

Warning: NATO-UN record is bad news for Canada

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John Manley's Afghan report focuses rightly on the willingness of our NATO allies to send additional combat troops to Kandahar as a condition of our remaining in Afghanistan, but there is a broader issue for Canadians: the poor track record of NATO and the United Nations in bringing peace, order and good governance to the countries they have occupied after a military intervention.

The most obvious example is Kosovo. It has been almost nine years since UN Resolution 1244 brought an end to the NATO bombing of Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia. That resolution, which laid down the parameters for the future of Kosovo by providing for a functioning civil society with democratic institutions, called for the return of all refugees and the disarming of the Kosovo Liberation Army, provided for a limited number of Serbian security forces to patrol Kosovo's borders and to guard Christian holy places, and reaffirmed Serbia's sovereignty over Kosovo while guaranteeing the Albanian community a high degree of local autonomy. It was a blueprint for success.

Sadly, none of the provisions of 1244 were fulfilled by NATO and the UN. Under the watchful eyes of 40,000 NATO troops and UN officials, the Albanians were allowed to expel almost all of the non-Albanian population from Kosovo and to destroy 150 Christian churches and monasteries.

Notwithstanding billions of dollars in development aid, Kosovo remains the poorest area of Europe. There is massive unemployment, the per capita income is \$1,600 a year and infant mortality is the highest in Europe. It has become a "black hole" where crime, corruption and violence flourish.

Kosovo is a small territory in southern Serbia, less than twice the size of Prince Edward Island; it has a population of about two million. Yet, after eight years of occupation, NATO and the UN have proved incapable of bringing law and order. In other words, they have made a mess of it.

Afghanistan is a vast and mountainous country about the size of Alberta. It has a population of 32 million with a long history of resisting foreign invaders. NATO forces, now numbering 15,000, are facing a fanatical enemy determined to force them to withdraw, and even though these forces are supplemented by 28,000 U.S. soldiers, it is doubtful that any military force is large enough to bring peace and stability to the country.

The Kosovo failure should serve as a warning that NATO and the UN are institutions ill-equipped to carry out the multifaceted task they have taken on in Afghanistan. The Manley report has pointed out that UN personnel in Kabul suffer from a "lack of leadership, direction

and effective co-ordination from UN headquarters in New York.” That is nothing new: Mismanagement has been a chronic problem characterizing UN operations everywhere.

An added problem is that NATO itself is an organization that has not yet found its role in a post-Soviet world. When it was founded in 1949, it was designed as a purely defensive group with two goals: Defend the West from any possible Soviet attack; and uphold the principles of the UN Charter while never using, or threatening to use, force in the resolution of international disputes.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO lost one of its primary reasons for existence. The second reason – to act in accordance with the UN Charter’s principles – was seen by some NATO members as an inhibiting factor in dealing with issues involving human-rights abuses or rogue states.

The turning point for NATO came with its military intervention in Kosovo allegedly for humanitarian reasons. The bombing of Serbia was done in violation of the UN Charter and NATO’s Article 1. During the bombing campaign, in April of 1999, on the occasion of NATO’s 50th birthday, Bill Clinton announced a new “strategic concept” for NATO. The new role essentially meant the alliance could and would intervene wherever and whenever it felt necessary to preserve peace and security. Its days as a purely defensive organization had ended.

As with any multinational organization, NATO has become difficult to manage. Its new role is not clearly defined, and decision-making is slow and cumbersome. Not all of its members are enthusiastic about the Afghan mission, where the chances of success are slim and the cost in blood and gold may become prohibitive. Others see it as a multinational facade to mask the unilateral aims of the Bush administration. This is not a formula for success.

Like it or not, Canada must fulfill its NATO obligations. But let us be clear about what those obligations are and the price we pay to fulfill them.

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