

MILITARIZED MASCULINITIES AND THE POLITICS OF PEACEKEEPING:  
THE CANADIAN CASE<sup>1</sup>

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The image of a Canadian soldier wearing his blue beret, standing watch at some lonely outpost in a strife-torn foreign land, is part of the modern Canadian mosaic, and a proud tradition.

General Paul Manson<sup>2</sup>

Arone lapsed in and out of consciousness during the beating. When he was conscious, he was heard to scream “Canada, Canada,” on several occasions....

Murder of Shidane Arone by Canadian soldiers, 16 March 1993<sup>3</sup>

The image of Canada as peacekeeper, so aptly described above by former Chief of the Defence Staff General Paul Manson, has long-served as one of the “core myths”<sup>4</sup> of Canada’s “imagined community.”<sup>5</sup> That myth locates Canada as an altruistic and benign middle-power, acting with a kind of moral purity not normally exhibited by contemporary states. Thus when two Canadian soldiers beat to death a Somali teenager, Shidane Abukar Arone, in March 1993 - using their fists, their boots, a baton, a metal rod and cigarettes - the myth was reasserted at the very moment it began to disintegrate. Arone’s only words in English that night were to repeat the name “Canada, Canada” throughout his ordeal. The myth had been sold so well, even a sixteen year old Somali shepherd, murdered by those who were supposed to be its exemplars, apparently believed in it.

Arone’s tragic death, and the shooting two weeks earlier of two Somali men by Canadian

soldiers, sparked a series of Courts Martials and eventually prompted the Canadian Government to launch a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the activities of its Forces in Somalia. Intended as much to resuscitate the image of Canada's military and Canada's reputation internationally, many of those investigations focused on problems of a "few bad apples" or otherwise lamented a decline of traditional military values. More rarely were the events of Somalia associated with the problems of militarized masculinity and the use of soldiers - people trained to destroy other human beings by force - in peace operations.<sup>6</sup> However, the dramatic expansion of peacekeeping missions in the post-Cold War period demands such an analysis. The events in Somalia revealed not only some of the contradictions of one of Canada's "core myths," but underscored as well the pervasiveness, and effects of, militarized masculinity within issues of international security.

#### MASCULINITIES AND PEACEKEEPING

Since the end of the Cold War, it has become commonplace to note that there has been a proliferation of peacekeeping missions: the United Nations (UN) launched fifteen between 1956 and 1989, and a further twenty-two peacekeeping missions between 1989 and 1995 alone.<sup>7</sup> The proliferation of missions has led also to a proliferation of peacekeeping personnel deployed around the world: in 1991 the UN deployed some 11,000 blue helmets, and by 1994 the number of peacekeepers in the field numbered well over 75,000.<sup>8</sup> Those missions also have become much more complex, departing from the traditional interposition of neutral forces between belligerent groups to include, for example, military and police functions, the monitoring of human rights, the conduct of elections, the delivery of humanitarian aid, the repatriation of refugees, the creation and conduct of state administrative structures, and so on.<sup>9</sup>

Peacekeeping, and peace operations generally, became the way in which the UN asserted its

visibility internationally, and many cited peacekeeping as “perhaps the major instrument of diplomacy available to the United Nations for insuring peace and international security.”<sup>10</sup> That instrument, however, continues to depend primarily on the use of soldiers to serve as the personnel for peace operations. Nobody knows better than militaries themselves what is involved in the creation of a soldier. As Major R.W.J. Wenek wrote in 1984: “The defining role of any military force is the management of violence by violence, so that individual aggressiveness is, or should be, a fundamental characteristic of occupational fitness in combat units.”<sup>11</sup> These are the kinds of qualities feminist scholars point to when they note the way in which most militaries promote a particular kind of masculinity, one premised on violence and aggression, institutional unity and hierarchy, “aggressive heterosexism and homophobia,” as well as misogyny and racism.<sup>12</sup>

The argument of this chapter is that peacekeeping may have resolved what was a crisis of legitimation for some post-Cold War militaries, but it did so in a way that is not fully or properly, militaristic. Restrictions on firing weapons only in self-defence and a sometimes multilateral chain of command disrupt prevailing notions of military purpose and structure. Within traditional military culture, peacekeeping and peace operations are often ridiculed and demeaned: much as they have become increasingly important within the post-Cold War era, there is not the same prestige associated with a ‘blue beret fight’ for the (mostly) young men trained to do battle who we deploy on these missions. The resolution of the military’s legitimation crisis becomes to some extent a crisis of masculinity. The tensions which emerge, and their sometimes horrifying consequences, are made clear by examining the Canadian case.

## CANADA AND PEACEKEEPING

As has been suggested, peacekeeping is an extremely popular activity within Canada. This

is in contrast to the far more ambivalent position on peacekeeping found in the United States, where peacekeeping does not appear to receive the same widespread public support as in Canada and where peace operations generally are treated with considerable caution, and sometimes outright hostility. It is difficult to imagine the Canadian state falling into arrears to the UN for peacekeeping contributions, a consistent problem with the US state; and equally unthinkable that a Canadian soldier would be lauded by some political elites for refusing to serve under UN command as occurred in the United States with the 1995 case of Specialist Michael New.<sup>13</sup> Peacekeeping in Canada, by contrast, was reviewed favourably in the most recent reviews of both foreign and defence policy as central, primary to our foreign and security policies. As the 1994 Defence Department statement noted:

In virtually every one of these [successful peacekeeping] cases, Canada has played a constructive and often leading role. Canadians are rightly proud of what their country - their military - has done in this regard. Indeed, the demand for our services, and arguably the need, is growing. Since 1988, the United Nations has undertaken more peacekeeping missions than in the previous thirty-five years, and Canada has been a key participant in almost every one of them.<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, as Janice Stein reported to the Special Joint Committee reviewing Canada's foreign policy in 1994, "the overwhelming sense [is] that this is an area of comparative advantage for Canadians."<sup>15</sup>

Canadian government documents reveal an assumption not only that Canadians are experienced and committed peacekeepers, but that peacekeeping is a clear extension of Canadian values on the international stage. As the 1995 Government Statement, Canada in the World noted:

Canadians are confident in their values and in the contribution these values make to the international community ... Our principles and values - our culture - are rooted in a commitment to tolerance; to democracy, equity and human rights; to the peaceful resolution of differences; to the opportunities and challenges of the marketplace; to social justice; to sustainable development; and to easing poverty.<sup>16</sup>

Or as Stéphane Dion, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, enthusiastically commented: "Canada is a good global citizen, projecting beyond our borders our values of generosity, tolerance and an unswerving commitment to peace and democracy."<sup>17</sup>

Such widespread government support does not mean that there are not disagreements within the Canadian government about peacekeeping. The Department of National Defence's enthusiasm for peacekeeping is tempered somewhat by the disadvantages associated with the popularity of an activity which does not require nearly as much capital expenditure as the geo-strategic defence of Canada and its allies. As the Defence White paper stated repeatedly, there is more to defence than peacekeeping, or as Major General (retired) Glen Younghusband pointed out to the Special Joint Committee Reviewing Canada's defence policy in 1994, "To believe that Canada will never require a greater military capability than peacekeeping is wishful thinking, and a defence policy based on wishful thinking would be dangerous indeed."<sup>18</sup>

But in general, the advantages of peacekeeping are widely accepted, and government support for peacekeeping is reflected also within the general population. In the 1995 foreign policy review conducted by the Canadian government, women's groups which appeared before the Joint Committee provided a number of important criticisms of peacekeeping, but most of the groups were quite

supportive and viewed it as an element of defence which should be expanded.<sup>19</sup> Peace groups often note the importance of shifting the emphasis of the Canadian military from "combat to peacekeeping."<sup>20</sup> In 1992, even the Citizens' Inquiry into Peace and Security (an 'alternative' foreign and defence review organized by the Canadian Peace Alliance and funded by a number of largely peace, native and labour NGOs) found that support for peacekeeping activities was "virtually unanimous".<sup>21</sup>

The image of Canada as peacekeeper has also served a variety of important political goals of the Canadian government. As Joseph T. Jockel notes, "Canada's reputation as a good international 'citizen', a reputation acquired partially through extensive peacekeeping, may have strengthened its position in the UN across a wide range of issues on the world agenda."<sup>22</sup> It certainly played a role in Canada's successful bid for a Security Council seat in 1998 and Jockel notes that in the post-Cold War period:

Canada was the peacekeeping country *par excellence*, having contributed to virtually all UN peacekeeping operations ... [its] peacekeeping experience, coupled with its well-recognized commitment to the UN, appeared to have left it especially suited to play if not a leading role, then at least a significant one in the building of the new world order.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, as numerous commentators have noted, it has been Canada's involvement in peacekeeping and its "history of altruism, compassion, fairness, and of doing things irrespective of our own national interest" which gives it influence internationally far out of proportion to its military or economic power.<sup>24</sup> As Carol Off writes: "Canada is one of only a handful of nations that include

peacekeeping as a permanent part of their national defence, and no other country gives peacekeeping such a defining role in its international politics. It's in our genetic code as a nation."<sup>25</sup>

The Canadian soldier as peacekeeper is not a warrior but a protector. These are assumptions that fit very well with the more generalized notions of moral purity which pervade Canadian foreign policy<sup>26</sup> and the much-touted view of Canada as a 'middle-power' which has informed most government statements and mainstream analyses of Canadian foreign policy since the Second World War. As the "seasoned veterans"<sup>27</sup> of peacekeeping, Canadian soldiers are expected to know how to act when deployed abroad. It is that reputation that makes the experience of Canadian soldiers in Somalia so revealing of the practices associated with militarized masculinity.

#### THE REPUTATION TARNISHED: CANADIAN PEACEKEEPERS IN SOMALIA

The very favourable image associated with Canadian peacekeeping was shaken to its core when reports emerged from Belet Huen, Somalia of the shooting of two Somali men and then the subsequent torture and murder of Arone by members of Canada's elite Airborne Regiment.<sup>28</sup> The two men, one of whom died, were shot in the back, and while an initial investigation concluded that the Airborne soldiers had acted properly, a Canadian military doctor later reported that the dead man had been shot once in the back and then "someone had finished him off with a ... lethal shot to the head."<sup>29</sup> The doctor reported, moreover, that he had been pressured to destroy his medical records concerning the alleged murder.<sup>30</sup> Canada's peacekeeping image was rocked even further when, at Courts Martials proceedings, it was revealed that Shidane Arone's torturers had photographed his ordeal. The photographs, described as "trophy photos," depicted two soldiers, Master Corporal Clayton Matchee and Private Elvin Kyle Brown striking various poses with the bloodied Arone, one of which showed Matchee holding a loaded pistol to Arone's head and another in which Matchee

forced Arone's mouth open with the riot baton.

The first reaction by mainstream observers of peacekeeping in Canada to the Arone murder was to dismiss it as the act of a few 'bad apples',<sup>31</sup> most likely the result of years of underfunding, which had led to the deployment of a unit not ready for duty.<sup>32</sup> The bad apple theory was undermined when, some months after the Inquiry was called into the events in Somalia, a number of videos were released to the Canadian media. The first was a video from the Somalia mission, taken by Canadian soldiers on duty there as a personal record, portions of which portrayed Airborne soldiers describing it as "Operation Snatch Niggers" with others lamenting that "they had not shot enough niggers yet." The second video depicted the Airborne's hazing (or initiation) rituals which included, among other things, images of Airborne soldiers vomiting or eating vomit, being smeared with feces, and with the single black soldier in the regiment being forced to walk around on all fours with the phrase 'I love the KKK' written on his back.<sup>33</sup> The problem, it would appear from the videos, was far more pervasive than could be accounted by blaming only 'a few bad apples'.

The Courts Martials eventually found one of the men involved in Arone's murder, Elvin Kyle Brown, guilty of torture and manslaughter; it convicted him to five years in prison and dismissed him in disgrace. Clayton Matchee tried to commit suicide after his arrest in Somalia, suffered brain damage, and was found unfit to stand trial at his subsequent Courts Martial. Other soldiers who had heard but not stopped the beating and murder were found guilty of lesser charges, and after the release of the hazing videos, the Airborne Regiment itself was disbanded.

The government Inquiry that had been called to investigate the events in Somalia was halted before it could actually examine Arone's murder. The Inquiry had exceeded the set time limit for its investigation and the Canadian Government refused any further extensions. This was the first time



in Canadian history that a Commission of Inquiry of this magnitude was brought to a halt before its completion. But the Commissioners did hear extensive evidence on pre-deployment issues as well as the shooting on 4 March 1993. Its five volume report, entitled Dishonoured Legacy, while critical of the military in a number of important respects, picked up on the theme which had already been emphasized by military apologists. The problem was not one of the military itself, but rather one of a military gone wrong. As military historian David Bercuson noted, the Canadian military had become stifled by budget cuts, was over-bureaucratized and staffed by career-minded “cover your ass” officers who have replaced the disciplined and honourable leaders of the past.<sup>34</sup> The problem, in short, was a failure of traditional military values.

#### FEMINIST AND CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Feminists and critical theorists might ask instead whether the “problem” was actually one of military values themselves. Theorists of both militarism and of masculinity have long argued the intimate connection between military organisations and hegemonic representations of masculinity.<sup>35</sup>

As David Morgan writes:

Of all the sites where masculinities are constructed, reproduced, and deployed, those associated with war and the military are some of the most direct. Despite far-reaching political, social, and technological changes, the warrior still seems to be a key symbol of masculinity. In statues, heroic paintings, comic books, and popular films the gendered connotations are inescapable. The stance, the facial expressions, and the weapons clearly connote aggression, courage, a capacity for violence, and, sometimes, a willingness for sacrifice. The

uniform absorbs individualities into a generalized and timeless masculinity while also connoting a control of emotion and a subordination to a larger rationality.<sup>36</sup>

And this is as true of Canada's ostensibly benign and altruistic peacekeepers as it is of soldiers elsewhere. Indeed, what has been particularly revealing in the Canadian case has been the dangerous behaviour which erupts when soldiers trained "to engage in wanton destruction and to slip the bonds of civilized behaviour"<sup>37</sup> are limited and constrained to "mere" peacekeeping duty. From this perspective, what Somalia demonstrated was not a departure from traditional military values but rather their brutal conclusion.

Most feminist analyses of militaries and militarism focus on the ways in which the qualities demanded by militaries - the requisite lust for violence (when needed) and a corresponding willingness to subordinate oneself to hierarchy and authority (when needed)<sup>38</sup> - are not natural but must be self-consciously cultivated. Few new male recruits arrive as ready-made soldiers and as Barbara Ehrenreich notes, "The difference between an ordinary man or boy and a reliable killer, as any drill sergeant could attest, is profound. A transformation is required."<sup>39</sup>

Historically, that transformation has been accomplished in different ways, but by the seventeenth-century in Europe, as Ehrenreich describes it, the process had become highly organized:

New recruits and even seasoned veterans were endlessly drilled, hour after hour, until each man began to feel himself part of a single, giant fighting machine. The drill was only partially inspired by the technology of firearms. It's easy enough to teach a man to shoot a gun: the problem is to make him willing to get into situations where

guns are being shot and to remain there long enough to do some shooting of his own. ... In the fanatical routines of boot camp, a man leaves behind his former identity and is reborn as a creature of the military - an automaton and also, ideally, a willing killer of other men.<sup>40</sup>

The contemporary practices of boot camp are remarkably similar across most modern state militaries. They entail a tightly choreographed process aimed at breaking down the individuality of the recruits, and replacing it with a commitment to, and dependence upon, the “total” institution of which they are now a part.<sup>41</sup> By its end, recruits should conform to the official attitudes of military conduct, be able to follow orders instantly and without question, and commit themselves to the larger group (whether that is co-recruits, barrack, regiment, battalion, military or state) over any personal or individual commitments they previously held.<sup>42</sup>

The new soldier faces the humiliation strategies that are common to most national militaries. The tactics used to humiliate and degrade the recruit will vary depending on the military. In some, physically brutalizing new recruits remains an acceptable strategy, whether by officers or more senior recruits. In other militaries where physical punishment in principle is prohibited, drill sergeants often have at their official disposal only the threat of violence and verbal assaults. Here the new recruit is not only reminded constantly of his or her incompetence, but faces a variety of gendered and raced insults crafted to play upon her or his specific feminine or masculine anxieties, including ‘whore’, ‘faggot’, ‘sissies’, ‘cunt’ ‘ladies’, ‘abortion’, ‘pussies’, ‘nigger’, ‘Indian’ and sometimes simply ‘you woman’.<sup>43</sup> Even in militaries that ostensibly outlaw physical violence toward new recruits, unofficial initiation rituals, or ‘hazing’ is still common and regularly conducted in the

presence of superior officers.<sup>44</sup>

Ominously, and in an observation which might have served as a prediction of the murders in Somalia some ten years later, Major R.W.J. Wenek wrote in 1984 that:

Aggressiveness must be selected for in military organizations and must be reinforced during military training, but it may be extremely difficult to make fine distinctions between those individuals who can be counted on to act in an appropriately aggressive way and those likely at some time to display inappropriate aggression. *To some extent, the risk of erring on the side of excess may be a necessary one in an organization whose existence is premised on the instrumental value of aggression and violence.*<sup>45</sup>

The recipe for creating soldiers thus involves not only selecting for and reinforcing aggressive behaviour, it usually entails also an explosive mix of misogyny, racism and homophobia. A deeper analysis of the murders in Somalia and Canada's Somalia Inquiry reveals all of these ingredients to have been present in Canada's beloved, benign and altruistic armed forces.

#### RE-READING THE SOMALIA CRISIS

Soldiers in Canada's Airborne regiment were excited to be going to Somalia, especially as it became clear that it might become a Chapter 7 mission. As the only soldier charged in Arone's murder said after his release from prison (and apparently with no intended irony): "The fact is, peacekeeping is boring and we were much happier to be going to Somalia in a chapter 7 role. Personally, I was delighted."<sup>46</sup> The Airborne had been chosen to go while Somalia was still designated a 'blue beret mission', but the mission was changed to a Chapter 7 mission in early

December of 1992, just before the Airborne deployed. As one soldier commented, “I think the men were glad when the mission changed from peacekeeping to peace making ... this was more real. We’re training for war all our lives, and the guys all want to know what it is like. That’s why they join the army, to soldier ...”<sup>47</sup>

Apparently so excited by the prospect of real soldiering, a number of Airborne soldiers allegedly torched an officer’s car and others went into a provincial park and fired off their weapons in a small shooting spree. Asked at the Inquiry whether this might have signaled discipline problems within the Airborne, Major-General (retired) Lewis Mackenzie’s response was revealing: while it didn’t excuse what the soldiers did, he said, these incidents could be explained by the fact that there had been few Chapter 7 missions in UN history to that point and the soldiers were all “psyched up.” Somalia had become “a non-blue beret fight,” and while “some of this is macho stuff,” there was “more prestige” for Airborne soldiers being deployed on a Chapter 7 mission than a Chapter 6.

But, in fact, after their training, their preparation, and perhaps most important, their anticipation of real soldiering, the Airborne discovered that the war had moved on from Belet Huen. The country was hot, dusty, dry and full of scorpions - which provided a certain amount of danger during otherwise boring daily routines, but little in the way of exciting military action. Life in Somalia was unpleasant, but Belet Huen was not a warzone. One soldier remarked that, “When we got there, there was no war. The war had gone by. Probably for some guys that was a disappointment.”<sup>48</sup> As Winslow notes, “Once the Canadians concluded that they were ‘wasting their time’ in Somalia, came the brutal conclusion that one could die ‘for nothing.’”<sup>49</sup> And when Canadian soldiers came to that conclusion, their own violence began.

The Canadians, indeed, had already decided that Somalis - in particular Somali men - could

not be trusted. They were black, they were the enemy, they had no respect for their women, they were liars and thieves, they were not grateful for Canadian efforts and they were even, in the opinion of many Airborne soldiers, homosexuals. Marked in this way, the violence perpetrated upon them seems almost inevitable. As Sherene Razack argues, it “is a short step from cultural difference to naturalized violence,”<sup>50</sup> and this was certainly in evidence in Somalia.

While the release of the two videotapes (the first from Somalia and the second from 1 Commando’s hazing rituals) was perhaps the most obvious indications of racism within the Airborne - and apparently shocked many Canadians - officials at the Department of Defence might not have been surprised at all. It was learned within the first week of the Somalia Inquiry's hearings that the Department had been investigating the presence of racist skinhead organizations and neo-nazi activities within the Canadian Forces, and had identified the entire CFB Petawawa (home of the Airborne Regiment) as “one of the several areas where right-wing activities are centred.”<sup>51</sup> Senior military officials, in other words, had allowed members of the Airborne Regiment who were either known members of racist skinhead organizations or who were under investigation for suspected skinhead and neo-nazi activity to be deployed to Somalia.<sup>52</sup>

Whether or not the racism exhibited by Airborne soldiers was ‘organized’, much of the evidence from testimonies, photographs, diaries and letters home from Canadian soldiers reveals the ways in which racism pervaded the Airborne. From posing in front of the Confederate rebel flag (a flag often used by white supremacist groups in the United States), through tattooing themselves with swastikas, to calling Somalis any number of racist pejoratives (“smufty,” “smoofties,” “moolie,” “flip-flop,” “nig nog,” “nigger” and “gimmes”)<sup>53</sup>, Canadian soldiers demonstrated repeatedly that they viewed the Somali people as both ‘other’ and inferior.

Many of the Canadians assumed that the desperate poverty they witnessed in Somalia was the result of a backward culture that fostered laziness. As paratrooper Robert Prouse reported in his diary from the mission, fellow soldiers said that Somalia should be used “as a nuclear dump, it’s worthless” and others asked: “F\_\_\_\_\_g tar monkeys, why should we help them? If they haven’t improved in the last thousand years, they won’t improve now. They’re so backwards, why bother?”<sup>54</sup> As Prouse commented, “The majority of our people hate the Somalis and the country.”<sup>55</sup> Many also considered Somalis a people with little respect for human life, who had different standards, and different expectations about death and violence.<sup>56</sup> Kyle Brown reported that in Somalia, “[Violence is a] part of their culture, and a language they understand.”<sup>57</sup> If nothing else, one soldier complained, it was hard to distinguish between the “good guys” and the “bad guys”: “They’re all Black, who’s who? They all look alike.”<sup>58</sup>

Somalis were different not only in terms of their skin colour, their poverty and their values, but for Airborne soldiers they were also different from the Canadians in terms of their attitudes toward women. In interviews with sociologist Donna Winslow, soldiers reported how angered they were by the way Somali men treated both women and children. As one soldier reported, “It’s frustrating to see. Women do everything over there. They get the water, cook, do everything ... But the men, they sit around, don’t do anything all day long. They visit their friends and that’s about it.”<sup>59</sup>

Somali men not only seemed different in terms of how they treated women, but also in terms of how they interacted with one another. Many of the Canadian soldiers quickly concluded that “Everybody’s gay here!”<sup>60</sup> Somali men wore sarongs, they held hands with one another as expressions of friendship and urinated by squatting. As one soldier described it: “Real men wear pants and stand to urinate and they certainly don’t hold hands.”<sup>61</sup> Soldiers reported to Winslow that

the hand-holding was evidence that “there was quite a lot of homosexuality” in Somalia.

The reviled and hated ethnic ‘other’ all looked the same, treated “their” women badly and were a bunch of homosexuals. But the last straw was that they also did not act nearly grateful enough to the soldiers who had arrived in ‘Operation Deliverance’. Razack writes that, “the Canadian military understood its role as ‘putting that region of Somalia back on the path to a normal lifestyle.’ Or, in the more direct language of the troops, their task was to ‘look after’ Somalis who, as it turns out, were neither properly grateful nor deserving, a source of considerable aggravation for the troops.”<sup>62</sup> The reality on the ground for Canadian soldiers included having rocks thrown at them, being called insulting names, and confronting a people, many of whom did not seem to appreciate the work that the Canadians were doing for them.<sup>63</sup>

As the soldiers became increasingly frustrated with the apparent lack of gratitude, the rock throwing, the begging and the petty thefts, their own responses became correspondingly more violent. Soldiers started throwing rocks back at the Somalis, sometimes in order to disperse children begging for food and water.<sup>64</sup> One photograph depicted a Canadian chaplain standing guard over a number of bound and blindfolded Somali children with a sign that read ‘I am a thief’ hanging around their necks. As one soldier reported to Winslow, “Basically everybody beat up on the Somalis. Everybody did.”<sup>65</sup>

#### WARRIOR PRINCES?

The racism and violence witnessed in Somalia were largely attributed to the “frustration,” “stress” and the profound “culture shock” Airborne members experienced upon arrival in Somalia.<sup>66</sup> Arone’s murder was linked also to the particular anti-malaria drug used by Canadian soldiers in Somalia.<sup>67</sup> Each of these types of explanation de-politicizes the events in Somalia, excuses and



explains away the racism and violence in a way intended not to disrupt prevailing myths about both Canadian soldiers and Canada itself. Canada's so-called "Somalia crisis" was a crisis only insofar as it laid bare the fundamental contradiction of relying on soldiers in so-called 'peace' operations. And it was Somalis, in particular Somali men who were marked as 'different', who bore the brunt of those contradictions.

If we examine the ways in which race, gender and sexuality are privileged sites in the creation of a soldier, we might be less surprised that these were the lines around which Canadian soldiers reacted, and understood both their 'difference' and expressed their violence. Race and racism often figure in military hazing and initiation rituals, as was noted above. Race was apparently a factor in Kyle Brown and Clayton Matchee's hazing, especially upon entering the Airborne. Matchee is full Cree and Brown part Cree, and reports indicate that in Matchee's case in particular, his "Cree heritage became a focus" of his hazing upon arriving at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa to join the Airborne. Matchee, in turn, became one of Brown's "most feared hazers" when he arrived at Petawawa.<sup>68</sup> Alfred McCoy has argued that soldiers subjected to brutal hazing as cadets repeat that behaviour later in their careers.<sup>69</sup> Thus as Matchee beat Arone he told fellow soldiers that "The white man fears the Indian and so will the black man," and when asked the next day about the murder he boasted, "Indians: two, White man; nothing."<sup>70</sup>

Brown himself claims to have experienced his Airborne hazing as "a lot of fun." It was a ritual that did not involve the faeces and vomit-filled celebration of 1 Commando, but was rather a "Zulu Warrior" ritual in which new recruits tried to drink a bottle of beer before a strip of burning toilet paper stuck in the cheeks of the soldier's buttocks burned to the end. Brown commented that "No one was seriously hurt - a lot of soldier's bravado - but we all felt closer-knit and united after

it.”<sup>71</sup>

It is precisely that sense of unity that initiation or hazing rituals are intended to promote. As Alfred McCoy describes it, the hazing is often brutal and normally aims at “breaking down a cadet’s civilian identity ... creating what one study called a ‘remarkable unity’.”<sup>72</sup> If Kyle Brown felt a greater comradeship with his compatriots after having his buttocks singed, so too - more surprisingly - did Corporal Christopher Robin. Robin was the only black soldier in the Airborne’s 1 Commando Unit who was depicted in the hazing video being forced to walk around on all fours and to bark like a dog with ‘I love the KKK’ written on his back. He was also shown on all fours while another soldier pretended to sodomize him and he was tied to a tree as fellow soldiers poured white powder on him. When Robin was asked at the Inquiry whether the acts depicted in the video were “racist,” he said that they were. When asked if he had ever experienced “racism” in the Airborne, he said that he had not; rather, these incidents showed, “what you can take under adverse conditions.” He said also that no matter what people now thought, he was very proud of the Regiment of which he was a part and said further that “I would do everything I could to protect ” its good name.<sup>73</sup>

Along with race, gender too is a locus of organizing a soldier’s sense of self, and some indication of the Canadian military’s attitudes toward women was conveyed quite clearly in one of the first documents tabled at the Inquiry. The Hewson Report was a 1985 inquiry investigating whether there was a higher rate of criminal behaviour within the Canadian Forces than within Canadian society more generally.<sup>74</sup> It was introduced at the Inquiry because Major General Hewson reported that while there was no higher general incidence of crime within the Forces, there were two “exceptions” to this observation: first, there did appear to be a higher frequency of sexual offences within the Canadian Forces than within the larger Canadian population; and second, there was a

higher incidence of violent crime within the Canadian Airborne Regiment.<sup>75</sup> It was the latter observation that mattered most at the Inquiry, but it was Hewson's explanations for both of these "exceptions" that unintentionally revealed some of the Canadian military's assumptions about women.

Hewson explained the higher incidence of violent crime within the Airborne Regiment in straightforwardly gendered terms: local "girls," he said, tended to be attracted to the "young single soldier with his new 'sporty' car, regular and higher pay and job security." The local male population was described as "robust and tough," and there simply were not enough girls to go around: "Disputes over girls," in other words, were almost unavoidable.<sup>76</sup> But not particularly worth investigating further. As it would be summarized later by David Bercuson, the earlier troubles in the Airborne resulted from the "social climate" in Petawawa: "there were too few ways for single soldiers to blow off steam; there was too much drinking; there were too few available women."<sup>77</sup> In this way, the strutting between males over 'girls' was depicted as natural.

While the Hewson report addressed directly, and in an openly gendered way, the question of crime within the Airborne, it was more circumspect - but equally revealing - in its analysis of the higher incidence of sexual offences within the Canadian Forces. Hewson never stated how much higher the level of sexual offences were, but indicated that an appendix outlining 'crime case synopses' "does not, statistically, reveal any significant or alarming trends."<sup>78</sup> This was far from the case. Hewson's crime case synopsis, in fact, indicates that the incidence of sexual crimes was dramatic. If one includes within the category of sexual assaults all assaults in which the victim was a woman, more than half of the 141 crimes listed were either sexual assaults or physical assaults against women: 76 out of 141 cases, or 54 percent.<sup>79</sup> Hardly a figure that could be described as

insignificant. What the Hewson report indicated to the Canadian military - but what was never followed up either after the Hewson report was issued or at the Somalia Inquiry over ten years later<sup>80</sup> - was something that feminists have long-argued: namely that the level of violence against women is disproportionately high within militaries, and this is true also of the Canadian military.<sup>81</sup>

That level of violence towards women is quite at odds with the self-representations of Canadian soldiers as warrior princes, providers of humanitarian services and helpers to the women and children of Somalia. It was but one of the ways that Somali men were designated as inferior, as was described above, and yet from Hewson's studies, the Canadian military's attitudes toward women may have been little different than that of the denigrated Somali 'other'. Certainly the evidence of violence towards women within the Canadian Forces suggests that this is true, as does the Hewson Report's cavalier attitude toward "disputes over girls." But even more dramatically, early questioning at the Inquiry by the Canadian Jewish Congress alleged also that members of the Airborne held a celebratory dinner to honour Marc Lepine,<sup>82</sup> the man who massacred fourteen women at the Université de Montréal in 1989, shouting at them as he did so, 'you're all a bunch of feminists'. Airborne soldiers claimed they did not like the way Somali men treated "their" women, and insisted that this was a cultural difference between the Somalis and Canadian soldiers; yet at the same time participated in celebrations of a man who had massacred fourteen women in Canada.

## CONCLUSIONS

Canadians had never before seen their soldiers accused of atrocities against civilians. They did not have any public experiences that corresponded to the United State's Vietnam, to attacks like the My Lai disaster, or to the kind of cultural reflection as was witnessed in post-Vietnam United States, through novels, documentaries and even Hollywood-produced movies. Why would they?

Canada's "imagined community" had long distinguished itself through different (re)presentations of military: Americans fought wars, but Canadians made peace.<sup>83</sup> The extent to which the notion of a soldier as benign, altruistic and morally superior is, quite simply, a contradiction, had never before been confronted in Canada. That this contradiction might also exist at the level of Canada as "nation" was unthinkable. As Razack writes: "Canadian naïveté and passivity as a nation constitute a narrative of innocence that blocks accountability for the violence in Somalia, just as it blocks accountability for racist violence within Canada. A nation so gentle could not possibly have participated in the acts of violence reported by the press."<sup>84</sup>

An analysis of Canada's reputation as a country committed to the ideals of peacekeeping, and the way in which many features of that reputation were seriously challenged by the murders of Somali citizens by Canadian soldiers, leads us to questions about the constitution and effects of militarized masculinity. Militaries depend on attracting young people, but especially young men, to the idea of becoming 'real men' through the initiation rituals associated with soldiering. As Judith Stiehm has written: "all militaries have ... regularly been rooted in the psychological coercion of young men through appeals to their (uncertain) manliness"<sup>85</sup> What militaries do is replace that uncertainty with a certainty that is, at least in part, constituted through norms of masculinity which privilege violence, racism, aggression and hatred towards women. And its effects were dramatically depicted in Somalia. What this means for students of Critical Security Studies is that a change of "mission" does not by itself transform the years of training and socialization that have gone into the creation of a soldier. What this suggests, quite dramatically, is that the skills of war are often quite at odds with those required for peace operations. Indeed, it is often the non-military contributions which Canadian peacekeepers make for which they are best remembered. In Somalia, these included

re-opening a local school and hospital. In other settings it has included building parks for children, and serving as mediators in difficult situations. This means that we need to acknowledge that soldiers *don't* always make the best peacekeepers - sometimes it is carpenters, mediators and doctors who best perform that function, and who best contribute to a people's sense of a meaningful security. It means also that when we *do* send soldiers on peace operations, they need to be soldiers who have been trained and encouraged to understand that properly masculine behaviour need not be dependent on misogyny, racism or violence.<sup>86</sup> Keeping the peace positively demands it.

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8. Coulon, Soldiers of Diplomacy, p. ix.

9. Janet E. Heininger, Peacekeeping in Transition: The United Nations in Cambodia (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1994), p. 5; see also Coulon, Soldiers of Diplomacy, p. 26.

10. Robert A. Rubinstein, "Cultural Aspects of Peacekeeping: Notes on the Substance of Symbols," Millennium, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1993, p. 548.

11. Major R.W.J. Wenek, The Assessment of Psychological Fitness: Some Options for the Canadian Forces, Technical Note 1/84, Ottawa: Directorate of Personnel Selection, Research on Second Careers, July 1984, p. 13 *cf.* Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia, Document Book No. 1, Hewson Report (Ottawa: Canada, 1995), p. 46.

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30. David Pugliese, "Somalia: what went so wrong?" The Ottawa Citizen, 1 October 1995, p. A6.
31. I raise this in my "The Ugly Unasked Questions About Somalia." It is discussed also in Government of Canada, Dishonoured Legacy, ES-1 and *passim* and in Peter Desbarats, Somalia Cover-Up: A Commissioner's Journal (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1997), p. 3 and *passim*.
32. Jockel, Canada and International Peacekeeping, p. 33.
33. Christopher Dornan, "Scenes from a scandal," The Globe and Mail, 21 January 1995, p. D1.
34. Bercuson, Significan Incident, p. vi and *passim*.

35. R.W. Connell has developed the notion of “hegemonic masculinity” by which he means the way in which some forms of masculinity, at different periods of time, become “culturally exalted.” See his Masculinities (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 77-78.
36. Morgan, “Theater of War,” p. 165.
37. Bercuson, Significant Incident, p. 29.
38. Charlotte Hooper notes the way in which soldiering also involves many traditional “feminine” traits such as “total obedience and submission to authority, the attention to dress detail, and the endless repetition of mundane tasks that enlisted men as opposed to officers are expected to perform ...”. But these activities are not emphasized in representations of soldiering, illustrating the way in which, for Hooper, “it is not the actions themselves but the gendered interpretations placed on them that are crucial in determining which activities count as masculine and valued and which count as feminine and devalued.” Hooper, Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 47-48.
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40. Ehrenreich, Blood Rites, pp. 11-12.
41. For an excellent summary of the goals and procedures of basic training, see Harrison and Laliberté, No Life Like It, chapter 1. See also Davis, The Sharp End, chapter 2; Joshua S. Goldstein, War and Gender, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chapter 5; Arkin and Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity,” pp. 151-168; McCoy, “Same Banana”, pp. 689-726; Gill, “Creating Citizens, Making Men,” pp. 527-550.
42. Arkin and Dobrofsky, “Military Socialization and Masculinity,” p. 158.
43. Gill, “Creating Citizens, Making Men,” p. 15 ms. copy; Davis, The Sharp End, p. 14. Appy,

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53. The latter was intended to refer to the constant begging by Somalis - and Winslow reports that the Canadians also purchased a “commemorative T-shirt with an outstretched Somali hand and the word ‘gimme’ on it.” Winslow, The Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia, p. 252. See also Hearing Transcripts, Information Legacy Tuesday October 10, 1995, Vol. 3, p. 584, Vol. 4, p. 595, Monday January 15, 1996, Vol. 32, p. 6086.
54. Prouse, “The dark side that emerged in Somalia is inside all Canadians,” pp. A4-A6.
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75. Document Book No. 1, Hewson Report, p. 17.

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79. Ibid., Annex G.

80. Hewson recommended that the higher level of sexual offences be studied further, though he did not seem to think that this recommendation merited inclusion within his Main Summary of Recommendations.

81. Much, though not all, of this violence is directed at the women (and children) within military families. A 1994 US study indicated that the rate of domestic violence within American army families was twice that of comparable civilian families. See Harrison and Laliberté, No Life Like It, p. 189.

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