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Most discussions about the impact of Afghanistan on the future of NATO focus on transatlantic relations between the United States and the European Union. But for Canada, which is one of the few NATO allies that voluntarily deployed into the south, facing heavy resistance and fighting from Taliban insurgents, the Afghanistan operations have become the most salient dimension of its continued involvement in the Atlantic Alliance. While this may seem surprising, given the cutbacks in Canadian defense spending in the 1990s and the withdrawal of Canada’s standing forces from Germany, it should not. For during that so-called dark decade, Canada continued to make major contributions to NATO and European security. This essay argues that Ottawa’s multi-faceted military and political support of the “new” NATO of the post–Cold War era continued when the alliance undertook its involvement in Afghanistan. Indeed, in its efforts in support of NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, Canada has demonstrated a dedication to the alliance that seems stronger than NATO’s collective commitment to itself.

Keywords: Canadian foreign policy; NATO; Balkans; Europe; 1990

Introduction

The peaceful revolution in Central and Eastern Europe in November of 1989, embodied in the fall of the Berlin Wall, marked the end of the Cold War and transformed the identities, roles, functions, and responsibilities of agents. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), conceived as a collectivity of agents – i.e., states – was directly affected by these transformation processes, and began a search for a new soul, identity, and destiny in transatlantic security affairs. Now that the Cold War was over, so went the more critical reasoning, the alliance was without a raison d’être that could justify its continued existence for the management of transatlantic security affairs. While much ink has already been used arguing for the persistence of the alliance, one of the more overlooked aspects of transatlantic security affairs has been the question of burden-sharing – that is, the financial regime by which the total fiscal balance of the organization is distributed among its members according to collectively accepted formulas, principles, and practices. More specifically, the new situational security context that evolved with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the departure of the Soviet bloc as NATO’s most pivotal enemy called into question the existing practices of determining the burden of NATO member states. It is precisely the interest of this article to discuss Canada’s role in that transatlantic burden-sharing regime, and to analyze how much, if at all, Canada contributed to the durability and adaptability of the “new NATO.”

While the wide-ranging body of scholarship on NATO largely ignores Canada’s role in the “new NATO” altogether, we have to revert to the more specialized literature on
Canadian foreign policy, which suggests that Canada had become the laggard of the alliance – that is, a non-committed and resource-depleted ally that was unable to uphold its commitments to international peace and security. While this assertion may seem to be convincing at first, a logical puzzle remains unexplained. If, indeed, it holds true that Canada was “asleep” in the 1990s, how then could one logically explain its disproportionate burden in NATO’s current mission in Afghanistan? Indeed, Canada’s engagement with the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) has become the most salient dimension of its continued commitment to the success of the transatlantic alliance, and was recognized most recently by NATO’s spokesperson, James Appathurai:

Canada has played, and continues to play a very, very important role in a strategically important part of Afghanistan, and we would like to see that role continued. And certainly NATO will, to the extent that we can, support any efforts to provide more . . . to garner more forces, including for the south. We have a strong standing request to nations to provide additional resources, and as Canada will lead this effort certainly NATO will be supportive where we can.

To reiterate the problématique, if one agrees with the notion of the Canadian decline in the 1990s, Appathurai’s praise for Canada’s performance in Afghanistan cannot be logically explained. Indeed, if a country was a laggard in the 1990s, how can it be a leader 10 years later? It is suggested in this article that Canada’s role-playing and performance in Afghanistan is the product of the decisions, experiences, and commitments made in the 1990s. Specifically, this article provides a revisionist analysis of Canada’s role and performance in NATO in the 1990s. It argues that, contrary to the accepted wisdom in the literature, Canada was not a laggard in the alliance but a committed, capable, and dedicated ally. More precisely, it shouldered a burden that was consistent with its relative standing in the alliance as a “middle power.” Only if we understand Canadian actions in this context is the applause for Canada’s current performance in Afghanistan by the NATO spokesperson comprehensible.

The article starts with a brief discussion of the declinist literature of Canadian foreign policy. It then moves on to establish the situational context – that is, the changing security environment and the new meaning of international security and diplomacy – in which Canadian actions in the 1990s in Europe took place and which gave new meaning to the armed forces. The last section of the article examines Canada’s commitments to European security by focusing on the United Nations (UN) and NATO’s Balkan operations in the 1990s.

Canada’s decade of darkness

The literature on NATO in the 1990s does not hold much prospect for examining Canadian role-playing in the alliance. Indeed, one has to turn to the rather extensive and more specific literature on Canadian foreign policy post-1989 to gain a better understanding of that role. The accepted tone of that literature seems to be that after 1989 Canada abandoned NATO as well as international crisis management obligations altogether. Indeed, Canada is generally portrayed as being in decline in the 1990s. This school of Canadian foreign policy – what I call here the “declinist school” – has been led most chiefly by political scientist Andrew Cohen and distinguished historian Jack Granatstein. It holds that because the government denied funding for Canada’s foreign and defense policies, its role and engagement in world politics vanished to an extent that Canada became an irrelevant international actor altogether. This lost presence and influence, so the mantra goes,
was partly induced by domestic political conditions in Canada – most chiefly, the federal
deficit and the threat of national disunity. Specifically, in the early 1990s the Progressive
Conservative government under Brian Mulroney and its successor government of Jean
Chrétien were confronted with a situation of fiscal austerity so severe that it demanded
fiscal curtailing across all levels of government. These deficits, including those of the
federal and provincial government, doubled from $33 billion in 1989/90 to $63.7 billion in
1992/93. The debt accumulation occurred despite the fact that deficit reduction was one of
Mulroney’s top policy priorities. His turnaround of deficit spending didn’t get going
until the fiscal year 1997/98.

In the mind of the declinist school, this fiscal situation and the resulting budgetary cuts
of all federal departments were the product of a long and continuous historical trajectory
of neglect of Canada’s foreign and defense policy establishments. Since 1956, successive
Liberal as well as Conservative (federal) governments drove Canadian internationalism
into a long and continuous decay. They starved Canada’s diplomatic service, the develop-
ment agency, and the armed forces up to the point where Canada became an irrelevant
player in world politics. More precisely, the “Golden Age” of Canadian foreign policy, led
by Lester B. Pearson from 1945 through 1957, is seen as the benchmark against which
Canadian internationalism is weighed in order to deduce judgments about the performance
of contemporary governments in the areas of diplomacy and defense. In that sense, the
“Golden Age” marks an almost Weberian “ideal type” (Idealtyp) of Canadian international-
ism. Indeed, in much of the recent literature, Canada’s foreign policy accomplish-
ments of the past were glorified.

Pundits remind us, though partly incorrectly, that back in the 1940s and 50s Canada
was perceived internationally as an emerging “middle power” and “helpful fixer” of press-
ing world issues. Those times wanted more from Canada, and Ottawa availed itself by
helping to solve international conflicts. Canada sent troops to multilateral peacekeeping
missions in, for example, the Middle East, Cyprus, and the Sinai. These commitments
brought Canada not only international publicity but also recognition and status. As a
reward for its role and performance in the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I), the
UN’s peacekeeping mission for the Suez Canal crisis, Lester B. Pearson and the Depart-
ment of External Affairs were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957. Yet, since these
highmarks of Canadian internationalism, so goes the argument, a cultivation of neglect
and fiscal starvation developed. Put differently, Canada has not gained much traction
internationally since 1957, and indeed the world has turned away from Canada. To use
Andrew Cohen’s words:

We did things abroad. We went to war, we kept the peace, and we died doing both. We fed,
taught, and treated people in hard places, we brokered and proselytized in international coun-
cils. We bought goods from the corners of the earth and sold them there, too, and we became
rich. We have a past. We come from somewhere.

Although this trend of neglect in Canada’s foreign and defense policy is seen by declinists
as persisting until present times, the 1990s in particular made things worse, in that Canada
lacked the ability to show international participation and commitment to UN-led peace-
keeping operations. The operational tempo of the Canadian Forces (CF) increased to a
point of overstretch for Ottawa. Specifically, the CF’s international crisis management
missions tripled compared to the period from 1945 to 1989. Indeed, the number of Cana-
dian personnel deployed on foreign operations frequently exceeded the sustainable ceiling
of 4,000 troops that was set in the 1994 Defence White Paper. Members of the Canadian
Forces were deployed overseas for lengthy and costly periods of time. They did more with less – that is to say, more operations with less money and fewer capabilities. In the case of the Department of National Defence (DND), under whose umbrella the Canadian Forces are administered, those missions were not limited to the Balkans; they extended to places such as Somalia, Haiti, and Rwanda. These additional tasks put significant pressure on the departments in charge of coordinating and managing those operations. It drained their operating budgets, yet no more money was made available by the government. As part of a process of fiscal restructuring, the Canadian Forces were forced to close several bases at home and abroad, including CFB Lahr and CFB Baden-Söllingen in Germany. Likewise, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) had to close various embassies and consulates around the world. This unilateral withdrawal from world politics caused a serious rebuff among Canada’s closest NATO allies, and Canadian representatives abroad felt the brunt of their NATO colleagues for decisions made in Ottawa. Put simply, Canada was no longer “as strong a soldier, as generous a donor, and as effective a diplomat, and it has diminished us as people.”

Yet what is often neglected or overlooked in the debate on Canadian internationalism is the situational context in which Canadian actions were embedded. The new international security environment in Europe dictated new thinking and practices of international politics. It also prescribed new roles for the armed forces, realigning them from deterrence to crisis management forces. Strategies of conventional war-fighting and forces on high alert were practices of the past. NATO’s former enemies had become its friends. In short, the “new world order” induced a transformation in the alliance, in terms of the organizational structure itself as well as the roles and mandates of the participating armed forces. It is precisely in this context that we need to understand Canadian actions.

This is not to deny that Canada was faced with a fiscal crisis in the early 1990s, or that DFAIT and DND, the two key departments with a major foreign policy portfolio, had to swallow most of the budgetary cuts. It is also undeniable that the fiscal slashing constrained those departments’ ability to represent Canadians and their interests abroad. However, if we examine Canada’s contributions in relation to those of its 18 NATO allies, we find that the budget cutbacks did not disempower Canada. Contrary to the commonly held belief of the declinist school that Canada was “asleep,” empirical evidence of Canadian participation in NATO suggests that Canada was active, alive, and committed to international peacekeeping and crisis management in Europe. Canada was not irrelevant in the 1990s; it was an active international crisis manager, contributing proportionately more to NATO’s operations than like-minded countries located in a similar power league. Clearly, Canadian internationalism of the 1990s requires a more contextual understanding of the new pan-European security environment, in which soft power and not hard power resources are palpable to advance national interests, and Canadian contributions must be considered in this new situational context. That is the focus of the next section.

The new currencies of post–Cold War international relations

In tandem with the fall of the Berlin Wall, a transformation of the role and significance attributed to military power as a tool of national statecraft in international affairs took place. While the West used the armed forces from 1949 through 1989 as a deterrence tool, with important symbolic character, those forces gained new meaning in the post–Cold War era for a number of reasons that had implications for the alliance at large.

To start with, national governments saw themselves increasingly confronted with popular demands to cash in the so-called peace dividend, which is defined as “a sum of public
money which becomes available for other purposes when spending on defence is reduced.” In other words, taxpayers no longer supported the extraordinary levels of defense spending of the Cold War years (see Table 1 for details), and insisted on changes in Canada’s foreign and defense policy.

Second, and as a result of the popular peace dividend discourse, NATO adopted an official policy of force reductions by which all member states were equally affected. As official NATO data referenced in Table 1 indicates, in the case of the United States, which is by far the largest military power in the alliance, its defense budget, measured in relation to the gross domestic product (GDP), shrunk from 4.73 percent (on average) in 1990–1994 to 3.49 percent (on average) in 1994–1999, and reached a low of 3.04 percent in 1999–2001. This equals a 48.25 percent reduction from 1985 to 2001. In actual dollar amounts, the US defense budget was reduced from US$306,170 million (or more than US$306 billion) in the fiscal year 1990 to $278,856 million (or more than US$278 billion) in 1995.

The defense curtailment of Canada of 40.3 percent from 1990 to 2001 is clearly in line with the United States’ curtailment of 42.84 percent during the same period (again, see Table 1). Moreover, compared to the defense cuts of other “middle powers,” Canada’s reductions were not extensive or extraordinary; rather, they were consistent with those made by like-minded powers. The Netherlands and Norway, also considered “middle powers,” reduced their defense budgets by more than 38 percent, almost as much as Canada. Spain, as well as major powers such as the United Kingdom, were only slightly behind Canada. The point is that the extent of Canada’s defense reduction as a percentage of its total gross domestic product was consistent with the practice of equally ranked as well as major powers.

While in 1994 Canada happened to be the first country of the alliance to announce the closure of its two forwardly operating bases in Germany, other NATO states followed suit shortly thereafter. In other words, in terms of the size of their active duty contingent, other NATO allies also reduced the size of their armed forces substantially. More specifically, while as a product of a larger internal organizational restructuring process Canada cut its active military personnel by more than 30 percent from 1990 to 2001 (see Table 2), so did the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Norway. If Canadian forces were in rough shape, they were nonetheless roughly similar in nature, although certainly not scale, to those of the United States. In stark contrast to their European colleagues, first and foremost, they were expeditionary and relatively mobile and flexible.

As was the case with Table 1, Table 2 shows that the extent of the Canadian curtailment, compared to that of other NATO allies, was not extensive by any means. Rather, it was consistent with the downsizing of, for example, the United States, which plays in a different power league; and it was far less extensive (−32 percent) than that of Spain (−49 percent), the Netherlands (−49 percent), or Belgium (−61 percent). This shows not only that Canada’s actions were consistent with those of its allies, but that a fundamental organizational transformation process indeed took place.

Third, while during the Cold War the currency of diplomacy in international affairs was measured in terms of a country’s military might – that is, the size of its fleet, army, and air force – this formula of military potency became less important in the post–Cold War era. This was the case because the alliance was less in need of large conventional force postures in a post–Cold War order. NATO’s principal adversaries in the Warsaw Pact, especially the Soviet Union, became friends with the alliance, thus reducing the demands for large conventional defense forces. At its London Summit in 1990, NATO allies offered their “hand of friendship” to states from Central and Eastern Europe.
Table 1. NATO defense spending as a percentage of total GDP, 1990–2001.

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Source: NATO data, 1990–2002. All calculations are the author’s.
Table 2. NATO active duty personnel, 1990–2001 (in thousands).

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NATO not only invited the East to become friends with the West; the alliance also put to rest its adversarial military doctrines.

This evolutionary thinking, however, should not be mistaken for a new transatlantic “love affair.” Rather, NATO began a process of reaching out to Central and Eastern Europe and supporting their evolving democracies in the transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes. This new trend in the management of European security affairs challenged the accepted wisdom of security officials in Europe. The “new NATO” also required new thinking, new resources, and new mandates. Indeed, with the London Summit in 1990, NATO was assigned an increasing political mandate in transatlantic affairs, rather than a military one. This is not to say that the alliance abolished its collective defense clause; it is simply to say that political objectives received more weight than their military counterparts. The new primary objective of the alliance became bringing peace and stability to Central and Eastern Europe by exporting NATO’s collective values of democracy, the rule of law, freedom, and transparency. More specifically, NATO assisted and engaged CEE politically through the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), and later the so-called Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which was based on the three mutually reinforcing pillars of dialogue, transparency, and cooperation. The PfP program provided an institutionalization of that dialogue process with other PfP member states. Its primary aim was to build trust and provide a form of openness among its members. In that sense, PfP was a vehicle for promoting mutual transparency and cooperation by allowing states from CEE insight into the management of a collective security organization. In turn, CEE states allowed the alliance greater access to their defense management and organization. For example, NATO helped in drafting defense legislation and assisted in planning civil–military relations by implementing the democratic principle of putting the armed forces under the supervision of civilians. NATO also provided guidance for the general management of security and defense issues, thus working as a confidence-building tool. In this process, as one official put it, Canada played a silent but firm role. Put simply, this evolving friendship between East and West reduced the necessity of and reliance on military (or hard) power capabilities, and transformed the role of NATO’s armed forces from war-fighters to crisis managers and diplomats. NATO forces became postmodern militaries that are able to quickly adapt to new environments and to carry out a multitude of tasks: peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention, war-fighting, and diplomacy.

While this exogenous process of transformation took place, NATO’s armed forces also underwent an internal renewing process – a process officially called “transformation.” Receiving strategic guidance from NATO’s new 1991 strategic document, NATO forces were asked to become lighter, more mobile, more flexible, and more rapidly deployable. Moreover, these new roles and mandates required different types of doctrines, equipment, and training for the armed forces. Diplomacy and international engagement as opposed to large-scale conventional forces were the new keywords in Brussels. Canada understood the nature of this transformative thinking and restructured its forces accordingly. The result was the 1994 White Paper, in which the government provided strategic guidance to the armed forces. It argued that Canada should retain general-purpose and combat-capable armed forces that would be ready to deploy anywhere in the world on short notice in defense of Canada’s interests.

The nature of the Canadian Forces, however, was already quite unlike those of most other NATO allies, which were postured to defend their own (European) homelands while being highly immobile, inflexible, and incapable of deploying forces abroad. In short, with the Defence White Paper of 1994, Canadian Forces were asked to retain an expeditionary character to allow rapid deployments outside of Canada. Thus, Canada’s armed
forces were ready when, for example, the call from NATO arrived asking for a Canadian contribution to a robust conflict management force in the Balkans. European NATO allies, on the other hand, could not redeem this particular benefit of their forces, as their militaries were structured in non-expeditionary ways. Consequently, Europe’s response to the crisis in the Balkans was not only slow but ineffective.

This political nature of NATO had been a long-term goal of Canada. Back in 1949, while the negotiations of the Washington Treaty were ongoing, Canada had successfully lobbied its allies to include Article 2. This article became known in the literature as the “Canadian article,” paying tribute to Canada’s lobbying efforts. Specifically, Article 2 emphasizes NATO’s political function in transatlantic affairs by extrapolating hope for enhanced political and economic benefits from the alliance beyond military defense and security. Thus, as one analyst put it succinctly, when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and NATO was able to revitalize its political functions, the alliance became that of Canada’s dreams. Finally, after more than 50 years of waiting, Ottawa again had its political NATO.

Fourth, with an evolving post–Cold War order, the significance and meaning of the concept of national security was altered. More specifically, while advancing national security interests was the primary objective of states during the Cold War, other security concerns – such as environmental security, human security, and societal security – gained importance, forcing national governments to pay attention to them. These new security concerns also required different types of resources and capabilities. Environmental security issues, for example, can be addressed only to a very limited extent by military means.

In sum, while NATO states relied on their hard power as a tool of statecraft to exert influence over other states or regions during the Cold War, this resource of national statecraft became less effective with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Soft power tools, such as diplomacy and negotiation, rather than the number of tanks, guns, or troops, became the new accepted source of international politics. Consequently, the rationalist (or neorealist) argument put forward by the declinist school of Canadian foreign policy – the argument that low levels of defense spending automatically resulted in diminished presence and influence abroad – does not stand up well in the situational context of the post–Cold War era. This new world order changed the context in which Canadian external relations and decisions took place and, more importantly, affected the roles, tasks, and responsibilities of Canada’s NATO forces. The new world order also allowed Canadian officials to reexamine the nature of international threats facing Canada, and to adjust the means by which those threats were (and are) addressed accordingly.

**Canadian internationalism in Europe during the 1990s**

In the 1990s, Canada’s presence and actions in Europe took place at many levels and in many forms. In addition to the military deployments of Canadian Forces personnel to the Balkans, the government made available significant diplomatic and development resources in support of an evolving pan-European security environment. Indeed, one might argue that this combined experience lay the groundwork for the government’s current whole-of-government policy, also known as the 3D policy (referring to diplomacy, defense, and development), which would later be an integral component of Canada’s 2005 International Policy Statement and remains at the heart of Canadian involvement in Afghanistan. This is to say, the whole-of-government policies have their roots in the 1990s and Canada’s Balkan operations.
However, prior to the UN’s Balkan operations, Canada answered the call to arms in the Gulf War in 1990. While the mission in the Gulf affected NATO only tangentially, since the alliance was not formally a party to the war, the United Nations was involved, and a small selection of NATO’s member states actively supported the UN mission. Canada did not participate in active UN combat operations, but it sent two-thirds of its navy to the Gulf in support of an international naval blockade. Moreover, a selection of its special forces and a field hospital assisted the international community with the enforcement of UN resolution 678, which demanded a withdrawal of Iraq and the liberation of Kuwait. In total, more than 6600 Canadian soldiers rotated through this operation before, during, or after the hostilities. Most of the soldiers of this operation were deployed from Canada’s two bases in Germany.

When the Gulf War ended in 1991, Canada remained forwardly deployed in Europe. It was one of the first countries to participate in a peacekeeping mission in South-Eastern Europe. Initial Canadian deployments were made through the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) in Bosnia, and subsequently through the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). In the case of the ECMM, which was a classical peacekeeping operation under Chapter VI of the UN Charter (traditionally conceived as a non-military peacemaking mission), only after Canada and the United States had agreed to send troops were UN peacekeepers allowed into the country. This underlined Canada’s reputation as a peacekeeper.

A brief aside on peacekeeping. Peacekeeping operations can be divided roughly into four generations. The first generation, also called “classic” or “traditional” peacekeeping, originated after the end of World War II in 1948 and lasted until the end of the Cold War in 1989. The UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), established in 1948 to oversee the armistice between Israel and Palestine, is an example of that first generation; in fact, UNTSO can be considered the starting point for UN peacekeeping. The role of peacekeepers in that first generation of peacekeeping was to act as a neutral party or buffer on the ground. In the second generation of peacekeeping, peacekeepers were no longer limited to simply observing or supervising a cease fire. This second type of peacekeeping largely took place after the Cold War, during a time when the UN involved itself in intrastate conflicts, including those in the Sinai, Beirut, and Sri Lanka. After 1994, a third generation of peacekeeping evolved, with a much broader mandate that included functions such as military disengagement, demobilization, policing, human rights monitoring, and observation. The fourth generation of peacekeeping is the equivalent of a peace-enforcement operation.

Back to South-Eastern Europe, the initial mandate of the Canadian contingent to UNPROFOR was to monitor and to demilitarize UN “protected areas” in Croatia, and to monitor, if applicable, ceasefire agreements. While doing so, Canadians encountered some of the most difficult operational situations of the entire UNPROFOR mission. For example, Canadian soldiers witnessed the massacres in Srebrenica in 1993, were taken hostage in Sarajevo in 1994 in an attempt to liberate the airport at Sarajevo, and were confronted with direct combat in the battle of the Medak Pocket. Indeed, one of the most difficult tasks of the UN operation was to enforce a peace where there was no peace to keep. There is evidence that the Mulroney government early on realized these limiting factors that made operation in the first UNPROFOR mission (1992–93) particularly difficult. While realizing the weaknesses of a Chapter VI mission, Canada lobbied its allies in the United Nations Security Council to authorize a Chapter VII mission – that is, a peace-enforcement operation, in which the use of force is not limited to cases of self-defense but can actively be used to enforce the will of the international community.
In comparison to its international allies and partners, Canada sent a total of 2151 soldiers (or 5.44 percent of the total UN force) to UNPROFOR, ranking fifth overall. If we exclude non-NATO UN members, Canadian contributions rank even higher. Canada was the third-largest force contributor (or 11.47 percent) of a total force of 18,759 soldiers sent by 16 NATO countries. Given the fiscal curtailing of the federal budget at home in the early 1990s, as well as threats to national unity with the referendum on the independence of Quebec, this commitment to UNPROFOR is noteworthy for a middle power, especially compared to all NATO allies. It certainly does not suggest a declining or vanishing Canada. To the contrary, Canada showed presence when needed and shouldered a fair portion of its international responsibilities of restoring order in South-Eastern Europe.

When the UN left the Balkans in disarray in 1995, Canada did not shirk its further international responsibilities. Ottawa remained committed to the duty of global crisis management and conflict prevention. In Europe, it made the shift from UN-led operations to those commanded and controlled by NATO. This shift, which was commonly referred to as a process of “contracting-out” UN peacekeeping operations, was made possible by the Agenda for Peace, a report by the secretary general adopted by the UN Security Council in 1992. Specifically, while recognizing the failures of UNPROFOR, the report called for closer institutional cooperation between the United Nations and regional security organizations. The Dayton Accords of 1995, which formalized the peace in the Balkans, called for an Implementation Force (IFOR) with a total of 60,000 troops to replace the unsuccessful UN force (UNPROFOR). IFOR was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 1031 in 1995, and the operational responsibility rested with NATO. More precisely, this was a peace-enforcement mission: IFOR troops were heavily armed and authorized to use force should this become necessary to implement the will of the international community. Regarding the size of the mission, Canada sent 1047 troops and thus ranked ninth out of 16 NATO countries in total (or 1.96 percent). Nevertheless, it was the fourth-largest force contributor to Operation Air Bridge, which supported the city of Sarajevo with humanitarian aid.

One year later, in 1996, IFOR was replaced with the NATO’s Stabilization Force (SFOR). Under this new arrangement, Canada maintained 1327 soldiers in the Balkans, mandated to help bring peace to the region. More specifically, from 1997 to 2001, Canada sent a total of 6442 soldiers to IFOR. It thus provided 4.5 percent of the total force (5.7 percent, if the United States is not counted in). It was the seventh-largest contributing NATO country to SFOR, out of 16 (19 as of 1999) countries in total. It is noteworthy that all of Canada’s army units rotated through this operation. This involvement, once again, shows a strong commitment on behalf of Canada, especially given the rather dire fiscal situation and the crisis of Quebec’s sovereignty at home. Most certainly, it does not support the declinist hypothesis of Canada being asleep.

In 1999, when ethnic Albanians and a Serb minority engaged in ethnic cleansing practices in the province of Kosovo, Canada once again answered NATO’s call for troops and commitment. Canada became the seventh-largest force contributor (out of 19 nations in total), by deploying a total force of 1450 troops each year from 1999 to 2001. Put differently, Canada supplied 4.3 percent of the total force. It also shouldered a disproportionate burden of Operation Allied Force, the 78-day air campaign. Taking the ground and air campaign together, Canada was the third-largest force-contributing nation. This, yet again, was a significant contribution (in relative terms) of one of the “medium-ranked” NATO countries, measured according to the size of the population. It can be seen as an indicator of Canadian international commitment rather than an indicator of decline or irrelevance.
It is exactly because of this record of commitment and participation in the 1990s that Canada was able to offer troops to NATO’s operation in Afghanistan when the call to arms came in the aftermath of 9/11. Yet again, Canada did not shy away from shouldering some of that international responsibility. Based on its record of commitments to NATO, Canada once more was there when NATO needed its help. In continuation of this NATO commitment, Canada became the fourth-largest contributing country of the NATO-led International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) operation in 2003. ISAF was supported by 42 states in total. Canada shouldered a total force burden of 4.75 percent.

Conclusion

By putting Canadian commitments and contributions to allied security in their proper situational context – that is, the changing security environment in Europe and the nature of NATO’s missions in the Balkans – this article examined Canada’s role and performance in the transatlantic burden-sharing regime. (A summary of NATO’s missions during the decade of the 1990s is shown in Table 3.)

It demonstrated that Canada was not in decline or absent from world politics during that final decade of the millennium. Rather, Canada carried its weight in transatlantic security affairs when needed, and to the best of its abilities as a so-called middle power. Canadian Forces members experienced the full spectrum of crisis management. Those tasks, which ranged from classical peacekeeping (ECMM, UNPROFOR) to peace-enforcement operations (IFOR, SFOR, KFOR), to a large degree had the protection of

Table 3. List of all minor and major NATO operations, 1990–2001.

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<td>Operation Deny Flight</td>
<td>Balkans</td>
<td>Implement UN “no-fly” zone and protect UN peacekeepers</td>
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<td>Kosovo/Macedonia</td>
<td>Humanitarian assistance as part of Kosovo conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 1999 – today</td>
<td>Kosovo Force (KFOR)</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Implementation of Kosovo peace agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 1999–Nov 1999</td>
<td>Operation Essential Harvest</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Disarming of Macedonian forces, support of UN observers, stabilization of Macedonia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
humans as their main objective. This shift in the formulation and execution of national security policies in the post–Cold War era required different capabilities and policies than had previously been called for, and Canada stepped up with those capabilities when NATO needed it the most. Canadian soldiers participated in all the Balkan operations, often coming into harm’s way (especially in the Medak Pocket incident). As two analysts put it succinctly, Canada did more for NATO than NATO did for Canada.59

These Canadian military actions did not take place in a vacuum. They spoke to a country’s predisposition toward a multilateral foreign and defense policy. Unlike the United States, Canada does not now, and did not in the 1990s, deploy its forces unilaterally; rather, it does so in concert with others and with the endorsement of the UN or NATO. This collaboration provides legitimacy for Canadian actions abroad and gives the country an “insurance policy” of sorts, in the form of allies. At the same time, it intensifies the risk that Canadian commitments remain unnoticed or are taken out of their historical context. That context shows convincingly that Canada was not asleep in the 1990s; it is precisely this commitment of that earlier decade that helps explain Canadian actions today in Afghanistan.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Gheciu (2005); Schimmelpfennig 2003.
3. See, for example, Mearsheimer (1994–95, 1990).
4. The only monographs published on this topic include Haglund (2000a, 2000b); MacDonald and McDonough (2005); MacMillan and Sorenson (1990); McDougall (1992); McNish and Hanson (1997).
5. See Zyla and Sokolsky (2010).
7. On the notion of a Canadian decline see, for example, Cohen (2004); Conference Board of Canada (2000); Conference of Defence Associations Institute (2002); Granatstein (1998, 2004).
8. Moreover, as defense economists remind us, defense procurement is not an instantaneous process; it can take many years, sometimes decades, to get the right equipment. See, for example, Breunig, Pöcher, and Strunz (2006); Coulomb (2004); Hartley and Sandler (1995); Martin (1996); Matthews (1992). For the Canadian case see, for example, Lagassé (2004).
9. The term “decade of darkness” was coined by Gen. Rick Hillier in a speech given to the 23rd Annual Conference of Defence Associations Institute (CDAI), Ottawa, 16 February 2007. See also (Hillier 2009).
10. For a detailed discussion of the issue of Quebec’s sovereignty, see Cardinal (2005); Conway (1992); Gauvin (1994); Young (1999).
14. For this critique, see Chapnick (2008–9).
15. For this critique, see Chapnick (1999, 2005, 2006). For the latest debate on the notion of Canada being a middle power, see Nossal (2009).
16. For a good reference on Canadian peacekeeping during the Cold War, see Maloney (2002); Carroll (2009).
21. The acronym DFAIT is used throughout this essay to allow for a smoother reading of the text. Yet, it is understood that the Department was renamed in 1993 from the Department of External Affairs to its current name.
23. See, for example, Cox and Sinclair (1996).
27. Ibid.
29. See Baldwin (1997).
30. The London summit was preceded by a Ministerial Meeting at Turnberry at which the future role of NATO was debated. Opening Remarks at the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Speech by NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner, Turnberry, 7–8 June 1990. On the London Summit, see “London Declaration on A Transformed North Atlantic Alliance,” issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, London, 5–6 July 1990.
31. See, for example, M-NACC-1(91)111 North Atlantic Council, North Atlantic Cooperation Council Statement on Dialogue, Partnership and Cooperation, Article 2. See also North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Study on NATO Enlargement,” Chapter 5, Section A, Article 70.

32. For references on PfP, see Smith (2006); Simon (2004); Bell (1996).


34. On the distinction between soft and hard power, see Nye (2004, 2005). For a “classical” definition of power, see Cline (1975); Dahl (1969, 1957).

35. On the transformation of soldiers being diplomats, see Goodwin (2005).

36. On the discussion of post-modern militaries and the new role of the armed forces see, for example, Kaldor (1999); Kaldor, Vashee, and World Institute for Development Economics Research (1997); Moskos, Williams, and Segal (2000a, 2000b).

37. On the notion that NATO had become more of a political alliance see, for example, Sloan (2005).


40. For a general discussion on the “new world order,” see Clark (2001). For a discussion of the evolution of the concept of security see, for example, Baldwin (1997).

41. The literature on the evolution of the concept of security is extensive. For a good overview see Baldwin (1997); Booth (1991); Haftendorn (1991).


43. Due to space constraints, I will focus mostly on the military aspects of the argument.

44. See, for example, Bland and Maloney (2004, Appendix).


46. On the role of Canada’s special forces in the Gulf War and later NATO, see Zyla (2005).


48. For a greater discussion, see Thakur (2006).

49. For a detailed account of Canadian troops in the Balkans, see MacKenzie (1993).


51. Confidential interview with former staffer of Privy Council, Ottawa, 12 July, 2007; S/RES 743 (1992). UNPROFOR I was limited to Croatia. It was followed by UNPROFOR II for Bosnia and Herzegovina (1993–94), and UNPROFOR III for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Herzegovina (1993–95).

52. In terms of population, the United States ranks first, followed by Germany, Turkey, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Canada, the Netherlands, Greece, Czech Republic, Belgium, Portugal, Denmark, Norway, Hungary, Luxembourg, and Iceland. Thus, Canada has the ninth-largest population of all NATO allies.


55. Bland and Maloney (2004, 233). Lenard Cohen counted a different number of Canadian troops and came to 1035 in total. See Cohen (2003, 127). The official DND number is 1029 collected from an interview with DND official, June 2007. In any case, the number of Canadian troops is well beyond a thousand troops.

56. Bland and Maloney (2004, 234). The numbers provided in this monograph are, however, not identical with numbers available from other publications or official government documents. Lenard Cohen, for example, counted 1800 troops as Canada’s contribution to SFOR; see Cohen (2003, 127). The Department of National Defence lists 1641 as the official number. Interview with Senior Officer of the Department of National Defence, Finance Section, 2007.

57. The numbers are identical in Bland and Maloney (2004), Cohen (2003) and from DND. See Note 55. It is, of course, recognized that the KFOR operation lasted beyond 2001.

58. In terms of the total NATO population, the United States ranks first, followed by Germany, Turkey, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Canada, the Netherlands, Greece, Czech Republic, Belgium, Portugal, Denmark, Norway, Hungary, Luxembourg, and Iceland.

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