A BLUE PRINT FOR STABILITY?
ARCTIC REGIONAL ORDER
AS A MODEL FOR THE SOUTH
CHINA SEA

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE
E-SOLDIERS TWO
COMPRENDRE LA LÉGITIMITÉ MILITAIRE ET CULTURELLE DE MOSCOU EN TRANSNISTRIE
AND SELECT BOOK REVIEWS...
ON TRACK

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PRESIDENT / PRÉSIDENT
Major-General Daniel Gosselin, CMM, CD (Ret'd)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / DIRECTEUR-GÉNÉRAL
Matthew Overton

EDITOR / RÉDACTEUR
Dr. Meghan Fitzpatrick

CDA Institute / L ’Institut de la CAD
75 Albert Street, Suite 900
Ottawa ON K1P 5H3
Phone / Téléphone: (613) 236 9903
Email / Courriel: robert.legere@cdainstitute.ca
Website / Site Web: https://cdainstitute.ca

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dr. Meghan Fitzpatrick

In this issue of ON TRACK, we review a range of critical issues in Canadian defence policy and important developments in international security that will undoubtedly have repercussions for many years to come.

Executive management consultant and Canadian Armed Forces veteran Eric Dion looks at the key issues facing military human resources (HR) policy in the twenty-first century. He offers expert analysis of how CAF culture has changed over the past decades and challenges policymakers and practitioners alike to think creatively about reshaping unproductive practices for a new generation of service personnel.

Tensions in the South China Sea remain high after a recent close encounter between a US Navy destroyer (USS Decatur) conducting freedom of navigation operations and a ship from the Chinese navy. Adam P. MacDonald of Dalhousie University examines the factors contributing to dispute and assesses whether the security architecture of a peaceful maritime region like the Arctic, can be applied to the South China Sea. In his article, he draws parallels between these two disparate areas of the globe and investigates the applicability of lessons learned in the North.

Ensuite, nous présentons un article du Dr. Michael Eric Lambert, un spécialiste du soft power. Dans l'article, Lambert suggère que la Transnistrie est un laboratoire pour la politique étrangère de la Russie. Celle-ci ambitionne de retarder l'intégration de la Moldavie et de l’Ukraine dans l’Union européenne et l’Otan. Toutefois, loin d'être une zone périphérique, la Transnistrie dispose d'une identité singulière et revêt une importance stratégique capitale pour le transit du gaz vers l’Europe et la stabilité régionale. Dans ce contexte, la Russie impose la paix depuis la chute de l'URSS en l'absence d’une proposition concrète venant de l’OSCE. L'article de Lambert fournit des clés utiles pour comprendre le conflit et ses nuances.

Finally, we have reprinted a series of our latest book reviews that provide cogent insight into the latest work in Canadian and international defence and security. This includes everything from militarized responses to organized crime to North American strategic defence, Operation MEDUSA and the world of war correspondents since 9/11.

This issue of ON TRACK represents a period of transition for all of us here at the Conference of Defence Association’s Institute. Heading towards the end of 2018, we are looking to expand the diversity of voices and viewpoints that we publish both in this journal and in our other publication platforms. As part of this process, we have already issued new submission guidelines for our authors that we hope will help encourage a stronger and more robust conversation of the challenges facing Canadians today.

Over the following months, we encourage all our members and readership to keep an eye on our blog, the Forum. This is where you will be able to find articles from many of the young and talented MA and PhD students who attended this year’s Graduate Student Symposium in Kingston. Moreover, we are busily working with this year’s winners to develop their work for publication as part of our Vimy Papers series.

The month of November and Remembrance Day provides us all with opportunities for reflection. As a historian, I am reminded of just how important it remains to encourage open and frank discussion about the origins and nature of conflict. The CDA Institute is committed to fostering that conversation with the help of our members and the wider defence and security community. We look forward to connecting with all of you in doing just that.

Sincerely,

Dr. Meghan Fitzpatrick
Director of Research & Senior Editor

**ON TRACK AUTUMN 2018**
A BLUE PRINT FOR STABILITY? THE APPLICABILITY OF THE ARCTIC REGIONAL ORDER AS A MODEL FOR THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

By Adam P. MacDonald

The South China Sea (SCS) is home to numerous disputes over contested territory and overlapping maritime claims. As such, many believe that it is on a trajectory towards inevitable conflict. To avoid this, there are growing calls to draw on the experience of a similar maritime region, the Arctic. It is subject to a degree of maritime dispute, competition over lucrative resources and shipping lanes, military build up and great power competition but remains peaceful.

This article explores the applicability of lessons learned in the Arctic to the current situation in the South China Sea. This is followed by an examination of the limitations of such a direct comparison by reviewing the major features that make the SCS unique: namely, emerging strategic contestation over the current regional order. This piece concludes by assessing the critical importance of the geostrategic tensions between China and the United States over regional leadership and military primacy in East Asia.

Explaining Arctic Regional Stability

According to expert observers, Arctic stability is an anomaly. They expect geopolitical tensions to return to the region in the near future. It is forecasted that the emergence of new shipping routes and competition over resources between regional states and external actors like China and India will increase. Despite minor and non-violent flare-ups over maritime claims, threat narratives positing inevitable resource scrambles and military confrontation have not come to fruition. Contrary to such predictions, the Arctic is a stable, rules-based and relatively well-governed space that limits the excess of any possible geopolitical contestation. Four inter-related characteristics are responsible for this enduring ‘Arctic Peace’: 1) the Balance of Power; 2) the nature and makeup of the regional states; 3) the development and advancement of inclusive institutions; and 4) shared norms, interests and identities.
First, the Arctic is home to the world’s two nuclear superpowers – the U.S and Russia – whose deterrence relationship places a cap on direct military competition. Other Arctic states – Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden – are members of the NATO alliance or close defence partners. Therefore, they are well-insulated by the existing security framework against threats from other states. With the exception of Greenland, which is in the midst of securing independence from Denmark, the geopolitical alignment of the region is largely fixed with little opportunity for potential aggressors to seize territory or maritime areas without risking war with a nuclear power and/or a well-established alliance network.

While all Arctic states are increasing their constabulary and military presence in the region, these forces are dedicated to missions like stewardship over sparsely populated areas that are witnessing an increase in human activity. This includes commercial shipping and tourism. What is more, the build up of Russian military presence in the Arctic is about increasing effective control over their uncontested territory and coastal water rather than signalling discomfort with other regional powers. This includes promoting the Northern Sea Route as a major international shipping lane. The absence of existential threats and fixed strategic alignments has produced a latent Balance of Power that has blunted hegemonic competition over leadership in the region.

Second, all the Arctic states are also developed and stable countries that are not subject to large-scale domestic unrest. Furthermore, they recognize one another’s national borders, apart from a minor dispute between Canada and Denmark over Hans Island. With functional governments in place, state-based threats are marginal compared to those associated with increased human activity. Apart from Russia, all the Arctic states are also western countries with positive relations. For Moscow, the Arctic is centrally important as a strategic resource base. Therefore, it is in Russia’s direct interest to insure the absence of dispute and tensions in the region. Arguments that resource competition will lead to confrontations at sea also fail to acknowledge that most of the surveyed areas exist in unchallenged territorial and maritime sovereign spaces. There is no practical benefit for any Arctic or external player like China to threaten or use military force to contest ownership of territories and maritime spaces. There are legitimate concerns about the intentions of actors like China. But these activities should not be interpreted as challenging ownership but rather as manoeuvring to secure access to the region for shipping, investment and natural resources extraction.

The demise of Cold War strategic rivalry created an opportunity for the transformation of Arctic politics in the 1990s that continues to this day. In particular, Arctic politics have become increasingly conducted within a number of inclusive institutions that promote and coordinate collaboration in areas like climate change and sustainable development.

The Arctic Council, the most visible expression of cooperation to date, has broadened its functions from decision influencing towards supporting the development of legal instruments to mitigate the challenges associated with increasing human activity. Alongside the Arctic Council, other forums have been established to foster regional cooperation and engagement on soft security matters like the 2015 creation of the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.

However, regional cooperation is not hierarchical, where one major power creates and enforces participation in institutions, binding or all-inclusive. And while there is an absence of military forums, lack of collaboration has not had a negative impact on other avenues of cooperation because the region’s relative stability. A Balance of Power where neither the Western Arctic States nor Russia are threatened militarily and have exclusive authority over unchallenged territories has allowed enduring institutional frameworks to emerge that adapt to new issues associated with the ‘internationalization’ of the region.

The success of this institutional framework rests upon the shared norms, interests and identity held by the Arctic States. These countries have a strong sense of belonging in an exclusive group that affords them pre-eminence in regional decision-making. The maintenance of stability has also become a shared goal leading to the production and sustainment of measures to marginalize disputes. This is best exemplified by the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration, where the parties pledged to resolve differences peacefully within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). At all times, there has been a conscious effort to insulate Arctic relations from tensions and dispute, specifically between the West and Russia. Although economic and military relations with Russia have been severed since 2014, the rest of the institutional architecture remains in place and Moscow plays a role in all venues.

**Application to the South China Sea**

Could such an institutional framework be reproduced in an increasingly divisive and strained region like the South China Sea? While there are many similarities between the two, four major areas of divergence make ‘lessons learned’ from the Arctic difficult but not impossible to enact. These include the nature of territorial and maritime disputes; the shifting Balance of Power; the role of external actors; and most importantly the changing great power rivalry between China and the United States.
Nature of Territorial and Maritime Disputes – The territorial and maritime disputes of the SCS are significantly different from those in the Arctic in three primary ways: geographic scope, number of overlapping claims, and the legal nature of disputes. Overlapping maritime claims between Canada, Denmark and Russia pale in comparison to the extent of claims made in the SCS. Both China and Taiwan claim upwards of 90 percent of the area. This includes the majority of other claimant’s Economic Exclusion Zones (EEZ). Moreover, four other states (the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, and Malaysia) claim parts of the region.

With the exception of Hans Island, there are no such territorial disputes in the Arctic. Ownership over all topographical features in the SCS is in dispute. This has motivated multiple parties to pursue land reclamation activities, install military assets, governance structures, and establish permanent populations on previously uninhabited rocks to solidify ownership.

The Arctic states collectively have stated their support for and deference to UNCLOS and authorized international bodies to resolve disputed EEZ claims. There is no such consensus in the SCS. As the largest claimant nation with the most expansive claims, China refuses to engage with and abide by international legal mechanisms. This is evident in their vitriolic dismissal of the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration Ruling brought forth by the Philippines.

Beijing is also wary of meaningful engagement via multilateral venues and prefers bilateral channels to deal with smaller neighbours, while remaining vague on the nature and justification of its claims. This is contrasted, however, by the certainty professed by Beijing of the illegality of foreign warships and aircraft operating within their recognized and claimed water spaces without express approval. Such a position has motivated increased American Freedom of Navigation Patrols (FONOPs) throughout the region, that sail near Chinese claimed territory. Such conflict is largely absent in the Arctic.

Balance of Power – Despite recent Russian build up, the Balance of Power in the Arctic will likely remain stable due to the lack of territorial disputes, stable strategic alignments and the difficulty in projecting power there. In contrast, the Balance of Power is shifting towards China’s advantage in the South China Sea, a nation that has expressed a desire to re-make the geopolitical layout of the region. Beijing is also increasingly able to project power in disputed waters. Artificial islands hosting military and constabulary forces support China’s defense-in-depth strategy whereby military and constabulary forces are used to target and threaten American naval units. This is intended to deter them from operating along China’s periphery via a missile centric force of land and sea based ballistic and cruise missiles. The development of an emerging blue water navy also demonstrates China’s desire to operate further afield.

This shifting Balance of Power has motivated increased regional defence spending, military cooperation and coordination between Asian states, which seek greater ties to the United States. Thus far, China has been careful to throttle its use of military power to maintain economic and diplomatic relations in the region. Nevertheless, a growing number of states are seeking leadership from the US to counterbalance China’s growing influence. But unlike the East China Sea where Japan is a major power ally, the United States has no strong military partners in the SCS to counterbalance China effectively. The lack of a united front against China complicates attempts to pressure Beijing to join multilateral and/or legal forums to resolve disputes. This stands in contrast to the Arctic, where multilateral forums, processes and shared values were created and institutionalized at a time of minimal strategic contestation in the 1990s.

Role of External Actors – Unlike the Arctic where external actors play a marginal role in strategic aspects of regional politics, the United States has been the pre- eminent power in East Asia over the past half-century. Washington and many local actors believe the United States is the crucial, and increasingly vital, stabilizing force in an altering regional landscape. The US officially maintains its neutrality over ownership disputes within the SCS. Be that as it may, China’s growing insistence that foreign warships are not authorized to conduct activities in its claimed water spaces has increasingly drawn the United States into these disputes. Over a dozen states share Beijing’s legal stance with respect to foreign military operations. But China is seen as posing the greatest challenge to Freedom of Navigation due to their increasing willingness and ability to enforce these views with naval and coast guard capacity.

It is also unclear as to whether the United States would defend its treaty allies in the event of a conflict in the SCS. In the Arctic, there is no such external actor to play the role of an offshore balancer to inhibit a hegemon akin to the United States’ position in East Asia. This is because of the strong collective identity of the Arctic States as the primary regional decision-makers. This has placed external states in a secondary and subordinate role. China is fast becoming one such external actor in the Arctic, whose growing interest and involvement in the region may have long terms implication. But Beijing is still primarily engaging via economic means, not military or political, though the former may ultimately impact the latter. However, they have not yet directly challenged or altered the Balance of Power or primacy of the Arctic States.

Great Power Rivalry - The biggest difference between the Arctic and the SCS is great power rivalry over regional
leadership between China and the United States. Current American militarily primacy is unsustainable against an emerging China, which desires a greater role and voice in regional matters and the geopolitical makeup of the area. The American equation of military primacy to regional peace and stability is no longer tenable. China's preferred strategy is to avoid military conflict with the United States but they are increasingly capable of inflicting severe damage on American and allied units in the region and designing strategies to win a (non-nuclear) war if necessary.

For Beijing, the growing costs of even limited conventional war decrease the likelihood of war in the near future. This encourages political and strategic forces to bend in their favour, slowly re-aligning the region away from Washington. The uncertainty of Washington's commitment to the region since the Trump Administration assumed power may also provide an opportunity for Beijing to establish itself as the leading state in East Asia. Having said that, these efforts have not resulted in wholesale strategic realignment. Despite China's growing economic and political clout, it is unlikely this will translate into unrivalled hegemony. After all, the Chinese reside in a tough geopolitical neighbourhood populated by a number of powers - some nuclear-armed, and wary of Beijing's possible hegemonic aspirations.

Beijing has successfully assumed a leadership role in regional economic matters, including major infrastructure projects associated with the Belt and Road Initiative. Having said that, these efforts have not resulted in wholesale strategic realignment.

Despite concerns about China's growing military power, many regional states also remain unwilling to enter a formal alliance with the United States. This is primarily due to the expected impact on stability. Similarly, many Arctic states have gone to great pains to maintain the status quo and current Balance of Power. Any tightening of official military alliances may prove problematic to the United States in navigating great power relations with China without being dragged into local disputes. If unable to achieve regional primacy, China and the United States could increasingly view one another as the greatest and most pressing existential challenge. The issue of FON is also a growing point of contention. China increasingly portrays SCS disputes as an intractable 'core national interest' over which they are unwilling to compromise. Meanwhile, the United States views FON as a legal right essential to ensure global trade and non-negotiable to vital national interests.

**Conclusion**

The issues outlined above do not mean that the South China Sea is doomed to inevitable conflict or political paralysis. Trade and shipping are still flowing, and it is premature to assert China's ultimate aim is to control the entire region. SCS countries also continue to engage and liaise with one another. Conflict has been averted so far, in spite of heightened tensions over FON. Nevertheless, the centrality the SCS has assumed in Sino-American relations inhibits the establishment of mechanisms to resolve ongoing disputes. Resolution of the geopolitical tensions through East Asia between China and the United States is required before meaningful progress can be made towards creating a stable, institutionalized SCS region similar to what exists in the Arctic.

Adam P. MacDonald is a PhD student in the Department of Political Science (Dalhousie University) whose research interests include major power strategic rivalry, nuclear weapons theory, Canadian foreign and defence policy, and geopolitical and military developments in East Asia and the Arctic.

**Notes**

1. For example, see Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific* (New York: Random House, 2014).
2. Examples include: Daniel Thomassen, "Lessons From the Arctic for the South China Sea", Centre for International Maritime Security, 4 April 2017; and Ian Storey, "Arctic Lessons: What the South China Sea Claimants Can Learn From Cooperation in the High North", Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Perspective, 16 December 2013.
9. For an overview of SCS disputes,
see “Maritime Issues in the East and South China Sea”, RAND Corporation (12-13 January 2016).


This article follows a piece written twelve years ago, entitled e-Soldiers. It examines Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Military Human Resources (Mil-HR) policies, with a view to offering fresh perspectives for military personnel management. They will be referred to as e-Soldiers.¹

All Canadian Armed Forces members and officers should first and foremost be considered, “soldiers.” This is evidenced by the integrated Basic Military Qualification (BMQ) that every member goes through following enrolment and by the Basic Military Officer Qualification (BMOQ) every officer goes through as well. It may be argued that this skill set is insufficient to warrant the title of, “soldier,” but these courses play a fundamental part in the CAF acculturation and socialization process by creating a common understanding of service.

In Strong Secure Engaged (SSE), Canada’s latest Defence Policy (2017), the government lays out a foundation for the eventual renaissance of the Canadian Armed Forces. Indeed, “to meet Canada’s defence needs at home and abroad the Government will grow defence spending over the next 10 years from $18.9 billion in 2016-17 to $32.7 B in 2026-27.”² It is a significant investment, which will allow major projects to go ahead to meet Canada’s national defence obligations, if it comes to fruition.

As a comprehensive defence policy, Strong Secure Engaged broadly covers all facets of military spending. It addresses emerging areas of interest for Canada. And for the first time, it directly addresses the critical issue of personnel. Military human resources are the core capacities and abilities, or capabilities, which ensure the CAF is operational. From a strategic perspective, it is also worth noting that Canada spent over $20.6 billion on defence, of which 46
percent was devoted to human resources in 2016 alone. Essentially, almost half of Canada’s annual military spending goes directly or indirectly toward its people. However, most examinations of Canada’s defence policy focus on large capability projects. Be that as it may, the CAF’s vitality ultimately rests in its e-Soldiers!

Capabilities fade without effective and the efficient human resources practices or people management. And without exceptional operators, the CAF will be unable to maintain its high operational standards. The specialized nature of today’s workforce also requires HR practices tailored to individual needs. This approach is in stark contrast to the CAF’s current industrial relations management of its people.

This article first looks at the current operating environment and how the unconventional nature of conflict today requires a new and innovative mindset. This is followed by an examination of the socialization of CAF members and officers in the 21st Century. Then we turn to organizational structure, followed by the overarching strategies and a review of military HR policies and processes that hamper socio-cultural evolution. Using a system-of-systems approach, the piece concludes by looking at how to change current HR practices in a way that will provide value-added synergies by leveraging the six dimensions of a theoretical model. None of these dimensions alone can create success. A fundamentally integrated viewpoint is required.

**Theoretical Model**

This article is based on a constructive and pragmatic epistemology and philosophy. In other words, achieving effective as well as efficient results and effects is critical to the CAF for its success. This article is also predicated on a system of systems view and management ontology and its theoretical model is based on prior research from Canada’s Comprehensive Approach.

It is constructed of six dimensions for analysis and decision: The context, socio-cultural factors, organizational structure, systemic processes, strategic policies, which together create synergy dynamics that add value. The simple idea is to combine the effects of all six dimensions as one interdependent system to create and sustain Synergy.

**Situational Context**

The first dimension of analysis is the environment or the situational context. In the foreseeable future, warfare is likely to remain largely unconventional and indirect. The chaos and complexity of such an environment has potential to generate significant global instability. This form of warfare challenges the current rules based international order. Addressing such challenges requires an integrated comprehensive approach across our military and government. Conventional industrial age methods are now less effective against unconventional foes. This complex environment requires new ways of thinking. More holistic solutions need to be found. In the face of such external instability, our internal environment must remain stable.

**Sociocultural Transformation**

The CAF is already committed to cultural transformation but must go further in its efforts to adapt. To date, the CAF’s transformations have mainly focused on strategy and structure. The people management skills and quality of leadership, seen during Op HONOUR, illustrate excellent HR, but we can no longer afford the impact that industrial age practices have in shaping CAF culture.

For example, regiments are also no longer the appropriate organizational construct to facilitate a whole-of-government and comprehensive approach where integrated teamwork is required. Instead, intra-agency collaboration is needed to enable performance. The proliferation of distinctive uniforms only serves to highlight the numerous tribes that exist to the point of dis-unification. And this is only the tip of the iceberg.

While the majority of CAF personnel remain members of separate tribes, the global special forces community provides us with an example of striving towards the standardization of better, smarter operating procedures and enhancing interoperability and collaboration. This is a lesson that the wider CAF would do well to heed. After all, the CAF has not deployed as regiments since the deployment of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in 1992. Since that time, task forces have been created and sustained to support operations. But it seems that these hard-earned lessons have not been learned and implemented yet.

**Organizational Structure**

If change is a constant in a world
characterized by increased instability and complexity, transformation should be more evolutionary than revolutionary. For the CAF, this process began twelve years ago when restructuring led to the creation of four operational commands in 2006. This was followed by another wave of restructuring in 2012 and the subsequent reintegration of three out of the four commands into the Canadian Joint Operations. Over the past twenty years, the CAF has gone from dismantling the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (DCDS) to re-establishing a similar operational structure. The CAF also initiated a parallel move away from the three original service branches but has since returned to this structure. Infighting and disagreement within the CAF, and the Department of National Defence (DND) has prevented further constructive collaboration.6

An integrated posture is required to face the challenges of the twenty-first century, one which starts with basic military qualifications and training and ends with joint integrated solutions to the root causes of unconventional warfare. To put it bluntly, teamwork is needed to defend against unconventional warfare. Like the Marine Corps and the 1st-Force concept, the branches of the CAF must align in such a way as to facilitate integrated force development, generation, employment, management and sustainment.7 An organizational structure integrated around a single end-to-end managed value chain could reduce inefficiencies and infighting in the CAF from the start.

A Hockey Analogy

Imagine if professional hockey players only trained with others who played the same position, rather than as part of a larger team. How could players get better training in silos all the time, goales with goales, for example? How could teams be expected to come together effectively just before a game? This is the effect of the current CAF organizational structure. Task Forces are arranged only for employment and then dismantled. Hockey teams are meant to train and play together and so too should all elements of the CAF.

Strategic Policies

Innovative HR policies must remain focused on core missions. In Canada’s 2017 Defence Policy, a lot of attention is devoted to recruitment, diversity, health, resiliency, families and transition. But there is little emphasis on core strategic HR policies. Strong Secure Engaged recognizes that, “people are at the core of Canada’s new vision for Defence,” but there needs to be more leadership on training, professional development, career and people management.8 All of these factors will have an immediate impact on the CAF cultural transformation.

Unrestricted warfare demands new whole-of-government approaches at a national level and a comprehensive approach at the multinational level. At the institutional level, the CAF still has serious internal issues like intra-agency infighting and inefficiencies and has yet to realize the potential of strategic openness. For instance, civilian education must be better leveraged, recognized and even credited for areas like health services. Civilian programs in management, sciences, technology and languages should also be credited toward professional development. For example, a soldier who completes the requirements for a Certificate of Proficiency in parachuting could be granted permission to wear parachute wings! Our most elite operators already go to civilian sport parachuting professionals. Mastering the art of war requires leaders with vision to see beyond simple bureaucratic barriers.9

Civilian Doctors

Imagine doctors could sign-up online for three-year tours to support and deploy with a CAF mission element. They would undergo 3-month basic military officer qualification, specialize in a field of operational medicine and wear the uniform at the professional rank of Doctor, or Surgeon.

But we can’t do that! This will imply changing rank structure! And changing force generation and CAF HR policies! Groups like Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) already deploy many doctors and supporting medical staff on front lines globally, all over the world.

Systemic Processes

The re-establishment of Personnel Administration (or HR) Officers has gone unnoticed but would be the first step in changing systemic processes, streamlining recruitment, reinforcing retention, and ensuring LEAN personnel management.10

This would allow more holistic management throughout Canada’s military HR.

Digitization provides us with additional opportunities to break down the, “stovepipe structures that have characterized militaries throughout ages.”11

For example, are so many postings necessary for military members and even for officers? Could officers and members manage their careers online by applying competitively for professional development opportunities? Is the up-or-out military career scheme efficient and should there be more horizontal opportunities? Such industrial age policies are out of synch with the contemporary employment market. Internal HR management processes should not inhibit nor restrict innovative possibilities.

Synergistic Value

These changes may seem simple but are constrained by current HR policies,
It is vital to leverage people’s abilities. Faced with intangible threats like unrestricted, hybrid and asymmetric warfare, Canada must be smarter and invest accordingly. In Strong Secure Engaged, the capacities part of the equation is well developed but the abilities part is not. 

For policy recommendations, see CDA Institute Blog, The Forum...

Eric Dion is a contract professor, executive management consultant and military veteran who served 25 years in the Canadian Forces. He holds an MBA and PhD in management. His research focuses on the strategic nexus between national security and global defence.

Notes

8. Strong Secure Engaged, p. 17.
9. Ibid.
11. LEAN is mostly a production efficiency process but it can be viewed in terms of HR management, where inefficiencies are sought and eliminated in the personnel management processes of DND/CAF.
12. Dion, 1st Force.
COMPRENDRE LA LÉGITIMITÉ MILITAIRE ET CULTURELLE DE MOSCOU EN TRANSNISTRIE

par le Dr. Michael Eric Lambert

Sommaire

Le processus de rattachement de la Transnistrie au reste de la Moldavie est vu par la Communauté internationale comme un leurre de la part de Moscou. L'objectif est de retarder toute action concrète pouvant amener la région en dehors de la sphère d'influence du Kremlin. La Transnistrie constitue un laboratoire en matière de stratégies russes pour retarder l'intégration des États membres du Partenariat oriental (EaP) dans Union européenne et dans l'OTAN. Pour y parvenir, Moscou instrumentalise le droit russe et les casques bleus et met en avant d'autres stratégies innovantes avec la mise en place d'un "soft power" régional. Loin d'être une "zone grise", "soviet-land" ou un "État en déliquescence", la région dispose d'une importance stratégique tant pour le transit du gaz que pour la sécurité internationale en raison du trafic d'armes.

Si la Transnistrie a survécu à l'URSS, elle pourrait également assister à la fin des ambitions européennes dans la région.

Ce qui impressionne le plus dans le cas de la Transnistrie, c'est la résilience des habitants, des entreprises, du Gouvernement transnistrien de facto, et des militaires et para militaires qui vivent dans un "État" non reconnu par la Communauté internationale et ce depuis plus d’un quart de siècle.

Aux espérances d’assister au rattachement de la Transnistrie au reste de la Moldavie dans les années 1990, ont rapidement succédé les craintes de voir celle-ci devenir une partie de la Fédération de Russie dans les années 2000, puis de rejoindre le projet de Novorossiya après l'annexion de la Crimée en 2014. Au final, aucune perspective ne s’est avérée exacte et la Transnistrie semble rester la
même depuis la fin de l’URSS, c’est-à-dire une modeste région de 4163 km² pour 500 000 habitants coincé entre Moldavie et Ukraine en attente de son avenir. Une situation difficilement compréhensible dans la mesure où s’imaginer vivre dans une “région close” échappe aux représentations des européens pour qui les frontières sont perméables. Les difficultés administratives pour voyager, étudier, échanger une monnaie non-reconnue à l’international, ou tout simplement garantir l’application des Droits de l’Homme, sont au cœur des débats sur cette enclave soviétique qui souhaite son rattachement à la Fédération de Russie.

La réalité est pourtant toute autre sur le terrain, et nécessite une mise en contexte. L’isolement s’avère théorique car la très grande majorité des résidents disposent d’un deuxième passeport (russe). Ce deuxième document leur permet de voyager librement et de travailler sans entraves dans la Communauté des États Indépendants (CEI). L’absence de frontières officielles avec la Moldavie et l’Ukraine rend également les déplacements à l’étranger plus facile, les résidents n’ayant souvent pas de tampons sur leurs passeports (qui signifieraient une reconnaissance de “frontières” officielles). Une situation similaire à celle que lon retrouve dans le système académique, avec l’Université de Tiraspol qui n’est pas reconnue comme appartenant à un pays, mais dont le diplôme aligne ses standards sur ceux des universités russes, qui s’alignent sur les standards européens. En conséquence, le niveau d’enseignement en Transnistrie y est similaire à celui des universités reconnues à l’international.

La monnaie n’est pas en reste, et si le rouble transnistrien n’est pas échangeable dans d’autres pays, il est difficile de trouver des pays qui acceptent de prendre le Leu moldave ou beaucoup de monnaies du Caucase ou d’ex-Yougoslavie. En conséquence, les habitants s’accommodent souvent de la situation en ayant deux comptes en banque, dont un en roubles russes pour leurs voyages.

À cela s’ajoute beaucoup d’éléments qui permettent de donner une autre image de la Transnistrie et qui légitimissent sa pertinence stratégique et culturelle pour la Russie de nos jours. En effet, la majorité des statistiques ne peuvent pas prendre en compte l’économie illégale qui représente, comme pour Kaliningrad, plus de 60% du PIB. Une situation similaire à celle de la dette nationale qui s’élève à 400% du PIB, et est souvent présentée comme un motif d’éclatement futur de la Transnistrie. En pratique, la dette appartient au groupe Gazprom. C’est donc la Russie qui décide de son existence ou de sa disparition. Il faut également distinguer ce qui relève du politico-militaire de l’identitaire en Transnistrie, et les intérêts de la Russie pourraient largement dépasser les enjeux purement stratégiques.


Cet article analyse les stratégies d’influences de la Russie, son “soft power”, en abordant les questions identitaires et l’histoire singulière de la région par rapport à la Moldavie et l’Ukraine. L’article analyse également les effets du “hard power” russe et la pertinence stratégique des reliques militaires de l’Union soviétique.

Le document propose également plusieurs pistes pour considérer la Transnistrie comme un élément du système européen et international et sa prise en considération. Une approche autrement plus réaliste que celles qui sont souvent proposées de rejoindre la Moldavie sous un format fédéral et qui semble loin d’aboutir.

Un héritage soviétique prestigieux

Si elle est au cœur de l’attention en Europe de l’Est depuis la chute de l’URSS, l’existence de la Transnistrie remonte à avant la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. On notera que l’adjectif “Transnistriens” a été inventé par des ethnographes roumains au 19ème siècle. Ces derniers l’utilisent pour décrire la singularité des minorités roumanophones qui vivaient sous la tutelle de la Russie en Podolie et Kherson. Cette présence dans un territoire slave est la conséquence des tensions avec l’Empire Ottoman qui enrolait les jeunes chrétiens dans ses troupes et qui incite les Chrétiens à s’enfuir.
Si l'expression tombe en désuétude jusqu'en 1941, elle est rapidement réintroduite lorsque le maréchal roumain Antonescu occupe la région au déla du Dniestr en Ukraine. Cette dénomination n'est pas arbitraire, et elle atteste des origines roumaines de certains habitants. Cette spécificité est très importante car dans l'idéologie Hitlérienne, l'appartenance des Transnistriens à la "race latine" leur confère des droits et un prestige supérieur à ceux de la "race slave". Le territoire n'est plus dès lors un espace entre Roumanie et Ukraine, mais devient pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale un territoire qui sépare "Europe" et "monde slave", ce qui à l'époque conditionne la vie des habitants dans la région.

La disparition de l'Allemagne nazie et la chute du Gouvernement fasciste roumain soulève plusieurs questions en 1944: La Transnistrie est-elle roumaine, c'est à dire hors du commandement de Moscou et sous influence de la Roumanie ? Est-elle une partie de l’Ukraine ou bien de la nouvelle Moldavie ?

Dans la logique stalinienne, l'histoire de la Transnistrie et de sa population peuvent servir les intérêts du Kremlin. En pratique, les Roumains parlent une langue latine écrite dans un alphabet latin, par contraste avec le cyrillique. Qui plus est, la Roumanie dispose de sa propre politique internationale pendant la période soviétique. Si Staline accepte l'identité roumaine de la Moldavie, celui-ci craint un potentiel rattachement avec la Roumanie voisine en raison de la proximité culturelle des deux. En conséquence, il propose de rattercher le sud de la Moldavie - connectée à la mer Noire - et de donner en contrepartie la Transnistrie à la Moldavie plutôt qu'à l’Ukraine. Cette manoeuvre géopolitique est lourde de conséquence car les Transnistriens sont pour 1/3 moldaves, 1/3 russes et 1/3 ukrainiens. Pour communiquer, ces derniers utilisent alors l'alphabet cyrillique et le russe qui est la langue de communication inter ethnique la plus simple.

Le rattachement de la Transnistrie à la Moldavie justifie le remplacement de l'alphabet latin par le cyrillique, et l'usage du russe comme langue officielle du pays, afin de permettre aux Transnistriens de communiquer avec le reste des Moldaves. La manoeuvre de Staline permet d'imposer un autre alphabet aux moldaves, et de jouer sur la spécificité régionale de la Transnistrie pour créer des tensions dans le pays. Par voie de conséquence, si la Moldavie souhaite se reprocher de la Roumanie, les Transnistriens s'y opposeront, ce qui pourrait mener à une guerre civile. La crainte d'une explosion de violence fera que la Moldavie restera sous le contrôle de Moscou sans perspective de rapprochement avec Bucarest jusqu'à la fin du Communisme.

L'instrumentalisation des minorités en mer Noire marque le début d'un lent processus de Soviétisation-Russification qui explique la situation de la Transnistrie contemporaine et les différences avec les pays voisins.

Dans la mesure où l'idée initiale de Staline était d'endiguer tout rapprochement entre la Roumanie et la Moldavie, il fallait également artificiellement accroître la puissance économique de la Transnistrie. Le Gouvernement moldave aurait pu décider de se détacher de la Transnistrie pendant la période soviétique car la région est faiblement peuplée avec 1 million d’habitants pendant les années 1980 pour 4 dans le reste du pays. C'est la raison qui explique, après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, le plan massif d'industrialisation pour accroître artificiellement l'importance de celle-ci en Moldavie.

La Transnistrie devient alors rapidement un exemple des bienfaits du Communisme, un "paradis" soviétique ou l'architecture, les industries et le mode de vie, incarnent l'idéal socialiste. L'urbanisation de la région, l'usage de la langue russe dans un contexte où cohabitent trois grandes ethnies, amène à cette image de "melting pot" soviétique avec comme langue inter ethnique le russe. Qui plus est, l'industrialisation de la Transnistrie permet de justifier la concentration sur ce secteur agricole pour le reste de la Moldavie, celle-ci n'ayant pas besoin de se moderniser dans la mesure où ses industries sont déjà de l'autre coté du Dniestr. La Moldavie devient donc une terre de production agricole et viticole tandis que la Transnistrie s'impose comme bastion industriel avec son industrie métallurgique, textile, et la production de cognac et des consommables qui vont avec (bouchons, bouteilles, étiquettes, etc.).

L'image de perfection socialiste se devan d'aller avec celle de puissance militaire. La Transnistrie connaîtra une militarisation rapide en raison de la production métallurgique, l'espace disponible pour entreposer des armes, la proximité avec la mer Noire et le port d'Odessa. Le souhait d'exercer des pressions militaires sur le reste de la Moldavie située à proximité de la Roumanie expliquent la militarisation dès la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

La Transnistrie s'impose dans les années 1950-1960 comme le centre de stockage des armes soviétiques et notamment de petit calibre. Leur abondance ne constitue pas une exception par rapport à l’Ukraine, mais leur présence contrastait fortement avec le reste de la Moldavie où elles sont peu nombreuses si on compare au nombre d’armes par habitant.

La Transnistrie incarne alors cette image de perfection soviétique, où se mêlent les langues et les ethnies, puissance industrielle émergente d'une terre au départ faiblement urbaine. Tous ces éléments vont avoir des conséquences sur l’identité de la région, expliquer l’émergence du conflit en 1992 et sa continuité depuis cette période.

Conséquences pour l'identité régionale

Malgré son ambiance soviétique artificielle, le contraste entre les habitants de Transnistrie et de Moldavie va jouer en faveur du développement d'une identité culturelle régionale. Les Transnistriens sont essentiellement des urbains, par
contraste avec les Moldaves plus ruraux, ils vivent et travaillent dans une ambiance industrielle, tandis que les moldaves sont attachés à leurs terres et la paysannerie.

Pour les transnistriens, c’est grâce à Moscou que fut préservé l’identité russe et l’alphabet cyrillique, perçue comme libératrice de la Roumanie fasciste, et bienfaisante tandis que cette influence est perçue de manière plus négative en Moldavie car tentant de détruire une partie de l’identité roumaine.

Il semble difficile de parler “d’ethnie transnistrienne”, tout au plus d’un “Melting Pot soviétique”. Malgré cela, on assiste à l’émergence de tensions puis d’un conflit en 1992 que l’on pourrait caractériser comme conflit ethnique entre Slaves et Latins, ou culturel entre deux région d’un même pays, selon le point de vue.

Juste après la chute de l’URSS, les Moldaves souhaitent se rapprocher de la Roumanie et le retour de l’alphabet latin et du moldave-roumain comme langue d’État. Une situation incompatible pour les Transnistriens qui ne partent pas le Moldave pour les russophones et ukranophones, et ne sont pas prêt à partager les ressources de leur industrie avec un pays essentiellement agricole. Ce mélange entre opportunité économique et différence culturelle engendre un conflit violent aux portes de la jeune Union européenne.

En 1992, la nouvelle Russie doit se décider à intervenir rapidement ou à rester externe au conflit. Le support du Kremlin est d’autant plus important que la Moldavie, en raison du nombre d’hommes dont elle dispose, peut prendre la Transnistrie en quelques mois. Si tel avait été le cas, cela aurait signifié une Moldavie unifiée sans influence culturelle russe dans la région, et un contrôle de Chisinau sur des entrepôts d’armements soviétiques. À cela s’ajoute la puissance agricole et industrielle en devenir d’une Moldavie qu’il est de nos jours difficile d’imaginer car celle-ci est essentiellement agricole.

Stratégiquement, la Russie va se décider à intervenir dans le conflit pour plusieurs raisons. La première, c’est la présence de citoyens russes en Transnistrie, ce qui revient à défendre les intérêts des “russes” au sens large et envoyer un message fort de soutien à ces derniers dans l’ensemble de l’espace post soviétique. Deuxièmement, cela permet au Kremlin de conserver le contrôle sur les entrepôts d’armes dans la région, à proximité d’une Ukraine dont on ignore encore les ambitions territoriales. Troisièmement, cela permet d’exercer des pressions économiques sur la Moldavie dans une nouvelle Communauté des États Indépendants (CEI) qui laisse déjà apparaître des dissidences comme en Géorgie.

L’identité régionale et la proximité avec la Russie joue donc en faveur des transnistriens à l’époque. Qui plus est, ces derniers perçoivent l’Union soviétique comme bienfaisante et sont moins soviéto-sceptiques que les moldaves. Cette culture qui souhaite conserver l’héritage soviétique, plus proche culturellement de Moscou, et surtout la position stratégique, justifie l’intervention de la 14ème armée russe. Une situation de conflit gelé temporaire qui deviendra rapidement permanente.

Une région qui oscille économiquement entre Russie et Union européenne depuis la fin de la Guerre froide

L’influence soviéto-russe connait cependant ses limites, et si la Transnistrie dépend économiquement de la Russie après la fin de la Guerre froide, celle-ci se retrouve rapidement à devoir nouer des relations avec l’Union européenne voir même avec la Moldavie avec qui elle est officiellement en conflit.

La région exporte actuellement plus de 70% de ses produits en Union européenne, en cause la séparation géographique avec la Russie et le manque de compétitivité des produits pour la CEI qui sont également manufacturés en Ukraine et dans le reste de la Moldavie. Les exportations se font dans le domaine du textile avec l’entreprise Tirotex, deuxième entreprise du secteur en Europe, avec plus de 6100 salariés - surtout des femmes - et qui vient de moderniser son outil de production avec des machines allemandes et chinoises.

Il faut concevoir l’économie de la région comme autarcique, les habitants et le gouvernement recevant une aide substantielle de Moscou. Le gaz y est également gratuit et les transnistriens ont pour habitude d’envoyer la facture de Gazprom à la Moldavie, leur demandant de payer pour eux. Un piège évident car si la Moldavie cesse de payer pour les importations de gaz russe en Transnistrie, cela signifie que la Transnistrie est un pays distinct de la Moldavie. En conséquence, le gaz pour la production d’électricité (centrales à gaz), les transports, le chauffage et les exportations, y est totalement gratuit. Cela explique en grande partie l’absence de débat sur la production d’énergies renouvelables ; consommer du gaz apparaissant comme un acte patriotique.


Malgré le système monétaire avec le rouble transnistrien, le faible nombre de touristes (140 000 en Moldavie et à peine 10 000 en Transnistrie) et la lente dégradation de l’outil industriel, la Transnistrie parvient à survivre avec l’aide de Moscou et ses expatriés. Ces derniers rapportent une somme substantielle de Moscou. Le gaz y est également gratuit et les transnistriens ont pour habitude d’envoyer la facture de Gazprom à la Moldavie, leur demandant de payer pour eux. Un piège évident car si la Moldavie cesse de payer pour les importations de gaz russe en Transnistrie, cela signifie que la Transnistrie est un pays distinct de la Moldavie. En conséquence, le gaz pour la production d’électricité (centrales à gaz), les transports, le chauffage et les exportations, y est totalement gratuit. Cela explique en grande partie l’absence de débat sur la production d’énergies renouvelables ; consommer du gaz apparaissant comme un acte patriotique.
60% du PIB qui dépend de la contrebande et de l'économie illégale. D'une manière assez similaire, les 400% d'endettement du PIB sont un chiffre arbitraire, et la Russie est seule garante du paiement de celle-ci. L'économie n'est donc pas sur le point de s'effondrer et la Transnistrie emprunte sa dette exclusivement à la Russie.

Malgré cela, l'Union européenne dispose d'une importance fondamentale pour l'avenir de la région, car dans un premier temps, elle importe des produits de Transnistrie qui sont souvent présentés comme "Made in Moldova". L'Europe importe ses textiles, certains produits métallurgiques, un peu d'alcool (vin et cognac) et surtout donne un emploi aux expatriés transnistriens. Ces derniers viennent en Europe en usant de leur deuxième passeport. Sans ce support financier, la situation serait autrement plus complexe et les opportunités d'embauche des plus jeunes considérablement amoindries.

La Transnistrie a également besoin des produits en provenance de l'Union européenne. Elle se procure ses équipements pour ses usines, ses voitures, ses produits cosmétiques, etc. à l'étranger. La Russie parvient à fournir un équivalent, mais ne peut pas garantir une aussi grande variété de produits et notamment dans le domaine médical et pharmacologique. Cela explique notamment l'importance grandissante de la Chine, qui parvient à offrir une alternative aux machines et voitures allemandes, et exporte des produits pharmaceutiques dans la région.

Il semble dès lors possible de voir une Transnistrie subsister avec le support exclusif de la Russie, sous réserve que l'Ukraine et la Moldavie ne s'allient pas exclusivement à la Russie, sous réserve que

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La présence des troupes russes s'avère cependant une aubaine pour la Transnistrie et sa Défense "nationale". Premièrement, celle-ci n'est pas en mesure d'importer de nouvelles armes, et les exercices militaires conjoints avec les troupes russes permettent aux transnistriens de manier des équipements modernes auquel ils n'ont pas accès d'ordinaire (AK12) et prêt à les manier s'ils doivent les recevoir un jour. Cela permet également d'être inter opérables avec la Russie, un avantage indéniable qui montre le souhait de rapprochement avec Moscou, et permet d'agir comme une seule armée en cas de conflit. Les troupes russes sur place importent également des pièces d'hélicoptères et de véhicules blindés légers et même de tanks, ce qui permet de changer celles des appareils qui ne fonctionnent plus et son illégales à l'importation pour les transnistriens. Les entraînements sont naturellement en langue russe, ce qui permet une nouvelle fois aux troupes de former un seul ensemble en cas de conflit.

Pour résumer la situation, les troupes de Transnistrie sont le prolongement des troupes de Russie, et l'uniforme s'avère être la seule différence visible, d'autant plus que certains Transnistriens dont le deuxième passeport est russe font également leur service militaire au sein de la Fédération en raison de leur "double" nationalité.

L'inter opérabilité des armées, comme du temps de l'époque soviétique, amène le niveau d'entraînement des troupes dans la région à excéder celui des ukrainiens et des moldaves. Les nombres d'hommes en Transnistrie reste cependant modeste avec 4500 à 7500 hommes pour 25 000 réservistes.

Le principal risque pour l'OTAN et l'UE reste de penser que les troupes ne sont pas aptes à manier des équipements comme le S-400 ou les nouveaux véhicules en raison de leur absence dans les entrepôts de Transnistrie. Cette erreur stratégique serait lourde de conséquences.

Sur un plan tactique, il reste à mentionner la situation enclavée de la région qui
empêche de disposer d’avions de chasse et d’équipements lourds. Il faut dès lors s’attendre à une guérilla urbaine de longue durée avec des snipers, une bonne connaissance du terrain de la part des hommes sur place, mais objectivement pas à une guerre avec des équipements modernes. L’issue d’un conflit dépendrait donc de l’ingérence de Moscou ou d’une grande puissance, voir même régionale comme l’Ukraine.

On ignore également la motivation psychologique des troupes à défendre le “pays” et cela peut jouer un rôle essentiel dans ce type de conflit. Les troupes russes percevront certainement une dynamique géostratégique et un intérêt à assurer la présence de Moscou dans l’ enclave, mais la situation pourrait être toute autre pour les Transnistriens qui n’ont pas d’attachement émotionnel profond à la “patrice”. Qui plus est, l’émersion d’une guerre mettrait à jour l’absence de jeunes gens pour la concrétiser, ces derniers résidants essentiellement à l’étranger.

De solides perspectives d’avenir en raison de l’influence grandissante de la Chine

Un dernier facteur à prendre en compte est l’influence grandissante de la Chine, souvent oubliée en raison de l’ omniprésence russe. Comme nous avons pu le voir, la Russie dispose d’un “hard power” établit dans la région, dont les Occidentaux ne souhaitent pas véritablement se débarrasser, et une influence économique vacillante en raison de l’importance de l’Union européenne pour les expatriés et certains produits que la Russie ne peut pas fournir. Ce “smart power” russe est dès lors puissant sur la dimension “hard” et possible à challenger sur la dimension “soft”.

La Chine n’a pour l’heure actuelle aucun intérêt à contester l’influence militaire de la Russie dans la région, et elle n’a pas envie d’aborder ou continuer le conflit. Elle est aussi un acteur neutre en terme de hard power, ne vendant même pas d’équipements militaires en Transnistrie.

En terme de “soft power”, la Chine est pourtant devenue une alternative à la Russie et à l’Union européenne. Dans un premier temps, car elle s’intéresse à la production transnistriennes. La Chine est demandeuse en tomates, légumes en général, mais surtout en vin et en cognac qu’elle se procure à un prix élevé en Europe. La production de spiritueux transnistriens, souvent peu et parfois interdite à l’exportation en UE, intéresse la Chine qui est prête à les acheter pour les revendre sur son marché interne.

La Chine souhaite également investir, dans le cadre de la “New Silk Road”, dans l’industrie métallurgique et renouvelle actuellement plusieurs infrastructures. Le coût du travail et les infrastructures en Transnistrie sont compétitives dans la région, la Moldavie, ayant un coût de main d’œuvre similaire mais des infrastructures en moins bon état, et l’Ukraine, des coûts légèrement plus élevés. Le principal attrait pour la Chine reste naturellement l’absence totale de coûts pour le gaz russe de Transnistrie. Une situation qui permettrait, sous couverture de rester discret, d’optimiser les coûts de production pour les petites pièces métallurgiques. Cette situation est naturellement appréciée par les dirigeants de la région qui constatent un engouement pour un nouvel acteur tandis que le marché européen montre ses limites. La crise économique russe pose également de nombreuses questions sur l’avenir des financements dans un contexte ou l’attention du Kremlin se porte désormais sur la Crimée.

La Chine sera-t-elle le futur de la Transnistrie ? Si celle-ci souhaite acheter les produits et éventuellement y investir, elle n’aurait cependant pas la capacité d’influence dont dispose la Russie sur le plan linguistique et culturel. Elle pourrait exporter plus de véhicules, des machines et des outils agricoles, mais le manque d’accès à la mer Noire joue en défaveur de l’État de facto.

Sur un plan militaire, il serait cependant intéressant de voir l’avenir de la Chine dans la région, qui pourrait comme pour Djibouti se décider à envisager la présence d’un avant-poste militaire pour sécuriser la mer Noire. Cette approche purement prospective dans le cadre de l’initiative “One Belt, One Road” pourrait se concrétiser avec l’accord de la Russie. Pour le moment, l’UE comme la Russie, devraient cependant concentrer leur attention sur ce nouvel acteur qui propose une alternative sans connotation idéologique ou géopolitique aux marchés de l’UE et de la CEI.

Michael Eric Lambert est spécialiste du soft power en tant que stratégie de politique étrangère et des relations sino-européennes/russes (Ph.D. à Sorbonne Université en partenariat avec l’INSEAD, 2016). Ses ouvrages sur l’Europe et l’Union soviétique qui mêlent un esprit atypique à une approche fantasiste lui permettent d’aborder des thématiques sous un angle provocant et original.

*Carte: Spiridon Ion Cepleanu*
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Reviewed by Adam Finzi

When I first decided to read *Militarised Responses to Transnational Organised Crime: The War on Crime*, I had one main expectation going into analyzing this collection of articles. I anticipated that the authors would provide a fair and balanced assessment of the War on Crime and ultimately conclude that the issue of organized crime cannot be resolved through military means. Although this proved correct, the journey the book took me on to reach this conclusion is what makes it a worthwhile read.

The main draw of this collection is its ability to keep the reader engaged through its dissection of four main criminal activities. These activities include wildlife crime, piracy, migrant smuggling, and drug trafficking. The editors achieve this by offering different perspectives on the War on Crime by authors who offer their own analysis of each issue. Moreover, each chapter offers strong arguments in favour or against militarized responses supported by cogent arguments and verifiable evidence.

Like many academic works, *Militarised Responses* opens by establishing a model to explain the concept of militarization. It consists of three main pillars: war talk, institutional interests, and strategic timing. It includes various levels of militarization ranging from equipping police forces with better equipment to using the army to combat criminals. This broad and common model facilitates a refreshing consistency from chapter to chapter. While authors may not agree with one another, the reader can rest assured that they are examining the subject from a common starting point.

Several key themes emerge throughout this book. First, using military force to tackle organized crime often looks good politically as it implies that decision makers are taking organized crime seriously. Furthermore, it is an easier for the general public to understand when compared to other means of fighting crime such as economic measures. A clear contemporary case is the U.S. government’s current focus on militarizing the U.S.-Mexico border, even though making the border more secure increases profits for smugglers.

The reason for these increased profits is further explored in another of the book’s...
major themes, wherein authors analyze criminal activity from an economic perspective. Writing about human smuggling, Reitano explains that:

*The more restrictive the policy of states, the more challenging a border becomes to cross, the more militarised the levels of enforcement, the more necessary a smuggler becomes and the more risk accepting, professional and corrupt that smuggler will need to be to perform his function successfully. Thus, in the contemporary context of inelastic demand for movement, where the pool of smugglers willing and able to play the role in the heightened security environment has restricted, as the laws of economics dictate, prices begin to rise.* (Reitano et al, 209).

Therefore, the U.S. border response to organized crime increases the profitability of human smuggling.

The Canadian Armed Forces’ participation in the War on Crime is limited. This includes Operation SABOT in which the Royal Canadian Air Force look for marijuana grow ops from the air to support the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. As the Government of Canada legalized the recreational use of marijuana on October 17th, 2018, an economic analysis suggests that the demand for illegal marijuana will decrease. A smaller demand should lower grow-up profits, thereby discouraging their use by organized crime, and lessen the need for Operation SABOT.

Canada’s legalization of marijuana also supports the findings of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs, which recognized the failures of the War on Drugs. Legalization allows the CAF to focus their energies on other public safety concerns and offers Canada a unique opportunity. If Canada’s legalization of marijuana is successful, the government can use the positive effects of legalization to encourage other Western states to enact similar decriminalization or legalization measures. This could have an impact in the long-run on disincentivizing ineffective militarized responses to organized crime.

*Militarised Responses to Transnational Organised Crime* has a lot to offer those with an interest in the War on Crime. The book’s exploration of militarized responses to wildlife crime, piracy, migrant smuggling, and drug trafficking reveals how these responses are often ineffective on their own. However, this critique is supported by strong arguments on either side of the issue and a clear definition of the term employed by all the contributing authors. Some essays in the collection grabbed my attention more than others but their succinctness prevented them from becoming tedious. For these reasons, I believe editors Tuesday Reitano, Lucia Bird Ruiz-Benitez de Lugo and Sasha Jesperson have put together a collection of essays which ranks amongst the best I have ever read.

Adam Finzi is a Master of Arts graduate from Wilfrid Laurier University’s Political Science program. Adam’s previous work experience includes research and policy analysis for the Permanent Mission of Canada to the Organization of American States and observing El Salvador’s 2014 presidential election at the request of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. His research interests include Canadian foreign policy, human rights, and ethics.
As Canada implements its new defence policy, *Strong Secure Engaged*, the multiple areas for upgrading the CAF capabilities for North American Defence commitments are highlighted, particularly in the context of being Secure in North America. Since consultation with the US is a key aspect of implementing NORAD initiatives, this book is a timely assessment of many of the issues that will come into consideration as the two nations make decisions about NORAD's future capabilities. The subtitle of the book — *Security and Sovereignty in an Uncertain World* — is a very appropriate descriptor of the challenges facing political and military leaders today.

As an edited collection, the book is organized around four broad areas or themes: the global context, US defence policy, Canadian defence policy and the future of North American strategic defence. Each of these areas has three or four chapters that provide the reader with a good overview of the complex security issues that will influence NA strategic defence.

In setting the context for the more detailed discussion on North American security, the first part of the book sets the stage by examining the relationship of Canada and the US with the other key security players in today’s global context – Mexico, China and Russia. For the reader there are probably three major themes that fall out of this first section. First, the importance of understanding the perspective of others when trying to move an agenda forward is critical. Mark Katz raises the issue of Russian resentment of US intentions in the region and the US rejection that Russia should have privileged interests "in countries where Russia has traditionally had friendly cordial relations" (p. 18). The inability of Russia and the other nations in the West to get beyond the trust factor continues to hinder improvements in the security environment. Second, and a follow on from the first point, is the importance of understanding the nuclear dimensions to the security relationships that exist in today's global environment. The nuclear threat environment for North America is problematic for leaders. Rathburn and Rathburn make the important observation that actors tend to "under-react to reassurance signals" (p. 40) leaving room for over-reaction and conflict if signals are not interpreted correctly. Tensions appear to have improved with respect to North Korean relations but the argument about over-reacting remains valid.

Third, and closer to home, is how Mexico fits into this broader North American security structure. While the three nations militaries do cooperate, there are larger problems that will complicate the desire by some to bring Mexico more deliberately into the North American security architecture. Sumano notes that some in Canada have issues with losing the special relationship that exists with the US in a Bi-National Command arrangement. (p. 50) More problematic is that the security challenges in the south are different than the security challenges in the North and new leaders in all three countries have different views than their predecessors. This will impact how the machinery of each of the nation’s bureaucracies engage and approach security issues.

The next two sections of the book provide the reader with US and Canadian defence policy perspectives that provide the context for the last section of the book that then deals with the future of NA Strategic Defence. The challenges of funding defence are front and centre for both Canada and the US. Saposky highlights the risks that rising health care costs may have on defense budgets and the US desire to maintain primacy in the global system. Moens, without specifically discussing funding, identifies the negative views of NATO by the Trump administration which the informed reader will know was often characterized around NATO partners not meeting their 2 percent of GDP obligations.

The Canadian context is no better. Nossal concludes his chapter by indicating that "although the 2017 defence policy promises a lot, it in fact does not provide the CAF with the capabilities that it needs in the short to medium term to be strong at home, secure in North America, and engaged in the world." (p. 106) The new defence policy is focused on getting the people component of military capability corrected in the early years in order to ensure the skills sets exist to effectively implement the larger procurement programmes in the out years. Only time will tell if the fiscal circumstances remain favourable in the out years thereby allowing the implementation of the larger and more expensive projects to be completed on time. Canada faces many of the same challenges as our US counterparts when it comes to increasing health care costs and increasing debt levels.

The final section of the book investigates the future of North American Strategic defence and discusses some of the challenges that must be considered. Charron and Ferguson make the point that it will have to be about more than just the renewal of the radars that make up the North Warning System (NWS). An updated NWS must be able to deal with...
US require F-35s as part of the NORAD commitment for interoperability? Should Canada join the ballistic missile defence system? These are just three of a number of topical and contemporary questions raised as the authors discuss the future challenges for North American Strategic defence.

Anyone interested in North American security and our relationship with the US should read this book.

**Dr Craig Stone** holds a BA in Economics from the University of Manitoba and an MA and PhD in War Studies specializing in Defence Economics from the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC). He became a member of the academic faculty in RMC's Department of Defence Studies at the Canadian Forces College in the summer of 2005 after a 30 year career in the Canadian Army as an Artillery Officer.

Dedicated history buffs might even be familiar with some of the more obscure entries, such as those by MGen Bill Griesbach, LGen Maurice Pope, BGen Jim Roberts, Gen Jean Allard, and a recently-discovered one by MGen Ed Morrison of the First World War.²

MGen David Fraser is the latest senior officer to contribute to this short list—and it is definitely a stimulating read. Although *Operation Medusa: The Furious Battle that Saved Afghanistan from the Taliban* is not a “whole-life” memoir, it continues the trend started by MacKenzie, Dallaire and Hillier in chronicling command in combat in less-than-total-war situations—a distinction that might be lost on the soldiers fighting and dying in those conflicts.

And it is unique: the only book-length account of a single battle written by the Canadian general in charge. This operation, which ran from early to mid September 2006, has been described in print before, most notably by the late journalist Adam Day in his excellent three-part series in Legion Magazine³ and by Colonel Bernd Horn in his book *No Lack Of Courage: Operation Medusa, Afghanistan*.⁴ Significantly, first-person
Fraser—a brigadier general at the time—had been commander of NATO’s Regional Command South in Afghanistan since February 2006. That summer, he received intelligence that Taliban forces were massing preparatory to a full-scale ground assault against the alliance’s troops. It would be the biggest battle in NATO’s history.

The Taliban definitely had the home field advantage. Centred on the Panjwayi District—coincidentally the birthplace of the Taliban almost three decades earlier—the enemy knew the terrain intimately; had highly-trained fighters at its disposal; had stockpiled critical commodities and had set countless landmines and IEDs. Corrupt local officials who passed on information about Canadian soldiers’ locations and movements—and even intentions on some occasions—protected Taliban fighters. The terrain also clearly favoured the defender.

Compounding Fraser’s problem was the fact that his troops had just arrived in theatre—and had never been tested in combat. Add to the mix multi-national troops and assets; multiple chains of communications and command; language differences; and national restrictive caveats, and one can begin to understand the enormity of the problem that he faced. Things were not looking good.

Fraser and his co-author, veteran writer Brian Hanington, divide the story of Operation MEDUSA—the codename for the campaign to attack and defeat the Taliban in Panjwayi—into two books. The first lays out the almost year-long prelude to the battle (“The Run-Up”), while the second details the two weeks of combat that followed (“The Battle”). Descriptive one-word titles for each chapter cleverly capture its essence: “Study,” “Engage,” “Plan,” “Strike,” “Bleed,” and “Slaughter.” The Taliban’s actions in massing their troops were a clear break from their previous tactics. In fact, the situation bordered on the bizarre: unconventional troops were using conventional tactics against conventional forces, which then chose to adopt unconventional methods to defeat them—a clear example of how different the war in Afghanistan was from the potential conflicts for which NATO troops had been preparing for a couple of generations.

On 3 August, something different happened after a vehicle hit an IED. Taliban insurgents rose from cover and fired on the Canadians, killing four of them. This was the first time an IED incident had been covered by fire. Fraser admits that something changed that day, but for “a long time we couldn’t figure it out” (p.83). It took a while for the realization to hit him that “they think they can beat us” (p.84).

That was when Fraser understood that he had to figure out how to defeat a force that was digging in for a conventional battle, something he and his troops were not manned, equipped or armed to do.”This, he notes, “is how the rough planning of Operation Medusa started” (p.84). The net result was that, rather than launching a conventional ground assault, Fraser decided he would have to proceed unconventionally: watching, waiting, using a broad range of intelligence assets to find enemy insurgents and the full arsenal of resources at his disposal to kill them—preferably at a stand-off distance.

It is at this point that Fraser explains the book’s subtitle (“The Furious Battle that Saved Afghanistan from the Taliban”). His reasoning goes thusly: if the Taliban won in Panjwayi, it would create a safe haven from which to launch future operations, isolate Kandahar, remove national control of the area and destabilize the Afghan government. Additionally, insurgent success would strengthen Taliban resolve, bolster recruiting, increase the flow of weapons from Pakistan and weaken the homefront resolve of NATO nations.

It could be argued that this is “a bridge too far,” by ascribing more to Operation MEDUSA than it could or actually did achieve. While it is obvious that Afghanistan has not (yet) been saved from the Taliban, Fraser maintains that the operation did accomplish that goal at that particular time.

This discussion leads into the second book, which is about one-third of the total. It describes the actual fighting in vivid, visceral, no holds barred detail. This section alone is worth the price of admission. Time and time again, it illustrates the old military adage that “no plan survives contact with the enemy.” It held as true for Fraser and his forces as it did for generations of their warrior predecessors.

A number of common threads run throughout the book. It appears that even in an age of post-modern asymmetric warfare, certain lessons learned in previous wars remain valid. Among the key ones—backed up by first-hand evidence from Fraser—are the crucial requirements for accurate intelligence and the vital importance of teamwork (both friendly and enemy). Sadly, one lesson learned several times in earlier wars had to be relearned at a cost: the failure to appreciate the effects of artillery and air bombardment on well-entrenched enemy troops.

Fraser also provides honest, critical analyses of the capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces, its allies and the Taliban. Additionally, his heartfelt compassion for the wounded and the fallen shows through time and time again.

Quotations—some of them quite lengthy—from participants at all levels in the operation are scattered throughout the book. They provide thought-provoking points of view from a range of rank levels and nationalities. Additionally, several photographs enhance the text, especially
those with extended captions that tell a “mini-story” of their own.

Maps—an essential component of all good military history writing—are provided in front and back endpapers. Unfortunately, their dark colour schemes detract from the clarity they should portray.

The writing itself will appeal to both avid military readers and a general audience, not an easy task to accomplish. Despite some minor concerns (sub-title claim, map clarity), David Fraser’s book is a well-written, engaging, thought-provoking, highly descriptive chronicle of the biggest battle involving Canadian soldiers since the Korean War. It is also an all-too-rare account by a Canadian general in command during combat.

Notes


6. Usually attributed to Helmuth von Moltke, but also accredited to a variety of other strategic thinkers including Carl von Clausewitz, Napoleon Bonaparte and Sun Tzu, among others.

7. The Canadian Armed Forces defines asymmetric threats as “attempts to circumvent or undermine an opponent’s strengths while exploiting his weaknesses, using methods that differ significantly from the opponent’s usual mode of operations.” As quoted in Patrick Henrichon, "Protecting the Canadian Forces against Asymmetric Threats," Canadian Military Journal 3.4 (Winter 2002), 10.

Retired colonel John Boileau served in the Canadian Army for 37 years. He commanded Lord Strathcona’s Horse (Royal Canadians), taught at the British Army Staff College, was Chief of Staff at Atlantic Militia Area/Land Force Atlantic Area (now 5th Canadian Division), and served as Army Adviser at the Canadian High Commission, London. He is a graduate of the US Army Armour Officer Advanced Course, the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College and the Royal College of Defence Studies. He is the author of 13 books of historical non-fiction (seven of them military history), as well as more than 500 magazine and newspaper articles, book reviews, travelogues, encyclopedia entries and op-ed columns. He is currently Honorary Colonel of the Halifax Rifles (RCAC).
Collectively, using such means to target as propaganda and deceptive media. Covert influencing operations such as criminal activity, ethnic targeting, and irregular warfare with cyber warfare, by intermingling conventional and audience. Hybrid conflict is characterized the attention of a more wide-ranging election tampering (although not soon reinforced by information wars in Russia’s aggressive behaviour in Ukraine. The notice drawn by hybrid conflict was Doctrine, which seemed to presage the so-called Gerasimov Waywardness, perhaps some re-focus is needed. While playing up the specific utility of the Civil-military Cooperation Centre of Excellence (CCOE), it seriously downplays the previous chapters on the complexity of the threat, which would otherwise baffled at, for example, the difference between Civil-military cooperation and Civil-military interaction. thereof, had shifted attention away from deterrence and territorial defence, however, have shifted attention away from civil-military cooperation. In some NATO and European Union CIMIC players. Unfortunately, the NATO Centres of Excellence (COE) chapter, in particular, lapses occasionally into blatant self-promotion, being the most unapologetic in campaigning for more attention. It bemoans that “the end of major operations in Afghanistan and NATO’s growing focus on deterrence and territorial defence, however, have shifted attention away from civil-military cooperation. In some NATO members, civil-military cooperation is on the brink of extinction” (p. 7). Given the reality of budgetary and personnel restraints, in concert with hostile Russian waywardness, perhaps some re-focus is inevitable. While playing up the specific utility of the Civil-military Cooperation Centre of Excellence (CCOE), it seriously downplays the previous chapters on the complexity of the threat, which would argue for increased input from the remaining COEs. This collection of essays provides military and civilian readership with a broad-ranging overview of the role played by civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) in addressing hybrid threats. It will likely garner additional attention simply for including “hybrid warfare” in the title. This form of conflict is not particularly new, having been seen as far back as the Peloponnesians, and appearing in some form within most conflicts from the Romans in Germania, the Spanish Peninsular War, through to Indochina/Vietnam. As a military theory, it received new consideration as the so-called Gerasimov Doctrine, which seemed to presage Russia’s aggressive behaviour in Ukraine. The notice drawn by hybrid conflict was soon reinforced by information wars in the Baltics, as well as U.S. Presidential election tampering (although not addressed in this book), bringing it to the attention of a more wide-ranging audience. Hybrid conflict is characterized by intermingling conventional and irregular warfare with cyber warfare, criminal activity, ethnic targeting, and covert influencing operations such as propaganda and deceptive media. Collectively, using such means to target military objectives, as well as civil society and its governance, diminishes the utility of fighter-bombers and mechanized brigades, hence the linkage with CIMIC. Within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), CIMIC is defined as, “the coordination and cooperation, in support of a mission, between the military and civil actors, including the national population and authorities, as well as international, national, governmental, and non-governmental organizations and agencies.” The ad-hoc approaches to CIMIC, seen throughout the 1990s’ Balkan missions, gave way to a more formalized approach in 1999. Since then, it has been given almost uniformly over to the Reserve side of the CAF, most recently within the newly-formed Canadian Combat Support Brigade. This organization is spread over five provinces and contains such strange bedfellows as artillery, electronic warfare, and engineers. While Canada receives no specific mention within the book, our military does actively support the NATO CIMIC function. The breadth and growing proximity of such hybrid attacks has propelled CIMIC from its previous niche within military stability operations, where it tended to play a limited liaison role, often unwaveringly addressing problems caused by other deployed troops (p. xiii). The increasingly bold moves by Russia has sparked growing questions of potential countermeasures, which has led inexorably to a rise in CIMIC as a potentially useful player given that both hybrid conflict and CIMIC have strong population-centric emphases. This is a well-structured book. Given the variety of means and targets of hybrid warfare, this work turns to a diverse group of military and civilian authors in explaining the relevance of CIMIC via three segments: underlying concepts, key players, and case studies. The editors provide the key concepts within the introduction, which is a valued feature for busy readers or someone looking for a quick overview. The book also includes a list of acronyms, figures, and tables; the four pages of acronyms, when used in concert with the index, proves especially useful for those outside of the CIMIC field who would be otherwise baffled at, for example, the difference between Civil-military cooperation and Civil-military interaction.

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This portion is further diminished by bemoaning hierarchical structures and the disruptions of personnel being posted in and out of the organization – a situation pretty much every developed military organization recognizes as a reality. Perhaps troubling is that one survey cited proudly asserts that “the main benefit of any COE is that we are not in the NATO command structure” (p. 91). This leaves an implied denunciation of NATO’s organizational framework, which the leadership should find troubling.

I found the most personally rewarding chapters to be the case studies, the final portion of the book. For Canadian readers, our troops’ deployments make four of the five analyses resonate directly: Mali; Afghanistan and Lebanon; Ukraine; and the Baltic region. The Ukraine study is particularly strong and receives additional kudos for its focus on cyber threats, which is a timely issue of growing concern. The remaining case study on East Asia may prove useful, given the Royal Canadian Navy’s regional activities and the announced tasking of CAF personnel to Korea, although lessons will have to be inferred given the chapter’s primary focus upon China’s continued expansion into the South China Sea.

The chapter on the United Nations’ operation in Mali may prove sadly prescient for Canadians as it considers the nexus between UN operations and intelligence, which is arguably the weakest link in their peacekeeping track record.[5] Although the chapter is couched in CIMIC terminology, the Mali mission remains one with essentially no peace to keep, in a landscape confused by overlapping and conflicting civilian, military, and NGO actors … before even considering enemy combatants. All of these players are operating in a theatre in which the author generously describes both the fledgling democracy and the host-nation’s military capabilities as “fragile” – a point that was reaffirmed during Mali’s end-July Presidential election that was marred by rocket and mortar attacks and the burning of polling stations (pp. 191-193).

Overall, the book is recommended for its utility in providing topical explanations of, as well as insights into NATO thinking on, the nexus of two themes: hybrid threats, with its potential to be viewed occasionally through some Hollywood action-movie lens, and Civil-military cooperation, which often remains treated as a checklist afterthought to campaign planning (“Oh, we need a CIMIC Annex here.”) Both aspects, CIMIC and hybrid complexity, will be present within international and transnational conflict for the foreseeable future; this book provides a useful, wide-ranging introduction.

Bob Martyn, PhD, is affiliated with the Centre for International and Defence Policy, as well as the Cultural Studies Interdisciplinary Graduate Program, both located at Queen’s University. He has taught within history and politics programmes at the Royal Military College of Canada and Queen’s University, as well as lecturing periodically at the Canadian Forces College. His previous military career provided ribbons for deployments to Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan; with his varied Canadian and international parachute and dive badges, his Mess Kit looked awesome.

Notes

5. See, for example, David Carment and Martin Rudner, eds., Peacekeeping Intelligence: New Players, Extended Boundaries (New York: Routledge, 2006).

In 2012, journalist Marie Colvin was killed while covering the then one-year-old Syrian civil war for the Sunday Times. Colvin had smuggled herself into Homs and was no stranger to personal risk, sporting an eyepatch after she lost her right eye to shrapnel during the Sri Lankan civil war in 2002. Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad shrugged off the news of her death at the time: “It’s a war and she came illegally to Syria. She worked with the terrorists, and because she came illegally, she’s responsible of everything that befall on her.” Recent reports suggest that her death was not accidental, but that Syrian government forces actively tracked her movements and ordered her killing. By now, reports of the threats to reporters, photographers, and freelancers are familiar. In 2016 alone, 127 journalists...
died globally in the course of doing their jobs.\textsuperscript{2} 

Reports of the deaths of journalists, particularly Western journalists, are frequently accompanied by bromides indicating that they knew the risks of their work but disregarded them in order to bring home the stories the public needed to know. Also accompanying the news is the frequent assertion that the world has become more dangerous for journalism in the years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the War on Terror. Many of the memoirs published by current and former war correspondents touch on these themes, that of the intrepid war correspondent disregarding personal safety in an increasingly dangerous environment.

Lindsay Palmer, assistant professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, wrote *Becoming the Story* to interrogate the business of news gathering in contemporary conflict through a different lens than that through which we normally consume news of the deaths or injury of war correspondents, taking Colvin as one of five case studies.

Palmer’s work, while it contains case studies of journalists under fire, is not a collection of profiles documenting journalistic courage or determination. Readers seeking that sort of information might be better served by seeking out works such as Terry Gould’s *Marked for Death: Dying for the Story in the World’s Most Dangerous Places* (Counterpoint, 2009) or memoirs from journalists such as Michelle Shephard’s *Decade of Fear: Reporting from Terrorism’s Grey Zone* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), Michael Petrou’s *Is This Your First War? Travels Through the Post-9/11 Islamic World* (Dundurn, 2012) or Mellissa Fung’s *Under an Afghan Sky* (Harper Perennial, 2012).

In contrast, Palmer conveys the basic account of what occurred to each of her subjects profiled, but the real focus of her investigation is on the business of news, the narratives that form and are marketed in response to journalistic deaths, and the cultural import of these deaths within and outside the industry. It is, in part, a critique of the hypocrisy surrounding the “safety culture” that emerged in newsrooms during the war on terror – the news industry trains its workers in first aid, crisis situations, and encourages both alertness and safety practices, yet the economic model of news, with fewer resources available to overseas bureaus, combined with limited protections for Western workers let alone local journalists, help produce the very conditions that put journalists at risk. When deaths or trauma occur, Palmer notes that reporting on these cases has tended to emphasize the individual freedom and risk-taking of the war correspondent in question rather than prompting an examination of “safety culture”.

Furthermore, she argues, economic and cultural forces have led the news industry, broadly defined, towards simplistic and moralistic explanations for the very conflicts that resulted in the trauma directed at journalists. While many journalists were targeted and killed during the war in the Western Balkans and elsewhere in the 1990s, the seemingly pivotal nature of the 9/11 attacks appeared to erase that history and produce a new Manichean narrative presented throughout print, broadcast, and digital media that in turn informed how the deaths of these journalists were reported on and interpreted (pp.2-10).

One of Palmer’s most convincing case studies is one of the more famous incidents of injury to an embedded war correspondent – the aftermath of a 2006 IED attack that severely injured ABC reporter Bob Woodruff and his cameraman Doug Vogt (originally from Lethbridge, Alberta). Preceding the specifics of Woodruff’s injury, Palmer capably escorts us through the debate over the practice of “embedding” reporters with units of the U.S. military during the Iraq War and how it touched on the question of “safety culture”.

Palmer notes that Iraq was far from the first time that reporters accompanied military units closely – indeed Canadian war correspondents traveled in battledress with an honorary rank and with a military driver during the Second World War and Korea. Similar agreements governed media conduct in the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, as media organizations abided by military controls about what could be reported on in exchange for proximity to the action and some guarantee of safety for their reporters (p.50).

Of course, journalists were injured or killed both as embeds and while reporting independently from the military, but operating with the military offered some advantages, such as professional security during an attack and access to medical evacuation, which proved pivotal in Woodruff’s own survival and in the coverage of his injuries and recovery. Palmer, who interviewed Woodruff for her book, does not dwell on the specific circumstances of his injury, but rather focuses on the narratives that developed in coverage of his injury and recovery, how reports cast him and Vogt as representatives of war correspondents generally, how their risks were characterized as personal, and how Woodruff came to be aligned with U.S. troops that had suffered similar injuries.

Woodruff’s example, Palmer suggests, “illuminated the industrial imperatives that drive the celebrification and commodification of war correspondents in the twenty-first century” (p.69). Palmer argues that these narratives tended to minimize criticism of the war, of the embedding system, and of the emerging news industry model where a visible “personality” like Woodruff is meant to do the work that foreign news bureaus once did before cutbacks and consolidation. Casting its war correspondents as heroic figures, as was the case in the coverage of Woodruff’s road to recovery, amounted to acquiescence with U.S. government
policy: "U.S. networks were not asking the tough questions that their viewers needed answered; instead, they were aligning themselves and their war correspondents with the military men and women whose presence in Iraq had outlasted all of the original predictions." (pp.75-76). Meanwhile, the news industry benefited from the ratings won by the very risks of death and trauma the industry’s “safety culture” sought to prevent. In short, contradictions abound.

In Woodruff’s case study, as in others, Palmer seems to be onto something. The consolidation and cutbacks in media as an industry may well have contributed to the risks that war correspondents took. It may also be said that the nature of some of this war reporting, with close focus on the drama at street-level following an IED attack or during an offensive, may miss something greater about the direction of the war. However, that is only if one leaves out political commentary and analysis beyond the scope of the individual case studies Palmer has offered.

It can be simultaneously true that the media followed Woodruff’s injury and recovery with fascination and that the news media generally mirrored the greater public mood by 2006 that the war in Iraq was on the verge of disaster. How else to explain the fortunes of the Democratic Party in the 2006 mid-terms, and the renewed desire for inquiry and self-criticism about the Iraq missions that resulted in the much-publicized surge of 2007? Palmer’s close focus on the individual case studies reveals much, but, like her subjects, the narratives she pursues also omit important details that are arguably as influential in shaping the media landscape.

This book is not intended for a general readership but for a specialized audience. It is thoroughly researched and contains a variety of international perspectives despite its primary focus on American subjects. Specialists in public relations, communications, journalism, and media studies will find much to chew on and consider in this volume. General readers may find the technical terms and theoretical constructs, however adeptly applied in the chapters, somewhat difficult to follow. With that being said, in a world increasingly defined by low-intensity, asymmetrical wars and terrorism, interested readers will find Palmer’s study of the apparent contradictions in how these wars are covered, and what forces drive this coverage, to be of immediate concern, finding in her notes much for further discussion and debate.

Notes


2. Most of these were in Columbia, Iraq, Mexico, Syria, and Yemen. See Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, Journalists killed in 2016, https://www.cjfe.org/journalists_killed_in_2016_an_interactive_map.

Andrew Burtch is the Canadian War Museum’s post-1945 Historian and an Adjunct Research Professor at Carleton University. His book, Give Me Shelter: The Failure of Canada’s Cold War Civil Defence, received the 2012 C.P. Stacey Award for military history.
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