The Limits of the Human Security Agenda: The Case of Canada's Response to the Timor Crisis

T. S. HATALEY* AND KIM RICHARD NOSSAL

(Queen's University)

Enthusiasts of human security argue that what is needed in the post-Cold-War period is a foreign policy agenda that is more 'people-centred' than the state-centred focus of security policy during the Cold War period. Among the most enthusiastic proponents of the human security paradigm in the 1990s was the Canadian government, which, in partnership with a number of other like-minded governments, sought to press the human security agenda, taking a number of human security initiatives. However, since the late 1990s, we have seen a paradox: the concept has attracted increased attention from scholars while its salience among policy-makers appears to be declining. Using the case of the Canadian govern-ment's policy towards the crisis in Timor in September 1999, we explore the difficulty that policy-makers have had in moving human security from the rhetorical realm to the level of concrete policy that makes a difference to the safety of people whose security is threatened. We conclude that there was a significant gap between Canada's human security rhetoric and Ottawa's actual policy in Timor. While the Canadian government did eventually contribute troops to the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET), we show that Canada's response was slow, cautious, and minimalist. There was neither the willingness nor the capacity to be at the forefront of the efforts to send a robust force to East Timor. This case demonstrates some important limits of the human security agenda, and why this agenda remained so firmly in the realm of the rhetorical in the 1990s.

Efforts to 'redefine' security have been a persistent theme of contemporary international relations scholarship.[1] With the end of the Cold War, the attention of students of security turned from the paradoxical 'in/security' of the nuclear balance of terror—where the security of the state was predicated on the purposeful creation of insecurity among the citizens—to the putatively 'new' insecurity of the decade-long post-Cold-War period. The series of intrastate wars and ethnic conflicts that marked the ten years between the end of the Cold War and the onset of the post-9/11 era intensified the search for a better

---

* T. S. Hataley and Kim Richard Nossal, Department of Political Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6, Canada. Fax: +1-613-533-6848. Email: <9th1@qsilver.queensu.ca>; <nossalk@post.queensu.ca>.
1 Richard H. Ullman, 'Redefining Security', *International Security*, 8 (1983), pp. 129–153; Jessica Tuchman Mathews, 'Redefining Security', *Foreign Affairs*, 68 (1989), pp. 162–177; Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd edn (Boulder: Westview, 1991); Joseph J. Romm, *Defining National Security: The Nonmilitary Aspects* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993).

conceptualization, or 're-visioning',[2] of security. Often this took the form of adorning 'security' with modifiers that were intended to better capture the multidimensional aspects of security in world politics: for example, 'cooperative security', 'collective security', and 'common security.'[3]

Academic interest in redefining and adorning security during this period was mirrored by many political leaders, particularly in the West, who had to grapple with the consequences, both moral and political, of the frequent outbreak of brutal and well-publicized violence in the post-Cold-War period. Indeed, as more ordinary people were killed in the conflicts in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Chechnya, or Rwanda, some foreign policy makers in the West sought to articulate a more 'people-centred' approach to security. From this 'people-centred' understanding of security grew the 'human security' paradigm. The phrase seeks to postulate a conception of security that takes into account the paradox first noted by students of security during the Cold War era: that the security of states tends to tell us little about the security or insecurity of individuals within states. Instead, human security insists that we focus on the safety of ordinary people rather than on the security of states.[4]

One of the foremost proponents of the human security paradigm in the 1990s was the Canadian government. In partnership with Norway, Canada and a number of other like-minded governments sought to press the human security agenda, organizing meetings, pushing the idea of a 'people-centred' foreign policy, and taking a number of initiatives that it was believed would advance the human security agenda. In particular, Canada's foreign minister from 1996 to 2000, Lloyd Axworthy, took the lead in trying to forge a reconceptualization of the idea of security, shifting the focus from the security of states to the safety of people.

However, as Roland Paris has noted, as a foreign policy agenda the human security agenda is 'sweeping and open-ended'.[5] As Paris puts it, trying to ensure that ordinary people are safe from threats to their well-being may be an 'honourable' goal, but it involves a potentially extensive and expansive foreign policy agenda. Without some means of limiting the scope of whose safety is to be protected, any government that embraces the human security agenda faces a daunting challenge: To which of the vast range of threats to the safety of ordinary people should it respond? And what tools of statecraft should be used, and under what circumstances?

While the idea of human security has attracted increasing interest among students of global politics since it was first articulated in the early 1990s, its popularity among policy-makers appears to have waned, particularly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. To be sure, from retirement Axworthy was quick to argue that 9/11 was testament

---

2   For example, J. Ann Tickner, 'Re-visioning Security', in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds), *International Relations Theory Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

3   Kim Richard Nossal, 'Seeing Things? The Adornment of "Security" in Australia and Canada', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 49 (May 1995), pp. 33–47.

4   On human security generally, see Peter Stoett, *Human and Global Security: An Exploration of Terms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Ramesh Thakur, 'The UN and Human Security', *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 7 (1999), pp. 51–59. On the Canadian foreign policy context, see Heather Owens and Barbara Arneil, 'The Human Security Paradigm Shift: A New Lens on Canadian Foreign Policy?', *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 7 (1999), pp. 1–12; George MacLean, 'Instituting and Projecting Human Security: A Canadian Perspective', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 54,3 (2000), pp. 269–276; Robin Jeffrey Hay, 'Present at the Creation? Human Security and Canadian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century', in Fen Osler Hampson, Michael Hart, and Martin Rudner, *Canada among Nations 1999: A Big League Player?* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 215–232; the contributions in Rob McRae and Don Hubert (eds), *Human Security and the New Diplomacy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); and the contributions to Rosalind Irwin (ed.), *Ethics and Security in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001). For a trenchant critique of the human security, see Roland Paris, 'Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?' *International Security*, 26,2 (2001), pp. 87–102.

5   Paris, 'Human Security', p. 91.

to the relevance of the human security agenda,[6] but the government of which he was once a member has quietly dropped human security as a central theme of foreign policy.[7] The Human Security Network remains active, but since 9/11 its activity has been at the margins.

While there are no doubt a number of reasons for the decline in salience of the human security agenda among policy-makers, we suggest that one reason is the difficulty that policy-makers have in moving the human security agenda from the realm of fine rhetoric to the level of concrete policy that makes a difference to the safety of people whose security is threatened. While we are cognizant of the theoretical limitations of a single case study, this article focuses on the case of how one government that had embraced the human security agenda responded to unambiguous threats to the safety of people who were geographically distant and remote from its interests. We explore the embrace of the human security paradigm by the Canadian government in the mid-1990s, and then look at Ottawa's response to the violence in East Timor in September 1999.

We conclude that there was a significant gap between the rhetoric of the human security agenda and the Canadian government's actual policy in East Timor. While the Canadian government did eventually respond to the outbreak of violence in Timor by contributing troops to the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET), we show that Ottawa's response was slow, cautious, and minimalist. There was neither the willingness nor the capacity to be at the forefront of the efforts to interpose a robust force in East Timor once the Indonesian government had given its consent.

This case demonstrates some important limits of the human security agenda, and in particular why this agenda remained so firmly in the realm of the rhetorical in the 1990s. First, we will argue that the Canadian government, despite the expansive rhetoric of the human security agenda, found itself having to decide between what Donald K. Emmerson termed *Moralpolitik* and *Realpolitik* in the Timor case.[8] In Canada, as in many other Western countries, *Realpolitik* carried the day: a hard calculation of interests led to the conclusion that there were in fact no Canadian interests that warranted more than a token and symbolic contribution to the efforts to end the threat to the safety of East Timorese.

Second, the human security agenda, if it is to be taken seriously, suggests that the state embracing it should organize itself in a way to be able to implement its commitment to the safety of ordinary people in other places. The Canadian contribution to INTERFET showed clearly that Ottawa's embrace of human security was not underwritten by a comparable embrace of the means to do more than provide symbolic and rhetorical support for the idea. Neither the Canadian prime minister, Jean Chrétien, nor his minister of finance at the time, Paul Martin, was prepared to buy into the foreign minister's enthusiasm for the human security agenda. Moreover, while the Canadian Forces embrace peacekeeping as an institutional *métier*, neither the minister of national defence nor the finance minister was prepared to organize the Canadian Forces to engage in the kind of robust expeditionary projection envisaged by the human security agenda. As Robin Hay put it, crudely but appropriately, 'Martin continually fails to put the government's money where Lloyd Axworthy's mouth is on human security.'[9] Thus, by 1999, when the human security of East Timorese was manifestly at risk, the Canadian government had neither the will nor the

---

6 Lloyd Axworthy, 'Make Sense, not war', *Globe and Mail* (17 September 2001), p. A17, <http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/01.09/010917axworthy.htm>.

7 For example, although the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) maintains a human security website (<http://www.humansecurity.gc.ca/psh-en.asp>), Axworthy's signal contribution to the human security debate—his 1999 'concept paper', discussed below—disappeared from the DFAIT website after Axworthy's retirement from politics before the 2000 Canadian general election.

8 Donald K. Emmerson, 'Moralpolitik: The Timor Test', *National Interest*, 58 (Winter 1999/2000), pp. 63–68.

9 Hay, 'Present at the Creation', p. 230.

capacity to implement the ambitious human security agenda being embraced so enthusiastically by the foreign minister.

In short, we suggest that the case of Canadian policy towards the Timor crisis of 1999 confirms the conclusion of some scholars that the human security paradigm might offer a useful analytical tool, but is not very useful for those who have to make foreign policy. Paris, for example, has argued that the policy-maker's task is made difficult because 'the ethic of the human security movement is to emphasize the "inclusiveness" and "holism" of the term, which in practice seems to mean treating all interests and objectives within the movement as equally valid'.[10] Likewise, as Heather Owens and Barbara Arneil put it, human security 'is too broad and vague a concept to be meaningful for policymakers, as it has come to entail such a wide range of different threats on one hand, while prescribing a diverse and sometimes incompatible set of policy solutions to resolve them on the other'.[11]

'Safety for People': The Human Security Agenda

The human security agenda enjoyed a central place in Canadian foreign policy in the mid and late 1990s. While some elements of the human security approach had been evident prior to Axworthy's appointment as minister of foreign affairs in January 1996,[12] Axworthy embraced the concept and made it a central focus of foreign policy during his time in office. Soon after his appointment, Axworthy was using the language of human security, and within a year had articulated the key elements of the approach,[13] and had embraced human security as a primary goal of Canadian foreign policy. Indeed, he pushed his agenda with a such fervour that Fen Osler Hampson and Dean F. Oliver were prompted to characterize Axworthy's approach to foreign policy as 'pulpit diplomacy'.[14]

Axworthy's leadership did produce a number of diplomatic successes, the most notable of which was the convention to ban anti-personnel landmines.[15] Moreover, he sought to institutionalize and multilateralize the human security agenda. Axworthy and the Norwegian foreign minister, Knut Vollebaek, had sought to institutionalize intergovernmental interest in the human security agenda by creating the Human Security Network, a coalition of like-minded governments interested in human security. In May 1998, Axworthy and Vollebaek met on the island of Lysøen in Norway, and negotiated the Lysøen Declaration, in essence an action plan for human security.[16] Subsequently, 11 other governments joined the Network.[17]

---

10 Paris, 'Human Security', p. 92.

11 Owens and Arneil, 'Human Security Paradigm Shift', p. 2.

12 See Jennifer Ross, 'Is Canada's Human Security Policy Really the "Axworthy Doctrine"?' *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 8,2 (2001), pp. 75–93, who argues that the roots of the human security agenda can be traced to the policies pursued by the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney in response to the civil wars in Central America in the mid-1980s.

13 For example, Lloyd Axworthy, 'Canada and Human Security: The Need for Leadership', *International Journal*, 52,2 (1997), pp. 183–196.

14 Fen Osler Hampson and Dean F. Oliver, 'Pulpit Diplomacy: A Critical Assessment of the Axworthy Doctrine', *International Journal*, 53,3 (1998), pp. 379–406.

15 On the landmines issue, see Maxwell A. Cameron, Robert J. Lawson, and Brian W. Tomlin (eds), *To Walk without Fear: The Global Movement to Ban Landmines* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also Mark Gwodzdecky and Jill Sinclair, 'Landmines and Human Security', in McRae and Hubert (eds), *Human Security*, pp. 28–40; Andrew Latham, 'Theorizing the Landmine Campaign: Ethics, Global Cultural Scripts, and the Laws of War', in Irwin (ed.), *Ethics and Security*, pp. 160–78; David A. Lenarcic, *Knight-Errant: Canada and the Crusade to Ban Anti-personnel Land Mines* (Toronto: Irwin, 1998).

16 Michael Small, 'The Human Security Network', in McRae and Hubert (eds), *Human Security and the New Diplomacy*, pp. 231–235.

17 The Human Security Network includes Austria, Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, The Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand—and South Africa as an observer. See < http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org/menu-e.php > .

However, as Paris has noted,[18] one of the major problems with the human security agenda as a central component of foreign policy was its expansive nature. As some students have noted, the human security agenda involves a vast range of threats to human safety; unless it is very narrowly defined, Canada would have to become, as Hay put it, 'a Boy Scout imperialist' to actually implement that agenda.[19] But even if one were to take a more narrow perspective on human security—for example, working to keep people safe from violence or threats of violence that can come with the collapse of state authority—the commitment is still an expansive one.

In its 'concept paper' on human security, published in the middle of the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade argued that the embrace of the human security agenda had a number of consequences for a country's foreign policy. First, it argued that on occasion the defence of human security objectives would require 'vigorous action', including coercive measures, such as sanctions and military force. However, the paper added that only 'when conditions warrant' should coercive diplomacy be used in the pursuit of the human security agenda.[20]

Clearly the conditions warranted earlier in 1999, when the Canadian government participated in the use of force against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in response to the killing of Kosovar Albanians in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo by Serb security forces, both local militias and police and armed forces from Serbia proper. When the president of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, refused demands by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to relinquish *de facto* control of the province to the international community, NATO forces bombed Serbian targets in Kosovo and Serbia proper for 78 days before Milosevic relented. In this campaign, Canada was a relatively enthusiastic partici-pant, committing some 800 ground troops and 18 CF-18/A Hornet fighter-bombers to the NATO campaign.[21] It bears mentioning that the Chrétien government's enthusiasm was not diminished by the existence of considerable domestic criticism by the sizeable number of Canadians of Serbian origin, who staged angry protests against their taxes being used to bomb their country of origin.

Importantly, Canada's policy towards the war in Kosovo was framed almost exclusively in terms of the human security agenda rather than in terms of political or strategic reasons. As Axworthy put it,

> It was and is the humanitarian imperative that has galvanized the alliance to act. To be sure, strategic considerations played a role. The risk of the conflict's spilling over into the Balkans, in particular into Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was and is a concern. However, NATO's actions are guided primarily by concern for the human rights and welfare of Kosovo's people.

Rather, Axworthy stressed the 'human security' considerations. He argued that 'NATO's actions are guided primarily by concern for the human rights and welfare of Kosovo's people … Alliance members could not turn away from the humanitarian crisis taking place on NATO's European doorstep. That is why Canadian pilots are part of the effort.'[22]

18 Paris, 'Human Security', p. 88.
19 Hay, 'Present at the Creation', p. 228.
20 Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World* (Ottawa, 1999), p. 8. This document can no longer be found on the DFAIT website; it was, however, posted to a number of other sites where it can still be accessed: see, for example, <http://www.summit-americas.org/Canada/HumanSecurity-english.htm>.
21 Kim Richard Nossal and Stéphane Roussel, 'Canada and the Kosovo War: The Happy Follower', in Pierre Martin and Mark R. Brawley, *Alliance Politics, Kosovo, and NATO's War* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 181–199.
22 Axworthy, 'Kosovo and the Human Security Agenda', Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs, *Statements and Speeches* 99/28, 7 April 1999, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University. For the full text, see <http://198.103.104.118/minpub/Publication.asp?FileSpec=/Min_Pub_Docs/100194.htm>.

Given Canada's support for the intervention in Kosovo in March 1999, and given the success of the NATO bombing campaign in bringing Serbian ethnic cleansing in Kosovo to an end, it might have been expected that the Chrétien government would have taken a more active approach to the evolving situation in the Indonesian-occupied territory of East Timor over the summer of 1999.

Canada and the Crisis in Timor

Despite the centrality of the human security agenda in Canadian foreign policy in 1999; despite Canada's enthusiastic support for NATO's humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in the spring of 1999; and despite the strong support that the Canadian government had given to the process of Indonesian disengagement after Australian Prime Minister John Howard's initiative of December 1998,[23] the Canadian approach to the outbreak of severe violence in East Timor can best be described as cautious. Over the course of 1999, the government in Ottawa limited its involvement in the Timor process to the diplomatic realm. Canadian officials had access to the same intelligence that other Western countries did concerning the willingness of the TNI-backed militias to use force—in particular the clear threats of the militias as early as February 1999 that they would use violence if there was a vote for independence from Indonesia.[24] Moreover, despite the fact that, as Wheeler and Dunne put it, 'amber warning lights were flashing in the months before the 30 August vote',[25] the Canadian government did not follow the lead of the Australian government, which had moved as early as March 1999 to mobilize the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for possible action in East Timor[26] and which had mobilized over the southern winter of 1999 in anticipation of violence. and, as the violence escalated in September 1999,[27] the Canadian government's position was marked by a distinct lack of enthusiasm to take concrete action.

Axworthy was on a tour of Nordic countries when the violence erupted. He expressed abhorrence: 'It was quite clear that Indonesian police are not interceding toprovide security and letting the paramilitary literally get away with murder ... We can't allow that to continue.' However, he also noted that 'we have to be conscious of a peacekeeping force landing there and being opposed by the Indonesian military. I don't think that would be a very sound policy.'[28]

23 On Howard's initiative, see Alexander Downer, 'East Timor: Looking Back on 1999', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 54,1 (2000), p. 6; Garry Woodard, 'Australia's Foreign Policy after Timor', *International Journal*, 55,1 (1999–2000), pp. 2–3; also Nicholas Wheeler and Tim Dunne, 'East Timor and the New Humanitarian Interventionism', *International Affairs*, 77,4 (2001), p. 812.

24 William Maley, 'Australia and the East Timor Crisis: Some Critical Comments', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 54,2 (2000), pp. 151–161.

25 Wheeler and Dunne, 'East Timor and the New Humanitarian Interventionism', p. 815.

26 In March 1999, an additional brigade of the ADF was moved to Darwin and put on 30-day readiness. By June, the ADF was engaged in exercises simulating an amphibious landing in East Timor, and special forces were landed in East Timor to scout possible landing sites. Eventually, over 4500 troops were assembled in Darwin in readiness for a possible deployment to East Timor. Cotton, 'Against the Grain', pp. 131–132.

27 Ian Martin, *Self-Determination in East Timor: The United Nations, the Ballot, and International Intervention* (Boulder: Lynne Reinner, 2001); Wheeler and Dunne, 'East Timor and the New Humanitarian Interventionism', pp. 805–827; James Cotton, 'Against the Grain: The East Timor Intervention', *Survival*, 43,1 (2001); United Nations, 'The United Nations and East Timor—A Chronology', <http://www.un.org/peace/etimor/Untaetchrono.html>; International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect: The Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (Ottawa: International Development Research Council, 2001), supplementary volume: *Research, Bibliography, Background*, pp. 114–117.

28 'Militia Mayhem Kills Five Following East Timor Vote', *National Post* (2 September 1999); 'Canada Wants World to Lean on Indonesia', *Toronto Star*, 2 September 1999. Axworthy was not alone in this view: on 3 September, Peter Burleigh, the deputy ambassador to the United Nations of the United States, termed an international security force for East Timor 'not a practical suggestion'. Quoted in Joseph Nevins, 'The Making

As the killings intensified, Axworthy continued to discuss the matter with Robin Cook, the British foreign secretary, and with Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General. And while there was consensus that a 'robust' international force was needed, Axworthy continued to express concern about the Indonesian military. 'Clearly we're still limited by the insistence of the Indonesian authorities that they will handle it … Nobody wants to contemplate going ashore against [Indonesian] opposition.'[29] He also rejected calls for economic sanctions against Indonesia, claiming that it was better to keep the lines of communication open rather than isolating Indonesia.[30]

Likewise, on 7 September, when the Australian minister for defence, John Moore, was committing between 2000 and 4000 troops to a 'coalition of the willing' and it was announced that Britain and New Zealand were expected to commit a comparable number of ground troops for a humanitarian intervention, the Canadian government was quick to deny reports that Canada would join the coalition. 'We are not at that stage,' Chrétien was reported as saying. 'Canada is always considering any difficult situation, but we are not there yet. We will see what the United Nations is doing.' The Prime Minister's Office added that Chrétien wanted the Indonesian government to consent to the deployment of foreign troops in Timor,[31] which was a common position among the Core Group and the international community more generally.

By 7 September, as more information about the crisis in East Timor began to filter out of the territory, the Canadian government acknowledged that, if it was necessary to send in peacekeepers, Canada would make a commitment. However, that was qualified by two conditions. First, the contribution would be small, based simply on the fact that Canada had troop commitments elsewhere, notably in Yugoslavia. Second, the Canadian contribution would not be made outside a multilateral arrangement that had both UN backing and broad international consensus.[32] On 8 September, Axworthy reiterated Canada's position not to impose economic sanctions, but to press for a multilateral consensus and for Indonesian approval for an international peacekeeping force.[33] This he proceeded to do: while Axworthy took the lead in organizing a meeting of foreign ministers of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum to discuss the issue, other governments—notably the United States, Australia, and Britain—took the lead in coercing the president of Indonesia, B. J. Habibie, into agreeing to an international peacekeeping force authorized by the United Nations Security Council.

During an interview broadcast in Canada on 9 September, Axworthy noted from Auckland that the violence in East Timor was not a complete surprise; in fact Canada had weeks earlier taken steps through the UN Security Council to draw up a contingency plan for East Timor.[34] The fact that the violence in East Timor was no surprise was further supported by Bela Galhos, an East Timor exile living in Ottawa, and Kerry Pither of the East Timor Alert Network. Both claimed that the international community knew the violence was coming and that NGOs had been warning the international community about the inevitability of this outcome.[35]

Footnote Continued

of "Ground Zero" in East Timor in 1999: An Analysis of International Complicity in Indonesia's Crimes', *Asian Survey*, 42,4 (2002), p. 639.

29 'Robust Presence Needed in East Timor: Axworthy', *National Post* (7 September 1999).

30 CTV-TV, 'Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Is Dismissing Calls for Economic Sanctions against East Timor' (6 September 1999).

31 'Coalition Ready to Send Troops into East Timor', *National Post* (8 September 1999), p. A1.

32 CBC-TV, 'East Timor Crisis' (8 September 1999) and 'Canada's Contribution to the East Timor Crisis' (7 September 1999).

33 'APEC Divided over Peacekeepers', *Toronto Star* (9 September 1999), p. A1.

34 CBC-TV, 'Lloyd Axworthy', *The National Magazine* (9 September 1999).

35 CTV-TV, 'Canada Criticized for Inaction over East Timor Bloodletting', *Canada AM* (8 September 1999).

By 11 September, an international intervention force was beginning to develop, although a mandate for one did not yet exist. John Howard, the prime minister of Australia, reported that there were firm commitments from New Zealand, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and Portugal. All these commitments, however, were subject to a UN mandate.[36]

On 12 September, at the same time that Habibie was agreeing to formally ask the UN for an international peacekeeping force, Chrétien publicly announced that Canada would be participating in the East Timor intervention force, promising 600 troops from the Canadian Forces (CF).[37] He was immediately attacked by critics who claimed that Canada did not have the ability to send 600 troops to East Timor. For example, David Bercuson accused the prime minister of making a commitment 'without any regard for where the troops were going to come from, for the size of the defence budget and for the welfare of CF soldiers'.[38] Similar criticisms were voiced by Art Hanger, the Reform Party defence critic, who maintained that Canada did not have the resources, the forces, or the equipment for such a mission. As Hanger put it, 'The prime minister is picking numbers from his hat and making outrageous promises to bolster his own ego on the world stage … [He] remains blissfully unaware of the military meltdown ongoing at DND [Department of National Defence].'[39] (It appeared from the eventual Canadian contribution to INTERFET, detailed below, that Chrétien had been told that the total number of Canadian Forces personnel that could be assigned to the Timor mission was between 600 and 650. This included 250 naval personnel, 100 aircrew, 50 logistical and medical support, and 200 infantry. Because he had referred to 600 'troops', he left the impression that Canada would be devoting 600 infantry troops to the mission.)

Despite Chrétien's pledge, the NGO community in Canada continued to press the government for more vigorous action. On 13 September, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation's Asia Pacific Working Group, a coalition of NGOs with operations or partners in East Timor, wrote to Axworthy, providing details of the death and destruction being visited on NGO operations in Timor by the Indonesian-backed militias. The coalition called on Canada not only to use its position on the Security Council to intensify international pressure for the fast deployment of an international force to prevent the further loss of life, but also to apply a range of sanctions against Indonesia.[40] Likewise, the Canadian Labour Congress added its voice to the calls for sanctions: on 14 September, Ken Georgetti, the president of the CLC, called on his 2.3 million members to refuse to handle products moving between Canada and Indonesia.[41]

After 15 September, when the Security Council approved Resolution 1264 (1999), authorizing the establishment of a multinational force, the Canadian government began to finalize its contribution. As anticipated, it consisted of land, marine, and air elements, numbering approximately 600 personnel. However, while an advance reconnaissance mission of 15 CF personnel was despatched from Canada on 16 September, the departure

---

36 CTV-TV, 'The Unfolding Crisis in East Timor Had Hijacked the Agenda at the APEC Summit in Auckland, New Zealand', *National News* (11 September 1999).

37 CBC-TV, 'Sending in the Troops', *Sunday Report* (12 September 1999). Habibie made his decision in the early hours of 13 September; across the international date line it was still the 12th in North America.

38 CBC-TV, 'Canada's Commitment', *Sunday Report* (12 September 1999).

39 CTV-TV, 'The Continuing Violence in East Timor', *National News* (13 September 1999); 'Canadian Military Can't Meet PM's Promise, Eggleton Says', *National Post* (15 September 1999).

40 Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), *News Release*, 13 September 1999, < http://www. ccic.ca/ archives/news/1999/nr_130999_east_timor.htm > . The CCIC's Asia Pacific Working Group included the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, USC Canada, CUSO, South Asia Partnership, Canadian Human Rights Foundation, Alternatives Inc., Indonesia Canada Alliance, Philippine Development Assistant Program, Inter Pares, Canada Asia Working Group, and International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.

41 'CLC Wants Boycott on Indonesia', *National Post* (15 September 1999), p. A4.

of the main force was delayed because time was needed for the completion of an inoculation regime against Japanese encephalitis—a mosquito-borne virus prevalent in East Timor. While National Defence Headquarters had begun inoculations even before the government made its formal announcement, inoculations took 40 days to complete, and thus Canadian troops were not be available for deployment to East Timor until the end of October, well after the first Australian-led forces began arriving in Timor on 20 September.

In the end, the Canadian contribution to INTERFET, named Operation Toucan, did consist of over 600 personnel from the three CF elements.[42] The air element consisted of two CC-130 Hercules transports, with 103 personnel. The deployment of the Hercules, both of which had been acquired in the 1960s, was marked by problems: one Hercules had to return to its base in Trenton, Ontario three times with mechanical problems; the other made it as far as Fiji, where it experienced a failure in the pressurization system limiting it to flying no higher than 10,000 feet. And when both Hercules finally made it to Darwin, one of the planes was grounded for 11 days with mechanical problems. However, the Hercules did manage to fly 130 missions into Timor, ferrying over 1000 tons of cargo and over 2000 passengers before returning to Canada on 26 November.

The naval component of the Canadian contribution consisted of the supply ship, HMCS *Protecteur*, with a crew of 250. *Protecteur* left Esquimalt on 23 September and arrived in East Timor in October. Its primary duties were replenishment: supplying other INTERFET ships and the Canadian land forces upon arrival in East Timor in October. HMCS *Protecteur* returned to Canada in February 2000.

Finally, the Canadian contribution included a small land force. The core element was an infantry company of 175 soldiers from the Royal 22e Regiment (the 'Van Doos') based in Valcartier, Québec. This company was attached as a subunit of the First Battalion of the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, which itself was part of the Australian brigade. In addition to the company of Van Doos, an additional 68 personnel provided command, logistical, and medical support. The land forces left Canada on 15 October and trained with the New Zealand battalion in Townsville in Queensland before landing in Timor on 29 October 1999.

Analysis

Why was the Canadian government so cautious in responding to the crisis in human security in East Timor in September 1999? Why, despite Axworthy's commitment to the human security agenda, was the Canadian material commitment to the operation in East Timor so limited? Why did it take until the end of October—fully two months after the outbreak of violence in the territory—for Canadian ground troops to reach the theatre? Why was there so little forward planning for the possibility that the East Timorese vote on autonomy in August might be marked by violence? Even given the differences in strategic location between Canada and Australia, why was Ottawa so hesitant to follow Canberra's lead in preparing for a violent transition?

One argument often put forward by critics is that Canadian caution was the direct result of economic interests.[43] On the one hand, it is true that Canada's economic ties with

---

42 For details, see Jessica Blitt, 'OP Toucan and Beyond: Contradictions in Canadian Policy in East Timor', *Datalink*, 87 (2000); and Canada, Department of National Defence, *Annual Report of the Chief of the Defence Staff, 1999–2000* (Ottawa, 2001).

43 See, for example, the critique of Svend J. Robinson (NDP: Burnaby-Douglas): Canada, Parliament, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* (17 September 1999); also see Joe Woodward, 'Business Comes First: While East Timor burns, East Timor Maintains Its Unbroken Record of Ignoring It', *Alberta Report*, 26 (20 September 1999).

Indonesia had been growing substantially over the course of the 1990s. According to the East Timor Alert Network, when the Chrétien government came to office in 1993, Canadian investments in Indonesia totalled some C\$3 billion; by 1998, Canadian investments in East Timor had tripled to C\$9 billion.[44] In 1994, Chrétien recognized Indonesia as the biggest and fastest-growing market in the world; clearly there was a desire for Canada to be part of that market, perhaps best indicated by the Team Canada trade mission to Indonesia in January 1996[45] and the continued willingness of the Canadian government to approve arms sales to the government in Djakarta. Moreover, as Svend J. Robinson, a New Democratic Party member of Parliament, reminded Axworthy, the Canadian government's positive attitude towards Indonesia was clearly on display at the APEC meeting in Vancouver in 1997, when the government 'rolled out the red carpet for Suharto, the author of the genocide in East Timor, and attacked students who were peacefully protesting his policies'.[46] As the situation in East Timor deteriorated, in this view, the Canadian government's policy was concerned with the protection of Canadian economic interests in Indonesia. Kerry Pither, of the East Timor Action Network, accused the Canadian government of 'always put[ting] Indonesian trade and \$6 billion in Canadian investments ahead of human rights'.[47]

While not surprisingly Axworthy himself dismissed this argument outright,[48] the economic argument does not explain why the Canadian foreign minister took the initiative in pushing the East Timor issue at the APEC meeting or at the United Nations. Axworthy's overt criticisms of the Indonesian regime and his persistent personal pressure on Ali Alatas, the Indonesian foreign minister, were hardly consistent with an effort to maintain good relations with the Habibie regime. Moreover, while over C\$300 million in military sales from Canada to Indonesia had been approved by the Chrétien government between 1993 and 1998, Axworthy had implemented a new regime for assessing the impact of all Canada's military sales abroad on human rights; when applied to Indonesia, this had slowed actual exports of military goods to a mere C\$5000 in 1997 and 1998.[49]

Alternatively, it has been argued by some that Western governments, including Canada, had little interest in East Timor's autonomy, but were pushed into activism because of the interrelated dynamics of public opinion, the media attention given to the violence, and the impact of the NGO community. For example, Geoffrey Robinson suggests that three interrelated dynamics were at work.[50] First, governments were susceptible to the 'CNN effect': as one senior Western diplomat put it to Robinson, his country's policy 'was not driven by realpolitik but by the reactions to images on the television'. Second, the international community had people on the ground in East Timor, and the real possibility that foreigners might die prompted some states to become involved. This potential crisis was ratcheted up one notch when on 8 September some of the UN officials in East Timor refused to be evacuated. And finally Robinson argues that NGOs played an important role in lobbying the government and educating the public. Moreover, the fact that NGOs had

---

44 East Timor Alert Network BC, 'The Tragedy of East Timor', < http://www.redeagle.com/etanbc/ intro.html > .
45 CBC-TV, 'Chrétien Applauds Suharto's Decision' (21 May 1998).
46 Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Minutes* (17 September 1999); on the pepper-spraying of protesting students, see W. Wesley Pue (ed.), *Pepper in Our Eyes: The APEC Affair* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).
47 Cited in Blitt, 'OP Toucan and Beyond', p. 3.
48 See, for example, Axworthy's dismissive response when Brian Stewart of CBC suggested to him that 'many people will doubt Canada's willingness to be really forceful on this because of our trade relations with Indonesia, which we've worked very hard on, over the years, to build up. I mean are you prepared to even consider sanctions, an embargo here?' Axworthy immediately retorted, 'I don't think that's got anything to do with it.' CBC-TV, *National Magazine* (9 September 1999).
49 Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Minutes* (17 September 1999).
50 Geoffrey Robinson, 'If You Leave Us, We Will Die', *Dissent* (Winter 2002), p. 89.

been involved in East Timor since the mid-1970s meant that the groundwork was already in place and the lobbying did not need to start at square one. One Canadian diplomat is reported as saying that it was the influence of the NGOs that finally convinced the Canadian government to become involved in East Timor.[51]

There can be little doubt that the dynamics of public opinion played an important part in the crisis. Coral Bell notes that East Timor provides a good example of the effectiveness of the 'hue and cry' strategy that had its origins in the thinking behind the League of Nations.[52] And it is clear that the interrelated dynamics of the CNN effect and NGO activism ensured that the issue of East Timor did not slide off the agenda. However, the problem with this argument, when applied to the Canadian case, is that the government did not have to be impelled into action. It is quite clear that as the situation in East Timor deteriorated, Canada's diplomatic apparatus was already in motion. Indeed, it is clear that neither the CNN effect nor political action by the NGO community had any impact on Ottawa's policy once it had been articulated in early September. On the contrary, the government stuck to its position *despite* media images of the killings and destruction and pressure from the NGO community: there were going to be no wide-ranging sanctions imposed on Indonesia; a multinational peacekeeping force should only be deployed with Indonesian permission; and Canada was going to provide a marginal contribution to whatever multinational force was created.

A more plausible explanation for the gap between Axworthy's human security rhetoric and the policy behaviour of the Canadian government was simply that the government as a whole had not bought into the foreign minister's human security agenda. The lack of support of the prime minister himself for the human security agenda can perhaps best be seen in how Chrétien explained the despatch of Canadian forces to the Timor operation. Rather than justifying the deployment of Canadian troops by mentioning the humanitarian crisis, or the human security agenda, Chrétien instead argued that Canadian troops were being sent to East Timor because the Canadian public wanted the peacekeepers in Timor in order to boost the country's international image. 'We are always there, like Boy Scouts,' Chrétien was reported to have said at the conclusion of the APEC summit in New Zealand on 13 September. 'And we are happy and Canadians love it. They think it is a nice way for Canadians to be present around the world.'[53]

In short, there was little in the prime minister's rhetoric that suggested that he was committing forces to a robust humanitarian mission. On the contrary: Chrétien expressed the belief that rationality would prevail in East Timor. Speaking to reporters in Tokyo on 18 September at the end of a trade mission, Chrétien stated, 'These missions are always difficult. It's always dangerous, but we have confidence that when the UN-sponsored troops are arriving there that the Indonesians will respect the wish of the international community and will respect the decisions of their own government.'[54]

Despite his expression of confidence in the rationality of the Indonesians in East Timor, the timing of Canadian deployment to the Timor theatre strongly suggests that the government in Ottawa was not willing to take any chances that Canadian Forces would be subject to hostile fire. Since one could only know how much resistance the TNI or the militias would put up by actually landing troops in East Timor, the Canadian deployment,

---

51 Robinson, 'If You Leave Us, We Will Die', p. 97.
52 A common belief in the early interwar period was that if international public opinion raised a hue and cry, governments would rethink their aggressive policies. Because the 'hue and cry' strategy so manifestly did not work against Japan, Italy, and Germany, the idea fell into disrepute. Bell, 'East Timor, Canberra and Washington', pp. 172–173.
53 'East Timor Troops Need More Power: Axworthy', *National Post* (14 September 1999), p. A1.
54 'Chrétien Confirms Troops, Hardware for East Timor', *National Post* (18 September 1999), p. A10.

with the delay required by the 40-day inoculation period, was conveniently timed to ensure that the Canadian Forces would arrive well after the main Australian-led force had been deployed to East Timor, and thus well after the first encounter between INTERFET and the TNI-backed militias.[55]

It should be noted that Chrétien's apparent aversion to the use of force as a tool of foreign policy in the case of East Timor was entirely consistent with his general approach to the use of force over his years as leader of the opposition and then as prime minister. As Liberal leader of the opposition during the first Gulf War in 1991, Chrétien vociferously opposed using force to expel Iraq from Kuwait, going so far as to argue that the Canadian Forces operating in the Persian Gulf should be brought home if fighting broke out.[56] As prime minister, he consistently argued against the use of threats of NATO air strikes against the Serbs in Bosnia.[57] And in early 2003, Chrétien refused to join the American-led invasion of Iraq, provoking a serious crisis in Canadian–American relations as a result. It could be suggested that on the two occasions when the Chrétien government did agree to use force—in Kosovo in 1999 and in Afghanistan in 2002—the prime minister had his eye firmly on public opinion polls that demonstrated high levels of support for the use of force against the Serbs in Kosovo and against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Moreover, Chrétien's aversion to the use of force appears to have been mirrored in the Liberal government more generally, and may explain why the rhetoric of the foreign minister was never connected in a serious way to the capabilities of the Canadian Forces. As numerous students of Canadian foreign and defence policy have noted,[58] Chrétien allowed the minister of finance, Paul Martin, to drive the defence budget down over the course of the 1990s as a means of dealing with the federal deficit, leaving an expanding gap between the commitments given to the Canadian Forces by the ministers in cabinet and the capabilities of the CF.

But Canada's lack of capabilities had a fundamental impact on its Timor deployment. After a cabinet meeting on 14 September which discussed a possible deployment of Canadian forces to East Timor, the minister of national defence, Art Eggleton, asserted that the CF was so stretched that only 250 infantry troops could be deployed to Timor, together with a Hercules and a supply ship. Moreover, while the minister promised that Canada 'would try to get people there as quickly as we can for the sake of the people of East Timor', it would take 10 days to get a Hercules to the theatre, three weeks to deploy an infantry company, and a full month for HMCS *Protecteur*, stationed on Canada's west coast, to arrive in the area.[59]

Conclusion

On 17 September 1999, the three ministers responsible for Canada's East Timor policy— the minister of foreign affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, the minister of national defence, Art

---

55 For an account of the early days of the INTERFET deployment, see John Blaxland, *Information-Era Manoeuvre: The Australian-Led Mission to East Timor* (Canberra: Australian Army Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2002), < http://www.defence.gov.au/army/lwsc/ > .

56 On the Canadian debate over the use of force in the first Gulf War, see Kim Richard Nossal, 'Quantum Leaping: The Gulf Debate in Australia and Canada', in Michael McKinley (ed.), *The Gulf War: Critical Perspectives* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), pp. 48–71.

57 *Globe and Mail* (12 January 1994; 10 February 1994).

58 This point is made, *inter alia*, in Hampson and Oliver, 'Pulpit Diplomacy'; Hay, 'Present at the Creation'; Kim Richard Nossal, 'Pinchpenny Diplomacy: The Decline of "Good International Citizenship" in Canadian Foreign Policy', *International Journal*, 54 (Winter 1998–1999), pp. 88–105; Louis F. Nastro and Kim Richard Nossal, 'The Commitment-Capability Gap: Implications for Canadian Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era', *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, 27 (Autumn 1997), pp. 19–22.

59 'Canadian Military Can't Meet PM's Promise, Eggleton Says', *National Post* (15 September 1999), p. A1.

Eggleton, and the minister for international cooperation, Maria Minna—appeared before a joint meeting of the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. To a question about the delivery of Canadian aid to East Timor, Maria Minna replied, without irony, 'This is why we have not been able to go into East Timor: we cannot put people at risk.'[60]

A week later, on 23 September, Axworthy was in New York, delivering the keynote address at a dinner hosted by the Carnegie Foundation and the International Peace Academy. Entitled 'Civilians in War', the speech detailed what Axworthy claimed was his main objective during Canada's two-year term on the Security Council—'to make human security—in particular the protection of civilians—the central focus of the Council's work'. But he also went on to argue that the international community needed to develop criteria for triggering military intervention for military purposes; in particular, he asserted, 'we will need to find ways to overcome the reluctance of some to take risks on behalf of victims of war in far-flung places'.[61]

The difference in perspective articulated by these two ministers nicely reflects the gap between the rhetoric of human security being articulated by the Canadian foreign minister and the actual behaviour of the Canadian government. Axworthy's 'pulpit diplomacy'— urging people to take risks on behalf of victims of war in 'far-flung places'—was simply too much at odds with the *Realpolitik* so succinctly reflected in Minna's spontaneous response to a parliamentary question. Canada's response to the Timor crisis thus suggests an important limit of the human security agenda: it is easier to embrace the rhetoric of human security than it is to transform the human security agenda into concrete policy initiatives. When a government must choose between safety for other people and safety for its own people, it is more likely to put other people at risk than its own.

---

60 Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Minutes* (17 September 1999).
61 Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Statements and Speeches*, 99/48, 'Civilians in War: 100 Years after The Hague Peace Conference', New York, 24 September 1999.

Author Query Sheet

Manuscript Information	
Journal Acronym	PAR
Volume and issue	16/1
Author name	Hataley
Manuscript No. (if applicable)	

AUTHOR: The following queries have arisen during the editing of your manuscript. Please answer the queries by marking necessary corrections **at the appropriate positions on the PROOFS. Do not answer the queries on the query sheet itself. Please also return a copy of the query sheet with your corrected proofs.**

QUERY NO.	QUERY DETAILS
1	Clarify the sense of 'by Serb security forces, both local militias and police and armed forces from Serbia proper'.
2	Define TNI.
3	Clarify the sense of 'which had moved as early as March 1999 to mobilize the Australian Defence Force for possible action in East Timor and which had mobilized over the southern winter of 1999 in anticipation of violence. and, as the violence escalated in September 1999, the Canadian government's position was marked by a distinct lack of enthusiasm to take concrete action'.
4	Define CLC.
5	Define APEC.
6	Define USC and CUSO.
7	What does 'NDP: Burnaby-Douglas' signify?
8	'While East Timor burns, East Timor Maintains Its Unbroken Record of Ignoring It' – Shouldn't the word 'Canada' appear in this sentence in place of the second 'East Timor'?