

“In Considerable Doubt”? Canada and the Future of NATO

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Introduction: “Deadism” Redux

In so many ways, the attacks on New York and Washington of 11 September 2001 might have been expected to result in a diminution of NATO’s importance to Canadian grand strategy. At the very least, the onset of what would be billed, alternatively, as the “Global War on Terror” (the GWOT) and the “Long War,” heralded the beginning of a new strategic era, one in which Europe would become of even less strategic significance to Canada than during either the so-called “post-Cold War” era, which spanned the decade between the demise of the Soviet Union and 9/11, or the earlier, and long, Cold War era. And it followed that if the familiar cynosure of Canadian security and defence policy during that earlier era, namely Europe, was going to go on losing importance at an accelerated clip, then so too must the organization whose primary function had been, from its inception in 1949, the safeguarding of Western European security, and with it, of transatlantic security. That organization, of course, was and remains the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It is an organization that, for two decades now, has continued to defy expectations that it must soon fade into obscurity as a vehicle for advancing Canada’s strategic interests.

The purpose of this article is to show how and why it is that, surprisingly to some, NATO has managed to retain considerable significance for Canadian security and defence policy a full decade after 9/11. Perhaps heightening the poignancy of the surprise is the pessimism about NATO's future prospects expressed in recent years by none other than Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who in February 2009 went on record as stating that unless NATO manages to "succeed" in Afghanistan, "I do think the future of NATO as we've known it is in considerable doubt."¹ While this is not the first time – far from it – that a NATO-watcher has expressed skepticism about the alliance's survivability, it was one of those rare moments when a leader of a member-state that was not called France, particularly one with such a NATO "pedigree" as Canada possesses, actually voiced doubt in such a candid manner.

But if the prime minister can be applauded for his candour, can the same be said of his predictive powers? Here, I think, the answer must be in the negative; for what I shall argue below is that, like that of Mark Twain, stories of the death of the alliance are "greatly exaggerated."² More to the point, tales of NATO's demise are nothing new; they have been frequent, and we are either (depending upon how one counts these things) going through the second or third cycle of "deadism" insofar as concerns the alliance's future. Yet the latter refuses to die. To understand why this should be so, let us take a look at the logical and empirical claims that have been made regarding NATO's future, both within Canada and outside of this country, starting with the earliest "deadist" phase, which occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War.

"Like a Plant Without Water"

Two years ago, NATO marked its 60th anniversary in existence, with a summit in the French city of Strasbourg and its German neighbouring town across the Rhine, Kehl. Six decades is a long time for a collective-defence organization to be in existence, yet

¹ Quoted in Mary Anastasia O'Grady, "A Resolute Ally in the War on Terror," *Wall Street Journal*, 28 February 2009, online ed.

² In an 1897 telegram from London to the Associated Press, sent by the author in response to his receiving news disseminated by the wire service that he had died. Twain would go on to live for a further 13 years.

few informed observers today would be prepared to bet against NATO celebrating a 70th anniversary in eight more years, Stephen Harper to the contrary notwithstanding. Yet a mere two decades ago, both in Canada and elsewhere in the alliance, speculation was rife as to which organization (if any) would replace a NATO whose lease on life was widely considered to be short. In Canada and a few European countries, the smart money seemed to be on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE),³ which had emerged in some imaginations as the central “architectural” component of the future European security order. In the words of one analyst who had been following the decisionmaking process within the Department of External Affairs,⁴ especially as concerned the thinking of the minister responsible, ex-Prime Minister Joe Clark, the “essential element of Clark’s vision of the new Europe, ‘the drawing board for the new European architecture,’ is the CSCE process.”⁵

Joe Clark was hardly the only one to envision a future in which NATO either was non-existent or, if extant, irrelevantly so. Quite a few practitioners of international relations (IR) theory were of a similar view, and were quick to pronounce NATO to be as dead as its quondam Warsaw Treaty Organization adversary, with the only difference being that the leaders of the Atlantic alliance did not yet realize it. Nor is it particularly difficult to understand why so many were prepared to write off so quickly the old alliance. Obviously, the old conceptual cloak of collective defence could not help looking rather moth-eaten in an age when there seemed (and still seems, to some) to be no great power enemy against whom that kind of defence was needed. Hence the numerous predictions of the alliance’s impending demise, based as these were on an historical track record that testified to one central fact in international security: no alliance had ever shown itself capable of long outlasting the disappearance of its adversary.⁶ So why should anyone expect NATO to be any different, given that, in the trenchant words of Josef Joffe, an alliance without an enemy must quickly begin to resemble “a plant without water.”⁷

³ The name would soon be changed to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

⁴ To be renamed, in 1993, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

⁵ Robert Wolfe, “Atlanticism Without the Wall: Transatlantic Co-operation and the Transformation of Europe,” *International Journal* 46 (Winter 1990-91): pp. 137-63, quote at p. 158.

⁶ Stephen M. Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” *Survival* 39 (Spring 1997): pp. 156-79.

⁷ Josef Joffe, “Die NATO und Nostradamus,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 6 February 1995, p. 4.

In the realm of IR theory, none played the part of Cassandra better than adherents to a school known as “structural realism.” And among their ranks, no one sounded as much doom and gloom for the alliance as Kenneth Waltz, who so memorably characterized the future in a 1993 bon mot, to the effect that “NATO’s days are not numbered, but its years are.”⁸ For sure, the manner in which he descried that future did leave Waltz with some wiggle room, in that he never *did* specify the number of years he expected it to take for NATO to disappear. This epistemological shortcoming he later sought to remedy, when in 2000 he announced that, in reality, NATO *had* died as a multilateral collective-defence institution, and was merely surviving as an adjunct to American grand strategy; henceforth it would exist “mainly as a means of maintaining and lengthening America’s grip on the foreign and military policies of European states.”⁹

In fact, Waltz was only partly correct: NATO might have ceased being an effective institutional provider of what none of the *original* European member-states thought they still needed by the 1990s, namely American protection against a great power threat, but it had not ceded pride of place in Euro-Atlantic security. Instead, defying the pundits, it managed to re-emerge, following the initial round of deadest prophesying, as *the* indispensable institution for the provision of a variety of other public goods in the area of security. Among those goods were a set of policy initiatives packaged at the time under such rubrics as “cooperative security,”¹⁰ “security sector reform,”¹¹ and by the end of the 1990s, even “human security.” Interestingly, the post-Cold War decade, which started as a moment of great expectations for those who wished to see the reduction if not elimination of NATO as an important pillar in transatlantic security, would end with NATO’s becoming more active in European and

⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security* 18 (Fall 1993): 44-79, quote at p. 76.

⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *International Security* 25 (Summer 2000): 5-41, quote at p. 18.

¹⁰ Javier Solana, “Letter from the Secretary General,” *NATO Review* 45 (November-December 1997), p. 3.

¹¹ Note two students of the alliance’s SSR involvement in Central and Eastern Europe, “NATO has been the driving force in the promotion of security sector governance, with a clear emphasis on democratic control of armed forces and defence reform.” Heiner Hänggi and Fred Tanner, *Promoting Security Sector Governance in the EU’s Neighbourhood*, Chaillot Paper no. 80 (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, July 2005), p. 81.

increasingly “out-of-area” operations than it had ever been during its Cold War salad days.

This was possible because during the 1990s NATO managed to re-invent itself as a security organization. In so doing, it reinserted itself into the strategic conceptualizations as these were being developed in the various member-states, perhaps nowhere more so than in Canada itself. Indeed, the latter country even managed during this decade to be far out in front of the alliance’s “redesign curve,” through Ottawa’s styling the evolving organization as one increasingly in keeping with the country’s longstanding “article 2 yearning,” expressed in the conviction that the alliance needed to develop into more of a *political* and less of a military grouping of states.¹² And this is in part exactly what NATO would become during the 1990s.

The tale of NATO’s transformation is familiar enough. The journey can be said to have begun as early as the alliance’s London summit of July 1990, which resulted in what at the time looked to be an extraordinary declaration of intent to reach out to the recent adversaries of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and in so doing transform NATO into an increasingly political organization, whose new mandate would stress cooperating with, not containing, the east. In a little more than a year, the alliance would seek to give institutional meaning to the cooperative thrust by the creation, at the Rome summit of November 1991, of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which held its inaugural meeting the following month.¹³

Also at that same Rome summit the alliance adopted the first of what would turn out to be a series of three “new strategic concepts,” the most recent of which was unveiled at the November 2010 Lisbon summit.¹⁴ Perhaps the most important aspect of

¹² This desire figured prominently in Canadian advocacies of the late 1940s in support of the formation of an Atlantic “community” of like-minded states; see David G. Haglund and Stéphane Roussel, “Escott Reid, the North Atlantic Treaty, and Canadian Strategic Culture,” in *Escott Reid: Diplomat and Scholar*, ed. Greg Donaghy and Roussel (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), pp. 44-66.

¹³ The NACC was replaced by a new cooperative mechanism, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), unveiled at NATO’s Madrid summit in July 1997. See Sergio Balanzino, “Deepening Partnership: The Key to Long-Term Stability in Europe,” *NATO Review* 45 (July-August 1997): pp. 10-16.

¹⁴ The second “new strategic concept” (NSC) was unveiled in 1999; see Karl-Heinz Kamp, “The Way to NATO’s New Strategic Concept,” *Research Paper* no. 46 (Rome: NATO Defense College, Research

the first of these new strategic concepts was the acceptance that the “threat” of yore had been replaced by “risks” that were both “multi-faceted” and “multi-directional.” The document’s drafters did not see any less of a need for the alliance, but they did recognize that now, more than in the past, NATO would have to “frame its strategy within a broad approach to security.” Importantly, two new security functions were highlighted in the document: dialogue and crisis management. Each in its own way would work to breathe new life in the old alliance.¹⁵

Within a half-year of the Rome meeting, the alliance would embark on a tentative journey into the world of peacekeeping. Alliance foreign ministers, meeting in ministerial session in early June 1992 in Oslo, announced their conditional willingness to assume peacekeeping assignments, on a case-by-case basis, under the responsibility of the CSCE. A year and a half later, dialogue would be given firmer institutional meaning through the launching of the Partnership for Peace. The two undertakings would embroil NATO in a new set of problems as well as be implicated in a gathering momentum by 1994 on the alliance’s enlargement. From then on, the alliance and its member-states would become increasingly busy carrying out the two major thrusts of the “cooperative security” alliance, enlarging to the eastward in a bid to extend the “liberal zone of peace” in Europe, and conflict management in a part of Europe hitherto deemed out of NATO’s “area.” By the end of the decade, few echoes of the deadism debate remained.

Canada Rediscovered NATO

My earlier references to Conservative prime ministers, both a former one (Joe Clark) and the current one (Stephen Harper), might give the impression that something about the Conservative party renders it inherently dubious about NATO. Such an impression,

Division, June 2009). For the most recent NSC, see Jamie Shea, “Why Does NATO’s New Strategic Concept Matter?” *Atlantisch Perspectief* 34, 8 (2010): pp. 8-13.

¹⁵ “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, Agreed by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Rome on 7-8 November 1991,” reproduced as Appendix IX, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1995), pp. 235-48. Also see Michel Fortmann, “NATO Defense Planning in a Post-CFE Environment: Assessing the Alliance Strategy Review (1990-1991),” in *Homeward Bound? Allied Forces in the New Germany*, ed. David G. Haglund and Olaf Mager (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 41-62.

of course, would be utterly misleading, for throughout this country's six-decades'-long experience of NATO membership, both major federal parties have blown equally hot and cold on the questions of NATO's future and its relationship to Canadian defence and security priorities.¹⁶ In fact, one of real surprises of the Canadian rediscovery of NATO during the 1990s is that it was largely the work of a Liberal party that initially was, if anything, even more convinced of the alliance's inevitable slide into irrelevancy than had been the Conservative government in power at the time the Cold War and the Soviet Union came to their respective ends. And therein hangs an instructive tale, one that unfolded on the watch of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, who had not previously been connected in any discernable fashion with the debates over Canadian grand strategy during the last years of the Cold War.

Yet it would be this prime minister whose government would, essentially, renew Canada's alliance vows, during the period 1993 to 2003, although at the outset one would not have predicted this, given that Chrétien chose to campaign in 1993 against a major military procurement project of relevance to NATO (for the purchase of Sea King helicopters), and especially in light of his party's well-known suspicion about "cozying up" too closely to the great American ally. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Liberals' astounding rout of the Progressive Conservatives in the 1993 federal election, it really did appear that a new strategic era was at hand for Canada – an era whose watchword was going to be "emancipation," in the event both from the bilateral security embrace of the United States and from the premier multilateral collective-defence structure of the Cold War, NATO. Although for some analysts and policy makers in Canada the latter had at times been mustered into conceptual duty as a vehicle for achieving distance from the former, through but dimly understood and fundamentally metaphysical

¹⁶ For fluctuating Canadian stances toward NATO during the Cold War decades, see David J. Bercuson, "Canada, NATO, and Rearmament, 1950-1954: Why Canada Made a Difference (but not for Very Long)," in *Making a Difference? Canada's Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order*, ed. John English and Norman Hillmer (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1992); Peter C. Dobell, *Canada's Search for New Roles: Foreign Policy in the Trudeau Era* (London: Oxford University Press/Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1972); Paul Buteux, "NATO and the Evolution of Canadian Defence and Foreign Policy," in *Canada's International Security Policy*, ed. David B. Dewitt and David Leyton-Brown (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada, 1995), Tom Keating and Larry Pratt, *Canada, NATO and the Bomb: The Western Alliance in Crisis* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1988); and Robert Bothwell, *Alliance and Illusion: Canada and the World, 1945-1984* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

properties associated with the metaphor of a European (and therefore, alliance) “counterweight,”¹⁷ many more observers – not only in the Liberal party but prominently to be found there – equated the multilateral alliance with the bilateral embrace, and thus they assumed that the Liberal reign would be characterized by an overall emancipatory thrust from each.

If that was the goal in 1993, there was little trace of it a decade later. By the time Chrétien turned the reins over to Paul Martin in December 2003, Canada’s security and defence policy was once more according a central role both to the United States and to the transatlantic alliance. This did not take place by accident, but instead reflected a maturation of Liberal thinking on international and national security during the 1990s (i.e., the rediscovery *predated* the attacks of September 2001). At the outset of Chrétien’s decade in power, it was assumed that Liberal doctrine was going to incline Canada *away* from transatlanticism. By the end of his tenure it was almost as if the opposite was occurring: not only had NATO become re-inserted as a core pillar of the country’s foreign and security policy, but during the dust-up over Iraq in Chrétien’s final year in office, Europe – or at least the “old” Europe of Donald Rumsfeld’s articulation (i.e., the “Europe” of France and Germany) – also seemed to be resplendent as a Canadian policy lodestar, so much so that it could be remarked by an impolitic observer that “[f]or a short time during the late winter of 2003, Canada’s position was so closely aligned with France’s as to become virtually identical with it; and ... you could say that Ottawa’s grand strategy had very much become hostage to France’s preferences.”¹⁸

So, what happened to transform an organization (NATO) that very much looked like a vestige of the past into an ever-present reality of Canadian defence and security policy, even during the tenure in office of a prime minister, and a party, that at the start in 1993 gave every appearance of wishing a decidedly different outcome? And why did transatlanticism continue to be an “identity pole” for a Canada that was said more and more to be inexorably drifting away from the Atlantic world in favour of a more “geographically correct” posture that would correspond with, as well as celebrate, the country’s multicultural “essence”? In part, perhaps, the ongoing vitality of NATO and,

¹⁷ Roy Rempel, *Counterweights: The Failure of Canada’s German and European Policy, 1955-1995* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ David G. Haglund, “Canada and the Anglosphere: In, Out, or Indifferent?” *Policy Options* 26 (February 2005): 72-76, quote at p. 73.

a fortiori of transatlanticism, simply pays tribute to what some analysts take to be a relevant invariant of policymaking in Canada: namely, a tendency for matters relating to the “high politics” of security and defence to yield to policymaking processes that accord surprisingly little heed to parties and partisanship, and instead are largely determined by the “system.” As one student of this topic has written, it is frequently argued that “[p]olicymakers may play the game of party politics when it comes to trade or the environment, but in the realm of ‘high politics’ – where the survival of the state is at stake – we expect them to set politicking aside and take their cues from the clashing of forces ‘out there’ in the wider world.”¹⁹ But there may be another way of looking at things, one that puts the premium not on invariants associated with the exigencies of the international system (what Kenneth Waltz would call the “third image”),²⁰ but rather on the ideational preferences as expressed through elites in the Liberal party of Canada. In short, the surprising re-attachment to NATO and to transatlanticism can be seen, albeit not exclusively so, as reflecting the creative reassessment of the transatlantic (“liberal-democratic”) alliance so as to make it look surprisingly congenial to Liberal ideology.

To some students of Canadian politics, “Liberal ideology” might appear as the ultimate in oxymorons, given that the party has often been depicted as being an ideology-free zone, where pragmatism and, above all, an insatiable lust for power explain all that needs to be explained about Liberal behaviour throughout so much of the 20th century. For sure, the Liberals did not reach, and cling so tenaciously to, the pinnacle of power as a result of an excessive commitment to ideology.²¹ Nevertheless, there were some geopolitical markers discernible in the Liberal creed, as that latter would get propounded at various moments, and rarely with such fanfare as during the emancipatory hubbub of the early 1990s. To say again, there existed two emancipatory

¹⁹ Brian Bow, “Parties and Partisanship in Canadian Defence Policy,” *International Journal* 64 (Winter 2008-09): 67-88, quote at p. 67. Bow himself is unsure whether the regnant assumption is accurate, and he has, along with his Dalhousie colleague David Black, written sensibly on this question in a co-guest-editors’ introduction to the same *IJ* special issue on political parties and foreign policy, entitled “Does Politics Stop at the Water’s Edge in Canada? Party and Partisanship in Canadian Foreign Policy,” *ibid.*, pp. 7-27.

²⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

²¹ For a chronicling of the former governing party’s long tenure, see Stephen Clarkson, *The Big Red Machine: How the Liberal Party Dominates Canadian Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

touchstones of Liberal intellectual activism, one pertaining to Canada's relationship with the United States, and the other to its ties with NATO.

In respect of the first of these, it could have been imagined at the time Jean Chrétien assumed power that a more distant relationship with Washington was going to be fashioned. The Conservatives, who earlier in the 20th century had styled themselves as the "anti-American" alternative in Canadian politics, had reversed roles by the latter decades of the century, and had become associated with that bogey of English-Canadian nationalism, namely the spectre of "continentalism."²² It was, after all, the Conservatives who championed the historic free trade agreement with the United States, and won re-election in 1988 in a campaign one of whose most memorable images was provided in a Liberal negative advertisement, featuring an American trade negotiator erasing the Canada-US border. The image was a powerful one, albeit not powerful enough to persuade the electorate that Liberal leader John Turner was entirely wise in denouncing his rival Brian Mulroney, a prime minister who, in Turner's view, "with one signature of a pen ... will reduce us, I am sure, to a colony of the United States, because when the economic levers go, the political independence is sure to follow."²³

Jean Chrétien, on becoming prime minister in 1993, made a point of telling anyone who would listen that unlike Mulroney, he was going to keep his distance from the American president. But it would not only be the US from which the Liberals were going to seek distance; NATO too was on their target list, as an organization that was a bit too constraining for Canadian impulses – and this, notwithstanding the residual allure, to some party elites, of the aforementioned counterweight metaphor. Truth to tell, there *was* a certain Liberal approach to the Atlantic alliance, one that bore the impress of a pre-Second World War party assessment of the dangers to national unity that might ensue from too excessive an engagement with transoceanic collective-defence enterprises. Admittedly, in those years it was the Empire/Commonwealth that

²² Nationalists in French Canada, on the other hand, were rather well disposed, in the 1980s, both to the United States and to the prospect of deepening economic integration on a continental scale, and for this they were scolded by their English-Canadian counterparts. See for example, Robert Chodos and Eric Hamovitch, *Quebec and the American Dream* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991).

²³ Quoted in David G. Haglund and Joseph T. Jockel, "The Non-Vanishing Border: Change and Continuity in Canadian-American Relations," in *Canada: Images of a Post/National Society*, ed. Gunilla Florby, Mark Shackleton, and Katri Suhonen (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 55-69, quote at p. 55.

stirred unease among party elites, many of whom in the 1930s looked rather like your typical American “isolationist” of the day;²⁴ still, save for a short period in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was never difficult for Liberal politicians to find comfort in a posture toward collective defence best characterized by the principle of “limited liability,” or as Mackenzie King, a past master at limiting liability, might have put it, commitment if necessary, but not necessarily commitment.²⁵

Lest it seem unfair that such stress be placed on limited liability as an exclusively *Liberal* principle, be it noted that by the 1980s and early 1990s, the Conservatives as well had become converts to what had earlier been anathema, and had embraced the hope so long held by their main political adversaries, of reducing the costs to Canada of contributing to the common defence, such that while the Canadian so-called “pull out” from Europe might have taken place on Chrétien’s watch in 1994 (when the bases in Germany were closed), the decision to end the four-decades’ long stationing of Canadian military personnel in Europe had actually been announced in 1992, while the Conservatives were still in power.²⁶ And the Liberals could at least lay credible claim to being more committed to “internationalism” than their Conservative adversaries – or, at least, they could be *thought* by many to be so.²⁷

It was this Liberal claim to ideational internationalism that constituted the second element in the emancipatory thrust. To be clear, what Canadian policy was to be emancipated from was the concept of collective defence; and since this concept was so often (and not incorrectly) regarded to be NATO’s core if not sole mandate during the Cold War, it was understandable that anything taking Canada away from collective defence in a period now hailed as “the post-Cold War era,” could only be assumed to

²⁴ Or so I have argued in “Le Canada dans l’entre-deux-guerres,” *Études internationales* 31 (December 2000): pp. 727-43.

²⁵ See David G. Haglund and Stéphane Roussel, “Is the Democratic Alliance a Ticket to (Free) Ride? Canada’s ‘Imperial Commitments’, from the Interwar Period to the Present,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 5 (Spring 2007): pp. 1-24.

²⁶ For the context surrounding that decision, see Roy Rempel, “Canada’s Troop Deployments in Germany: Twilight of a Forty-Year Presence?” in *Homeward Bound?*, pp. 213-47.

²⁷ For an intriguing assessment of *Conservative* “internationalism,” see Nelson Michaud and Kim Richard Nossal, eds., *Diplomatic Departures: The Conservative Era in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1984-93* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001).

take Canada away from NATO, as well. The emancipatory thrust showed up every place that security and defence intellectuals with close ties to the party were gathering to debate the country's grand strategy. It showed up, for instance, in Ottawa in March 1994, when the new Chrétien government convened an ingathering of party elites and unaffiliated policy wonks at what was styled as the first "National Forum on Canada's International Relations." It showed up in the widely publicized discussions that took place in the summer of 1994 under the aegis of an advocacy group calling itself, in anticipation of the emancipatory prospects awaiting us all in the new and possibly saner 21st century, the "Canada 21 Council."²⁸ And it showed up in the autumn 1994 report of the special joint committee of the House and Senate charged with reviewing Canadian foreign policy, which recommended that Ottawa should "encourage NATO to continue moving to a collective security role for the whole of Europe."²⁹

Now, collective security is an ambiguous concept, one that can easily represent the very antithesis of limited liability if it were to be taken seriously, as its champions after the First World War intended it to be taken.³⁰ At that time, it was considered to embody the most robust of commitments in pursuit of the most robust of outcomes – namely the keeping of the peace by *guaranteeing* that wherever interstate aggression might rear its ugly head, it would be met by overwhelming opposition from the "international community" (at the time the League of Nations), such that it would soon become obvious to any would-be miscreant that the crime of international aggression simply did not pay, never could pay, and therefore would not occur in future, if the community would be but bold enough to go to war for the sake of peace. By the early days of the Chrétien government, what was intended by those who uttered the words "collective security" was a rather more irenic policy dispensation (and a less costly one, to boot), first captured by the felicitous notion expressed in the aforementioned Canada 21 document, "common security," and later summed up in the even newer, and to many more attractive, idea of "cooperative security," this latter emphasizing the virtues of talking through problems with recent adversaries who might now become friends, or

²⁸ *Canada 21: Canada and Common Security in the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, 1994).

²⁹ Special Joint Committee Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, *Canada's Foreign Policy: Principles and Priorities for the Future* (Ottawa: Parliamentary Publications Directorate, November 1994), p. 21.

³⁰ For a useful, though dated, conceptual analysis, see Roland N. Stromberg, "The Idea of Collective Security," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17 (April 1956): pp. 250-63.

at least partners.

The embrace of cooperative security as being not only clearly Canadian but also Liberal in provenance (even if it had started to make the policy rounds during the Conservative reign) would turn out to be a first step on the country's surprising road back to NATO. Indeed, you could almost say that it was NATO that began to move closer to Canada ideologically, and to Canadian *Liberal* ideology in particular. It did so during the decade of its ostensive reinvention, which saw the alliance embark upon those two sets of security activism, dialogue and conflict management, introduced in this essay's previous section, which together would guarantee for NATO a much higher profile in Ottawa by the end of the decade than it had enjoyed in 1993. In a word, NATO underwent "transformation."³¹ In shedding the raiment of collective defence in favour of the garb of cooperative security, the alliance began to look ideally suited for promoting Canadian interests (or, as some preferred to couch the matter, values).³² Significantly, for Canada, both new functions were to provide a powerful rationale for re-engagement with the alliance, and could even be made to seem, in creative hindsight, to be almost the creation of Canadian Liberal defence and security intellectuals.

Ottawa, after some initial hesitation and throat-clearing on the enlargement issue, began to pose as one of the process's champions, so much so that during the run-up to the first of the three post-Cold War rounds of expansion, it was advocating that the alliance accept twice as many new members as even the Americans and Germans were prepared to welcome. The three that did get in as a result of the Madrid summit in 1997 – Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic – were certainly acceptable as far as Canada was concerned, but Prime Minister Chrétien had also been touting the candidacy at that time of three other states – Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia. And insofar as concerned peacekeeping, Joel Sokolsky has put it well in describing what

³¹ In fact, NATO constantly undergoes "transformation," and today even has, in Norfolk, a major headquarters called Allied Command Transformation, commanded by a French air force general subsequent to Paris's re-integration into NATO's military structure, announced at the alliance's Strasbourg summit in April 2009. See Frédéric Pesme, "France's 'Return' to NATO: Implications for Its Defence Policy," *European Security* 19 (March 2010): pp. 45-60.

³² David G. Haglund, "The NATO of Its Dreams? Canada and the Co-operative Security Alliance," *International Journal* 52 (Summer 1997): pp. 464-82.

happened to this iconic Canadian defence and security tradition during the Chrétien years, which witnessed the “greening” of Canadian peacekeeping (meaning not that the practice was somehow becoming more eco-friendly, but that it would be increasingly something Canadians did wearing NATO green helmets instead of UN blue ones).³³ By early 1999, shortly before the bombing of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo war began, Ottawa officials were now even speaking of NATO as *the* “human-security alliance.”³⁴

Conclusion: Deadism Round II and Beyond

By the start of the new century – the century that just a decade earlier was supposed to have witnessed the rapid demise of Canada’s (and the other allies’) attachment to the transatlantic alliance – Ottawa was more engaged with NATO than it had been at any time since the early 1950s. Significantly, it was an engagement that could be seen to correspond closely with Liberal foreign policy doctrine – or at least, could be *made* to correspond with that doctrine. This does not mean that, absent the Liberals, Ottawa would have forsaken the old alliance; it simply means the latter was able to be conceptualized in a manner fully congruent with Liberal dogma.

Then came 9/11, and once more doubts were being raised as to the survivability of NATO. This time, however, the skeptics were not claiming that a robust collective-defence organization no longer had a purpose, for the world had suddenly become less “threat-free” than it has looked a decade earlier. No, this time NATO doubters were wondering whether the alliance’s demise was at hand, and if so, was imperilled by none other than its principal champion, the United States. For more than a few observers of transatlantic relations, it was the new American administration of George W. Bush that had the task of fashioning a response to the new era of terrorism that most threatened NATO, and did so because of a strong preference for “unilateralism” in foreign policy.

³³ Joel J. Sokolsky, “Over There with Uncle Sam: Peacekeeping, the ‘Trans-European Bargain,’ and the Canadian Forces,” in *What NATO for Canada?* ed. David G. Haglund, Martello Papers 23 (Kingston, ON: Queen’s University Centre for International Relations, 2000), pp. 15-36.

³⁴ Author’s notes, from a conference organized by the Atlantic Council of Canada, and held at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto in February 1999. For the events surrounding Canada’s participation in the war against Serbia, see Michael W. Manulak, “Canada and the Kosovo Crisis: A ‘Golden Moment’ in Canadian Foreign Policy?” *International Journal* 64 (Spring 2009): pp. 565-81.

NATO, for the first and only time in its long existence, was quick to invoke article 5 of the Washington treaty in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11. But Washington, still smarting from the “lesson” it chose to absorb from the recent Kosovo War – namely that wars fought by committee (i.e., NATO) could become much messier enterprises than wars administered and prosecuted by a small and efficient “coalition of the willing” – preferred in the brewing conflict with the Taliban regime to restrict the real fighting to a small and trustworthy cadre of countries, not all of whom were NATO member-states. And this preference had some policy intellectuals in Europe declaring that America was turning its back upon the very alliance it had done so much to bring into being.

For a time it did look as if the US had little need, at the peak of its “unipolar” moment in international security affairs, for the kind of multilateral constraints that accompanied whatever assistance NATO would be able and willing to provide. But once it became obvious how awesome was the challenge of replacing easily toppled regimes with governing structures capable actually of improving conditions, there was a return by Washington, even the Washington presided by the Bush administration during its second term in existence, to transatlantic multilateralism, such that by the end of the last decade, there was once more a reduction in deadest rhetoric. Despite what had looked in 2003 to have been, for the alliance, a “near-death experience,”³⁵ the intra-alliance scars of Iraq would be quick to heal. Indeed, we now know that the war in Iraq hardly proved to be the mother of all transatlantic crises some were so sure it was going to be, at the time. In retrospect, it is apparent that the war against Saddam Hussein was much less divisive than had been the 1956 Suez Crisis, given that the earlier crisis pitted the US (and Canada, too) against both France *and* Britain – i.e., America was arrayed against its two most powerful allies in 1956, whereas in 2003 it had its most powerful ally, the UK, at its side.

The culminating, nearly sublime, irony of the Chrétien years was that Iraq

³⁵ Elizabeth Pond, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Pittsburgh and Washington: European Union Studies Association/Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

provided, as Janice Stein and Eugene Lang have ably demonstrated,³⁶ the motivation for Canadian recommitment to Afghanistan – a recommitment that did so much more to restore Canada to a lofty position within the alliance, reminiscent of the one it occupied in the formative years of NATO, than anyone could possibly have imagined at the time it was made. Today, notwithstanding that the nature of the Afghan deployment will be changing, with a reduced emphasis (presumably) upon combat, Canada continues to be regarded in Washington and elsewhere as one of the most stalwart of allies, and no longer finds itself being singled out, as happened so regularly during the latter stages of the Cold War, as one of NATO's leading deadbeats (or, "free riders"); if anything, Canada has joined those who point the finger at reluctant allies trying to shirk their share of the collective "burden."³⁷

While it would be dreadfully incorrect to argue that this is what Jean Chrétien had intended way back in 1993, it would similarly be wrong to deny that the surprising re-engagement of Canada with the alliance *did* take place during his decade in power, in what is yet another instance of the workings of a timeless axiom in international relations, the "principle of the opposite effect." Nor has Stephen Harper, his minatory words to the contrary notwithstanding, shown any great urgency to have Canada de-camp from or otherwise change its status in the alliance. As I write these words, a Canadian air force officer, Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard, commands the NATO air operations mounted in late March 2011, under the cover of a UN security council resolution and motivated by a rationale predicated upon the Canadian-championed "responsibility to protect" doctrine, to ensure that the skies over Libya (and some of the land below, as well) be zones where combat is forbidden by the forces of Muammar al-Qaddafi.³⁸

No one can say how the Libya operation will turn out. But what is so interesting

³⁶ See Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang, *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007).

³⁷ Including, for a time, its once-favoured German ally; see David G. Haglund, "Afghanistan and the Limits of 'Unlimited Solidarity': A Farewell to *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*," in *The Afghanistan Challenge: Hard Realities and Strategic Choices*, ed. Hans-Georg Ehrhart and Charles C. Pentland (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), pp. 175-87.

³⁸ Paul Koring, "Canadian Air Force General to Lead Enforcement of No-Fly Zone," *Globe and Mail*, 26 March 2011, p. A20.

about it is that it reconfirms, for the umpteenth time, that whenever voices grow, in Canada and elsewhere, about the alliance's apparent lack of utility, NATO always manages to be given a role that, upon reflection, mutes the skepticism regarding its future. Not too long ago, during the phase I have labelled "deadism, round II," there was much grumbling on the part of some European allies about a new metaphor, the "tool box." It was felt, in the wake of 9/11, that the US zeal for crafting coalitions of the willing – accompanied by what was at the time a controversial mantra, to the effect that the coalition (i.e., the alliance) did not determine the mission, but rather it was the mission that determined the coalition – must lead to the inevitable demise of the Atlantic alliance. Yet we now see, in Libya, a sterling example of the tool box – an element, be it stressed, that corresponds reasonably well with aspects of NATO "carpentry" – getting employed not only by the US, but also by Britain, France, and ... Canada. In this respect, Sten Rynning was correct to have predicted, shortly after the Iraq war's outset, that the tool box would be more likely to rescue NATO than to jeopardize it.³⁹

Neither can anyone say what the future holds in store for the alliance. But there is one thing that seems clear enough: the only way NATO could be fatally damaged would be for the US itself to pull the plug on it. Few realize it, but NATO does have an escape hatch available for disgruntled members. It is called article 13 of the Washington treaty of 1949, and along with article 10, it provides the "constitutional" means by which the size of the alliance might be regulated. Significantly, while article 10, governing the enlargement of the alliance, has seen extensive use ever since the first expansion was undertaken in 1952, no ally – not even France in 1966 under Charles de Gaulle – has ever seriously considered invoking article 13, and leaving NATO.⁴⁰ Short

³⁹ On this point, see Sten Rynning, *NATO Renewed: The Power and Purpose of Transatlantic Cooperation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁴⁰ Article 10 states that the members of the alliance "may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty." According to the provisions of article 13, once the treaty had been in force for twenty years, viz. as of 1969, "any Party may cease to be a Party one year after its notice of denunciation has been given to the Government of the United States of America ..." North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1995), pp. 233-34.

of an American departure from the alliance (for it, too, could exercise article 13), it is hard to see how NATO can ever die.

This is not to remark that NATO will go from strength to strength, for that is clearly an absurd expectation, in light of what we know about the alliance's continued difficulties mustering resources capable of satisfying members' intentions (the classic problem of "burden sharing"), to say nothing of what we know about NATO's past. But it is to remark that NATO will continue, as it has for so many decades, to be a central organizational pillar of the security and defence policy of its member states, Canada among them. There will be good times, and there will be bad times, for the alliance and its members. Mostly, NATO will endure because no one has an interest in bringing about its disappearance.