

# Defence Policy "Walmart Style": Canadian Lessons in "not-so-grand" Grand Strategy

Christian Leuprecht  
Royal Military College of Canada &  
Queen's University

[christian.leuprecht@rmc.ca](mailto:christian.leuprecht@rmc.ca)  
[www.christianleuprecht.com](http://www.christianleuprecht.com)



# Overview

- Debate
- Grand Strategy in the context of Civ-Mil relations
- Rationalizing
- Reinventing
- Jettisoning
- Scaling Back
- Implications for Canada and NATO

# Debate

- Does Canada have a Grand Strategy?  
Should it?
- Does it need a better GS?
- Is Canada free riding?
  - Threats
- Walmart: Realism Canadian
- "How much is (just) enough?"
- A Seat at the Table, Influence, Prestige, and Status
- Metrics of global influence?



# GS

"The crux of grand strategy lies therefore in policy, that is, in the capacity of the nation's leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long term (that is in wartime and peacetime) best interests . . . it operates at various levels, political, strategic, operational, tactical, all interacting with each other to advance (or retard) the primary aim." (Paul Kennedy)

# Grand Strategy

- What is it?
- Is *GS* even possible?
  - Components
  - Democracy
- When do we find it?



# Canada's Strategic Culture: Expeditionary Expediency

- National Interests
  - International Security & Stability
  - Open Trade Routes/Trade surplus
- Grand Strategy: Prosperity, Harmony, Security
  - "Optimize" defence spending
  - Full-spectrum armed forces
- Strategic Culture
  - Expeditionary (Afghanistan as attitudinal change)
  - Discretionary
  - Positive Influence/No Ulterior Motive
- Posture
  - Canada vs. EU defence spending
  - Troop strength
  - Professionalization
  - Changing conceptions of the citizen-soldier (implications for policy and missions)

# Rationalizing (1960-1994)

- Just Enough: Play in the International Clubs
  - Threat of nuclear attack: Deterrence
  - Minimal commitments:
    - Peacekeeping
    - Off-the-shelf purchases
    - Unification
    - Divestmen
    - Nationalist retrenchment



# Reinventing (1994-2005)

- Overcoming the limits of "Just Enough"
  - Budgetary constraint
  - Post-Cold War temp of overseas ops
  - Axworthy human security doctrine
  - Interoperability





# Jettisoning... (2005-2007)

- ... Just Enough
  - New Conservative brand
  - Friction over defence spending gives rise to increases
  - "Unequal dialogue" in civ-mil relations



# Scaling Back... (2008-)

- ... ops, death, dismemberment, and expectations
  - What is there to show for? Personnel, ops, maintenance
  - Little new kit at tempo comparable to the 1990s
  - Cadillac or Corolla?



# NATO Retrenchment

- "There is an unmistakable sense among Western decision-makers of power slipping away. This is not solely a matter of possible American global disengagement, but a situation of "exhaustion-moral, political and economic-of nations that have been in the forefront of the international security business and the vibrant ascendancy of some other players."

(NATO Secretary-General Fogh Rasmussen)



# NATO Retrenchment

- Budgetary pressures
- Interventionist malaise
- Nationalist retrenchment



# Convergence: How Europe is becoming more "Canadian"

- Legitimation
  - Post-interventionist era (avoid "non-winning" conditions)
  - Anchor missions in society, human rights & int'l law
  - R2P/humanitarian interventions (problem of coherence)
- Liberal institutionalism
  - Skepticism about military/kinetic means
  - Soft power (interventionist exceptionalism)
  - UN-mandated/broad international consensus
  - Multilateralism (limit & steer unilateralism)



# The future of Canadian foreign policy

- MIA?
- Powerful? Or prosperous
- National power by other means
- Between retrenchment and multilateralism



Thank you and questions



[christian.leuprecht@rmc.ca](mailto:christian.leuprecht@rmc.ca)  
[www.christianleuprecht.com](http://www.christianleuprecht.com)