

the greatest extent. The European viewpoint may well be that Canada is making choices on the grounds of sovereignty that not only do not contribute much to Alliance security, but fail to maximize continental security, and may indeed at some future date become a deficit if costs force Canada to reduce its presence in Europe, first in Norway, subsequently in Germany.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE OF ALLIES to the new Canadian defence paper? Whatever the terms that had been worked out in advance to legitimize the transit of the US Coast Guard vessel *Polar Sea* through the Arctic, American officials must now be asking themselves whether they fully understood the domestic political implications in Canada of making this trip. Certainly the voyage gave a boost to the sovereignty debate. However, whereas sovereignty deals with legal rights, security involves the capacity to defend those rights through the use of force if necessary. The problem for Canada is that security begins, as it does for the US on the Elbe, not on the St. Lawrence. Submarines will not make much difference to the determination of Arctic sovereignty. This will ultimately be determined not by unilateral action but by international law as has been true in North America at least since the 1816 Rush-Bagot Agreement between Britain and the US which limited naval forces on the Great Lakes.

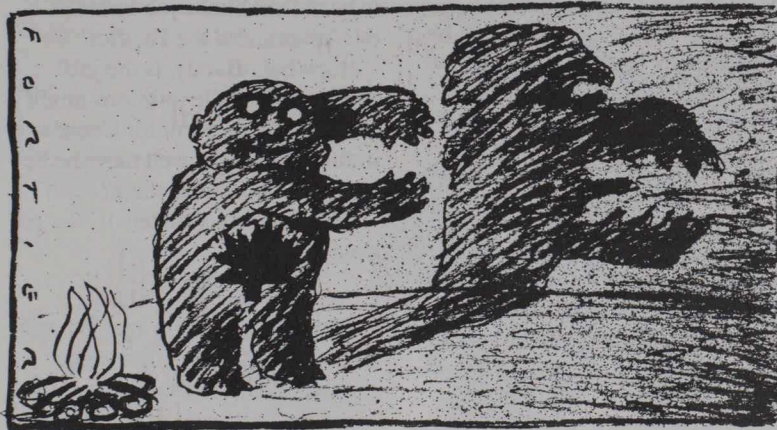
One US concern is that Canada is imitating American mistakes. Under the Reagan build-up, the US has committed itself to a substantial increase in hardware while forgetting to some extent about the costs of operation, maintenance and logistics. Purchase of a dozen nuclear submarines is one thing. Maintenance of command and control, logistical support, training, modernization, and upkeep is quite another. Auxiliary costs could bankrupt the Canadian armed forces. If Canada really is going to buy a Class 8 Icebreaker, finance new frigates, update Tribal Class destroyers, provide replacements for lost CF-18s, assume its share of the costs of the North Warning System, properly equip its European forces, increase its

reserve to 90,000 men, all on a budgeted two percent annual increase in defence spending after inflation, magic will have to be performed. In the absence of magic, political leverage to increase budgets must suffice, and that too, in Ottawa as in Washington, is in short supply these days.

A second concern is cost-related but essentially technological. At present, the capacity of submarines to elude, exceeds their capacity to trace and monitor. The danger here is that Canadian purchases

propeller technology. But the likelihood of getting trapped in underwater ice canyons by American subs, guided by very sophisticated command and control systems on the surface and in space is sufficiently worrisome so that most Soviet subs probably will remain at home. Canadian subs may find very little to hunt for.

A GREAT DANGER IN DEFENCE thought is to contrive for political reasons a defence where there is no threat and to remove a defence



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will be made at the lower-end of the technology scale because of cost. With new technology in the area of passive and active sensors, data handling networks, and command and control systems evolving rapidly, there is the risk of early obsolescence. Canada may find itself able to deploy its own nuclear submarines but unable to find or identify Soviet attack submarines.

A third concern involves the mission the subs are supposed to perform. Suppose a Canadian submarine does find and identify a Soviet submarine, what next? Is Canada prepared to use force to deny that submarine access to its territorial waters? If a show-down did occur, which submarine would have the advantage, the heavily-armed Soviet attack submarine or the smaller Canadian defender?

A fourth concern is the suspicion that this may be a deployment without a mission. At present, Soviet submarines for the most part remain near bastions such as the Kola peninsula. They have the capacity to operate under the Arctic ice and they may become more venturesome as they become quieter, thanks to gifts of Western

effort – even a marginal one – from a location where the threat is more real. The White Paper proposes to “consolidate” Canadian forces along the Central Front by integrating the CAST (Canadian Air Sea Transportable) Brigade destined for Norway. CAST had problems ever getting across the Atlantic in time to figure in any confrontation. The proposal to consolidate must come as a surprise to those analysts who trumpeted the weaknesses of CAST, with the objective of eliminating them, only to find that instead the commitment itself has been eliminated.

The threat on the Central Front is real enough. But so is the threat on the Northern Flank. How the Alliance meets defence needs in Norway without permanently stationing troops there (which would be anathema to the Norwegian Left and is contrary to longstanding Norwegian government policy) will send echoes through Norway and Denmark as far away as neutral Sweden. Very easily one gets into a debilitating spiral where an Alliance member refuses external assistance because of local political opposition. The country in turn finds out that because of the

lack of sufficient Alliance help a sense of malaise sets into the public mind which abets the neutralist argument even more.

The consolidation of Canadian force deployment is long overdue, and the Mulroney government should be congratulated for taking up the challenge. The anxiety is, however, that consolidation can mean so many things, including the possibility that when tough decisions over budgets must be made, it leads to a net reduction of actual defence effort. We know this is not the intention of the White Paper. But the realities of politics are such that the drive to establish a credible submarine force for continental defence may come at the expense of the commitment to Europe.

For the United States, the pre-occupation is that the new Canadian emphasis on continental defence will be seen in Europe as the first step toward greater North American isolation. Sovereignty and security are not identical.

Indeed, the search for the former may lead to decline of the latter. Fragmentation of the Alliance, unwanted but driven by implicit priorities, is the most fundamental American concern. It should also be Canada's. □

#### Further Reading

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