

**Transformation in the Canadian Forces:
A Sociological Institutional Approach to Change in the CF
from Peacekeeper to War Fighter**

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explain the process of institutional transformation within the armed forces of a democracy. It offers an ideational explanation for this process, which is grounded in sociological institutionalism. Specifically, it argues that one of the most important and powerful factors that can drive institutional transformation within national armed forces are radical shifts in how senior political decision-makers perceive the appropriate "institutional role" of their military forces. To illustrate this process, this paper will examine the recent and radical transformation of the Canadian Forces, from an institution structured to specialize in peacekeeping operations to an institution structured to specialize in counter-insurgency war fighting.

Introduction

The structure and capacity of one of Canada's most widely recognized institutions, the Canadian Forces, is changing rapidly. Indeed, since Paul Martin became Prime Minister in December, 2003, the Canadian Forces have been transforming from a relatively light, virtually immobile force into a heavier, highly mobile force with a vastly enhanced capacity to conduct special operations in hostile overseas territories. As General Rick Hillier put it, the Canadian Forces is currently "in the business of changing almost everything we do." (CBC News, p. 1) The aim of this paper is to explain why this transformation is taking place. In response to this question, this paper hypothesizes that this process has been shaped by an ideational shift in how the Government of Canada conceives the appropriate role of the Canadian Forces, as an institution. Specifically, this paper argues that the government of Jean Chrétien conceived the Canadian Forces as a peacekeeping institution and structured it to reflect this institutional role conception. In contrast, the governments of Paul Martin and Steven Harper conceived the Canadian Forces as a war fighting institution and radically altered the tangible structure and capacity of the institution to reflect their conception of its appropriate role.

This paper is composed of three main parts: first, it provides an overview of key concepts and theoretical assumptions utilized in the paper, which are derived from sociological institutionalism. Second, it explores three key arguments that explain how the institutional role conception of the Canadian Forces maintained by the Martin and Harper governments influenced them to transform the institution into a heavier, highly mobile force with a vastly enhanced capacity to conduct special operations in hostile overseas territories. Finally, it concludes with a summary of the findings of this study and a discussion of the implications of this work and future research that could derive from them.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is rooted in sociological institutionalism, which posits that ideational institutions, such as social norms and roles, matter because they shape and influence political outcomes. According to this approach, political outcomes are influenced by the structural conditions set by ideational institutions. According to Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor, sociological institutionalism “emphasize(s) the way in which institutions influence behavior by providing the cognitive scripts, categories and models that are indispensable for action, not least because without them the world and the behavior of others cannot be interpreted.” (Hall & Taylor, p. 15) Sociological institutionalists stress the importance of behavioural conditioning for specifying the range of options a decision-maker will choose from, and even what options they will imagine being available to them in a given situation. In other words, institutions help to shape the perceptions of actors by concealing certain options from their view and, through this, guide them to make certain decisions rather than others.

Moreover, sociological institutionalists posit that organizations often adopt a new institutional practice because it enhances the social legitimacy of the organization. In other

words, organizations embrace specific institutional forms or practices because they are valued within a certain social environment. (Acharya, p. 248; Hall & Taylor, pp. 946-950; Pierson, p. 136; Thelen, p. 226) Decision-makers will try to modify the structure and capacity of a tangible institution, like the Canadian Forces, to force it to better fit their mental conception of its appropriate role or purpose. In this case, the social environment in question is the relatively small group of political and military decision-makers tasked with setting the basic structures and capabilities of the Canadian Forces.

This paper utilizes the concept of institutional role conception, which is derived from the concept of national role conceptions. National role conceptions refer to the way national leaders think of their country and its place in the world. For instance, national leaders might perceive their country to be a world leader, a neutral mediator and a conciliator, a reliable ally, an aggrieved revolutionary, a pillar of the international community, a protector of the weak, and so on. For example, America's willingness to intervene with military force around the globe may stem at least in part from the tendency of American leaders to think of America as a country with special responsibilities in the international system – as the leader of the free world, the world's policeman, the defender of freedom, and the arsenal of democracy. (Brecher, p. 334; Holsti, p. 233) Likewise, institutional role conceptions refer to the way national leaders think of a particular institution and its place in the world. As Ralph Turner explains, an institutional or national role “is a normative concept. It refers to expected or appropriate behaviour... While a norm is a directive to action, a role is a set of norms. The role is made up of all those norms which are thought to apply to a person occupying a given position.” (Turner, p. 316)

Within this study, the institutional role conceptions being examined are posited to encompass several norms of military practice pertaining to the roles of “peacekeeper” and

“war fighter.” Certainly, how decision makers perceive an institution’s appropriate role in the world can influence their decisions regarding how to shape the institution’s structure and capabilities because it establishes mental parameters defining which structural forms and capabilities seem appropriate to fulfilling that subjectively understood role. The shift in institutional role conception examined in this paper involves a transition away from conceiving of the Canadian Forces as a peacekeeping institution, which was the conception maintained by the Chrétien government, toward conceiving of the Canadian Forces as a war fighting institution, which has gained increased popularity among senior Canadian government officials during the post September 11th era. (Gwyn, p. 52) For example, Jean Chrétien argued during his tenure as Prime Minister that “We Canadians have been always recognized as the best in peacekeeping,” and that Canadians are “always willing to get involved in peacekeeping.” (CBC News, 2003, p. 1; MacNeil, p. 3) Likewise, in reference to Canada’s multi-year commitment to peacekeeping in the Balkans, Chrétien’s first minister of national defence, David Collenette, argued that “This is what Canadians would expect us to do.” (Rinehart, pp. A1, A6)

These statements stand in stark contrast to statements made by the Martin government in *Canada’s International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World*, which explicitly claimed that “The Government believes... a greater emphasis must be placed on the defence of Canada and North America than in the past,” and that the Canadian Forces must “stand ready to participate in military missions against terrorist networks or states who harbour them.” (Graham, p. 12) Prime Minister Steven Harper’s public comments about the Canadian Forces’ activities similarly acknowledge that the institution is now undertaking a war fighting role: “The fact of the matter is we are engaged in a war in Afghanistan.” (Blanchfield, September 16 2006, p. 2; CBC News, September 19

2006, p. 1) He also acknowledged that this represents a major change for the institution, noting that “for a lot of the last 30 or 40 years, we were the ones hanging back.” (Blanchfield, September 16 2006, p. 2; CBC News, September 19 2006, p. 1) Chief of Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, who was first appointed by Prime Minister Martin and continues to serve under Prime Minister Harper, went even further, arguing unambiguously that “we are the Canadian Forces, and our job is to be able to kill people.” (Taylor & Taylor, p. 14) Within this study, the institutional role conceptions maintained by Canada’s senior political and military leadership will serve as the independent variable and the institutional changes resulting from changes in this conception will serve as the dependent variable. Therefore, the transformation of the Canadian Forces that has taken place under the Martin and Harper governments may be understood as an attempt by these actors to ensure that the structure and capabilities of this venerable institution will better correspond to their mental image of its appropriate role in modern conflict.

The Ideational Roots of the Canadian Forces’ Transformation into a Heavy Force

The first major aspect in the ideational transition from the “Canadian Forces as peacekeepers” to the “Canadian Forces as war fighters” institutional role conception involved a transition away from conceiving the Canadian Forces as an institution that should be structured to primarily conduct passive, non-combat patrol functions in relatively passive environments toward conceiving the Canadian Forces as an institution that should be structured to conduct front-line combat operations against determined opponents. As Chief of the Canadian Army, General Andrew Leslie, put it in March, 2007, the Canadian Forces “are no longer a blunt instrument relegated solely to watching from the sidelines or inter-positioning ourselves between two formerly warring factions.” (Elmer, p. 1) The recent

transformation of the Canadian Forces into a far heavier force, in terms of both the defensive armour and offensive weaponry of its overseas deployable units, reflects and is the product of this ideational shift.

The Chrétien government was primarily concerned with maintaining the Canadian Forces' capacity to fulfill relatively unambitious international obligations, including peacekeeping operations in the 1990s, which did not require heavily armed and armoured vehicles because the government official assumed that the institution would rarely, if ever, engage in combat during these missions. Chrétien expressed his conception of the proper role of the Canadian Forces quite clearly when discussing the deployment of Canadian troops to Kosovo in 1999, when he argued that, "happily, they are not going there for fighting and I'm very happy that Canadians will be involved in peacekeeping." (CBC News, June 4 1999 p. 1) In addition, when asked whether he supported committing the Canadian Forces to undertake robust peace enforcement operations, during which ground combat between Canadians and local belligerents was likely, Chrétien stated that he "wasn't comfortable with this new sort of peacemaking." (Keating, p. 167) Beyond this, the Prime Minister famously characterized the Canadian Forces as "boy scouts," which has been interpreted by scholars like Martin Shadwick as a reflection of the prime minister's belief that the Canadian Forces should undertake relatively passive operations when deployed in other countries – keeping an eye out for trouble and lending a helping hand to the locals, but nothing more dangerous than that. (Shadwick, Summer 2006, p. 95)

With such a strong conception of the Canadian Forces as passive peacekeepers, it is unsurprising that the Chrétien government structured the Canadian Forces to enhance its ability to fulfill this role. Indeed, throughout the 1990s, this government worked to transform the institution into a light force, armed with lightly or unarmoured vehicles that lacked the

ability to field heavy fire power, like tank cannons. For example, the Chrétien government reduced the number of Canadian tanks by almost half, from 114 vehicles to 66 by the year 2000. At the same time it sought to replace the Canadian Forces' most heavily armed and armoured ground vehicles with far less robust equipment, including the light armoured personal carrier (LAV III), which the government purchased over 650 of during the late 1990s. (Granatstein, 2002, p. 14; Middlemiss & Stairs, p. 27) The LAV III is designed to attack and defend against lightly armed infantry, not armed or armoured vehicles or even infantry armed with rocket-propelled grenades, which are very common in conflict zones around the world, particularly Afghanistan. (Rudd, p. 1) Speaking directly about the deployment of thousands of Canadian Forces' personnel to non-combat peacekeeping operations throughout the 1990s, Art Eggleton, Minister of National Defence from 1997 to 2002, drew direct connections between his government's conception of the Canadian Forces as passive peacekeepers and its efforts to transform the institution into a lighter force, argued that, "With the type of missions that Canadian Forces are involved in, it is important that our soldiers receive the best equipment available. And we are meeting that objective by providing our soldiers with these new armoured vehicles." (Department of National Defence, September 24 1999, p. 1)

The decisions taken by the Martin and Harper governments to significantly increase the offensive and defensive combat capabilities of the Canadian Forces was shaped by the ideational shift that took place under these governments, conceiving the Canadian Forces as a war fighting institution that required a heavily armed and armoured military to be able to engage in front-line combat operations. The ideational shift was reflected in official policy documents. Indeed, the Martin Government's 2005 *Defence Policy Statement* all but eliminates references to pursuing the "traditional" roles of peacekeeping and states plainly

that future operations for the Canadian Forces will be “far more complex and dangerous” and involve the deployment of troops to failed and failing states where “there is little if any peace to keep.” (Graham, p. 8) The document also stated that the Martin government supported a “long-term transformation process,” to change the institution into one capable of front-line combat operations, and also that “recent investments will allow them to make significant progress toward reaching their goals.” (Graham, p. 2) Taking this into account, an ideational shift clearly took place.

General Hillier has drawn explicit links between the new conception of the Canadian Forces as an institution that should be able to conduct front-line combat operations and the institution’s transformation into a heavier force. For example, in both public speeches and articles, he has argued unambiguously that the Canadian Forces’ role is to kill the “detestable murders and scumbags” who commit terrorism and also argued that the Canadian government “anticipated the demands of the new security environment,” and transformed the Canadian Forces in order to “enhance our relevance, responsiveness, and effectiveness” in this environment. (Hillier, Winter 2005, p. 8; Taylor & Taylor, p. 12) Prime Minister Harper’s first defence minister, Gordon O’Connor, drew even more direct links between the transition in the government’s conception of the Canadian Forces and the structural changes being made to that institution during a speech delivered in June, 2007, in which he argued that, “contrary to the previous conventional wisdom about fighting insurgencies – that we needed to go with a light presence and keep our heavier kit at home – we’ve realized that as modern insurgencies change their tactics, we’ve had to respond by hardening our forces to ensure that our troops stay as safe as possible while performing their vital tasks.” (O’Connor, p. 5)

The structural changes made, or at least attempted, by these governments reflect this ideational shift. Perhaps the most visible changes, in light of the direction taken by the Chrétien regime, include the Martin government's decision to purchase the lightly armoured but heavily armed Mobile Gun System, effectively a LAV III fitted with a tank cannon, and to replace the Canadian Army's Iltis jeeps, which lacked armour or even a roof, with a combination of lightly armoured G-Wagens and medium armoured, mine- and IED-resistant Nyala jeeps to serve as the primary vehicles for Canadian ground troops operating in hostile environments. The Nyalas in particular reflect a belief within the Martin government that the Canadian Forces require the capacity to operate in environments where local fighters will frequently try to blow up Canadian personnel, even in civilian areas. (Shadwick, Spring 2005, p. 72) Speaking on behalf of that government, Major Daryl Morrell explained that the Nyalas were purchased specifically because they are "more robust than the G-Wagen," meaning they are far better armoured, which vastly increases the probability that personnel traveling inside them will survive an explosive attack. (CBC News, January 26 2006, p. 1) Moreover, although the Mobile Gun System is very lightly armoured compared to the tanks it was intended to replace, and therefore far more vulnerable, it could have provided the same offensive capabilities as a tank and, in this respect, it is a far better-armed vehicle than the LAV III preferred by the Chrétien government, which is equipped with a much weaker cannon. The Martin government also sought to provide the Canadian air force and navy with new precision weapons systems to support combat operations far inland. (Graham, p. 14)

The transformational changes attempted under the short-lived Martin government have accelerated under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. This was perhaps most evident in the latter government's decision to cancel the Mobile Gun System and, instead, purchase a fleet of new tanks, the Leopard II, to serve as Canada's most robust front-

line ground combat vehicles. Compared to the Mobile Gun System, the Leopard II is a much heavier vehicle, at approximately three times the weight, with five times as much protective armour, and armed with a larger and more powerful cannon. (Foss, pp. 249, 505) Together, this renders the Leopard II considerably better able to launch and provide protection from heavy firepower. For example, the lightly armoured chassis of the LAV III-based Mobile Gun System made it very vulnerable to improvised explosives and rocket propelled grenade attacks that are common in many contemporary engagements against non-conventional forces. (Bergen, p. 1) The Leopard II is comparatively good at defending against explosives and managing the terrain of Afghanistan. (Pugliese, September 9 2006, p. 1) Indeed, the Leopard II is widely considered to be among the most capable tanks ever constructed. (Foss, pp. 248-249) General Hillier drew direct links between the purchase of the Leopard II and the Canadian Forces' front-line combat role in Afghanistan when he argued that, "With that (tank) gun, to go back to the old Bell telephone commercial, you can reach out and touch somebody from a long ways away." (Blanchfield, p. 2) General Leslie similarly argued that true tanks, not a light armoured vehicle fitted with tank cannon, were necessary to allow the Canadian Forces to conduct front-line combat operations in dangerous environments, like southern Afghanistan. (Blanchfield, p. 2; Leslie, p. 21)

From this it is clear that the transition in institutional role conception that took place after the Chrétien government left office influenced the structure and capabilities of the Canadian Forces. Specifically, the Martin and Harper governments began to conceive the Canadian Forces as an institution that should undertake front-line combat, rather than the more passive patrolling role associated with traditional peacekeeping operations, and transitioned the institution toward a heavier force to allow it to better serve in this new role.

The Ideational Roots of the Canadian Forces' Transformation into a Special Operations-capable Force

The second major aspect in the ideational transition from the “Canadian Forces as peacekeepers” to the “Canadian Forces as war fighters” institutional role conception involved a transition toward conceiving the Canadian Forces as an institution that should be structured to conduct special operations in highly hostile overseas environments. Special operations, which include, among other activities, reconnaissance, unconventional warfare, and counter-terrorism actions, often far behind enemy lines with minimal external support, are generally considered to be the most challenging form of war fighting. (Campbell & Freeman, p. 1) Therefore, conceiving this as an important operational role for the Canadian Forces flows logically from the broader ideational shift toward conceiving the Canadian Forces as a war fighting institution. The recent transformation of the Canadian Forces' command structure to include a command dedicated to the planning and management of special operations forces, and also the vast expansion of the Canadian Forces' special operations capacity, reflects and is the product of this ideational shift.

The Chrétien government rarely acknowledged the existence of special forces personnel within the Canadian Forces. Indeed, this government went out of its way to maintain secrecy about Joint Task Force (JTF) 2's existence and roles by avoiding publicly discussing the unit or its activities, stifling media requests to report on the unit, and preventing virtually any publicly available government document from referring to the unit in any way. (Pugliese, 2002, p. 108) These efforts to prevent information about JTF2 from reaching the public were unique among Canada's close allies, all of whom routinely acknowledge the presence of their special forces in well-recognized conflicts, like the war in Afghanistan, and speak directly and openly to the press about the general activities of these

units. (Pugliese, 2002, pp. 177-178) Moreover, during the rare occasions where the Chrétien government did acknowledge JTF2's existence, it tended to down play its role in overseas operations and instead highlighted its domestic law enforcement role in preparing to respond to terrorist attacks. In other words, the Chrétien government sought to create the impression that JTF2 was effectively a highly-trained police SWAT team, rather than Canada's premier overseas combat unit. (Pugliese, 2002, p. 49, 2003, p. 173) The government's decisions regarding JTF2's structure and capabilities reflected this conception for it kept the unit capped at just under three hundred personnel, which, even for a NATO military the size of Canada's during the 1990s, was proportionally quite small. (Pugliese, 2003, pp. 193-210) This, in turn, ensured that the Canadian Forces' capacity to conduct overseas special operations was fairly limited. Taking this into account, the Chrétien government's efforts arguably reflect and were guided by its conceptualization of the Canadian Forces as peacekeepers rather than a war fighting institution that routinely engages in combat operations behind enemy lines in foreign countries. These latter tasks are certainly not those of "boy scouts."

In stark contrast to the attitude taken by the Chrétien Government, the Martin and Harper governments frequently acknowledge the existence of JTF2 and, in fact, included several references to it in their core defence policy statement. Indeed, the Martin government's *Defence Policy Statement*, which continues to serve as a guiding document under the Harper government, contains numerous references to JTF2 and repeatedly discusses plans to enhance the Canadian Forces' capacity to conduct special operations in foreign countries. (Graham, 2005, pp. 8, 12-13, 16, 18, 29, 31) In addition, when talking to the press about JTF2, General Hillier drew direct links between the expansion of Canada's special forces units and his belief that conducting special operations are an appropriate

institutional role for the Canadian Forces. Indeed, he argued in March 2007 that, since his appointment as Chief of Defence Staff in 2005, JTF2 have been “growing their capacity” to conduct operations on Canadian soil and also abroad, particularly in Afghanistan, and stated plainly that “our special forces are the tools of choice... our special forces are world class.” (Blanchfield, March 28 2007, p. 1) Therefore, rather than try to hide the existence and roles of the Canadian Forces’ premier combat unit from public view, these governments embraced the notion of that the institution should be enhancing its capacity to some of the most highly skilled combatants in the world.

The Martin and Harper governments’ decision to radically increase the capacity of the Canadian Forces to conduct special operations reflects the ideational shift that took place under these governments. For example, the Martin government’s 2005 *Defence Policy Statement* called for the creation of a range of new operationally-focused commands, including Canada Special Operations Command (CANSOFCOM), which has authority over all special forces units. (Graham, p. 11; Hennessey, p. 26; McDonough, p. 3) The forceful language of the 2005 statement, to which General Hillier and Defence Minister Bill Graham had considerable input, represents the new mentality that “security in Canada ultimately begins with stability abroad.” (Graham, p. 4) Speaking about CANSOFCOM in January, 2006, Hillier argued that “CF Transformation is based on meeting the threats of a new security environment; therefore, operational effectiveness is at its heart. It is built on lessons learned by CF members who have cut their teeth on operations. Their collective integrated efforts will have considerably more operational impact.” (Department of National Defence, January 31 2006, p. 1) Colonel Mike Day, who assumed command of CANSOFCOM in June, 2007, offered perhaps the clearest of the shift in institutional role conception with respect to Canada’s special operations capacity when he told reporters that “we live in a

world that has lost its way. I believe that CANSOFCOM has been given the opportunity to answer that challenge.” (Campbell & Freeman, p. 1)

A critically important aspect of CANSOFCOM is that it decentralized and streamlined command authority over special operations. Prior to the creation of this new command, any request for the use of Canadian special operations forces had to be directed to the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff’s office along with a series of requests to the chiefs of the army, navy, and air force regarding the use of military resources that fell under their command authority. The three environmental chiefs, as these officers are known, would then negotiate amongst each other and the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff to decide which service should contribute which resources to a particular operation. (Lerhe, p. 11) This command structure all but guaranteed a slow, cumbersome decision-making process that, in turn, reduced the speed at which the Canadian Forces could conduct special operations. The creation of CANSOFCOM changed all this for it placed control over nearly all resources required to conduct special operations overseas, including ground personnel and equipment and the helicopters needed to transport them within their theatre of operations, under the authority of the officer in charge of CANSOFCOM. This individual now merely needs to seek approval for the operation in question from the Chief of Defence Staff and negotiate the primary means to transport these personnel to the theatre of operations with the air force and/or navy. As Hillier explained in an interview with the CBC, these changes were made to enable the Canadian Forces to “deploy soldiers and supplies quickly... when they are needed” and increase cooperation between the ground, sea, and air elements of the Canadian Forces to increase the effectiveness of the institution as a whole. (CBC News, July 10 2006, p. 1) In an article penned by Hillier, he went onto argue that

Our aim is to achieve significant strategic effect for Canada by producing one

integrated effect on every mission that the Canadian Forces undertakes, whether it is here in Canada, on the continent or overseas. It's not about separate land, air or sea components on a mission where our significant contributions from a national perspective, because of a past silo approach, sometimes did not appear on the international radar scope. This compartmentalized or piecemeal approach reduced our impact and certainly did not enable us to get the strategic impact for Canada that we wanted. And what we want to do is maximize that impact, increasing Canada's profile and increasing our effect in the world in a very real way, shaping the places we go in accordance with our interests and with our values. This is the guiding light of transformation for us. (Hillier, 2006, p. 9)

In addition to these changes to the Canadian Forces' command structure, the Martin and Harper governments funded the development of the Special Operations Task Force (SOTF), a new military formation designed to increase the Canadian Forces' capacity to launch combat operations in foreign countries. (McDonough, p. 4) The SOTF includes JTF2, which doubled in size under the Martin and Harper government to approximately 600 personnel, and a new 750-strong Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR), whose primary function is to secure foreign plots of territory, in the face of violent opposition, in order to allow other elements of the Canadian Forces to safely deploy there. (Day, p. 1) Reflecting on these addition to the Canadian Forces' capacity, Colonel David Barr, the first commander of CANSOFCOM, argued plainly that the CSOR is intended to "fill a void that we had in the past." (Thatcher, p. 1) In other words, by more than quadrupling the size of the Canadian Forces' special forces units, the Martin and Harper governments have sought to vastly enhance the Canadian Forces' capacity to conduct "intervention operations" in other countries, including "limited war-fighting." (Bradford, p. 16; McDonough, p. 4) This, again, reflects the ideational shift among senior Canadian decision-makers toward viewing the Canadian Forces as an institution that should be able to conduct war fighting operations

overseas in countries that may not welcome a Canadian military presence on their soil.
(McDonough, p. 4)

The Ideational Roots of the Canadian Forces' Transformation into a Highly Mobile Force

The third major aspect in the ideational transition from the “Canadian Forces as peacekeepers” to the “Canadian Forces as war fighters” institutional role conception involved a transition away from the Chrétien government’s belief that the Canadian Forces did not need to possess its own transportation capacity and toward viewing the Canadian Forces as an institution that should be independently and rapidly mobile – that is, capable of quickly moving its personnel and equipment into and within conflict zones on its own, without having to rely on allies or other actors. This is an important aspect of the war fighter role conception because being able to transport elements of the Canadian Forces where they want to go, precisely when they want to move, provides the institution the capacity to fight wars on its terms at times and places of its choosing. As Hillier explained when asked about the need to enhance the Canadian Forces’ mobility, “If you can’t lift at least a platoon, or if you can’t lift that new howitzer... with a gun crew and a basic load of ammo, and if you can’t do it from a high altitude, in hot temperatures, and if you can’t do it day and night, and if you can’t life it about 100 km once you’ve got it up – it’s useless to us!” (MacLean, p. 2) The recent transformation of the Canadian Forces into a more mobile force, equipped with multiple world-class transportation vehicles, reflects and is the product of this ideational shift.

Enhancing the mobility of the Canadian Forces received limited political support from the Chrétien government. This reflected that government’s belief that robust transportation capabilities were not necessary for a country dedicated to peacekeeping

operations, in which slow deployment speeds are the norm. (Adelman & Suhrke, p. 37; Jones, p. 11) Even after the difficult deployment of Canadian tanks, in a non-combat role, to the Balkans in the 1990s, the Chrétien government did not perceive the need for an independent transportation capacity. Indeed, when asked about whether his government thought the Canadian Forces should be able to transport their personnel and equipment independently, Chrétien argued that:

Some people say we should. You know we have to act in a different fashion, you know we cannot have equipment waiting in case it is used. You know some complain that we rent planes when we need them, but it's cheaper. What is important is to have our personal ready to go to point A to point B in a rented plane. You know some of this equipment that some people are asking, only the Americans have it, and the Brits. The others don't have it. (MacNeil, pp. 3-4)

John McCallum, who served as Chrétien's defence minister from 2002 to 2003, similarly argued that "no one has yet been able to give me a single instance where the absence of this capability stopped us or significantly delayed us in moving people or equipment from point A to point B." (McCallum, p. 3) The Canadian Forces' mobility capacity, or lack thereof, under the Chrétien government, reflected this conception. For example, in his first act as Prime Minister, Chrétien famously cancelled the purchase of sorely needed replacements for Canada's fleet of Sea King helicopters, which was 30 years old in 1993, calling them frivolous "Cadillacs." (Granatstein, 2004, p. 164) Even when faced with hundreds of millions of dollars in cancellation fees and mounting Sea King crashes, which destroyed several aircraft, he refused to go back on this decision and delayed the decision to replace the helicopters until after he left office ten years later. This government similarly allowed the Canadian Forces' fleet of Hercules transport aircraft, which was also approximately 30 years old in 1993 to slowly atrophy to the point where multiple aircraft had

to be removed from service due to structural wear and overseas operations had to be delayed or cancelled due to mechanical problems associated with the advanced age of the vehicles. (Hataley & Nossal, p. 13) During this period, the Chrétien government also repeatedly rejected requests for proposals to purchase large aircraft that could rapidly transport large numbers of Canadian soldiers and their equipment overseas. Instead of renewing the Canadian Forces' own capacity to transport its personnel and equipment, the Chrétien government relied on open market contracts with the American military and Ukrainian transportation companies to move troops in times of crisis. In effect, because the Canadian Forces lacked this institutional capacity, they had to contract out this capacity to foreign-controlled institutions. This situation was problematic because the Canadian Forces could not guarantee that they would have access to this foreign-controlled lift capacity when needed, particularly during an international crisis when many countries would be drawing on the same finite resources.

As with the ideational shift that contributed to enhancements in the Canadian Forces' capacity to engage in ground combat and overseas special operations, significant enhancements to the mobility of the Canadian Forces occurred after Paul Martin became prime minister in December, 2003, and began implementing his new conception of the proper roles of the institution. For instance, in February, 2004, Minister of National Defence David Pratt began a review of Canada's defence policy and capabilities, during which he highlighted the need to enhance the Canadian Forces' mobility: "government must be able to swiftly send our personnel and equipment where they're needed whether it's across the country or around the world." (Pratt, p. 2) The Martin government's 2005 *Defence Policy Statement* outlined that government's decision to replace Canada's fleet of CC-130Es, which have formed the core of the Canadian Forces' transportation capacity since the 1960s, with

larger C-130J Super Hercules aircraft. The government's explicitly stated rationale behind this proposal was to make the Canadian Forces "more responsive by enhancing their ability to act quickly in the event of crises... they will arrive on the scene faster, make a rapid transition to operations once there, move more effectively within theatre, and sustain deployments." (Graham, p. 11) Moreover, the initial plans to purchase a new fleet of C-47 Chinook heavy lift helicopter, to transport Canadian troops within conflict zones, began under the Martin Liberals. (Graham, p. 14) However, the Martin government was defeated by the Harper Conservatives before it could implement these proposals, and so this task fell to the Harper government. The Harper government was willing to continue what its Liberal predecessors had started because, as General Hillier explains, it also perceived independent mobility to be a necessary capacity for the Canadian Forces:

There are certain things (the Harper government) want to see... volume one of that plan has always been the transportation hub – air, land and sea. If you can't get there, if you can't sustain yourself while you are there, and if you can't recover yourself – you can't do your job. There's no difference whether it is northern Canada, east coast, west coast or Afghanistan. If you can't do those three things – get there, sustain yourself and recover yourself – you can't do your job! (MacLean, p. 2)

The decisions taken by the Martin and Harper governments to restructure the Canadian Forces certainly reflect the major ideational shift in the political leadership of the Canadian Forces. Indeed, Minister of Public Safety, Stockwell Day, argued that "these helicopters will... help protect Canadians at home and abroad while enhancing our capacity to better cooperate with our allies in the fight against terrorism." (Department of National Defence, June 28 2006, p. 1) General Hillier has drawn some of the most direct connections between enhancing the Canadian Forces' independent mobility and enhancing the CF's overall war fighting capacity, arguing that "these helicopters will be a valuable addition to the

Canadian Forces,” which will “allow our troops to deploy into isolated areas in effective numbers, without relying on our allies.” (Department of National Defence, June 28 2006, p. 1) Likewise, Minister O’Connor argued in 2006 that “what we’re trying to do now is put in place the very basic requirements of the military to be effective. Mobilities – air mobility, army mobility on the ground, and mobility at sea, so that’s where we’re starting.” (CTV.ca News Staff, p. 1) In 2007 he similarly argued that “stability operations are not all about ground operations. Adequate and reliable air transport is paramount for mission success. The Canadian Forces have done without vital heavy-lift helicopters for over a decade. This is why our government is moving quickly to acquire 16 Chinook helicopters.” (O’Connor, pp. 5-6) O’Connor went onto argue that Canada’s current:

lack of heavy-lift helicopters limits the CF’s ability to conduct independent operations, and also means, when unavailable, troops must opt for ground transportation, placing them at greater risk of ambushes, landmines, and IEDs. We are taking action to acquire this vital capability, because, fundamentally, the Conservative government does not believe that Canadian Forces should be dependent on equipment from other nations.” (O’Connor, p. 6)

Although the purchase of new Chinook and Hercules aircraft represent significant steps toward enhancing the Canadian Forces’ capacity to rapidly transport its personnel and equipment, the limited size of these aircraft rendered them incapable of moving more than a single major piece of equipment, such as a LAV III, from Canada to a distance conflict zone per trip. Moreover, the newly purchased Leopard II tank cannot fit inside a Hercules and so this vehicle could not be quickly transported to Canadian troops overseas with any of the mobility assets present in the Canadian Forces’ inventory when the Harper government took office in 2006. (Stairs et al., p. 35) Members of the Harper government have repeatedly acknowledged this fact and argued that the Canadian Forces require an independent strategic

lift capability, based around the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III, which can carry any ground vehicle owned by the Canadian Forces, to ensure that the institution could fulfill its war fighter role. For example, Minister O'Connor argued that "to take a leadership role in international operations, an ocean-bound country like Canada needs an independent ability to move heavy equipment to where it is required, without having to rely on allies or contractors." (O'Connor, p. 6)

General Hillier similarly noted that the acquisition of the C-17 strategic air lifters "represents the Canadian Forces' first-ever independent strategic airlift capability," which will serve as a "means for Canada to provide a stronger and faster response in times of international crisis," including transporting Canada's heaviest ground combat equipment anywhere in the world within 24 hours, thus enhancing the Canadian Forces' combat capabilities. (Department of National Defence, August 11, 2007, p. 1) Moreover, in a press release announcing the purchase of the C-17s, the Harper government argued that "today's changing and uncertain global environment demands Canada's military have its own reliable and independent access to strategy airlift to move heavy equipment quickly, over long distances and deliver it to where it is needed... To this end, (the Canadian government) is procuring a fleet of four strategic airlift aircraft." (Department of National Defence, 2007, p. 1)

Taking these statements into account, the purchase of four C-17s by the Harper government in 2006 certainly appears to have been shaped by a significant ideational shift regarding the appropriate role of the Canadian Forces. (Maillet, p. 5) Indeed, especially when viewed in the context of the transition of the Canadian Forces toward a heavier, combat-oriented institution, the Martin and Harper governments' shared recognition of the need to enhance the institution's independent mobility capacity seems to reflect an overarching desire

to allow the institution to make physical contact with threats faster and more easily than ever before by putting “boots on the ground” and in harm’s way. (McDonough, p. 4) In other words, enhancing the institutional capacity of the Canadian Forces in this way can be seen as another aspect of the Martin and Harper governments’ attempts to transform the Canadian Forces into the war fighting institution they envision it to be.

Conclusion

The support found for the hypothesis put forth in this paper, positing that the ideational shift from conceiving the Canadian Forces as a peacekeeping institution to an institution intended for war fighting that took place as the Martin and Harper governments took the reigns of power from Jean Chrétien, has implications for broader scholarship on the Canadian Forces and the value of institutional role conceptions in the study of institutional change. Most importantly, the results of this paper suggest that the transformation of the Canadian Forces must be understood as more than simply a reaction to the fact that the institution is operating in the challenging environment of Southern Afghanistan because it appears clear that the Martin and Harper governments have ordered very particular enhancements in the institution’s capacity that correspond to their equally particular conceptions of that institution’s appropriate role in the world. Taking this into account, a necessary avenue for future research is to expand the universe of cases considered in an effort to better understand the generalizability of institutional role conceptions in explaining previous major structural changes in the Canadian Forces and also changes in other national militaries. Through this process, the theoretical component of this paper will almost certainly undergo further refinement as it evolves to best reflect the dynamics of institutional transformation in the military sphere.

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