive support for Israel? This paper will answer these questions by discussing three options for the CAF to help guide operational contingency planning. From these options, it will determine the one that is the most valuable to military planners based on an analysis of the Harper government's approach to foreign policy and how it applies it to international crises, both in the Middle East and around the globe.

THREE OPTIONS FOR A MILITARY PLANNER

So what if there was a crisis in the Middle East and Israel was under threat? Or, what if Israel moved to conduct another pre-emptive strike, this time on Iran, causing a ripple of retaliations from that state and likely instability amongst the Arab nations, the Palestinian Authority and non-state actors such as Hezbollah? Should the CAF be prepared to provide military support to back up a strongly worded foreign policy? Would Canada lead the way ahead of international partners such as the US and NATO? The following are the three potential options that will be considered in this paper.

⁵ Chief of Force Development Directorate of Capability Integration, *Future Security Environment 2013 to 2040 (DRAFT)* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence,[2013]).19 - 21.

The Normative Approach

This would be the status quo of the application of foreign policy as it existed prior to the election of the Harper government in 2006. It would essentially be a liberal internationalist approach of maintaining a balanced level of global preparedness that would not focus disproportionately on crisis response in support of Israel. It would usually align with the consensus of multilateral organizations such as NATO and the UN, but not always in line with military options endorsed by the US. This option will consider the domestic impact of foreign policy decisions, but would put more weight in the electorate's concern for democratic freedom and humanitarian support instead of targeting specific voting groups. The military preparedness would remain universal, flexible and multi-purpose.

The Proactive Approach

This option would consider the current foreign policy as a significant shift towards willingness by the government to take a hard line and act militarily to back up its rhetoric. If the government is supporting Israel by way of an ideological and principled foreign policy it could be assumed that at some point the Canadian military may be called upon to provide direct operational support in the event of a crisis. As such, the CAF should prepare for military operations that would fall in line with the Israeli government and the Israel Defense Force operational plans.

The Pragmatic Approach

The final option would assume that despite the strong rhetoric, the Conservative government will only act in a pragmatic fashion. Decision making on whether to dedicate military assets will take into consideration Canadian values and principles, particularly of the majority elements within the Conservative coalition. Whether the decision falls in line with those of Canada's allies, such as the NATO members and the US, will be dependent on whether there are economic implications and if it is in Canada's national interest. The CAF should remain flexible in order to consider any crisis in the Middle East on a case-by-case basis recognizing that the government will be principled in voicing its policy but will be conservative and practical when it comes time to act.

The most likely option that the CAF should consider for contingency planning will be determined based on three criteria: the Conservative foreign policy as it has developed since 2006, examples of how the Conservative government has responded militarily to international crises and what the CAF has been preparing for both since the release of the Canada First Defence Strategy in 2008 and the recent draft assessment of the FSE out to 2040.

THE HARPER SHIFT IN FOREIGN POLICY

The official Canadian policy with respect to Israel advocates that it has the unqualified right to exist, to defend itself, and to be free to defend against and combat terrorism in accordance with humanitarian and international law.⁶ While Canada

⁶ Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, "Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada: Canadian Policy on Key Issues in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," <http://www.international.gc.ca/name->

supports the two-state solution to achieve lasting peace in the region, it makes a clear statement of support for a democratic and peaceful negotiation process that can only advance without the threat of violence or terrorism from factions within or supporting the Palestinians.⁷ In support of Israel's national security policy, it is the Canadian government's position not to single out the government of Jerusalem for public criticism. Canada has an established record of voting against UN resolutions that condemn Israel. It also boycotts or abstains from other conferences that permit similar one-sided criticism or do not adequately include Israel such as the Durban Review Process or the recent nuclear technology agreement with Iran. Further, when Canada attends the G8 and Organization internationale de la francophonie summits, it blocks criticism of Israel from being included in the communiqués. Canada is often one of the few western countries to take such clear stands.⁸ Stephen Harper's visit to the Knesset in January 2014 has certainly solidified this overall policy of unwavering support for Israel.

In order to understand this government's stance on Israel and what it means for the Canadian military an analysis of the Conservative approach to foreign policy would be helpful. There has been significant reflection on Canadian foreign policy since Stephen Harper became Prime Minister of a minority Conservative government in 2006. Academics, the media, diplomats, and the Canadian public have struggled with defining the Harper government's foreign policy and what it means for Canada in the world. In 2006, the Conservative Party of Canada stated in its platform that "Too often, Liberal foreign policy has compromised democratic principles to appease dictators, sometimes

[anno/peace_process-processus_paix/canadian_policy-politique_canadienne.aspx?lang=eng](#) (accessed 01/31, 2014).

⁷ Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, "Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada: Canadian Policy on Key Issues in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict"

⁸ Prime Minister of Canada, *PM Addresses the Knesset in Jerusalem: 20 January 2014*

for the sake of narrow business interests... We need to ensure that Canada's foreign policy reflects true Canadian values and advances Canada's national interests."⁹ These notions were considered to be fundamentally different from what came before it. John Ibbitson argues that after some early missteps by the minority government, this principled approach eventually developed into a Conservative coherence on foreign policy following the "Big Break" from the policies of the Laurentian elite¹⁰ such as Lester Pearson and Lloyd Axworthy. It became an assertive, populist and bilateral approach to foreign affairs where trade trumps everything and the positive promotion of Canadian values only occurs if there are no major Canadian economic interests involved.¹¹ He also acknowledges the importance that is given to making foreign policy decisions that resonate positively with the Conservative coalition; which is formed primarily of conservative-minded immigrants who live in the suburbs of major Canadian cities (primarily Toronto), rural Canadians (less so in Quebec) and voters from the Prairies.¹² Kim Nossal agrees most strongly with that last statement, arguing that between 2006 and 2014, Canadian foreign policy has neither been "ideological" nor "incoherent" but has been shaped "first and foremost by electoral considerations" that support the strategic goals of the Harper Conservatives to become the 'natural governing party' of Canada.¹³ Paul Wells noted that in 2006, the Harper government's assertive approach to foreign

⁹ Conservative Party of Canada, *Stand Up for Canada: Conservative Party of Canada Federal Election Platform 2006*, (2006), 44.

¹⁰ Darrell Bricker and John Ibbitson, *The Big Shift: The Seismic Change in Canadian Politics, Business, and Culture and what it Means for our Future* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd, 2013), 2 - 5.

¹¹ John Ibbitson, "The Big Break: The Conservative Transformation of Canada's Foreign Policy," *The CIGI Papers*, no. No. 29 (April, 2014), 5 and 12.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Nossal, *Primat Der Wahlurne: Explaining Stephen Harper's Foreign Policy*, 13.

policy was clear and less hesitant than prior to his election win.¹⁴ When Hamas, the hardline anti-Israeli party with links to terrorist organizations, won a strong majority in the Palestinian Authority, Canada was first amongst all other world governments to cut off its foreign aid to them. Wells also cites Harper's strong commitment to maintaining the trust of the population following his majority government victory in 2011. Instead of straying from Canadian values, as his opponents claimed he would, Harper grew the Conservative vote by appealing to the broader coalition of voters that were not staunch opponents to the party.¹⁵ As Jeffrey Simpson put it in 2011: "the Conservatives became the country's dominant political party, not so much because the country changed...but because the party changed to fit the country."¹⁶

With respect to the question that this paper asks, how can the CAF interpret the Harper government's foreign policy on Israel in order to anticipate potential military operational outcomes in the event of a crisis? Both Nossal and Ibbitson address Harper's unwavering support for Israel. When applying his understanding of Harper's foreign policy, Ibbitson notes that Israel is a singularly ambiguous issue. Confidential sources have revealed to him Stephen Harper's "intense interest in and support for Israel emerged when he was a teenager, and has never wavered."¹⁷ As Prime Minister, he has successfully reoriented Canadian foreign policy towards this unwavering support; however, taken into context of the Conservative approach, Ibbitson infers that Harper can sustain a principled policy without committing to a defined military response as there are

¹⁴ Paul Wells, *Right Side Up: The Fall of Paul Martin and the Rise of Stephen Harper's New Conservatism* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart Ltd, 2006), 294 - 295.

¹⁵ Paul Wells, *The Longer I'M Prime Minister* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2013), 349.

¹⁶ Jeffrey Simpson, "It's the Conservatives Who Changed to Fit Canada," *The Globe and Mail* July 15, 2011.

¹⁷ Ibbitson, *The Big Break: The Conservative Transformation of Canada's Foreign Policy*, 7.

no major Canadian economic interests involved. For military planners looking at the rhetoric on Israel, this gives an indication of what other factors are at play if a decision was to be made to respond to a crisis in the Middle East.

The Harper government's support to Israel has drawn criticism which continues to shape the debate as to what the government would do if a crisis occurred that threatened Israel. Does a policy that touts uncompromised support for Israel incline the government towards a more assertive military stance? Former Prime Minister Joe Clark published a book in 2013 wherein he states that "The Harper government explicitly rejects even-handedness in the Middle East. It shows no interest in being 'fair-minded,' ... Those outspoken positions limit, or eliminate, Canada's capacity as a mediator, or even as a calming influence."¹⁸ The other question posed publicly is whether the Conservative policy is less about preparing for concrete action and is more likely a strategic method to garner votes and support from the Jewish-Canadian community? So-called pandering has been denied by Foreign Minister John Baird and other Conservatives such as Senator Linda Frum: "Going after the Jewish vote isn't really a tremendous strategy. There aren't a lot of Jewish votes in Canada."¹⁹ Nonetheless, Shimon Fogel, chief executive of Canada's Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs has indicated that despite Conservative denials that it was done for political ends the Conservative stance has had a partisan payoff, both in votes and financial backing: "Significant segments of the Jewish community shifted their alliance over to the Conservative party." Former diplomat Robert Fowler criticized this perceived pandering as a trend within the current government

¹⁸ Joe Clark, *How we Lead: Canada in a Century of Change* (Toronto: Random House, 2013).

¹⁹ Bruce Campion-Smith, "Israel has always Loomed Large for Stephen Harper," *The Toronto Star* January 17, 2014.

which has significant global implications. In a speech to a Liberal convention in 2010, Fowler described the policy as a

...scramble to lock up the Jewish vote in Canada [that is] selling out our widely admired and long-established reputation for fairness and justice in this most volatile and dangerous region of the world.... such wanton squandering of Canada's reputation disqualified us from being able to use Canadian diplomatic skills to offer the long-suffering Israelis and Palestinians the prospect of a durable peace.”²⁰ As stated earlier in this paper, Kim Nossal argues that any action taken by the Conservative government will be “framed with the ballot box primarily in mind.”²¹

If that is the case, and if the Conservative coalition is increasingly comprised of conservative-minded immigrants, then direct military support to Israel may in fact be the less pragmatic path to follow. Following the 2011 election, Jeffrey Simpson of *The Globe and Mail* noted that “this highly polarized issue of Israel and its neighbours, where almost no middle ground exists, such a position risks alienating Muslims, whose numbers in Canada are growing much faster than the Jewish population.” Further, he quoted an Ipsos Reid exit poll where 53 percent of Jewish voters supported the Conservatives and only 12 per cent of Muslim voters did so. If those Muslim voters are tied in any way to the conflict in the Middle East, then any action taken, especially military, would likely alienate a significant group of the electorate and conflict with what appears to be a key tenet of Conservative politics. As such, if a crisis were to occur where Israel looked to Canada and the international community for military support, how would the government respond?

PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

²⁰ Robert Fowler, "Reflections on Africa and Other Canadian Foreign Policy Issues" (Montreal, March 28 2010, 2010).

²¹ Nossal, *Primat Der Wahlurne: Explaining Stephen Harper's Foreign Policy*, 16.

Another way of understanding how the Conservative foreign policy relates to potential military action is to examine how it was applied in some key international events. In July 2006, just months after the federal election, the minority Conservative government was confronted with a violent conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Hezbollah. Approximately 40,000 Canadian citizens in Lebanon and Israel were trapped in the fighting and nine Canadians including a Canadian peacekeeper were killed. Stephen Harper, traveling on a week-long diplomatic mission in Europe indicated the government's position, that "Israel has the right to defend itself" and "I think Israel's response under the circumstances has been measured."²² Despite other countries such as Russia and France criticizing Israel for what they perceived to be "disproportionate force in its attacks in Lebanon", Harper continued to reiterate his call for "Hezbollah and Hamas [to] release their prisoners ... and [that] any countries in that area should encourage an end to violence [and recognize] Israel's right to exist."²³ Throughout the conflict, the Harper government did not waver from its support of Israel; however, the military response was very measured and was not designed to support Israel's war effort. DFAIT and DND were mobilized, not to provide military support to the Israel Defense Force, but to evacuate almost 15,000 Canadian citizens from Lebanon.²⁴ Further, despite international and domestic pressure, Harper did not support sending Canadian troops to southern Lebanon as part of a multinational peacekeeping force, adding that countries in the area should be responsible for resolving the conflict: "I think what is important if we are going to resolve this problem in the long term is that we get governments in the

²² Bruce Cheadle, "Harper Sides Firmly with Israel, 'Onus' on Hostage-Takers to Stop the Conflict," *Canadian Press NewsWire* (July 13, 2006).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ The Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *The Evacuation of Canadians from Lebanon in July 2006: Implications for the Government of Canada* (Ottawa: ,[2007]), 1.

region that are dedicated to peace and stability for all sides, and are prepared to deal with these kinds of extremist and terrorist security threats.” This demonstrated what appears to be a pragmatic response that was communicated to align with the vocal support for Israel as it asserted its sovereign right to defend itself. It is not known if Israel requested any military support from Canada nor is it known if any was provided outside of the public eye. Nonetheless, the response that was communicated to the public would seem to indicate that the Conservative government chooses to make practical decisions regarding direct military support that align with Canadian national interests such as protecting the diaspora. The government recognized that becoming embroiled complex military activity would be costly and politically risky and, as will be demonstrated in the next few examples of Canada’s foreign policy in action, the Conservative party appears to be establishing a similarly pragmatic trend.

In 2011, Canada’s support to the NATO operations to bring down the regime of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya occurred with minimal opposition from parliament or the general public. Given the widespread public support for the Afghanistan mission at the time, Kim Nossal noted that it was hard for parliamentarians to question the intervention of our military: “We’ve got out of the habit of talking critically about why we go to war...The notion of supporting our troops has now been embraced by all parties, it’s not just for Harper Conservatives.”²⁵ In hindsight, and in a favourable electoral environment after having just won an election in May with a majority government, Stephen Harper took the opportunity to reaffirm his principled approach to foreign policy. At a medal ceremony at the end of the Libya mission in November 2011, Harper stated “Those who

²⁵ Nossal quoted in John Allemang and Daniel Leblanc, "As Politicians Hit Hustings, Canada's Libya Mission Flies Under the Radar," *The Globe and Mail* March 23, 2011.

talk the talk of human rights must from time to time be prepared to walk the walk Heaven forbid that we should fail to do that of which we are capable when the path of duty is clear. Our government is not that kind of government. Canada is not that kind of nation.”²⁶

The most current conflict in eastern Ukraine and the Crimea is another example of the Harper government’s pragmatic foreign policy. Based on the principle of supporting democracy and international law, Harper’s policy also garnered the support of the 1.1 million Ukrainian-Canadians while still aligning with the values of the increasing conservative coalition in Canada. As the first G7 leader to visit Ukraine, in March 2014, immediately after the overthrow of the Yanukovich government, he expressed Canada’s strong commitment to the new regime, while condemning the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea.²⁷ The recent deployment of six CF-18s and support staff to Eastern Europe as well as 50 soldiers to participate in military exercises in Poland is a highly measured and pragmatic military contribution. Sticking to Canadian values, vote garnering and a focus on minimizing expenses prior to a 2015 election has led Steve Saideman of the CIC to describe the contribution as the “least and most Canada can do.”²⁸

Other instances where the Conservatives demonstrated a practical application of principled foreign policy to minimize political risk were Harper’s cautious handling of the CC-117 transport aircraft support to the French in Mali, the government’s emphatic rejection of a UN suggestion that Canada might take over leadership of the peacekeeping

²⁶ John Iveson, "Canada’s New Role in the ‘struggle between Good and Bad’ has Its risks," *The National Post* November 24, 2011.

²⁷ Ibbitson, *The Big Break: The Conservative Transformation of Canada's Foreign Policy*, 7.

²⁸ Steve Saideman, "The Least and most Canada can Do," *Canadian International Council* (April 21, 2014).

force in Congo²⁹ and the skepticism over the makeup of the Syrian rebels in that conflict and refusal to join the US in arming them.³⁰ Close examination of each of these examples, though not covered in detail in this paper, reveal a consistent trend of military action when faced with similar international crises.

To summarize, the Conservatives have made foreign policy decisions to act from a principled position, consistently when it is in line with the public opinion of the majority members or at least, the key applicable voting group, from within the conservative coalition and always when there is little risk both economically or politically. The next section will consider how the CAF has interpreted official direction from the current government in order to prepare the force for future operations.

COHERENT DIRECTION ON A WAY FORWARD?

The Canada First Defence Strategy released in 2008 was hailed as a welcome encapsulation of the Government's perspective and plans for Defence; however, it was also criticized for being too general in its strategic framework. For military planners concerned with preparing the force to meet the defence requirement of the Canadian government, it provided a clear list of missions and associated capabilities. Of the six assigned missions, two addressed international operations: the Canadian Armed Forces must be prepared to "[1] lead and/or conduct a major international operation for an extended period... and [2] deploy forces in response to crises elsewhere in the world for

²⁹ Campbell Clark, "Canada Rejects UN Request to Lead Congo Mission," *The Globe and Mail* April 30, 2010.

³⁰ Steve Rennie, "Harper Rules Out Arming Syrian Rebels, Blasts Putin for Supporting 'thugs of Assad regime'," *The National Post* (June 16, 2013).

shorter periods.”³¹ The document describes threats to international stability across the globe to include conflicts that involve state and non-state actors. The expectation is that the CAF is able to “deal with the full range of threats and challenges to Canada and Canadians.”³² The remainder of the document describes commitments towards rebuilding the Forces and providing the requisite capabilities to achieve success in all six of the assigned missions. A new defence strategy, due in late 2014 or early 2015, will attempt to preserve the expeditionary capacity of the military even as the government reduces defence spending in a post- Afghanistan, deficit-fighting environment.³³

In order to determine what those international threats look like and what capabilities will be required to counter them, it fell to the CAF to develop an assessment of the future security environment. These studies have been conducted regularly and updated since 2008 with the most recent FSE in draft form ready to be released in the summer of 2014 which will look out at the Future Operating Environment (FOE) from 2013 to 2040. As previously discussed, this document provides a short assessment of each of the global areas mentioned in the CFDS, however, there is no prioritization placed on developing capabilities for a specific area or type of conflict. Helpfully, for this paper, there is a chapter which attempts to describe in what strategic context CAF expeditionary operations will typically occur.

Chapter 4 looks at “Military Trends” and acknowledges that preparing the CAF for expeditionary operations across the full spectrum of conflict is “inherently

³¹ Department of National Defence, *Canada First Defence Strategy* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2008), 3.

³² *Ibid.* 6

³³ Department of National Defence. *Canada First Defence Strategy*, 13.

difficult.”³⁴ In order to anticipate future conflict and assist with preparing contingencies, this chapter of the FSE looks at the CAF’s approach to operations through the lens of Canada’s ‘strategic traditions’ as they relate to security and defence. Specifically, it identifies “historically consistent trends” that would be useful in providing “guidance and balance how the CAF must adapt to meet the challenges of conducting military operations out to 2040.”³⁵ This chapter only identifies three military trends: that the structure of the CAF will usually stay the same as a general purpose force, that most expeditionary operations will occur with the CAF forming part of an alliance or coalition, and that the CAF gains influence in these organizations through the provision of competent, professional staff officers.

The second part of this chapter attempts to understand when the Government of Canada will choose to deploy the CAF on expeditionary operations. It states that the “GoC has deployed the CAF under a variety of justifications but the defence and furtherance of Canadian national interests has always formed the core purpose of Canadian military operations.”³⁶ But it struggles to determine any “visible trend to indicate at what stage the CAF may be called upon to deploy, or for how long they may remain involved in a conflict.” The only trend that it can identify is “that successive Canadian governments have often sought strategic influence through the contribution of military capabilities to coalition efforts at a time, and with the level of force, best suited to Canadian national interests.”³⁷

³⁴ Chief of Force Development Directorate of Capability Integration, *Future Security Environment 2013 to 2040 (DRAFT)*, 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁶ Chief of Force Development Directorate of Capability Integration, *FSE*, 67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

With regards to upholding Canadian values and ensuring that public opinion remains supportive of the operation, the FSE also identifies a trend within the government to ensure that the rule of law, including domestic and international law, guides, enables and constrains all CAF activity. The FSE also states that having international or broad-based legitimacy for the use of military force has been a defined trend since at least the end of the Second World War and that it is almost certain that the GoC will seek some form of international legitimacy to underpin CAF involvement in a conflict. With the current Conservative government this has not always been the case and there is a new skepticism of some global institutions, especially the United Nation, which have caused the GoC to be less predictable. John Ibbitson clarifies this policy by arguing that occasionally, the Conservatives have contributed to multilateral organizations only to the extent that it advances Canada's national interest.³⁸ That being said, as a document that is looking at trends that span the period from 1949 to 2040, it is reasonable to consider this a viable consistency.

With regards to helping military planners prepare for potential crisis in the Middle East do these documents help clarify what the government expects from the CAF given its support for Israel? Both of these documents are focussed on ensuring that the CAF is a balanced force that is prepared to deploy around the globe, usually as part of a coalition or alliance, in order to further Canada's national interests of supporting international stability. There is no direct mention of a focussed capability gap that needs to be filled in order to be prepared to directly support operations in the Middle East. Both are adequately generic documents that describe and incline towards a conservative approach to preparedness: be ready for everything.

³⁸ Ibbitson, *The Big Break: The Conservative Transformation of Canada's Foreign Policy*, 12.

PRAGMATISM TRUMPS RHETORIC

No matter how clearly one thinks, it is impossible to anticipate precisely the character of future conflict, ... [t]he key is not to be so far off the mark that it becomes impossible to adjust once that character is revealed.

- Professor Sir Michael Howard, United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence

This paper has asked the question: given the strong stance that the current Canadian government has taken towards supporting Israel, should military planners at the operational level of the CAF be prepared to shift focus towards preparing contingency plans in the case of a major crisis in the Middle East? Three options were proposed to assist military planners in understanding how to act when faced with this problem. The normative approach would very much coincide with the policies of previous Liberal governments in that it would take an internationalist stance that would be biased towards solutions that were proposed by consensus in multilateral organizations such as the UN and NATO. The current Conservative government would likely not choose this approach as Stephen Harper has made a concerted effort to distinguish the party from the Liberals, to include a departure from consistent support for multilateral institutions. Also, even though its policies are touted as being principled, the Conservatives will prioritize solidifying good trade relationships over standing firm on the values that apply. Domestic politics also play a key role and the government will likely make foreign policy decisions that align with the values of key voting groups and majority members in the conservative coalition. Neither trade nor domestic politics play such significant role in the normative approach.

The second approach under consideration was for military planners to take the government's foreign policy at face value and believe that Harper would act

unconditionally on his word in the event of a crisis in Israel. Consequently, planners would need to be highly proactive and devote significant effort to contingency planning for crises in the Middle East that would require military operational support to Israel. This approach is also not the most likely way that the Conservatives would apply their foreign policy. Despite the rhetoric the Conservative government will not blindly extend their foreign policy with strong military action for several key reasons. The government is very sensitive to the potential negative impact on Canada's relationship with the international community including the Arab world. Unilateral military action by Canada in direct support of Israel, especially without support from the US, NATO, the UN or other key players in that region, would put Canada in an awkward and challenging position. Beyond the diplomatic trouble, this type of action could result in unwanted disruptions to important trade relations both in the private and public sector. Further, the likely outcry from the Arab diaspora in Canada, a key electorate in the Conservative coalition, would not be favourable to a government which is very sensitive to drawing support from that growing conservative base. Finally, the Harper government has not historically demonstrated that kind of imprudence and has been very careful in how it dedicates military forces, especially since the end of the Afghanistan conflict. Most telling was the strong diplomatic support for Israel in 2006 during its conflict with Hezbollah in Lebanon where military action was limited to evacuating Lebanese Canadians. Measured support for the campaign in Libya demonstrated prudence and garnered significant political gains, both domestically and internationally. As well, a modest contribution to the NATO force posturing in Europe in response to Russian

aggression is not on par with the strong public denouncements of Putin as expressed by Stephen Harper.

By taking into consideration the trends demonstrated by the Harper government regarding how they apply foreign policy, the third option, which this paper calls the pragmatic approach, is the most useful for military planners. With regards to Israel, the government will base its foreign policy on principles, such as recognizing its right to exist and its freedom to defend itself in accordance with humanitarian and international law. However, its concern for maintaining positive relations for international trade and ensuring support from within its conservative coalition will cause the government to take a measured approach to military action. Given that outlook, the CAF should generally continue to assess threats to Canada globally and develop the force in response to a balanced perception of the future security environment. That being said, military planners cannot completely ignore the importance that the government has placed on supporting Israel. Specifically, it would be prudent to pay special attention to those areas, such as Israel, where the PM takes a principled stance. If a crisis happens in those areas, the government will likely look to the CAF to provide military options even if they are not prepared to act upon them to their full extent. Based on our strategic tradition, the CAF should be prepared to provide practical solutions that do not go above and beyond those being considered by both multinational organizations like NATO and the US. So what should military planners be doing right now? Planning resources, to include time and manpower, are precious and limited. Building preparedness and knowledge in areas such as the Middle East and Israel are important, but maintaining a balanced, flexible force

with contingency plans that can be adapted to anywhere in the world, is the most pragmatic approach to deciphering Canada's foreign policy.

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