



December 10, 2006

## **CANADA'S ROLE IN THE OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN**

### **Introduction**

This document reflects the reading, thinking, and discussion among members of the Échec à la Guerre collective. It represents a revision of an earlier draft to incorporate the many comments made by individuals and member groups. The document is divided into 5 sections and a total of 18 questions. There is some logic to the order in which the questions are presented, but the answers are largely independent of each other, making it easy for you to explore them in any order that is convenient for you. You can click on any question in the table of contents to go directly to that question.

Before getting into these specific questions, here is a summary of the collective's overall position on the war in Afghanistan:

- The war in Afghanistan is not a just war; the invasion of Afghanistan was never authorized by the Security Council and cannot be justified by invoking self-defence.
- “Reconstruction” and “democracy-building” in the Afghan context are pure propaganda at worst, self-congratulatory rationalization at best. After five years of foreign intervention in Afghanistan, the country is in a disastrous situation that bears no relationship to the stated good intentions of the countries involved.
- In reality, the goal of this war has always been to install a regime favourable to US interests and those of its allies. It is part of a broader offensive – the so-called “war on terror” – whose real purpose is to expand the US empire into Central Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.
- Canada is participating in this strategy in order to preserve and deepen its strategic partnership with the United States, and several large Canadian corporations expect to benefit.
- For all these reasons, the collective is calling for the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan.

The following questions and answers have not been endorsed by all the decision-making bodies of our member groups, but we believe that they represent a useful contribution to the debate on continued Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan. They also offer a coherent and systematic agenda for opposition to this war of occupation.

– The *Échec à la Guerre* Steering Committee

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
<b>SECTION 1: AFGHANISTAN: A LEGITIMATE MILITARY INTERVENTION? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
QUESTION 1: Was the invasion of Afghanistan a legitimate act of self-defence by the United States after the 9/11 attacks? .....	4
QUESTION 2: Was the Afghanistan war authorized by the United Nations? .....	5
QUESTION 3: The UN Security Council has ratified the Afghanistan war – doesn't that make it legitimate? .....	7
QUESTION 4: With a regime like the Taliban that trampled on human rights, and especially women's rights, wasn't military intervention justified? .....	8
<b>SECTION 2: AFTER FIVE YEARS OF FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN, WHAT IS THE SITUATION? .....</b>	<b>9</b>
QUESTION 5: Has the foreign intervention contributed to democracy building in Afghanistan? .....	10
QUESTION 6: Has the human rights situation improved? .....	10
QUESTION 7: Has there been any progress on the status of women? Can the occupation of Afghanistan be justified by the need to protect women's rights? .....	12
QUESTION 8: Is Afghanistan a more stable country since 2001? Has the security situation improved? .....	17
QUESTION 9: Is the foreign intervention in Afghanistan helping to fight terror and reduce the danger of attacks against Canada? .....	17
<b>SECTION 3 : THE REAL REASON FOR THE WAR : EXPANSION OF THE U.S. EMPIRE .....</b>	<b>19</b>
QUESTION 10: What are the real reasons for instigating the war in Afghanistan and, more generally, the "war on terrorism?" .....	19

**SECTION 4: CANADA’S INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE “WAR ON TERRORISM” .....21**

- QUESTION 11: How has Canada participated in these wars since they began?.....21
- QUESTION 12: Hasn’t Canada’s participation been constructive, since it was part of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force, which was authorized by the Security Council? .....22
- QUESTION 13: Did the election of the Conservative government in Ottawa lead to the change in the mandate of the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan? .....24
- QUESTION 14: Notwithstanding government propaganda, what are the true motives of Canada’s participation in the war in Afghanistan? .....26

**SECTION 5: WHAT DO WE HAVE TO PROPOSE? .....29**

- QUESTION 15: “Don’t we have a responsibility not to abandon the Afghan people and to continue helping them rebuild their country?” .....29
- QUESTION 16: Will a withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan favour the Taliban’s return to power? Will it plunge the country into civil war?.....31
- QUESTION 17: Why don’t we ask for a change of mandate and/or mission for the Canadian troops in Afghanistan? .....32
- QUESTION 18: So what responsibilities do we have to the Afghan people? .....35

## SECTION 1: AFGHANISTAN: A LEGITIMATE MILITARY INTERVENTION?

### QUESTION 1: Was the invasion of Afghanistan a legitimate act of self-defence by the United States after the 9/11 attacks?

No, for several reasons. First, self-defence, in both international law and domestic law (in Canada, the Criminal Code), must be clearly distinguished from the use of force for revenge or punishment; states, like persons, must not act as vigilantes. Second, in criminal law, self-defence may be invoked in the face of an imminent threat of death or grave bodily harm. In general, the threat must be immediate<sup>1</sup> and the response must not be pushed beyond what is reasonably required to repel that threat. Therefore, in general, self-defence may not be invoked to justify physical retaliation to an attack a few weeks after it occurs. The appropriate course of action in that case would involve police work, legal proceedings, and so forth.

In international law, the concept of self-defence is recognized by the *Charter of the United Nations*:

**Article 51.** *Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations,<sup>2</sup> until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.<sup>3</sup>*

Article 1 of **Resolution 3314 of the UN General Assembly** (1974) defines aggression:

Aggression is the use of armed force by a State against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, as set out in this Definition.

The resolution provides several concrete examples of acts that would be considered instances of aggression, including invasion, blockade, bombardment, or “[t]he sending [of armed groups] by or on behalf of a State” against another state.

---

<sup>1</sup> There are special circumstances in which the immediacy of the threat need not be invoked; for example, in a case of domestic abuse or where a prisoner’s life is threatened in a correctional facility. But these are people in vulnerable positions that are in no way analogous to the status of the United States on the world stage.

<sup>2</sup> Emphasis ours.

<sup>3</sup> See the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org>.

In the case of the 9/11 attacks, the concepts of self-defence and aggression simply do not apply. Afghanistan could not be considered an aggressor state since the attacks were neither perpetrated by it or its agents nor planned on its territory (the planning took place in Germany). As well, in early October 2001 when it launched its war on Afghanistan, the United States was not, to anyone's knowledge, facing an imminent threat of new attacks.

Furthermore, it was not until three years later, on 29 October 2004, that Osama Ben Laden acknowledged Al Qaeda's authorship of the attacks. Before that time, the United States had not demonstrated his or Al Qaeda's guilt, much less that of Afghanistan, in any appropriate forum. The United States even rejected the Taliban's offer to extradite Ben Laden to Pakistan for trial so that they could present their evidence against him.

In both international and domestic law, self-defence certainly cannot be invoked to justify a later attack on a person or country who is merely presumed or claimed to be an aggressor.

The US aggression against Afghanistan in October 2001 more closely resembles the new doctrine of "preventive war" which the White House subsequently made official in its National Security Strategy of September 2002. With this doctrine, the US claims the right to attack unilaterally, "preventively," any country perceived as a serious threat to its vital interests or those of its allies. This doctrine was used as a cover for the invasion of Iraq and will likely serve the same purpose in any future aggression against Iran, Syria, or other countries. Under international law, such acts and "strategy" are totally illegal and illegitimate. All they are is the doctrine of "might makes right" dressed up in fancy language.

## **QUESTION 2: Was the Afghanistan war authorized by the United Nations?**

The war in Afghanistan was devised and directed by the United States. It was led by a coalition of countries, mainly NATO members (including Canada), who on 4 October 2001 invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic (Washington) Treaty. Under this provision, an armed attack against any NATO country is considered an attack against them all.

There is no UN Security Council resolution authorizing the United States, whether alone or in coalition with other countries, to attack Afghanistan. Between 11 September and 7 October 2001, when the bombardment of Afghanistan began, the UN Security Council adopted only two resolutions concerning the 9–11 attacks. **Resolution 1368** of September 12 "unequivocally condemns in the strongest terms the horrifying terrorist attacks... and regards such acts, like any act of international terrorism, as a threat to international peace and security." The preamble to this resolution recognizes "the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the Charter." Though, as we have seen, the terms of the Charter do not apply to the Afghan war, this language in the preamble of the resolution allowed the United States to claim legitimacy for its actions. Then, on 28 September 2001, the Security Council adopted **Resolution 1373**, which sets forth certain antiterrorism measures that all states must apply. Neither Resolution 1368 nor Resolution 1373 even mentions the word "Afghanistan."

In the aftermath of September 11, the United States capitalized on an outpouring of international sympathy to acquire *carte blanche* for war under the rules of international law. The Security Council, whose official mandate is to prevent war, allowed the United States and its “coalition” to prepare and declare one. The Security Council, of course is no neutral body. Of its fifteen members, **the five permanent ones** (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China) **have veto power**, impairing the Council’s capacity to prevent a war being conducted by any of the five. The ten remaining Council members are chosen from the UN member countries for rotating two-year terms. In practice, these ten rotating members are pressured by the United States to vote in its favour. Since the end of the Cold War, the Security Council has been dominated by the American agenda, even though Russian and Chinese interests have occasionally obstructed it.

In this context, it took more than five weeks after the bombardment of Afghanistan commenced before the Security Council took a position on the war conducted by the United States and its “coalition.” Yet **Resolution 1378** (14 November 2001) does not even mention it. Instead, it condemns the Taliban and supports “the efforts of the Afghan people to replace the Taliban regime”! Likewise, **Resolution 1383** (6 December 2001) simply ratifies the Bonn Agreement signed the day before, providing for temporary arrangements among the “coalition” countries, the representatives of their Afghan allies (in the country and in exile), and the UN Secretary-General’s special representative.<sup>4</sup> In addition, with **Resolution 1386** (20 December 2001) the Security Council authorized, “as envisaged in Annex 1 to the Bonn Agreement, the establishment for 6 months of an International Security Assistance Force” (ISAF). The previous day, the United Kingdom had officially offered to take command of ISAF, and Canada assumed this role later.

And if this is not bad enough, not only has the US “Enduring Freedom” operation continued to this day, but after nineteen resolutions the Security Council has yet to set any guidelines whatsoever for the military invasion of Afghan territory or to call its authors to account. Meanwhile, the Council repeats *ad infinitum* its deep attachment to Afghan sovereignty. Two years after the invasion, the words “enduring freedom” finally appeared in **Resolution 1510** (13 October 2003). While authorizing the expansion of the ISAF mandate outside of Kabul and its environs, this resolution calls on ISAF “to continue to work in close consultation with the Afghan Transitional Authority and its successors and the Special Representative of the Secretary General as well as with the Operation Enduring Freedom.” This clause appears in each subsequent 12-month renewal of ISAF authorization, effectively giving *carte blanche* to the US military intervention in Afghanistan.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Bonn Agreement (December 5, 2001) provided for the implementation of a temporary government led by Hamid Karzai, the holding of an emergency session of the Afghan parliament (Loya Jirga) in 2002, the establishment of a transitional authority, and the adoption of a national constitution before the holding of national elections.

### **QUESTION 3: The UN Security Council has ratified the Afghanistan war – doesn't that make it legitimate?**

The question of after-the-fact legitimacy is more difficult to resolve since it is quite true that the UN Security Council never officially disapproved or denounced the war in Afghanistan (or the war in Iraq, for that matter), quite the contrary. Nevertheless, we believe that the war is neither legitimate nor legal under international law, the only appropriate system of law for deciding such matters.

The UN Charter clearly states that the primary role of the United Nations is to prevent war, and to propose other means of resolving conflicts between nations. Even if one accepts the idea that the United States was trying to prevent new terrorist attacks by attacking Afghanistan,<sup>5</sup> the Security Council violated its mandate by failing to consider possible non-military solutions once the bombardment began.

This failure by the Security Council is unfortunately not an isolated case. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the United Nations has been undergoing a severe crisis since the end of the Cold War. The absence of a second superpower to act as a counterweight to the US has created a new situation at the UN — and especially on the Security Council, which is often reduced to ratifying the US empire's wars, in violation of the UN charter. This happened with:

- the UN Security Council resolution of the fall of 1990 giving advance authorization to the Gulf War;
- the resolutions renewing the genocidal sanctions on Iraq for twelve straight years;
- the resolutions ratifying the *fait accompli* consisting of the illegal March 2003 “coalition” invasion of Iraq – a June 2004 resolution even welcomed the end of the Iraq occupation!

On several occasions since the end of the Cold War, the UN's fundamental mission has been derailed. It has become an instrument for approval of the US empire's wars of expansion. In fact, former US Permanent Representative to the UN John Bolton allowed as much:

*There is no such thing as the United Nations. There is only the international community, which can only be led by the only remaining superpower, which is the United States, when it suits our interest and we can get others to go along... When the United States leads, the United Nations will follow. When it suits our interest to do so, we will do so. When it does not suit our interests we will not.*<sup>6</sup>

Just as it is possible for governments to pass laws violating their own country's constitution or bill of rights – laws whose legality and legitimacy can then be challenged with reference to these fundamental legal instruments – the Security Council, under pressure from the United States, is increasingly passing resolutions that violate the spirit and the letter of the UN Charter. In these cases it is our duty to defend international law and denounce such resolutions, not to accept that they grant legitimacy to illegal acts.

<sup>5</sup> And this is not at all certain, since any number of other objectives may have guided the US in this case.

<sup>6</sup> Speech delivered in February 1994, at the Global Structures Convocation, in Washington, when John Bolton was deputy secretary of State for international organizations, quoted in Phyllis Bennis, *Calling the Shots, How Washington Dominates Today's UN*, Olive Branch Press, 2000.

**QUESTION 4: With a regime like the Taliban that trampled on human rights, and especially women's rights, wasn't military intervention justified?**

In addressing this question, it is important to keep in mind the troubling fact that civilians are the main victims of war. Civilians suffer both directly, as war casualties, and indirectly, as people who have to live in a destroyed environment without means of subsistence. Using war to "help" people whose rights are being violated is obviously not something to be taken lightly.

Furthermore, countries who plan wars in order to capture resources, conquer territory, or in other ways advance their strategic interests or hegemonic designs never lack for noble-sounding pretexts: self-defence, defending civilization, rescuing threatened national minorities, and so on. After no weapons of mass destruction had been found to justify the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration argued that it was legitimate to overthrow a brutal dictatorship in order to free the Iraqi people. But to allow any country to make war entirely on its own grounds means throwing out international law and replacing it with "might makes right."

True, there are situations in which concerted, disinterested international intervention may be warranted. The need to learn the lessons of the Rwandan genocide is often cited in this connection, and the *2005 World Summit Outcome* contains the following point on the international responsibility to protect civilians:

139. The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help **protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity**.<sup>7</sup> In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII,<sup>8</sup> on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, **should peaceful means be inadequate** and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We stress the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and its implications, **bearing in mind the principles of the Charter and international law**. We also intend to commit ourselves, as necessary and appropriate, to helping States build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out.<sup>9</sup>

Two remarks are relevant here. First, these provisions did not apply to Afghanistan, where there was no ongoing genocide or ethnic cleansing. Second, the invocation of Chapter VII to cover the use of force for humanitarian purposes falls under the aegis of the Security Council, which is dominated by the United States and not the General Assembly. Given the historical status of war as a pillar of US foreign policy, it is to be expected that these new provisions will be vehemently

---

<sup>7</sup> Emphasis ours.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter VII of the UN Charter concerns the use of force by the "international community."

<sup>9</sup> These considerations were reaffirmed by Security Council Resolution 1674 of 28 April 2006.



invoked where the US has a strategic interest in invading another country, and will be ignored otherwise.

Perhaps this remark seems cynical, but it is in fact a fair conclusion to be drawn from US foreign policy in general, and from its Afghanistan policy in particular. The United States has maintained close ties to many brutal regimes over the years, selling them arms that are then used to oppress their populations. In the specific case of Afghanistan, the US government never expressed any concern about human rights and women's rights in that country until they became a useful pretext for war. The US government's historical flip-flopping on Afghanistan is revealing.

During the Cold War, the United States supported the Mujahedin – the precursor to most of the armed groups now making up the Northern Alliance – against the Soviet invasion and the pro-Soviet government in Kabul.<sup>10</sup> Dissatisfied with continuing instability caused by constant clashes between the warlords who had overthrown the government, the CIA and the Pakistani intelligence services began to finance and train – the Taliban, of all people! This support continued uninterrupted until the Taliban took power in 1996 and all the way through to 2001. After 9–11, the US restored its favour to the Northern Alliance and the warlords in its effort to overthrow the Taliban. But their new allies – that is, their old Cold War allies – are very much the equal of the Taliban as regards human rights violations and oppression of women (see questions 6 and 7).

## **SECTION 2: AFTER FIVE YEARS OF FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN, WHAT IS THE SITUATION?**

We do not deny that some groups of Afghan citizens may have experienced improved living standards; for example, there appears to be expanded access to education for girls in Kabul, and local development projects have been carried out in certain villages and neighbourhoods.

But in Afghanistan, if the reports of the Senlis Council,<sup>11</sup> WOMANKIND Worldwide, and Afghan member of parliament Malalai Joya are to be believed, the general situation has not improved, in stark contrast to the public statements of the occupying powers (including Canada).

In addition, even if living standards had improved for everyone, one would still have to ponder the objectives of the foreign intervention. Is it a matter of installing a local government favourable to Western (and particularly US) interests or of genuinely supporting Afghan self-determination? If the first of these is true, the intervention would not be justifiable even if it led to short-term improvements.

<sup>10</sup> Note that the secular regime of the day guaranteed women's access to education.

<sup>11</sup> See two recent reports by the Senlis Council, a European think tank that does not oppose the foreign occupation of Afghanistan: *Canada in Kandahar: No Peace to Keep* (28 June 2006) and *Five Years Later: the Return of the Taliban* (5 September 2006).

### **QUESTION 5: Has the foreign intervention contributed to democracy building in Afghanistan?**

The voter turnout rate in the Fall 2004 presidential elections was high, around 75%. According to the Senlis Council, polls showed that people wanted to give Hamid Karzai a chance and to see if the central government would improve their daily lives. As well, the Northern Alliance and the other warlords had no particular stake in these elections, since the president's authority did not extend beyond Kabul and their regional interests were not threatened.

But the parliamentary elections of September 2005 were an entirely different matter. According to the 2006 report of Human Rights Watch (HRW),<sup>12</sup> the last electoral campaign was marked by a very low turnout rate (only 36% in Kabul) and by much intimidation of voters and candidates. **More than half the members of the new parliament** are linked to armed groups or have a history of human rights violations. When MP Malalai Joya, from the conservative province of Farah, denounced this result in Parliament she received over 100 death threats for her pains. She claims that 70% of the parliament is composed of warlords and their agents. With results like these and no improvement in rural living conditions, the rural population rapidly became disenchanted. Speaking before the NDP Federal Convention in September 2006, Joya said:

*The US government did remove the medieval-minded regime of Taliban and their Al Qaeda masters. But instead they brought back the "Northern Alliance" to power who are brothers-in-creed of the Taliban and as brutal and anti-democracy as Taliban and even worse.*

*... Kathy Gannon, an expert in Afghanistan justly states that "the US is not interested in peace in Afghanistan. The people who killed thousands, who patronized the drug business are in charge of the country."*

*... [The] US can work with pro-American fundamentalists, but oppose only anti-American fundamentalists. This is the reason that people make mockery of the "war on terror."*

*... Hope you have realized from the small parts of problems that I just shared, that my country is still in chains of bloody and terrorist fundamentalists. The situation in Afghanistan and conditions of its ill-fated women will never change positively, as long as the warlords are not disarmed and both the pro-US and anti-US terrorists are removed from the political scene of Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup>*

### **QUESTION 6: Has the human rights situation improved?**

One cannot seriously claim a significant improvement in the human rights situation in a country where notorious criminals sit in parliament with impunity and prisoners are tortured.

---

<sup>12</sup> See <http://hrw.org/wr2k6/>.

<sup>13</sup> Malalai Joya, speech to NDP Federal Convention, Québec City, 9 September 2006 (<http://www.npd.ca/page/4329>, viewed 29 November 2006).

In March 2006, Amnesty International (AI) launched a worldwide campaign against torture and ill-treatment in the “war on terror.” Concerning Afghanistan, the organization wrote:

*Since 2001, thousands of Afghans and some non-Afghans have been arbitrarily detained, held incommunicado (without access to the outside world) and subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by US forces and by armed groups acting under US control....*

*Amnesty International is not aware of any investigations by the Afghan government into cases of deaths in US custody. Nor is the organization aware of any efforts by the Afghan government to put an end to torture and ill-treatment by individuals – including members of armed Afghan groups – working under the control of US forces in Afghanistan....<sup>14</sup>*

Likewise, the 2006 HRW report indicates that groups allied with the United States, today well represented in the Afghan parliament, are largely responsible for human rights violations:

*Despite the insurgency’s growing strength, the majority of Afghans cited the numerous regional warlords as the greatest source of insecurity. In some remote areas, there are still no real governmental structures or activity, only abuse and criminal enterprises by warlords, many of whom were brought to power with the assistance of the United States after the Taliban’s defeat.*

*Armed clashes between rival factions decreased in 2005, but in many areas warlords and their troops continue to engage in arbitrary arrests, illegal detentions, kidnapping, extortion, torture, murder, extrajudicial killings of criminal suspects, forced displacement, and rape of women, girls, and boys.<sup>15</sup>*

Malalai Joya makes a related point:

*President Hamid Karzai instead of relying on people to bring the criminal warlords to trial, appoints these criminals to higher posts. For instance, this year he appointed 13 former commanders with links to drugs smuggling, organized crime and illegal militias to senior positions in the police force.<sup>16</sup>*

And here is Christine Delphy on the relationship between this war and human rights progress:

*Wars waged for purposes of control and exploitation will never advance human rights. This bombing in the name of civilisation has also consigned to oblivion many of the principles on which that civilisation prides itself. The allies, complicit first in the slaughter of Mazar-i-Sharif and other crimes<sup>17</sup> and now in the US manoeuvres, have disregarded the Geneva Conventions. The US is inventing new pseudo-legal categories, such as the “unlawful combatants” of Guantanamo Bay, who are not covered by any form of law – national or international, common law or the rules of war. The freedom of*

<sup>14</sup> See <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engASA110052006?open&of=eng-2as> (viewed 29 November 2006).

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/18/afghan12266.htm> (viewed 29 November 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Joya, speech to NDP.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Fisk, “We are the war criminals now”, The Independent, London, November 29, 2000. Consult also the Human Rights Watch website, [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) and the Amnesty international website, [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

*the individual, pride of our democracies, is a dead letter, international law mortally wounded, the great body of the United Nations in its death throes. Only genuine and peaceful cooperation between nations will advance human rights and that is not on the agenda. It is up to us to put it there.*<sup>18</sup>

**QUESTION 7: Has there been any progress on the status of women? Can the occupation of Afghanistan be justified by the need to protect women's rights?**

**A war to liberate Afghan women?** A concern for women's fate under the Taliban has been invoked in hindsight by the occupation forces to justify their bombardments, their war, and their presence in the country. "The American flag flies again over our embassy in Kabul... today women are free," declared Georges W. Bush in January 2002, several weeks after bombardments by the "coalition against terrorism" had hounded these oppressors of women out of power. "The 'coalition against terrorism' went to war to liberate Afghan women.... Strange reasoning. The mujahedin now restored to power by the allies are no better than the Taliban...."<sup>18</sup>

In March 2003 on International Women's Day, the Canadian organization Rights and Democracy wrote the following to US Secretary of State Colin Powell: "Warlordism threatens the security and stability of the entire country, as well as the fundamental human rights of women, who continue to suffer under renewed discriminatory edicts imposed by powerful provincial warlords, echoing the Taliban-era repression of women." In December 2002, Human Rights Watch reported some troubling facts that led the organization to conclude: "Warlords have replaced the Taliban with similar attitudes toward women."

**US Warmaking and Women's Rights: a Historical Primer**

Few governments have women's interests at heart. "The United States doesn't give a damn for women's rights in Afghanistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia or anywhere else. On the contrary, it has knowingly and deliberately sacrificed Afghan women to its own interests. What is the origin of the mujahedin? Back in 1978, even before the Soviet invasion, the tribal chiefs and religious authorities declared a holy war on Nur Mohammed Taraki's Marxist government, which had decreed that girls were to go to school and prohibited the levirat<sup>19</sup> and the sale of women. Never were there so many women doctors, teachers and lawyers as there were between 1978 and 1992."<sup>20</sup>

An awareness of the pall likely to be cast on women's rights did not give the United States any qualms about backing the mujahedin against the local and Soviet communists. And when the Communists were gone, to quell the chronic instability caused by fighting between warlords, the US did not hesitate to back the Taliban: "The ground was well prepared for the arrival of the

---

<sup>18</sup> Christine Delphy, "Free to Die," trans. Barbara Wilson, *Le Monde diplomatique*, March 2002 (<http://www.rawa.org/lemonde-d.htm>, viewed 29 November 2006).

<sup>19</sup> The rule requiring a childless widow to marry her deceased husband's brother.

<sup>20</sup> Delphy, "Free to Die."

Taliban, spiritual heirs to the mujahedin. They were equally anti-Communist and even more fundamentalist.”<sup>21</sup>

From 1996 to the fall of the Taliban in September 2001, the United States and its NATO allies did nothing to protect Afghan women. On the contrary, this was up to the women themselves, along with NGOs and feminists from around the world. There were constant protests, calls for international action, and even clandestine efforts to help Afghan women.

Western governments turned a blind eye to women’s suffering in Afghanistan until the events of 9/11 provided a pretext to redress the Taliban’s obstinate refusal to deliver the proposed trans-Afghan natural gas pipeline into the hands of US interests. Suddenly, the Bushes of this world were listening to Afghan women; suddenly, the leaders of the “Axis of Good” were commenting on the atrocities. The US-led antiterrorism coalition came up with a new regime-change scenario: back the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. What does a cynical game of musical chairs like this have to do with Afghan women’s interests?

**Improvements in the status of Afghan women after five years of occupation,** girls’ access to education and women’s participation in politics, are often presented as major achievements of the foreign intervention. These achievements have indeed been targeted by the Taliban and other Afghan forces, with the burning of several schools and the assassination, on 25 September 2006, of Safia Ama Jan, a feminist activist and provincial director of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in Kandahar.

There has unquestionably been some progress. The situation under the Taliban was so horrible that any progress, however minimal, is a significant gain. Some women, mainly in Kabul, have gone back to school, some have found jobs with NGOs, and a few have traded the *burqa* for the *chador*. Article 22 of the Afghan constitution recognizes gender equality; women make up more than 25% of parliamentarians (a constitutionally enshrined quota); a working group on violence against women was formed by presidential decree after a long campaign by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); the legal age for marriage was set at 16 for girls and 18 for boys; and so forth. But, according to *WOMANKIND Worldwide*,<sup>22</sup> this progress is on paper only.

Rigorous analysis of the situation shows that the status of women in Afghanistan is just as problematic as it was under the Taliban, and that the mechanisms set up by the new government not only reinforce patriarchy, but also keep women subjugated. In its 30 May 2005 report, *Afghanistan: Women Still Under Attack - a Systematic Failure to Protect*, Amnesty International (AI) writes:

*Husbands, brothers and fathers are the main perpetrators of violence in the home but the social control and the power that they exercise is reinforced by the authorities, whether of the state or from informal justice systems....*

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> WOMANKIND Worldwide, *Taking Stock Update: Afghan Women and Girls Five Years On*, October 2006 ([http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermail/alltickers/fr/att-0801/Afghan\\_Women\\_Girls\\_Five\\_Years\\_On-WOMANKIND\\_Report.doc](http://www.un-instraw.org/revista/hypermail/alltickers/fr/att-0801/Afghan_Women_Girls_Five_Years_On-WOMANKIND_Report.doc)).

*Violence against women is widely tolerated by the community and widely practiced. It is tolerated at the highest levels of government and judiciary. Abusers are rarely prosecuted; if cases are prosecuted, the accused are often exonerated or punished lightly. Impunity seems to exist for such violence. The authorities seldom carry out investigations into complaints of violent attacks, rape, murders or suicides of women.*<sup>23</sup>

More recently, *WOMANKIND Worldwide* issued a devastating verdict on the NATO forces, who are supposed to be restoring peace and security to the country and protecting women's rights. It stated that:

- Violence of all kinds is on the rise, including:
  - crimes of honour;
  - murders of women aid workers;
  - attacks on women elections workers;
  - perpetuation of severe forms of domestic abuse;
  - trafficking and prostitution;
  - “astronomical” rise in cases of self-immolation;
  - high rates of child marriage;
  - kidnapping of young women;
  - minimal protection from rape and assault.
- The report summarizes the situation as follows: “The true scale of violence experienced by women has not been reported in the Western media, precisely at a time when interest (and therefore funding) in Afghanistan is beginning to steadily dissipate.”
- The Ministry of Women's Affairs operates at low capacity and with minimal influence on government policy; most women's aid programs have not achieve their objectives.
- The practical needs of women and girls, such as access to clean water, education, healthcare and livelihoods, remain unmet.
- Even more troubling, the security situation in several provinces is worse than it was under the Taliban in 2001: “Insecurity remains the overwhelming challenge characterizing all aspects of daily life for Afghan women. Alongside insecurity is grinding poverty, the two perpetuating each other.”
- “The failure of the realization of international standards of human rights for Afghan women, at its root, is about the lack of rule of law in Afghanistan.” Customary law continues to dominate the legal system, a situation more or less unchallenged by the central government.

The report concludes: *“It is imperative that the media, donor governments, international organizations and the Afghan government acknowledge the lack of progress in the domain of women's rights and immediately take action in key areas (education, legal system, security services, healthcare, and livelihoods) to transform paper rights to rights in practice.”*

---

<sup>23</sup> See <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa110072005>.

Malalai Joya speaks in similar terms:

*I must tell you that unfortunately there has been no fundamental change in the plight of Afghan people. When the entire nation is living under the shadow of gun and warlordism, how can its women enjoy very basic freedoms? Unlike the propaganda raised by certain Western media, Afghan women and men are not “liberated” at all.*

*... Suicide among Afghan women goes high in terrible degree, according to recent UNIFEM survey, 65% of the 50,000 widows in Kabul see suicide the only option to get rid of their miseries and desolation and that majority of Afghan women are victims of mental and sexual violence.*

*... Under the Taliban, the vice and virtue department became a notorious symbol of arbitrary abuses, particularly against Afghan women and girls but today Afghan cabinet once again decides to reestablish this dreadful department instead of focusing on more acute needs of the Afghan society.*

*... Those who speak for justice are threatened to death, on May 7, 2006, I was physically attacked by pro-warlord and drug-lord MPs in the parliament just for speaking the truth – crimes of Northern Alliance. One of them even shouted “prostitute, take and rape her!”<sup>24</sup>*

### **Can the NATO-led war in Afghanistan be justified in the name of women’s rights?**

**We don’t think so.** Regime change is not enough. What is needed to achieve *de facto* and *de jure* equality between women and men is a profound transformation of Afghan society – something no army in the world can accomplish.

**We do not believe** that women’s status can genuinely improve in a country at war and under foreign occupation, in which soldiers fire at anything that moves, women and children included, on the pretext that Taliban fighters are hiding behind every civilian; in a country where the modest homes and meagre subsistence livelihoods of ordinary people are often destroyed by “counterinsurgency” operations or brutal poppy eradication campaigns.

**We think** that the presence of NATO forces is contributing to the popularity of the Taliban, making them into heroes in the eyes of some, and confirming to the majority of men that they have a right to dominate women.

**We do not think** that it is up to the Western powers to impose their conception of women’s liberation in the name of some Western civilizing mission, as past colonial governments forcibly unveiled Arab women in Algeria and banned *sati*<sup>25</sup> in India.

**We think** that it is up to Afghan women to secure their own liberation. They need our solidarity, not our weapons.

---

<sup>24</sup> Joya, speech to NDP.

<sup>25</sup> The Indian rite, abolished in 1829, whereby a widow had to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

We should listen to feminist voices that have spoken up against “humanitarian wars” fought in the name of women’s rights – voices like those of Christine Delphy and Malalai Joya:

*Even if a greater measure of freedom were to be won, would that make the war right? When it comes to human rights, the question is whether anything can be worse than war. At what point does war become the best option? To say that the war may be good for Afghan women is almost to say that it is better for them to die in the bombing, cold or starvation than to live under the Taliban. The West has decided that death is preferable to slavery - for Afghan women. This would be a truly heroic decision if Western lives, not those of Afghan women, were in the balance.*

*The cynical way in which the “liberation of Afghan women” has been used as a pretext shows the arrogance of the west in assuming the right to do as it will with the lives of others. That arrogance informs the Western attitude towards Afghan women and the attitude of rulers to their subjects.*

*Let us propose a simple rule of international, and individual, conduct: no one shall have the right to take decisions, especially heroic decisions, when others have to suffer the consequences. Only those who pay the price of war can say whether it is worth it. In this case, those who decided on war are not paying the price and those who are paying the price had no part in the decision. At present the women of Afghanistan are on the road, living in tents or camps, in their millions. There are a million more refugees outside the country than there were before the war and a million displaced persons in the country itself<sup>26</sup>. Many may die and there is no guarantee that their sacrifice will win them any additional rights. Is it, in any case, proper to speak of sacrifice when they had no choice?*

*The allies should, in common decency, stop proclaiming that these women are being forced to endure all this suffering for their own good, and pretending that they are being denied the right to decide their own fate, even the right to live, in the name of freedom. But there is reason to fear that this theme is a real hit. There is a long list of countries to which the coalition against evil has vowed to bring good. And of course, any resemblance to past history (events too remote to mention) or colonial wars is pure coincidence.<sup>27</sup>*

Christine Delphy

\* \* \*

*The Canadian policy-makers must know that warlords of the “Northern Alliance” are equally responsible for the plight of Afghani people and the current tragedy in Afghanistan.*

*I am well aware of the hardships, challenges, and death from anti-democracy forces, but I trust my people. One day they may kill me as they have gun and power and support of the US government, but they can never silence my voice and hide the truth.*

Malalai Joya  
September 9, 2006

<sup>26</sup> See [www.hcr.org](http://www.hcr.org) and [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)

<sup>27</sup> Delphy, “Free to Die.”



**QUESTION 8: Is Afghanistan a more stable country since 2001? Has the security situation improved?**

Security in Afghanistan is worse than it has ever been, with a growing number of civilian victims and a much higher number of attacks against foreign troops, including Canadian troops, who have been fighting in Kandahar since February 2006.<sup>28</sup> All serious observers agree that the resistance is on the rise and engaging in new tactics. The influence of the Taliban is growing in the south and southeast and they have created alliances with other nationalists and tribal forces against the occupation. In the rest of the country, regional commanders (warlords) have consolidated their power by usurping the political process and controlling the drug trade. Peacebuilding is nowhere in sight; on the contrary, Afghanistan appears to be settling in for a long war and the number of foreign soldiers is reaching new heights.<sup>29</sup>

Since the overthrow of the Taliban – who had eradicated poppy growing in the areas under their control – Afghanistan is once again the world’s largest supplier of illegal opium (90% of world production, according to the UN). The drug trade is the most flourishing industry. While the United States has allied itself with drug barons in the northern and central parts of the country, who are well represented in the Afghan parliament, it has used a brutal military approach to eradicating poppy growing by peasants in the south and southeast, for whom this represents a livelihood. The results of this military campaign are disastrous, with thousands of hungry refugees crowded into 10–15 camps in the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, popular resentment against foreign troops growing, and new support for the resistance appearing every day.

**QUESTION 9: Is the foreign intervention in Afghanistan helping to fight terror and reduce the danger of attacks against Canada?**

Before answering this question directly, we want to dissociate ourselves from the propagandistic use of the word “terror” in the everyday discourse of politicians and the Western media. For one thing, we do not feel it is fair to automatically apply the word “terrorism” to any armed resistance against foreign military occupation, ours included. For another, we want to dissociate ourselves from the selective use of a term that never seems to apply to what our own armies do. In our view, “shock and awe” campaigns, missile showers, the use of cluster and phosphorus bombs, napalm, depleted uranium weapons, and all the rest have caused “collateral damage” amounting to tens if not hundreds of times as many civilian victims as the tragic attacks on New York, Madrid, and London. These, too, are acts of terrorism.

Having made this distinction, we believe that the impact of the foreign military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq is diametrically opposed to what they are claimed to achieve.

---

<sup>28</sup> Of the 44 Canadian soldiers who had died in Afghanistan by 29 November 2006, 36 died within the last nine months of the period.

<sup>29</sup> There are currently approximately 38,000 foreign soldiers in Afghanistan, including 20,000 US soldiers. Several thousand members of the US contingent are to be replaced by a larger number from other NATO countries.

The inevitable brutality of these interventions is bound to raise the ire of the civilian population against foreign troops, making more and more people join the resistance and carry out attacks. This implacable logic has not escaped the military command itself, as witness this quote from Canadian Major General Andrew Leslie, explaining that Canada's military intervention in Afghanistan could last twenty years: "Every time you kill an angry young man overseas, you're creating fifteen more who will come after you." A similarly revealing statement was made by British Chief of Staff General Dannatt to the effect that the presence of British soldiers in Iraq only exacerbates security problems rather than solving them.<sup>30</sup>

In ideological terms, the foreign military occupation is clearly giving a boost to religious fundamentalism in both Afghanistan and Iraq. And what about possible terrorist attacks against Canada? Canada's military intervention in Afghanistan appears to be making these more probable; at least, that is the opinion of the majority of the Canadian public, and even of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS):

*Finally, it is worth remembering that Canada was specifically mentioned by Osama Ben Laden as being among the "designated targets" for terrorist action because of our role in Afghanistan after 9/11.<sup>31</sup>*

---

<sup>30</sup> Interview with *Daily News*, 12 October 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Presentation by Jim Judd, Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, to the Subcommittee on Public Safety and National Security, 22 February 2005.

See <http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/en/newsroom/speeches/speech22022005.asp> (viewed November 29, 2006).

### SECTION 3 : THE REAL REASON FOR THE WAR : EXPANSION OF THE U.S. EMPIRE

**QUESTION 10 : What are the real reasons for instigating the war in Afghanistan and, more generally, the “war on terrorism?”**

The war in Afghanistan has both immediate and strategic objectives.

- Immediate objective: to overthrow a government hostile to the United States and put into place an Afghan government favourable to U.S. interests in the region.

The Taliban refused, among other things, to grant the construction of the trans-Afghan natural gas pipeline between Turkmenistan and Pakistan to U.S. interests, i.e. to UNOCAL, of which President Hamid Karzai had been a consultant. According to Michael Meacher, who was Minister of the Environment in the Blair administration from May 1997 to June 2003, the United States was already contemplating a military intervention against Afghanistan before September 11, 2001:

*The BBC reported (September 18 2001) that Niaz Niak, a former Pakistan foreign secretary, was told by senior American officials at a meeting in Berlin in mid-July 2001 that "military action against Afghanistan would go ahead by the middle of October". Until July 2001 the US government saw the Taliban regime as a source of stability in Central Asia that would enable the construction of hydrocarbon pipelines from the oil and gas fields in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, through Afghanistan and Pakistan, to the Indian Ocean. But, confronted with the Taliban's refusal to accept US conditions, the US representatives told them "either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we bury you under a carpet of bombs" (Inter Press Service, November 15, 2001).<sup>32</sup>*

On December 27, 2002, an agreement was finally signed between Hamid Karzai and Turkmeni and Pakistani government representatives: a \$3.2 billion project!

- Strategic objectives: to install US military bases not only in Afghanistan but also in several other countries in Central Asia, through which the United States can “project its strength” in the entire region (formerly the exclusive domain of the Soviet Union, situated in China’s backyard). Currently, for example, while the Bush administration’s tone against Iran becomes shriller, the United States army can rely on military bases on either side of that country.

---

<sup>32</sup> Michael Meacher, *This War on Terrorism is Bogus*, The Guardian, September 6, 2003. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1036571,00.html>. Also see the articles by George Arney of the BBC [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/1550366.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1550366.stm) and by Julio Godoy of Inter Press Service <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines01/1115-06.htm> (consulted November 29, 2006).

With respect to the “war on terrorism” more generally, this is how we see things.<sup>33</sup>

- After the end of the Cold War, natural resources and regional markets, which were previously under the control or influence of the Soviet Union, “opened up” to the cupidity of the world’s major economic powers: the United States, Europe, Japan and China, as well as Russia, which tried to maintain as much influence as it could.
- Economic competition is intense and the United States cannot be certain of dominating the world economy. US military superiority, on the other hand, is unrivalled and uncontested, so the temptation to gain through force of arms what cannot be won through purely economic competition is very strong. Control of access to Iraqi oil is the most notable recent example of this.
- The neo-conservative ideologues of the *Project for a New American Century* clearly sensed the key role US military supremacy would play in carrying out their “project.” In *Rebuilding America’s Defenses*<sup>34</sup>, they wrote that the United States must dramatically increase military spending so as to make it impossible for other countries to catch up, thus placing the US in a position to be able to lead major wars on several fronts at the same time, etc. There was only one problem: without a new Pearl Harbour, the US population would never be willing to accept such a major reallocation of resources to the military. The September 11 attacks then took place, providing the ideal pretext for inflating military expenses to an incredible extent in order to wage “endless war” against the forces of the Axis of Evil.
- This very real war, in which our government is sinking more and more public resources, is accompanied by a whole series of so-called “security” or “anti-terrorist” measures and laws which severely undermine civil liberties and put in jeopardy fundamental principles of justice such as the presumption of innocence, the right to a fair trial, the prohibition against torture, etc.<sup>35</sup>
- The war is also fought in the area of language, creating new expressions which attempt to justify flagrant violations of international law, civil liberties and the principles of fundamental justice: “preventative war,” “enemy combatant,” “Islamofascism,” etc. In order to make people forget that this war kills and wounds a great number of civilians who are bystanders to the conflict, the official accounts of military operations speak only of killing “terrorists,” “insurgents” or “Taliban”. In Afghanistan, the dead are invariably referred to as “Taliban.”

In short, the “war on terrorism” is the smokescreen used to obscure the current thrust of US imperial expansionism, principally through force of arms. According to our analysis, the war in Afghanistan was the official opening volley of this “endless war” and should certainly not be disassociated from it .

---

<sup>33</sup> We refer readers who would like to know more about the Échec à la guerre Collective’s point of view on this major question to the following previously-published documents : *La guerre contre le terrorisme : une arme de destruction massive*, March 2004 ( <http://www.echecalaguerre.org/publications.htm> ); and also *Appel à la société québécoise et canadienne : Rejetons le partenariat militaire avec les États-Unis*, September 2005 ( [http://www.echecalaguerre.org/docs/declaration\\_0606\\_f.pdf](http://www.echecalaguerre.org/docs/declaration_0606_f.pdf) ).

<sup>34</sup> See <http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> See on this subject the publications of the *Ligue des droits et libertés*: <http://www.liguedesdroits.ca/> .

## SECTION 4: CANADA'S INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE "WAR ON TERRORISM"

### QUESTION 11: How has Canada participated in these wars since they began?

Since October 2001, Canadian participation in the war in Afghanistan and in the "war on terror" has been more extensive, and often more offensive, than most people realize. Canada has participated in a number of missions or operations: Apollo, Altair, Sirius, Athena, Archer, Argus, and others. According to information available on the *Canadian Forces* (CF) website, "since October 2001, Canada has deployed 22 warships and more than 18,000 Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel in the international campaign against terrorism." The Polaris Institute in Ottawa estimates that to date Canada has spent approximately 4.1 billion dollars on all of these operations. What follows is some information about the biggest operations (Apollo, Athéna, Archer, Task Force Afghanistan) the CF have participated in:

- **Operation Apollo** (October 2001 to December 2003): Approximately three weeks after the September 11 attacks, on October 4, 2001, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (the Treaty of Washington) was invoked under which "...an armed attack against one or more of them [NATO countries] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all." Three days later, Operation Apollo was set up to support the American operation Enduring Freedom, to which Canada committed a large number of naval, air and land forces.

**Naval forces** included several Canadian frigates deployed in the Arab-Persian Gulf for 6-month periods; at the height of the mission, in January 2002, "the Canadian naval operating group had six warships and approximately 1500 Navy personnel." In February 2003, Canada even took command of the international naval force in the Arab-Persian Gulf.

**Air Force** involvement included strategic and tactical air transport, long-range patrols and helicopter detachments, most often in direct contact with the naval deployment.

**Army forces** mainly included (for the first 6 months in 2002) the deployment in Kandahar of approximately 750 soldiers of the 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group (3 PPCLI) for tasks ranging from airport security to combat, in support of the United States' 187<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team. Testifying before the Senate on November 19, 2002, Lieutenant-Colonel Pat Stogran, former commander of this Battle Group, stated that:

*In addition to our defence of the Kandahar airfield, we embarked on three large-scale, battalion-sized offensive operations in pursuit of the al-Qaeda, one such operation being the first combat air assault in the history of the Canadian army into the Sha I Kot Valley, in March 2002. Sub-elements of the battle group also conducted numerous operations of smaller scale, both defensive and offensive in nature.<sup>36</sup>*

The return to Canada of Canadian soldiers was coordinated with the planned rotation of American troops, which meant using United States air transport resources. It should be noted that the CF members assigned to Operation Apollo reported to the commander of Canadian Joint Task

<sup>36</sup> See [http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/2/parlbus/chambus/senate/deb-e/018db\\_2002-11-19-E.htm?Language=E&Parl=37&Ses=2](http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/2/parlbus/chambus/senate/deb-e/018db_2002-11-19-E.htm?Language=E&Parl=37&Ses=2) (consulted on November 29, 2006).

Force South West Asia (CA JTFSWA) whose headquarters is the Canadian National Command Element (NCE), which has about forty members and is stationed with the...U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) at MacDill Air Force Base, in Florida.

- **Operation Athena** (August 2003 to November 2005): deployment of a major contingent to Kabul – five successive six-month rotations, involving a total of 6,000 soldiers – as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which is under NATO authority. From February to August 2004, Rick Hillier, the Canadian Chief of Staff of Joint Operations, was in command of ISAF, which at the time had 6,500 soldiers from 35 countries, with the largest contingent composed of 2,000 Canadian soldiers. It is important to remember that this major Canadian military deployment had been announced in February 2003, when the United States was preparing to launch its war against Iraq. By providing major support to the United States on another war front, this seemed to compensate for the fact that Prime Minister Jean Chrétien was about to announce that Canada would not participate in the invasion of Iraq. On November 29, 2005 the last Canadian material in Kabul were transferred to Kandahar and Camp Julien was officially handed over to the Afghan Defence Ministry.
- **Operation Archer and Task Force Afghanistan** (February 2006 – ): From February 2006 to July 31, 2006, under Operation Archer, more than 2,000 CF troops were deployed in southern Afghanistan, in the Kandahar region, where they once again came under the command of the United States operation Enduring Freedom, as was the case with Operation Apollo. ISAF, however, whose mission at first was to ensure security only in the Kabul region, had had its mission gradually expanded to cover the 13 provinces of the North, West and now the South of Afghanistan. Since the end of July 2006, Canada's 2300 soldiers in Afghanistan have once again come under ISAF. This change in command structure, from Enduring Freedom to ISAF – doesn't change anything in the direct combat role that is now the main task of Canadian soldiers in the Kandahar region. In September 2006, NATO asked its member states to increase their resources in ISAF, and Canada announced that it would send 125 more soldiers (from the Valcartier base in Quebec, which provided most of the soldiers deployed in the summer of 2007).

**QUESTION 12: Hasn't Canada's participation been constructive, since it was part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, which was authorized by the Security Council?**

ISAF's mandate, until it was expanded to the southern provinces (Kandahar and Helmand), was essentially a "stabilization" and "security" mandate that did not include "anti-insurgency", brush clearing activities, or confrontation with armed opposition forces, including Taliban and others. Canadian military operations were mostly policing (patrols, training of Afghan security forces, etc.). And it wasn't until the start of 2006, while Canadian troops were deployed in Southern Afghanistan, that they took on an overtly offensive role directly under the command of the U.S. operation Enduring Freedom.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> If this declaration is true regarding most of the Canadian military assets in Afghanistan, it remains that most of the time part of the Canadian intervention has been clearly offensive...and secret, notably regarding part of mission Apollo, mentioned in the previous question. But there is more. Joint Task Force 2 (JTF-2) the CF special operations

In light of the increasing number of casualties among Canadian soldiers, and of concerns expressed by the public, many voices, both in Canada and abroad, blamed the new situation on the change of command. These voices called for the Canadian intervention to revert to the authority of ISAF, and for NATO to assume command of operations in southern Afghanistan. These analysts present the mandate as having two different approaches – “anti-insurgency” vs. “stabilization and security”. On the one hand there is the American approach, brutal and destined to fail; the other approach, European and Canadian, is less aggressive, more focused on help and development, and more likely to succeed. Without calling for the withdrawal of the Canadian troops, these analysts would like to see a return to the original mandate.

The reality of operations command offers no hope of this happening. In fact, in the summer of 2006, command passed from Operation Enduring Freedom to ISAF, without any change in the mandate of the Canadian troops and their combat operations in the Kandahar region. Moreover, this had been predicted in the House of Commons by the Conservative Minister of Defence, Gordon O'Connor.

Furthermore, the different methods applied from the start in Central and Northern Afghanistan, and especially in Kabul, do not really represent different approaches, but different contexts. In Kabul, the Hamid Karzai government and foreign forces have long met with little resistance, which is not the case in the south. Tasks and methods there were therefore different, more “constabulary” than “anti-insurgency”. As resistance increases in Kabul, and this has already started, the blind and brutal methods will begin again, because that is the usual evolution of foreign military occupations. For the defenders of the American war agenda, these two approaches are complementary, rather than contradictory. Among the four main challenges identified by the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) in their report, *Rebuilding America's Defences*, is the capacity to conduct several major wars simultaneously, as well as the necessity of taking on the “policing operations” that these wars entail. At first, NATO's role in Afghanistan was limited to the latter tasks, but that no longer seems to be the case.

Thirdly, we believe that the distinction made by some analysts between the motivations and methods of the United States and those of NATO can be misleading. NATO's intervention in Afghanistan has been placed under the command of the “Supreme commander of the allied forces in Europe” who is traditionally appointed by the United States. This command's mission is to support the United States' objectives in 93 countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Until recently, the “supreme commander” was General James L. Jones, of the Marine Corps, who directed operations in Vietnam, in Bosnia and in Iraq. His designated successor is General Bantz Craddock, who was the main military adjutant for Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, from 2002 to 2004, before being named Chief of Southern Command (the Caribbean and Latin America) for the United States army, where he supervised the prison in Guantanamo Bay, which he has always defended against critics.

Finally, as we indicated in answering question 3, we believe that by not denouncing the war and accepting the American intervention in Afghanistan as a *fait accompli*, the Security Council did not uphold the Charter of the United Nations. Authorizing ISAF and NATO's command of that force are part of this breach.

---

unit, was sent to Afghanistan soon after the attacks of September 11, 2001. It participated in the attack in Bora Bora in December 2002, and more than once transferred prisoners to the custody of United States forces.

**QUESTION 13: Did the election of the Conservative government in Ottawa lead to the change in the mandate of the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan?**

No. Moving the mission of the Canadian troops from Kabul to Kandahar was a decision of Paul Martin's Liberal government.

Overall, since the early 1990s, there has been a major change in the international role as well as a progressive integration of the Canadian army with that of the United States and its offensive operations around the world. This has happened without public debate and, to a large extent, without public awareness. It was hastened following the attacks of September 11, 2001, but only made official in 2005 with the Martin government's International Policy Statement (IPS), whose "3D" approach, linking diplomacy, defence and development, marked the new militaristic turn in Canadian foreign policy<sup>38</sup>. Afterwards, of course, the minority Conservative government raised the stakes in this new orientation, and under its mandate, the result of this change has become obvious. But it didn't instigate the change.

- Even if it seems paradoxical, the role of the Canadian army abroad has become increasingly combative since the end of the Cold War:
  - quasi-secret participation of the Canadian Air Force in the last two weeks of the Gulf War bombings in 1991;
  - open participation of the Canadian Navy in the maritime blockade of Iraq<sup>39</sup>;
  - participation in the intervention in Somalia, where Canadian soldiers tortured a young Somali to death;
  - Canadian Air Force participation in the 78 days of NATO bombings of Yugoslavia in 1999;
  - participation in the bombings and the land force invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

Without actually expressing it as a doctrine, for over 15 years, Canada has generally chosen to participate in the military interventions of the world's only superpower.

- After the end of the Cold War, military budgets declined until 1998-1999, and then rapidly increased<sup>40</sup> following recriminations from the military, political and economic *milieux*; complaints about "our army" no longer having the means to accomplish its role were heard, without any debate about this role, which was changing radically.
- In 2005, Paul Martin's Liberal government announced the largest increase in the Canadian military budget since the Second World War: an increase of 12.8 billion dollars over 5 years. That same year, the Martin government's International Policy Statement (IPS) indicated that this money would be used to increase regular forces by 5,000 soldiers,

---

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.itcan-cican.gc.ca/ips/menu-en.asp>

<sup>39</sup> taking part in the worse sanctions ever imposed by the United Nations, responsible for the death of more than one million people in Iraq, mostly children.

<sup>40</sup> The 1998-1999 military budget, set at 9.4 billion dollars and overrun by 9.3%, was the lowest point in this decline. The military budget in 2007 was approximately 15 billion dollars.



and reserve forces by 3,000 soldiers, as well as to purchase various equipment that would double the Canadian army's rapid intervention capacity abroad<sup>41</sup>. In July 2005, it was announced that Canadian troops in Afghanistan would be moved from Kabul to Kandahar, and that in February 2006, 1,400 additional soldiers would be sent to this area. This news was accompanied by statements from the new Chief of Defence Staff Rick Hillier, who was happy to be able to hunt down the terrorist "scumbags" and finally see the Canadian army play its true role of "being able to kill people."

- Since it came to power, the minority Conservative government has announced military expenditures of 5.3 billion dollars, in addition to the 12.8 billion announced by the Liberal government in 2005. The goal is to recruit 13,000 additional regular forces soldiers and 10,000 additional reserve forces. As well, in 2006, the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence – mostly composed of Liberal senators – recommended practically doubling the Canadian military budget to 25 and even 35 billion dollars a year!
- It was only recently that people in Canada learned of a major change in the role of the Canadian army abroad, but the change is even more profound than most people might suspect. On August 31, 1999, 1,149 Canadian soldiers were participating in official UN peacekeeping missions around the world. This represented 10.6% of the 10,801 peacekeepers in 11 different missions. Fifteen years later, on August 31, 2006, only 56 Canadian soldiers were participating in UN peacekeeping missions, representing only 0.08% of the 66,786 peacekeepers deployed in 16 different missions, while international demand continues to rise.<sup>42</sup> In summary, today there are 6 to 7 times more peacekeepers than there were 15 years ago, and Canada contributes one twentieth of what it used to!
- This change in the role of the Canadian army in the world, and the higher participation in wars alongside the U.S. army, are accompanied by increasing integration of the Canadian army with the U.S. army, in terms of both equipment as well as military training and command. Even when the Chrétien government decided that Canada "would not participate" in the war against Iraq, Canadian soldiers were closely linked to the planning for this war at the U.S. Central Command base at MacDill Air Force Base, in Florida, and later in Qatar; and in 2004, Canadian Brigadier General Walt Natynczyk was the second in command of all American occupation troops in Iraq.

---

<sup>41</sup> For more information, see *Appel à la société québécoise et canadienne: rejetons le partenariat militaire avec les États-Unis* (<http://www.echecalaguerre.org/Declaration.htm>).

<sup>42</sup> This data is taken from Steven Staples, *MARCHING ORDERS : How Canada abandoned peacekeeping – and why the UN needs us now more than ever*, a report ordered by The Council of Canadians, October 2006.

**QUESTION 14: Notwithstanding government propaganda, what are the true motives of Canada's participation in the war in Afghanistan?**

The Canadian army was sent into this war without public or parliamentary debate. We believe that this initial decision as well as the decision to further increase the role of the Canadian army in Afghanistan are based on a two-level dynamic: mainly, the progressive deepening of the economic, ideological and military partnership with the United States; and the immediate profits to be made by a certain number of corporations in Canada.

**Deepening the Canada-United States partnership**

Remember that following the end of the Cold War, the United States launched a war against Iraq (1991) and proclaimed the dawn of a “new world order” — an order characterized by championing neo-liberal globalization and a more bellicose foreign policy. Pressures then increased on allied countries to adopt the same “threat analysis”, and participate in U.S. military interventions. In answering the previous question, we outlined the progressive transformation of Canadian foreign policy and the corresponding change in the role of the Canadian forces — changes that have been made without public debate.

The day after the attacks of September 11, 2001, George W. Bush declared “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.” Moreover, the former American ambassador to Canada, Paul Celluci, revealed that the only guideline he had received upon taking up his post in 2001 was to ensure that Canadian military expenditures increased very significantly. He repeated to anyone who listened that the United States believed “security to be more important than commerce.”

The message was clear: if Canada did not adopt the same “security” agenda as the United States, commercial relations between the two nations could suffer. Within this context, economic and political leaders in Canada decided to do everything to keep their access to the United States market, including identifying more closely with the “war on terrorism.” In January 2003, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) <sup>43</sup> launched its *North American Security and Prosperity Initiative* in which it takes a position favouring the “intelligent border”, the secure supply of Canadian energy resources to the United States, ballistic missile defence, increasing military expenditures, as well as the interoperability of Canadian and American armed forces.

In April 2004, in a policy document entitled *New Frontiers: Building a 21st Century Canada-United States Partnership in North America*, the CCCE stated:

*In such a world, Canadians must think hard about what we will need to do to defend ourselves. But as global citizens, we also must continue to think about how we can contribute effectively to peace and security around the world. The way that we and other countries respond to the relentless threat of terrorism and rogue states has vital implications for global economic growth just as it does for Canada's future both as a trade-dependent economy and an immigrant-based society. In short, for Canada and for the world as a whole, economic security and physical security have become inseparable.*

---

<sup>43</sup> The CCCE is a group of chief executives from approximately 150 large Canadian corporations, which together, control most of the exports, investments, training and research and development within the Canadian private sector.”

When the pressure of public opinion forces the Government of Canada to take decisions that do not please the Bush administration, it tries to compensate by intensifying Canadian military participation in Afghanistan. An early instance of this saw Brian Tobin, a former federal minister and premier of Newfoundland, writing a letter to the *Globe & Mail* (February 5, 2003) just as Prime Minister Chrétien was about to announce that Canada would not participate in the invasion of Iraq:

*The U.S. needs to free up key logistical and military assets on the ground in Afghanistan for the coming campaign in Iraq. Canada can, and should, offer to fill the gap.*

One week later, Ottawa announced that Canada would take command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and send 2000 soldiers to Afghanistan.

A second example occurred shortly after Prime Minister Paul Martin's announcement that Canada would not participate in "ballistic missile defence." On March 21, 2005, there was a meeting of his most senior ministers, PMO officials, and General Rick Hillier, the recently appointed Chief of Defence Staff. Hillier proposed that Canada deploy 1,000 soldiers in Kandahar under the authority of the U.S. operation Enduring Freedom. Faced with reservations, he traded on the Martin government's desire to be a player on the international stage alongside the United States. Scott Reid, Paul Martin's communications director, stated:

*There was a strong current [within the Department of Foreign Affairs] that evaluated our strategic interests as a function of our relationship with the United States. Often, policy was presented to us with the proviso that 'this issue is important for the White House'. And what is important for the White House cannot be taken lightly, because the people there will take it personally...<sup>44</sup>*

In Canada, the government cannot publicly state that the reason for its military involvement in Afghanistan is that it wishes a closer partnership with the United States. Yet, in Washington, subway advertisements purchased by the Canadian embassy there push this very message quite clearly among American decision-makers. These ads portray Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan with the following message:

*Canadian troops in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Boots on the ground.  
U.S.-Canada Relations – Security Is Our Business.*

### **Canada – U.S. Partnership: a business opportunity**

This strategic orientation for an economic and military partnership with the United States presents golden business opportunities for certain corporations in Canada in the form of military contracts, contracts for the trans-Afghan pipeline or for other projects in the region. Consider two major contracts announced in 2005: first, the 849 million dollar contract for Bell Helicopter, in Mirabel, for basic assembly of 368 helicopters for the United States army; and the 750 million dollar contract to build new light armoured vehicles. The main contract for the first phase of the latter project, worth 100 million dollars, was awarded to Oerlikon in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu.

---

<sup>44</sup> Bill Schiller, *The Road to Kandahar*, Toronto Star, September 9, 2006, p. F1; as quoted in Steven Staples, *MARCHING ORDERS: How Canada abandoned peacekeeping – and why the UN needs us now more than ever*, October 2006, p. 5.

Some key sectors of the Canadian economy, such as oil and natural gas, and armaments, have also benefited substantially. In September 2004 and in November 2005, two business delegations from Western Canada, headed by Jean Chrétien<sup>45</sup>, met with President Niyazov of Turkmenistan. In addition to the trans-Afghan pipeline – a 3-billion dollar project which, it seems, will be routed through Kandahar, – are the modernizing of the Seyidi refinery and gas exploration in Turkmenistan. The Seyidi refinery is the second largest in Turkmenistan, and the Israeli company, Merhav, has been invited to set up a consortium to modernize it: a project worth more than 1.5 billion dollars U.S. Canadian companies with interests in this region of the world include PetroKazakhstan<sup>46</sup>, Buried Hill Energy and Thermo Design Engineering.

### **...and human rights**

During his second visit, Mr. Chrétien hailed the immense progress made by Turkmenistan since its independence. He also stated that President Niyazov had succeeded in setting up a unique development model that took into account both the country's enormous potential and its favourable geopolitical situation.<sup>47</sup> Yet, he doesn't seem to have considered the 2006 report by Human Rights Watch (HRW). According to HRW, under the late president for life, Saparmurat Niyazov, Turkmenistan was one of the most repressive and closed countries in the world, characterized by backward policies, particularly on culture, education and health. For example, (i) a Turkman law equates criticizing any presidential policies to high treason; (ii) the study of the *Ruhnama*, a "new holy book" written by the late President himself, is replacing other disciplines in the school and university curricula. (iii) the President's February 2005 proposal "to close all libraries, with the exception of the central library and those attached to universities." Already, over 100 libraries have been closed.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Mr. Chrétien, former prime minister of Canada, was acting as an advisor for Bennett Jones, a law firm based in Calgary, which specializes in energy issues. He is also the international relations advisor for PetroKazakhstan, also based in Calgary, which has major interests in Kazakhstan and in the Caspian Sea region.

<sup>46</sup> There have been several acquisitions in the oil and gas sector, especially regarding these projects in Central Asia. This is how PetroKazakhstan has since been sold to Chinese interests and Unocal, purchased by Chevron.

<sup>47</sup> For more information, see <http://www.newscentralasia.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=876> et <http://www.newscentralasia.com/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=1560> (consulted November 29, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> For more information, see <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/18/turkme12244.txt.htm>.

## SECTION 5: WHAT DO WE HAVE TO PROPOSE?

Our movement against war and militarism is part of the progressive movements of Quebec and Canadian civil society. Many citizens who have mobilized for this purpose are also involved in various struggles against neoliberalism, poverty, the oppression of women, racism and other forms of discrimination, the destruction of our planet, etc.

Although our governments are the product of general elections and claim to act in the people's best interest, our movement must often wage prolonged struggles before the interests and will of the majority are really considered. In these struggles, we even have to counter the disinformation our governments often spread about the human consequences of their projects and policies. If this is our experience here at home on issues that concern us, why should we believe in our governments' professed good intentions regarding wars being waged far from our borders? In examining what we can do as progressive movements, why would we include the government and the Canadian army in this collective "we"? Why would we consider them our partners or, even worse, the agents of our duty to act in solidarity?

### **QUESTION 15: "Don't we have a responsibility not to abandon the Afghan people and to continue helping them rebuild their country?"**

When citizens of good faith ask this question, our first response is to point out the ambiguity of "we". Who are we talking about? About "we" citizens opposed to war... in partnership with the U.S. Army? Or in a broader partnership with NATO? Or in a more limited partnership with only the Canadian Army? Because, in the final analysis, we are being sold military intervention as a way to "help rebuild". This is a strange perspective when we recall the words of the Chief of the Defense Staff, Rick Hillier: *We are not the Public Service of Canada. We are not some other department. We are the Canadian Forces and our job is to be able to kill people.*<sup>49</sup>

Linking the question of military intervention to reconstruction reveals a lack of knowledge of the reality itself, because in the past five years, the net result of the war and foreign intervention in Afghanistan has not been to help the Afghan people rebuild their country, as the *Senlis Council* has observed:

*Five years of international presence in the country aimed at increasing the living standards of the Afghan population have failed to make any measured improvements in the accessibility and quality of health and educational services in most of Afghanistan, beyond the confines of Kabul*<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> CTV.ca, July 16, 2005. See [http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/1121433777212\\_154](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/1121433777212_154)

<sup>50</sup> [http://icosgroup.net/modules/reports/Afghanistan\\_Five\\_Years\\_Later](http://icosgroup.net/modules/reports/Afghanistan_Five_Years_Later)

This isn't surprising when we know that for all foreign interveners, **the amounts invested in military spending are ten to fifteen times greater than those allocated to development assistance**. This is also true for Canada. In 2006-2007, Canadian military intervention in Afghanistan cost \$1.4 billion, while \$100 million was allocated to "assistance" for that country. Are we rebuilding a little, the better to destroy? When Canadian military officials describe the satisfactory progress of Operation Medusa by explaining that the troops are advancing after intense bombardments, "football field by football field", can we claim to be helping the Afghan people rebuild their country?

We should also ask ourselves serious questions about the real impact and the true nature of the small share of expenditures that goes to "assistance". Here is what Malalai Joya has to say about this:

*Ironically, this is happening in a country that has received 12 billion dollars while another 10 billion more were pledged at the London conference last year. But this money will mainly fill the pockets of the warlords to can better suppress our nation more severely.*

Similar concerns were expressed by Jean Mazurel, French representative of the World Bank in Kabul, in a September 2006 interview with CBC journalist Sylvain Desjardins. He gave the example of a school that would cost \$200,000 to build, but for which only \$50,000 of the initial budget would be left after all the middlemen took their cut. He also affirmed that a large part of the "assistance" went to pay for expert services and products from the donor countries, without any impact on the population's immediate welfare. In a *Time Magazine* article on May 30, 2006, Rachel Morarjee reported the testimony of a Kabul mechanic to explain while, during the riots in Kabul the previous day, the angry crowd had even looted and burned the offices of NGOs:

*"People were angry with the NGOs because they are using lots of money for themselves. The only people who get any benefit from them being here are the people who are working for them," said Isatullah, a mechanic.*

In conclusion, we will add three points. First, we must mention the fact that the question "Don't we have a responsibility not to abandon the Afghan people and to continue helping them rebuild their country?" often comes out of the mouths of our government officials. Since they aren't really concerned about the plight of people here – and still less about the Afghans – and are diverting the budgets of our social programs to military spending, how dare they lay a guilt trip on the progressive movements of civil society who are fighting every day for people's interests here and abroad?

Secondly, the idea that we are responsible for solving the problems of other societies unfortunately smacks of the colonialism still present in our Western societies.

Finally, we should remember that military intervention is involved. The role of armies isn't to do humanitarian work or to rebuild the countries they occupy. The examples of Iraq and Afghanistan are conclusive on this point! According to the World Bank, it would cost \$27.5 billion to rebuild Afghanistan's obsolete and destroyed infrastructure. Yet from 2002 to 2006, the NATO countries – led by the United States – gobbled up more than three times that amount in military spending "for" Afghanistan. We must reject the 'army/development assistance' and 'army/humanitarian

assistance' amalgams, because they are deceitful and in no way produce the promised results. Moreover, this confusion of roles seriously endangers the lives of genuine humanitarian workers by erasing the distinction, in the view of the resistance, between these workers and the military occupation forces. Above all, this confusion of roles is only a way to make war acceptable to the Canadian public, by masking the totally devastating effects it has on the society that suffers it.

**QUESTION 16: Will a withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan favour the Taliban's return to power? Will it plunge the country into civil war?**

It is important to remember two things concerning the Taliban that the supporters of Canadian military intervention in Afghanistan tend to conceal. Interference by the United States in Afghanistan's internal affairs was largely responsible for bringing the Taliban to power and keeping them there. The imperative of preventing the Taliban's return at any price is valid only if the forces currently in power are significantly different, particularly on the issues of religious fundamentalism and respect for human rights, especially women's rights. Yet as we have seen, this isn't really the case.

Obviously we can't predict the future. However, we believe that a solution exists in the short or medium term that would bring peace, democracy and development to a country as poor and as devastated as Afghanistan is today — a country which, over the past three decades, has experienced two foreign invasions and interminable internecine wars, often fuelled by foreign countries. Above all, we do not believe that such a solution can be imposed from outside this society, especially not militarily.

Based on most of the international civilian observers and even on Western military sources, we know that five our years of occupation and "reconstruction" have not produced the promised positive results. On the contrary, people in Afghanistan have less and less confidence in the central government and the foreign military forces that support it. The Taliban's influence is rising and they have succeeded in making an alliance with other forces opposed to foreign occupation. The United States and its allies, including Canada, can say that they want to "win hearts and minds" in Afghanistan, but the opposite is what is happening now. And probably the opposite will continue to happen as the number of foreign troops increases and as these troops intensify their brutal and blind oppression of Afghan opponents.

Sooner or later, all the foreign troops currently occupying Afghanistan will leave the country. They will leave because the armed resistance, despite the repression, will have gained in scope and effectiveness, because the Afghans will grant it more support – out of confidence, vexation or fear – and because the citizenry of the occupying powers will be less and less accepting of the human and financial costs associated with military intervention. The question of power in Afghanistan will then be settled according to the balance of forces that exist at that time among the various social, political and military elements of society.

When that time comes, if the Taliban hold military power, they will acquire political power *de facto*. But if they don't, compromise and power-sharing formulas may be possible, finally echoing the wish expressed by the vast majority of people in Afghanistan to put an end to war and the way of arms — unless, ignoring this aspiration, another period of internecine wars begins

among the various armed factions. Whichever alternative prevails, we do not believe that the current war between the foreign armies, the Northern Alliance and other warlords, on one side, and the Taliban and their allies, on the other, is of a nature to favour the development of authentically democratic forces in Afghanistan.

The danger, often mentioned, that the withdrawal of foreign troops will result in the outbreak of a civil war, appears to be a hypothetical doom and gloom scenario to make us forget the very real doom and gloom the occupation currently imposes on the people of Afghanistan. It is based on a premise we consider false, namely that maintaining foreign troops in Afghanistan would help mitigate the risk of civil war in that country which it is in fact exacerbating.

The same arguments are resorted to by people in the United States when attempting to justify the continued occupation of Iraq, even by those who consider the initial invasion “an error”. Yet, year after year, the number of victims of sectarian attacks and assassinations in Iraq has increased, parallel to the growing number of foreign soldiers killed. In fact, intercommunity attacks in Iraq have reached such proportions that it is perfectly reasonable to talk about civil war, a situation that even the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, publicly acknowledge on December 3, 2006.

Far from being surprising, this is to be expected. The presence of foreign troops in a country they have invaded, far from calming internal divisions, generally exacerbates them and creates a widening gulf between the forces opposing this presence at any price and those allied with or profiting from it one way or another.

**QUESTION 17: Why don't we ask for a change of mandate and/or mission for the Canadian troops in Afghanistan?**

To understand the situation currently prevailing in Afghanistan, we drew on various sources, including the Senlis Council, Womankind Worldwide, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. These organizations, like many others in Quebec, in the rest of Canada and elsewhere, are not necessarily calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. Most often, concerning Canadian forces, they call for a review of the troops' role in the sense of “peacekeeping” or “protection of the civilian population”. They also sometimes call for the command of foreign troops to be assumed by the United Nations instead of NATO and, in some cases, for replacement of the existing foreign forces with a new military force coming mainly from Muslim countries.

Such proposals generally are based on a desire to move the current situation in the direction of peace and the interests of the Afghan people. They could be pertinent if this really involved peacekeeping and the protection of the civilian population, in a Muslim country where the belligerents had at least accepted to observe a ceasefire and negotiate. But foreign invasion, war and military occupation are involved here, which not only make these proposals unrealistic, but also maintain illusions as to the nature of and reasons for Canadian military involvement in Afghanistan.



### **Change of mandate and/or mission for the Canadian troops**

Such a call is unrealistic and maintains illusions because:

- it disregards the concrete conditions on the ground, particularly the resistance;
- it disregards the balance of power within NATO;
- it tends to consider the current mandate to be an aberration;
- it refuses to analyze the reasons for this war beyond the proclaimed intentions.

To expound briefly on each of these aspects:

**It is impossible to call for a change of mandate while disregarding the concrete conditions on the ground.** To the extent that it involves deployment of troops in a sector where the local population is suspicious of them, and where armed resistance is intense, the very logic of maintaining this presence makes it necessary to “hunt insurgents”, rely on informers, who may have various motives, burst into homes, thereby terrorizing their occupants, carry out military operations aimed at the elimination of armed opponents and resulting in civilian deaths that will be described as “blunders” and “collateral damage”, etc.

The alternative, according to some, would be to withdraw from these regions and concentrate on areas where less warlike operations of “protecting development” are possible, gradually expanding these areas. And how will these areas be expanded? Apparently, peacekeeping and reconstruction will win the “hearts and minds” of the Afghans in these areas and this will undermine the resistance. But once again, this scenario ignores an essential player: the resistance itself. Afghan forces opposed to the occupying military presence will target foreign troops wherever they are, and will do this increasingly as their number and preparedness permit. The quieter areas will become hotter and the mandate and/or mission of the occupation troops will have to change accordingly.

**NATO’s intervention in Afghanistan isn’t a leaderless activity in which each army can choose to do whatever it wants, wherever it likes.** From the outset, the United States, who decided on this war, chose to support and arm the Northern Alliance and other warlords, bring them to power and then extend their power to the entire country. Despite the official propaganda about democracy and reconstruction, this is the general mission NATO is performing in Afghanistan and the mandates of the participating armies can only be defined in terms of the resulting tasks.

In a period when armed resistance is growing in Afghanistan and when the United States, in difficulty in Iraq, has to deploy additional troops to that country, there is enormous pressure for other NATO contingents to take over from the American troops in “hunting the Taliban”. Canadian troops have been thus engaged since February 2006 and Canadian political and military circles are now pressing other NATO countries to adopt the same mandate and assume “their share” of the costs of these operations.

**The current mandate of the Canadian troops isn't a mere accident** which is staining Canada's reputation as a promoter of peace, which it can easily remove by returning to its previous mandate. Over the past fifteen years, Canada's military role abroad has been evolving in the opposite direction from peacekeeping.<sup>51</sup> More recently, using the pretext of the September 11, 2001 attacks, a more militaristic Canadian foreign policy, closely tied to that of the United States, has been explicitly adopted in the highest Canadian economic, political and military spheres.

**The call for a change of mandate disregards the fundamental question of the reason for this war and the interests it really serves**, beyond the good intentions professed by the United States and its allies.<sup>52</sup> It is based on the explicit premise that the Government of Canada's intentions are the same as ours but that – by error or by capitulation to outside pressure – it went astray in the new means chosen to fulfill its good intentions. In our opinion, this is very naïve, to say the least, because this war is one of foreign domination and control and any suggestion of different means cannot suddenly transform it into its opposite.

### **Change of command of the foreign troops from NATO to the UN**

In the current context, this demand is no more realistic than a change of mandate or mission:

- Such a decision falls under the mandate of the Security Council; yet immediately after the invasion of Afghanistan, it was the United States itself that drove the Council's various resolutions on this subject, resolutions that obviously did not criticize the war, that ratified the establishment of the ISAF and then the extension and broadening of its mandate under NATO command, etc.; no other country on the Security Council to date has ventured to propose any changes to these resolutions...
- The only alternative would be for the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to take matters in hand in a sort of disavowal of the Security Council's current direction; this is theoretically possible, but very unlikely since it would require a majority of countries to openly confront the US orientation, which few governments find it in their interest to do. In practice, in Canada, our task would be to call on the Government of Canada to intervene in this way, which is contrary to its current policy.
- Finally, this demand maintains the prevailing illusions concerning the role of the UN on issues of war and peace, when these questions are under the jurisdiction of the Security Council where the United States often manages to make its own policies prevail. It would be necessary to start talking openly about this reversion to UNGA.

---

<sup>51</sup> See Question 13.

<sup>52</sup> See Questions 10 and 14.

### **QUESTION 18: So what responsibilities do we have to the Afghan people?**

The many discussions around this question often take place as if we had the solutions to the problems of Afghan society and the responsibility for implementing them. We believe that it is necessary to break with such an approach and base our work on real solidarity with the Afghan people in their struggles for self-determination. In her address to the NDP Convention in September 2006, Afghan Member of Parliament Malalai Joya affirmed:

*I think that no nation can donate liberation to another nation. Liberation should be achieved in a country by the people themselves. The ongoing developments in Afghanistan and Iraq prove this claim. I think if Canada and other governments really want to help the Afghan people and bring positive changes, they must act independently, rather than becoming a tool to implement the wrong policies of the US government. They must align themselves to the wishes and needs of the Afghan people.<sup>53</sup>*

To affirm the principle of self-determination is first to recognize that the Afghans are responsible for their own destiny and can very well conceive and implement their own solutions to their problems. It must also be recognized that foreign interventions, in Afghanistan or elsewhere, have rarely been based on respect for this principle, but rather on a will for control and domination contrary to the interest of the peoples it claims to help. The current war in Afghanistan and Canadian intervention in this war are no exception.

The courses of action we present are twofold: on the one hand, what to do specifically concerning Canada's military intervention in Afghanistan; on the other hand, what to do more generally concerning Canadian foreign policy.

#### **Concerning the war in Afghanistan:**

1. **We call for the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan.** This withdrawal is not equivalent to abandoning the Afghan people since, from our perspective, it means withdrawing part of a foreign army of occupation. This is our primary responsibility to the Afghan people in their long and difficult struggle for self-determination. The presence of Canadian troops in Afghanistan is part of the increasingly militaristic orientation of Canada's foreign policy, and we reject it on this basis.
2. **As long as Canadian military intervention lasts in Afghanistan,** we must:
  - **deconstruct the Government of Canada's misleading discourse** concerning the progress made in Afghanistan on "good governance", human rights, women's rights, etc.;
  - **demand accountability** and insist on the truth concerning Canadian military intervention: number of Afghan victims caused by our intervention, use of prohibited

---

<sup>53</sup> Malalai Joya, op. cit.

munitions, number of prisoners transferred and under what agreements<sup>54</sup>, costs of the intervention, etc.;

- **develop direct ties** between civil societies, with Afghan individuals and organizations who do not accept either the logic of repressive fundamentalism or that of foreign armies;
- **identify and denounce**, within Quebec and Canadian society, the promoters of the war in Afghanistan and their interests.

### Concerning Canada's foreign policy:

3. **We reject** the increasingly militaristic orientation of Canada's foreign policy, the deepening of the military partnership with the United States, and the almost total integration of the Canadian Army into the United States Army that results from this.

**We demand** that a real public debate be held on the role of the Canadian forces and on reducing military spending. We demand the end of subsidies to participation by Canadian companies in the international arms trade. We oppose military recruiting, which is intensifying everywhere in universities, colleges and secondary schools and which specifically targets young people from disadvantaged sectors of our society.

4. **We demand** an in-depth review of Canada's foreign policy so that it is really geared to justice and sharing of wealth, particularly concerning official development assistance. We denounce the shift to "security" adopted by the government and the fact that part of this assistance is now diverted for military purposes. We not only call for the immediate achievement of the objective of allocating 0.7% of Canada's GDP to development assistance, but also for assistance that is really disbursed and managed transparently, free of any obligation to the donor country and devoted to projects determined by people in the countries for which it is intended. Afghanistan, ranked 175<sup>th</sup> of 177 countries according to the United Nations Human Development Index, should be one of the main countries to receive the increased real assistance.

*Countries that conduct wars to take control of resources,  
to conquer territories or to otherwise pursue their hegemonic designs  
always have noble motives to justify their wars:  
the defence of the nation, the defence of civilization,  
assistance to national minorities in jeopardy.*

---

<sup>54</sup> We must denounce the fact that Canadian troops hand over their prisoners to the Afghan authorities under an agreement that does not oblige the Afghan government to transmit their names to independent Afghan human rights organizations and does not prohibit their transfer to third parties...