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VICTORY IN THE SHADOWS: CANADA'S SEARCH FOR MILITARY SUCCESS IN AFGHANISTAN

Major Christopher A. Nobrega

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Solo Flight

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Major Christopher A. Nobrega

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KEY HISTORICAL MOMENTS

INTRODUCTION

“Today the government has established six priorities in transitioning the mission from a sole focus on security to helping the Afghanistan government... Of all these priorities, the Canadian Forces have the lead in the first one—building the Afghan security capacity. We enabled the success of other government departments in all the other priorities, but the essential underlying requirement is security. A stable and secure Afghanistan strengthens international security and by extension our security.”¹

- Chief of the Defence Staff, General Walter Natynczyk, November 2008

In the modern, globalized world replete with ubiquitous cellular services, instant news, and far-reaching social media networks, it is hard to imagine instances of global surprize. Yet, despite the increasing speed of information transmission, events such as the current COVID-19 pandemic highlight that governments around the world continue to struggle with achieving security in a measured and holistic way. While this is true today, the same could be said for the events of 11 September 2001, which transformed the world. Though the US intelligence services were attentive to the imminent threat, shockwaves of the attacks quickly travelled around the world starting with Canada.² Initial Canadian reaction, aside from assisting the US with airspace closure, was condemnation of the attacks that killed 24 Canadians.³ Following the early reaction, however, was a greater governmental effort to support the US in their efforts to combat

¹ General Walt Natynczyk, “The Canadian Forces—Today and in the Future,” accessed May 4, 2020, <http://speeches.empireclub.org/69567/data>.

² Wayne C. McWilliams and Harry Piotrowski, “September 11, Afghanistan, and Iraq,” in *The World Since 1945. A History of International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009).

³ Christopher Kirkey and Nicholas Ostroy. 2010. “Why is Canada in Afghanistan? Explaining Canada's Military Commitment: [1].” *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 40 (2), 202.

the ever-evolving problem of terrorism.⁴ While Canada's preliminary involvement was diplomatically based, efforts quickly transformed into military support that was arguably linked to North American security and, from a geopolitical stand-point, American domestic security.⁵

Canada's involvement in Afghanistan has been argued as successful, yet there is evidence that suggests that the governmental approach was misrepresentative. For example, following the Conservative government's election in 2006, Prime Minister Harper, speaking on Canada's involvement touted the meme that "Canada is back."⁶ This followed the previous Liberals promise, under Prime Minister Martin, that Canada would assume a place of prominence on the international stage.⁷ Oddly, the sentiment would be reiterated almost a decade later by the current Liberal government. However, in 2006 it served to blur the rationale for Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.⁸ What remains unclear was whether federal government motives were aimed at achieving domestic security, North American security, the improvement of Afghan security and quality of life for its citizens or simply to bolster Canada's international standing.⁹ Domestically,

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Joel Sokolsky, "Between a Rock and a Soft Place: The Geopolitics of Canada-United States Security Relations" in *Geopolitical Integrity* edited by Hugh Segal (Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2005), 299-303.

⁶ Jean-Christophe Boucher, "Selling Afghanistan: A Discourse Analysis of Canada's Military Intervention, 2001-08." *International Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2009), 729.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Global and Mail and Huffington post. "Harper Tells U.S. Audience 'Canada Is Back' - The Globe and Mail," accessed May 23, 2020, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/harper-tells-us-audience-canada-is-back/article1103642/>; "Trudeau's Not The First To Say 'Canada Is Back,'" HuffPost Canada, December 1, 2015, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/12/01/canada-is-back-trudeau-harper_n_8688282.html.

⁹ Jean-Christophe Boucher, "Selling Afghanistan: A Discourse Analysis of Canada's Military Intervention, 2001-08." *International Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2009). Indeed, in Prime Minister Harper's address to a group of influential businesspersons in the US, beyond inferences to domestic security preventing terrorism, he went on to lament Canadian casualties in Afghanistan and focused several themes stating "I want it understood that we are determined that Canada's role in the world will extend beyond this continent.

difficulties with ambiguity, as well as disjointed efforts between governmental departments, made evidence of success unclear if not uncertain throughout the mission.

Underscoring greater governmental efforts, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) incursion into Afghanistan started simply but its mission morphed as the situation, both in Canada and abroad, changed over a relatively short period of time. The complex nature of operations, unplanned role changes and limited time and resources rendered evidence of the CAF's military success indistinct. In this light, this paper aims to show that while the CAF's approach to security was conformist with doctrine, given its size, posture, and capabilities, an earlier and prolonged focus that was weighted toward capacity building as a part of a whole-of-government approach, would have afforded greater evidence of military success. Success though is arguably a relative term, dependent on perception or actual achievement of defined aims. In this case, a lack of clear articulation of the aims of Canada's endeavours in Afghanistan was problematic and a recipe for disenchantment due to lack of success. Accordingly, the country's foreign affairs and military involvement were influenced by factors, which, successful or not, mattered to both Canadians and Canada's allies.

A key factor in Canada's role was the fact that the country's involvement was politically tied to allied partnerships and security arrangements. For instance, although North American security was a prime strategic concern, Canadian involvement in Afghanistan became variably tied to values, concern for humanitarianism, and international responsibility.¹⁰ The former relationship was cited as an early anchor to the

Our needs for prosperity and security, our values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law...they are also the common destiny of all humanity."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

CAF's involvement in the region. However, while the influence of the US on Canadian politics and decisions to extend Canada's involvement are important, so is international context. In this regard, Kirkley and Ostroy contend that the demise of the USSR afforded middle powers, like Canada, the foreign policy freedom to act militarily in a unipolar world; a posture that would have been unlikely during the Cold War.¹¹ This bolstered national bearing and reinforced Canadian intent to achieve international position through a re-energized foreign affairs and CAF.

Some analysts contend that part of the inconsistency in the government's path lay in the Canadian shift from the peacekeeping and human security constructs of the 1990s to a national security focus that went hand-in-hand with war-fighting.¹² As the pointed end of Canadian foreign policy, the CAF's re-orientation away from human security to national security in a short period was problematic from a conservancy perspective. In particular, beyond its initial incursion, the CAF was not well-prepared to adopt and sustain the changing roles it assumed throughout the evolutionary campaign. In short, success in conventional tactical operations during low-level conflict does not easily translate to success in unconventional war.

For the CAF, although the organization quickly adapted to changing roles, it often lacked the resources needed to quickly acclimatize to new responsibilities. Additionally, when faced with incongruence between other governmental departments, the CAF's successes were often episodic. This is especially true in the context of the fight against the emergent insurgency led by the Taliban. In this light, insurgent use of

¹¹ Christopher Kirkey and Nicholas Ostroy. 2010. "Why is Canada in Afghanistan? Explaining Canada's Military Commitment: [1]." *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 40 (2), 208.

¹² Jean-Christophe Boucher, "Selling Afghanistan: A Discourse Analysis of Canada's Military Intervention, 2001–08." *International Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2009).

neighbouring Pakistan for support provided additional challenges for Canada's attempts at security. This was especially important at the strategic level where attempts to lift Afghanistan from failed state status could only be achieved in concert with regional stakeholders.¹³ Correspondingly, it is important to remember that at the start of Canada's efforts in 2001, nation building was simply not a main objective

INITIAL LODGMENT: 2001 - 2002

Canada's involvement in Afghanistan can be looked at from a number of distinctive phases starting with the post-9/11 efforts to destroy al-Qaeda and oust the Taliban from power.¹⁴ Operation *Apollo* from 2001-2002, spearheaded Canada's original contribution to the "war on terror" and reinforced the country's commitment to bi-lateral security of North America by supporting US operations.¹⁵ The operation was part of the greater American effort to uproot the Taliban and destroy al-Qaeda in the fight against growing international terrorism.¹⁶ From a security perspective the aim was clear and boiled down to removing the threat of recurrent 9/11-style attacks on the West by expunging its foundation.¹⁷ During this phase, the Chretien government communicated that Canada's efforts were linked to the war on terror, solidarity with the United States

¹³ Chris Alexander, "Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Strategy for Peace," *Policy Options*, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/afghanistan/afghanistan-and-pakistan-a-strategy-for-peace/>.

¹⁴ Sean Maloney, "'Was It Worth It?' Canadian Intervention in Afghanistan and Perceptions of Success and Failure" *Canadian Military Journal*, 14, no. 1 (2013), 24-25. Maloney summarized a total of seven phases. In addition to the four overarching phases, Operations *Argus* (2005-2008); *Archer* (2005); and Combined Task Force (CTF) *Aegis* and *Orion* occurred concurrent to the main phases.

¹⁵ Jean-Christophe Boucher, "Selling Afghanistan: A Discourse Analysis of Canada's Military Intervention, 2001-08." *International Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2009), 723.

¹⁶ Sean Maloney, "Canada, Afghanistan and the Blame Game," *Policy Options*, 2, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/afghanistan-2/canada-afghanistan-and-the-blame-game/>

¹⁷ Jean-Christophe Boucher, "Selling Afghanistan: A Discourse Analysis of Canada's Military Intervention, 2001-08." *International Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2009), 723. Canadian Forces efforts were led by naval inclusion in Naval Task Forces focused on operations in support of anti-terrorism operations in the Arabian Sea in October of that year.

and partnership in NATO.¹⁸ Indeed, it was the Martin government that promoted Canada's foreign policy turn away from human security to hard power, which ironically would be needed to contain, if not defeat an insurgency.¹⁹ Moreover, as Alexander Moens noted, the "military commitment...brought Canada back to the fighting core of the NATO Alliance, revived the Canadian Armed Forces, and [became] a cornerstone in Ottawa's attempt to rebuild relations with the United States."²⁰

From the CAF perspective, once land forces were committed in the fall of 2001, the effort was kinetically-focused with measurable, tactical, and operational objectives that fed into greater strategic goals. The Canadian public, for the most part, agreed.²¹ The premise of removing threats to international security was supported but initial enthusiasm was tempered by the reality of the mission's danger when a friendly-fire incident claimed the lives of Canadian soldiers. Regardless, the significance of the short incursion was that despite its brevity and friendly-fire casualties, Canada had achieved a strategic effect by supporting US efforts on the ground. The proclaimed enemy had been routed in a remarkably short period and an interim, moderate government installed in place of an extremist one. It is worth noting that the CAF efforts were conventional in nature, in line with doctrine, and thus rested in the government's comfort zone.²² In effect, despite minimal combat action, Canada via the CAF, had achieved a

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 729.

¹⁹ Alexander Moens, "Afghanistan and the Revolution in Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 63, no. 3 (September 1, 2008), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070200806300309>

²⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹ Jean-Christophe Boucher, "Selling Afghanistan: A Discourse Analysis of Canada's Military Intervention, 2001–08." *International Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2009).

²² Christopher Kirkey and Nicholas Ostroy. 2010. "Why is Canada in Afghanistan? Explaining Canada's Military Commitment: [1]." *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 40 (2), 202. Initial CAF deployments focused on naval power in the Arabian Sea as well as the integration of JTF-2 into the SOF-heavy operations against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Reference needed.

measure of conventional success. The defeat of al-Qaeda and the removal of the Taliban from power was rapid and resulted in an extended pause rather than a complete cessation of combat operations. Unbeknownst to most Canadians, it also heralded the start of a more dangerous, prolonged, uncertain, and unfocused phase in Canada's role in Afghanistan. As the new reality unfolded, Canada's noncongruent energies became more apparent.

OVEREXTENDED VISIT: 2003 – 2014

If Canada's initial efforts in 2002 could be considered definitive, well-intentioned, well-supported, and ultimately successful, the period from 2003-2014 that defined the country's re-commitment, and its evidentiary outcomes, remains ambivalent. Part of this cascades from the prevailing view that, having quickly defeated al-Qaeda and the Taliban, American plans did not adequately address what was to happen next in Afghanistan.²³ This situation confounded allies but also left room for consistent, if not impulsive Canadian enterprise. While Canada's foreign policy orientation on Afghanistan had shifted to be more aligned with the US attention to defeating enemies, the installation of an interim government in Kabul and the US reorientation toward Iraq provided Canada with an opportunity to lead efforts in the country.²⁴ As Moens noted, "By defining the new priority as an international war on terror, the US pushed hard against the working consensus among Western countries that fixing failed states could best be done with a

²³ Sean Maloney, "'Was It Worth It?' Canadian Intervention in Afghanistan and Perceptions of Success and Failure" *Canadian Military Journal*, 14, no. 1 (2013), 26. Sean Maloney goes on to note that there was a standing belief that operations would collapse the Taliban regime, route al-Qaeda over a period of "six or more months" after which follow-on international and UN efforts would rebuild and reconstitute an Afghan government and security forces. The speed of the campaign caught planners of guard and, as the Americans were not keen to have a UN force be responsible for security, a NATO stabilization Force was an acceptable compromise. Hence ISAF was born.

²⁴ Sean Maloney, "Canada, Afghanistan and the Blame Game," *Policy Options*, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/afghanistan-2/canada-afghanistan-and-the-blame-game/>.

mixture of human security and development policies.”²⁵ Clearly, US sights were set on Iraq, and its desire to nation-build Afghanistan became more monetarily focused; an orientation that proved problematic for the ensuing insurgency.²⁶

For the Canadian government, the security situation led to a shift in strategic messaging that revealed an asynchronous governmental approach to the growing problem.²⁷ For the CAF, the result was a focus shift and a role identity challenge that translated into periodic evidence of success. The mission morphed from an early focus on security to one that eventually encompassed security interwoven into the “3D” model of defence, diplomacy, and development.²⁸ What started as the provision of security in Kabul in 2003, developed into diplomatic mentorship of a nascent government, development of civic infrastructure projects, leadership of NATO’s ISAF command, development of security forces and combat for units committed to the counterinsurgency. As the list of roles grew, so did the complexity of effort for Canada’s foreign affairs department and armed forces that were neither versed in nation building nor counterinsurgency campaigns.

Adding to the frictions of complexity, was that the messaging for the government’s re-commitment to Afghanistan were confused.²⁹ Christian Breed in his look at departmental conformity notes, “It is not that reasons for war need to be clear...they

²⁵ Alexander Moens, “Afghanistan and the Revolution in Canadian Foreign Policy,” *International Journal* 63, no. 3 (September 1, 2008), 3. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070200806300309>.

²⁶ Mick Moore, “Globalization and Power in Weak States,” *Third World Quarterly*, 32, no.10, (2011).

²⁷ Chris Alexander, “The Truth of Canada’s Failure in Afghanistan,” *Literary Review of Canada* (blog), accessed April 28, 2020, <https://reviewcanada.ca/magazine/2018/10/the-truth-of-canadas-failure-in-afghanistan/>. The former Ambassador to Afghanistan summarizes one of the main problems with the shifting Canadian government messaging – it failed to adequately communicate the true nature of the conflict.

²⁸ Jean-Christophe Boucher, “Selling Afghanistan: A Discourse Analysis of Canada’s Military Intervention, 2001–08.” *International Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2009), 723.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

need to be compelling”³⁰ From this viewpoint, it can be argued that the initial government line of going into Afghanistan to help eradicate a threat to North American security was convincing to Canadians and Canada’s allies. On the other hand, following the CAF re-deployment in 2003, the pervasiveness of the rationales given diminished with time.³¹ A key cause of the diminishing support was the inconsistency and incoherency of the government’s message. As Breede argues, there was a lack of cohesiveness along the vertical and horizontal axes in the approach of Canadian governmental departments. First, there was a dearth of vertical cohesiveness, which defines the interweave and buttressing of the hierarchical levels of each department. In particular, fragmentation and incongruence were common among the strategic, operational, and tactical levels in the involved organizations.³² For the CAF, the efforts to achieve congruent success through the operational levels were thwarted by changes to security over time and by a lack of discernible metrics by which to judge achievements. Conversely, there was evidence of horizontal cohesion (i.e. departmental overlap) in some of the country’s endeavours but again, time was a severe limitation as reorientation, organizational synchronization, and learning new roles took time.³³ This was especially relevant given the international impetus to rebuild Afghanistan.³⁴

From a security point of view, successes during Canada’s re-commitment were tactical and therefore fleeting. After the shift of operations from Kabul to Kandahar

³⁰ H. Christian Breede, “Defining Success: Canada in Afghanistan 2006–2011”, *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 44:4, (2014), 495. DOI: 10.1080/02722011.2014.973425

³¹ Jean-Christophe Boucher, “Selling Afghanistan: A Discourse Analysis of Canada’s Military Intervention, 2001–08.” *International Journal* 64, no. 3 (September 2009).

³² H. Christian Breede, “Defining Success: Canada in Afghanistan 2006–2011”, *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 44:4, (2014), 487. DOI: 10.1080/02722011.2014.973425

³³ *Ibid.*, 490.

³⁴ Sean Maloney, “‘Was It Worth It?’ Canadian Intervention in Afghanistan and Perceptions of Success and Failure” *Canadian Military Journal*, 14, no. 1 (2013), 23.

following Operation *Archer* in 2005, Canada bolstered its commitment to conventional operations. The increased investment centred on enabling a mechanised battle group, resulting in tactical and strategic success in operations like *Medusa*, which took the conventional fight to the Taliban.³⁵ But the Taliban's shift toward insurgency tactics, that better suited domestic and external influence, vis-à-vis media reporting on casualties, later overturned those successes.³⁶ Crucial to this aspect of Canadian involvement was the lack of resources needed with each situation change. For example, having been conventionally defeated, the insurgents shifted tactics to embrace the ubiquitous use of improvised explosive devices. Their success led to allied reaction to acquire different vehicles (hull variants and helicopters) that, for Canada, ultimately constrained its efforts to affect security.³⁷ Additionally, in terms of manpower, Canada simply did not have the resources to adequately provide security for the entire Kandahar province.³⁸ In a latent insurgency this left ample room for Taliban manoeuvre, especially given the fact that their lines of support extended into Pakistan. Herein lies a key strategic failure of Canada and the international community. Pakistan was a lifeline for the Taliban and failure to shut down the support it provided doomed operational and tactical counterinsurgency efforts. Aside from the diplomatic and security aspects of Canadian involvement, development also became a focal point of the reinvestment in Afghanistan. A notable initiative undertaken by Canada to assist with development was the stand-up of the Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). As was the case with leadership of

³⁵ Sean Maloney, "'Was It Worth It?' Canadian Intervention in Afghanistan and Perceptions of Success and Failure" *Canadian Military Journal*, 14, no. 1 (2013).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ H. Christian Breede, "Defining Success: Canada in Afghanistan 2006–2011", *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 44:4, (2014), 485-486. DOI: 10.1080/02722011.2014.973425.

NATO's ISAF earlier in the campaign, NATO nations were reluctant to step forward to generate PRTs, which were meant to bridge the gap between security and development.³⁹ In much the same way as Canada happened into an insurgency, the PRT was not central to Canadian doctrine but became a focal point of Canada's effort. While the PRT achieved positive effects in assisting with development projects, the deteriorating security situation sidelined its operations. Much like conventional combat in an unconventional conflict, the PRT's success was tied to attendant Canadian presence meaning that success was tactical rather than enduring. For example, although schools were built and opened, they eventually closed as security could not be guaranteed once the PRT departed.⁴⁰ Finally, and perhaps most important as reflects contemporary Canadian efforts around the world, following Canada's re-commitment to Afghanistan, significant energies were expended toward the development of security forces. This started with the use of Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLT) that afforded the training and development of Afghan security forces. The OMLTs reinforced emerging Afghan security forces and allowed their inclusion in allied operations. Following the draw down of Canada's combat mission, the development relationship continued with the training of Afghan forces that was centerpiece to Operation *Attention*.

Operation *Attention* signalled the start of the end of Canada's commitment to Afghanistan. Gone were combat operations to ensure the security, which plagued foreign affairs and CAF successes. Instead, training Afghan security forces was

³⁹ Sean Maloney, "Canada, Afghanistan and the Blame Game," *Policy Options*, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/afghanistan-2/canada-afghanistan-and-the-blame-game/>.

⁴⁰ Sean Maloney, "'Was It Worth It?' Canadian Intervention in Afghanistan and Perceptions of Success and Failure" *Canadian Military Journal*, 14, no. 1 (2013).

determined to be crucial and still remains extant.⁴¹ Training foreign forces was a safer path because while the Canadian public became weary of the government's variable directions in Afghanistan, a training mission that was void of casualties was more palatable.⁴² Ultimately, Canada's efforts between period 2003-2014 were recalibrated from solely security activities to ones centered on diplomacy and development as well. For the Canadian public, although the 3D model of nation building was employed in Afghanistan, combat with its inherent casualty count became the focal piece of the Canadian mission. Together with worsening popular support, diminishing reports of success, resources and time, Canada's withdrawal from Afghanistan seemed inevitable. In the end, the prestige that drove Canadian involvement in Afghanistan was lost.⁴³

RECOMMENDATIONS

Globalization and failed states are not going away, at least for now, and it is incumbent on the CAF to ensure it is ready to support operations in failed states in a way that is sustainable. One such way is to continue on the thread of success with the development of foreign nation security forces. During Operations *Athena* and *Attention* OMLTs and Embedded Training Teams successfully trained and conducted operations with Afghans. While risk to personnel still exists, the operating footprint and therefore risk is smaller and much less expensive.⁴⁴ Now referred to as Security Force Capacity Building, Canada currently employs this doctrine in a number of conventional army and

⁴¹ John Friberg, "1st SFAB in Afghanistan - A Successful Deployment?," *SOF News* (blog), December 12, 2018, <https://sof.news/afghanistan/1st-sfab-in-afghanistan/>.

⁴² Steven Chase, "Canada No Longer Training Kurdish Troops in Iraq amid Fight against Islamic State, Defence Chief Says," *Globe and Mail*, accessed, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canada-no-longer-training-kurdish-troops-in-iraq-amid-fight-against/>.

⁴³ Sean Maloney, "Afghanistan: Not the War It Was," *Policy Options*, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/afghanistan/afghanistan-not-the-war-it-was/>.

⁴⁴ R.R. Chenard, "Security Force Capacity Building: Where Does Canada's Re-Focused Mission Fit?" (Joint Command and Staff Program) Course Paper, Canadian Forces College (2016), 9.

SOF-centric missions around the world.⁴⁵ Not only does the SFCB model work well for Canada in terms of most likely employment model, it garners Canada much valued credibility with allies such as the US. In fact, capacity building is in vogue with Canada's allies. The US has devoted entire brigade groups, known as Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) to the concept.⁴⁶

For Canada, another benefit to SFCB is the lower equipment requirements. As witnessed by the capital equipment purchases of tanks, aircraft, and helicopters for Afghanistan, not to mention the ongoing fighter-jet and naval ship procurement difficulties, capital acquisition projects are complex, expensive and time consuming. With this in mind, the approach to SFCB in Canada is still very ad hoc, and following the US model of Security Force Assistance, a strategic concept that incorporates various departments and operational levels to achieve congruence, would provide Canada with an enduring, less improvised doctrine.

⁴⁵ There are currently five missions in CAF operations page that use some form of SFCB. National Defence, "Current Operations List," education and awareness, aem, March 27, 2015, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/list.html>.

⁴⁶ "2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade: Fort Bragg," accessed, <https://home.army.mil/bragg/index.php/units-tenants/SFAC/security-force-assistance-brigades>.

CONCLUSION

Canada's involvement in Afghanistan started with 9/11 – an event that had global as well as domestic repercussions. From a foreign policy and CAF perspective, the nature of Canada's contribution in 2001 was security focused, fairly clear, and consistently articulated. Operation *Apollo* defined Canadian efforts to support the US efforts to rid Afghanistan of al-Qaeda, which was assessed as a clear and present threat. Having succeeded in helping to remove the threat, Canada between 2003-2014 then embarked on a more difficult, less clearly defined endeavour to lift Afghanistan from its failed state status. While this was a noble cause, it required multiple re-calibrations and role changes for the both the government and the CAF. Temporary successes were certainly achieved, but lacking doctrine and a coherent approach, neither entity was well-equipped to achieve lasting success in the ever-changing environment.

The contemporary world is full of examples of failed or failing states, some of which provide havens for terrorist groups that conspire against Western interests. Short of an existential threat, the Canadian public is disinterested in foreign policy that elicits the CAF to conduct war fighting for oblique aims. A values-based approach to improving security through nation building and capacity building is more palatable for overseas endeavours. Current Canadian and CAF involvement in a number of overseas SFCB missions affirms that reduced risk and the option to extract from undertakings without political impact can achieve short and long-term objectives in a coherent manner. While successes in Afghanistan were variable, an increased investment at home and abroad for the government and the CAF would pay international and domestic security dividends well into the future.

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