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TRUDEAU'S PROMISES: FROM COALITION OPERATIONS TO PEACEKEEPING AND BEYOND

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Academic and policy discussions on Canada's future role in multinational military interventions inevitably refer back to the long war in Afghanistan. Canada's involvement, as part of Operation *Enduring Freedom* (OEF) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) evolved significantly over the years. Canada's reputation as an alliance partner also improved noticeably in the process. As of 2006, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) were known for operating with few caveats and were at the forefront of developing a viable whole-of-government approach as part of their design of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kandahar, despite obvious shortcomings.¹

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Although the success metrics of the war in Afghanistan are hard to establish and the overall outcome of the intervention is inconclusive at best, the experience tells us a lot about Canada's standing in alliance politics and what the CAF can be expected to do in the future as part of those coalitions, given the skills and expertise acquired during this war-intensive period.² Indeed, the CAF acquired diverse skills as the intervention called for both community engagement and warfighting, with a lot of necessary adaptations along the way.

Beyond the lessons learned from the previous war, Canada's military role abroad should be guided by clear foreign and defence policy guidelines. The last defence policy statement dates back to 2008. With the economic recession hitting the country at about the same time, many of the plans outlined in the Canada First Defence Strategy had to be shelved. Now that there is a Liberal government in power, under the leadership of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the Department of National Defence (DND) has been tasked with conducting a defence review. The review process includes public consultations across Canada, through the organization of events, roundtables, and discussions on social media. The result of this process will be unveiled in January 2017 and will provide greater clarity on Canada's role in operations, force levels, readiness, and personnel issues.

This paper examines the conditions under which Canada should consider deploying the CAF and considers some of the motives that play into the decision-making process. It does so by taking into account past and current CAF operations, as well as the defence priorities that have already been announced by the government. I argue that, moving forward, the Canadian government ought to think much more about the type of mission that is well suited for the CAF, where Canadian soldiers are most needed, as well as which allies and partners are best to work with.

Alliance Politics

One of the assumptions of this paper is that maintaining a reputation for reliability within an alliance setting is one of the main currencies of influence for a medium-sized country like Canada. Therefore, decisions on the use of force are assessed in reference to Canada's most important allies.³ That being said, it is worth asking whether Canada paid too high of a price to boost its reputation over the course of the Afghan War. In Afghanistan, but also more recently in Iraq as a member of the global coalition against the Islamic State, Canada strived to make military contributions that place it in the top tier of participating countries. As mentioned before, Canada is also seen as an alliance partner capable of deploying its armed forces with few restrictions on what they can do on the battlefield, meaning a higher tolerance for risky missions, which plays into allies' qualitative assessments of burden-sharing.⁴ The nightmare of coordinating national caveats was felt by ISAF commanders as they had to consider the various contributions made by each ally and partner, factoring in each nation's rules of engagement and restrictions on their mobility in order to translate pledges into effective multinational military cooperation.

Given what Canada has invested in previous military interventions, the government would do well to invest in mechanisms that preserve allies' coordination capacity and interoperability, either as part of NATO or US-led coalitions. For NATO, the Secretary-General has insisted on the utility of the Connected Forces Initiative (CFI) as the means through which NATO allies and partners can retain their capacity to work closely together, as refined through ISAF and Operation *Unified Protector* in Libya. The message was reinforced during the 2014 Wales Summit:

We continue to build on the experience gained in recent operations and improve our interoperability through the Connected Forces Initiative (CFI). Today we have endorsed a substantial CFI Package consisting of six key deliverables, including the high-visibility exercise Trident Juncture 2015, with 25,000 personnel to be hosted by Spain, Portugal, and Italy; a broader and more demanding exercise programme from 2016 onwards; and a deployable Special Operations Component Command headquarters.⁵

Through CFI or military exercises led by the Alliance or individual nations, Canada has a stake in continuously sharpening its capacity to operate with other Western armed forces.

Why Participate in Military Operations?

The government of Canada, currently engaging in a comprehensive defence policy review, will examine how alliance ties can enhance the country's foreign and defence policy goals, but the scope of the exercise is much broader. The review, which was launched by Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan

in April 2016, is articulated around three issues: identifying the most pressing security challenges, defining the role of the CAF in meeting those challenges and finally, establishing the appropriate mix of capabilities needed by the CAF to accomplish their missions and tasks successfully. Therefore, as a point of departure, it is worth asking which security challenges or motives guide decisions on the use of force.

The primary motive for investing in the armed forces is national defence and, by extension, to contribute to regional and global security for the sake of international stability. In Canada, the absence of an existential security threat means the country's military commitments are primarily assessed through alliance politics, especially the bilateral relationship with the United States.⁶ The US has a more expansive perception of threat than Canada, given its massive and global military footprint. Based on numerous treaty commitments and alliance ties, American armed forces have been deployed all over the world to defend US interests and partners, with the goal of ensuring international stability through the projection of its power. In Canada, decisions on the use of force are often taken as the result of US or NATO initiatives. Finally, the Canadian government may choose to use force for humanitarian purposes. The humanitarian logic of intervention can lead to operations ranging from disaster relief or peace support operations.

With the Liberal government now in place, the Defence Minister has received a broad mandate, which aims:

[T]o ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces are equipped and prepared, if called upon, to protect Canadian sovereignty, defend North America, provide disaster relief, conduct search and rescue, support United Nations peace operations, and contribute to the security of our allies and to allied and coalition operations abroad.⁷

As evident in this statement from the Minister's mandate letter, the CAF will be asked to do more, not less, in the future. Yet, Trudeau government is not planning on increasing the defence budget or the size of the armed forces. This means that Canada's current defence commitments, including its ongoing military operations, will have to be re-evaluated or downsized in order to fulfill the ambitious agenda that has been set out for the CAF.

More Peacekeeping?

Under the previous government, which held office from 2006 to 2015, Prime Minister Harper and his defence team had primarily focused on allied and coalition operations, striving for greater interoperability as part of a select group of powerful allies and contributing to deterring threats in the Euro-Atlantic area. These efforts were ramped up after the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. The current

government maintains those commitments, though it changed the nature of Canada's contribution to coalition operations in Iraq and Syria. In addition to existing commitments in the Middle East and Europe, the Trudeau government has pledged to renew Canada's contribution to UN peace operations. In the throne speech, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised that "the government will renew Canada's commitment to the United Nations peacekeeping operations, and will continue to work with its allies in the fight against terrorism."⁸ What this renewed commitment entails is not quite clear yet. Perhaps the defence policy review process will shed light on the future of Canadian peacekeeping.

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What we know is that the CAF have a total size of at most 68,000 in the regular force. To increase its operational tempo at its current size, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) General Jonathan Vance will have to think about how to redistribute military personnel so that a greater number of soldiers are able to take part in peace operations.⁹ Most of the CAF currently deployed on operations are in Europe, on assurance missions in the Ukraine, Eastern Europe and the Baltics, and in the Middle East as part of Operation *Impact*, where there are more than 800 troops deployed as part of the anti-ISIS coalition. In comparison, only 29 soldiers are deployed on peace operations at the moment.

If Canada is to renew its commitment to UN peace operations, it will have to move some of its assets away from Europe and Iraq to instead support peace operations in Africa – the location of 8 (out of 16) ongoing peacekeeping operations – or closer to home in Haiti where Canada played an important role in the past.¹⁰ However, on the latter possibility, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is winding down, meaning a political rather than military role will be needed. The CAF could continue their involvement in Haiti as advisors. As for other potential peace operations in the Americas, the CAF simply does not have the linguistic comparative advantage, as is the case in Haiti. Should new peacekeeping operations be launched in Colombia, for instance, Spanish-speaking troops from Argentina or Chile could be better suited.

That leaves Canada with the possibility of an increasing peacekeeping role in Africa or the Middle East. The demand is already strong in both regions, as shown in Figure 1. The CAF could act as force multipliers if they were deployed alongside traditional troop contributing countries, like Bangladesh, Rwanda, or Jordan. This kind of peacekeeping train and assist role for the CAF would not require large numbers of deployed personnel but could make a real difference on the ground by sharing their expertise with partner countries. There are urgent needs in the Central African Republic and Mali, given the shifting political and security situation. It is possible to also foresee

FIGURE 1: List of Current UN Peacekeeping Operations (2016)

Name of Operation	Location
United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)	Western Sahara
United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)	Central African Republic
United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)	Mali
United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)	Haiti
United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)	Democratic Republic of the Congo
African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)	Darfur
United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)	Syria
United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)	Cyprus
United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)	Lebanon
United Nations Interim Security Force for <u>Abyei</u> (UNISFA)	Sudan
United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS)	South Sudan
United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)	Côte D'Ivoire
United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)	Kosovo
United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)	Liberia
United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)	Pakistan
United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)	Middle East

Source: Department for Peacekeeping Operations, 2016

future peace support operations in Libya and Syria to support what are likely to be volatile political transitions. A renewed peacekeeping role along these guidelines will require a modest increase in the number of Canadian peacekeepers, but no one will expect Canada to rival the top troop contributing countries in terms of numbers. What the CAF can offer is specialized expertise and advanced capabilities that can lead to the qualitative improvements of existing or future missions. Still, the Canadian government would have to do better than having just 29 troops in peacekeeping operations, as it currently does.

Even with a very modest increase in deployed peacekeeping troops, Canada can still play a greater role in peacekeeping by boosting its training intake in Canada.¹¹ The demand for training is growing as the requirements of peace support operations get more complex. Peacekeepers are now expected to be well versed in international law, human rights, as well as gender and cultural awareness. Canada can offer this kind of training in existing facilities, such as the Peace Support Training Centre in Kingston, Ontario. With more resources dedicated to those facilities and training personnel, Canada could quickly double or triple its intake, translating its peacekeeping expertise into a global network of defence cooperation.

Another reason why the demand for training is likely to increase is the number of high-profile sexual misconduct scandals that have harmed the reputation of peacekeeping and of the United Nations. Since eradicating sexual misconduct is a Canadian priority, as made clear by the CDS's decision to launch Operation *Honour* at the very beginning of his term, the timing is perfect. Taking an active stance in training, with an emphasis on achieving the highest professional standard

of conduct for peacekeepers worldwide and additional training on the prevention of gender-based violence, would be a meaningful way to show that the CAF are viewing Op *Honour* seriously and taking action in a constructive way.

Predicting the Unpredictable

A note of caution is warranted as we reconsider Canada's role in UN peacekeeping or more traditional coalition operations. First, what Canadians might expect a peacekeeping mission to look

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like could look very different in practice. Peacekeeping has been linked to the Canadian imaginary because of its role in creating and sustaining that institution in the early year. Lester B. Pearson is justly credited with how effectively the government of Canada intervened during the Suez Crisis of 1956. For the decades that followed, Canada continued to play an active role in defining peacekeeping and maintaining a reputation as a top troop-contributing nation. Canada's peacekeeping standing depreciated sharply over the course of the past two decades but apparently, Canada's attachment to it has not.

When Justin Trudeau was advocating for a renewed peacekeeping role during the 2015 electoral campaign, it was embraced by the Canadian public. The truth is that a peacekeeping mission could look a lot like what the CAF did in Afghanistan. ISAF and OEF were both population-centric operations and relied on small-unit patrolling in communities. Yes, there was a more robust, warfighting component when the CAF were located in Kandahar, but peacekeepers have seen plenty of action too, in places like Somalia, Bosnia, Mali, and the Central African Republic. The skillset, thus, is not that different, contrary to what the organization Canadem has argued, namely that: “the capacity of Canada's military to conduct peacekeeping operations has largely disappeared after a decade of war-fighting in Afghanistan.”¹² What are known as ‘Chapter 7’ peacekeeping operations in UN parlance imply a more robust military role for peacekeepers. Finally, pre-deployment training further tailors the skillset to the mission. In sum, the CAF have the expertise to step up to the peacekeeping plate but the government must be clear about articulating the risks. As Bob Martyn notes:

Given current war-weariness, risk-aversion, and budgetary restraint, the government may see great international utility and domestic favour in expanded involvement in peacemaking operations. One can only hope that they are not marketed domestically as a return to a golden era of peacekeeping.¹³

Conclusion

In Afghanistan, the CAF developed a skill set that transformed them into a multi-role, combat capable force. While Canada is no longer engaged in a combat mission abroad, the population-centric operations conducted by the CAF as part of ISAF remain relevant today, as Canada contemplates how to renew its role in UN peacekeeping operations. However, investing more in peacekeeping will come at the expense of other operations; Canada is simply not resourced to maintain a high operational tempo in light of the depreciating defence budget and the current size of the force. Will the government reduce its sizeable contribution to Op *Impact* in order to boost its peacekeeping footprint? Should interventions in Mali or CAR be prioritized over assurance missions with NATO allies? The CAF cannot do it all, but they can certainly be deployed in more modest numbers in coalition operations, to free up the resources needed to rebuild its peacekeeping credibility. Canada cannot decisively alter the outcomes of operations with its contributions, so perhaps the best approach is to maintain a broad set of skills that can make it a desirable ally across the spectrum of conflict.

About the Author

Dr. Stéfanie von Hlatky is an assistant professor of political studies at Queen's University and the Director of the Queen's Centre for International and Defence Policy (CIDP). She's held positions at Georgetown University, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Dartmouth College, ETH Zurich and was a Fulbright Visiting Research Chair at the University of Southern California's Centre for Public Diplomacy. She has published in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, *International Journal*, *European Security*, *Asian Security*, as well as the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* and has a book with Oxford University Press titled *American Allies in Times of War: The Great Asymmetry* (2013). She has also published two edited volumes: *The Future of US Extended Deterrence* (co-edited with Andreas Wenger) with Georgetown University Press (2015) and *Going to War? Trends in Military Interventions* (co-edited with H. Christian Breede) with McGill-Queen's University Press (2016). Stéfanie von Hlatky is the founder of *Women in International Security-Canada* and current Chair of the Board.

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