

# Canada Paying a Heavy Price for Ignoring Its Military for 30 Years



by Conrad Black

**These are times of great tension** in the world. War in the centre of Europe and in the Middle East, and rumour of war in the Far East, demonstrate the geopolitical price that Canada has paid for treating its armed forces for nearly 30 years as an anachronistic waste of money.

For eight years we have had a government which has proclaimed its belief in global brotherhood and the post-national state. There is some agreeable truth to this perspective as it indicates that frontiers are easy to cross with only a few exceptions, both for tourists and those engaged in

international trade. It was completely unthinkable just 30 or 40 years ago that people with handheld devices could communicate freely and instantly all over the world, transmit detailed messages and colour photographs, and receive comprehensive replies within a few minutes.

However, contrary to widespread hope and expectations, this has not made for closer and more cooperative international relations.

The basic reasons why countries come into conflict with each other are colliding national interests, and these are not in themselves alleviated by the protagonists or their countrymen knowing each other better. Of course, to a significant extent, all people have the same concerns and ambitions, but they tend to have diverging and, in many cases, competing national objectives. Sometimes these conflicts are accompanied by the propagandistic demonization of another nationality, as in the most profound antagonisms in the Middle East. But generally, it is understood that people have similar personal and familial ambitions, although that does not reduce in the slightest the irreconcilable competition between peoples, and it is usually by national governments that the affairs of the world are conducted.

I apologize for such a laborious recitation of what most readers know to be obvious. But especially when acts of horrible barbarism occur, such as those committed by Hamas against the people of Israel on Oct. 7, there is a tendency to imagine that because most people are in fact similar in their ambitions and their fears, an element of humanization might usefully defuse crises of national or sectarian hostility.

Unfortunately, this is only a consideration that arises after the fact, when civilized states who have been engaged in horrible bloodbaths against each other look back on the enormous tragedies in which they have participated, and celebrate their community of spirit and desire for reconciliation. This has been well expressed poetically, such

as by Thomas Hardy in the poem "[The Man He Killed](#)." It was the spirit of the [Franco-German agreement of 1963](#) between President de Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer, which effectively ended a century of mortal animosity in which the two countries took approximately 10 million casualties fighting each other. Such arrangements can only be made by governments and peoples that recognize that antagonism has failed and that it is time to pursue a peaceful end to hatreds and rivalries. It has been brought clearly home to all informed people that we continue to be in a time when comparative peace can only be maintained by a correlation of forces that discourages aggression.

The absence of the perception of such a balance emboldened the Russian government to invade Ukraine, and the comments of the then U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, [made it clear](#) that American expectations were of an [easy Russian victory](#) and reabsorption of Ukraine into Russia. This was a total and inexcusable failure of military intelligence, and indicated an unforgivable willingness to be complicit in giving back to Russia the largest single component of what it lost in the great and bloodless Western strategic victory at the end of the Cold War when the Soviet Union disintegrated.

The [Iran-approved](#) and bankrolled Hamas assault upon Israel on Oct. 7—which was, along with the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, at New York and Washington, the world's greatest atrocity of this young millennium—indicated that Iran and its terrorist proxies believed that the enfeebled strategic perceptions of the present U.S. government, as well as a systematic mobilization of anti-Israeli demonstrators throughout the West, would deter the response that Israel has pledged to make: to exterminate the military capacity of Hamas ever to inflict such grievous wounds on Israel again. Of course, Israel must ignore such agitation and exterminate Hamas as a military force.

The return of a war to Central Europe for the first time in 75 years and the escalation of Mideast tensions to their greatest point in 50 years, and the continued aggressions of China more explicitly threatening Taiwan than at any time since the normalization of relations with that country by the major

Western powers nearly 50 years ago, all emphasize the price Canada has paid in the influence and respect it once had and should retain in the world, by the foreign policy of this government, which has essentially been a prostration of naive altruism accentuated by deliberate military weakness.

This is, in fact, a time of tremendous geopolitical opportunity for the West. China has terrible financial problems; all talk of it imminently surpassing the United States as the world's greatest economy stopped shortly after the inauguration of Donald Trump and has not revived. It's vaunted "Belt and Road" has incited more animosity than influence. Russia thought it could conquer Ukraine in two weeks. Iran and Hamas insolently believed that they could jostle the irresolute Biden regime into restraining Israel from the elimination of Hamas.

Canada has demonstrated at critical times an ability positively to influence the United States. Prime Minister Mackenzie King was a marvelously effective intermediary between Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt from May 1940 to August 1941, when he knew both men better than they knew each other. Louis St. Laurent and Lester Pearson were equally effective in working with U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Anthony Eden in winding down the [Suez Crisis of 1956](#). Brian Mulroney had a great and benign influence with U.S. presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, and Canada's influence in the world grew as a result.

We are now paying a heavy price for ignoring our military for 30 years and redefining our world role from being a serious G7 player in the Western Alliance to unfocused, globalist goodwill offensives directed miscellaneously towards almost everyone, punctuated by self-inflicted wounds such as the unsubstantiated outburst against India, a very important country that had been accustomed to taking us seriously for 65 years. Countries have influence in the world by having strong alliances, a strong military that can be deployed, a wide array of natural resources of strategic value, and a

constructive and original foreign policy that defines national goals and pursues them with persistence and ingenuity.

Canada has the resources and the historic reputation as a country with an honest and intelligent foreign policy under governments of both major parties. But under the current regime we have behaved like Peter Pan descended upon Dante's Inferno, practically unarmed, mouthing platitudes (apart from Ambassador Bob Rae's distinguished contributions at the United Nations) and preoccupied with nonsensical views of climate and gender change while mutilating our national reputation in the world with false self-slanders about genocide against the native people. And, to adapt the famous expression, we are clueless in Gaza.

The country can do better, but I doubt if this government can.