Peace and security
Dissecting Canada’s positions in key areas

Afghanistan
Canada’s failure to end the “thousand little wars”

Arms exports
Canada’s new report reflects old habits

Space policy
Industry support in an international policy vacuum

The Ploughshares Monitor
SUMMER 2014 | VOLUME 35 | ISSUE 2

2015 Peace Agenda: Turning The Ship Around
SPECIAL ISSUE

A quarterly publication of Project Ploughshares • Available online: www.ploughshares.ca
Contents

Summer 2014

3

Introduction to our special issue
Time for a new Canadian foreign and defence policy.
by John Siebert

4

“The thousand little wars”
Canada’s failure to end the wars in Afghanistan.
by John Siebert

10

2015 Peace and Human Security Agenda
Dissecting Canada’s position on nuclear disarmament, peace operations and conventional weapons control.
by Cesar Jaramillo, Kenneth Epps, and John Siebert

14

Canada’s space policy framework 2014
Industry support in an international policy vacuum.
by John Siebert

17

Canada’s arms exports
New report reflects old habits.
by Kenneth Epps

COVER: Master Corporal Jordan Taylor salutes as the Canadian flag is lowered at the International Security Assistance Force headquarters in Kabul on March 12 to mark the end of Operation ATTENTION and the 12-year military mission in Afghanistan. Patrick Blanchard/DND
Time for a new Canadian foreign and defence policy

By John Siebert

The end of Canada’s failed military mission in Afghanistan in March 2014 provides an opportunity for a fundamental reevaluation and change in the way Canada contributes to international peace and security.

Canada has been blinded by its preoccupation with a military response to the War on Terror and misguided attempts to transform Afghanistan, without paying attention to the fundamental principles of building a sustainable peace in a conflict zone.

Canada has trumpeted the leading role of a stronger, better equipped, and better funded Canadian Forces in foreign policy as well as defence policy, but has failed to rationalize and provide an underlying policy framework on how to supply and equip the Canadian Forces with appropriate new planes, trucks, and ships to meet its goals.

Canada is no longer a player in United Nations peacekeeping operations, which are the primary means by which the international community has assisted in a 40 per cent decrease in the number of armed conflicts in the world since the mid-1990s.\footnote{See The Armed Conflicts Report on our website (www.ploughshares.ca).}

Canada has let its once world-renowned diplomatic corps dwindle and twist in the wind of irrelevancy, although diplomacy is the essential factor in the political resolution of violent conflicts.

Canada has become a spoiler rather than a leader in international efforts to advance nuclear disarmament and the control and reduction of conventional arms.

Major advances in the global understanding of how armed violence perpetuates itself and can be checked have been systematically ignored by Canada in favour of bravado statements and narrow considerations to advance Canadian commercial interests.

Canada is out of step with its own history and the national assets it brings to advancing peacebuilding and disarmament.

Canada needs to regain its standing in the world as a contributor to human security rather than making the world less secure. We need to turn this ship around.

The articles that follow provide direction for charting a new course for Canada in the world.
Canada and the failure to end the “thousand little wars” in Afghanistan

By John Siebert

April 1 marked the end of Canada’s military mission in Afghanistan. It was Canada’s longest and costliest expeditionary war since Korea in the 1950s. It failed. And that failure has been evident since 2006. Far too much faith was placed in military options to defeat the Taliban and other insurgents.

Today we are left crossing our fingers, watching the withdrawal in 2014 of the majority of international troops, hoping that a newly elected Afghanistan President will be able to consolidate the Afghanistan government’s control of the country and Afghan security forces will be able to eventually defeat the insurgents.

Neither Canada nor its allies stopped to reconsider their options and make the types of investments in diplomatic and other efforts to advance the only real alternative to war: a comprehensive peace process that addressed local, national, and regional sources of tension. Canada can still choose to make this its priority in Afghanistan, but there is no indication it is prepared to do so.

Phases of the war
The Canadian Forces engagement in Afghanistan can be roughly divided into three phases. The first, launched after 9/11, primarily provided protection and stabilization for the new government in the capital of Kabul until 2005. Important work was accomplished in taking heavy artillery out of the field and supporting an emerging Afghanistan government administration after decades of civil war.

The fateful decision was made in 2006 that Canada would take responsibility for one of the more difficult assignments: responding to the resurgent Taliban in the south of the country. From 2006 to 2011 Canada conducted counterinsurgency warfare in Kandahar Province, spiritual heartland of the Taliban with easy access to Pakistan as a refuge for its fighters.

In the final phase, between 2011 and 2014, Canada focused on training the Afghan military and police so that they could carry on the questionable counterinsurgency strategy, replacing foreign with local troops.

Optimists and pessimists
The massive investment of Western development assistance in Afghanistan since 2001 resulted in measurable improvements in the lives of Afghans, particularly in Kabul and other swelling urban centres.
in the north and west, where fighting had the least impact. In rural areas, particularly in the south and east, the situation was much different. Insurgents effectively took control of large parts of the countryside and provided justice and limited services with shadow government-like administrators.

Not surprisingly, defenders of Canada’s mission, particularly those in official circles, are quick to point to the improvements in Afghanistan. But the cost has been high. Canada has spent at least $18-billion to date and will bear the cost of meeting the needs of Canadian veterans of this war for another 60 years. One hundred and fifty-eight Canadian Forces personnel died and thousands more were injured. Canadian civilian officials, development workers, and journalists also were killed and injured, along with tens of thousands of Afghan civilians.

In his book Chris Alexander, Canada’s former Ambassador to Afghanistan, former Deputy Head of the UN’s mission there, and now a federal cabinet minister, speaks from the sunnier side of the street: “The three plagues of Afghan life since the Soviet withdrawal—factions, drugs and terrorists—are now all in stasis or retreat” (Alexander 2011, p. 245). Alexander points to material improvements brought about in Afghanistan by the presence of international troops and large investments in aid assistance:

The pundits seem to proclaim with one voice: Afghanistan will never change....

Yet it has changed. The last decade has seen a dramatic shift in the country’s human landscape. Over 5 million Afghans have returned home, mostly from Iran and Pakistan. Per-capita income has grown, by some measures, sevenfold. A new road system is the backbone for a reviving economy, with agriculture, handicrafts, telecom, construction and even mining all booming. (p. 244)

But there are many others with intimate knowledge of the country who doubt that there is a bright future for Afghanistan under current circumstances. Graeme Smith, former Globe and Mail correspondent in Afghanistan and now lead International Crisis Group (ICG) analyst there, provides a more pessimistic assessment:

The NATO surges into the south will almost certainly be remembered as a spectacular mistake. Many of the aims were noble: peace, democracy, rule of law. We thought that a sweeping program of armed nation-building might improve the lives of people in southern Afghanistan and simultaneously eliminate a haven for terrorism. Both of these guesses proved incorrect. (Smith 2013, pp. 278-279)

Pakistan and the future of Afghanistan

No one can say with certainty what the future holds for Afghanistan. Optimists and pessimists alike hedge their analytic bets. Alexander sees the continuing role of Pakistan in giving shelter to the Taliban and other insurgents as a key variable. Smith sees local conditions and sources of conflict as primary.

Pakistan, according to Alexander, has been chiefly responsible for the sustained insurgency in Afghanistan:

The victims of violence over the last decade have lost their lives, either directly or indirectly, because of a misguided Pakistani policy that treats Afghanistan as a mere pawn in an ongoing battle for regional supremacy against India. Conflict will not yield to peace in Afghanistan unless and until this policy is abandoned. (pp. 245-246)

Alexander begs the question: If the powerful United States cannot significantly alter the contradictory dynamics of Pakistan, with its commitment to fighting the “war on terror” while also providing sanctuary and sustenance to the Taliban,
what good does Alexander do in pointing to this problem? At one level it provides an analytic get-out-of-jail-free card if his optimistic projections don’t pan out. If Afghanistan descends into civil war again, Alexander can point to Pakistan’s role with great sadness. No concrete policy follows from his analysis.

Smith, on the other hand, sees the roots of the Taliban’s continuing hold over the south in a multitude of local conflict drivers. Pakistan is a factor, but not the primary reason that the Taliban may in the future fully control the south and possibly all Afghanistan:

Here is the most important thing I learned from surveying the Taliban: no matter how stupid, or stubborn, or ignorant, or xenophobic, or religiously misguided these men are—they are nonetheless nationalists…. They showed no fondness for Pakistan, despite the support from that country for the insurgency, and every fighter in our survey rejected the legitimacy of the border, saying that the Pakistani cities of Quetta and Peshawar belong inside Afghanistan. (pp. 208-209)

“A thousand little wars”

Obviously, Alexander and Smith view the nature of the conflict differently. As a primary author of the May 2014 ICG report, Smith interviewed key leaders in four Afghan states to determine the impact of the withdrawal of international troops and their replacement by Afghan security forces after 2014. The varying results point to myriad conflicts arising from their vastly different recent history and local conditions.

In a video commentary that accompanied the report, Smith described the con-
continuing turmoil in Afghanistan as “a thousand little wars.” His detailed ICG report categorizes some reasons for these wars:

- unresolved local and national grievances that have led to generations of feuding;
- ethnic and tribal tensions;
- discord within the Afghan security forces;
- mistreatment of civilians by Afghan security forces;
- the existence of safe havens for the Taliban in Pakistan, and continuing counterinsurgency and intelligence operations by Afghan security forces against Pakistan and in its territory;
- the historical relationship between minorities and majority Pashtuns;
- tactical decisions by the Taliban and other insurgent groups;
- the existence of insurgent groups aligned with, or in competition with, the Taliban;
- the play of local and regional warlords in the national government;
- village tensions with provincial or national authorities;
- conservative and rural religious authorities opposed to modernization policies;
- grudges against the United States and other international forces for arresting and killing Afghans;
- chronic unemployment, especially among the youth; and
- tensions between secular and religious sensibilities.

The war in Afghanistan has never been simply a war on terror, but a civil war with many different local elements in which the international forces, including Canada, were fighting on one side.

Smith recounts failed attempts to initiate talks with the Taliban and other insurgents to end the civil war. The short-term prognosis is bleak:

There is an emerging consensus in Afghanistan that the insurgents will only talk seriously after testing the military strength of Afghan forces once the internationals exit. A post-election, post-transition government, provided it has broad acceptance and legitimacy, would be best placed to explore new avenues for reviving the peace talks, including through outreach to regional countries, particularly Pakistan. (ICG 2014, p. 5)

The initial round of voting for a new Afghan President in April went well, but the required runoff election between the two frontrunners has hit snags over claims of ballot stuffing and corruption, casting doubts about the acceptance and legitimacy of the new government. Afghan security forces fighting in the field without the assistance of international troops have had mixed success.

How Canada should advance peace in Afghanistan

In concert with The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and civil society colleagues, Project Ploughshares has maintained a steady public commentary on Canada’s role in the Afghan war since 2001. The observations and recommendations made along the way remain valid as Afghanistan faces its future without the presence of substantial numbers of foreign troops.

Many reasons were given for Canada’s military involvement in Afghanistan: responding to terrorism, protecting women’s rights, creating opportunities for little girls to go to school, appeasing the United States after not joining the 2003 invasion of Iraq, being seen as a team player in a NATO effort.

For Ploughshares, Canada’s obligation was not to NATO or the “war on terror,” but to the people of Afghanistan, whose government had been overthrown in 2001 through international action in which Canada participated (Regehr 2006b). As a result, Canada had a responsibility to assist
Afghan authorities and communities in protecting people whose government had been destroyed.

The best means to do that was through conflict resolution, peacebuilding, reconstruction, and humanitarian support. Combined, these were not a parallel or alternative strategy to military counter-insurgency in Afghanistan; they were the only viable strategy. The legitimate role of international military forces was to provide police-like protection to civilians until Afghanistan's government could provide this in territory it controlled. Over time, the government’s legitimacy would expand.

In 2006 Ploughshares questioned the military-centred counterinsurgency response of Canada in the southern province of Kandahar. We argued that Canada should reject self-defeating attempts to crush the insurgency in favour of multi-dimensional peacebuilding efforts (Regehr 2006a) that built confidence in public institutions, found alternatives to dependence on opium production, and marginalized warlords and insurgents.

A 2007 letter from The Canadian Council of Churches stated that the priority of the current military campaign against terror was misdirected. Rather, “the campaign against terrorism [should] be guided by due process and actions that honour the laws, values and freedoms that terrorism threatens” (CCC 2007).

In a 2009 brief released on Human Rights Day The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC 2009) recommended that Canada help to end the war by committing itself to a diplomatic surge that had political energy and financial resources comparable to those devoted to the military surge (pp. 13-14). The goal was to create an inclusive political order that included the Taliban and other insurgents, and that also addressed legitimate fears that a new political order might compromise the hard-won expansion of civil and other human rights, particularly in Kabul and other urban centres in Afghanistan.

We addressed the contention that peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan was key to ending the civil war in Afghanistan. We said that strategies designed to separate the Taliban leadership residing in Pakistan from their foot soldiers in Afghanistan made sense only insofar as this challenge was understood to be fundamentally political rather than military. Amnesty programs for low-level Taliban fighters would be ineffective without a peace deal. Afghanistan had to recognize Pakistan’s legitimate security concerns, accept the Durand line as the boundary between the two countries, and adopt a posture of explicit neutrality in the Pakistan-India conflict. Further, the international community had to support processes that address the deep democratic deficit that is at the root of Pakistan’s insecurity (Regehr 2007).

Of course, Canada’s role in Afghanistan after 2001 was not only a military response. Canada invested in development programs and supported emerging Afghan government institutions. But, under the banner of a whole-of-government approach, defence always took precedence. This approach overrode the checks and balances inherently and necessarily at play among various Canadian government agencies and departments (Siebert 2010); an example can be seen in the scandal that developed over the way in which Canada dealt with Afghan detainees.

In November 2010 we appeared before the House of Commons Special Committee on Afghanistan on behalf of The Canadian Council of Churches. The Prime Minister had just announced the extension of the Canadian Forces mission in Afghanistan for three more years, 2011-2014, with the focus on training Afghan National Security forces to fight the Taliban and other insurgents. We argued that the training focus was potentially helpful, but only to the extent that better trained Afghan military and police personnel could extend the services and legitimacy of the national government to
areas where insurgent fighting was light or non-existent. In other areas, however, the substitution of Afghan for international troops to carry on the counterinsurgency war provided no political gains (Siebert and Hogeterp 2010).

In the face of this renewed and expensive military commitment in Afghanistan, we sought assurance that Canada would also increase its diplomatic activity to support a negotiation surge, as well as increases in development and other forms of assistance to address local governance and development needs. If Canada did not make these additional commitments, we believed that it would continue to play a role in sustaining the current military stalemate while missing the opportunity to bring the war to an end.

Included in our recommendations was the appointment of a special reconciliation envoy by Canada (Regehr 2010). In addition to monitoring and supporting regional diplomacy, the envoy would encourage national reconciliation efforts and encourage the role of Afghan civil society in sustaining peace efforts. We wanted Canadian financial aid to support Afghan and international organizations that increased the ability of local and state-level governance mechanisms to support peace-building.

Looking ahead
Canada has announced that it will continue to provide financial support through 2017: $110-million to support Afghan security forces and $227-million for development programs related to women’s needs and empowerment, including human rights institutions that focus on women’s and girls’ rights (CIPS 2014, pp. 5-6). This support is welcome, as far as it goes, but direct support to civil society for local and regional peace processes is difficult to discern.

Maintaining the current number of Afghan security personnel is completely dependent on foreign assistance to pay their salaries and supply all but the most elementary military materiel. This support is not sustainable over time. Movement to a comprehensive peace agreement must begin at some point.

Fortunately, it is not too late for Canada to shift gears and take a leadership role in helping Afghanistan and its neighbours to establish a sustainable peace. Canada can choose to be at the forefront of this urgent diplomatic and civil society process, or it can simply stay the course and hope that propping up Afghan security forces for another few years will bring the peace that has failed to materialize to this point. □

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Canadian defence budget and procurement

When the Canada First Defence Strategy was announced in 2008 the government promised that nearly half-a-trillion dollars would be spent on the operations and equipment of the Canadian Armed Forces over a 20-year period. This budget did not include significant supplementary funding for the Canadian Forces mission in Afghanistan, which ended in 2014.

Recent federal budgets have cut into the promised Department of National Defence (DND) expenditures, however, resulting in DND personnel and equipment cuts, and lengthy program delays. Yet, despite reductions to the promised expenditures, Canada’s annual military spending still reaches almost $19-billion and the DND budget remains the largest piece of the federal discretionary-spending pie.

At the same time, other government departments that play major roles in international security—especially the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD)—have borne significant budget reductions. Additionally, the “whole-of-government” approach to international security issues, which was invoked for the Afghanistan mission 2001-2014 and emphasised collaboration by DND, the Canadian International Development Agency (now part of DFATD), and Foreign Affairs, has lost government favour. There is little evidence that Canada is now taking a broad, multidimensional approach to international security, let alone to related spending.

Major failings in the acquisition of military equipment are now well documented, exposing an untenable military procurement system. Capital spending is too high (for example, the F-35 JSF aircraft), too low (with funds “unspent” at the end of the year) or too slow (the Sea King helicopter replacement). Perhaps the one point of policy consensus is that the system is broken.

The experts to whom government has turned to improve the procurement system have failed to produce new thinking. The 2013 Jenkins Report, for example, returns to questionable assumptions about the benefits of industrial regional programs and the promotion of military exports.

– Kenneth Epps
Completing the push for nuclear disarmament

More than 40 years after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) came into force, there are still more than 17,000 nuclear weapons in existence, which are capable of destroying the biosphere and human civilization. The continued disregard by Nuclear Weapons States of the NPT obligation to disarm not only creates strong nuclear proliferation pressures, but also constitutes a clear and present threat to international peace and security.

Some states and international civil society organizations have repeatedly called for concrete steps toward the complete elimination of nuclear weapons—without exceptions or exemptions, focusing particularly on a global legal ban on the possession, deployment, and use of these instruments of mass destruction.

In 2010 a unanimous motion by both houses of the Canadian Parliament urged the government “to engage in negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention as proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General” and “to deploy a major worldwide Canadian diplomatic initiative in support of preventing nuclear proliferation and increasing the rate of nuclear disarmament.”

Civil society organizations, former diplomats and government officials, and more than 600 recipients of the Order of Canada are urging the Canadian government to support UN resolutions calling for formal negotiations toward a nuclear weapons convention. Polls indicate that more than 88 per cent of Canadians support a legal agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Achieving such a ban would require determined leadership, and Canada is uniquely positioned to provide it. Besides enjoying credibility as a responsible international actor, Canada is a member of NATO (a nuclear alliance), an active player in the global nuclear energy industry, a state party to the NPT, and a member of the G7 and G20. However, the current Canadian government has not made nuclear disarmament a top foreign policy priority, despite the fact that such a stand would have wide public support. And while at multilateral forums Canada has consistently pressed for action to curb proliferation, it has been all but mute on compliance with disarmament obligations.

– Cesar Jaramillo

Canada and multilateral peace operations

Canada’s military mission in Afghanistan failed. The reasons will be debated for years to come. What is not debatable is that Canada’s combat escalation in Afghanistan corresponded to a major decline in Canadian commitment to UN peacekeeping operations.

The completion of Canadian troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 demands that we question the global war on terror and review the basics of Canadian defence policy. Fundamental decisions about how and when Canadian troops are deployed should be re-examined so that Canada effectively promotes international peace and security.

NATO’s record since the end of the Cold War also demands a close look at the relevance for Canada of military alliances and joining military coalitions of the willing. The war in Afghanistan has revealed the limitations and weaknesses of a powerful alliance in an asymmetrical war.

After more than a decade of decline, Canadian involvement in international peacekeeping operations has reached an all-time low. As Professor Walter Dorn of the Royal Military College has noted, the loss of Canadian peacekeeping experience abroad is compounded by the loss of training in Canada. The recent closure of the Pearson Centre is only one example of the erosion of Canadian peacekeeping capacity. In training exercises and simulations, Canadian military officers now plan operations of an alliance, sometimes explicitly identified as NATO. They no longer consider being part of a UN mission.

The end of Canada’s combat mission in Afghanistan provides the opportunity to review the fundamentals of Canada’s military security doctrine, the efficacy of membership in NATO, and the prospects and potential for Canada to return to the peacekeeping activity that many Canadians continue to support.

– Kenneth Epps
Armed violence reduction and conventional weapons control

The *Global Burden of Armed Violence* estimates that more than 500,000 people are killed annually by armed violence—an average of one death per minute. The vast majority of those killed are either civilians deliberately or indirectly targeted by combatants in armed conflicts or, more often, young men caught up in criminal and gang violence in urban settings.

As we have seen to our horror in Syria, innocents are killed by the full range of conventional weapons used in combat: from fighter aircraft to tanks and armoured vehicles to artillery and rockets. More commonly, however, armed violence is the result of the use of small arms and light weapons (SALW)—the ubiquitous handguns, rifles, shotguns, and automatic firearms that are readily available to government forces, rebels, criminals, and civilians alike.

The international community has responded to the armed violence crisis with several multilateral agreements and instruments designed to better control small arms at the national, regional, and global levels.

- The 2001 UN Programme of Action on SALW, a politically binding instrument that calls for specific measures to better control small arms at the national, regional, and global levels.
- The UN Firearms Protocol of 2004, part of a treaty addressing transnational crime and legally binding on states parties. The Firearms Protocol requires improved national standards in the commercial production and trade in firearms, including adequate recordkeeping to facilitate firearms tracing across borders.
- The 2013 Arms Trade Treaty, signed by the majority of UN member states and awaiting 50 ratifications before it enters into force, likely in late 2014. It obligates states parties to operate effective weapons export control systems that assess proposed transfers of large and small weapons to ensure that they are not diverted and do not contribute to breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law.
- Other global agreements (e.g., the International Tracing Instrument) and regional agreements (e.g., the ECOWAS treaty in West Africa and the CIFTA treaty in the Americas) designed to improve transparency and tighten controls on conventional weapons.

Canada and other states seeking to reduce the impact of global armed violence face two major challenges. First, important relevant multilateral agreements on conventional weapons control must be effectively implemented. This will require ongoing international cooperation and assistance to ensure that provisions are met by all states parties, including Canada. Second, ways and means must be found to “operationalize” the growing political awareness that security and development are integrated and mutually supporting (or eroding) programs. This awareness resulted in the 2006 “Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development” agreed to by more than 100 states and to which Canada is an inactive signatory. Both challenges need to be more widely explored and addressed.

— Kenneth Epps
Gender, human rights, and violent conflict

In 2010, in response to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Armed Conflict and related UNSC resolutions, Canada created a national plan for implementing Canada’s commitment to enhance the capacity of women to participate in peace processes. UNSC Resolution 1325 established an international normative framework, on which Canada and other member states could construct their own unique national responses.

The Canadian National Action Plan (C-NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, announced in October 2010, provides a long list of measurable indicators to track implementation and firmly embed the role of women in the hard security agenda. The C-NAP sets standards by which we can measure Canada’s implementation over time.

In recent years Canada has chosen to lead internationally on maternal and child health. While helpful, this emphasis does not respond to the reality of so many who suffer from violence and war. While women and children suffer greatly from the effects of war, they are not yet sufficiently engaged in resolving violent conflict.

Canada has confirmed to the international community that its commitment to women, peace, and security is “neither optional nor incremental.” However, to date, Canada has not reported on its work to meet the C-NAP commitments, leaving open the question of its real commitment.

Canada can and should be a leader in supporting programs that protect women from violence in armed conflict zones and should insist on women’s participation in peacebuilding from the grassroots through to international efforts to end conflicts and prevent their restarting.

– John Siebert

Dedicated mediation efforts: A new frontier for Canada

Since the end of the Second World War, Canada has been a strong supporter of multilateralism to assist in the resolution of armed conflicts and to advance peaceful solutions to conflicts that could result in war.

It may be strange, therefore, for people to realize that Canada’s Foreign Ministry, now known as DFATD (Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development), has never specifically encouraged or specialized in mediating conflicts. There is no recognized career track for Canadian foreign service officers with skills in mediating conflicts.

The foreign ministries of other nations, such as Norway and Finland, have provided resources, training, and longer-term political commitment, even when national governments change, to diplomatic interventions to resolve armed conflicts in different parts of the world. This is, in part, why there is an Oslo Accord on peace in the Middle East from the 1990s, but nothing like an Ottawa Accord on peace related to a specific conflict.

Canada’s usual diplomatic high cards—being bilingual, a cosmopolitan and multiethnic citizenry, no (external) colonial history, a close and trusted neighbour to the United States, and a constitutionally strong believer in “peace, order, and good government”—have not been played systematically in the complex game of international mediation.

Certainly there are Canadian diplomats who, in the course of their work in troubled parts of the world, have been engaged in conflict mediation efforts. But these efforts have been undertaken without sustaining infrastructure and support for the concept of mediation. No formal mechanisms exist in DFATD to preserve a corporate memory of these isolated initiatives. Career incentives for specialization and application of mediation skills do not exist.

In addition to formal diplomatic skills and resources, a wealth of Canadian civil society expertise on conflict mediation could be enlisted in track two diplomacy and grassroots peacebuilding to support formal conflict mediation efforts.

– John Siebert
Canada’s Space Policy Framework 2014

Industry support in an international policy vacuum

By John Siebert

On February 7 Industry Minister James Moore released Canada’s Space Policy Framework: Launching the Next Generation (CSA 2014). This policy document was developed in response to the government-mandated study of Canada’s space industry by former federal Cabinet Minister David Emerson, Reaching Higher: Canada’s Interests and Future in Space (Aerospace Review 2012). Both the Emerson review and the Space Framework are welcome first steps in building a badly needed Canadian space policy.

A brief, modest proposal, with significant omissions

For at least a decade Canada has been sharply criticized for not having a comprehensive outer space policy and program. James Fergusson and Stephen James (2007) produced a broad critique of Canadian national security and outer space policy. They characterized Canadian space policy and programming as disjointed and incoherent:

Canada has no overarching national space policy…. Space is so structurally buried and fragmented within government that voices advocating for more appropriate treatment of space security issues are marginalized, even within such departments as Industry Canada (the Canadian Space Agency’s parent department) and the Department of National Defence (DND). (p. i)

Minister Moore’s opening message claims that the Space Framework “will provide a comprehensive approach to Canada’s future in space to ensure our continued commitment to exploration, commercialization and development” (CSA 2014, p. 3). However, it would be more accurate to say that the Space Framework is a brief, modest proposal that maintains current lowered levels of public financial support (“fiscal neutrality”) and is aimed primarily at enhancing the role of the Canadian space industry. Little policy direction is given to preserving the vulnerable outer space environment, which is subject to debris accumulation that threatens access to and use of key space orbits, and to the international efforts required to maintain human use of space for future generations.

The Space Framework does not even go as far as to accept all of Emerson’s recommendations.

To meet the need for Canadian government coordination and coherence on space investments, the Space Framework does provide for new government and industry coordination mechanisms, including the establishment of the Space Advisory Board, headed by the President of the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). Further, a Deputy Ministers Governance Committee on Space will be established “to provide oversight for all major space activities undertaken by the Government of Canada and the CSA.”

However, there is no firm commitment that decisions on “annual government-wide priorities for the Canadian Space
Program [be taken] to the Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning, which is chaired by the Prime Minister, for discussion and approval each spring” as recommended by Emerson. No definite planning horizons are established beyond 2015-16.

In response to Emerson’s recommendations for steady long-term public funding, the Space Framework provides only short-term commitments. CSA funding will remain steady through 2015-16. However, in the last decade it actually dropped in constant dollars, from $325-million in 2001-2002 to $225-million in 2012-2013 (Aerospace Review 2012, p. 35), excluding a one-time funding boost through the Canada Action Plan following the 2008 recession. Other government sources of funding, such as aerospace industry, defence, and academic sources, will be “leveraged” to support space activities. Partnerships with the private sector and international cooperation also will be developed to share costs and risks.

The Emerson Report calls for total funding for the CSA’s technology development program to be raised by “$10 million per year for each of the next three years and [to] be maintained at that level” (Aerospace Review 2012, p. 42). The Space Framework offers what appears to be a more modest commitment to double the Space Technologies Development Program budget “to $20 million annually by 2015-16” (Industry Canada 2013).

No plan to secure the global commons
The Space Framework claims that “space is increasingly congested, contested, and competitive” (CSA 2014, p. 8). Those who follow space policy discussions will immediately recognize this as a frequently repeated phrase in the U.S. National Security Space Strategy (US DoD 2011, p. i): “Space, a domain that no nation owns but on which all rely, is becoming increasingly congested, contested, and competitive.”

The Space Framework points at the growing number of major spacefaring powers, the risks of collision between valuable space assets and debris, and the growth of private space commercial interests, without commenting on Canada’s international efforts to improve space governance to the benefit of all.

Canada’s national interests are best protected by an international normative regime that prioritizes the protection of outer space as a unique and sensitive environment. The principle that outer space is a peaceful global commons should be clearly stated as being at the heart of a Canadian comprehensive outer space policy. This principle would be further strengthened by being grounded in the definition of space security put forward in the Space Security Index: “the secure and sustainable access to and use of space and freedom from space-based threats” (Jaromillo 2013, p. 5).

When and how Canada will pursue its national interests, in concert with others through multilateral institutions and for the mutual advantage of all, is not covered in the Space Framework. Yet we know that Canada is not ignoring such questions. Canada participates regularly in forums such as the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in Vienna.

Clearly the most harmful potential development in outer space would be the creation of huge new debris clouds.
through the destruction of satellites by space-based or ground-based weapons. The Space Framework does not mention non-weaponization of space, a traditional pillar of Canada’s international space diplomacy.

The weaponization of space—placing explicitly offensive weapons in space—is not the same as the military use of space. Canada’s military and security forces, like the militaries of other nations, have legitimate needs for space-related services such as communications and surveillance, which often by definition are dual- or multiuse. Thus, the definition of “peaceful uses of space” must be understood to have nuances. All of this the Space Framework studiously avoids, preoccupied with narrow commercial advantage for the Canadian space industry.

In fact there is no direction in the Space Framework for Canada’s arms control efforts in space or military applications of space assets. Brief mention is made of Canada’s first operational military satellite, Sapphire, which actually is defined in terms of civil space activity: “An orbital traffic controller, Sapphire monitors thousands of pieces of debris, detects man-made objects in orbit, and provides data to the U.S.-led Space Surveillance Network, dedicated to preventing satellite collisions” (CSA 2014, p. 6). The reader is left to speculate that an “operational military satellite” with these capabilities would also be identifying potential adversaries’ military and intelligence satellites.

Debris mitigation is mentioned in the Space Framework, but only as a potential opportunity for Canadian industry. Not mentioned are the international security implications in activities that must differentiate between space junk and another country’s operational satellites.

The reiteration of a national space policy that includes a clear commitment to the non-weaponization of space and the sustained peaceful use of space for all would be more than an idealistic proposition by Canada. It would, for example, permanently close the controversial debate on Canada’s potential participation in ballistic missile defence systems, which have the capability of being quickly adapted for ground-based on-orbit satellite destruction.

Further steps
There are indications from government officials that further work now is being undertaken to expand on the Space Framework, providing more in-depth analysis and adding meat to its bare-bones content. The current government’s overall fiscal plan to eliminate the deficit in 2014-15 also could lead to more substantial federal government investments in space after the 2015-16 horizon covered in the Space Framework. Further public consultation on issues not captured in Emerson’s focus on the Canadian space industry could help to provide greater depth and give positive direction in developing policy that acknowledges the international context for Canada’s space investments. The result could be a truly comprehensive space policy.

References
Canadian Space Agency 2014. Canada’s Space Policy Framework: Launching the Next Generation.
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Canada’s arms exports

New report reflects old habits that fall short of the transparency standards of the Arms Trade Treaty

By Kenneth Epps

In February the Export Controls Bureau of Foreign Affairs, Development and Trade Canada (DFATD) posted without notice its latest report on the export of military goods from Canada. The report reveals details of arms exports to all recipient countries except the United States for the calendar years 2010 and 2011. It breaks no new ground, adding nothing to reverse a decline in Canadian arms export reporting standards that began in 2003. Nor are there surprises in the nature and destination of the military shipments that the report documents. During the two-year period, the majority of Canada’s exported arms were shipped to NATO members and other allies. But, as was also revealed by previous reports, military equipment valued at tens of millions of dollars was exported to countries posing significant risks, including risks that the equipment will be used in hostilities or to perpetrate human rights violations. These sales were permitted despite the close control called for by Canadian export guidelines.

Following the pattern, DFATD reported that the value of exported military goods from Canada totaled $408.5-million in 2010 and

Table 1: Largest reported* recipients of Canadian military goods during 2010 and 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient state</th>
<th>2010 value</th>
<th>2011 value</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>$92,912,589</td>
<td>$168,317,053</td>
<td>$261,229,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>$68,001,211</td>
<td>$11,287,404</td>
<td>$79,288,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>$6,224,742</td>
<td>$64,975,753</td>
<td>$71,200,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>$20,291,982</td>
<td>$45,574,646</td>
<td>$65,866,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>$12,713,300</td>
<td>$51,833,911</td>
<td>$64,547,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>$28,228,622</td>
<td>$25,330,145</td>
<td>$53,558,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>$2,170,665</td>
<td>$39,392,561</td>
<td>$41,563,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>$21,729,991</td>
<td>$16,062,874</td>
<td>$37,792,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>$7,742,810</td>
<td>$28,697,618</td>
<td>$36,440,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>$10,783,166</td>
<td>$25,495,238</td>
<td>$36,278,404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total for 10 largest recipients 2010 & 2011 $747,766,281**

*Does not include military exports to the United States, which are not reported.

**The value of exports to the largest 10 recipients for the two-year period represents 72 per cent of the total reported exports of military goods during the period.
$634.5-million in 2011. Neither figure includes military exports to the United States, the value of which is generally accepted to exceed the reported total. (Indeed, Project Ploughshares estimates that military exports to the United States typically are worth more than double the exports to all other states combined.) Because of a unique arrangement between Canada and the United States, military equipment sold to U.S. recipients does not require authorization through export permits. As a consequence, Canadian export control officials are unable to monitor or document U.S. shipments.

The 2011 military export total was the largest reported for several years, but neither the 2011 nor the 2010 totals should be seen as exceptional. Figure 1 illustrates the trend in the government-reported annual total for arms exports over a 34-year period (1978-2011). For comparative purposes, the annual totals have been adjusted for inflation based on 2011 dollars. Although there was significant variation in reported totals during the period, recent totals are close to the $537-million annual average for the period. The 2010 and 2011 totals were, respectively, below and above the mean by similar amounts. The 2011 figure represents a significant climb from values reported from 2005 to 2007, but it is not far from the norm over the longer term.

The largest recipients of Canadian arms exports for the period also followed an established pattern. The ranking of Table 1 shows that the latest reported Canadian military exports had relatively few customers. The top 10 (of 98) received almost three-quarters of the two-year total. Similarly, the largest portion of the total shipment value involved established allies. Half of the top 10 are NATO member states, including the top two—the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. One-quarter of all exports during the period were shipped to the UK.
Less typically, four of the top 10 were states in the Global South: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, South Africa, and Singapore. None are new customers and all have received substantial arms shipments from Canada in the past. Saudi Arabia has been the largest reported recipient of Canadian military goods in many of the years since 1991. While it is too early to declare whether the number of non-traditional recipient states in the latest top ranking indicates a trend, it should be noted that the federal government is making efforts to boost sales to markets in the Global South (Epps 2013a).

During the two years covered by the latest report, Canada maintained a practice of exporting military goods to countries at war and to states whose governments have a persistent record of human rights violations, despite both conditions being subject to “close control” under Canada’s export control guidelines. Table 2 documents the recipient states in 2010 or 2011 that fall into one or both categories and where Canadian arms shipments totalled more than $1-million over the two years. This list of states is similar to that for the previous three-year reported period, 2007 to 2009, with Algeria and Egypt the only exceptions. Although Canada supplied military goods to both countries during the latest period, the value in each case dropped below the $1-million total. For most other recipients, the average annual value of Canadian arms exports increased from the equivalent average for the three-year period of the previous government report (see Epps 2011). Overall, the data of the latest report suggests that Canada has done little to tighten restrictions on arms sales to problematic states.

### Transparency decline

The last four government reports have used the same methodology, effectively lowering the bar for Canadian transparency norms for military exports. Prior to 2003, Canada’s reports were annual and more timely (typically published within 15 months, often within 12, of the end of the reported calendar year). Each differentiated among weapon systems, support systems, and parts and included descriptive comments. Since 2003, export statistics have not met these standards.

### Table 2: Recipients subject to close control under Canadian guidelines*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States hosting armed conflict and serious human rights violations</th>
<th>Total arms shipment value for 2010 and 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>$1,688,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>$9,710,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>$6,359,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>$1,134,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>$5,261,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>$2,265,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>$8,109,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>$1,228,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States with serious human rights violations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>$3,643,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>$71,200,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>$36,440,428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quite apart from omitting previously published data, recent reports have included information that misrepresents and obfuscates the record. In Table 5 of the 2010-11 report (Exports of Military Goods and Technology by Destination and Export Control List [ECL] Item), many figures are “double-counted” by repeating identical values across two or more ECL categories. The repetition occurs because, as the report explains, “a single export permit may be classified under several ECL Item numbers.” Rather than assign proportional values to each ECL category (as presumably was done in the past), the full value of the export is assigned to all applicable ECL categories.

So, for example, Table 2 of the report reveals that the total value of all ECL Group 2 (military goods) categories exported to New Zealand in 2010 was $5,325,847. Figures in Table 5 indicate that in the same year Canada exported goods valued at $3,286,833 in each of six Group 2 subcategories (2-2, 2-5, 2-6, 2-11, 2-21, and 2-22), worth a total of $19,720,998. When the value of goods reported for another seven Group 2 subcategories are included, the New Zealand Group 2 subcategory total of Table 5 is more than five times the reported Group 2 total of Table 2. For the majority of recipients listed in recent reports there is no correlation between the values reported in Tables 2 and 5. Most Table 5 statistics are, therefore, worthless and misleading for anyone who has not verified Table 5 values against those of Table 2.

Like earlier versions, the latest report suggests that there is little to gain from efforts to compare—let alone verify—data with other sources. It notes that “a meaningful comparison” of its data with information from other sources, notably Statistics Canada and the Canadian Commercial Corporation, is “extremely difficult.” Much of the difficulty lies in significant differences among the sources in how and when they report weapons exports. Still, it is possible to make useful comparisons in specific instances.

In principle, comparing two reports on the same topic generated by the same government department should be straightforward. Yet, although the report notes that “the internationally accepted standard for statistics on worldwide military trade is the … United Nations Register of Conventional Arms,” there are marked discrepancies between the data reported by DFATD to the UN Register and seemingly comparable data that DFATD also provided in recent export reports.

Perhaps the most telling example is found by comparing information about shipments of armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia, as reported to the UN Register and in export reports. Figure 2 juxtaposes the two datasets for the 20-year period 1992 to 2011. There is generally a match in the volume and trends for the first decade. Since 2002 the connection has been less clear. Indeed, in some recent years there appears to be no correlation whatsoever.

In 2005, for instance, DFATD reported to the UN Register that 222 armoured vehicles were transferred by Canada to Saudi Arabia. Yet for the same calendar year DFATD reported the value of “ground vehicles and components” (the category in which armoured vehicles are placed) exported to Saudi Arabia as less than $1-million. (Canadian light armoured vehicles sold to Saudi Arabia are typically worth at least $1-million apiece and often substantially more.)

The reporting mismatch may be due in part to counting differences. Export values may include the value of parts that are not reported to the UN, for example. Nevertheless, the fact that such major discrepancies can be found in data originating in the same department does not inspire confidence in the accuracy of government transparency and reporting procedures.

The licence-export gap
The latest report reveals an enormous gap
between the value of arms exports authorized by the government and the value of exports actually made. Canadian companies wishing to export military goods to (non-U.S.) states must apply, and receive authorization, for export permits from the Export Controls Bureau, typically in advance of final contract agreements.

Rarely reported information released to Parliament in 2012 revealed that over the six-year period 2006 to 2011 the value of military goods approved for export far exceeded the value of exports (see Figure 3). Information from the export reports indicates that (non-U.S.) military exports totalled $2.8-billion over the six years. However, the report to Parliament stated that (non-U.S.) military export permits worth $31.5-billion were authorized during the same period (Epps 2012). The difference between approval and shipment values is more than tenfold.

For 2011, the difference is even greater; the value of authorized export permits was more than 18 times the value of goods exported ($11.7-billion versus $634-million). The value of military goods approved for Saudi Arabia totalled $4.0-billion in 2011, while exported arms were reportedly worth $65-million (a ratio of 62:1).

Some portion of the gap can be attributed to contract cancellations, amendments, or delays. But, it may well be that exporters are failing to secure all or significant parts of contracts for which they must seek permits before bidding. It appears that, in fact, the main restraining factor for Canadian arms exporters is a highly competitive global arms market, not federal regulations.

The record points to a policy of Canadian authorization of military exports that is more enthusiastic than cautious. The government is clearly approving significantly larger volumes of military goods to a broader group of nations than are documented in reports on arms exports. From the data released to parliament, we know that Canadian officials approved military
exports to 11 countries during 2010 and 2011 that do not appear in the export report. The large value of the export permits approved for Saudi Arabia, and for Afghanistan, Egypt, Israel, and several other states suggests less restraint and poorer assessment of risks than is warranted by the security and human rights conditions in these states.

Meeting emerging global standards
The entry into force of the global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), expected as early as the end of 2014, will usher in a new international framework to improve national standards across the globe for the control of weapons transfers. Canada has not yet signed the treaty. However, because most of its allies and military trade partners (including all other NATO members) have signed, Canada will still need to adapt to these new standards. It could begin by making serious efforts to improve the transparency of its reports on the export of military goods.

Improvements should include:

- Timely annual reports. Recent multiple-year reports by Canada have included data up to four years old. States parties to the ATT will be obligated to report annually by May 31 on arms exports for the previous calendar year. Canada should adopt the schedule that will soon become the international norm.
- U.S. data. Information on the largest consumer of Canadian military goods is a fundamental transparency requirement. Government officials should devise an authorization process to ensure that all Canadian companies shipping military goods to the United States provide the necessary export information.
- Removal of all double- or multiple-counted data from the report. Since government officials were able to disaggregate export data in the past, it should not be an impos-
possible task for officials to determine values that align across report tables. In particular, to avoid the current misrepresentation, the values of Group 2 subcategories should add up to the total value reported for arms shipments to each recipient state.

- Export permit and export data. Currently, the report is confined to export data, that is, information on military goods that have been transferred to recipient countries. This data is important for assessing the volume and impact of actual arms transfers. Data on export authorizations (export permits), while gathered by DFATD, is only made public when there are explicit requests in Parliament. Export permit data more clearly reveals government policy on export recipients of Canadian weapons and could offer the opportunity to review arms exports before they occur. Some ATT signatory states have already committed to reporting both permit and export data. By reporting both Canada could help to establish an international norm.

- More information on actual transfers. Canadian reports should return to, and improve upon, earlier standards by providing basic information on weapons systems, parts, and components, as well as descriptive comments. The comments should be sufficiently detailed to allow independent assessments of the rigour with which Canada is applying national export controls.

An example of the last point in the latest report reveals that Canada exported ammunition valued at $1-million to Brazil in 2010, but does not clearly indicate that none of this ammunition would be used by the Brazilian police. Under government guidelines arms should not be transferred to the Brazilian police, who are accused of persistent violations of human rights.

It is possible for the government to publish data on the type, number, value, and end-user of exported military goods and services without jeopardizing commercial confidentiality. The increased detail would allow Canadians to build confidence in government export control standards.

Canada will need to do more than improve arms export transparency to implement the provisions of the ATT (Epps 2013b). But improved transparency will be central to promoting global implementation of the treaty and improved international transparency norms will emerge from national and regional examples.

At this early point in the treaty process, Canada could make an important global contribution by improving its reporting standards.

References

Figure 1 Source: DFATD
Figure 2 Source: DFATD
Figure 3 Source: DFATD
On the centenary of the First World War, The Group of 78 and Project Ploughshares are pleased to organize the conference “WWI and Contemporary Policy on War and Peace.” The conference will be held at the Canadian War Museum and will reflect on how we can reduce the incidence of armed conflict and reinforce the foundations of a more stable, just and peaceful world. Historians will cast light on events preceding, during and following the war. Others will draw attention to how our world has changed through the development of multilateral institutions and international law to assist in avoiding war and building human security.

To register: www.group78.org

When: September 26 – 28, 2014
Where: Canadian War Museum, 1 Vimy Place, Ottawa