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The AfPak Campaign and the Limits of Canadian Diplomacy

JULIAN SCHOFIELD and BENJAMIN ZYLA

Initially, recognition of the vital role played by regional diplomacy did not accompany NATO's substantial commitment to economic and political development in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014. Pakistan in particular had a major influence on the conduct of reconstruction efforts and NATO's efforts to lay the institutional foundations in Afghanistan. Canada, an early and committed participant in the International Security Assistance Force, would by 2005 come to recognise the vital importance of the role of Pakistan in the outcome of the mission. However, regional limits to the influence of the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and Canada made comprehensive efforts unattainable.

In March 2007, Canada's foreign affairs minister, Peter Mackay, asserted, "Our foreign policy is clear. It is aimed at restoring Canadian leadership in the world. . . . Our priorities are to play a leading role in peace and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan."¹ However, accompanied by a rather slow start and under-resourced Canadian diplomatic regional effort to bring peace and security to Afghanistan, the minister's words largely remained rhetorical. The lack of a comprehensive Canadian diplomatic effort was an early indication that far from holding to its promise of a long-term commitment to Afghanistan, Canada was actually satisfying pragmatic short-term concerns over its alliance relationships within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO] and more so *vis-à-vis* the United States.² To put it simply, Canadian foreign and defence policy concerning Afghanistan did not think beyond alliance commitments and strengthening the Canadian–American defence relationship; it viewed its Afghan policy through the prism of American foreign policy.³ These goals superseded any effort of bringing "real" peace and security to the country at the Hindu Kush and missed an important opportunity to take regional considerations and players into the context of Canadian foreign policy-making.

More specifically, for two reasons, Canada was slow to recognise that Pakistan and China posed the principal challenge to a stable and developed Afghanistan: first, primarily Pakistan, but China to a lesser extent, had interests opposed to NATO objectives in Afghanistan. Second, during the latter part of NATO's deployment in Afghanistan, Beijing had come to develop an influential position in the Afghan economy, especially its natural resource sector.⁴ In turn, Canada's low commercial and strategic interests, the political weakness of its Central and Southern Asian immigrant communities, and the constraints on Canadian diplomacy in South Asia meant that Ottawa could do no better than mimic the diplomatic inactivity of its allies. Canada's deference to NATO, and the United States in particular, on Afghan–Pakistan policy, however, shifts the question to why NATO, and ultimately the United States, had not confronted Pakistan and its allies. Whilst Ottawa tried to offer a so-called “comprehensive approach” to challenges posed by the Afghan campaign, its diplomacy was never enough or sufficiently strong to provide lasting regional security in Kandahar, which in turn was insufficient to provide the conditions for local development.⁵ This implies that after NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, Canadian diplomacy will not be able to stop Pakistan's re-imposition of a restrictive transshipment regime or a reassertion of direct support to the Quetta Shura Taliban and the Haqqani network.⁶

Against this backdrop, this analysis has two arguments. First, Canada has been engaged in Afghanistan along with its major western allies primarily to maintain the solidarity of NATO and that with the United States. Second, and as a result thereof, Canadian foreign policy-makers failed to recognise two other important geopolitical players to bring peace and security to Afghanistan: Pakistan and China. Canada was consequently unable to buttress its developmental efforts with anything like the same level of diplomatic success because of compelling limitations to its influence in South and Central Asia. This may have been because American unwillingness to trade its geopolitical objectives elsewhere to apply pressure on Pakistan hamstrung Canada and, more broadly, NATO. In particular, Washington was unwilling to test China's special relationship with Islamabad. For example, 90 percent of Afghan exports enter into or pass through Pakistan,⁷ and the Taliban leadership and field cadres train and operate from sanctuaries within Pakistan.⁸ Had Afghanistan been a high priority for Canada and other Powers, one would have expected greater effort to engage Pakistan and its key allies diplomatically, especially China and Saudi Arabia, as well as to increase Indian, Russian, and Iranian involvement. Instead, Canada engaged in a major counter-insurgency campaign in Afghanistan with the puzzling absence of an accompanying regional diplomatic strategy. This course is especially astounding given Pakistan's widely recognised and decisive role—and indirectly by China, its closest ally⁹—in this conflict.

NATO thinks about South and Central Asia in terms of loose and evolving partnerships with the alliance. The events of 9/11 in New York and Washington, DC prompted it to embark on a more “global strategy” in response to an internationalisation of security threats. International partnerships, for example with Pakistan and China, are clearly one tool to respond effectively to these threats and thus amendment of the term “NATO partnership” by adding the qualifier “global.”¹⁰ These developments in NATO’s evolving strategic thinking are not surprising given its long history of outreach activities in the early 1990s. Indeed, its relationships with other Powers spread gradually and steadily further afield from Europe, and different security rationales drove each new step of engagement.

Improved political and military relations with Russia after the end of the Cold War led, at the 7–8 November 1991 Summit meeting in Rome, to the creation of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council [NACC]. NACC was to manage emerging concerns in Eastern Europe and provide stability and an institutional architecture for political engagements.¹¹ It was part of a larger effort to facilitate the interplay of interlocking institutions—an overlap in terms of membership and scope—increase transparency, and thereby enhance peace and order in Europe. Indeed, as a forum for political consultations on issues such as military defence planning, arms control, crisis management, civil–military relations, and force structure,¹² it thus evolved into a loose partnership institution without explicitly locking its members into legally binding agreements or extending NATO’s collective defence clause to those countries.¹³

NACC’s unexpected success evolved in 1994 into a so-called Partnership for Peace [PfP] in which NATO would provide “practical”—meaning more individually targeted—responses to specific policy concerns raised by Central and Eastern European partners and help them adjust to NATO standards and priorities. Specifically, it addressed issues of internal stability about which NACC was unable to speak. To this end, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe established a Partnership Co-ordination Cell at Mons, Belgium to increase the level of transparency.¹⁴ Put simply, PfP’s primary goal was to transform the societies and institutions of PfP countries and help them adjust to the new socio-economic as well as political and security environments.¹⁵ This process implied an expansion as well as an intensification of political and military co-operation amongst its members. In 1997, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council replaced NACC and provided a political forum for long-term political consultation and co-operation beyond PfP. Two years later, a so-called Membership Action Plan that distinguished between semi-permanent and aspirant partners augmented the PfP. Such distinction had become necessary when a number of neutral countries—Sweden, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, and Ireland—joined the PfP programme, mainly to participate in NATO’s Balkan operations.

In the early 1990s, NATO thought of relationships in regional—that is European—terms and attempted to create a network of interlocking institutions and relationships that were neither competitive nor mutually exclusive but functionalist in the sense that they would be assigned one specific rather than a range of tasks. This constituted a comprehensive and logical architecture for the alliance to operate and respond to evolving threats.¹⁶ Canada's diplomats in Brussels at the time, for example, noted that this network of institutions would function as an early warning mechanism that allowed NATO to identify and respond to emerging conflicts.¹⁷

The events of 9/11 altered the security threat perception from a regional Atlantic to a broader global horizon beyond NATO's borders. This development demanded a new approach to thinking about partnerships whilst recognising that NATO partnerships had always been flexible, adaptive, and pragmatic. Moreover, NATO's International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] in Afghanistan revealed the strategic importance of relationships in Central and South Asia, particularly to ensure the accessibility of critical transit routes to supply the NATO mission in Afghanistan. Partnerships were no longer about what NATO could do for partners, but rather what partners could do for NATO.¹⁸ Put differently, NATO evolved from a customer of security to a consumer of security, which highlighted the need to engage states as distant from Europe as Iraq, Mongolia, Japan, and Pakistan. Furthermore, NATO has sought dialogues that are more extensive: with China, India, Singapore, Malaysia, and Colombia.

In sum, NATO's thinking on partnerships had evolved from a group of states that loosely shared NATO's values, norms, and principles to a conception of relationships with states that do not necessarily share NATO's normative or cultural dispositions. Many NATO new partners remain geographically disconnected from the Euro-Atlantic area. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China are three salient examples. The new Strategic Concept of 2010 took note of this fact, envisioned NATO as a "hub" for other global security actors around which to establish a global security network.

Pakistan possesses a virtual veto over NATO's long-term prospects in Afghanistan.¹⁹ Washington has repeatedly asserted its belief that Pakistan is either passively or actively responsible for the sanctuaries provided to the Quetta Shura Taliban in Baluchistan and the Haqqani network in North Waziristan. In 2012, Kabul complained to NATO that Pakistan fired 1,900 rockets against alleged Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan [TTP] positions in Kunar Province within Afghanistan.²⁰

NATO's long-term goal for Afghanistan is to ensure sufficient socio-economic development that will allow it to sustain a national army. Although current development plans are to achieve self-sufficiency in agriculture and in virtually all other areas,²¹ Afghanistan will remain entirely dependent on foreign aid and imports through Pakistan.²² Above all, food self-sufficiency is a priority, as there have been severe fluctuations in both cost and supply—for

instance, a famine in the early 1970s set the stage for the emergence of the *mujabedeens*. Currently Afghanistan is dependent on Pakistan for 80 percent of its wheat supplies, much of it as imported aid, whilst lower Pakistani prices have undermined incentives for the indigenisation of manufacturing. In the area of construction materials, Pakistan's current supplies are cheaper.²³ Afghanistan's carpet manufacturers are second only to agriculture in employment, but because they depend on Pakistan for most of the machines and materials, Afghanistan must pre-export 94.8 percent of its carpets to Pakistan for completion. The result is that Afghanistan collects only ten percent of the final sale value of the carpets, losing an estimated \$200 million per annum.²⁴

One-half of Afghan trade is with its five neighbours—Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—most of which consists of \$1 billion imports from Pakistan.²⁵ Since the subcontinent's partition in 1947, disputes over the status of the Pashtun population in Khyber-Pakhtunkwa saw Pakistan disrupt or block Indo-Afghan trade in 1947, 1955, 1961, and from 1965 onwards.²⁶ Under American and European Union [EU] pressure, Pakistan signed a new Afghanistan Transit and Trade Agreement [ATTA] with Afghanistan on 6 May 2009. In exchange for transit trade access across Pakistan to Central Asia, Afghanistan acquired the use of the ports of Karachi as well as Gwadar and Bin Qasim.²⁷

Pakistan, on the other hand, receives considerable incentives to cooperate over ATTA. Changes in American legislation have recently facilitated the United States becoming the largest creditor and market for Pakistani exports, especially textiles, increasing from \$2.6 billion in 2001 to \$5.6 billion in 2009.²⁸ Buttressing this by 2007 was €7.2 billion in trade with the EU, which is also exploring a preferential tariff regime with Pakistan in exchange for co-operation over Afghanistan.²⁹ In October 2009, President Barack Obama also signed a \$7.5 billion foreign aid bill for Pakistan for 2010–2015, in addition to the American military assistance it already receives.

However, Pakistan remains difficult to influence. At the 22 May 2012 NATO Summit, American pressure and the promise of \$1.1 billion from the Coalition Support Fund was insufficient to convince Pakistan to re-open NATO's supply link Ground Lines of Communication [GLOCs]. The main problem remains that President Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League, as well as his predecessor's, Asif Ali Zardari's, People's Party of Pakistan and the Pakistani army are constrained by antagonistic public opinion, which is hostile to the perceived treatment of the *Umma* by the United States. Pakistanis also feel that American pressure is abusive, having failed to recognise the 42,000 Pakistani lives lost since 2001 in pursuit of American interests.³⁰ However, Pakistan has handed over 200 alleged al Qaeda associates, facilitates American drone attacks on its territory and, despite being able to isolate completely Afghanistan except through Central Asia, has maintained air corridors and recently re-opened the GLOCs to NATO.

However, Pakistan's fragmented elite structure, entrenched press, and active democracy make any direct influence attempt delicate. American and EU sway with Pakistan's commercial elite gives no more significant leverage than China's contacts with Pakistan's military and bureaucracy or Saudi Arabia's links with elements of Pakistan's civil society. Indeed, Pakistan has been recalcitrant with Saudi Arabia, its close ally, in Islamabad's agreement for an energy pipeline with Riyadh's adversary, Iran; and its other close ally, China, has pressured Pakistan for its persistent failure in suppressing the Uighur East Turkestan movements. The United States has been as unsuccessful in getting Kabul to respond to Pakistani concerns in dealing with the alleged TTP infiltrators operating from Afghanistan.³¹

Trade with Iran is of interest to Afghanistan and India because it permits circumvention of the Pakistani port of Karachi, and Afghanistan has been trying to re-route its trade away from Pakistan, with Indian help, for over half a century. Afghanistan concluded a transit agreement for Bandar Abbas in 1974 and a Trade and Transit Agreement for the Chabahar Free Zone Authority port in 2003. In addition, India, Iran, and Afghanistan have concluded a trilateral Trade and Transit Agreement. Whilst unfriendly to Pakistan's Afghanistan policy, Iran has limited influence largely in Herat and central Afghanistan, but its infrastructure is too weak to divert trade from Pakistan.

China and Pakistan share a long geostrategic rivalry with India, which brought them together as allies by the mid-1960s. China has been a major arms supplier to Pakistan, consistently backing Islamabad diplomatically and actively aiding its nuclear programme.³² Pakistan is possibly China's closest ally, or a close second to North Korea.³³ It provides a vital counter-balance to India, which China sees as a threat to the security of Xizang [Tibet] and a vital link to the oil-producing Islamic states of the Persian Gulf. China recognises the instability and foreign policy unpredictability of Pakistan but puts a priority on ensuring its continued survival.³⁴ American President George W. Bush's redefinition of China from a strategic partner to strategic competitor shortly after his first election undercut American influence in Beijing.³⁵ Subsequently improved Indian–American relations, including a nuclear commerce deal, have made China concerned that Washington is pursuing a containment strategy against it.³⁶ Above all, China was anxious that the Americans would use permanent bases in Afghanistan to push into Central Asia and undermine its position in the unstable province of Xinjiang.³⁷ Russia shares this concern.³⁸ China had attempted unsuccessfully, through the Shanghai Cooperation Council [SCO], to shut down NATO's Central Asian transshipment routes and has consistently refused to join the NATO effort in Afghanistan. It realises it cannot compete economically with the United States in Pakistan or Afghanistan—Pakistani exports go primarily to the United States and EU—but it has significant strategic leverage because of its permanent geopolitical presence in the region.³⁹

The Chinese and Pakistani economies increasingly inter-connect through Chinese investments in Pakistan's infrastructure projects, including telephone networks, irrigation projects, and public hospitals. Pakistan appreciates these investments as its economy has been in a crisis for a number of years with growth stagnating, low foreign direct investments, and unemployment and prices on the rise. Indeed, Sino-Pakistani trade has grown rapidly in the last decade.

Geopolitically speaking China sees NATO's presence in Afghanistan in the short term as beneficial as it denies Islamic militants a sanctuary to destabilise Western China.⁴⁰ Thus, Beijing is concerned about a premature NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan but prefers Pakistani domination of Afghanistan to a post-NATO vacuum.⁴¹ Afghanistan and all of its neighbours are members or observers of the Russian and Chinese dominated SCO.⁴² Since 2002, China has provided \$180 million in foreign assistance to Afghanistan, with another tranche of \$75 million in 2009, and has provided police training since 2006. China also invests significant amounts for accessing Afghan's natural resources, such as natural gas and exploring the Aynak copper region.⁴³ Since 2009, China has engaged Afghanistan through the SCO and India and Pakistan through the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation and the Dianchi Co-operation for Opening Asia.⁴⁴ Starting in February 2012, China engaged Pakistan and Afghanistan in a dialogue over Taliban reconciliation, concerned with a post-NATO Afghanistan and Indian influence.

The American Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, visited China in April 2009, followed by further State Department contacts, although China maintained its unwillingness to either pressure Pakistan or become further involved in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ Although Beijing approved Washington's designation of the East Turkestan Independence Movement [ETIM] as a terror group in April 2009,⁴⁶ China is concerned that the Americans will nevertheless provide sanctuary to non-ETIM anti-Chinese groups in the form of human rights non-governmental organisations originating in its Xinjiang province.⁴⁷ In May 2012, Beijing and Washington began a joint Afghan training programme.⁴⁸ Unlikely to push the Chinese further on Pakistan because they share delicate commercial relations, the United States needs Beijing to resolve the more pressing issues of nuclear proliferation in North Korea and Iran.

By the end of the 1990s, Canadians had become used to seeing their military deployed overseas in robust "peace-enforcement" operations after nearly ten years of service in United Nations [UN] and NATO peace operations in the Balkans. In that sense and contrary to accepted public wisdom at the time, joining the American-led coalition "Enduring Freedom" in 2001–2002 to topple the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was *not* a strategic departure for Canada. Here was another multi-lateral "peace-enforcement" operation in a troublesome area of the world, endorsed and authorised

by various UN Security Council resolutions. For Canada, the forces that it was going to send to Afghanistan were readily available as foreseen in a 1994 White Paper.⁴⁹ By becoming part of “Enduring Freedom,”⁵⁰ Ottawa actively joined the American discourse on the “war against terror”—politically and militarily. It thus participated in the destruction of the Taliban in Afghanistan to prevent future attacks by international terrorists and their networks against the West, including Canada.⁵¹ The initial Canadian deployment consisted of six naval vessels, six aircraft, special forces, and roughly 2,000 troops. These returned to Canada in July 2002.⁵²

Politically, Ottawa wanted to assist its American ally in a time of need after 9/11, and to support UN Resolution 1363.⁵³ Officials also understood the positive impact Canadian deployments would have on Canadian-American relations. Then defence minister, Art Eggleton, noted enthusiastically, “This is the first time that the Americans have asked a coalition ally to join them on the ground with their operations in Afghanistan. This is the first time they have done that for any country, and they asked Canada first.”⁵⁴ Moreover, Washington’s perception of Canada as a serious partner in the fight against terrorism, the government hoped, could produce both an environment of goodwill ensuring that the border would remain open for trade and mute criticism in the American Congress of Canadian defence efforts. In short, one might conclude that at least in the initial phase, Canada’s enthusiasm for NATO’s success was stronger than NATO’s collective commitment to itself.⁵⁵

Yet, things did not go as smoothly as officials hoped. The time leading to the war in Iraq in 2003 produced significant tensions not only within NATO circles but also in the Canadian–American relationship. Whilst politicians on both sides of the border disapproved of Saddam Hussein’s leadership, disagreement existed over the appropriate response and the means to achieve it. Indeed, Jean Chrétien, the Canadian prime minister, waited until the very last moment to make a decision on America’s invitation to join forces in toppling the regime in Baghdad.⁵⁶ Behind the scenes, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade [DFAIT] and Department of National Defence [DND] worked closely with their American counterparts in preparing for war and, simultaneously, seeking a diplomatic solution at the UN. Canadian diplomats, for example, made considerable efforts to secure a compromise resolution on Iraq without success.⁵⁷ Militarily, the Canadian Forces [CF] engaged in joint planning with the United States Central Command to integrate a Canadian battle group of 600–800 troops to fight alongside the Americans in Iraq, which undoubtedly led Pentagon officials to believe that Canadians would be part of the military mission. In his memoirs, then American ambassador to Canada, Paul Cellucci, recalled, “Despite the obvious hesitations about the prospects of an invasion, we believed that Canada would be with us even without a second UN resolution on Iraq.”⁵⁸ Yet, all this collaborative planning and preparation proved unworkable with Chrétien’s announcement in the House of Commons on 17 March 2003 that

Canada would not send troops to Iraq but would, instead, increase its military commitments to NATO's ISAF mission. NATO took command of the UN-sanctioned ISAF and began to expand its activities to other regions of Afghanistan outside of Kabul.⁵⁹

For some time, Chrétien had strong reservations about the American norm of regime change, especially in light of similar strong German and French opposition to sending forces to Iraq and a lack of a UN resolution that would legally justify such an invasion. In that sense, Afghanistan was becoming a substitute for Iraq in Canadian defence planning,⁶⁰ and Washington perceived the way that Ottawa announced its decision as an affront by an ally. However, what American officials in their voiced disappointments often forgot to mention was that shortly after 2003, 31 CF-members, amongst them the future chief of the Defence Staff, Walter Natynczyk, served on exchange with American and British forces in Iraq and under American command. Shortly after returning to Afghanistan in 2003, Canada assumed command of the Provincial Reconstruction Team [PRT] in Kandahar province.⁶¹ PRTs were the application of the whole government approach, designed to foster security, development, and assistance for the local population. One thousand additional CF troops made their way to Afghanistan operating there with minimal operation restrictions.⁶²

In 2005, Chrétien's successor, Paul Martin, re-committed Canadian forces to Afghanistan in a combat function under "Operation Athena," at times with circa 2,500 forces. Furthermore, under "Operation Enduring Freedom," Canadians took responsibility for the regional command of Kandahar province from the United States Army. When Stephen Harper's Conservatives took power in February 2006, the new government fully embraced Canada's earlier Afghanistan commitments as well as its justifications for Canada's military engagements there. In short, all successive governments believed that international terrorism and radical Islamist groups posed a threat to Canada, and that Canada therefore had a significant national interest to stop them, if necessary by military means.⁶³ According to Harper, Canada's engagement in Afghanistan was justified:

First, because our national security is at stake. As North Americans learned on September 11, 2001, terrorism is a menace to us all. It is a global phenomenon and it must be confronted wherever we find it, at home or abroad. We were unmistakably reminded of this by the recent arrests of a number of people charged under Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act.

Second, we are doing this because we are determined to demonstrate Canada's leadership on the world stage and to show that we will pull our weight in United Nations missions.

Third, we are doing this because the government and the people of Afghanistan have asked us to help them, and it is in the nature of

Canadians to share the peace and prosperity we have achieved with countries torn by war, poverty or natural disaster.⁶⁴

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor further explained in the House of Commons on 10 April 2006: "Our approach to Afghanistan can be summarised in two words, 'Canada First.' The Canada First defence strategy seeks to protect Canada from threats that confront us at home and from abroad. This means going to Afghanistan to counter terrorists harboured there, terrorists that are not bound by borders nor dissuaded by oceans."⁶⁵

Due to the prominence of counter-insurgency in American strategic thinking, it is little surprising that the American doctrine of a "three-block war" found its way also into Canadian doctrinal thinking. Originally developed by General Charles Krulak of the United States Marines, the doctrine prescribes that in the context of highly unpredictable security environments, the military might have to respond to a spectrum of threats and conflicts sometimes simultaneously and to fight, keep the peace, and provide humanitarian relief. Alliance solidarity was a consideration in the doctrinal convergence observed in many NATO armies in Afghanistan.

In early 2006, based on the conclusions of the London Conference on Afghanistan, Canada signed the Afghan Compact. In establishing a framework for international co-operation for the following five years, it sought to base reconstruction on the foundation of Afghanistan's political institutions. It also recognised that success in this mission would require efforts along three lines: security, governance, and development.⁶⁶ However, at home, politicians debated the future of Canada's Afghanistan commitments and a task force emerged to provide recommendations. Its brief remained clear. Whilst Canada needed to remain in Afghanistan beyond its February 2009 deadline, its continued presence, even in a combat role, should increasingly focus on training the Afghan National Security Forces to take on a greater share of the security burden. It should also improve its reconstruction and development efforts for Afghanistan by making a concerted diplomatic effort with its NATO allies in South and Central Asia.

Whilst this military effort was on going, DFAIT believed Afghanistan was a lynchpin in the whole region between Israel and Pakistan.⁶⁷ By the mid-2005, it was the centre of Canada's diplomatic efforts, and its high commissioners and ambassadors received instructions to raise public awareness of the issue abroad. Canada, for example, made Afghanistan the focus of its Canada-EU Summit in 2007, and at its 2007 UN address, called for a special UN envoy. The diplomatic effort intended to improve the co-operation of major allies, integrate development and defence relations bilaterally with Afghanistan, and maintain international support for these efforts. When the CF deployed to Kandahar, DFAIT managed the joint PRT.⁶⁸ By mid-decade, Ottawa acknowledged that success in Afghanistan would depend

on its neighbours, not only for security, but also for long-term development. Ottawa saw itself as an impartial facilitator.⁶⁹

Canada's main effort, the Afghanistan Pakistan Co-operation Process [APCP], including the 2010 Afghanistan–Pakistan Border Region Prosperity Initiative, had as its initial purpose the strengthening of frontier controls in the Kandahar region. Born out of the Dubai Process in 2007, Canada had hoped that securing the Durand Line would help cut Taliban access to their sanctuaries in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. It also expected that the improved border situation would help commerce and development in Afghanistan, especially through remittance-sending labour exports and hydroelectric trade.⁷⁰ Further afield, Ottawa believed that Afghanistan could benefit as a regional transshipment hub for commerce and fossil fuels. This initiative comprised workshops and sought to establish co-ordinated infrastructure, systems and training at Afghan–Pakistani border crossing points, and mechanisms for information exchange.⁷¹ In April 2011, the respective deputy ministers from Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to an Action Plan outlying their respective commitments until 2013 and made further informal commitments following the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan in November 2011. The two states have completed reciprocal visits in areas of immigration and customs.

With the departure of its military contingent in 2012, Canada committed to continue its “Regional Diplomacy” strategy into 2014 by encouraging the creation of Border Liaison Offices as part of Canada's 2010 G-8 APCP initiatives. One such office established at the Khyber Pass was for counter-narcotics co-operation, accompanied by an effort by Ottawa to establish a Joint Working Group focusing, at this stage, also on narcotics. At the June 2012 Istanbul Process ministerial meeting in Kabul, Canada stated that it would seek to promote confidence-building measures between Afghanistan and Pakistan and further facilitate the Afghan–Pakistan ATTA.

Canada's military holding mission, at least initially, was a tactical success with minimal casualties, though it achieved few of its counter-insurgency goals and did not seem to benefit from the APCP.⁷² More broadly, Canada was unsuccessful in getting Pakistan to address sanctuary issues or denying the Taliban Quetta Shura a safe haven.⁷³ Afghan–Pakistan border officials agreed to co-operate on a number of issues through to 2013, but Canada did not address the underlying border issue. American diplomatic cables indicate that differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the designation of the Durand Line have stalled further co-operation. Pakistan has refused any subsequent Afghan attempt to obtain binding agreements on any border issue at any of the NATO-hosted conferences. Tellingly, as early as 2006, then Pakistan president, Pervez Musharraf, refused joint military patrols with Canadian soldiers.⁷⁴ Pakistan has since refused almost all of the more substantive recommendations of the APCP. Consequently, only minor improvements have occurred in Afghan–Pakistan relations. The APCP may

endure, but its effectiveness will be severely curtailed until the two states can delineate and agree on the legal status of the Durand Line; it is therefore becoming increasingly dormant.

The 2 May 2011 assassination of Osama bin Laden and the 26 November 2011 NATO bombing of Pakistan that killed 24 soldiers further hampered progress on Afghan–Pakistan relations. Islamabad retaliated by closing its border with Afghanistan, again shutting down NATO's GLOC and pulling out of its 2011 engagement with the International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn. The escalation of cross border violence between Pakistan and Afghanistan, linked to Pakistan's support for the Haqqani Network against Afghanistan and Afghanistan's failure to close sanctuaries to elements of the TTP raiding Pakistan's border areas, such as at Bajaur, has been a further impediment to improved relations. Kabul prominently mentioned cross-border shelling by Pakistan into Afghanistan in August 2012 at the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation in Saudi Arabia. Predictably, the Afghan–Pakistan Joint Peace Commission stalled.

Canada has had little diplomatic impact on Afghanistan and Pakistan. Whilst DFAIT has re-stated Canada's long-term commitment to regional diplomacy, in reality Canada has mostly divested itself from Afghanistan. In terms of physical presence, only minor training missions currently remain, and the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA] continues, uninterrupted, its development aid focusing on health, education, human rights, and humanitarian assistance as part of its fragile states programme.⁷⁵ The results of Canada's diplomatic initiatives were modest, proportional to the effort, low risk, and, importantly, did not compromise Canadian values.⁷⁶ Canada's mediation of Afghan and Pakistan border issues was initially a trial and error process, seeking a spot that could accommodate Canada's low level of influence but credible level of impartiality.⁷⁷ Ultimately, Canada lacked the influence necessary to either impose a solution on the two disputants or convince allies such as the US that could.⁷⁸ The likely eventual failure of the APCP will also cost Canada little diplomatically.

Most surprising however, is the obvious lack of a Canadian regional strategy given the complex political and military circumstances in the region. Kim Nossal asserts that this absence is the result of a strong value-laden ideational current in Canada's foreign policy thought, which excludes narrow definitions of the national interest, geopolitics, or *realpolitik*. The consistently weak emphasis placed upon concrete measures and proposals for a regional strategy for Afghanistan demonstrates the persistence of this perspective. Had this policy been the result of constraints placed upon Canada by American or NATO interests, there would have been greater challenges by the parliamentary opposition and more publicly raised objections by DND, DFAIT, and CIDA personnel.⁷⁹

Nossal, however, concedes that regionalism has been highlighted persistently as vital for the stabilisation of Afghanistan.⁸⁰ Members of the federal

Bloc Quebecois were the most insistent that a solution for Afghanistan depended on the multi-lateral involvement of key regional players, including Pakistan, China, India, and Iran.⁸¹ The Manley Report made a similar, vaguer recommendation in 2008. It recognised Pakistan's role in the Afghanistan insurgency and the need to get Canada and other NATO members, especially the American-dominated Kabul mission, to agree to a combined policy on regional engagement.⁸² The Manley Report further stated that Canada and its allies should engage Pakistan to secure a more stable regional security environment, recognising its role as a sanctuary for the Taliban insurgency.⁸³ However, one critic of the report, the Senlis Council, argued that it largely neglected Pakistan and was missing strategic recommendations.⁸⁴

In fact, there has been a lively and well-informed public policy debate, suggesting the complexity of any regional approach, rather than a failure to understand the role played by Afghanistan's neighbours, most likely restrains Canadian legislators. Analysts have consistently identified Pakistani co-operation as the determining factor for success in Afghanistan.⁸⁵ Roland Paris, for example, has argued that significant resource-backed diplomacy would be required to get Pakistan to close the insurgent sanctuaries.⁸⁶ The Senlis Council called for military incursions into Pakistan,⁸⁷ a confrontational policy for which NATO did not have escalation dominance. However, repeated ground incursions would likely have led to the closure of the border, an end to the "Predator" drone programme, and possible confrontation or artillery exchanges. Compromising Pakistan's territorial integrity could also trigger commercial retaliation by Saudi Arabia and increased nuclear proliferation to Pakistan by China. Consequently, the only American weapon employed regularly inside Pakistan is the "Predator" drone.⁸⁸

The principal challenge is that the key regional players, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, India, and Iran—with the exception of Russia—are far more influential today than two decades earlier. This situation is in part because of their emerging nuclear arsenals, but also due to their counter-veiling alliances. Canada specifically, and NATO more generally, are ill equipped to deal with them.⁸⁹ Success in Afghanistan depends on addressing the Afghan–Pakistan border dispute and Pashtun irredentism, New Delhi's historical link with the Pashtun,⁹⁰ and Chinese and Saudi alliance associations with Islamabad. Ironically, NATO's interests in Afghanistan are most congruent with Iran: to develop Afghanistan economically, counter-balance Pakistani influence, and stop the opium trade originating in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. Furthermore, even if Canada wished regional engagement, India prefers to manage its relations bilaterally via the 1972 Simla Agreement. India's approach has to do with cementing its prevailing influence in South Asia and denying Pakistan's usual strategy of bringing in third parties to mediate and ultimately publicise the dispute over Kashmir.⁹¹

Canada's relatively weak standing with Pakistan has much to do with the competition from states that manage far higher levels of influence in

Islamabad: in approximate order of influence, China, Saudi Arabia, and the United States respectively, followed by the EU, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates.⁹² These states acquire influence based on converging geopolitical interests, religious affinity, military alliances, arms transfers, energy dependence, foreign direct investment, Overseas Development Assistance [ODA] grants, and commerce—in every category, they exceed Canada.⁹³

For example, American assistance from 2001 to 2011 totalled \$13.3 billion in security assistance and \$7.3 billion in economic and developmental aid.⁹⁴ By 2008 Pakistan was receiving \$1.5 billion in ODA annually—up from \$1 billion in the 1990s—of which the top contributor was the EU.⁹⁵ By comparison, Canada's ODA contribution increased to Cdn\$62 million in 2002 and Cdn\$80 million by 2011, of which a significant proportion was in response to floods and earthquakes, though overall, ODA was consistent with levels in the 1980s and 1990s.⁹⁶ By 2010–2011, Canada's bilateral aid shrank to Cdn\$30 million—\$83 million with multi-lateral aid—placing Canada in thirteenth place of ODA donors to Pakistan out of a total pool of US\$1 billion.⁹⁷ CIDA and DFAIT policy priorities in South Asia are broadly concerned with the assertion of Canadian values, which in turn focus on the alleviation of poverty, democratic governance, nuclear non-proliferation, and promotion of trade.⁹⁸ Although the internal preference has been for CIDA to distance itself from serving the purpose of securing diplomatic influence, in the context of Asia where Canada has traditionally put an emphasis on security at the behest of its allies, there has been a dispute over the extent to which ODA should be politicised and re-oriented to serve foreign affairs objectives.⁹⁹ Some critics have argued that Canada should but has not linked its aid programme to tangible foreign policy objectives.¹⁰⁰

A second avenue—the influence of Canadian values through Pakistani-Canadians—has been mitigated by the small size of the community in both Canada and Pakistan.¹⁰¹ The Pakistani community simply lacks organisation for the purposes of impressing Pakistan's interests on Canadian legislators.¹⁰² The relative paucity of Canadian foreign aid and commerce with Pakistan, and the limited influence of Canada's domestic and military-to-military contacts, has a significant limiting effect on Canadian diplomacy in Islamabad. However, the legacy and persistent involvement of Canada in Pakistan's development has generated goodwill that permits a co-operative resolution of disputes.¹⁰³ In the areas of illegal immigration and narcotics smuggling, for example, Pakistan has been very co-operative.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Canada is not in a position to push forward plans intended to alter Islamabad's Afghanistan policies. Canada has consequently deferred to its larger allies like the United States to manage the complicated relationship with Pakistan.¹⁰⁵

Since the American led invasion that toppled the Taliban in 2001, NATO members have provided extensive security and development assistance to Afghanistan slated to end in 2014. Once NATO forces have departed, China and Pakistan are two actors that are likely to take up an important role

in the further political development of Afghanistan. For China, its on-going engagements in the country since 2002 sees three concerns: security interests, especially regional security related to its Xinjiang province, and preventing Afghanistan from becoming a regional centre for Islamic extremism; economic interests in the form of Afghan's large mineral deposits; and preventing a permanent American presence in its immediate neighbourhood. For Pakistan, its multifarious special interest groups will likely become bifurcated between re-asserting Afghanistan's subordination within a Pakistani sphere of influence and continuing the benefits of commercial access to the American and EU markets vital to its development.

Against this backdrop, it is rather puzzling that neither NATO nor the United States—and thus Canada—recognised that both Pakistan and China are important regional players with an important role in a stable and developed Afghanistan. Had Afghanistan been a high priority for Ottawa and other NATO allies, there would have been a greater diplomatic effort to engage Pakistan and China. Rather, what occurred was Canada engaged in a major counter-insurgency in Kandahar and showed a baffling absence of an accompanying regional diplomatic strategy. More prosaically, its interests in alliance solidarity and alignment with the Americans to maintain an undisrupted Canada–United States relationship largely drove Canadian efforts in Afghanistan.

For the United States, its interests in South, Central, and East Asia were complex. It was essentially unwilling to apply the required pressure to compel Pakistan to shut down the Taliban sanctuaries along the Durand Line or to pressure Afghanistan to alter its unwillingness to recognise the Durand Line as the legal border.¹⁰⁶ Without strong American backing, the remaining significant NATO members of ISAF, including Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Australia, and the Netherlands, have had little incentive to challenge prevailing Western sentiments against a more forceful nation-building effort in the interest of alliance cohesion. Canada presented a high priority for engaging the Americans with NATO and ensuring NATO's vitality rather than defeating the Taliban. To be fair, whilst Canada has had insufficient resources to challenge the regional *status quo* and bring a lasting peace to Kandahar, it has maintained its tradition of development assistance and attempted, with very limited success, to leverage its mediatory or bridge builder role between Kabul and Islamabad. In short, Canada has primarily logrolled within a campaign coalition seeking the least objectionable common interest, which is joint action within NATO, rather than success in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁷ In that sense, the priority of maintaining solidarity in NATO has chain ganged Canadian regional diplomatic policy into virtual inactivity.

NOTES

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3. Charles F. Doran, *Forgotten Partnership: US–Canada Relations Today* (Baltimore, MD, 1984), 139.
4. Barnett Rubin and Abubakar Siddique, "Resolving the Pakistan–Afghanistan Stalemate," Special Report 176 (Washington, DC, October 2006), 17–18; Rizwan Zeb, "Cross Border Terrorism Issues Plaguing Pakistan–Afghanistan Relations." *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 4/2(2006), 69–74; "Afghanistan–Pakistan Trade Facilitation and Transit Trade: Challenges" (3 April 2008): <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/0,contentMDK:21706596~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:223547,00.html>; Sajid Chaudhry, "President's First Official Visit: Pakistan, Afghanistan to Ink New Trade Agreements," *Daily Times (Pakistan)* (27 December 2008): http://www.bilaterals.org/article.php?id_article=14144; "Pakistan's Economy Suffered \$68bn Loss Due to Afghan Turmoil," *Daily Times (Pakistan)* (24 March 2009); United Nations, (APP), "Pakistan Says Military Means Alone Cannot Bring Peace to Afghanistan" (20 March 2009): http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=71277&Itemid=2; Amina Khan, 2007, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2006/cr06114.pdf>; <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/content/LOP/ResearchPublications/prb0729-e.htm>; "ADB Grants US\$165Mn for Afghanistan Railway," *Freight Transport* (October 2009).
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8. Idem., "Diversionary Wars: Pashtun Unrest and the Sources of the Pakistan–Afghan Confrontation," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 17/1 (2011), 38–49.
9. Idem., "The Robustness of Chinese–Pakistan Alliance Relations," in Riaz Ahmed Shaikh, ed., *Back from the Brink—India–Pakistan Ties Revisited* (Karachi, 2013), 205–59.
10. Trine Flockhart, "NATO's Global Partnerships—A Haphazard Strategy?," in Ellen Hallams, Luca Ratti, and Benjamin Zyla, eds., *NATO since 9/11: The Transformation of the Atlantic Alliance* (Basingstoke, 2013).
11. Its inaugural meeting took place on 20 December 1991. The following countries were members of NACC: Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and the United States as members of NATO; and Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Slav Federal Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and one representative of the Soviet Union from Central and Eastern Europe.
12. For example, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, *Report NATO Enlargement*, International Secretariat (October 2001), Article 3. The negotiations for the CFE treaty as well as Russian troop withdrawals are often cited as examples of where the NACC process had a practical and important impact.
13. This is also why Canada favoured a NATO enlargement before an EU expansion; EU expansion was most likely to take a decade or longer due to the extensive requirements of the *aqui communautaire*, the large regulation framework of the Union.
14. For a greater discussion about the role of the PCC, see G. Lange, "The PCC—A New Player in the Development of Relations between NATO and Partner Nations," *NATO Review*, 3 (May 1995).
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16. "Partnership with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe," Statement issued by the North Atlantic Council, Meeting in Ministerial Session, Copenhagen (6–7 June 1991). A good counter-example where the concept of interlocking institutions failed was in Yugoslavia where "interlocking" turned into institutional bickering.

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