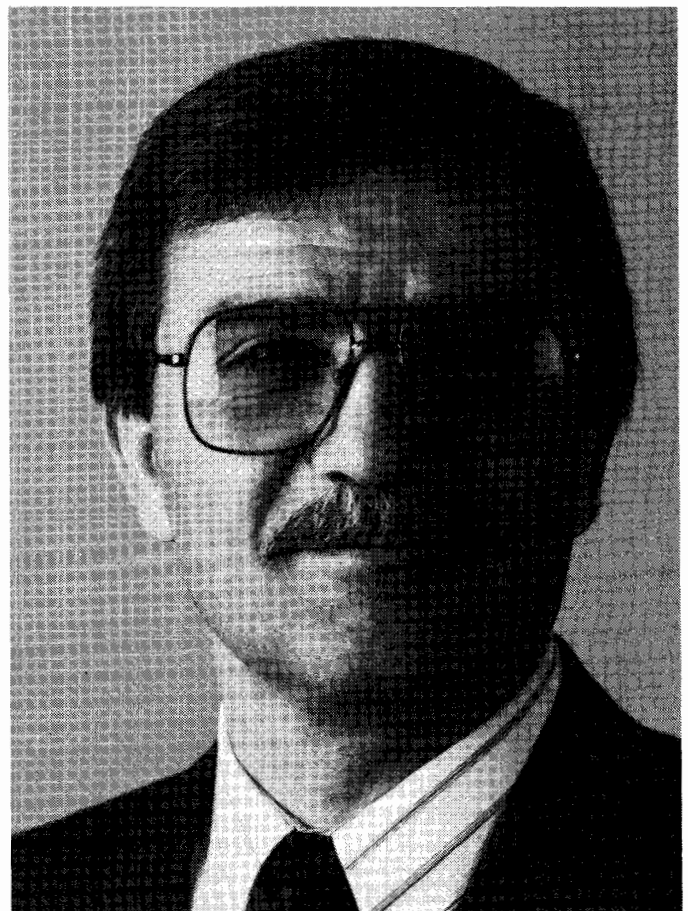

A Private Member Looks at Defence Policy

by Sarkis Assadourian, MP

Over the last decade the world has undergone immense transformations that have compelled Canada to reassess its security commitments for the 21st century. In October 1994 A Special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons presented its report on "Security in a Changing World". This was followed by a Government White Paper on Defence Policy. This article looks at some of the issues to be considered in working out a new Defence Policy for Canada.

During the Cold War, Canada maintained a strong commitment to the Western Alliance. Defence spending was defined by commitments to NATO and NORAD in Europe and North America. These military alliances were justified on the basis of national security. Also, the bipolar nature of the international system intensified the need for organisations such as NATO and NORAD. The bipolar system was characterised by the dominance of two superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. With the Soviet Union's feared military arsenal, Canada needed to be protected. Thus, NATO and NORAD, reflected the security predicaments in a bipolar world. These military commitments continue to provide the security needs of Canada.

Today the prospects of Canada entering into a conflict with a major superpower seem unlikely, but, threats to global security still exist. Former US President, George Bush, coined the now popular phrase, 'New World Order, to describe an invigorated world without superpower confrontation, where prospects for



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international co-operation are greater. However, conflicts between nations and humanitarian disasters indicate that problems have not simply disappeared with the end of the Cold War. As a member of the international community, Canada has chosen to respond to these new challenges.

Canada's Recent Contributions To Global Security

The following three examples illustrate Canada's recent contributions to global security.

- **Rwanda:** In the last year, the people of Rwanda have been subject to incredible human suffering. The initial response from the international community was slow, however, assistance was eventually provided. Canada, upholding its international responsibilities has sent humanitarian aid to the ravaged country. Canadian peacekeeping forces ensure the safe repatriation of people from Zaire to Rwanda; also they are responsible for providing food, water and agricultural tools to Rwandans returning home. Canada's aid contribution has included over 1,000 tonnes of humanitarian relief supplies sent to Rwanda since April 1994. Also, during the civil war, Canadian CC-130 Hercules planes were the only aircraft flying into the capital, Kigali; keeping open an essential lifeline into the country. The Canadian Armed Forces transported humanitarian supplies and donations gathered by various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and co-ordinated by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- **Haiti:** Canada has played a key role in attempts to return democracy to Haiti. When the United Nations Security Council agreed to impose sanctions on Haiti, the government of Canada authorised the deployment of a Canadian Naval Task Group to monitor and enforce UN sanctions. As well, Canada joined naval forces from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Argentina, and the Netherlands. When American troops were able to secure the country following the military government's downfall, Canada committed to sending 210 police officers and peacekeepers to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). The RCMP will help train the Haitian police force. On October 15, 1994, Foreign Affairs Minister, André Ouellet announced that upon Jean Aristide's return to Haiti, Canada will provide \$30 million in aid over six months. With the political climate stabilising in Haiti, there is reason to be optimistic for the future of democracy.
- **Yugoslavia:** Since the bloody conflict in the former Yugoslavia began, Canada has contributed extensively to the United Nations Protection Force there. Canada is committed to peace in the region, to the United Nations and to our allies. Canadian aircraft have conducted nearly 1,500 flights, transporting more than 10,000 passengers and 20,000 metric tonnes of food and relief supplies. Currently, there are about 2,000 Canadian troops in the former Yugoslavia. Since the fall of 1991, Canada

has contributed 50 million dollars in humanitarian assistance for the victims of the conflict. The latest Canadian contribution to the former Yugoslavia will be allocated to a series of bilateral and multilateral programs including: 4 million dollars in Canadian food aid delivered by the World Food Program; 3.2 million dollars to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees; 400,000 dollars to the World Health Organisation to help restore medical facilities and support local health personnel; 400,000 dollars to the UN Childrens Fund; 1.5 million dollars to the Red Cross for emergency winter supplies; and 500,000 dollars to support the humanitarian assistance activities of qualified Canadian agencies.

These examples indicate that threats to global security have become multidimensional. During the Cold War, problems emerged from confrontations between superpowers competing for influence in the Third World. Present conflicts are a result of the proliferation of national, ethnic, and territorial conflicts. Many of these problems cannot be dealt with by military solutions. The Rwandan situation indicates the importance of providing basic human necessities in the interest of security. If the Rwandan catastrophe is not controlled, there is the danger that other parts of Africa could be threatened. The Haitian case illustrates the importance of police training to support good governance. The Yugoslavian conflict shows the significance of humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping in preventing senseless deaths from occurring. These examples of humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping fulfil functions needed in the world. Canada should continue its leadership in supporting such humanitarian efforts throughout the world as part of its commitment to global security.

Report of the Special Joint Committee

The Report of the Special Joint Committee on Defence identified the importance of peacekeeping as one of Canada's military priorities: "...when peoples' lives are at risk, as our armed forces have done in peacekeeping operations around the world for the past ten years, we are prepared to say yes, that is essential and important and a proper element to Canadian citizenship and world citizenship."¹ Specifically the Committee recommended that Canada should maintain unified, combat-capable, multipurpose armed forces composed of sea, land and air elements that are properly equipped, able to operate together at home in defence of Canada's territorial sovereignty and security, and able to operate abroad in support of Canada's multilateral peace and security interests and responsibilities.

The Report also affirmed Canada's military role in the United Nations and other multilateral peace and security

operations as essential to Canadian interests and values. It said the Government should expand international focus beyond Europe to a broader multilateral role, with greater attention to the Pacific Region and the Americas. It said Canada should maintain membership in NATO and NORAD.

The Report said the government should reduce the number of headquarters units by one third and headquarters personnel by 50%; reduce resources devoted to fighter aircraft by a minimum of 25% leaving three operational squadrons and one training squadron of CF-18s; increase Regular Land Forces by 3,500 combat personnel; maintain the present fleet of frigates and destroyers; attach priority in equipment purchases to modern armoured personnel carriers and new search and rescue helicopters.

The Committee also suggested there was a need to strengthen the role of Parliament in the scrutiny and development of defence policy. Among other things it was suggested this might include:

- Creation of a new Standing Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons with appropriate regional representation;
- Full Parliamentary debate before any deployment of Canadian Forces abroad;
- Parliamentary scrutiny before any future defence policy review or White Paper;
- Annual day of debate on defence policy.
- More information to Parliament on Department of National Defence capital plan and performance indicators

Conclusion

In my view, Canada should never jeopardise its obligations to defend this country, and leave aside commitments to global peacekeeping. These two aspects constitute the reasons for Canada's renowned reputation in the global sphere, and the self-confidence of our people. Canadians realise that our international obligations are a defining feature of our country. For

example, Canada's valuable assistance in helping to resolve the Suez Crisis, in 1956, illustrated the importance of our role in global peacekeeping. The Prime Minister of Canada, Lester B. Pearson, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for Canada's efforts.

With the Cold War over and no military threat immediately apparent, we are better off concentrating on what we are able to do rather than what we cannot do. We have an enviable record in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance which has shaped our self-image, and helped define our role in the world. It is precisely because of "Canada's non-militaristic position that we are acceptable to many countries as an intermediary in troubled areas."² Since the end of the Cold War, Canada has intensified these operations.

In today's multipolar world, Canada has the opportunity to promote its interests more than ever. This sentiment is best exemplified by a quote from Lester B. Pearson who said: "... in few countries is there less likely to be a conflict between national interest and international policy, since in few are the requirements of interdependence so closely related to the maintenance of independence. I believe that this role, played not to spread ourselves or to gain prestige, but to discharge our proper international responsibilities, strengthened our feeling of national pride. This, in turn, contributed to national unity and a deeper sense of national identity."³ ♦

Notes

1. The Special Joint Committee on Canada's Defence Policy, *Security in a Changing World*, Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1994, p. 17.
2. Robert J. Jackson and Doreen Jackson, *Politics in Canada*. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1994, p. 626. It refers to the quotation in the penultimate paragraph.
3. David Cox, "Canada and the United Nations: Pursuing Common Security," *Canadian Foreign Policy*, vol. 2, no. 1, (Spring 1994), p. 68.