

## The "Pause" and the Decision to Renew Canada's Commitment in Afghanistan

### **Abstract**

This paper analyzes how the Government of Canada made the decision to renew its commitment to the mission in Afghanistan in 2003. Although studies of defence policy decisions are common in the United States, research on how the Government of Canada decides to conflicts has received very little attention in academic literature. In an effort to help address this gap, this study engages two questions: how does the Canadian government decide to go to war? In addition, which influential factor(s) best explain Canadian defence policy decisions towards going to war? By examining the case of the origin of Canada's commitment to Afghanistan, which had initially paused in 2002, this study concludes that the 2003 deployment was influenced by the bureaucracy of the Government of Canada and the Canadian Forces, which wanted to show support for the mission. Moreover, this paper also explores the notion that Canada reengaged in Afghanistan as an alternative to engagement in Iraq.

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Since the 1950s, a large volume of literature has been written on Canadian governance structures and institutions. Authors of this literature have revealed the underlying processes that drive these institutions including the federal cabinet, its many committees, the Prime Minister's Office, and party caucuses.<sup>1</sup> In particular, a focus by some authors on the interactions between prime ministers and senior ministers in cabinet has narrowed the number of variables that could presumably influence political decision-making.<sup>2</sup> Despite the degree of knowledge gathered about how the Canadian cabinet works in practice Canadian decision-making literature has, thus far, lacked detailed study of how area-specific policies are made. Specifically, how is the decision made to commit the Canadian Forces to international conflict? The scholarship on conflicts that does exist consists largely of descriptive, journalistic overviews of Canada's involvement in them.<sup>3</sup> These works contain a wealth of information, which makes them valuable as historical texts. However, they offer little in the way of coherent frameworks for understanding why the Government of Canada made the decisions it did. With this in mind, this paper asks two interesting and as yet unanswered questions: how does the Canadian government

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<sup>1</sup> Eddie Goldenberg, *The Way it Works: Inside Ottawa* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2006), Edward Greenspon and Anthony Wilson-Smith, *Double Vision: The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power* (Toronto, ON: Doubleday Canada, 1996), Donald J. Savoie, *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999), Richard Schultz, Orest M. Krulhak, and John C. Terry, eds., *The Canadian Political Process*, 3rd ed. (Toronto, ON: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., 1979), Paul Thomas, "Governing from the Centre: Reconceptualizing the Role of the PM and Cabinet," *Policy Options* 25, no. 1 (2003/2004), Graham White, *Cabinets and First Ministers* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Herman Bakvis, "Prime Minister and Cabinet in Canada: An Autocracy in Need of Reform?," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35, no. 4 (2001), Nicholas d'Ombraim, "Cabinet Secrecy," *Canadian Public Administration* 47, no. 3 (2004), Donald J. Savoie, *Court Government and the Collapse of Accountability in Canada and the United Kingdom* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008), Thomas, "Governing from the Centre.", White, *Cabinets and First Ministers*.

<sup>3</sup> Christie Blatchford, *Fifteen Days: Stories of Bravery, Friendship, Life and Death from inside the New Canadian Army* (Toronto, ON: Anchor Canada, 2008), Kim Campbell, *Time and Chance: The Political Memoirs of Canada's First Woman Prime Minister* (Toronto, ON: Doubleday Canada, 1996), Roméo Dallaire and Brent Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Carroll & Graf, 2004), Sean M. Maloney, "Canada's New and Dangerous Mission in Afghanistan," *Policy Options* (March 2006), Peter Pigott, *Canada in Afghanistan: The War So Far* (Toronto, ON: Dundurn Group, 2007), Chris Wattie, *Contact Charlie: The Canadian Army, the Taliban, and the Battle that Saved Afghanistan* (Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books Ltd., 2008).

decide to go to war? In addition, which influential factor(s), both internal and external, best explain Canadian defence policy decisions? Although this paper cannot definitely answer these questions based on one case study, an analysis of the process of Canadian defence policy decision-making will better collective knowledge of this issue area.

To facilitate this analysis, this paper analyses Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the United States-led mission in Afghanistan in 2001. The decision to deploy with the United States (US) and other allies was made following the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York, NY, and Washington, DC, by Afghanistan-based terrorist group al Qaeda, whose senior leadership operated with the sanction of the Afghan government, the Taliban. During the course of this operation, Canada contributed over three thousand troops to the campaign, including naval, air, and ground assets in support of the US effort to defeat the Taliban government and its terrorist allies. Beyond the 2001 deployment, Canada expanded its initial contribution to the US-led effort by redeploying to Afghanistan in 2003 as head of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) effort to stabilize the state, operating out of the capital, Kabul.<sup>4</sup> The decision process surrounding the return to Afghanistan was made on February 4, 2003, and the factors that contributed to the decisions to deploy forces is the subject of this paper.

### **Summary of Events**

This case's major decision points must be examined in context as a means to better understand the specific factors that influenced the cabinet's decision to deploy forces in February 2003. On September 11, 2001, the terrorist group al Qaeda attacked the US, destroying New

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<sup>4</sup> Koren Marriott, "Canadian Forces Prepare for Operation Athena," ed. Centre for Security and Defence Studies (Ottawa, ON: Carleton University, 2003), 2.

York City's World Trade Centre as well as damaging the US military's bureaucratic headquarters, the Pentagon.<sup>5</sup> Following these attacks on a member of NATO, on September 12, Article 5 of the NATO charter (the fundamental principle that if a NATO ally is attacked by an outside entity the alliance will consider this an act of violence against all members) was activated by David Wright, Canada's Ambassador to NATO and Dean of the North Atlantic Council (NAC).<sup>6</sup> This authorization, coupled with the empathy that Canadian decision-makers felt toward the US following the attacks, committed Canada to the operation. As a result of the NATO decision, on October 7, 2001, the US initiated OEF and began strikes against Taliban and al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> On the same day, Canada announced that it would provide military forces in the form of naval assets and special forces soldiers from Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) to the conflict. In addition, on January 22, 2002, the 3rd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (3PPCLI) was deployed as Canada's main ground contribution in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup>

As this pertains to the 2003 deployment, in January 2003, in a meeting between US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Minister of National Defence John McCallum, Rumsfeld suggested that Canada could lead the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, he suggested that NATO could administer the mission. This request prompted Canada to consider the redeployment and the proposal of NATO becoming

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<sup>5</sup> William Maley, *Afghanistan Wars* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 251-252.

<sup>6</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "What is Article 5?" Accessed November 16, 2011. <http://www.nato.int/terrorism/five.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," (Washington, DC: CRS Report for Congress, 2004), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Sean M. Maloney, "Enduring the Freedom: A Rogue Historian in Afghanistan," (Toronto, ON: Potomac Books Inc, 2005), 58.

<sup>9</sup> Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang, *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar* (Toronto, ON: Viking Canada, 2007), 49.

involved, a prospect that was supported by many in the Government of Canada. Critically, the timing of the request coincided with the decision being made within Canada regarding deploying to Iraq, a decision that many political leaders did not support. Therefore, the prospect of deploying a large Canadian contribution to Afghanistan might negate an Iraq mission because Canada would not have the resources available to deploy. The decision to redeploy to Afghanistan was made on February 4, 2003, and was announced by McCallum in the House of Commons on February 10.

### **Intervention Decision(s)**

Canada made its decision to redeploy to Afghanistan on February 4, 2003. It will be the objective of this paper to determine the motivating factors behind Canada's decision to redeploy to Afghanistan in 2003 by applying the Conflict Intervention Framework.

### **The Conflict Intervention Framework**

The central supposition of the Conflict Intervention Framework is that the relative strength or weakness of internal and external governance factors influences the Government of Canada, which in turn influences Canada's decision whether or not to resort to force. The core logic is that decision-makers are influenced by a number of factors emanating from their political environment. Its central tenet is that the degree of debate among key decision-makers, public interest, and international partnerships each play an important role in defence policy decisions. High convergence among these factors should encourage a speedy decision, and in the case where factors are encouraging intervention, that should occur. Conversely, where actors in the decision process disagree on the motivation and the ability to deploy forces it is likely that a

decision will be made against intervention.<sup>10</sup> The specific factors taken into consideration include: interdepartmental debate involving the central agencies and departments involved in the decision to deploy forces; the relative influence of the prime minister and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO); whether public opinion is supportive or opposed to a military deployment; advice from senior military commanders; influence from the US; and Canada's international obligations to the United Nations (UN) and/or NATO.

The following sections of this paper examine the case to determine the influence that each factor had on the decision to deploy forces. Following this, the paper will present its conclusion where the factors will be evaluated in relation to one another to determine their ultimate influence in this case.

This paper explores the following hypotheses:

*Consistency in support of intervention is positively associated with approval of the mission, and consistency against is associated with disapproval, and that inconsistency in the policy positions of the two departments is positively associated with disapproval of the mission (H1).*

*The military's recommendation on the feasibility of the operation for the CF, should influence the decision for or against the deployment of military force (H2).*

*Canada will deploy forces in conflicts where it feels that the mission is important to the international institutions of which it is a member (H3).*

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<sup>10</sup> Luc Bernier, Keith Brownsey, and Michael Howlett, eds., *Executive Styles in Canada: Cabinet Structures and Leadership Practices in Canadian Government* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 29.

## *Factors influencing defence policy decision-making*

### Interdepartmental Debate

The Conflict Intervention Framework predicted that consistency in support of intervention is positively associated with approval of the mission, and consistency against is associated with disapproval, and that inconsistency in the policy positions of the two departments is positively associated with disapproval of the mission. This prediction was borne out in this case.

Following the initial deployment to Afghanistan in 2001-2002, which included ground forces that deployed in January 2002 and were removed in July 2002, senior DFAIT and DND officials were confident that Canada would be asked to redeploy a major ground forces commitment to Afghanistan in 2003. During its deployment Canada served alongside many of its closest allies and many bureaucrats anticipated that the CF would be called upon to assist stabilization efforts in many regions of the country, particularly in the south.<sup>11</sup> In addition, in late 2002, Canada had been discussing bilaterally with the US about the possibility that it may assist in a deployment to Iraq, pending UN authorization of a new resolution that allowed for the deployment.<sup>12</sup> Considering both of these possible scenarios, senior DND bureaucrats initially were hesitant to commit to any deployment.<sup>13</sup> Many in DND had been convinced by NDHQ of the need for an operational pause to allow their forces to retrain and rest from their high

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<sup>11</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>12</sup> G.R. Maddison, "DCDS Guidance - Commander Canadian Joint Task Force South West Asia (CA JTFSWA) USCENTCOM Liaison for Potential Military Operations Against Iraq," (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, December 17, 2002), 1, Carol Markham and Aaron Hywarren, "Re: Re TP On NATO and New US Request," (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, December 5, 2002), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Confidential Interview.

operational tempo experienced over the last few decades and, therefore, wanted to give the CF as much time as possible away from a potentially difficult combat mission.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, accounts of the decision-making process contain several references to the positive outlook that DFAIT and DND had towards a second deployment to Afghanistan. For example, according to a DND official close to the decision to deploy the second mission, "it was fairly clear that the minister, and the political level that they wanted to do it... we [bureaucrats] thought it was only a matter of time before we would make a contribution anyway and Kabul was a useful deployment[.]"<sup>15</sup> Accounts also confirm that the Afghanistan deployment was favored by ministers and the PMO when compared to Iraq because the evidence presented to Canada about weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) did not convince Canadian intelligence agents and senior bureaucrats of the possible threat that the US suspected Iraq posed to the international community.<sup>16</sup> Afghanistan, then, to senior bureaucrats in both departments, appeared to be a more viable option, politically, for the CF; it would be feasible for the CF; and it could be supported by bureaucrats and politicians. For example, despite Iraq appearing to be the easier prospect for a deployment in the short term, senior bureaucrats were aware that the mission would not receive much political support in Canada or from public opinion, which was diametrically opposed to the potential of an Iraq deployment.<sup>17</sup> This certainly decreased the possibility that Iraq would be seriously considered as a deployment for the CF. Consequently, as Canada was expected to receive some pressure from its allies to assist in further stabilization efforts in Afghanistan, senior bureaucrats in DFAIT and DND moved to begin discussions

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<sup>14</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>15</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>16</sup> Corri Barr, "Secret: Briefing Note for the Minister of National Defence," (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, September 2002), 2, Confidential Interview.

<sup>17</sup> Gloria Galloway, "Iraqi Crisis: Canadians Oppose War in Iraq Without UN: Only 15 per cent Willing to Endorse Unilateral U.S. Invasion, Poll Says," *The Globe and Mail*, January 13, 2003.



between counterparts in both departments about the potential for another deployment beginning in late 2002.

Although some in DND and NDHQ would have preferred a higher profile deployment like Iraq to a second deployment to Afghanistan, the ministers of both departments were reluctant to show much support in late 2002 and early 2003 for an Iraq deployment. For instance, DND officials were prevented from attending further discussions at US Central Command (CENTCOM) in Tampa, Florida where meetings were taking place on a deployment to Iraq.<sup>18</sup> Some in DND and NDHQ argued that attending these meetings was important because the Government of Canada had not ruled out the possibility at that time that it might deploy to Iraq in 2003, and therefore the CF should be involved in military planning.<sup>19</sup> With respect to the ministers of the departments, however, they did not believe that Iraq presented a viable alternative to Afghanistan and strongly preferred a return to Afghanistan because it could avoid the possibility that Canada would deploy to Iraq with anything more than a token contribution. With this in mind, Afghanistan was strongly supported by politicians and bureaucrats when compared to Iraq and official contingency planning and policy development focused on the potential for a second deployment.

The US, rather than Canada, provided the alternative that the ministers of DFAIT and DND required to fully avoid the potential of a deployment to Iraq. On January 8, 2003, Minister of National Defence McCallum met with US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld at the Pentagon in Washington, DC, where the latter suggested that Canada should lead the ISAF mission in

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with John McCallum.

<sup>19</sup> Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 59.

Kabul.<sup>20</sup> This suggestion had strategic advantages for the US: Canada's deployment to Afghanistan would allow American troops that had been deployed to Afghanistan to be repurposed for an invasion of Iraq.<sup>21</sup> The US was also concerned about ISAF's leadership once Germany and the Netherlands ended their six-month rotation.<sup>22</sup> The future of ISAF would be raised at a NATO meeting in June 2003 and the US hoped to find a leadership candidate for the mission, a problem that would be solved by NATO administering the operation. For Canada, the option of ISAF being under NATO was particularly appealing because the force could provide the security, command and control, logistics, and infrastructure that was often lacking in a UN-led mission.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the concern often raised by a country of Canada's size is that, alone, it may have difficulty controlling a large coalition of states.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, for DFAIT and DND, by operating as NATO mission commander Canada would be provided with the necessary elements to control a coalition that it simply would not have as a single, and relatively weak militarily, state. Consequently, following this meeting, the US request drove policy development in DND and later DFAIT toward seeking NATO as the new administrative support for the ISAF mission.

The suggestion by the US that Canada should lead the ISAF mission had important implications for Canada, and in particular DFAIT's and DND's decisions, that informed their ministers. Specifically, bureaucrats in both departments argued that Canada could not deploy to both states because of the CF's limitations on equipment and manpower and, therefore, politicians would need to choose the mission that would be best for Canada. Several accounts by

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 46, N. Thalakada, "Visit of Minister McCallum to Washington, DC - January 2003 - Overview Brief," (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, December 17, 2002), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Cockburn, *Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall, and Catastrophic Legacy*, 1st Scribner hardcover ed. (New York, NY: Scribner, 2007), 169-170, Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 287.

<sup>22</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>23</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>24</sup> Confidential Interview.

senior bureaucrats and military planners argue this point. For example, prior to McCallum's meeting with Rumsfeld, notes prepared by DND for McCallum argued that additional commitments by the CF to Iraq or Afghanistan would require that Canada to consider the CF's capacity to accomplish further tasks.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, recently appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs Bill Graham argued that committing to Afghanistan would make it difficult for Canada to provide any troops for a possible engagement in Iraq. Indeed, as Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang rightly state, "a consensus began to form at the political level and in the Foreign Ministry in Ottawa that Canada should take on the leadership [of ISAF], especially if we were not going to Iraq."<sup>26</sup> Graham, who recognized the political ramifications that could result from not deploying to Iraq with the US, noted that many inside the government called the Afghanistan deployment "the Afghanistan solution" to the Iraq problem.<sup>27</sup>

The two departments were also influenced in their decision to choose Afghanistan because of limitations in manpower. In 2003, the CF's regular forces totaled approximately 65,000. Approximately 19,000 were members of the Army,<sup>28</sup> and of these, 1,300 soldiers were already deployed to Bosnia as part of peacekeeping operations, leaving approximately 2,000-3,000 troops that could be deployed in a single operation in the long term and not interfere with committed peacekeeping deployments around the world.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, senior NDHQ commanders made it clear to DND and the Government of Canada that a choice would have to be made about deploying to either Afghanistan or Iraq: the option of both would not provide much in the way of tangible forces for either operation. Throughout the 2001-2002 deployment,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 65.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> David Bercuson, J.L. Granatstein, and Nancy Pearson Mackie, "Lessons Learned? What Canada Should Learn from Afghanistan," (Calgary, AB: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 2011), 427.

<sup>29</sup> Confidential Interview.

Canada had found it difficult to find any ground forces immediately available for deployment, and therefore the deployment of 3PPCLI in January 2002 was unsustainable in light of Canada's other commitments.<sup>30</sup> One senior defence official was transparent in their assessment of the influence of the troop limitations the CF had: "accepting the leadership [of ISAF] was not the alternative to Iraq, it was the forces, the size of the forces, we deployed enough forces in Afghanistan that we couldn't have had a separate [deployment], of any meaningful size, in Iraq."<sup>31</sup> He also noted that Canada's discussion of the ISAF leadership with NATO was begun, in part, because of observations made of Germany, a state that had committed such large forces to Afghanistan that they too could not deploy a substantial force to Iraq as a result.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, among DFAIT and DND's ministers and bureaucrats the prospect of deploying to Afghanistan, largely because of troop limitations, presented a political alternative to the Iraq War.

Moreover, as predicted by the Conflict Intervention Framework, the agreement between the two departments about the merits of redeploying to Afghanistan encouraged the Government of Canada as a whole to pursue the Afghanistan option rather than Iraq. Indeed, following his initial discussion with Rumsfeld, McCallum met with his Deputy Minister, Margaret Bloodworth, and Canada's senior military commanders to inform them of the prospect that Canada could lead the ISAF mission and to determine the feasibility of doing so.<sup>33</sup> Following this initial discussion, principal members of DND, including McCallum, Bloodworth, and Calder, in addition to senior members of NDHQ such as Chief of Defence Staff Ray Henault and Deputy Chief of Defence Staff Greg Maddison, met weekly between early January and the February 2003 to determine Canada's position on deploying to Afghanistan. Moreover, a

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<sup>30</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 67.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 57.

committee of Foreign Affairs and Defence officials was established that met daily to discuss the Afghanistan deployment, arrange for diplomats and military staff officers to visit Afghanistan to assess Canada's needs as potential leader of the NATO mission, and to meet with Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai.<sup>34</sup> Senior civilian and military officials present at these discussions confirm that, when compared to Iraq, Afghanistan received much more serious planning in terms of finding available resources, shoring up political support, and discussion with foreign partners, than Iraq did. Consideration of Iraq did not move far beyond routine contingency planning, which was never officially requested by the ministers of either department.<sup>35</sup>

In interdepartmental meetings, senior bureaucrats discussed the conditions that would be necessary for Canada to deploy as leader of the ISAF mission, one of which was that DFAIT would need to establish a political presence in Afghanistan.<sup>36</sup> Senior politico-military decision-makers argued in early 2003 that, for Canada to take on a leadership role in the mission, Canada would need to have a political presence in the country that could deal with potential political concerns from other NATO partners or the state of Afghanistan. DFAIT established a Canadian embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, on August 7, 2003, a few months after the request came from DND officials, including installing former DFAIT Assistant Deputy Minister Christopher Alexander as Canada's Ambassador to Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> Sources close to the decision noted that the immediate action to establish a Canadian Embassy in Afghanistan was driven by the agreement between DFAIT and DND that the mission was important and that the requirements of the CF

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>35</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>36</sup> Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Bercuson, Granatstein, and Pearson Mackie, "Lessons Learned?," 4, CTV News Staff, "Afghanistan: A Timeline of Canadian Involvement Post-9/11," *CTV News*, March 7, 2008, Confidential Interview.

should be met to ensure that the decision was made to redeploy to Afghanistan, which would be influenced by NDHQ's approval of the plan.

Consequently, on February 4, 2003, Canada leading the ISAF mission was proposed in the federal cabinet. Accounts of the meeting by Heritage Minister Sheila Copps suggest that Afghanistan was presented by McCallum and Graham as the best option for the CF, and that choosing to deploy a sizable force to that country could avoid political difficulties that could arise from the expected decision to not deploy to Iraq.<sup>38</sup> The fact that DFAIT and DND were in agreement about the motivations for the Afghanistan mission, and had been developing policy to support the mission since the end of the previous deployment, encouraged the rest of the cabinet to approve the recommendation of the foreign and defence policy focused departments. As a result, on February 12, 2003, Prime Minister Chrétien announced that Canada would be deploying a new battle group to Afghanistan, which would arrive in August, and that Canada would lead the newly assigned NATO mission.

Taking this into account, the decision to deploy to Afghanistan in 2001 was encouraged by the situation faced by Canada following the September 11, 2001, attacks. In light of these attacks DFAIT and DND strongly emphasized the need for Canada to deploy in support of the US and, in turn, the decision-making process during the September-October 2001 period was remarkably straight-forward with both departments being in agreement, a factor that accelerated the process of finding the resources that Canada could deploy. In addition, the 2003 decision to redeploy to Afghanistan was made based on existing policy that Canada would likely return to Afghanistan, which had been the focus of both departments in the intervening year. The decision by the US to support Canada deploying to Afghanistan as leader of a NATO ISAF mission

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<sup>38</sup> Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 67-68.

solidified the resolve of many in Canada to redeploy, and this option encouraged the departments to support the operation because it allowed them to avoid the difficult political question of deploying to Iraq.

### Military Advice

The Conflict Intervention Framework predicted that the military's recommendation on the feasibility of the operation for the CF, should influence the decision for or against the deployment of military force. This prediction was borne out in this case. Specifically, the CF's concerns about feasibility for the CF, and the resources that could be provided to sustain an operation in Afghanistan, were made clear to senior Canadian political officials after the September 11 attacks, and were reiterated at the outset of planning for Operation Apollo.<sup>39</sup> As the operation proceeded in 2001 and 2002, Chief of Defence Staff Henault made it clear to members of the Cabinet that the CF would need an operational "pause" in order to retrain so that they could redeploy to Afghanistan or elsewhere in 2003.<sup>40</sup> As predicted by the framework, feasibility was a major concern for senior military decision-makers because they were primarily concerned with maintaining force commitments, in addition to having the capacity to deploy a significant contribution to the WOT. Henault expressed his concern to DND, including the minister, that since the end of the Cold War that the CF had endured a high operational tempo

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<sup>39</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>40</sup> Louise Bisson, "Leadership and Post Traumatic Stress: Are the CF Leaders of Today Doing Everything They Can?" (Masters thes., Canadian Forces College, 2003) 45-46, Ross Fetterly, "The Cost of Peacekeeping: Canada," *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal* 1, no. 2 (2006): 47, Confidential Interview, Ray Henault, "CDS Speaking Notes" (paper presented at the Conference on Defence Association, Ottawa, ON, February 23 2003).

which had made it difficult for the CF to retrain and rest between operations due to the high demands on troops to deploy to another theatre.<sup>41</sup>

For instance, since the 1990s the Canadian Army had been able to maintain the capacity to provide two battle-group sized units abroad to peace support operations at significant cost to soldiers who on average worked an extra 80 days beyond the typical work year.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the Army's concerns about training were made clear to Henault by the fact that in 2001-2002 vital combat training had been lacking at the brigade level.<sup>43</sup> Beyond the Army, the Navy and Air Force were also burdened by continuous deployments. In 2001, the navy was suffering from significant staff shortages which required crew workloads to be heavy and personnel to be posted from unit to unit as a means of manning Canada's surface fleet.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, the Air Force was relying increasingly on reserve units to sustain necessary force levels.<sup>45</sup>

NDHQ officials' influence on political decision-makers was clearly demonstrated when the ground force contingent neared the end of its deployment in mid-2002. Canada had received requests by the US and other allies to continue the deployment through rotations of CF troops, a request that was rejected by NDHQ. Indeed, according to an official close to the decision, NDHQ reiterated to civilian decision-makers near the end of the PPCLI deployment that they had been "very clear that no we weren't able to do that... we couldn't do that without a pause of

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<sup>41</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>42</sup> Colin Kenny and J. Michael Forrestall, "Canadian Security and Military Preparedness: Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence," (Ottawa, ON: Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, 2002), 25.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, "Canadian Security and Military Preparedness: Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence," (Ottawa, ON: Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, February 2002), 25-26.



six months or so... so we did do the deployment when the pressure came to actually rotate we said no[.]”<sup>46</sup>

As a result of the 2001 deployment, NDHQ's influence was felt in the decision to redeploy to Afghanistan in 2003. Indeed, following the pause in Canadian operations between July 2002 and February 2003, the CF had been given sufficient time to retrain soldiers in infantry tactics and with new equipment (including Light Armoured Vehicles (LAV IIIs) and Stryker vehicles).<sup>47</sup> For the CF, Canada's military was in the best fighting position that it had been in since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, following the rotation of all its units through the retraining program Canada also had built up additional reserves which could be contributed to an operation.<sup>48</sup> Most senior military planners supported redeployment to Afghanistan, a mission that could make use of the CF's new training and equipment, and would allow Canada to once again support the US and other allies in the fight against international terrorism.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the military's common concern about the feasibility of the operation for the CF had largely subsided following the break in operations in July 2002. Similarly, DFAIT, DND, and the PMO were supportive of a redeployment to Afghanistan. For instance, according to sources close to the decision to redeploy to Afghanistan, political decision-makers had not intended to end the original 2001 deployment and were only convinced to do so based on recommendations from NDHQ. Therefore, NDHQ had little difficulty convincing political decision-makers to support a second deployment.

Discussion of the possibility that Canada could lead ISAF encouraged most senior commanders in NDHQ. Although the decision to lead the mission was made at the political

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<sup>46</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Confidential Interview.

level, NDHQ had an important influence on the decision. For instance, NDHQ stated to DND officials that senior commanders believed some requirements should be met before Canada could contribute additional forces. First, Canada needed a political presence in Afghanistan: specifically, an embassy would have to be established in Kabul.<sup>50</sup> In response, DFAIT established the embassy in early 2003.<sup>51</sup> Second, given the complexities of operating in Afghanistan and the required resources for the lead state, including intelligence, command and control, and logistics, Canada should only take on the leadership position if the mission becomes associated with NATO. NATO support was particularly important to NDHQ officials because members of the Army, including Chief of the Land Staff Mike Jeffrey, were concerned about the risks involved in deploying to a violent war zone such as Afghanistan.<sup>52</sup> The suggestion of NATO leading the mission would have assisted NDHQ in general in appeasing members of the Army command who often do not want to work under loose UN mandates. Consequently, by early 2003 DND had been in early discussions with German Minister of Defence Peter Struck and NATO's Secretary General George Robertson about ISAF becoming a NATO mission with Canada as lead nation.

Moreover, senior NDHQ officials were influential in the decision to support Afghanistan over potential operations in Iraq. The possibility of contributing to Iraq in late 2002 or early 2003 was being assessed by some in the Canadian Army in the fall of 2002 despite no official plans being requested by DND.<sup>53</sup> For example, DND officials had been discussing the possibility that Canada would make another contribution to Afghanistan in October 2002, just months after the

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<sup>50</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>51</sup> Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 66, Pigott, *Canada in Afghanistan*, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Sharon Hobson, "The Information Gap: Why the Canadian Public Doesn't Know More About its Military," (Calgary, AB: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2007), 9.

<sup>53</sup> Confidential Interview, Confidential Interview.

pull-out of military forces.<sup>54</sup> These discussions were influenced in part by US interest in an invasion of Iraq that was being actively discussed bilaterally with Canadian officials through political and military channels. For example, the possibility of Iraq was discussed in a briefing to the Minister of National Defence on the ongoing OEF, in which NDHQ staff specifically discussed that US CENTCOM was seeking additional troops for Afghanistan from coalition partners so that US forces could be deployed to Iraq.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, the US was also requesting Canada's support through political channels for Afghanistan rather than Iraq. The US needed its allies, including Canada, to provide forces for Afghanistan so that it could relocate its forces to Iraq. By January 2003, McCallum had met with Rumsfeld to discuss the Iraq mission and had been advised that the US would prefer additional support in Afghanistan and would support Canada leading ISAF. For Canada, by providing troops to Afghanistan rather than Iraq the Government of Canada could bypass the difficult political issue of contributing to Iraq, which was not supported by the Canadian public, many politicians in the Chrétien government, or international partners.

Debate about the mission was also ongoing within various levels of NDHQ, and in early January NDHQ was requesting direction on where it should focus its effort.<sup>56</sup> According to senior defence officials in the Army, Iraq appeared to be the favourable option because it would likely be short-term compared to Afghanistan, which would give the Army some relief from the number of deployments they were actively engaged in.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, from Canada's recent

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<sup>54</sup> G.R. Maddison, "Briefing to MND," (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 2002), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Confidential Interview, G.R. Maddison, "Afghanistan / Iraq Planning Update: Briefing to Level Ones," (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, October 3, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Confidential Interview, George Fyffe, "Iraq: The Military Campaign," (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, September 30, 2002), 4, Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 61.

experience in Afghanistan, the members of the Army argued that there were fewer "targets" of opportunity there than in Iraq.<sup>58</sup>

Despite all this, Henault and Maddison were actively supporting engagement in Afghanistan for several reasons: it would be politically supported, the US was also supportive of Canada's involvement, Canada would only participate if it was the leader of a NATO mission, and the operational pause had enabled the CF to sustain a deployment there. The CF had successfully retrained its forces on the use of new equipment, including LAV IIIs, had established new urban combat scenarios and training, and were given time to ready for a new deployment.<sup>59</sup> These measures involved a particular focus on training for a mission such as Afghanistan or Iraq, which CF commanders anticipated would involve more patrols and less direct action between armoured units. Moreover, many in DND and NDHQ realized that making this contribution would effectively make it impossible for Canada to contribute actual troops to Iraq.<sup>60</sup> As a result, according to a senior defence official, efforts were put into designing possible scenarios for contributing to Afghanistan rather than Iraq in 2002.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, as the Conflict Intervention Framework predicted, feasibility was a main concern to Canadian decision-makers. Yet, the political choice of Afghanistan, rather than Iraq, was of utmost importance when deciding on the mission.

Taking this into account, the CF's concerns over feasibility was a notable yet, technical, influence on the Government of Canada's decision to redeploy in 2003.

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<sup>58</sup> Bisson, "Leadership and Post Traumatic Stress" 45, Confidential Interview, Henault, "CDS Speaking Notes".

<sup>59</sup> Greg Burton, "An Urban Operations Training Capability for the Canadian Army," *Canadian Army Journal* 9, no. 1 (2006): 102.

<sup>60</sup> Confidential Interview, Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 66.

<sup>61</sup> Confidential Interview.

## International Obligations

The Conflict Intervention Framework predicted that Canada will deploy forces in conflicts where it feels that the mission is important to the international institutions of which it is a member. Specifically, if the mission is to be conducted under the UN or NATO and the mission is important to their members, then Canada will be influenced to become involved because of its ties to the organization. This prediction was borne out in this case. The decision to redeploy to Afghanistan in 2003 was shaped by the importance of NATO to senior Canadian politico-military decision-makers. Since the beginning of the operation in 2001, Canada's decisions on deploying to Afghanistan had been closely tied to NATO's willingness to support the mission. In late 2002, suggestions were made to Canada that NATO could consider taking over the mission from the UN in 2003. Conducting the mission with NATO encouraged Canadian decision-makers to consider redeployment for several reasons.

First, for the CF, NATO could provide the basing, command and control, intelligence sharing, and logistical expertise that Canada would need to lead the mission.<sup>62</sup> For instance, once a UN mission is completed the expertise that UN mission commanders develop and cultivate over the course of a operation is lost.<sup>63</sup> In NATO operations, the knowledge gained over the sixty years of experience in developing command and control and base policy is utilized from one mission to the next. Second, the UN was considered by many in NDHQ to be very poor at these specific tasks, and without a formal framework for setting up how they should be managed it would be up to the lead nation to provide these resources. Third, a NATO mission has advantages in the funding provided for the mission, which is significantly higher when compared

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<sup>62</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

to UN missions on a per soldier basis. In terms of cost and manpower, this alternative was not acceptable to senior NDHQ commanders.<sup>64</sup> Fourth, the NATO mission was a binding effort by its members, which would require them to provide at least some kind of support for the mission – preferably military support.

Fifth, by conducting the mission within NATO, a framework would be provided for dealing with other states. An often-cited impediment to UN operations is that there is no formal mechanism for communication and managing states' compliance with resolutions. Given NATO's purpose as a military organization, it has formal mechanisms for communication between its members, both in the field and through a series of bilateral and multilateral methods, meetings, and institutions such as the NAC.<sup>65</sup> Members of NDHQ and DND have repeatedly acknowledged during recent cases of Canadian military intervention that the absence of these frameworks under the UN has often produced difficulties in command and control, particularly in the ability to utilize other states' forces in times of need.<sup>66</sup> One defence official noted that in many UN missions communications is a big issue because the mission is "made from 50 countries that don't speak the same language... they can't even sort themselves out on who will be on duty that night."<sup>67</sup> A sixth major difficulty faced by UN missions was a reliance on states to volunteer to lead the force every six months. Although mandates can be renewed, as Germany intended to do in 2003, renewals were often negotiated by the current lead state and often states would want to end their mandate after a single term. Coupled with these problems, finding a mission commander was often difficult and the position was not considered to be desirable.<sup>68</sup> In

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, Confidential Interview.

<sup>65</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>66</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>67</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>68</sup> Confidential Interview, Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 48.

contrast, under NATO leadership the organization would be responsible for finding a replacement command once the current states' tour of duty had ended. Thus, working within NATO was highly favoured by Canadian political-military decision-makers in comparison to a UN option.

Another important influence on the Government of Canada in deciding on the 2003 deployment was the United Kingdom (UK). Canadian central decision-makers were under pressure from the UK to contribute to the ISAF mission in 2002 and early 2003, as Canada was seen as a reliable partner and one willing to take on more difficult assignments than many European states. To the UK and other members of the European mission in Afghanistan, Canada had performed well and achieved much in Operation Apollo, and its allies wanted Canada to return. In particular, Canada's military would provide increased stability and decrease the burden placed on allies who were spreading their forces around the country.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, following the UK, Germany and the Netherlands took command of ISAF, and the UK and Germany wanted to have a successor chosen early in this mandate: Canada was seen as an apt choice for the role.<sup>70</sup>

A closely related influence on Canada was Germany, which was leading the ISAF mission in late 2002-early 2003. The decision to redeploy to Afghanistan was led in part by DND's McCallum and Germany's Minister of Defence Struck, who had been discussing NATO taking over the mission in Afghanistan in late 2002.<sup>71</sup> NDHQ briefings to staff in October 2002 discussed the probability that NATO could lead the mission because it could provide intelligence and force generation measures that are difficult to manage by a single state, a theme that was

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<sup>69</sup> Pigott, *Canada in Afghanistan*, 85.

<sup>70</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

shared by Canadian politico-military decision-makers.<sup>72</sup> According to Canadian sources close to the decision, Struck was important to McCallum's consideration of the mission because Germany, as acting commander of the mission in 2002, had seen the need for NATO involvement. As the leadership role occurred on a rotational basis, NATO member states, having the resources, money invested, and equipment ready, were preferred as potential leaders of the large international force in Afghanistan.<sup>73</sup>

Germany was also influential in the decision to redeploy because it was first considered by NDHQ as a potential partner for Canada. At the outset of the decision-making process, NDHQ considered whether partnering with another state might make the transition to mission commander easier for Canada and less of a burden on the CF.<sup>74</sup> The CF had just completed a significant retraining cycle and was capable of returning to active rotations; however, it was preferred by senior commanders to return to combat operations in partnership with a larger and potentially more capable military force.<sup>75</sup> Canada had considered partnerships with Spain, Norway, Denmark, and France.<sup>76</sup> Germany, in particular, was considered a viable partner because it already held the leadership role in the UN mandated ISAF, was supportive of the transition to NATO, and considered staying in Kabul with a smaller force for another six months.<sup>77</sup> Germany's decision to maintain a large presence in Afghanistan, both in Kabul and elsewhere, was a strategic move to avoid requests from the US for military assistance in Iraq in 2003.<sup>78</sup> As discussed above, the CF faced a similar position, that a major deployment to

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<sup>72</sup> Maddison, "Afghanistan / Iraq Planning Update: Briefing to Level Ones," 14.

<sup>73</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>74</sup> Confidential Interview.

<sup>75</sup> Gross Stein and Lang, *The Unexpected War*, 67-69.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Confidential Interview.



Afghanistan could preclude a military deployment to Iraq, a move that some members of DND suggest was intended by political decision-makers as means to avoid deploying to Iraq.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, although Canada ultimately led the NATO ISAF mission without a partnership with Germany, the influence of its government was an important factor in the decision to redeploy to Afghanistan in 2003.

Taking this into account, the decision-making process in Afghanistan was influenced by NATO and the importance that Canada placed in that institution in particular. Canada's redeployment to Afghanistan in 2003 might not have occurred had NATO not agreed to take on the mission, because senior NDHQ commanders were reluctant to make another contribution to the mission if it was not supported by the full institutional backing of NATO.<sup>80</sup> The 2003 deployment was also encouraged by the US's need for more support in Afghanistan so that they could deploy to Iraq. The US suggestion that Canada lead the ISAF mission heavily influenced the decision to deploy in 2003 - NATO provided the military backing that many considered to be important for sustaining the Afghanistan operation in the long term.

## **Conclusion**

The Conflict Intervention Framework has done a good job at predicting how the factors it has identified influenced decision-making in this case. The decision-making process that occurred between DFAIT and DND was driven by the views of their ministers that Canada would need to deploy its forces in support of NATO. Indeed, during the 2003 decision process, both departments had continued to develop policy toward returning to Afghanistan, a mission

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Confidential Interview.

that many senior political decision-makers supported, including the ministers of DFAIT and DND.

NDHQ had an important and clear influence on the decision to deploy (in a limited and more technical way). Indeed, NDHQ, which had been conducting missions with a high operational tempo since the end of the Cold War, had made clear to Minister of National Defence Eggleton in 2001 that the CF could contribute to Afghanistan but the mission would have to have a term limit and there was no possibility for extension. The difficulties faced by the CF convinced DND and the Government of Canada to deploy 3,000 troops to Afghanistan, including 800 ground forces, but the mission would need to end by mid-2002, at which time the CF would scale back their operations. The influence of this request can be seen by the actions of political decision-makers: despite wanting to redeploy to Afghanistan past the mid-2002 deadline, they rejected requests from allies to do so. In the 2003 deployment decision, NDHQ's influence was important to influencing DFAIT and DND to meet basic criteria before Canada should redeploy, including establishing an embassy in Kabul, find a partner state for the deployment, and that deploying with NATO to Afghanistan should negate the possibility that Canada could deploy to Iraq in 2003.

In 2003, NATO was also important to Canadian decision-makers because it provided a framework to support the ISAF mission, which was seeking a new leader. In late 2002, Canada was already a strong supporter of NATO taking over the ISAF mission; the resulting US suggestion that Canada lead the NATO mission pushed senior Canadian decision-makers to request to NATO Secretary General Robertson that NATO take over the mission. Therefore, NATO in particular had an important influence on the Government of Canada because of the

importance of the organization to Canadian decision-makers and that Canada wanted to take the opportunity to lead the ISAF mission in partnership with the Alliance.

Taking this into account, the primary motivations behind the decision to return to Afghanistan was Canada's commitment to support a new NATO administered mission. The US request for Canada to assist in getting the ISAF mission under a NATO mandate, and that Canada could lead the new mission, influenced DFAIT and DND, and the CF, to prioritize the Afghanistan deployment over the ever seemingly remote possibility that Canada may deploy to Iraq.

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