

*THE
GENERAL
SIR WILLIAM OTTER
PAPERS*

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CANADA
AND THE NEW NATO
IN AFGHANISTAN

By M. Jean Fournet



THE GEN SIR WILLIAM OTTER PAPERS

Commissioned as a Military Officer in Toronto in the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, Lieutenant Colonel William Otter was the founding President of the Royal Canadian Military Institute.

His distinguished career included operational experience in the Battle of Ridgeway during the Fenian Raids, command of the Battleford Column in the North West campaign, and command of the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion The Royal Canadian Regiment during the South African Campaign. He finished his career as General Sir William Otter KCB CMG CVO, Inspector-General of Militia of Canada.

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For further information on the RCMI, please contact:

Royal Canadian Military Institute

426 University Avenue

Toronto, Ontario M5G 1S9

Phone: 416-597-0286/1-800-585-1072

Fax: 416-597-6919

E-Mail: susan.cook@rcmi.org

Web site: www.rcmi.org

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Designed by David S. McDonough

CANADA AND THE NEW NATO IN AFGHANISTAN

By M. Jean Fournet

Assistant Secretary General of NATO for Public Diplomacy

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here. As Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, one of my main jobs is to get the NATO message out to member countries. I know that Canada is one member state where the Alliance is not always prominently on the radar. So I very much appreciate this opportunity to blow the NATO horn here to give NATO the positive PR it deserves.

I am also pleased to address the topic of our panel here today. To my mind, "Canada and the New NATO in Afghanistan" hits the nail on the head. Because I believe that what is happening today in Afghanistan is an illustration of two key points: first, of how fundamentally NATO has transformed, over the past few months and years; and second, the important role that Canada is playing, through NATO, to help build security in the 21st Century.

Let me begin by sketching out the main elements of NATO's transformation. It's a long list, covering a whole host of fundamental changes. But to my mind, the key theme running through the entire agenda of transformation is that it is an agenda of transatlantic consensus on security in the 21st century.

There has been a lot of press, particularly since Iraq, claiming that Europe and North America are parting ways. As the Secretary General says, it's NATO's job to straddle the Atlantic, so we are very sensitive to continental drift.

And the way we see it, the new NATO – the NATO in Afghanistan today – is proof that the transatlantic partnership is still based on a shared perception of the security environment, and a common determination to build security together in the 21st century.

The first element of any security partnership is a shared assessment of the security environment. Now, Iraq has certainly made it clear that the United States and its allies in NATO don't always sing off the same song sheet.

But this is nothing new. There were disagreements over Suez in the 1950s, over Euro-missiles in the 1980s, over Bosnia in the 1990s, and there will be more in future. But disagreements over individual crises during the Cold War didn't detract from a

broad, shared perception of the overall threats. And the same is true today.

Today, Europe and North America agree that terrorism has grown from a national problem of law enforcement, into a threat to international peace and security. And they have agreed, including at last year's Prague Summit, that tackling terrorism is a shared priority.

Both sides of the Atlantic also agree that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction posed a risk we cannot ignore. Of course, over Iraq, there was fundamental disagreement over the tactics and timing of disarming the Saddam regime.

But there was no disagreement over the threat posed by these kinds of weapons. The unity you are now seeing over Iran and North Korea is a good illustration.

Regional conflicts, too, must be tackled. Because failing states are the breeding ground of instability, and a petrie dish for terrorism, international criminals and illegal trafficking. Afghanistan is a perfect example; so were the Balkans.

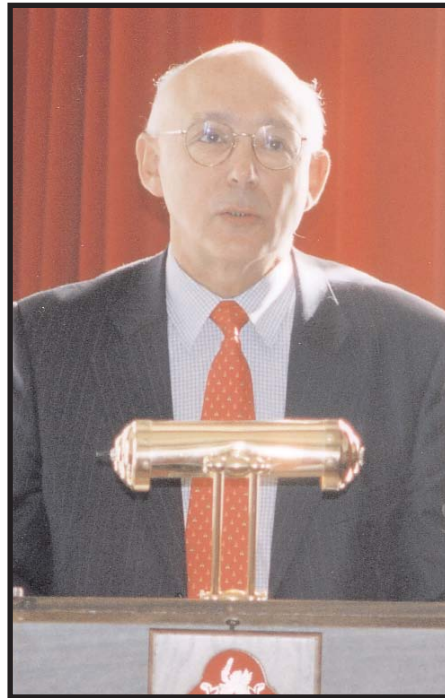
These are the main security threats of the 21st century. And both sides of the Atlantic understand that they have to tackle them, and tackle them together, if we are to ensure our common security.

We also all agree that we no longer can afford the geographical understanding of security that was prevalent during the Cold War. Against 21st century challenges, geography no longer acts as a shield. Terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction are global threats.

And, as "9/11" showed so dramatically, even a faraway "failed state" like Afghanistan can produce deadly spillover. Hence the need for a functional approach to security – an approach that tackles security challenges at their source.

That is why NATO members have agreed that from now on, the Alliance can go where the problem is. The NATO lead of ISAF is a good example. So is NATO's support to Poland in setting up a peacekeeping operation in its own sector in Iraq.

So – transatlantic consensus on the threats, and the need to take them on wherever required. But to take on these missions, we have to have the capability to back up our words with action.



I know that that is a concern here in Canada, at a time of real strain on your military.

It is a concern shared by all of your Allies in NATO. Which is why there is agreement on all sides on the need to improve our military capabilities.

Here, too, the Alliance has made progress. The first elements of the NATO Response Force will be up and running this month. Implementation of the Prague Capabilities Commitment is moving ahead, even if we still have a long way to go.

We are enhancing our defence against weapons of mass destruction. And we have agreed on the radical overhaul of our military command structure – to make it leaner and more flexible, with a new command specifically dedicated to transformation.

These improvements are urgent and overdue. NATO countries are stretched paper thin, trying to come up with the forces for the operations we face today. Operations that are far away from home, and require strategic reach and long-term sustainment.

Canada is doing a remarkable job, in Afghanistan, the Balkans and elsewhere – but we all know that this country, like many others in NATO, is struggling to meet its commitments.

Let me be blunt. We must be honest with ourselves, and with our publics. We will not be doing less militarily in future. We will be under a lot of pressure to do more. And if we do not come up with the useable capabilities we need, we risk failure.

Failure in our operations would be a catastrophe for those we have pledged to assist. It would also be politically disastrous for our organisations, including NATO and the United Nations.

The Secretary General is currently pushing NATO governments very hard on this subject. I am confident that his successor, who takes up his post on January first, will do so as well, to ensure that the consensus on building new capabilities is met with concrete results.

The strong transatlantic consensus to further deepen our relations with Partner countries – throughout Europe, into Central Asia, and across the Mediterranean – is already delivering results. In the Balkans as well as in Afghanistan, soldiers of many Partner countries are working side-by-side with NATO troops.

This demonstrates the enormous strategic value that these Partnerships have acquired. We will continue to nourish these relations: with new ideas on combating terrorism, more specific cooperation with individual Partners, and with new opportunities for regional cooperation.

We also have a strong transatlantic consensus on the need to cooperate closely with Russia. Since last year in particular, when we set up the new NATO-Russia Council, our relations have been characterised by a clear sense of direction and a true

spirit of cooperation.

This is one of NATO's greatest success stories, but one that still too few people know about. Once upon a time, Russia was seen as part of the problem. Now Russia is becoming part of the solution.

Finally, we have set the stage for NATO and the European Union to work in partnership, rather than the “splendid isolation” of the past. We have agreed arrangements which will allow the EU gradually to assume more of our common responsibility for security, including in the Balkans, and to become an effective security actor. Which is really in everyone's interest, because it will allow for more equitable burden sharing and, therefore, a better-balanced and more sustainable transatlantic relationship.

As you can see, NATO has become a hub of multilateral relations that stretch from North America, across Europe, through the Caucasus and into Central Asia – something which has never existed before. Indeed, NATO has become an unique asset for the international community. As a forum for security consultation amongst Allies, including the US. As a platform for security cooperation with countries across two continents, and into a third. And as the most effective multinational crisis manager in the world.

All of these assets are on display in Afghanistan.

As you know, NATO's peacekeeping operation in Kabul is supporting the Afghan National Authority and the Bonn Agreement. And we are now looking at how to expand that support into the regions, to prevent the resurgence of the Taliban or Al-Qaida.

This is an example of NATO tackling the real threats we face, wherever needed. To tackle terrorism effectively, it must be tackled in Afghanistan. September 11th made that clear. NATO is now doing that.

The Alliance is also demonstrating its unique value as a coalition builder. 14 NATO countries are part of ISAF, and 30 non-NATO countries as well. This is the fruit of a decade of building partnerships, and it is paying off where it counts: on the ground.

This operation also shows how important new capabilities are to achieving our goals. Afghanistan isn't on the other side of a European Wall – it's halfway around the world. Long range lift, modern logistics and intelligence capabilities, and robust command and control are essential to mission success.

Afghanistan is a vivid illustration that modern military capabilities aren't luxuries, or technology for technology's sake – they are the essential tools our troops need to do what they are assigned to do, in missions that help preserve our security here at home.

Today, right now, that job of bringing security to Kabul is falling on the capable shoulders of this country. From August,

Canadian troops have been at the core of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) supporting the Karzai Government in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul.

This is a very challenging mission, far away from home. For any country, it would be a strain. But NATO is helping Canada to overcome the hurdles, and take the prominent role that it has.

While Canada and Germany are commanding on the ground for the next months, the

Alliance is providing strategic co-ordination, command and control, and political direction from its headquarters in Brussels. Canada is benefiting from NATO's planning capability, its logistical support, and the assistance of its 18 NATO Allies in carrying out this mission.

Without NATO, Canada might simply have been unable to make this contribution. With the help of its Allies, Canada is taking a leadership role in a mission that is helping to enhance security for the people of the country, and for the international community more broadly.

Canada has a fine, internationally recognised peacekeeping tradition, which has its roots in the UN. Today, that tradition also sees its expression through NATO – a NATO which is taking on new missions, in new parts of the world, where Canada has interests and values to defend.

NATO is also providing a real boost to multilateralism, by squaring the circle of multilateralism and effectiveness. Smaller countries, like Canada, are using NATO's multilateral structures to magnify their influence on international affairs, in partnership with the world's superpower.

Through NATO, the US is channeling its power through multilateralism. A win-win-win situation: for Canada, for the US, and for multilateral cooperation more broadly, at a time when it's more important than ever.

Lester Pearson once predicted that NATO's achievements would extend beyond the emergency which gave it birth, or the geographical area of its members. In Afghanistan today, we are



proving him right – thanks in no small part, to Canada.

A decade after the Cold War ended, most Canadians don't pay much attention to the Alliance. I believe they should. Quietly, the Atlantic Alliance has transformed into a very "Canadian" organisation: an effective, multilateral peacekeeper, and an essential springboard for Canada to play its full role in the world.

And the evidence is on display half-way around the world – in Afghanistan.

Thank you. ■

The views expressed are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute or its members.

Lieutenant General Fournet is a graduate of the Ecole Polytechnique and the French National College of Aeronautics and Space.

Before coming to NATO he was National Armaments Director and Director of Co-operation and Industrial Affairs in the Direction générale de l'armement (DGA) of the French Ministry of Defence.

Jean Fournet is a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour and an Officer of the National Order of Merit.



ROYAL CANADIAN MILITARY
INSTITUTE

426 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1S9
416-597-0286 / 1-800-585-1072
Fax: 416-597-6919
www.rcmi.org