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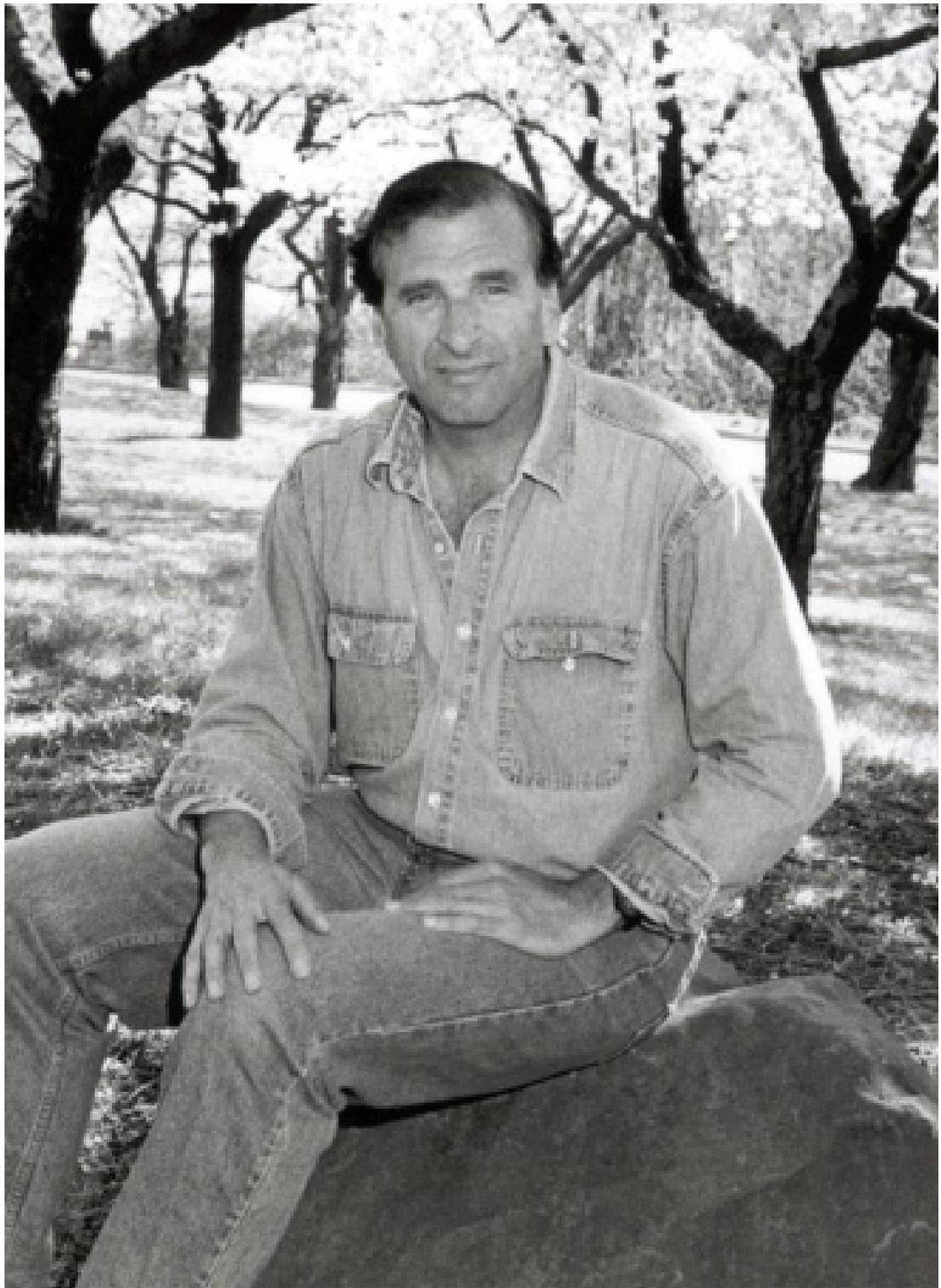
FOLLY:

WHY CANADA SHOULD BRING

ITS TROOPS HOME FROM

AFGHANISTAN

BY JAMES LAXER



Canadian troops have been fighting in Afghanistan for over five years. This military mission has endured for longer than the First World War and the Korean conflict. If the mission continues for another year, it will exceed the Second World War in duration, to become the lengthiest war in which Canadians have ever fought. To date, 44 Canadians have died in Afghanistan. On a per capita basis, more Canadians have been killed during the mission, than has been the case for any of the other allied countries who have sent forces to Afghanistan.

The Harper government has presented the mission to Canadians as combining a military element with the provision of aid to the people of Afghanistan. In fact, in dollars spent, the mission has been ninety per cent military, and only ten per cent reconstruction aid.

The Chretien government propelled Canada into the Afghan War with little thought in the autumn of 2001. The mission has since been sustained and extended by the Martin and Harper governments. Despite the brief debate and vote on the issue in the House of Commons in May 2006, this country has had no authentic national debate on the Afghanistan mission.

In this 30,000 word long report, I have entered the debate not as an expert on Afghanistan, but as someone with considerable experience analyzing Canadian and American global policies. It is my belief that the Afghanistan mission is a tragic mistake for Canada. If prolonged, the mission will cost many more Canadian lives,

without the achievement of the goals Canada and its allies have set for themselves in Afghanistan.

(This report will be published on-line on my blog, at www.jameslaxer.com, one chapter at a time, in February 2007. Then the report as a whole will be published there. The report will be available as well in PDF format. You are welcome to reproduce this report in whole or in part.

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Chapter 1: Canada Went to War in the Absence of an Authentic National Debate

The Canadian military mission in Afghanistan was launched during the fevered weeks that followed the terror attacks on New York City and Washington DC on September 11, 2001. The government of Jean Chretien took the decision that Canadians would fight in Afghanistan rather casually. The members of the Chretien cabinet saw the commitment as a way to show solidarity with the Americans at a time when there was almost universal sympathy for the United States internationally and certainly in Canada. The experts in the Canadian Forces were ignored when the commitment was made. The government had no real idea how many soldiers could be sent, equipped and sustained in the field in Afghanistan. The little advice the government did receive from the top soldiers was that anything beyond a token commitment would be very expensive and would soon strain the Canadian Forces, making it difficult to meet their existing commitments.

When politicians plunge their nations into war, they generally have their eye on recent conflicts as a guide to what can be expected. For Canada, the two most recent military outings prior to Afghanistan were the Kosovo conflict and the first Gulf War. Both were short affairs, decisively won by the side on which Canada fought. It was natural enough for Chretien and his advisors to assume that the Afghanistan war would

likely be over or nearly over before many Canadians saw action. During the weeks when Tony Blair emerged as the great friend of America and Jean Chretien had not yet visited Ground Zero in New York, the gesture was the thing.

In the more than five years that have passed since the gesture was made, Canada's Afghan mission has morphed into something its initiators never anticipated. For a time, this suited the Liberal government to a tee. When the Bush administration launched its invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Canada was locked into the Afghanistan operation. Jean Chretien's announcement in the House of Commons that Canada would not join the "coalition of the willing" in its assault on Iraq drew a sustained cheer from the Liberal caucus in parliament. That moment is now seen as a crucial juncture in the evolution of Canadian foreign policy. When Liberals are called upon to justify themselves to the nation, they point to the refusal to join the invasion of Iraq as their finest hour. Nonetheless, the Canadian Afghan operation could be presented to the Bush administration as proof of the devotion of the Chretien government to the global War on Terror.

The election of Stephen Harper's Conservative government in the winter of 2006 changed the tone of Canadian foreign policy. While the Liberals had found comfort in the ambiguity of their position---out of Iraq, but in Afghanistan---the Conservatives sought no such ambiguity. Well before becoming prime minister, Stephen Harper had served notice that if elected he would preside over the most pro-American government in Canadian history. While the Liberal government was refusing to join the coalition of the

willing, Harper was attending pro-Iraq war rallies, making it clear that if he were prime minister he would join in the fight.

By the time Harper did become prime minister in the winter of 2006, as leader of a fragile minority government, he fully recognized that to advocate participation in the war in Iraq---a war, by then, highly unpopular in the U.S.---would be unthinkable in Canada. Instead Harper injected the pent up pro-war enthusiasm of his party into the Afghanistan mission. Far from being a Liberal alibi for non-involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan became the place where a neo-conservative Canada could leave its mark.

In the autumn of 2001, there was no parliamentary vote to authorize what turned out to be Canada's bloodiest military engagement since Korea. In October 2001, Canadian parliamentarians engaged in a "take note" debate, a debate structured so as not to result in a vote in the House of Commons. During the debate, the Chretien government declared that Canada would participate in Operation Apollo, the codename for the mission of Canadian military units in support of the American invasion of Afghanistan. The technique of using a "take note" debate to commit Canada to a foreign operation was not a new one. This method, which provided a soupcon of parliamentary participation, left the real decision squarely in the hands of the prime minister and his cabinet. In 1994, the Chretien government introduced the use of take note debates. Take note debates were held in 1998 and 1999 at the time of Canada's commitment of fighter planes to participate in the Kosovo conflict.

Over many decades, Canada's record of holding full debates about important military commitments has been shockingly poor. In the case of the Korean conflict in the early 1950s, the government of Louis St. Laurent simply announced that Canada would participate in what it called the "police action" in that country. Having entered the First World War in 1914, with no parliamentary vote, on the ground that "when Britain is at war, Canada is at war," Canada graduated to sovereignty in the Second World War. On September 10, 1939, a week after Britain's declaration of war, Canada declared war on Nazi Germany following a debate and vote in parliament. Since the end of the Second World War---which involved other Canadian declarations of war---Canada has not declared war when entering a conflict.

In May 2006, the Harper government marginally improved on this shoddy record when it held a debate that ended in a vote to extend the Afghan mission by two years. Despite the vote which passed by the narrow margin of 149 to 145, the debate was rushed and perfunctory without the benefit of serious parliamentary hearings and input. MPs were notified only two days prior to the debate that it would be held, and MPs addressed the issue for only six hours.

For decades, Canadians have been poorly served by successive governments when it comes to serious public dialogue on questions of war and peace. Decisions about foreign policy and war need to be thoroughly opened up and democratized. Centralized government by cabinet on these issues is not good enough.

Having had no real debate on Canada's military mission in Afghanistan, Canadians have been left instead with the Harper government's threadbare rationale for the war. The government justifies the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan with two basic arguments. The first is that unless Canada and its allies prevail there, the terrorists will regroup to carry out lethal attacks against targets in Western countries including Canada. Fight them there, so as to avoid having to fight them here, the logic goes. The second argument is that the struggle is about the creation of a democracy in Afghanistan, a society that will be governed by the rule of law, in which human rights, in particular the rights of women, will be enshrined. Those who reject the government's position are dismissed with the epithet that they would "cut and run." Unwilling to defend the basic propositions on which the mission is based in a rational debate, Stephen Harper and Peter MacKay resort to questioning the courage of their opponents as though they lack manliness.

Both the propositions on which the government justifies Canada's participation in the war in Afghanistan are, to put it politely, open to question. To put it less politely, very strong arguments can be made that they are the exact opposite of the truth. On the first argument, a strong case can be made that it is precisely the presence of western armies, such as Canada's, in the Middle East and Central Asia that is drawing recruits into networks whose purpose is to lash out at the West in terrorist attacks. The second argument, that this is a fight for democracy, the rule of law and women's rights, quickly crumbles beneath any sustained look at what is actually going on in Afghanistan and how the West's mission there was conceived in the first place.

As for the government's dismissal of critics as cowards who would cut and run, this is nothing but the lowest form of wartime propaganda. The government's argument is circular. We are in Afghanistan because we are in Afghanistan. Our soldiers are fighting and dying there. To question the mission and cast it into doubt lowers the morale of our fighting men and women and gives succor to the enemy. Having had no real debate, now that we are in the fight, it is unpatriotic to have a real debate.

Increasingly Canadians are insisting on an authentic national dialogue on the Afghanistan question. Many, if not most, Canadians are deeply troubled by our country's military mission in that country. And just as Americans have brushed aside the argument that to debate the war in Iraq is unpatriotic, Canadians are not impressed by flag waving attempts to avoid debate on our Afghan mission.

Public hearings across the country and hearings before a parliamentary committee ought to precede the next vote in the House of Commons on the issue of Canada's military mission in Afghanistan. Canadians have been subject to top-down decisions on their military and foreign policies throughout their history. In recent years, there has been considerable discussion about the functioning of Canadian democracy and the existence in the country of what can be called a "democratic deficit." The most eloquent testimony to the existence of a democratic deficit is the sharp decline of the proportion of Canadians who vote in federal and provincial elections. Increasingly, Canadians believe that their votes do not matter and that politicians are more concerned with themselves

than with the well-being of Canadians. This sentiment is especially pronounced among young Canadians whose participation in elections is lower than is the case for older citizens.

Opening up the way Canada debates military missions and foreign policy can be efficacious in improving the functioning of our democracy. Decisions taken by those at the centre of government, with little or no consultation, can have an especially onerous impact on young Canadians. Public discourse about whether Canada ought to send troops to a country on the other side of the world rarely focuses on who will actually be sent to do the fighting and to stand in harm's way. It is, of course, the young, who are recruited by government advertising directed especially at those who have relatively few attractive economic options. While plenty of attention has been paid in the media to the troops already in Afghanistan or about to go to Afghanistan, and the risks they face, there is little discussion about how privileged people in an older generation make life and death decisions about the young we recruit into the Canadian Forces.

Here are some of the questions that need to be addressed in a national debate about the war in Afghanistan, among Canadians at large as well as in parliament:

- What is the purpose of the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan? How do we define success?

- What is the balance in the mission between making war on the insurgents and aiding in the process of reconstructing a country that has been torn by war for decades?
- Is a proportionate military effort being made by other NATO countries?
- What role is Pakistan playing in the conflict?
- Now that the United States is rethinking its mission in Iraq, is it likely to remain committed to a long-term military effort in Afghanistan?
- How many Canadian lives are we prepared to sacrifice in this conflict?
- Does the Canadian mission in Afghanistan make Canada a more or less likely target of terrorism?
- Can foreign armies in Afghanistan advance the cause of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, or does their presence undermine these goals by drawing recruits, in the region as well as in the West, into the ranks of the Muslim fundamentalists?

Canadians need a wide ranging national dialogue---one we have not had to date--- on whether our country's military mission in Afghanistan is right for Canada. Politicians need to play a candid role in this dialogue. But so too does the general public. This is not a debate for the experts. We all have a stake in how it turns out. Speaking of the experts, Canadians have, with a few notable exceptions, been ill-served by the mainstream media on the Afghanistan question. There has been shockingly little analytical journalism on this war, its origins and course, and the role Canada is playing in

it. Too much of the reportage has come from journalists embedded with the Canadian forces whose stories are like those of sports writers embedded with the home team.

The national conversation should focus on the specifics of Canada's Afghan mission. It must consider as well the wider military and political struggles that are unfolding in the Middle East and Central Asia. Afghanistan is but one theatre in that much larger struggle. What happens elsewhere, particularly in Iraq, is bound to have a significant impact on the fate of the NATO mission in Afghanistan, and therefore, on the Canadian mission in that country. Moreover, the debate will be incomplete unless it also considers the broad goals of Canadian foreign and military policy.

Chapter 2: The Invasion and Occupation of Afghanistan

Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S. assault on Afghanistan commenced on October 7, 2001, almost four weeks after the terror attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. on September 11. Initial aerial attacks were carried out by land-based B-1, B-2 and B-52 bombers, as well as by carrier-based F-14 and F/A-18 bombers. In addition, Tomahawk cruise missiles were launched at enemy targets from American and British ships.

The goals of the Afghanistan mission were outlined to the U.S. Congress and to the American people in two speeches delivered by President George W. Bush. The first address to the U.S. Congress was a declaration by the president that the United States was

now involved in a War on Terror. The second, a live television address to the people of the United States, explained the purposes of the American assault on Afghanistan.

“The evidence we have gathered,” Bush reported to Congress on September 20 in answer to the question on the minds of Americans---who attacked the United States---“all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as Al Qaeda. They are the same murderers indicted for bombing American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and responsible for the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole. Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; its goal is remaking the world -- and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere.”

The president issued an ultimatum to the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan: “The United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban: Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of Al Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals -- including American citizens – you have unjustly imprisoned, and protect foreign journalists, diplomats, and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate.”

The ultimatum, a sure precursor to war, was followed by an explanation to Americans and the world that the United States was now involved in a War on Terror. Bush depicted the enemy in this wide-ranging struggle in the following terms: “Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated. Americans are asking: Why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber -- a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms -- our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.”

Having issued an ultimatum to the Taliban, Bush concluded his speech with an ultimatum to the rest of the world: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.....The hour is coming when America will act....This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom. We ask every nation to join us. We will ask, and we will need, the help of police forces, intelligence services, and banking systems around the world.”

For the Bush administration, this was the seminal moment. The War on Terror would be prosecuted as a global struggle and the United States was putting all the countries of the world on notice. There were to be no neutrals in this struggle: countries that were not on the side of the United States, would be deemed to be on the side of the terrorists.

In his television address on October 7, Bush announced that the assault on the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda had commenced: “The United States military has begun strikes against Al Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime. We are joined in this operation by our staunch friend, Great Britain. Other close friends, including Canada, Australia, Germany and France, have pledged forces as the operation unfolds. More than 40 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe and across Asia have granted air transit or landing rights. Many more have shared intelligence. We are supported by the collective will of the world.”

Bush went on to say that the goal of the military action was to drive the terrorists from their hiding places and bring them to justice. Again the president warned the nations of the world that this struggle extended far beyond Afghanistan: “Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any

government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers, themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril.”

In the style that was to characterize the global policies of his administration, the struggle ahead was depicted in terms of black and white, good and evil. Many countries in the past had suffered terrorist assaults on their citizenry. Canadians had endured the Air India bombing. On June 23, 1985, Air India flight 182 was blown out of the sky south of Ireland above the Atlantic Ocean. All of the 329 passengers and crew died. Eighty-two were children and 280 were Canadian citizens. (On a per capita basis, the Air India bombing was as devastating a blow to Canada as the September 11 attacks were to the United States.) For years the British had lived with bombings and casualties that resulted from the campaign waged by the Irish Republican Army and its offshoots to make Northern Ireland a part of the Irish Republic. Similarly, France had suffered as a consequence of bombings perpetrated by terrorists of North African origin. In September 1986, in one episode, the Tati Department Store was attacked in Paris. Seven died and fifty-four were injured, most of the victims being mothers and children. Many other countries had also suffered as a consequence of the scourge of terrorism.

The suffering and anguish of Americans as a consequence of September 11 were enormous. The difference between the United States and the other countries that have been victims of terrorism is that the United States was uniquely powerful militarily. Other countries subjected to terrorist attack mobilized the means available to them to increase their security and to guard against future attacks. To make what may seem a

facile point, Canada did not consider taking military action in response to the Air India bombing.

The United States, though, was in an entirely unique position. Alone among the countries of the world, it had the military means to reach out across thousands of kilometers to carry out an assault on remote Afghanistan. By deciding on a military invasion as the American response to the terror attacks, the Bush administration was raising the stakes enormously. This was no mere police action. The invasion would turn out the regime in power and replace it with another. And by declaring that the action in Afghanistan was only one front in a much wider War on Terror in which the whole world was involved, the Bush administration was raising the stakes much further still. The United States was pledging to deliver its version of liberty to humanity and to rid the world of a dark menace.

From the beginning, the Afghan mission, Enduring Freedom, was cast in ideological terms. Its authors would not be satisfied with success against the Taliban and the Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. They were determined to use the provocation of September 11 to change the world and to increase the power of the United States throughout the globe. Pentagon planners complained that Afghanistan had precious few military targets of high value. While Afghanistan was the immediate target, from the first days, the top decision makers in the administration were thinking about a showdown with what they regarded as a much more important foe, Iraq. Even before the invasion of Afghanistan, Vice President Dick Cheney, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and

Under Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz were preoccupied with the idea of an invasion of Iraq. In their thinking, Iraq would be the decisive field of battle, while Afghanistan was merely the sideshow.

The coming assault on Iraq was the focal point of American foreign policy and military policy from the earliest days after September 11. The neo-conservatives who dominated the Bush administration developed a theory about how an American occupation of Iraq would lead to positive results for the United States on a number of crucial issues in the Middle East. The assumption on which the earlier administration of George Bush Sr. had operated was that to improve the American position in the Middle East, the Palestinian question would have to be settled. The administration of George W. Bush, on the other hand, started from a radically different premise---that a U.S. occupation of Iraq would open the door to a settlement of the Palestinian question which would suit both Israel and the United States.

The idea, advanced by Paul Wolfowitz, was that if the U.S. occupied Iraq and ushered a pro-American regime into power, Iraq could develop into a model democratic, constitutional state in which Islam was the religion of the population, but in which radical Islamic theocratic concepts could be pushed to the margin. Iraq would be America's tabula rasa in the region, the blank slate on which the United States could write its liberal-democratic narrative. The effect would reverberate through the region.

Other benefits would accrue to the U.S. from the occupation of Iraq. Bordering on Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria, Iraq would be an ideal place for the U.S. to establish permanent military bases. The Saudis were prickly about the political effects of having U.S. forces stationed on their territory. From Iraq, the U.S. could keep a close eye on the hostile regimes in Iran and Syria. American power in the Persian Gulf would be ensured. The U.S. would be able to establish a dominant position for American oil companies in Iraq and to look out for their interests in the rest of the Middle East. In addition, the strengthened position of the U.S. in the region would help muscle the Palestinians into taking what they could get in a deal with Israel, even if it fell far short of creating a state on all of their territory Israel had occupied since 1967 including East Jerusalem.

These were heady dreams and they were to morph into nightmares. The details of the U.S. led invasion of Iraq are well known and need not detain us here. What is significant is how that invasion turned out. On May 2, 2003, weeks after the American assault on Iraq, President George W. Bush landed in a warplane on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln. After the tailhook landing, the president climbed out of the plane, greeted by a huge banner that read “mission accomplished.” Dressed in the fatigues of a Navy fighter pilot, Bush swaggered across the deck. The president, who had avoided combat in Vietnam as a member of the Texas Air National Guard, was presiding over a quickly won military triumph.

Flash forward to November 7, 2006. With U.S. combat deaths in Iraq approaching 3,000 and dead and wounded exceeding 25,000, and with Iraq sinking into

civil war, American voters handed both Houses of Congress to the Democrats. The day after the election, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld resigned. His designated replacement, Robert Gates, in a congressional confirmation hearing, frankly acknowledged that the United States was not winning in Iraq. On December 6, 2006, the Iraq Study Group, headed by Republican James Baker and Democrat Lee Hamilton, reported its recommendations to the Bush administration. Established to find a way to get the United States out of the Iraq quagmire, the Study Group's recommendations amounted to a flat repudiation of the foreign and military policies of the administration. The report recommended the withdrawal of large numbers of U.S. forces from Iraq by the beginning of 2008 and advised that overtures be made to Syria and Iran to seek the collaboration of these countries in finding a settlement of the conflict in Iraq.

Almost from the first days of the American assault, Afghanistan became the forgotten war. Always the centre of the American strategic effort in the Middle East and Central Asia, Iraq continued to condition the outcome of the struggle in Afghanistan. If the U.S. were to withdraw in disgrace from Iraq (now the most likely outcome), it was exceedingly unlikely that the United States would commit to a lengthy war in Afghanistan

During the first phase of the assault on Afghanistan, the Americans operated with impunity in the air, concentrating their attacks on Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad as well as on Al Qaeda training camps. The Taliban quickly lost their ability to coordinate their efforts, with their systems of “command and control” rapidly degraded.

The Americans and their allies were not the only opponents of the Taliban. The regime in Kabul was already in a state of conflict with a force called the Northern Alliance when the U.S. attack began. The Northern Alliance was composed of diverse ethnic and religious elements whose members, for one reason or another, were involved in an insurgency against the Taliban. While the power of the Taliban rested largely on the Pashtuns, who predominated in the country’s south and east, the Northern Alliance was mainly non-Pashtun. At the time of the September 11 terror attacks, the Northern Alliance fielded a core force of about 15,000 soldiers, mostly Tajik and Uzbek fighters, whose base was in northeastern Afghanistan in Badakhshan, as well as in eastern Takhar province, the Panjshir Valley and part of the Shomali plain north of Kabul. The Northern Alliance counted on support from Iran, Russia and Tajikistan.

Viewed over the longer term, the American involvement in Afghanistan which pre-dated the invasion of 2001 resembled a revolving door. Friends became foes and foes became friends in rather farcical fashion. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the United States helped sponsor the creation of the Mujahideen, a fundamentalist Islamic movement that opposed the Soviets and despised the secular pro-

Soviet regime in Kabul. Osama bin Laden learned much about insurgent warfare during these times when he was on the American-backed side against the Soviets. Later, when the Soviets were driven out, subsequent struggles led to the installation of the Taliban regime whose fighters included many who had fought on the side of those supported by Washington. Still later, when the Gulf War in 1991 involved a marked increase in the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia, Osama bin Laden became an embittered enemy of America. A Saudi himself, he was no more prepared to contemplate a large Infidel (American) presence in the land that housed Islam's holiest sites, than he was to abide the Soviet hold on Afghanistan.

In the autumn of 2001, the Americans were attacking a country that had earlier been liberated by forces they had backed who were now their enemies, while their friends numbered among them foes from the previous struggle. Despite the rhetoric served up for Americans, Canadians and Europeans about this being a struggle about human rights and democracy, the forces involved and their respective histories, made this an implausible claim from the start.

On the old premise that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, the Americans naturally saw the Northern Alliance fighters as their allies, a ready made ground force who could make gains as the U.S. pounded the Taliban from the air. For the first couple of weeks, the Taliban lines held against the Northern Alliance. Then, the shellacking from the air and the inexperience of Taliban fighters in the face of American air power, took effect. By early November, Taliban lines were crumbling. The Northern Alliance advanced on and seized the strategic city of Mazari Sharif. Widespread looting and

executions were unleashed by the Northern Alliance fighters. Over five hundred Taliban soldiers, many of them from Pakistan, were massacred after being found hiding in a school.

The seizure of the city triggered a collapse of the Taliban regime, not only in the north, but in the south as well. On November 12, the Taliban fled Kabul and the capital was occupied the next day by the Northern Alliance. Over the next day or two, the Taliban regime collapsed virtually everywhere outside their southeastern stronghold of Kandahar. Pashtun warlords seized control in large parts of the country's northeast including the city of Jalalabad.

On the run, the remaining Taliban and Al Qaeda forces, likely including Osama bin Laden, fell back on the cave complex of Tora Bora, next to the Pakistan border, southwest of Jalalabad. As U.S. aerial attacks and Northern Alliance fighters sealed the fate of the city of Konduz, the Pakistani air force sent in aircraft to evacuate intelligence and military personnel who had entered Afghanistan in alliance with the Taliban and Al Qaeda. As many as five thousand people were evacuated from the region by the Pakistanis. Pakistan's ties with the Taliban and Al Qaeda were a factor in the Afghanistan situation prior to September 11 and the subsequent American attack. Pakistan has remained a key player there during the subsequent five years.

With U.S. ground forces joining the struggle, the battle for Kandahar got underway as did an American assault on the fighters in the caves of Tora Bora. On December 7, Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban recognized the hopelessness of his position in Kandahar and escaped from the city as the Americans closed in on the airport

and Afghan tribal forces seized the city. A few days later, U.S. Special Forces units and their Afghan allies fought for control of the caves of Tora Bora, backed up by American air power. The Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters managed a delaying action to allow top Al Qaeda leaders, possibly including Osama bin Laden, to escape into border regions of Pakistan to the south and east. (The U.S. have proved as unsuccessful in hunting down bin Laden as their forebears were in their pursuit of Pancho Villa when they invaded northern Mexico in 1916.)

By the end of December 2001, the largely conventional phase of the war was over. At that point, victory appeared to be in the grasp of the Americans and their Afghan allies. As with previous invasions of Afghanistan, however, it was only the beginning. That same month, Afghan political leaders, who had opposed the Taliban met in Bonn, Germany to draw up plans for the installation of a new regime. An Interim Transitional Administration was created. Named chairman of a twenty-nine member body, was Hamid Karzai, who was also appointed to the position of leader on December 22. Six months later, he was appointed Interim President of the transitional administration.

Originally a supporter of the Taliban, Karzai, who was born in Kandahar was a member of a prominent Pashtun family. When the Taliban took power in 1996, driving the regime of Burhanuddin Rabbani out of office, Karzai, who had formerly served as a deputy foreign minister, refused to serve as the UN ambassador of the new government. He withdrew to Quetta, Pakistan where he advocated the restoration of the Afghan monarchy. In July 1999, Karzai's father was assassinated, a killing that has been

attributed to the Taliban. Following the murder, Karzai threw himself into the struggle against the Taliban.

As Interim President of the new Afghan regime, Karzai exercised little real authority. He earned the nickname “Mayor of Kabul” from those who made the point that outside the capital real power was exercised by warlords, and tribal regional authorities. Though limited in his capacity to govern, Karzai nonetheless became extremely well-known internationally. The Bush administration adopted him as the face of the new, and supposedly democratic Afghanistan. The Karzai regime was touted as being committed to the rights of women, a major selling point in contrasting it to the Taliban’s harshly repressive policies.

In October 2004, nationwide elections were held in Afghanistan. With his high name recognition, the open backing of the Bush administration, and the use of U.S. army transport during his election campaign, Karzai emerged first among the twenty-three candidates for the office of president. With 55.4 per cent of the 8.1 million votes cast, Karzai was declared elected without the need for a second runoff ballot. At his swearing in ceremony in December 2004, the former Afghan king and U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney were present.

While the new American-backed regime of Hamid Karzai was working to secure its legitimacy throughout the country, an increasingly potent insurgency was mounted against it. The Taliban had been beaten in the short military campaign in the autumn of 2001, but now the Taliban was back, with new allies and fighting a very different kind of war. These foes of the American occupation of the country and of the new regime in

Kabul soon learned how to wage a different kind of war and they were able to capitalize on the estrangement of very large parts of the country from the new government. The assumption, sold to the outside world by the Bush administration, and by photo ops of Karzai with foreign leaders in Kabul, that the Taliban was beaten, turned out to be as false as the claim made by George W. Bush in the spring of 2003, that the American mission in Iraq had been accomplished.

American and allied Afghan forces continued to mount large scale operations against the Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents, such as Operation Anaconda in March 2002. In that operation, hundreds of insurgent fighters were killed, but hundreds more managed to slip back across the border into Pakistan. Pakistani forces, who were supposed to seal off the border against just such an escape, proved unwilling or unable to carry out their task.

By the summer of 2002, the insurgents were carrying out highly effective raids against U.S. forces and their Afghan and other allies. In bands numbering from five to twenty-five men, the insurgents moved quickly, blending effectively into the local population, and assaulted their opponents with mobile rocket attacks. Hit and run guerilla tactics allowed them to inflict casualties against the much better armed Americans and their allies.

In its ancient and modern forms, insurgent warfare combines military and political elements that make life extremely difficult for an occupying force. Foreign occupying armies, however mighty their weaponry, suffer from their lack of knowledge of the local population. They don't speak the language, they are remote from the culture and customs

of the people, and they stand out as aliens in the landscape, no matter how many candy bars they dispense, or children's soccer matches they organize. Insurgents, on the other hand, speak the language and follow up their attacks by fleeing into villages where they look like members of the local population. Insurgent tactics are designed precisely to heighten the perception in the population that the occupiers are to be feared, and that they are the source of the country's problems.

The insurgents' hit and run attacks have the natural and intended effect of making the soldiers of the occupying armies ever more fearful and hostile, not only toward the guerilla warriors, but toward the local population as well. Sudden attacks in villages and towns, inflicted by men in civilian clothes, riding bicycles or suddenly appearing in the midst of crowds, force a change in tactics by the occupiers. They have to set up roadblocks and check points to keep people at arms length, and to sort them out, before letting them go about their business. They issue orders to people to stop when commanded to do so and open fire when they do not.

And then there are the tragic errors when trigger happy soldiers and top gun pilots kill innocent people who fail to stop at checkpoints or blow up celebrants at wedding parties. These atrocities reinforce the growing antagonism of the population toward the occupiers. It generates a spiral that strengthens the insurgency and makes the task of soldiers who are far from home ever more difficult.

In the autumn of 2002, the Taliban launched a major recruiting drive, centred on the Pashtun areas in the south and south east. In this jihad, whose purpose was to drive the foreigners out of Afghanistan, the Taliban also drew in recruits from the Pakistani

side of the border, particularly young men who had attended the madrassas, religious schools that honed the ideology of resistance. Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters set up small training camps in border areas, and on the Pakistan side of the border they created encampments with as many as two hundred men each. Despite the supposed commitment of the government of Pakistan to the War on Terror, the Taliban and Al Qaeda faced few problems from the local Pakistani forces.

Like everything else in this war, reality and public rhetoric had little to do with one another. The fighters on the side of the United States, including President Hamid Karzai, had little commitment to the human rights cause that was so widely trumpeted by the Bush administration. They ended up on the American side for reasons that mostly had to do with tribal loyalties, regional and personal power struggles and mere chance. The fighters on the other side were similarly drawn into the struggle for a wide variety of reasons. Devotion to the ideology of the Taliban or Al Qaeda was only one of them. Tribal loyalties, personal grudges, antagonism against the foreign invaders, and anger at efforts to shut down the lucrative poppy trade, the source of ninety per cent of the world's heroin, were others.

With a new command structure, under the overall leadership of Mullah Omar, a ten man leadership council was created, to coordinate the Taliban insurgency. Signs of the new organizational structure were evident by January 2003. In the summer of 2003, hit and run attacks in the Taliban heartland of the south east, and even major operations in the mountains next to the Pakistan border were launched. The war the Americans thought they had won nearly two years earlier had returned with a vengeance.

In 2005 and 2006, the U.S. and its allies, including Canada, struck back at the Taliban with major offensives, designed to deny them any ability to hold territory and to cut down on the number of fighters they could deploy. Despite the intensification of the allied effort, by July 2006 British commanders in Afghanistan were warning Prime Minister Tony Blair that the war was far from won. A study undertaken by the British Royal Statistical Society concluded that during the period from May 1, 2006 to August 12, 2006, an average of five allied soldiers were killed each week by the insurgents, which was twice the rate of casualties suffered by the Americans and their allies weekly during the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

On October 5, 2006, when 12,000 U.S. troops came under its sway, NATO assumed overall control of allied operations in all regions of Afghanistan, with British Lieutenant General David Richards in command. About 8,000 U.S. troops remained under separate American command assigned with the tasks of training Afghan troops and carrying out anti-terrorist operations aimed at rounding up Taliban leaders and Al Qaeda units.

In the opening months of 2007, the pertinent question was how many casualties NATO countries were prepared to take to win the struggle in Afghanistan. The fact that the U.S. and its allies regularly killed far more Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters than the insurgents inflicted on them was not unimportant, but it was not decisive. Western countries were highly sensitive to the number of casualties suffered by their forces in Afghanistan. If the Taliban could continue killing enemy soldiers at a steady rate, that

would become an important political fact in countries where the public was already highly skeptical about the Afghan war.

In American strategic thinking, the Afghan and Iraq missions were inseparably linked. Both invasions were undertaken by the Bush administration in the belief that the United States could soon overwhelm the local forces and establish pro-American regimes that would have the support of most of the populations of the two countries. This is precisely where the Americans made their crucial miscalculation.

The U.S. military had been redesigned precisely to make use of its superior firepower and logistical superiority to smash any foe, with a deployment of relatively small American forces. The invasions, in both cases, worked well enough, with the armies of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein rapidly overwhelmed. What the Americans did not foresee was the extent to which Afghans and Iraqis, of various sects and persuasions, would coalesce around the basic goal of pushing out the invaders. The Bush administration made the case that the insurgencies that broke out in both countries in the aftermath of the invasions were largely the work of outsiders and Islamic fundamentalists operating under the broad direction of Al Qaeda. What the administration did not want to acknowledge was that the cement that held the insurgencies together was Afghan and Iraqi nationalism, the desire of very important elements in both countries not to have their futures determined by outside invaders. It was American occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq that was the problem and the source of the resistance.

Powerfully reinforcing the antagonism of many Afghans toward the occupation has been the steady toll of civilian casualties as a consequence of the conflict. While the Taliban has certainly been responsible for civilian deaths, especially as a result of suicide attacks, the killing of innocents by the Americans and their allies provokes enormous hostility. Afghan civilians have died in U.S. air assaults that have gone astray, at check points, in raids that targeted the wrong people, and in villages and towns where NATO forces have heavy weapons to attack Taliban fighters and other insurgents. In other cases, U.S. and allied forces have raided villages, breaking into houses, tying up and subduing terrified civilians, and sometimes even killing them. Since the start of the war, the Pentagon and NATO officials have had to admit that it is investigating such atrocities and that they do occur. On January 10, 2007, for instance, NATO officials in Brussels admitted that about thirty civilians were recently killed as a result of “poor communications” between NATO troops and Afghan authorities in southern Kandahar province. Afghan officials put the number of civilians who died in the incident at up to eighty.

From the beginning there have been repeated incidents in which civilians have lost their lives as a result of the actions of the armed forces of the United States and its allies. The list is a lengthy one, and only a few well-reported cases will be cited here:

- On October 10, 2001, a mosque in Jalalabad was bombed twice, once while prayers were in progress and later when efforts were being made

to remove the casualties from the first bombing. Between 15 and 70 people died in the first strike and as many as 120 in the second.

- On October 21, 2001, a hospital and a mosque were bombed in Herat. While the target was about thirty meters from the hospital, about one hundred bodies were discovered in the ruins.
- On December 1, 2001, bombs fell on the village of Kama Ado, killing as many as one hundred people in their houses.
- On July 1, 2002, in the village of Del Rawad, a bombing raid took the lives of 46 people who were celebrants at a wedding party and wounded 117 others.
- On April 9, 2003, eleven people died and one was wounded in Shkin in Paktika province when a stray American laser-guided bomb struck a house.
- On January 18, 2004, four children and seven adults died in a U.S. air raid in the village of Saghatho.
- On October 18, 2006, during a clash between insurgents and NATO and Afghan forces in the village of Tajikai, 200 kilometers west of Kandahar, a rocket fired from a NATO jet killed 13 people inside a house.

The U.S. military and NATO commanders have insisted that every effort is made to prevent civilian casualties. For obvious reasons, civilian casualties are highly

politicized and controversial. There are both high and low claims about how many civilians have died and about who is responsible for their deaths.

Studies of the number of civilians who died in Afghanistan in American aerial attacks during the first year of fighting, 2001-2002, have produced estimates that vary from one thousand to five thousand. While numbers of civilian deaths for the period 2002 to 2005 are hard to find, all sources agree that 2006 was the bloodiest year of the conflict since the period of the American invasion in 2001 when civilian casualties were especially high.

A BBC news story on October 26, 2006 conveyed the anguish of those who survived air raids carried out by NATO forces. In this case, the report concerned approximately 60 civilian deaths in two attacks in Kandahar province.

"Twenty members of my family are killed and 10 are injured," one survivor told the BBC. "The injured are in Mirwais hospital in Kandahar city and anybody can go and see them.

"For God's sake, come and see our situation."

Another man told the BBC that women and children were among 15 members of his family who had been killed.

Chapter 3: The Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

Canada's military mission in Afghanistan began a few weeks after the terror attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001.

Immediately following the September 11 attacks, Liberal Defence Minister Art Eggleton announced that Canadian soldiers operating within U.S. military units would participate in any actions taken by the United States to retaliate against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Beginning with this first gesture, the Liberal government quickly moved to lend support to the U.S. assault on Afghanistan. On October 2, 2001, in response to the September 11 terror attacks, the members of NATO invoked Article 5, for the first time

ever. Article 5 declares the alliance's commitment to regard an attack on one member state as an attack on all. The Chretien government supported this step which was advocated by the Bush administration and the Blair government.

On October 7, when the U.S. and the U.K. launched their initial attacks on Afghanistan, Prime Minister Jean Chretien announced that Canada would provide military support for the War on Terror. The following day, Canadian ships left Halifax en route to the Persian Gulf, where they were to join the U.S. fleet. On October 14, Chretien declared that Canada would offer "unqualified support" for the U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.

Following the rout of Taliban forces in the autumn of 2001 and the establishment of an interim Afghan government in Bonn, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was authorized by the passage of a United Nations Security Council resolution on December 20. The resolution was passed under the authority of Chapter Seven of the UN Charter. The ISAF was not funded by the United Nations. Participating member states paid for their individual missions and mobilized their own forces to serve in them. In this sense, the ISAF was not a customary UN mission. Initially, the ISAF operation was led by Britain. In August 2003, NATO formally took over command of the ISAF forces.

The operations of the United States and its ISAF allies were initially organized as two separate missions. The American mission, Operation Enduring Freedom, was completely controlled by the United States. It comprised mostly American forces and

involved the participation of the forces of a few European allies, as well as some Canadians. The ISAF operation was a separate mission. For the first two years of its existence, forces under the ISAF were confined to Kabul. Their goal was to pacify the Afghan capital and to lend muscular support to the creation of the new Afghan government. Meanwhile, the U.S. and other allied forces, who fought under U.S. command in Operation Enduring Freedom, undertook the task of fighting the Taliban and other insurgents in the rest of the country.

Canadian forces were involved both in Operation Enduring Freedom under American command and in the ISAF mission in Kabul. In February 2002, a battle group from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry was dispatched to Kandahar to serve in U.S. operations against the Taliban in the mountainous south of Afghanistan.

In the spring of 2002, a "friendly fire" incident inflicted on Canadians by U.S. forces was important in shaping the attitude of Canadians toward the conflict. On April 18, 2002, in the so-called Tarnak Farm Incident, a U.S. F-16 fighter jet dropped a laser-guided bomb on a unit of Canadian soldiers. Four Canadians died: Sgt. Marc D. Leger, 29, from Lancaster, Ontario; Cpl. Ainsworth Dyer, 24, from Montreal; Pt. Richard Green, 21, from Mill Cove, Nova Scotia; and Pt. Nathan Smith, 27, from Porters Lake, Nova Scotia. In addition, eight Canadian soldiers were wounded. The American pilot, Major William Umbach and his wingman, Major Harry Schmidt were responding to what they perceived as surface-to-air fire against their aircraft. In fact, what they saw was a Canadian anti-tank and machine gun exercise. Both Canadian and U.S. military inquiries

were held to investigate the incident. The report of the Canadian military board concluded that the Canadian night live-fire exercise had been properly conducted according to agreed upon procedures, and that responsibility for the incident lay with the American airmen who contravened established procedures.

On September 11, 2002, the two U.S. officers were charged with four counts of negligent manslaughter, eight counts of aggravated assault, and one count of dereliction of duty. Eventually the charges against the pilot, Major Umbach, were dismissed. Those against the wingman, Major Schmidt, were reduced solely to the dereliction of duty charge. Schmidt was reprimanded and fined nearly \$5700 in pay. It was found that when he dropped the bomb, Schmidt “flagrantly disregarded a direct order” to hold fire.

The incident received enormous media attention. It left a foul taste in the mouths of Canadians who generally believed the U.S. pilots got off too lightly, considering the gravity of the incident. The incident, which brought the war home in an immediate way to many Canadians, reinforced the sentiment that the U.S. always puts its own interests first, even in relations with allies who are so close to them in so many ways.

From August 2003 to December 2005, the Canadian mission was mainly limited to Operation Athena, the ISAF effort in Kabul to stabilize the government there.

On February 28, 2006, Canadian Brigadier General David Fraser assumed command of the multinational forces in southern Afghanistan. He took charge of a force

of 8,000 NATO soldiers, including 2,200 Canadians, as well as Afghan units in the region. These forces were deployed where the insurgency was most robust. For the Canadians, this mission proved to be bloody and difficult. (Fraser maintained command of southern operations until November 1, 2006, when he relinquished command to Dutch Major General Ton Van Loon.)

In July 2006 and then in September and October, Canadian soldiers with the support of Afghan units and backed up by American, British and Dutch forces fought the multi-phased battle of Panjwaii. Canadian forces, who had been involved in Operation Mountain Thrust, the largest battle in the war since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, moved into the Panjwaii area in July 2006. The purpose of the Canadian offensive was to clear a region where the Taliban had enjoyed notable success in entrenching itself and holding onto territory. Days of heavy fighting, during which one Canadian soldier was killed, led to the clearing of the Taliban out of the area and the breaking up of their large formations. After Canadian and Afghan troops left the area, however, the Taliban moved back in, becoming a thorn in the side of the Canadian operations in the Kandahar region. The second phase of the battle commenced in September when the Canadians launched Operation Medusa, whose purpose was to break up Taliban units and deprive the enemy of its hold on the area. While the Canadians quickly gained the strategic upper hand, the price was a high one. On the second day of the offensive, four Canadians died in two attacks, and the next day another Canadian soldier was killed and thirty were wounded when an American aircraft accidentally fired on Canadian troops after the Canadians had

called for air support. The operation was successful in re-establishing Canadian control of the Panjwahi area, but Taliban hit and run attacks continued there nonetheless.

The heavier fighting and the rise in Canadian casualties sparked a sharper political debate about the war in Canada. In early October 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper staked out his position when he declared that “the mounting Canadian death toll in Afghanistan is the price of leadership that comes with playing a significant role in global affairs.” He was speaking in Calgary where he received the Woodrow Wilson Award for public service. The same week Chief of Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, who had just returned from Afghanistan declared in a television interview that despite the Canadian casualties the morale among the Canadian soldiers in the zone of conflict remained high. “They know they’ve got great support back here in Canada,” Hillier declared. A year earlier Hillier had come to the attention of the nation when he said that the purpose of the military was “to be able to kill people” such as the terrorists Canada was fighting in Afghanistan whom the general depicted “as murderers and scumbags.”

A few weeks prior to the prime minister’s Calgary speech, at its Convention in Quebec City, the NDP called for Canadian soldiers to be withdrawn from the combat in Afghanistan. Just before the NDP convention, federal party leader Jack Layton explained the thinking behind his party’s position on the war: “Our efforts in the region are overwhelmingly focussed on military force - spending defence dollars on counter-insurgency. Prime Minister Harper need only look at the

experience in Iraq to conclude that ill-conceived and unbalanced missions do not create the conditions for long-term peace. Why are we blindly following the defence policy prescriptions of the Bush administration?

This is not the right mission for Canada. There is no balance - in particular it lacks a comprehensive rebuilding plan and commensurate development assistance.

...That's why I'm announcing that as a first step, New Democrats are calling for the withdrawal of Canadian troops from the combat mission in southern Afghanistan. Withdrawal should begin as soon as possible - working with our international partners to ensure a safe and smooth transition - but with a view to having it complete by February 2007."

With heavy combat for Canadian units underway and with the political parties taking positions, Canadians had to consider what they thought of this war in a way they had not had to think about a war that involved serious casualties for our armed forces since the Korean conflict.

The basic questions remained to be addressed. What were we doing in this bloody conflict on the other side of the world? What interests did we have in the fight? Canadians also learned, in news reports, to their discontent, that the Taliban insurgents

our forces were fighting could slip out of harm's way across the border into Pakistan where they could find a safe haven until they returned to hit us again. Canadians were discovering that this war had a dirty underside, that good and evil were not so simply arrayed against each other as they had been told.

As of December 2006, 44 Canadians involved in the Afghan mission, had been killed. From the autumn of 2001 to the spring of 2006, Canada's military mission in Afghanistan cost more than \$4.1 billion. Prior to 2001, Canada's relationship with Afghanistan had been quite minor, with Canadian aid to the country averaging about ten million dollars a year. Since then, Afghanistan has become the largest single recipient of Canadian bilateral aid in the world. At an international conference in Tokyo in January 2002, Canada pledged a dramatic increase its aid to Afghanistan. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Canada has committed \$616.5 million to the war-torn country covering the period 2001 to 2009. The \$4.1 billion spent on Canadian military operations in Afghanistan by the spring of 2006, dwarfs the amount allocated by Canada as aid to Afghanistan. In practice the ratio of military to non-military spending by Canada in Afghanistan is more than 10 to 1.

Canadians have long proudly thought of their nation as a major participant in UN peacekeeping missions. To put Canada's Afghanistan mission into perspective, let us consider the resources devoted to it as compared with Canadian peacekeeping efforts. While Canada has well over two thousand military personnel stationed in Afghanistan, this country currently deploys only fifty-nine military personnel to UN missions world

wide. There are over sixty-four thousand military personnel posted with UN missions around the globe, and they are drawn from 95 countries. Canada's contribution to these missions, in terms of personnel, amounts to a mere 0.09 per cent. This places us 50th out of 95 in our contribution of military personnel to UN missions. Prior to the mid 1990s, Canada consistently ranked among the top ten countries in its contributions of personnel to UN military operations.

Afghanistan, a country whose current population is estimated to be about 31.5 million, has been invaded many times over the millennia. In his whirlwind conquests in the fourth century B.C., Alexander the Great seized the lands bordering on the Aegean Sea and the whole of the Persian Empire, driving into Afghanistan and a corner of India before turning back to the west and occupying Egypt in 332 B.C. During his brief stay on Afghan soil, Alexander left one important legacy, the city of Kandahar, which was named after him. Despite its forbidding terrain in the heart of Central Asia, Afghan mountain passes have served as gateways for important commercial routes. And the territory of Afghanistan has been prized as strategically important in imperial struggles over the centuries.

The Russians and the British invaded the country on a number of occasions, ultimately concluding that local resistance made Afghanistan too much trouble to be worth long-term occupation. During the 19th century, the British and the Russians eyed each other's empires across the territory of Afghanistan in what came to be known as "the great game." The British feared that if the Russians gained control of Afghanistan, they could push through the Khyber Pass and threaten British India. The Khyber Pass has been the legendary route for invasions going in both directions over thousands of years. It was the route Alexander the Great took as he left Afghan territory for his foray into India. The British forces in India were woefully undermanned should a Russian force descend on them. The British had always relied on the power of the Royal Navy to

sustain their Indian empire. A threat from a great land-based power to the north would pose a much different kind of challenge.

For those who analyzed the geo-politics of the late 19th century, the favourite war they imagined was that between Russia and Britain, a war that would have had Afghanistan as its strategic centre. Among others, Karl Marx thought it likely that this would be the next great war to break out among the imperial powers. That war, of course, was never fought. But that did not stop both the Russians and the British from maintaining a continuing interest in Afghanistan.

To counter the Russian threat and to gain a predominant role in this strategically vital territory, the British fought three wars, known as the Anglo-Afghan wars. British military planners in Calcutta concluded that the safety of India required a cordon sanitaire, a swath of territory including Afghanistan that was safely under British sway. The first Anglo-Afghan War, 1839-1842, an effort to reduce Afghanistan to a dependency resulted in a humiliating defeat. The British garrison in Kabul was expelled and during its wretched winter retreat to the Khyber Pass, it was very nearly decimated. The war helped develop the reputation of the Afghans in the English speaking world as ferocious fighters in their resistance to foreign occupation of their country. To restore their prestige, tarnished by the disaster, the British launched raids deep into Afghanistan where they put villages, crops and livestock to the torch.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War, 1878-1880, was waged when the existing Afghan regime refused to concede a favoured position to the British in Kabul. The war ended with regime change in Afghanistan and resulted in a period of British control over Afghan foreign policy. During this war, when he went on a speaking tour of Scotland to denounce the imperialism of the governing Tories, Liberal leader William Ewart Gladstone charged that in Afghanistan the British had razed villages, leaving their inhabitants destitute and starving.

During the latter 19th century, the British and the Russians agreed on the boundaries for Afghanistan that endure today. During the First World War; Afghanistan remained neutral despite German efforts---playing on some local sympathy---to install a pro-German regime. During the third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919, the government in Kabul sought to end British control over the country's foreign policy. British intelligence concluded that the Afghans were seeking aid in the form of aircraft and pilots from the newly created Soviet Union. The British, who had had enough of war by then, signed the Treaty of Rawalpindi on August 19, 1919. With the treaty, London gave up its decades-old effort to control Afghan foreign policy. August 19 is celebrated by Afghans as their national independence day.

The retreat of the British from Afghanistan did not end the country's miseries at the hands of foreigners. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, an invasion that ended in colossal failure. Many date the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European Empire from that abortive adventure.

The Soviet interest in Afghanistan had existed for many decades prior to the invasion. In the 1950s, the Soviets began providing aid to Afghanistan, conceived by them as a part of their global Cold War struggle against the United States and the capitalist West. The Soviets built roads, constructed a number of oil pipelines, and established irrigation systems. During the 1970s, local Afghan communists overthrew the Afghan monarchy and established their own regime. The communist regime promoted land reform on behalf of the peasantry and women's equality. The idea of equal rights for women was deeply offensive to conservative elements in the country. The version of Islam practiced in rural Afghanistan insisted on the dominance of men and on the required covering of women (the *birka*) when they appeared outside their homes.

The Soviets sent more than one hundred thousand soldiers into Afghanistan. As was the case with the American assault in 2001, they quickly secured Kabul and appeared to have overwhelmed their foes. Having turned out the previous government, the Soviets installed Babrak Karmal as the country's new head of government. Karmal, an acclaimed actor and Marxist, was one of the twenty-eight founding members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan in 1965. He was elected to Afghanistan's National Assembly the same year and served in that body until 1973. In 1967, the PDPA split into two factions, with Karmal heading the more moderate of the factions, the one that had more contacts with the outside world. After the reuniting of the factions in 1977, the party seized control of Afghanistan the following year. Initially Karmal served as the regime's Deputy Premier, but the resumption of factionalism and the rise of his political

opponents resulted in Karmal being demoted to the position of ambassador to Czechoslovakia.

The efforts of the PDPA to modernize Afghanistan met with stubborn resistance. As the country sank into chaos, the Soviets invaded. Soviet commandos killed the country's leader Hafizullah Amin, opening the way for Karmal's ascent to power. Karmal promised democratic and constitutional reforms. He pledged an end to the death penalty in Afghanistan, individual rights and freedoms and the election of national and local assemblies.

What is noteworthy is the extent to which the broad division of forces in the war between the Soviets and their client regime versus the Mujahideen is similar to the division of forces in the current struggle between the NATO forces and their Afghan allies versus the Taliban. The Soviets had a firm grip on Kabul and other cities, as does NATO, and the Soviets promised reform to the people of Afghanistan including equal rights for women, as does NATO.

The Karmal regime faced fierce and growing opposition in the countryside. Despite the liberal sounding promises that were made, the Soviets and their Afghan underlings used force to pummel the insurgents into oblivion. The Soviets bombed the rural areas of Afghanistan, destroying villages, farm land and irrigation systems. This scorched earth policy killed an enormous number of people, rendered millions homeless and pushed the people in large parts of the country into starvation. On top of all this

carnage, the Soviets sowed the Afghan landscape with tens of thousand of land mines. Over the years, the weapons have killed and maimed thousands of people, and continue to take a heavy toll. The ruthlessness of the Soviets and their clients was reminiscent of the worst atrocities of the Stalinist regime during the forced industrialization and collectivization of land during the 1930s, when millions of people died, especially in the Ukraine.

The Jimmy Carter administration in Washington vehemently opposed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, among other things organizing a boycott by western countries of the Moscow Olympics in the summer of 1980. The fact that the Soviets and their clients, although far from being democrats, were decidedly more pro-women's rights than were the insurgents, did nothing to deter the Carter administration from supporting the insurgents. From the beginning the Americans helped organize and fund the armed opposition to the Soviet client regime. The war that ensued between the Karmal government and the Mujahideen was both a genuine civil conflict and a proxy Cold War struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States. The war, which devastated the country forced several million Afghans to flee their homeland into neighbouring regions of Iran and Pakistan. From sanctuaries outside Afghanistan, these displaced people served as a recruitment base for the guerilla forces that fought the Soviet backed government. The insurgents were generously financed by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, as well as by China, allowing them to purchase weapons on a large scale. As the war progressed, the Mujahideen developed a flexible, decentralized fighting force, with units of about three hundred men each, who were able to hit the

Soviets and their Afghan allies and then retreat. After several years of conflict, the insurgents possessed many hundreds of small bases in Afghanistan.

The Mujahideen, drawing on money, weapons and leadership from multiple sources, were never a unified movement. Their most famous leader, of course, was the Saudi citizen Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was highly effective as an organizer and financier of the insurgency in Afghanistan and his efforts drew fighters into the country not only from neighbouring Pakistan and Iran, but from many parts of the Muslim world.

For the Soviet Union, the financial and human costs of the war were staggeringly high. In 1989, after a decade of conflict in which fifteen thousand Soviet soldiers perished, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev concluded that his country, whose Eastern European empire was already showing signs of collapse, had to withdraw from Afghanistan. After the Soviets pulled out, their client regime gradually disintegrated, collapsing altogether in 1992, when the forces of the Mujahideen surrounded Kabul and seized it.

The fall of the Soviet regime in Afghanistan was far from being the end of the country's woes. No sooner had the victorious Mujahideen entered the capital than they fell out with each other to wage war for control of the country. During a time of increasing violence, a perception developed among the Pashtun population in the south that they were not sufficiently represented in the shaky government in Kabul. Out of this turmoil, religious scholars and former Mujahideen fighters established the Taliban, with

its main base in Kandahar. By 2000, the Taliban had seized control of almost the whole of the country. By that point, the active opposition to the Taliban was limited to a small corner of the country, the fiefdom of the Northern Alliance, which continued to receive UN recognition as the government of Afghanistan.

Under the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Taliban sought to replace rule by the warlords, who had subjected Afghans to misery, corruption, rape and bloodshed, with a government intent on imposing a very strict version of Islamic or Sharia law. The Taliban regime quickly became notorious for its implementation of public executions and floggings at soccer stadiums. Men had to wear beards and were beaten if they did not. As soon as the Taliban took control in Kabul, girls were banned from attending school and women were forced out of the workforce, a move that created a shortage of labour in both the educational system and in health care. Women, who were forced to wear the birka (a full body costume and head covering exposing only slits for the eyes), were not allowed to leave their homes without a male relative. Women, who disobeyed these regulations, could be beaten or even killed. Nail polish was banned and women flouting this regulation were liable to have the tips of their fingers cut off. Kite-flying and other supposedly frivolous activities were prohibited, as was foreign music and television. Taliban extremism became notorious internationally. In 2001, destruction by the Taliban regime of the two thousand year old Buddhist statues in Bamian, seen by Mullah Omar and his associates as idolatrous, led to global condemnation.

There are many strains of Islamic thought and practice. While it is not our purpose here to discuss the origins of Taliban thought and the place of such thinking in the wider spectrum of Islamic ideas, it is clear that many Islamic scholars are highly critical of the Taliban's approach to theology and society. According to some scholars, Taliban ideas combine some of the elements of Wahhabism, a strain of Islamic thought dating back to 18th century Saudi Arabia with customs of the Pashtun regions of Afghanistan.

In addition to being criticized for its domestic practices, the Taliban regime was harshly condemned internationally for allowing the poppy and heroin trade to continue. In part in response to international protests, the Taliban cracked down on the poppy trade and claimed in the summer of 2000 that it had reduced the trade by two-thirds. Just as efforts to stamp out the poppy trade have damaged the standing of the present Afghan government in some regions of the country, where the heroin trade forms the base of the economy, Taliban attempts to do the same also led to political alienation and opposition.

Another feature of the Taliban regime, one that was ultimately to bring it to grief, was its willingness to allow Afghan territory to be used as a refuge and training ground for Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda, which means "the base", developed from the Arab volunteers who went to Afghanistan during the 1980s to fight the Soviet occupation. In the early 1990s, Al Qaeda's central operation was based in Sudan. After 1996, it shifted its headquarters to Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden developed close ties with the Taliban leadership. The result was the establishment of training camps in Afghanistan. In

August 1998, following the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, President Bill Clinton ordered the U.S. military to launch cruise missile attacks against targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. He named Al Qaeda as the organization responsible for the embassy attacks and pinpointed Osama bin Laden as the leader of the organization.

The Taliban never managed to eliminate all internal opposition to its rule. As we have seen, the Northern Alliance continued its armed struggle against the Taliban regime. With the U.S. assault on Afghanistan in the weeks following the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, yet another Afghan regime was put together, this one including elements of the Northern Alliance. Once again, Afghanistan was invaded from abroad, this time by the world's only superpower and its allies. Once again an Afghan government was constructed, this time to suit the new invaders.

As was the case in previous invasions of Afghanistan, the overwhelmingly likely outcome is that the West will tire of its mission and will withdraw its forces leaving the various power groups in Afghanistan to sort out their own future. In the meantime, all that will have been achieved is to deepen the misery of the people of this unfortunate country.

Chapter 5: Canada's Allies In Afghanistan

Unlike Canada, most NATO member countries are not enthusiastic about the Afghan mission.

At the end of 2006, under NATO command, there were about 33,000 troops in Afghanistan, about one third of them American. In principle, the alliance's mission in Afghanistan is the key priority for NATO members. In reality, while this is a NATO mission, the major partners engaged in serious combat have been the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. The International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) were first deployed to Afghanistan under a UN Mandate. They were placed under NATO command in 2003. From then until 2006, the ISAF units were mostly charged with providing security in Kabul and in the relatively peaceful north and west of the country. In October 2006, NATO took command of most of the foreign forces in Afghanistan including 12,000 of the American troops. Another 8,000 U.S. soldiers remained under

American command and were charged with training the Afghan National Army and hunting for Al Qaeda members and Taliban leaders.

Here is a list of NATO countries and the number of military personnel they have deployed in Afghanistan (in October 2006): Belgium, 300, whose main task is to secure the airport at Kabul; Bulgaria, 150, in 2007, Bulgaria plans to send 200 more soldiers; Canada, 2500, 44 have died; Czech Republic, 100, this force is to rise to 150 when Czech forces assume control of Kabul Airport; Denmark, 389, 3 have died; Estonia, 79, Estonia plans to increase this force to 120; France, 1700, French forces are deployed in Kabul, 9 French soldiers have been killed since the start of the mission; Germany, 3000, German forces are deployed in the north, 18 German soldiers have died since the start of the mission, the German mandate does not allow German troops to be used in the south and east in fighting against the Taliban insurgency; Greece, 171; Hungary, 159; Iceland, 20; Italy, 1800, 9 have died during the mission; Latvia, 9; Lithuania, 115; Luxembourg, 10; Netherlands, 1907, Netherlands forces have been deployed in various missions including some operations in the south, 4 soldiers have died; Norway, 450, 1 has died; Poland 100, Poland plans to send an additional 1200 troops; Portugal, 156, 1 has died; Romania, 72, 4 have died, Romania plans to send an additional battalion; Slovakia, 57; Slovenia, 49; Spain, 800, 18 died in a helicopter crash in 2005, 62 died in a plane crash in Turkey in 2003 en route to Spain, 1 other soldier was killed; Turkey, 825; United Kingdom, 5,800, 44 have died; United States, 12,000 under NATO command, an additional 8,000 under American command, 296 Americans have died during the mission. In addition to these official NATO forces, there are small units from so-called Partner Nations, including

Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Finland, Macedonia, Ireland, Sweden (the largest of these with 220 soldiers, 2 of whom have been killed); and Switzerland. There are also 120 Australian soldiers, one of whom has died and 50 soldiers from New Zealand. The Afghan National Army is involved in the fight, deploying 28,600 troops and there are as well 30,200 Afghan policemen.

While this is a long list of countries participating in the mission, a quick glance reveals how uneven the levels of engagement have actually been. In terms of the numbers of troops deployed, and particularly the number of participating soldiers killed, the efforts have varied enormously, with only a few assuming the main weight of the fighting. As of December 30, 2006, there had been 455 coalition deaths in Afghanistan: United States, 296; Canada, 44; United Kingdom, 44; Spain, 19; Germany, 18; France, 9; Italy, 9; Netherlands, 4; Romania, 4; Denmark, 3; Sweden, 2; Australia, 1; Norway, 1; Portugal, 1. (Of significant note as well were the 62 Spanish soldiers killed outside Afghanistan in a plane crash in Turkey in 2003.) In absolute numbers, the United States dominates the list. Looked at it more closely, it is significant that the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom accounted for nearly 84 per cent of personnel killed. Looking at the whole list, including the U.S. and the U.K., in terms of the size of the populations of the countries participating, Canada has suffered the most casualties.

Other important NATO countries, including Germany, France and Italy, respectively with 18, 9, and 9 killed are involved in the mission, but are much less fully engaged than the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. whose forces have done most of the

fighting. Because of strong political opposition at home to participation in the Afghan war, and the view of the governments in Berlin, Paris and Rome that the mission will be long and unrewarding, these NATO countries have mostly kept their forces in the safer regions of the north and have placed restrictions on their forces operating in zones of conflict. Some of their forces are not even permitted to go on patrols at night.

At a NATO summit in Latvia in November 2006, the issue of the disproportionate involvement in combat, by some countries as compared with others, came to a head. Under pressure from the Americans and the British, a few allies agreed to ease restrictions on the use of their troops in missions against the insurgents. Those agreeing to do so included the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia and Luxembourg. Far more important, however, were the decisions of France, Germany, Italy and Spain to allow their forces to be deployed in combat situations only in emergencies. In plain language, this meant these large NATO countries refused to shift their positions in any meaningful way.

Explaining the decision, Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi told journalists that “this has been our clear position from the beginning.” He added: “That also goes for the French President, the German Chancellor, and the Spanish.”

Cynicism has surrounded the Afghanistan mission from the very beginning. The Bush administration launched the invasion of the country for broad geo-political reasons at a time when the key members of the administration had already made up their minds

that the place they really wanted a military showdown was in Iraq. The British have also seen the Afghan theatre as secondary to that in Iraq. From the British, at least, there has been some willingness to speak plainly about the conflict---British officers have warned publicly that the war is not being won---while in the U.S. the conflict has been so wrapped in ideological bunting that little reality has shone through. Among Canada's other NATO allies in Afghanistan, doubt has been pervasive. The continental European countries have sent forces to Afghanistan but have ensured that casualties remain relatively low. Public opinion would not allow them to do otherwise. These countries entered the conflict under overwhelming pressure from Washington. They are there largely to show that they are loyal members of the western alliance. When it comes to doing serious fighting against the insurgency, they have not done it, nor will they in the future.

Were Canada to withdraw from the mission, it would not jeopardize Canada's relationship with most other NATO countries, since for most of our allies involvement in Afghanistan has been no more than pro forma.

Chapter 6: Pakistan's Duplicitous Role in Afghanistan

Without the large scale support of Pakistan, it is exceedingly unlikely that the Taliban would ever have taken power in Afghanistan. What is more, assurances to the contrary notwithstanding, there is ample evidence that elements of the Pakistani state, and important tribal groupings in the regions of Pakistan that border on Afghanistan continue to back the Taliban. There is every reason to believe that the motives for this Pakistani intervention in Afghanistan which pre-dated the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 remain potent to this day and that they will continue in the future. Pakistan's

involvement in Afghanistan proceeds from deep seated geo-political interests. Pakistan prefers a weak and divided Afghanistan as its neighbour, and above all does not want Afghanistan to fall too much under the sway of either the Iranians or the Russians. In addition, Pakistan fears the rise of Pashtun nationalist forces on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border that would be inclined to agitate in favour of a Pashtun state that would threaten Pakistan's hold in its border regions. To deflect Pashtun energies away from this, Pakistan has supported Islamist forces in the region, whose goals are theocratic rather than nationalist. It is a dangerous game Pakistan has been playing, attempting to extinguish one fire by lighting another.

As long ago as the early 1970s, Pakistan has played a role in arming various factions in Afghanistan. The ethnic identity of the peoples who live on the Pakistani side of the frontier is virtually identical to that of the peoples on the Afghan side of the border. As a consequence of their ethnic makeup, these regions of Pakistan are semi-autonomous and are officially designated as tribal agencies, administered by an agent appointed by the Pakistan government. This administrative arrangement has lessened the reach of Islamabad in the border regions. Owing to this governing system, arising from the close ties between peoples on both sides and to mountainous terrain, the frontier area has been a highly porous one, with smugglers, refugees, and military units able to slip across, while being subjected to little control. During the era of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, about two million Afghan refugees crossed the border into Pakistan. In those days, the frontier region of Pakistan was the most important base for the Mujahideen in their hit and run raids against the Soviet regime in Kabul. Today, it is the

Americans and their allies, among them the Canadian forces in the Afghan south, who are the victims of similar hit and run raids, launched from Pakistani territory. In the 1980s, however, the Americans were completely onside with the raids from Pakistan. The CIA covertly pumped \$2.3 billion into the region, to be used by Pakistan to train as many as eighty thousand Mujahideen fighters for the Afghan struggle.

After the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan in 1989, serving and former Pakistani military officers continued training irregular military units in camps in Afghanistan. During the 1990s, as the warring factions in Afghanistan fought for supremacy, Pakistan played a very considerable role. Pakistan funded the Taliban, provided their forces with armaments, trained Taliban units, recruited fresh manpower for them, and provided diplomatic aid for the Taliban internationally, among other things supporting the virtual embassies established by the Taliban in key countries. As late as the spring of 2001, just months before the September 11 attacks, Pakistani military vehicles crossed the border on a daily basis, delivering artillery shells, munitions for Taliban tanks, and rocket-propelled grenades.

As has been made clear in the recent, and exceedingly frank, memoir by President Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan was heavily pressured into the American “War on Terror” in the autumn of 2001. Two days after the September 11 terror attacks, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage met in Washington with the Pakistani ambassador to the U.S. and the visiting head of Pakistan’s military intelligence service. As Musharraf has told the story, Armitage threatened that unless Pakistan, one of the few countries that

maintained diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime in Kabul, ruptured its ties with the Taliban and enlisted in the U.S. War on Terror, the Americans would bomb Pakistan “into the Stone Age.” Armitage, who disputes the language, does not deny making the threat.

Musharraf explained that his government considered its options and concluded that it was not realistic for Pakistan to go to war against the United States. Facing the prospect of U.S. aerial attack and an American alliance with Pakistan’s historic enemy, India, Musharraf cleaved to the side of the United States under extreme duress. Explaining his decision, the Pakistani president told the CBS television show 60 Minutes that “one has to think and take actions in the interests of the nation, and that’s what I did.” Within a few days of the Armitage threat, Pakistan severed ties with the Taliban and cooperated with American efforts to stop Al Qaeda and Taliban forces from crossing the frontier into Pakistan. That cooperation won Musharraf and his country the fulsome praise of President George W. Bush. In his frequent speeches on the War on Terror, Pakistan and its leader have always been prominently listed as among his valued allies.

Cooperation at the top between Islamabad and Washington did not mean that cooperation reached all the way to the operational level on the ground---at least not all the time. Reliable reports have revealed that much of the Taliban leadership is installed in regions of Pakistan, along the Afghan border. Whenever it gets too hot for the Taliban in Afghanistan, their units retire across the border, refit and return when it suits them. While the Bush administration has put pressure on Musharraf to take the fight against the

Taliban more seriously, Washington's main aim is to keep nuclear Pakistan broadly onside. If this means winking at Musharraf's game-playing with Taliban forces, so be it.

Despite praise from the Bush administration, President Musharraf remains ambivalent about his country's relationship with the United States, a stance that suits the internal politics of his country admirably. In his 60 Minutes interview, he talked openly about the list of seven demands that Richard Armitage had issued to the two Afghan diplomats. Two of them were particularly irksome to Musharraf. The Americans had demanded that Pakistan turn over its border posts and bases to the U.S. for use in the assault on the Taliban. The second demand, which Musharraf dismissed as ludicrous, was that Islamabad crack down on internal expressions of support for terrorist attacks on the U.S. "If somebody's expressing views," Musharraf told CBS "we cannot suppress the expression of views." This was a tart statement of his position, deftly mirroring such utterances over the years from American leaders who lecture foreigners on the inability of Washington to suppress the free expression of views in the United States.

While Washington does not approve of Pakistan's ambivalence, it is not prepared to have a showdown over it with the Musharraf government. The United States has strategic interests in Pakistan that far exceed those in Afghanistan. Pakistan is a nuclear weapons state that plays a crucial role in establishing the balance of power in Asia with Russia, India, China and Japan. Should the Musharraf government collapse in favour of a militant Islamic regime, the blow to Washington would be incalculable. The dual tactic of helping Musharraf stay in power in Islamabad, while keeping a gun to his head, has

paid high dividends to the Americans, and they will not abandon it in the interest of NATO troops, even their own, fighting in southern Afghanistan. The beauty of Musharraf's position is that for the Americans he is the only game in town in Pakistan. While the Bush administration does not like the frank things he says, they need him just as much as the Pakistani president needs the Americans.

In this game of smoke and mirrors, Canadian soldiers are engaged in a dirty war in which a supposed major ally in the region has been playing a duplicitous role. Washington is anxious to have NATO allies do as much of the difficult fighting as possible in southern Afghanistan, where the revitalized Taliban has been taking a toll. Not least, this is because the Bush administration needs to keep U.S. military casualties to a minimum, because American public opinion, already highly critical of the war, is negatively affected by rising casualties. On the other hand, Canadian casualties provoke no such reaction in the United States. The deaths of Canadian soldiers are rarely reported in the American media. Should Canadians be paying a price in blood in a conflict in which double-dealing is the name of the game?

Chapter 7: This War is not about Human Rights

In the West, the Afghan War has been widely depicted as a struggle between forces representing democracy and human-rights, including the rights of women, on one side, and an authoritarian 7th century style theocracy on the other. While the Taliban regime was certainly ferociously anti-women in its policies, the record on the other side is far from being a clean one. In many parts of the country, Afghan women remain severely restricted in their activities and girls are often not allowed to attend schools. Human rights reports, over the last several years, have documented a worsening situation

for women in many parts of the country that are not under the control of the Taliban. The Kabul regime is far from liberal and only backed away from executing a man guilty of converting to Christianity from Islam in the face of enraged public opinion in western countries.

As we have seen, the struggles that have occurred for control of Afghanistan in recent decades have broken out and have been pursued for reasons that have nothing to do with human rights. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to support a pro-Moscow regime that was in trouble. The Soviets intervened in Afghanistan for geo-strategic reasons. They wanted to shore up the southern flank of their empire against potentially hostile forces. They were already concerned about the rise of militant Islamic movements and the potential they had to disrupt the Soviet Union itself, as indeed, they were soon to do. Everywhere the Soviets went, from Eastern Europe to Africa, to Central and East Asia, they always talked about human rights and never practiced them. It was not, therefore, unusual for the client Soviet regime in Kabul to promise human rights and national elections. For what it is worth the Karmal government in Kabul was certainly less hostile to the idea of girls being educated and women working in various sectors of the economy than the Mujahideen who were later to drive them out of power. And unlike the Taliban who were one element among the Mujahideen, the pro-Soviet government did not require women to wear the birka.

The education of girls and the place of women in the workplace and in Afghan society have long been vexed questions. Under the country's 1964 constitution, free and

compulsory education was supposed to be provided at primary and secondary levels for males and females. This concept of schooling, based on western models, did not deliver what it promised, much if not most of the time. While in Kabul and other larger towns, there were primary and secondary schools, in many parts of Afghanistan, which is about seventy per cent rural, no schools existed at all. Nonetheless, there was education for girls, delivered in this highly uneven fashion. During decades of war, prior to, during and after the Soviet occupation, and in the subsequent struggle that propelled the Taliban into power, the educational system was ravaged. Tens of thousands of educated Afghans fled the country. Then, of course, the Taliban came to power and abolished education for girls and drove women out of the workplace.

Today, education for girls and the right of women to work have been re-established, in principle and to some extent in practice. It is estimated that about one third of girls now attend school, and most boys do. This puts Afghanistan back where it was on this issue in pre-Taliban days. It is estimated that, at present, about 51 per cent of males and 21 per cent of females in Afghanistan are literate.

Before this is taken as a sign that the West is on the side of the angels in Afghanistan, it needs to be remembered that when the Carter administration took up the cause of the insurgents against the Soviet client regime in Kabul---Jimmy Carter talked often about injecting concern for human rights into U.S. foreign policy---he aligned the U.S. with the Mujahideen, the forces in Afghanistan that not only had no interest whatsoever in democracy, but were the most repressive element in Afghanistan on the

issue of women's rights, and the education of girls. In addition, the U.S. had no particular difficulty with the Taliban after it came to power. Regarding the Taliban as potentially useful in the region against other players, Washington continued to provide aid to the Taliban regime in Kabul as late as four months prior to the September 11 attacks.

The two sides in the civil war in Afghanistan pit tribal and regional power groupings, including those disaffected due to the crackdown on poppy growing, against one another. A major complication in the Afghan struggle is that the country remains the centre of the world's opium and heroin trade. Much of the resistance to the West's intervention has nothing to do with the Taliban, or Al Qaeda for that matter, but has been provoked by the insistence of the Americans and the British that poppy cultivation---the main source of income in much of the country---must be halted. (The trouble is that the former Taliban regime cracked down on the drug trade, but now the insurgents, including the Taliban, are using the resentment of poppy growers---and funds from them---to sustain their cause.)

Since the U.S. invasion in 2001, poppy production in Afghanistan has skyrocketed. A U.S. State Department official estimated that in 2005, Afghanistan was the source of 86 per cent of the world's heroin. The same source reported that poppy production increased appreciably in 2006. In a country with one of the lowest living standards in the world, in which about 80 per cent of the workforce is unemployment, the drug trade is the major backbone of the productive economy. The highly organized

international drug cartel has close ties with corrupt local officials, who profit handsomely from the drug trade, as well as with elements in the Taliban.

The war in Afghanistan is in large measure a struggle about the future of the world's leading narco-state. A clear cut struggle between good guys and bad guys, this is not.

The appalling human rights record of the Taliban government was reviewed in Chapter 4 of this report. The opponents of the Taliban, with whom the United States made common cause in the autumn of 2001, also committed violations of human rights on a massive scale. The Northern Alliance (also known as the United Front) was composed of a number of anti-Taliban organizations, some of them Islamist factions, others representing ethnic and tribal groups. During the struggle that resulted in the Taliban taking power in 1996 and after that date, there were well-documented abuses perpetrated by members of the Northern Alliance including: warfare that indiscriminately targeted civilians, burning of houses, torture, looting, rape, summary executions sometimes carried out in front of victims' relatives, and the recruiting of children under age fifteen to fight against the Taliban. Ethnic Pashtuns, who formed the largest base of support for the Taliban, were frequently the targets of these abuses. In January 1997, aircraft controlled by one faction of the Northern Alliance dropped cluster bombs on residential districts of Kabul. Later that year, about three thousand Taliban troops were summarily executed in and around Mazari Shari, when the town fell into the hands of anti-Taliban forces. A 1996 U.S. State Department report on human rights abuses in

1995 reported that when forces of the Jamiat-i Islami (a Northern Alliance faction), under the command of Ahmad Shah Massoud captured a neighbourhood in Kabul “Massoud’s troops went on a rampage, systemically looting whole streets, and raping women.” (Massoud was killed in a suicide bomb attack two days before the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.)

The sad truth about the human rights issue in Afghanistan is that it has always been trumpeted by foreigners who intervene in the country, not as a way of appealing to Afghans, but as a way to bring their own people on side. Westerners will have no difficulty appreciating this in the case of the Soviets, whose human rights record was abominable, both at home and abroad. To make the case to the world communist movement that the Soviet Union was on the progressive side, the Soviets always made much of their belief in the rights of women, in the rule of law and free elections. On the latter two points, Soviet propaganda was almost always the exact reverse of the truth. On the issue of women’s rights, the Soviets, who were anti-religious, were no more inclined to discriminate against women than men. In that negative sense, the Soviet client regime in Kabul was a boon to women, certainly so in comparison to the regime that came afterward, with American backing.

The American attack on Afghanistan in the autumn of 2001 was not provoked by the miserable Taliban record on human rights, miserable though it was, but by the terror attacks on New York and Washington. The decision of the Bush administration to invade Afghanistan grew out of the outrage of Americans in the aftermath of the September 11

attacks. Even as that attack unfolded, the key members of the administration were already thinking ahead to the next and larger conflict, the invasion of Iraq.

From the beginning, the Bush administration trumpeted the human rights issue as a central feature of its global War on Terror. The portrait of the world painted by George W. Bush in the weeks following September 11 was etched in black and white. Al Qaeda had attacked New York and Washington because the terrorists hated the freedom Americans enjoyed and wanted to snuff it out. This line of argument became the watchword of the administration. The world was divided between the friends of liberty and its foes, and America was the global leader of the friends of liberty. In his second inaugural address in January 2005, Bush took this to extremes when he declared: “America, in this young century, proclaims liberty throughout all the world and to all the inhabitants thereof.”

Sadly, for the Iraqis and Afghans, the president’s edict delivered little apart from death, ruin and fear.

The human rights question in Afghanistan does not solely turn on the records of successive Afghan regimes and political groupings. It also has to do with the behaviour of occupying forces in the country. The Soviets, as we have seen, sowed ruin and destruction in Afghanistan during their years as an occupying force. The Americans, notwithstanding the insistence of the Bush administration that it stands on the side of liberty, have been responsible for one of the great human rights atrocities of this new century---the holding of prisoners captured in Afghanistan at the U.S. detainment camp in Guantanamo, Cuba.

Since 2002, the U.S. has operated a detainment camp at the United States Naval Base in Guantanamo, Cuba, which houses prisoners captured in Afghanistan, whom American authorities claim are Taliban and Al Qaeda operatives. The Bush administration claimed that the detainees at Guantanamo were “enemy combatants”, not soldiers of a regular military, and that, therefore, they were not entitled to the treatment accorded to military prisoners under the Geneva Conventions. In June 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the administration’s notion of the status of the prisoners was invalid. The following month, the U.S. Defense Department issued a memo indicating that henceforth the prisoners would be accorded treatment specified under the Geneva Conventions.

Of the original 775 detainees, 340 have been released. One hundred and ten others are said to be about to be released. Another 70 or more prisoners will face trial, leaving about 250 prisoners who could be held indefinitely. Since the detainees were first housed at Guantanamo, there have been widespread calls for the facility to be shut down. It is alleged that in the camp, prisoners have been tortured, their religion has been insulted, prisoners have been denied visits from outside agencies and the legal rights of the detainees have been denied.

The record of his administration aside, George W. Bush’s liberty pledge was more than a mere exercise in bombast. It was aimed at widening public support in the United States and elsewhere in the West for the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Rhetorically at least, Bush was aligning himself with the American liberal tradition, with its deep attachment to freedom. Bush’s crusade for liberty did succeed in bringing on board a

group of intellectuals who were generally regarded as liberals. One of these, who supported both of the Bush invasions, was Michael Ignatieff, who is now the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party. Ignatieff portrayed the United States as an Empire Lite. “The 21st century imperium,” he wrote “is a new invention in the annals of political science....a global hegemony whose grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known.” On Afghanistan, he observed that “it is at least ironic that liberal believers....someone like me, for example---can end up supporting the creation of a new humanitarian empire, a new form of colonial tutelage for the peoples of Kosovo, Bosnia and Afghanistan.” In January 2003, before the invasion of Iraq, Ignatieff wrote in the New York Times Magazine that “the case for empire is that it has become, in a place like Iraq, the last hope for democracy and stability alike.”

This “missionary position” has been adopted by thinkers such as Ignatieff who have been stirred to passion by the drive to remake the Middle East and Central Asia according to American values. In a narrative the emperor Hadrian would have understood, these new liberal imperialists warn that the civilized world is threatened by barbarians who lash out at it for a variety of reasons. Exploiting the situation in “failed states”, where human catastrophes brought on by civil war, natural disaster, disease, genocide and religious persecution have destroyed the possibility of viable states, the enemies of civilization take root. In the world’s string of failed states, which can be likened to the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter where planets failed to form, drug smugglers, traffickers in human chattels and terrorists have set up shop. From these safe

havens, they lash out at the rest of the world. Most dangerous in our age of instant communications and weapons of mass destruction are the terrorists, with Al Qaeda the generic name for terrorists committed to Islamic fundamentalism, who have the capacity to strike the first world as fiercely or more fiercely than they did on September 11.

In *Longitudes and Attitudes*, prolific author and *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, states it frankly: “How the World of Order deals with the World of Disorder is the key question of the day.” And Friedman is clear that the forces of civilization, led by the United States, must strike at the sanctuaries of the barbarians, just as the Romans did in their time, to make the world safe.

The people of Afghanistan have long been the victims of outside powers. Like previous invasions of Afghanistan, the American assault in the autumn of 2001 was driven by motives that had nothing to do with the human rights of the people of that country. When the geo-strategic wheel shifts and American interests drive them in a different direction with rethought priorities, the rhetorical concern for human rights in Afghanistan will also vanish.

That does not mean that there will not be true believers. Perhaps among those will be Michael Ignatieff who will continue to assert that the missionary cause in Iraq and Afghanistan is a good one, while regretting that the Americans have botched the job. Unlike Liberal leader Stephane Dion, Ignatieff voted in the House of Commons to support the two year extension of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

What is happening in Afghanistan is a civil war. The West's armies are ranged on one side in that conflict. In Afghanistan, Canadians are not fighting against an external invasion or even against the invasion of one part of a country by another as was the case in the Korean War in the 1950s. Does it make sense for Canada to send its troops into harm's way half way round the world in such a conflict?

One clear eyed observer of Afghanistan is Eric Margolis, the Canadian foreign policy analyst who has spent a great deal of time in Central Asia and has written widely on the issue. His book *War at the Top of the World* should be required reading on the subject. In an article in the spring of 2006, entitled "Three Big Lies About Afghanistan", Margolis wrote that "most foreign journalists" don't see the truth behind the government and military handouts about the struggle for democracy and human rights in Afghanistan.

"They get the Cook's tour," he wrote "led around by their noses by government or military P.R. specialists, and fed handouts. Call this blinkered news.....Few reporters get away from the military and go see the reality beyond. Even fewer know about Afghanistan's tortured history. That's why we have been getting so much disinformation and so little honest reporting about Afghanistan."

Chapter 8: The U.S. is Losing the Wider War

For the United States, Afghanistan is the sideshow. Iraq is the main event. The staying power of the United States in Afghanistan will largely be determined by what happens in Iraq. If Americans---elites and the people alike---decide that Iraq is a lost cause, they will soon decide the same thing about Afghanistan. An American troop withdrawal from Iraq will be quickly followed by a withdrawal from Afghanistan.

When Canadians consider the future of their Afghan mission, they need to keep an eye on Iraq. What happens there will determine the geo-strategic outlook for Afghanistan.

While the Harper government prefers that Canadians not think about Iraq and Afghanistan in the same breath, the reality is that even though the Afghan mission operates under NATO command and UN auspices, the American invasion was its starting point. Should the Americans decide to leave, the rest of the West will not stay long.

Quite apart from the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the Bush administration is engaged in a strategic struggle to establish hegemony in the vital region of the Persian Gulf (home to sixty per cent of the world's proven petroleum reserves) as well as in Central Asia, including Afghanistan and Pakistan. This whole region is now the scene of a wider war being conducted on a number of fronts. America's ally Israel is embroiled in conflict with elements of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank, and fought a brief war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006. The United States and the members of the "coalition of the willing" are fighting in Iraq in a mission that is increasingly being depicted as a disaster by American and British intelligence, as well as by highly placed military officials in Washington and London. The United States is determined to block Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. An American aerial assault on Iran's nuclear facilities could be the next phase in an even wider war. Conflict is raging in Afghanistan, especially in the regions of the country that border on Pakistan. Meanwhile, the American missions in this region of the world are being subjected to increasing scrutiny in elite circles, as well as among the American people at large.

Nearly four years after the invasion of the country by the “coalition of the willing”, Iraq is sinking into civil war. The execution of Saddam Hussein on December 30, 2006 cast into clear relief the divisions within the country. In Shiite and Kurdish districts of Iraq, celebrants took to the streets, firing guns in the air and cheering the death of the former tyrant. In the Sunni heartland, where Saddam was buried, hundreds came out to mourn him, vowing revenge for the hanging of their leader. The American occupiers have been reduced almost to the level of spectators as sectarian violence drives Iraq toward balkanization. Political elders, Republican James Baker and Democrat Lee Hamilton, were called in as co-chairs of the Iraq Study Group to seek a graceful way out of Iraq for the Bush administration. Disillusioned with the war and the broader foreign policy vision of the administration, American voters punished the Republicans when they handed control of both houses of Congress to the Democrats in the elections of November 2006.

In December 2006, the Baker-Hamilton Report (Report of the Iraq Study Group), and Defense Secretary Designate Robert Gates in testimony before Congress, declared what had been unthinkable in Republican circles----that the U.S. is not winning the war in Iraq. The Baker-Hamilton Report, not only advocated a withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq sometime in 2008, but called for negotiations with Syria and Iran, leading states that sponsor terror according to Bush administration orthodoxy.

While releasing his report, James Baker, a patrician elder statesman from the Bush Sr. administration, reminded the media that it had been American policy to talk to foes during the more than four decades of the Cold War.

The Baker-Hamilton Report was a clear signal that an important rift has opened up within the American political establishment, not only about the Iraq War, but about the approach of the United States to global issues. On one side of the debate is the Bush administration, committed to the neo-conservative conception of the American global mission. On the other side are the so-called “realists”, the Bush-Hamilton Report, a statement of their views.

The neo-conservative school of American foreign policy has promoted a radicalization of America’s global stance. Not satisfied with the status quo in which America is the strongest power, the neo-conservatives have set out to increase the global supremacy of the United States. At the centre of their global mission has been the struggle in the Middle East and Central Asia. During the halcyon days of the Bush administration in the aftermath of September 11, the use of military power was seen as the crucial way to transform societies with regimes hostile to Washington. War could be used as the means for creating democratic, liberal societies in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Along with the drive to export an American-style version of liberty to other countries, the Bush administration proclaimed its determination to ensure that the United States remain the world’s dominant military power, able to face down challenges from friendly and hostile regimes alike.

By the end of 2006, the Bush administration's policies were in tatters in the failing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in relationships with many countries around the world and in the rising crisis caused by America's inability to finance its military operations and keep its fiscal house in order. In Iraq, both the political and military strategies of the administration were exposed as completely threadbare. Far from being received as liberators in the country, the American occupiers provoked, not only a massive and growing resistance to their presence, but a deep internecine conflict among the elements that made up Iraqi society. Sunnis and Shiites were at each other's throats and the city of Baghdad where both elements were present was reduced to a warren of warring neighbourhoods, with local militias defending their own turf, and the central authority unable to establish any semblance of law and order. Thousands of people, who had the means to do so, were fleeing the city every week. The American planners of the invasion had utterly failed to predict the kind of calamity that would descend on the society as a consequence of their overthrow of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Contributing to the chaos in Iraq was the American military doctrine, espoused by the U.S. Department of Defence under Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney and other neo-conservative stalwarts had used Iraq as a proving ground for their doctrine of warfare. Ignoring the advice and warnings of Pentagon generals that Iraq could only be pacified with a much larger American and allied occupation force, Rumsfeld had insisted that a force of about one hundred and forty thousand American troops could get the job done.

For the first few months, things appeared to go well for the Americans in Iraq. By the end of 2003 and certainly by the end of 2004, however, the writing was on the wall for the Rumsfeld strategy. The American occupying force was too small. The generals were right and Rumsfeld was wrong. And it was not a mistake that could easily be corrected. The U.S. Army had been reshaped according to the Rumsfeld doctrine. Changing it would require a long period of reorganization and vastly increased military expenditures. In the meantime, Iraq had passed the point of no return. A much larger occupying force, which might have been effective against the insurgency and the descent into sectarian violence two or three years earlier, could no longer do the job by the end of 2006. The horses had long since escaped from the barn.

With the tenets of the Bush administration in disarray, the door was open to the alternative doctrines of the Realist School. James Baker, the patrician Republican from the first Bush administration, is famed for his genteel manner. Beneath his smiling exterior, however, there is not a sentimental bone in his body. He is interested in the global power of the United States and making the world safe for American enterprise. He will consort with the devil to realize these ambitions. In the Baker-Hamilton Report, establishing democracy in Iraq has been discarded as a major objective. What these elders want is pacification in the Persian Gulf. If they have to sup with unpleasant people to achieve that, no problem. James Baker is prepared to treat with the governments of Iran and Syria, not because he likes them, but because they exercise power in the region. Keep your friends close and your enemies closer, could be his motto.

The realists aspire to making deals where necessary. Their goal is to maintain a global, and in the Middle East, regional order, in which American geopolitical and business interests, are paramount. To achieve their objectives, the realists are not inclined to make outsize sacrifices on behalf of Israel, as the neo-conservatives have been prepared to do. James Baker and the realists are quite content with the regime in Saudi Arabia, medieval though it prefers to remain.

The realist outlook on Iraq is bound to spread to the lesser conflict in Afghanistan as well. An important wrinkle in the Afghanistan conflict, one that has been kept as much as possible from Canadian eyes, is the pro-Taliban stance taken by much if not most of the Pakistani state apparatus. The Bakerites, and other realists, are bound to show as little interest in democracy and women's rights in Afghanistan as they have in Iraq. In sharp contrast to the good versus evil simplicities we have been sold on Afghanistan, the Pakistanis, for tribal, regional and geo-political reasons are certain to go on backing Pashtun and other southern Afghan groupings, whatever their ideology. And the apparatchiks of the Pakistan state, as little interested in democracy and women's rights as Baker's friends in Saudi Arabia, are never going to do more than genuflect in the direction of George W. Bush's War on Terror.

Should it come time for the U.S. realists to make peace in Afghanistan, they will happily help cobble together a new regime, comprising elements of the Taliban, the old Northern Alliance and assorted drug dealers and war lords. And it will all be done

without a thought for Stephen Harper, Christie Blatchford and the editorial writers of the National Post. How long Hamid Karzai will survive as head of government in this situation is hard to say. But it is pretty certain that the ideals of democracy, the rule of law, rights for non-Muslims, and school for females, will receive short shrift.

The struggle for power between the neo-conservatives and the realists is by no means over. The Bush administration, while on the defensive, continues to have warlike ambitions in the Middle East and Central Asia. The neo-conservatives in Washington and the Israeli government have been keeping a wary eye on Iran as a potential threat in the region, a threat that could be countered by an aerial assault on the country. The pretext for such an assault would be the refusal of the Iranian government to give up plans to develop a nuclear program, allegedly for the purpose of generating nuclear power. The Bush administration and nuclear-armed Israel (the best estimate is that Israel possesses about two hundred nuclear missiles) claim that Iran is determined to produce nuclear weapons. This would make the country a greater regional power and would make it much more difficult for the United States to deter by threatening a military attack.

For the neo-conservatives, who see their power draining away, the prospect of an air war against Iran's nuclear facilities and its military-industrial complexes is a tempting one. Thwarted in Iraq and Afghanistan in lengthy ground wars, which have become highly unpopular with the American people, the prospect of an air war in which U.S. power can be displayed to maximum effect is seen by some as a way to propel the Americans to victory in the larger regional struggle.

On January 7, 2007, the Sunday Times of London reported that Israeli pilots have been training to carry out a pin point attack on three Iranian targets in which it is believed that nuclear facilities and uranium enrichment sites are housed. The Sunday Times said that Israeli planes have flown to Gibraltar to practice for the three thousand kilometer return flight to Iran, possibly by way of Turkey. The story included speculation from unnamed Israeli military sources that to destroy facilities housed many meters underground, the Israelis could use low yield nuclear weapons.

Spokespersons for the Israeli government responded tartly that they don't comment on articles in the Sunday Times. The Sunday Times story ran just over a week before Dr. Mohammad Al Baradi, the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency visited Paris and warned in a television interview that Iran could be in a position to produce a nuclear weapon within three years.

Meanwhile in Washington, leading Democratic Senators John D. Rockefeller IV of West Virginia, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada and Joseph Biden of Delaware have been warning Americans that the Bush administration is preparing public opinion for an attack on Iran at a time when the U.S. does not possess the military resources for such an attack, does not have the support of its allies and does not have the backing of Congress.

In the aftermath of the November 2006 Congressional elections and the report of the Iraq Study Group, the Bush administration decided on its course in Iraq for the next few months. In an address to the American people on January 10, 2007, President George W. Bush announced that the U.S. will send an additional 21,500 troops to Iraq, a reinforcement whose purpose is to try to halt the descent into chaos, particularly in Baghdad. The mission of the troops is to go into Baghdad's toughest neighbourhoods. Holding out hope that yet more force can do the job, Bush said that in the past "there were too many restrictions on the troops we did have" and that this time "we will have the force levels we need to hold the areas that have been cleared." Although the tone was far less vainglorious than in previous speeches on the war, Bush held out the hope that "victory will bring something new in the Arab world---a functioning democracy that polices its territory, upholds the rule of law, respects fundamental human liberties, and answers to its people." The real emphasis in the speech was not on remaking the Middle East, but in bloodying the noses of the insurgents and strengthening the Iraqi government so that the United States could hand over the security job to the Iraqis.

The new Bush strategy falls between two stools. To neo-conservatives, those who remain committed to the idea of persevering to achieve victory in Iraq, the additional troops are not enough. They wanted fifty thousand or more reinforcements to crush the insurgency. And they wanted a commitment that the troops would stay until victory is achieved. At the other end of the political spectrum are those who want a firm commitment that American troops will begin coming home soon. Americans have been migrating toward this position on the war for some time. Most Americans are no longer

in a mood to be aroused by stirring worlds about liberating the Iraqis. They want out of this conflict as soon as this can be managed.

Not enough of a reinforcement to please the neo-cons and not a clear enough commitment to pull out of Iraq to please the majority of Americans---that is the awkward position in which the president now finds himself.

It is not as though the world has never witnessed anything like this in the past. What is happening is very similar to the American stance in Vietnam in the last two years before the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front seized Saigon in 1975. When Richard Nixon was elected President in 1968, his mandate was ambiguous---he pledged to get Americans out of a war they had come to detest, while still promising to win it. In office, Nixon tried to achieve victory by broadening the conflict into Cambodia and Laos. All this was for naught. The Nixon White House came to the view---with an important input from the great realist of the day, Henry Kissinger---that the U.S. had to make a deal with North Vietnam to allow it to withdraw from the war, and further that it had to make an opening to China, to further divide the Communist superpowers, the Soviet Union and China against each other. On the road to the deal with North Vietnam, which was achieved in 1973, the emphasis from Washington was to bring about the “Vietnamization” of the war. The idea of Vietnamization was that U.S. units would progressively withdraw from their fighting role and that South Vietnamese units would take their place. The U.S. role would increasingly be to train the South Vietnamese

forces. Following elections in South Vietnam, the question was whether the regime there could stand without being powerfully supported by tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers.

In the end, of course, South Vietnam collapsed, and the American presence in the country came to an end. The American defeat in the war did not, however, lead to a collapse of the U.S. position in Asia as many had forecast. The dominoes, as the countries in the region had been called, did not follow Vietnam into the Communist camp. Instead, something quite unforeseen a few years earlier, transpired. The Nixon administration made its historic opening to China, with the president visiting Beijing. Having insisted in the past that the Communist world was a single juggernaut that must be resisted as such, a Republican administration faced reality and took advantage of the chasm of mistrust that had grown up between Beijing and Moscow. The new strategy was to balance off the two Communist giants by drawing closer to each in different ways.

The new approach bore fruit for the Americans. It played an important part in increasing the pressure on the Soviet Union and its empire that contributed to the demise of this superpower, a decade and a half after the U.S. withdrew in disarray from the American embassy in Saigon in 1975. Moreover, the opening to China played a key role in pushing the world's largest country down the road to a vast economic opening to capitalism and the West. Over the longer term, the Americans were helping create their next imperial challenger, but that is another story.

As for Vietnam, the victorious Communist forces soon found themselves in a shooting war against the hostile Chinese on their northern border. The Vietnamese had won an unimaginable victory against an immense foe, but Vietnam remained a poor and devastated country. It would not be too many years before the government in Hanoi wanted to throw the door open to foreign investment, including American investment.

The American soldiers who had fought to halt the spread of Communism and to help construct a democratic South Vietnam came home. They never were awarded a ticker tape parade in New York. But eventually the Americans who died in the war that never should have been fought were remembered in the most poignant of the monuments in Washington, the wall where the names of the thousands who perished were recorded.

Bush's decision to send more troops to Iraq should not be interpreted as determination on the part of Washington to fight through to final victory. Indeed, Bush hinted at that in his speech when he said that "victory will not look like the ones our fathers and grandfathers achieved. There will be no surrender ceremony on the deck of a battleship." In the pithy language of stock-market analysts, Bush's new strategy may turn out to be a "dead cat bounce." (This refers to a brief market rally that occurs after the market crashes, to be followed by a further decline.) George W. Bush, who never wanted the Iraq mission to be compared to Vietnam, is now following faithfully in the footsteps of Richard Nixon. Nixon escalated the war in South-East Asia to prepare the conditions for U.S. withdrawal. Bush is now doing the same thing in Iraq. Perhaps this is a nod to his historical legacy. He would like to leave the White House before the

whole rotten structure that he has created in Iraq comes crashing down. Then when someone ghost writes his memoirs, Bush can claim that he did not cut and run. He can leave that sorry chapter to his successor.

What is abundantly clear at the beginning of 2007 is that the United States is no longer committed to winning the fight in Iraq. What is at issue now is the withdrawal strategy. All the talk about building a democracy in Iraq has been so much hot air. Soon no one but historians will pay any attention to it.

Bush's policy of sending reinforcements to Iraq amounts to a rejection of the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. It also flies in the face of the message American voters sent when they handed both houses of congress to the Democrats in the elections in November 2006.

The Bush White House, however, has lost much of its freedom to set U.S. policy. The Iraq reinforcement has had to be couched in terms of the goal of bringing American troops home. That being the case, what we are witnessing is the beginning of the American "end game" in the Iraq conflict. The chances of the current Iraq government surviving into even the middle term future are remote. As the Americans prepare to leave, the country may disintegrate into its constituent parts. If that were to occur, the paramount American and western interest in the country would be to maintain their potential hold on Iraqi petroleum. The Americans could well end up pulling their forces out of Iraq and setting up a very large and permanent presence in Kuwait from which

they can oversee the petroleum reserves of the Persian Gulf Region. That could be the course of political realism as the neo-conservative fantasies about remaking the Middle East in the American image evaporate.

Baker and Hamilton and the other members of the study group, have not lost the battle to reset American Middle East policy. Their views are in the ascendancy with the American political elites and the American people. The realists, for their part, have watched the Bush administration lead the U.S. down the path to disaster in the two wars it has launched. They have no appetite for a further war against Iran, seeing this as potentially leading to an even greater disaster. They prefer a tough set of negotiations with Teheran and Damascus and a deal that will ensure the paramount position of the United States in the region.

The present period in the U.S. should be seen as an interregnum. The age of neo-conservative control of policy making has ended. But it is not fully clear what will come next.

The early jockeying for position among presidential hopefuls for 2008 in both the Republican and Democratic camps is taking shape around the Iraq question. The debate has two focal points. The first concerns the positions taken by potential candidates in the vote in the U.S. Senate in October 2002 authorizing President Bush to use force if necessary to strip Saddam Hussein of his weapons of mass destruction. The second is the

position taken by would-be presidential candidates on the Bush plan to send reinforcements to Iraq.

The U.S. Senate vote in October 2002 was later used by the Bush administration as authorization for its March 2003 invasion of Iraq. The vote has already played a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of heavy weight U.S. senators. John Kerry, for instance, voted for the resolution, declaring his support for the proposition that it could become necessary to use force to strip the Iraqi dictator of his weapons of mass destruction. After the invasion, when it was revealed that Iraq had possessed no weapons of mass destruction, Kerry denounced Bush for having misled the country. He repudiated his 2002 vote in the senate. That change of position was used with effect by Republicans during the 2004 presidential campaign to portray the Democratic standard bearer as a flip-flop artist. Two other Democratic senators with presidential aspirations for 2008, who also voted for the 2002 resolution, are John Edwards and Hillary Clinton. Edwards has since repudiated his 2002 vote and is playing a leading role in denouncing Bush's strategy in Iraq. More cautious has been Clinton who has not so far repudiated her senate vote, merely noting that if Americans knew then what they later learned, there would have been no such vote.

On the Republican side, John McCain, who wants his party's 2008 nomination, voted for the 2002 resolution and stands staunchly behind that vote.

On the second focal issue, the response to Bush's decision to send reinforcements, there is also jockeying for position among the presidential hopefuls. In mid January 2007, Hillary Clinton flew to Baghdad where she met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki. While she had previously said she did not back the reinforcement plan, she remained vague about where she stood, saying she would have more to say later. Clinton's unwillingness to distance herself more sharply from the war and the administration has already led many Democrats to become disillusioned with her as a presidential candidate. Polls show that only one in four Americans now support Bush on the Iraq War. If Clinton's position remains cautious on the war, that is not the case for other Democrats, such as Edwards, who will clearly try to use the issue to win their party's presidential nomination.

Among Republicans, McCain has defined himself as the hawk's hawk. I remember hearing him speak at an outdoor rally in Rochester, New York, in March 2000 during the campaign for his party's nomination. A Vietnam veteran, McCain declared that what he had learned from that conflict was that the United States should never go to war again without the willingness to do everything necessary to prevail. He has stuck to that position ever since. While he backs Bush on the war, he believes the U.S. should have sent a much larger number of additional troops. For McCain, the position he has staked out on the war, could well determine his fate in the run for the Republican nomination. For hard-core Republicans, who regard McCain as soft on social issues, his staunch support of the war has won him friends. The problem for him is that the country as a whole is negative about the war, and that includes some high profile Republicans.

Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, also a Vietnam veteran, has long since become a critic of Bush's handling of the war. Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas, who is making a run for the Republican nomination, is trying to set himself up as an alternative to McCain among conservatives. He has repudiated the Bush administration's decision to send additional troops to Iraq. While traveling in Iraq in January 2007, Brownback said that he does not believe that sending more troops is the answer. "Iraq requires a political rather than a military solution," he said. Following meetings with the Iraqi prime minister, the Kansas senator said he does not believe that the United States should increase its involvement in Iraq until Sunnis and Shiites stop "shooting at each other." While Brownback has supported the war in the past, he has begun moving away from administration positions. He has called for the division of Iraq into autonomous Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite regions within a loosely configured federation. He declared that he generally supported the approach of the Iraq Study Group. The staunchly conservative Brownback could end up as the realist candidate for the Republican nomination against McCain the hawk.

The American position on the Iraq War is shifting rapidly with those supporting George W. Bush becoming ever weaker and more defensive. When the debate shifts to Afghanistan, the same dynamics will be at work.

Chapter 9: Bringing Canadian Troops Home From Afghanistan

Canadians are highly skeptical, at the very least, about the war in Afghanistan. Public opinion polls show that Canadians are almost evenly divided about whether to continue the mission.

The Canadian mission in Afghanistan has never been as advertised. Apparently a straight-forward fight against terrorism and for human rights, the realities of the mission have been shrouded in deception from the very start. Initially, in the autumn of 2001, the announcement of the mission was a way for the Chretien government, with its tense relationship with the Bush administration, to express solidarity with the Americans in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The members of the Chretien cabinet undoubtedly thought the conflict would be of brief duration and that the Canadian role in

it would be unimportant. By March 2003, when the U.S. invaded Iraq, it was clear that the Afghan mission would be longer lasting than originally anticipated.

Jean Chretien's refusal to join the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq, the most popular decision he ever made as prime minister, put Ottawa more at odds than ever with Washington. The Canadian mission in Afghanistan then became a back door means for Chretien to assure the Bush administration that Canada was doing its part in the broader War on Terror. The short-lived government of Paul Martin further adjusted the focus on Afghanistan when it signaled its willingness to deploy more Canadians in the south of the country, the zone of heavy fighting. For the Martin government, this move, along with a shift to a more pro-Israeli stance in the Middle East, were ways to cozy up to Washington.

When the Harper Conservatives won their minority election victory in January 2006, the politics of Canada's Afghan mission altered yet again. While in opposition, Harper made it clear that he thought Canada should enter the fray in Iraq. As the leader of a shaky minority government, however, at a time when Canadians have been solidly opposed to participation in the Iraq War, Harper found a new use for the Afghanistan mission. It became his way to signal his neo-conservative bona fides both to the Bush administration and to his core right-wing base in Canada. Unlike the Liberals, who were wary of Washington, Harper was genuinely and fervently pro-American. Harper expressed the view that Canada's casualties in Afghanistan were the price the country had to pay for greater influence in global affairs.

While the politics of the Afghanistan War for Canadian governments has been a shifting game of smoke and mirrors, there has been a very real consequence. On a per capital basis Canadians have suffered more casualties in the conflict than any other country sending troops from the outside to participate in the war. That this should have been visited upon Canada and Canadians and particularly on those Canadians who have been killed or wounded in this war has been a tragic result of a political process that has never been transparent. Canadians have been poorly served by the Chretien, Martin and Harper governments on the Afghanistan question.

The war in Afghanistan, like the struggle in Iraq, is doing more to promote the cause of terrorism throughout the Islamic world than it is doing to win the so-called War on Terror. The argument made by some that to advocate withdrawal is appeasement and that we have a choice between fighting this enemy in Asia or on our own doorstep is a completely phony one.

Like previous invasions of Afghanistan, this one is almost certain to end in failure. Eventually, the West will decide to pull its troops out, leaving an even more despoiled country to sort itself out. The values touted by the West---democracy, human rights, and equality for women---are considered by many in Afghanistan and in other parts of the Middle East and Central Asia as nothing more than the crusader myths of outside invaders. The causes which we hold most dear are being sullied in this war.

Canada is not a great power, and has no strategic interests in Central Asia. It is time for this country to signal its NATO allies that we intend to pull our troops out of Afghanistan, giving them reasonable notice of our decision. Withdrawing from Afghanistan will enable Canada to pursue a more independent foreign policy, one that is not hopelessly compromised by support for the failing global policies of the Bush administration.

The European effort in Afghanistan has been grudging from the start. When the strategic policy in Washington shifts, as it promises to do, and Afghanistan falls into obscurity, the Europeans will be happy to pick up and go home. They will not be offended by a Canadian decision to do the same.

What will we owe the Afghans as we withdraw our military forces? In addition to an explanation for why we came and decided to leave, we owe that country, which has seen far too many foreign armies on its soil, continued economic assistance, in addition to programs tailored to training and educating Afghans in Canada, to help in the reconstruction of their country. The Canadian government has insisted from the very start that the mission in Afghanistan is divided into two crucial components: military and reconstruction aid. In fact, the military side of the mission has received ninety per cent of the funding. That ought to be redressed as we pull our military out of Afghanistan. It should be Canada's policy to provide aid to the people of Afghanistan up the level that we have spent on the military mission. Depending on when we end the military operation there, that would mean that Canada would provide at least \$3.5 billion in additional aid.

Chapter 10: Toward a New Canadian Foreign Policy

For Canadians, the Afghanistan operation has been a mission of folly. Canada blindly followed the United States into a war that is not winnable, a war from which no positive results can be anticipated. Now that American public opinion has turned sharply against the war in Iraq, U.S. involvement in Afghanistan will not long endure. Americans will move on to other engagements, other power struggles and new priorities.

By the time the Bush administration is out of office, the chances are that the Afghanistan mission, if not finished, will be on its last legs.

As Americans pursue a modified foreign policy, the opportunity opens for Canada to chart its own course in the world. In recent years, it has become commonplace for critics on the political right to decry Canada's waning global influence. Those critics have called on Canada to rearm and to reassert itself alongside its military allies.

What these critics really wanted was for Canada to line up solidly with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia to make a fourth in the "Anglo-Sphere". In Afghanistan, these critics got their way. Canada took its place in the Anglo-Sphere in a shooting war and Canadians suffered their most serious military casualties since the Korean conflict. For Stephen Harper, who observed that these casualties were the price of greater global influence, this made sense.

In truth, however, Canada's global influence has not been increasing. If anything, it has been diminishing. In Afghanistan, Canada has been engaged in a hopeless American adventure. In the Middle East, Canada has aligned itself so closely with Israel as to strip our country of whatever small influence it formerly had. The pursuit of influence in the military adventures of the Anglo-Sphere has proved to be a dead end for Canada.

Canadians need to think through the principles on which a new Canadian foreign policy should rest. Although discussions of Canadian foreign policy often skirt around this, the starting point for any foreign policy needs to be the furtherance of Canadian domestic interests in the international sphere. And while there is no necessary contradiction between the two, the second goal of Canadian foreign policy should be to advance the principles to which Canada is committed in the wider world.

Canada's vital national interests have always been much easier to spell out than to realize. That's what comes of living in a unique neighbourhood in which an otherwise potentially influential country is left feeling quite impotent because it is located next door to the world's only superpower. The power imbalance between Canada and its puissant neighbour has always made Canadian foreign policy a peculiar amalgam of resignation and utopianism.

On the resignation side, a species of lobbyists whom I would call "continentalists in realist clothing" have argued that Canada cannot challenge the wishes of the United States on fundamental issues and that its best course of action is to accommodate to the direction America is determined to take and to obtain the greatest influence and the best bargain in the process. In 1964, a former U.S. ambassador to Ottawa and a former Canadian ambassador to Washington collaborated to write a report (the Merchant-Heeney Report) that set out this approach. The report called on Canada to negotiate vigorously with the United States on bilateral issues, but to recognize the special global role of the U.S. On wider international questions, therefore, where Canada disagreed with American

policies, Ottawa ought to pursue what the report called “quiet diplomacy”. Canada ought to refrain from public disagreements with the United States on global issues that did not directly concern Canadian interests. The Merchant-Heeney Report quickly became notorious because it recommended what most people saw as an unacceptable abandonment of Canadian sovereignty, an unnecessary acceptance of American suzerainty on global issues.

While the Report was not adopted by Ottawa, the approach it advocated has been advanced repeatedly in one form or another, by pro-American lobby groups over the past four decades. The C.D. Howe Institute, the Fraser Institute, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (formerly the Business Council on National Issues) have tirelessly promoted the notion that Canadian foreign and defence policies should be closely coordinated with those of Washington. In his maiden speech in the House of Commons as Leader of the Opposition in 2003, Stephen Harper, then leader of the Canadian Alliance, excoriated the record of the Liberal government on the issue of Canadian-American relations. He accused the Liberals of having undermined the relationship with Washington by taking holier than thou positions on issues such the treaty banning the use of land mines. He concluded that anything that substantially harmed the United States would devastate Canada.

Adherents of this school of thought make the case that on important military questions Canada has no choice but to align itself with the United States. In a study for

the C.D. Howe Institute several years ago, historian Jack Granatstein advanced this argument.

We can label this the Continentalist School of Canadian foreign policy. The essential tenet of this school is that Canada is an economic, political, cultural and military extension of the United States, a lesser power whose larger fate is bound up with that of its neighbour. This school of thought was enormously influential in its advocacy of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in the 1980s and NAFTA in the 1990s. The members of the Continentalist School have been the most consistent advocates of a coherent approach to Canadian foreign policy in recent decades.

Over the course of Canadian history, there have been other coherent approaches. From the time of Confederation in 1867 until the Second World War, the dominant school of Canadian foreign policy could be called Imperial-Nationalist. At the beginning of this historical period, of course, Canadian foreign and military policies were legally in the hands of Westminster, although Canada had control of its domestic affairs. This makes the term foreign policy premature and indeed, for decades the Canadian foreign ministry was called the Department of External Affairs. The great architect of the Imperial-Nationalist school was John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, whose tory-nationalism was the ideology that suffused the Canadian state and its economic policies for many decades.

The Imperial-Nationalist approach to foreign or external affairs grew out of the proposition that the supreme threat to Canadian nationhood arose not from Canada's colonial relationship with Britain, but from Canada's uneasy position vis a vis the United States. Macdonald believed that Canada needed Britain to offset the threat from the south. During the Second World War, Winston Churchill's policy was to call on the power of the New World to redress the balance in the Old. Macdonald's policy was the reverse of that: he called on the power of the Old World to redress the balance in the New.

The Second World War destroyed the power relations in the North Atlantic on which the Imperial-Nationalist school was based. The British Empire disintegrated in the years following the war and the American Empire took its place. Canada could no longer seek a balance in its relationships with two great English speaking powers. Britain's decline spelt the end of the Imperial-Nationalist school of Canadian foreign policy. The sentiments on which the school had rested outlived the disappearance of the geo-political basis for the implementation of its policies, however.

Nationalist conservatism has remained a significant sentiment in Canada, but as neo-conservatism grew, it lost its place in the Progressive Conservative Party. Today's Conservative Party of Canada is firmly locked within the logic of the Continentalist School of Canadian Foreign policy.

Over the past four decades, as political and cultural movements have arisen to contest the degree of American domination of Canada, the basis for a new school of Canadian foreign policy has emerged. We can call it the Canadian School.

The Canadian School seeks to achieve two large goals. The first is to promote the survival of Canada as a sovereign power in North America. The second is to promote the values to which Canadians are committed in the wider world. The first goal grows directly out of Canadian domestic policies. As is appreciated by all Canadians who have embraced their country's potential as something far greater than the quest for immediate material gratification, Canada has the capacity to enlarge itself in human terms over the course of this century. Americans in the 19th century perceived their country's potential to achieve more in the future than it had in the past. Canadians, who are not bounded by the limiting confines of neo-conservatism and the subservience of the Continentalist School of Canadian Foreign Policy, realize that they are creating a country that will be greater in the future than it is today. That gives the present generation of Canadians an immense responsibility to realistically pursue the interests of Canada today in such a way as not to foreclose on the potential of the country for the future.

For the present, Canada needs a foreign policy with one eye on the long-term future, and the other on the present. The mixture that is needed is one that combines realism with a dose of utopianism. The Canada to come over the course of this century can expect to play as large a role in the world as the United Kingdom or France. Consider the course of the past century. At the beginning of the 20th century, with a

population of five million, Canada was five per cent as populous as the United States. When the century closed, Canada was more than ten per cent as populous as its southern neighbour. Laurier's boast that the "20th century belongs to Canada" has always seemed more than a little over the top, but he was not entirely wrong. Not only did Canada's population more than double relative to that of the U.S., its economy more than doubled in size in relation to that of the United States during the 20th century. Reluctant and non-visionary though the country's leadership has often been, Canada has thrived over the course of the past hundred years.

Like the British Empire of the 19th century, Canada has grown in a fit of absence of mind. For our good fortune to continue, however, a more concerted approach is needed. The Canadian School needs to drive home the point that the Continentalist School is guilty of taking an extremely short-term approach and not even doing a good job of that. The curious thing about the Canadian business lobbyists, for whom the Continentalist School speaks, is how lacking in serious ambition they are. Living as they do on a piece of real estate that is among the greatest on earth, and that is inhabited by a population that is highly motivated and well educated, you would think that Canadian business lobbyists would aspire to more than playing second fiddle to the Americans. One might imagine that Canadian business would want real power for itself, willing to engage in commerce with whomever, but always realizing that they could occupy a larger place in the global scheme of things. In the 19th century, American business moguls had that sense of themselves. John D. Rockefeller, the founder of Standard Oil, and the world's first billionaire, built his global petroleum empire through a peculiar combination

of cutthroat competition and Christian piety. He was seriously religious and believed in a social Darwinist business ethic in which the stronger prevailed and the weak perished. Standard Oil set its sights on the domination, not only on the American petroleum market, but the global market.

The Rockefeller story has been repeated many times over in the annals of American business, right down to the present epics of the Waltons and Bill Gates. By contrast, Canadian business moguls have usually been full of bluster, but highly derivative in their ambitions, wanting little more for themselves than acceptance from their British and American counterparts. The consequence is that they have been quite prepared to concede the genuine power that could have been theirs in return for a comfortable seat in someone else's vehicle.

Under the circumstances, an alternative vision of Canada's place in world and its foreign policy will have to be based on other social forces. At first glance, this may seem to be a rather dim prospect. There are reasons for hope, however. For several decades, Canada has been that odd case, a country whose population has grown ever more committed to its survival in the face of business spokespersons who have largely abandoned this cause.

The collapse of the Bush administration's strategy in the Middle East and Central Asia makes the prospects for a shift in Canadian foreign policy brighter. Those who have been most inclined to follow the Bush line in Canada---the Harper Conservatives and the

business lobbyists---have damaged their cause immeasurably in their stolid adherence to the lost cause. Theirs will be the fate of spear carriers through the ages would have wound up on the wrong side.

The new Canadian foreign policy should aim at preserving Canadian sovereignty and on lending Canada's weight in the world to greater political and economic justice and environmental sustainability. Canadians need to recognize that in the world of the 21st century national sovereignty is an immeasurably valuable asset. The American novelist Mark Twain once advised people to buy land on the grounds that "they're not making anymore of that." The same thing is basically true when it comes to sovereign nations. It is true that a rash of them became sovereign in the great age of decolonization in the several decades following the Second World War. Then there was a second rash that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union. And Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were severed into pieces.

But the point stands. Not many new sovereign states will be created over the course of the present century. Those that exist will prize their sovereignty as an asset that gives them admission to international decision making bodies and that allows them to shape affairs on their own territory to a considerable extent.

These assertions fly in the face of much received wisdom in the so-called age of globalization. With the fall of the Soviet Empire, the world entered the brief era of the supposed End of History and the Borderless World. The curtain rang down on that brief

epoch on September 11, 2001. The terror attacks were followed by the rediscovery of the state---in fact, it had never gone away. The American state, which presided over the greatest empire of our time, under the direction of the Bush administration, staked its claim to remaining the world's paramount military power in permanence. The contradiction at the heart of the American Empire was that while it was able to shape the course of politics, the economy and society in many countries, it relied on the state in each country to administer affairs locally.

The great fact of our age is that we live in a world dominated by the American Empire, but a world in which the sovereign state is increasingly valued as a priceless asset by peoples everywhere. Empire and nationalism co-exist today as they co-existed in the age of the great European empires.

In the new age, while Canadians have had very little leadership on this score from political leaders or intellectuals, they have moved in the same direction as other peoples in cherishing the survival of their state. Canadians have had a curious history on the question of national sovereignty in recent years. From the political right, once a strong source of support for a sovereign Canada distinct from the United States, Canadians now receive continentalist rhetoric, buoyed up by neo-conservative notions that the strong state is anathema to a free people. Neo-conservative ideas propel Canada toward descent into a series of regional extensions of the United States, tethered together by a weak federal government.

On the political left, the tradition of left nationalism has been strong and has had a major cultural impact. Left nationalism propelled the campaigns against the supine acceptance of American corporate ownership of the Canadian economy and played a seminal role in the resistance to free trade.

In recent years, however, other voices on the left have been far less concerned with national sovereignty. Some of these voices have been highly derivative of the ideas of the American-centred anti-globalization movement. For them, the compelling questions in the world turn on the relationship of the rich nations of the north to the poor nations of the world. Canada's struggles to maintain its sovereignty vis a vis the United States have meant little to those with this point of view. Intellectually, in any case, they remained enamored of the liberal anti-state ideologies that flourished during the brief post-Cold War era. Ironically, where the state is concerned, they shared much in common with neo-conservatives.

Those who believe that Canadian sovereignty needs to be sustained and extended should establish a set of goals.

If a major objective of Canadian foreign policy should be to foster a sustainable global environment, Canada will have to reacquire sovereignty in the critical area of the petroleum industry. Under the terms of NAFTA, Canada must continue to maintain petroleum exports to the U.S. at the level they have reached over the preceding three

years. As conventional Canadian oil production declines, Canada is becoming ever more reliant on oil sands production to sustain and increase overall petroleum output.

Using present production methods, which involve the use of enormous quantities of fresh water, large scale strip mining, the injection of clean natural gas to produce oil from the sands, and the emission of a huge volume of greenhouse gases, increasing oil sands production condemns Canada to a dirty global environmental role.

For Canada to achieve its environmental objectives, at home and abroad, the present American lock on the oil sands has to be broken. This will require either an amendment to the NAFTA Treaty, to remove the Canadian requirement to supply the United States with petroleum, or the abrogation by Canada of its place in NAFTA. Withdrawing from NAFTA would position Canada within the trade regulations of the World Trade Organization. For those who fear that leaving NAFTA would place Canada in the line of fire for U.S. retaliation, the backup of the regulations of the WTO should be kept in mind.

There are other crucial goals that need to be addressed as elements of Canada's bilateral foreign policy with the U.S. Recognized as important by successive Conservative and Liberal governments, but with little action to back it up, is the need to sustain Canada's claim to its Arctic territorial waters. Both the United States and the European Union refuse to accept Canada's claim to the Northwest Passage as Canadian waters. The Harper government briefly toyed with the idea of spending serious money

on the acquisition of ships to patrol our Arctic waters, but dropped the idea in favour of other military priorities. Constructing an Arctic patrol fleet should be the first new military undertaking in line with a new foreign policy.

Sovereignty also requires Canada to halt and reverse steps toward the concept of a Fortress North America alongside the United States. Canadian refugee and immigration policies should be de-linked from those of Washington. In the past, linking refugee policies to those of the U.S. would have resulted in consequences most Canadians would have lamented. After the U.S. backed coup in Chile in 1973, thousands of refugees were admitted to Canada. A refugee policy linked to that of Washington would have prevented those Chileans from reaching solace and a new life in Canada.

Canada should also halt the move toward interoperability of Canadian with U.S. military units. Interoperability is not a technical matter, although it is often portrayed that way. It is a political choice. The assumption underlying it is that Canada's main military operations will be alongside the Americans, or more accurately, under U.S. command. The premise of the alternative foreign policy, outlined here, is that Canada's first military priority should be to patrol the nation's territorial waters, especially those in the Arctic. It flies in the face of elementary logic for a country to integrate its armed forces with those of a country with which it has an ongoing, indeed deepening, dispute over territorial sovereignty. Would the Americans integrate their armed forces with those of a state that disputes Washington's claim to an important portion of U.S. territory?

The second priority of the Canadian military which also does not require interoperability with U.S. forces, should be to prepare for participation in international missions that fall under the heading of the “Responsibility to Protect.” The Responsibility to Protect, recognized by the United Nations as an international obligation, arises when peoples face catastrophes, whether natural or man made. The tsunami in south Asia in December 1995 is an example of the former. The Rwandan genocide and the ethnic cleansing in Sudan are examples of the latter.

Is it possible in a world dominated by the United States, and its potential challengers, most notably China, to find ways to address humanitarian catastrophes that are not bound to end up simply opening the way for the achievement of imperial aims? In the 21st century, is humanitarian intervention nothing more than the equivalent of missionary efforts in the 19th and early 20th centuries that provide a fig leaf for imperial aggression? Must we face the hard truth that humanitarian interventions cannot be conceived in good faith until empires have been reconciled with nation states and international law? And will this predicament become worse as the American Empire faces increasing challenges from China and other actors over the next twenty or thirty years?

If those such as Michael Ignatieff, who would rely on the American Empire to deliver aid to suffering people do not have the answer, two other possibilities remain: reform of the global system from above; or transformation of the system from below. Should reform from above, to which we will return, prove a failure, as well it may, that

leaves transformation from below as the road ahead. Uncertain, uneven, and explosive, upheaval from below will erupt in those cases where poverty, exploitation and authoritarianism, as well as ethnic and religious oppression, can be effectively countered by force. Where and when such volcanic eruptions may occur in Latin America, and parts of Africa and Asia, the one certainty is that the consequences will not be those that warm the hearts of liberal democrats, with their preference for pluralism, the rule of law, civil liberties and fair elections. But where liberals have made themselves the allies of global corporations and obscene income and wealth inequality, the pale light of their abstract quest for justice will scarcely bring warmth to those who suffer. Liberals could well end as sponsors of justice the way medieval churchmen were sponsors of charity.

What then of reform from above?

Efforts at transforming the UN have been undertaken many times in the past, and almost always, with meager results. More often than not what has stood in the way of reform is the unwillingness of member states to cede power so as to make the UN more of a supranational authority and less of an intergovernmental organization. The five permanent members of the Security Council (P5), armed with vetoes, have always been, and remain today, jealous of the clout this gives them. On top of this, the United States, with its unique power, has shown its unwillingness to submit to any international regime or regulation that it sees as threatening its right to control its security and retain its full sovereignty.

One could conclude that that is the end of the matter.

At present, initiatives to reform the UN to enable it to be much more effective in delivering humanitarian aid are being seriously pursued in a number of places. Let us explore one possible way forward.

As potential actors, hope lies with a number of countries that are relatively wealthy, but that lack the capacity, military and economic, to vie for global power. What is needed is a system for undertaking humanitarian interventions that is as insulated as possible from imperial power rivalries. Of course, perfection in this regard is unattainable. Let's concede, at once, some of the limitations. Humanitarian interventions are not possible in regions that are directly controlled by great imperial states (for example, Tibet, or Panama or Colombia.) And they are not likely to be possible in zones in which rival imperial powers are in active contention with each other.

In other cases, however, it could be possible to launch a system, under the auspices of the United Nations, in which the notion of the Responsibility to Protect can be acted on in clearly defined cases of humanitarian catastrophe. Second tier countries, while often closely tied to imperial powers---as Canada is to the U.S.---also have their own interests and aspirations which include a desire not to be completely subsumed within the weltanschauung of the world power. It is worth investigating the proposition that an international role for such countries as purveyors of humanitarian interventions, acting through UN mandates under the rubric of the "Responsibility to Protect" could be

established. For such countries to invest their treasure and their manpower in these missions would carve out a significant global role for them. Further, it would, in many cases at least, remove the taint of imperial aggression from such interventions.

No one ought to contend that such missions would much reduce the spheres of imperial power in the world. Indeed, such a role for second tier states would deal with situations the U.S. and the other imperial powers would rather avoid. This point is crucial, because it means that a space could be found for action that does not imply a direct confrontation with the power of the United States and its major competitors.

What countries could fall under the heading of second tier countries that could be recruited to play such a role? The criteria for inclusion could be rather broad. First, there ought to be a crucial restriction. The list should not include powers that possess nuclear weapons. Obvious candidates for the list would include Canada, the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain, Australia and New Zealand. Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, South Korea and South Africa could qualify. More controversial would be Germany and Japan.

What could emerge from this sort of initiative could be a new layer of power directed at alleviating humanitarian crises. This international mission could reduce human suffering, and arguably, could contribute to a safer world.

In conjunction with a Canadian commitment to enlarging the capacity of this country and others to act under the UN rubric of the Responsibility to Protect, Canada ought to move swiftly to providing 0.7 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product for Official Development Assistance. This goal, first included in 1970 in a UN General Assembly resolution as a target toward which developed countries should move, has for far too long been evaded by successive Canadian governments.

Canada's Afghanistan mission, conceived with little thought, has taught an important, if costly, lesson about the falseness of seeking to enhance Canada's global position through participation in the armed struggles of the Anglo-Sphere. Even though Canadians have paid a disproportionately high price in blood in Afghanistan in relation to that paid by our allies, there has been no increase in the influence of Canada on other nations. In the wider world, the effect of the Harper government's foreign policy has been to reinforce one perception of Canadians that is already strongly held---that we amount to little more than an extension of the United States in thought and in action.

That is highly unfortunate because another perception of Canada has been taking hold in the wider world in recent decades. That perception is of a country that is genuinely a refuge of liberty and tolerance, a human space where the world's travails can be addressed in a calm and compassionate way.

In the narrower world of the Anglo-Sphere, the consequences of the Harper government's foreign policy have been telling, and not a little ironic. In Afghanistan, Canada measured up to the standards of sacrifice of the Americans and the British, but the impact on Washington and London has been negligible. On softwood lumber, Washington pushed a completely self-interested bargain on Canada, taking no account at all of the fact that "Steve" was at the helm in Ottawa. On the Maher Arar case, the Bush administration refused to take the Syrian born Canadian off their watch list despite the request from the Harper government that they do so in the aftermath of an exhaustive Canadian investigation. The much touted friendship between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay meant nothing when the chips were down.

As for wider public opinion in the U.S. and Britain, Canadian casualties were simply not noticed by the American and British media. They were no more inclined to cover Canada after the sacrifices than before. As it has turned out, the supposed realism preached by Canadian neo-conservatives has produced no tangible benefits for this country.

It is time to turn the page and move on, to stake out a foreign policy that is rooted in self-interest and the quest for a better world, the combination that is needed in a country whose best days are in the future.

Appendix: Canadian Opinion of the Afghan Mission and Canadian Military Policy

CBC-Enviro-nics public issues poll

Last Updated November 2006

[CBC News](#)

1. Generally speaking, would you say that your opinion of the Canadian Armed Forces is	%
Very favourable	34
Somewhat favourable	39
Not very favourable	14
Not at all favourable	10
Don't know/No answer	3
2. Do you feel more proud, less proud, or about the same pride, in the Canadian Forces today as	%

you did five years ago?	
More proud	38
Less proud	13
About the same pride	46
Don't know/No answer	3
3. When it comes to Canada's role in the world, some people say that Canada should focus on a peace-building role in the world. Others say that Canada should focus on active combat roles with our allied countries. Which view is closer to your own?	%
Peace-building roles	80
Active combat roles with allied countries	16
Don't know/No answer	4
4. I would like to know how you feel about Canada's involvements around the world in the	%

last several decades. Please tell me if you are proud or not proud of each of the following: a) Canada's involvement in United Nations peace-building operations around the world since World War Two?	
Proud	92
Not proud	6
Don't know/No answer	2
4. b) Canada's non-participation in the U.S.-led war in Iraq?	%
Proud	78
Not proud	20
Don't know/No answer	2
4. c) Canada's recent involvement in Afghanistan?	%
Proud	55

Not proud	42
Don't know/No answer	3
5. As you may know, Canadian troops are now active in Afghanistan. Why do you think Canadian troops are there? What is the reason or reasons?	%
Support U.S. troops / U.S. foreign policy / help George Bush	22
Support NATO/support United Nations	5
Restore peace	13
Defeat Taliban / warlords / insurgents	9
Help create democracy	8
War on terror / defeat world terrorism/defeat Al-Qaeda	8
Peacekeeping	24

Humanitarian assistance/reconstruction	18
Negative U.S. influence / pressure	2
Stabilize Afghanistan	2
Sent by Canadian government	2
Other SPECIFY	6
DK/NA=0	11

6. Regarding Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan, do you... (%)

	2002	2004	2006 March	2006 June	2006 Oct	2006 Nov
Strongly approve	38	26	21	25	23	19
	75	61	49	56	48	50
Somewhat approve	37	35	28	31	25	31

Somewhat disapprove	11	33	15	35	16	48	15	40	18	50	18	48
Strongly disapprove	12		20		32		25		32		30	

7. As far as you know, is the Canadian mission in Afghanistan part of a U.S.-led coalition or part of a United Nations approved NATO mission?	%
U.S. led coalition?	35
UN approved NATO mission?	53
Don't know/No answer	12
8. In your opinion, should Canadian Forces	%
Stay in Afghanistan past the year 2009	10
Stay in Afghanistan until 2009 and then return to Canada, or	23
Return from Afghanistan before 2009?	59

Depends	–
Don't know/No answer	8
9. Do you think in the end the Canadian mission in Afghanistan is likely to be successful or not successful?	%
Successful	34
Not successful	58
Don't know/No answer	7
10. Here are some reasons why Canadian Forces might stay in or might leave Afghanistan a) Some experts say that if Canadian Forces left Afghanistan, it would undermine international efforts to help that country and the Taliban might return to power there. In your opinion is this	%
A good reason to stay in Afghanistan, or	58
Not a good reason to stay in Afghanistan?	38

Don't know/No answer	4
10. b) Some experts say that the Canadian mission in Afghanistan has increased Canada's image and influence in world affairs. In your opinion is this	%
A good reason to stay in Afghanistan, or	32
Not a good reason to stay in Afghanistan?	64
Don't know/No answer	4
10. c) So far 42 Canadian soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan. In your opinion is this	%
A good reason to leave Afghanistan, or	41
Not a good reason to leave Afghanistan?	56
Don't know/No answer	3
10. d) Some experts say that Canada's mission in Afghanistan will increase the chances of Canada becoming a target of terrorist attacks. In your	%

opinion is this	
A good reason to leave Afghanistan, or	44
Not a good reason to leave Afghanistan?	53
Don't know/No answer	3

Survey methods

The results of the survey are based on 2005 telephone interviews conducted by Environics Research Group Ltd. for the CBC from November 2 to 6, 2006.

The sampling method was designed to complete interviews with respondents age 18 and older within households randomly selected across the 10 province. The sampling model relies on stratification by province and by community size.

The results are weighted to reflect the actual proportions of the provinces in the population. On a national basis, the confidence level is + 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The sample sizes and associated margins:

	Number of people interviewed	+/- %
Canada	2005	2.2

Atlantic Canada	260	6.1
Quebec	505	4.3
Ontario	600	4.0
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	154	7.9
Alberta	226	6.5
British Columbia	260	6.1

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Acknowledgements:

I am very grateful to Jane Springer who read the manuscript and offered editorial advice and ideas about how to sharpen the argument. Thanks to my literary agent Jackie Kaiser for her ideas about how to shape the manuscript.

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