

e-Impllosion;

Countering global insurgency in the 21st Century

Personality Problem

Canada's engagement in Afghanistan, not with Afghanistan, is certainly a contemporary defining issue for Canada in the World. Just like Vimy Ridge in 1917 was a determining moment of Canada's history and national identity, Afghanistan today is a National issue. The fundamental issue is about how Canada should be and what Canada should become. Canadians understand that Canada is an integral part of the new interdependent World : The question is what part are we of? What price are we willing to pay to sit at the table? And therein lays the National identity crisis that has surfaced in regards to Afghanistan.

Peacekeeping was until 2001, Canada's mythological emblem of foreign-defence policy. Keeping the peace often assumed that there was a peace to be kept and Canadian soldiers where more often than not caught in the cross-fire of belligerent forces, waving UN flags. Little know is the fact that Canadian soldiers, or so-called peacekeepers, 'engaged with' belligerents in many regards and occasions. Hence, Canada was not if ever neutral at all. In fact, Canada has always been on the side of international alliances that where formed, opportunistically at the UN and more recently at NATO, to counter any global conflicts. Canada's main interest has always been with stable global economic market exchanges.

Our problem with personality has fundamentally something more to do with philosophy. As the saying goes: "Money runs the World", except we can't buy just another World... So maybe we can conquer the moon? We can perhaps even conquer Mars; the Universe! Since we can't manage to run the World, then let's export our problems to the Martians. They might even disintegrate, so that we can eventually occupy Mars just for ourselves. Plus, if our World explodes or implodes, we could leave onboard Star Ship Enterprise... This will surely resolve global issues like pandemics, climate, criminality and terrorism. Now who get's to pick who goes onboard Star Ship Enterprise? Let's start selling tickets.

Pragmatic Philosophy

Pragmatism is a philosophical approach that aligns quite well with the *Realpolitik* ideals. From a national perspective, pragmatism is fundamentally about Canadian interests in the World. One might ask just what are Canada's real interests in a country like Afghanistan? Since we enjoy an enviable geo-strategic position in North America, we benefit from our vast resources as well as we benefit from a friendship with the United States of America. To put it bluntly, we somehow enjoy Wal-Mart and Walt-Disney as we deal Wall Street. Hence, Canada's main interest is in securing stable global economic market exchanges.

The whole wide world and the World Wide Web have become icons of globalisation and of the information era, which provide as much opportunity as they present a global threat. Why? Because most opportunities are indeed provided for 20% of the World population, while actually about 80% of the World population literally lives within disconnectedness. So then, how does that pragmatically relate to the question about Canada's own interests? Canada is a part of the 'connected World' as Thomas Barnett refers to the one fifth of the whole wide world where opportunities are made and marketed, to those other four fifths...

Imagine an Island or a show called Survivors, where only 20% of participants have food; the other 80% have not. It is only a matter of time before you get an insurrection. Further

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imagine that the 20% also holds the power and control over most other resources as well. Again, it is only a matter of time before you get an insurgency and face guerrilla warfare. Figure that four Davids face-off in unconventional warfare against Goliath; Afghanistan. Obviously, Goliath should try to kill David, which would surely sort the global problem. Like eating soup with a knife, the counter-insurgency issue is that we got things wrong.

Professional Paradox

Counter-insurgency is like calling the firefighters after the fire broke: It might be too late but you sure hope those brave firefighters will somehow save us humans and our homes. Fire prevention therefore, is fundamentally proactive and a better strategy to firefighting, the issue being however that until we clearly perceive smoke signals, we remain passive. Furthermore, fourth generation warfare's (4GW) battle space is quite literally intangible. The military is an industrial age machine organised to tackle large problems in big ways, but when the problem is intangible, relies on information and influence, the military digs.

Then raises the problem of entrenchment, where traditional military paradigms resurface, and where successes are measured in bodies and meters, for the mind we cannot capture. And not only can we not capture minds, but we surely cannot capture the spirit of hearts. Therein lays the challenge of Canada's intervention in Afghanistan: The solution does not rest solely with defence and security and this is also the professional view of our military. Defence and security are pre-conditions obviously to further development and diplomacy, but in and of themselves they constitute a punctual fix to a much more fundamental issue.

Here must we remember conceptually that globalisation profits to only 20% of the World. The idea therefore is not to dislocate-disconnect but to relocate-reconnect with the 80%... This is the real Canadian-Afghan mission statement, one that our military cannot achieve, and one really needs to understand how our boys and girls in uniform like achievements! Essentially, not only do we have the wrong problem definition and the wrong approaches, but we also do not have the strategic, nor structural, nor systemic, nor cultural elements in place to organise nationally or globally, in order to prevent or pre-empt any insurgency...

Pashtun Puzzle

The Pashtun puzzle is the millennium history of strong ethnical self-interests, knit work. Pragmatic, blunt and to the point, the Pashuns are home in Pakistan, host to the Taliban. If we still haven't managed to sort out Canada's own aboriginal issues, then we can only hope to even tackle some of the multi-dimensional and cross-border Phastunistan issues. If we haven't managed to secure the safest border in the World with the United States, or if we haven't managed to eradicate marijuana grow in Canada, how about Afghanistan?

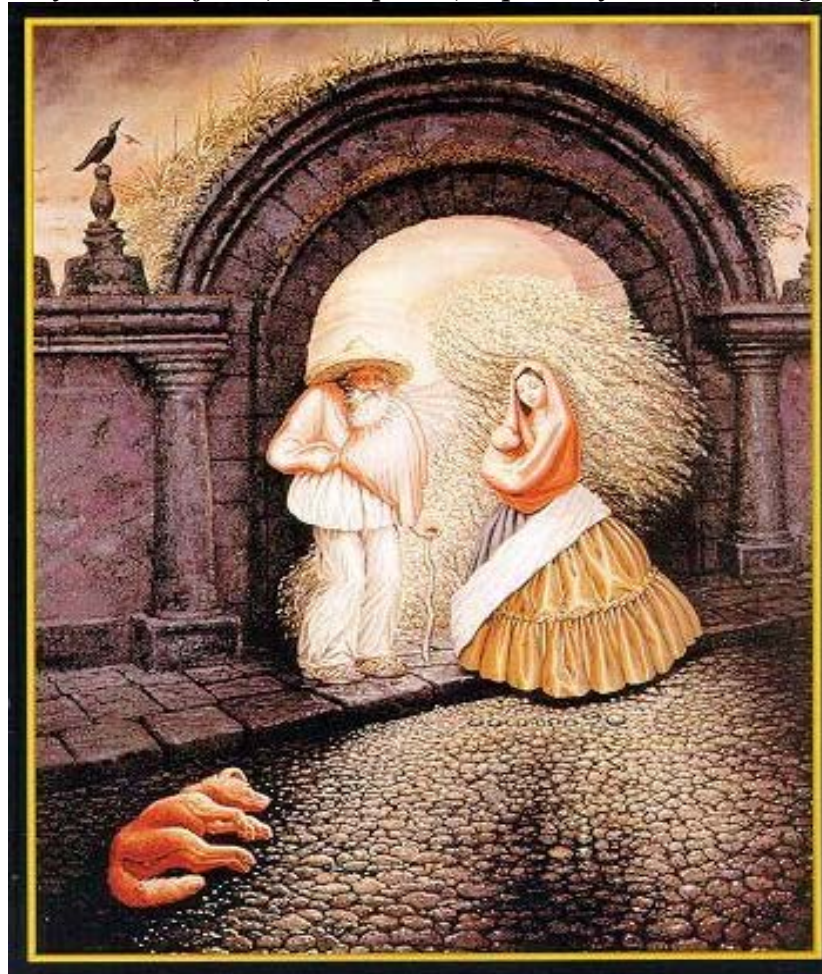
While during the Cold War we were concerned the World might explode, in this 4GW, we are concerned not that the World explodes but rather, that it may literally *e-implode*. Insurgency is fortunately limited to the confines of a Nation-State or to that of a region, and seeks only in that perspective, to destabilize a Country or region in order to make space to gain influence, via terror, and secure its interests for global narco-criminality. Less and less are these unconventional movements really interested in political capital. This is now unofficially the rule of a global narco-criminal underground conglomerate.

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In this perspective, the formidable machine that is our military probably even exacerbates disconnectedness through its professionalism and indirectly therefore creates more issues. This is not about Defence and Security: It's about the absence of the Rest of Government. Diplomacy and Development make up 3D, but the Whole of Government means just that. So if we are to tackle the Psthun puzzle, offer our expertise to Afghanistan and Pakistan, then we ought to have the right problem definition to task-tailor new holistic approaches. Thus, we ought to deploy more operators to neutralise first tier hard core global terrorists' but we also ought to deploy the whole spectrum of Canada's expertise to solve the issues.

Do you see Defence, Development, Diplomacy or a Dead Dog?



Popular Perception

The obvious image that comes to mind to Canadians in reference to Afghanistan is that of Canadian Soldiers in desert camouflage, confidently pointing weapons into the unknown. Like in the image above where you can see a general, a woman, an old man or dead dog, perception really depends on the pre-conditioning of the people that receive the message. As in the image above however, all the parts are part of the image as well as much more. There can be many faces to the same problem which we only see with some perspective. Hence, since the media's story about Afghanistan is really about the military perception, then most people, when asked if they see the general, are more likely indeed to see alike.

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Strategic culture is central to understanding national interests in regards to Afghanistan. It sets the conditions in which our democratically elected governments pass laws and make decisions in the national interests, rather than in their political self-preservation interests. It is within a strategic culture that national leaders emerge with the guts and wherewithal to take on those really tough decisions and use their political acumen to sell it to citizens. And it is within a strategic culture that Canadian citizens intuitively understand and trust their government to take decisions on their behalf, happy to know someone is taking care of the business of preserving and protecting our Canada, however tough that might be...

Information technology has rendered quantity of information readily available but quality information is only proportionally available and disinformation has become omnipresent. If perception is formed by information, it is also shaped by disinformation. Strategically, modern guerrillas understand fair well the importance of perception within democracies. Indeed, analysis reveals that this is precisely the center of gravity that Al'Qaeda aims for in order to shape decision-making and influence our strategic culture, via disinformation. Since Canada is in the midst of an identity crisis, then this is an excellent strategic tactic. Furthermore, since we are structurally & systematically disintegrated, this is even better.

Profound Perspective

As the Taliban say that we the West have all the wrist watches but they have all the time, achieving a measure of success in Afghanistan might take as much as the thirty years that Canada kept peace in Cyprus or the fifteen years Canada enforced peace in the Balkans, although in both cases, peace was negotiated and agreed to, and history was not so cruel. Security in Afghanistan is something different than security in Canada and we have yet to resolve some fundamental security issues of our own, let alone a region like Pasthanistan. And self-security is only a pre-condition to further self-governance and self-development. In this perspective, we ought to teach the 'willing Afghans' how to fish, not fish for them.

Canada's counter-insurgency perspective and pragmatic foreign policy should sound like: We have global interests in a stable global market, free of costly conflicts and terrorism, including self-stability in the Middle-east and Southeast Asia, from Palestine to Pakistan. We must address the root causes of instability, starting with a Palestinian & Israeli peace process, policies to root out Hezbollah and to stabilize Pakistan, Al'Qaeda's new hot bed, continuing with programs to reconnect four fifth of the World population to the one fifth, including global campaign plans against AIDS, which kills more annually than terrorism, and other global issues affecting our Island world like malnutrition, illiteracy, criminality.

The fundamental question is what price do we want to pay for global peace & prosperity? And how long do you think it will be before we have a global insurrection on our hands? Do you wish to pass this legacy onto your children or grand-children, via history books? Afghanistan is but a test for international institutions like the UN and NATO; the World. If a bunch of thugs can drive the World into havoc and chaos, *e-implosion* is inevitable! But if we find the courage of our convictions and if we start walking the talk, addressing the fundamental root causes of insurgency and insurrection, we might avert black-ages... This is an excellent opportunity to lead in redesigning the global administrative system.

Endnote: This article represents the personal views and perspectives of the author.