



MILITARY NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES

At the November conference, the discussant for the three preceding papers was John Marteinson, retired colonel and current editor of The Canadian Military Journal. Here is an edited transcript of his comments.

Lors de la conférence de novembre dernier, l'IRPP avait confié à John Marteinson le soin de commenter les trois communications qui précèdent. Colonel à la retraite, M. Marteinson est actuellement rédacteur en chef de la Revue militaire canadienne. Nous présentons plus bas une version révisée de ses observations.

The Canadian Forces are already experiencing a considerable state of flux and uncertainty. How they will be structured and equipped in 20 years simply is not clear. Part of the restructuring includes confronting the so-called revolution in military affairs. If our forces are to be inter-operable with the United States forces, as seems to be the preference of the Department of National Defence, major changes will be needed to incorporate the technological innovations that have brought us the “information warfare” that the Americans are moving toward.

But I see that change happening incrementally, and even in 20 years we will probably see a large part of our forces at the relatively low-tech end of the spectrum—though still available to take part in military interventions abroad. How much they will be able to contribute and whether, in view of our relatively lightly equipped forces, particular our army, our government will deliberately choose to help out only in the lower end of the spectrum is something we can only guess at.

There is no way we can accurately predict what sort of international commitments our government will choose to pledge our forces, or parts of them, to. Some missions will be relatively benign—like the Haiti and Kosovo ver-

ification missions. But others might be far more dangerous and chaotic, like the Bosnia mission in the 1990s and Sierra Leone today.

One possibility that we should always keep in mind—but in fact usually don’t—is that the Canadian Forces might actually be called upon to fight

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We appear to have a conundrum in Canada. Canadians, in general, think that Canada ought to contribute to global peace and stability by participating in a variety of multi-lateral deployments, generally peacekeeping or similar activities, though perhaps even in war if they can be convinced that it is in our interests or in the interests of our allies and friends. And, indeed, the Canadian Forces have invariably done a good job when they are sent into such missions. Canadian troops do make a difference: We are bloody good. But are we going to be able to make a difference in the future? The personnel and equipment shortages that we will probably confront are a problem. Will we be able to put our troops into dangerous and chaotic situations? Unless a significant change in defence policy is made, the answer is probably no: Canadian Forces won’t be able to take on the missions our government is committed to.