

LIBYA AND THE FALL OF GADHAFI

Introduction

Focus

In a remarkable eight-month series of battles, rebel forces have taken control of almost all of Libya away from long-time dictator Moammar Gadhafi. This *News in Review* story looks at how this unlikely turn of events came to be, Canada's role in these events, and what a post-Gadhafi Libya may look like.

Further Research

Keep up to date on developments in the battle for control of Libya at www.cbc.ca/news.

Although a few short months ago it seemed impossible, Moammar Gadhafi has effectively been removed from power in Libya.

For 42 years he ruled Libya with an iron fist, and his people responded with fear. The rest of the world disapproved of his personal excesses, condemned his brutal dictatorship, and tolerated him as an important opponent of radical Islamic organizations.

The people of Libya—increasingly disenchanted with his performance—took to the streets in protest in early 2011. The Libyan government responded with violence, and by the end of February 2011, casualties had climbed to over 1 000 people. The violent response by government forces caused further outrage in the country, and before long, a revolution was underway.

As unrest spread throughout the country, international demands increased that Gadhafi discontinue attacks against his citizens. His failure to heed that advice led to a United Nations Security Council resolution that, in effect, closed Libyan air space to Gadhafi's air force and offered protection to Libyan civilians. NATO undertook the leadership of an international mission to enforce the resolution. Canada was part of this mission, making a significant

contribution on the sea and in the air.

In the next six months life in Libya was turned upside down. Rebels who opposed the Libyan government built an armed force from scratch. Libyan forces, which put up a brutal fight, were eventually overrun by the rebels. And Gadhafi himself went into hiding.

At the time this story went to print, Gadhafi had still not been found, and almost all of Libya was in the hands of the rebels. A National Transitional Council was in charge and was preparing to appoint an interim government, arrange multi-party elections, and write a new constitution.

As this new chapter in Libyan history unfolds, a number of questions remain. What will the new Libya look like? How will the main factions in the country—secular and Islamic, urban and tribal—come together to decide how the new Libyan government and Libyan society should be structured? How should former officials of the Gadhafi regime be treated? And what should be done about Gadhafi when he is finally located?

Despite these unknowns, most Libyans look ahead to the dawn of a new age and the chance to create something few of them have ever experienced—a democracy.

To Consider

1. Why are some observers saying that the defeat of Gadhafi was not only a victory for the Libyan rebels but also for international diplomacy?
2. If Canada were facing a similar crisis, would you want an international body like NATO or the UN to intervene? Or would you rather that Canadians solve the problem by themselves?
3. Are there lessons from the Libyan experience that might be applied internationally to future conflicts?

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Video Review

Further Research

On the NATO website (www.natochannel.tv) you can find several videos dealing with NATO's activities in Libya and around the world. One in particular—*Libya: In Qadhafi's Prison*—provides a graphic illustration of why most Libyans are so pleased to be free of Moammar Gadhafi.

Pre-viewing Discussion

The army that defeated the professional forces of Moammar Gadhafi consisted largely of young, inexperienced volunteers with a cause. Can you imagine circumstances under which you would be willing to take similar action? What kind of fighting force do you think you and your fellow volunteers would make?

Compare your fictional force with the real one that appears in the video.

Viewing Questions

As you watch the video, answer the questions in the spaces provided.

1. How long did Moammar Gadhafi rule Libya?

2. What natural resource makes Libya one of the wealthiest countries in North Africa?

3. What are some of the ways that you saw protestors suffer in the video?

4. What actions did the United Nations Security Council authorize UN members to take against the Libyan government?

5. What challenges did the rebels face in the early days of their opposition to Libyan forces?

6. What military contribution did Canada make to the UN-authorized mission?

7. What role does a NATO AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) airplane play in the battle for Libya?

8. When did rebel forces finally take Tripoli?

9. What is the estimated cost to date of the Canadian mission to Libya?

10. What is necessary for the mission in Libya to be complete?

Post-viewing Discussion

1. During the video, Prime Minister Stephen Harper makes the following statement: "Libyans have waited a long time to be free of the barbarity, repression, and violence of the Gadhafi regime. And the Libyan people must now chart their own democratic course."

What is the message the Prime Minister seems to be sending to other nations interested in the make-up of any future Libyan government? What implications might it have for Canadian policy toward other fledgling governments, such as that of Iraq or Afghanistan?

2. What difficulties might the new Libyan government face if it is unable to capture or kill Moammar Gadhafi?

3. What responsibilities do you believe NATO and the other nations responding to the United Nations resolution will continue to have toward Libya once the mission is concluded?

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The Fall of Gadhafi

Did you know . . .

The United States was the first country to act following the passage of the UN resolution to intervene in Libya. The U.S. air force quickly bombed Libyan air force compounds on the ground, nearly eliminating the Libyan air force.

Focus for Reading

This section outlines the sequence of events that resulted in the fall of Moammar Gadhafi. As you read through this section, construct a timeline of the major events in the 2011 Libyan rebellion.

Of all the North African regime collapses in 2011, none has been more spectacular than the fall of Moammar Gadhafi.

Until the demonstrations against the government began in February 2011, Gadhafi was believed to have Libya very much under his thumb. It was only as his reprisals against demonstrators became more vicious, and resistance to his rule began to spread throughout eastern parts of the country, that the rest of the world became aware that that control might be very shaky.

The United Nations was quick to condemn his actions and demand that he cease military action against his own citizens. His refusal to do so led to the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 173. The resolution "authorized Member States, acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, to take all necessary measures to protect civilians under threat of attack in the country, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory" (www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm). The resolution passed with 10 votes in favour and five abstentions.

NATO Steps In

On March 24, NATO announced that it would assume responsibility for enforcing the no-fly zone, allowing the United States to maintain a much lower profile in the conflict. The U.S. was already heavily involved in armed conflicts in two other Muslim countries: Iraq and Afghanistan. Leadership in a

third war would be unpopular both at home and abroad. The U.S. relinquished control on March 31.

Some non-NATO nations also joined the no-fly coalition, including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Sweden. The support of several Arab nations was especially welcomed by NATO. It demonstrated to the rest of the world that this was an action against a brutal dictator, not against a Muslim nation.

The success of the mission was mixed. Initially the results were spectacular. Air strikes and cruise missiles forced the Libyan army to withdraw 600 kilometres from the coastal highway, with the rebels in hot pursuit. But it quickly became apparent that NATO could only accomplish so much with the weaponry it had available. Fighter planes are useful for striking large groups of soldiers and equipment when out in the open. They are far less useful for precision targeting of smaller groups in tighter quarters.

Gadhafi's forces quickly adopted new tactics. Like the rebels, they began to use civilian rather than military vehicles, and it became harder to distinguish one side from another from the air. They also positioned more of their weapons and equipment near civilian populations. NATO's air strikes continued, but with extreme caution. Many sorties were flown without any bombing taking place.

The Rebel Army

Facing Gadhafi's professional army were the rebel forces so poignantly described in the video—mostly poorly

armed and poorly trained young people led by defectors from the regular army. Their lack of training showed as initial successes were followed by rapid setbacks and the loss of territorial gains. Despite NATO air support, the rebel offensive rapidly stalled and was met with vicious counterattacks by Gadhafi loyalists.

For much of the spring and a good part of the summer, fighting was centered on Misrata, Libya's third-largest city. Late in February the rebels seized control of the city, and Gadhafi was determined to recapture it. The Libyan army laid siege to Misrata and intense fighting occurred. In April, as the Libyan army bombarded the city with rocket attacks, the United States began using drone aircraft to identify and destroy targets. Drones have the capability to linger over a battlefield, hitting targets as they appear. They also have equipment that makes them especially useful during night combat. Misrata remained an area of intense fighting until mid-August.

Ceasefire Attempts

During this period several attempts were made by foreign nations and organizations to broker a ceasefire. One of the first proposals came from the African Union. Led by South African President Jacob Zuma, the organization approached both Gadhafi and the rebel leaders in early April. Gadhafi indicated interest. However, by this time the rebels had hardened their position to accept no resolution to the conflict until Gadhafi was removed from power. The rebels rejected an Australian proposal that also failed to include Gadhafi's resignation. Gadhafi insisted he would never resign.

Obtaining Gadhafi's resignation as a condition for a ceasefire became even less likely when the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest

warrant for Gadhafi for crimes against humanity. Human rights advocates were thrilled. But those trying to convince him to step down realized that he would be only more determined to hang on to power to prevent his arrest and trial.

Stalemate

For much of the summer there were few military developments. Fighting continued. Gadhafi's forces continued to control Tripoli and most of western Libya; the rebels were secure in the east. NATO ramped up its air war, striking targets in Tripoli. Britain, France, and Italy offered to send senior soldiers to advise the rebels on tactics. France and Britain decided they would add attack helicopters to their contribution.

But NATO also worried that it might have to find a way to negotiate an end to the conflict—and that could result in a division of Libya. The National Transitional Council (NTC), the rebel governing body, seemed to be wrestling with factional infighting and tribal divisions among various rebel groups. One of the rebel commanders was killed under suspicious circumstances, and his supporters accused the NTC of collusion in his death.

August

Then came early August and a renewed push by rebel forces, led by tribes from the Nafusa Mountains near the Tunisian border. The rebels quickly marched toward Tripoli, seizing the town of Zawiya on the way. As the rebels neared Tripoli, Gadhafi forces finally abandoned the siege of Misrata.

Remarkably, by August 21 the rebels had reached Tripoli. More remarkably, by August 23 the city was under rebel control. Probably the ultimate blow to Gadhafi's regime came when the rebels stormed and took control of the dictator's fortress compound.

Vocabulary

Sleeper cell (noun)
– a small unit serving
as part of a larger
political movement

The fall of Tripoli was the result of all the elements of the six-month campaign coming together: NATO-led air strikes, surveillance by Predator drones, a rebel-planned encirclement operation of the city, and the assistance of anti-Gadhafi sleeper cells within Tripoli.

Where is Gadhafi?

With the fall of Tripoli, the fate of the Gadhafi government was sealed. As of the end of September, he remained on the run. Some experts believe he may be in the southern desert of Libya near

the border with Algeria. The rebel forces remain intent on his capture, believing it essential to the elimination of resistance to the new order. The International Criminal Code continues to hope to bring him to trial.

Also as of the end of September, intense fighting continues in three areas: Sirte, Gadhafi's hometown; Bani Walid, a town southwest of Tripoli; and in parts of the southern desert. Meanwhile, meetings are being held in Tripoli to form a transitional government to replace the 42-year dictatorship.

Follow-up

1. Join a classmate and compare your timelines. Add any information you missed to your own timeline.
2. Review your work and select two or three events that you believed were turning points in this time period. (A turning point is something that marks a significant change in a situation.) Be prepared to share your choices, and defend them, with the class.

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What happens now?

Vocabulary

Secular (noun) – not relating to religion; worldly rather than spiritual

Focus for Reading

After 42 years of dictatorship, Libyans are hoping to construct their first democratic government. As the success of the Libyan rebels became more assured, observers speculated on what a Libya without Gadhafi might look like. As you read through this section, make three lists in your notebook:

1. The major tasks faced by the Libyans as they create the new nation
2. Any assets that will help them in this endeavour
3. Any major obstacles that could derail their efforts

The National Transitional Council

Critical to the creation of a transformed Libya will be the work of the National Transitional Council (NTC).

The NTC was formed on March 5, 2011, and it has provided most of the leadership on the rebel side of the Libyan conflict. Initially its representatives came from cities in the eastern part of the country, and Benghazi was chosen as the temporary capital. As more and more cities were liberated in the fighting, those cities selected representatives to join the NTC. Some of the leaders—including the chairman, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, a former justice minister—defected from Gadhafi's government. Others were long-time opponents, secular and Islamist, of the regime.

From its inception, the NTC has coped with almost overwhelming responsibilities. "The council is the contact point for foreign diplomats. It is planning Libya's democratic transition and drafting a new constitution. It also oversees the opposition's military doctrine, co-ordinates public safety, and lobbies for humanitarian aid" (Olivia Ward, *Toronto Star*, June 18, 2011).

The NTC has been recognized by many countries as the legitimate governing authority of the Libyan people. The council has promised elections within one year of the rebels' final victory over the Gadhafi forces.

Forming a New State

All of Libya's rebel groups have stated that they have one real objective: to form a stable, rule-based democracy. In order to do this, the new government's first objective will have to be to provide security and restore basic services.

Security objectives are threefold. First, the NTC needs to prevent revenge killings: the murder of Gadhafi supporters by victorious rebels. To date, there have been few such killings, and the NTC continues to urge restraint.

Second, parts of Libya are divided along tribal lines, and some of these tribes have supported Gadhafi while others have opposed him. Gadhafi's departure could lead to increased tribal conflict in some areas where the leadership of the NTC is tenuous. The new government will need to find ways to effectively settle intertribal disputes.

Third, the new government needs to reconcile with and convince Gadhafi loyalists to disarm. Should they fail to do so, there will remain a real possibility of a future insurgency.

The Libyan rebels and the NTC do have a lot working in their favour. To date there has been little in the way of looting by rebel militia as they have taken control of loyalist cities and towns. For the most part, despite the atrocities committed by Gadhafi's fleeing troops—including the murder of dozens

Quote

"I can tell you one thing. I know the Libyan people, and they will not accept very strict Islam—that is definite . . . Those who will win a general election are not secularists or Salafists [supporters of jihad], but are those who will respect Islam, and at the same time will be able to co-operate with modern life." — Mohammed Busidra, former political prisoner and now influential moderate Islamist leader in Libya (*The Globe and Mail*, August 6, 2011)

of prisoners—the rebels have avoided inhumane actions.

Even in Tripoli, local committees have formed to help keep the peace, and the NTC has permitted large numbers of the old regime's police to return to their duties. To ensure a smooth transition from the old regime to a new government, the NTC is promising not to disband the Libyan army, police, or the civil service.

Economically, the new government should be relatively financially secure. The country is a major producer of oil. Production was shut down during the conflict but is already resuming in some areas. The country also has about \$170-billion in foreign banks that will soon be released to the new ruling authority. Much of this money has been pledged to restoring damaged infrastructure and to humanitarian causes.

To begin the rebuilding, the NTC aims to appoint an interim government within 30 days of declaring that all of Libya is free of Gadhafi's control. The council aims to include representation from people and tribes from all over the country. Multiparty elections will take place about eight months after that. A new constitution is expected to be written within 20 months.

The Role of Islam

Libya is and will remain an Islamic state, and Islam will play an important role in the formation of the new Libya. Almost all Libyans are Sunni Muslims, so there is real religious unity in Libyan society.

The leader of the Islamist opposition to the Gadhafi regime is Mohammed Busidra. For more than 20 years he was a political prisoner. Busidra has united the moderate Islamist leaders into a political force and is working to exclude Islamic extremists from post-Gadhafi politics. With other leaders he is working to form a united Islamist party to take part in the country's first democratic elections.

Busidra's group is also proposing a constitution for the new Libya. It will not impose Sharia law—Islamic religious law—but rather, prevent the passage of any law offending the principles of Islam. Thus women will not be required to cover their heads, but the consumption of alcohol and homosexual acts would be illegal.

According to *The Globe and Mail* (August 6, 2011), the Islamist groups affiliated with Busidra are extensive and influential:

- The Muslim Brotherhood
- The February 17 Martyrs' Brigade (the largest force in the rebel army)
- Moderate members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
- Several of Libya's most noted imams and Muslim leaders

Throughout Libya—and especially in Tripoli—the mosques have played a central role in the restoration of order after the fighting. Imams have used their influence to prevent looting and promote weapons registration, and mosques have served as mediators to settle disputes in local communities.

The Road Ahead

Clearly, both secular and Islamic authorities are eager to shape the new Libya. And, within each group, there are various factions with definite ideas on what the constitution, society, and politics in Libya should look like. Factional infighting is a potential danger to the stability of any new government.

Interim prime minister Mahmoud Jibril, on his arrival in Tripoli after the rebels took control, commented on this very threat. "This is a stage where we have to unify and be together. Once the battle is over, and the constitution is finished, and there is an interim government, the political games can start" (thestar.com, September 8, 2011, www.thestar.com/news/article/1051321).

Operation Unified Protector

Operation Unified Protector is the name given to the NATO mission that was organized to secure Libyan air space and protect Libyan civilians from Gadhafi's reprisals. The mission is expected to complete its work in December, at which time it will be disbanded.

Unified Protector was a mission that in many ways tested NATO as an organization. Of its 28 members, only eight actually participated in the military campaign. Among those eight,

there were disagreements on what the United Nations resolution permitted in the way of military action, as well as to what extent the organization should be working toward a diplomatic solution to the conflict. While NATO has deemed the mission a success, it has also been forced to recognize that consensus in the organization has become difficult to obtain. Unified Protector may well force NATO to re-evaluate the way it operates in future campaigns.

Analysis

1. Join with a partner and review the three lists you made while reading. Add any notes you missed.
2. Identify the most significant factor in each of the three lists and record your reasons for your choice. Be prepared to discuss your choices with the class.
3. NATO and its allies have been very careful to ensure that they are not seen in any way as influencing decisions the Libyan transitional government will make in the creation of a new state. Is there assistance Western governments might offer the transitional government that might be acceptable to all the various factions involved in building the new Libya?

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Canada's Role

Further Research

Information on the Canadian military's missions as part of the NATO forces assisting the Libyan rebels is available on the National Defence website at www.forces.gc.ca/site/index.asp. Enter "Libya NATO mission" in the search field.

Did you know . . .

Directing the entire NATO contribution to the air war in Libya is Canadian Air Force Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard.

FYI

The *libeccio* is a southwesterly wind that blows year-round in the Mediterranean.

The United Nations passed its resolution establishing an arms embargo and a no-fly zone over Libya on March 17, 2011. Within 12 hours of the resolution passing, Canadian planes were on their way from Canadian Forces Base Bagotville in Saguenay, Quebec, to an airbase in Sicily, Italy. On March 21, pilots flew their first air combat mission.

Parliament authorized a three-month military mission in support of the UN resolution. This has twice been extended, in June and September, and the mission is now expected to end in December 2011.

The name given to the Canadian mission was Operation Mobile. (The NATO mission itself is called Operation Unified Protector.) The Canadian mission was divided into two task forces: one based on land and one at sea.

Task Force Libeccio

Task Force Libeccio is the name given to the air force component of the operation. Over 400 personnel are involved in this task force. The planes assigned to the mission include:

- 7 CF-188 Hornet fighters
- 1 CC-150 Polaris tanker for in-flight refuelling
- 2 CC-130 Hercules tankers
- 2 CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft

Only six of the Hornets fly on any given mission. Flights from Sicily to Libya are lengthy enough to require mid-air refuelling, which is the job of the Polaris tanker. The Hornets carry 500-pound laser-guided bombs as well as Sidewinder air-to-air missiles.

As of September 27, 2011, the Hornets had flown a total of 862 sorties (a sortie being a flight by one aircraft).

Initially, most of the sorties were flown

by U.S. aircraft, but once NATO took responsibility for the air operations, seven other nations assumed most of that responsibility: France, Britain, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Italy, and Canada. France and Britain have flown about two-thirds of the total number of NATO combat flights. Canadians flew about eight per cent.

Task Force Charlottetown and Task Force Vancouver

HMCS *Charlottetown* was included in Operation Mobile as the sea component of the operation. Its work involved patrolling the Mediterranean, mostly around Misrata, both to gather information and to prevent prohibited weaponry from entering the country. It also escorted other military vessels working in the area. HMCS *Charlottetown*, on at least one occasion, came under fire from Gadhafi's forces but suffered no damage or casualties.

On August 18, 2011, HMCS *Charlottetown* was relieved by HMCS *Vancouver*. Both vessels are patrol frigates built in Saint John, New Brunswick, and carry about 250 personnel.

Diplomacy

Along with other nations, Canada has also been acting in a diplomatic role on behalf of the Libyan rebels. As early as mid-June the government recognized the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legitimate voice of the people of Libya. The move stopped short of recognizing the NTC as a government (western Libya was still in Gadhafi's control, and his diplomatic representatives were still in Ottawa). But it did mean that Canada's diplomatic representatives could begin talks with the council's leaders.

The UN resolution required countries to freeze Libyan government assets in foreign banks. Canada, like most countries, had done this. The government now also pledged to try to find ways to unfreeze at least some of these monies and transfer them to the NTC.

In early August the government expelled the remaining Libyan diplomats and froze the embassy bank accounts.

The government's intent was to allow the NTC to send a representative to Ottawa to replace the Gadhafi appointees.

By September, the Canadian government was confident enough in the success of the NTC that it sent diplomats to Tripoli to prepare to reopen the Canadian embassy. With that reopening came a transfer of frozen assets—about \$2.2-billion—to the Libyan transitional government.

For Discussion

On September 1, 2011, Prime Minister Harper gave a speech in Trapani, Italy, thanking members of the Canadian Forces for their work in Libya (<http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?category=2&id=4322>). Among his remarks were the following:

"Ladies and gentlemen, [Gadhafi] is now out of power—not yet finished—but his remaining control is inexorably ebbing away. And history will record this: that it was the good work of Canada's Armed Services—your work—working with our allies, that enabled the Libyan people to remove [Gadhafi] from power.

"They used to claim that in international affairs, and you've heard the quote many times: 'Canada punched above its weight.' Well, to punch above your weight, you first have to be able to punch, and that is what you have done here. Numbers don't tell the whole story, but it bears repeating that the RCAF has flown—without caveats—more than 750 strike sorties against [Gadhafi's] forces—a good 10 per cent of the total strikes.

"And Canadians should also know that the taking of Tripoli by rebel forces was materially assisted by CF-18 missions clearing away [Gadhafi] mechanized forces. Meanwhile, the Royal Canadian Navy frigate *Charlottetown*, and her sister ship, *Vancouver*, have done splendid work, also without caveats, enforcing the maritime blockade of [Gadhafi's] forces.

"In other words, in the job of neutralizing [Gadhafi], Canada played a part well out of all proportion.

"But because you held the ring while Libyans fought their own fight with their oppressor, the Libyan people are now free to choose. This is the best of Canada's military tradition. For we are not a country that makes war for gain or for territory. We do not fight for glory, and if we covet honour, it is only a reputation for doing the right thing in a good cause. That is all. And that is enough."

1. Bearing in mind that the audience for these remarks included servicemen and women representing Canada in Operation Mobile, how would you describe the *tone* of the Prime Minister's remarks?
2. What do you think the statement ". . . to punch above your weight, you first have to be able to punch . . ." tells us about the Prime Minister's approach to foreign affairs?
3. In light of what we know about the participation of other nations in Operation Mobile, was Canada indeed "punching above its weight" on this mission?
4. Overall, do you feel the speech gives enough credit to the Libyan rebels for neutralizing Gadhafi?

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Activity: Peacekeepers No More?

In recent years the Canadian military has grown in size and its role has changed. After the Korean War and until fairly recently—our mission to Afghanistan, which began in 2001—Canada's armed forces acted internationally as peacekeepers, serving in more than 70 United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world.

Peacekeeping has now largely given way to active combat missions—the recently concluded Afghanistan mission and the ongoing Operation Mobile in Libya being two examples. The Canadian military presence also continues in Afghanistan in a training mission for the Afghan military and the Afghan police.

The military is also active in international disaster relief. A large military force was dispatched to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. And the 200-person DART unit—the military's Disaster Assistance Response Team—is regularly deployed to provide emergency assistance in disasters around the world.

Is this the future of the Canadian military? Is this the international role we, as Canadians, want them to play?

In small groups, gather opinions and information to outline a future for Canada's military:

- Should we abandon our former role as peacekeepers completely, or should we work more closely with UN peacekeeping missions as we did in the past?
- Should we continue to involve ourselves in missions like the ones dealing with insurgencies in Afghanistan and Libya?
- Who should decide which military missions to support? Should we restrict ourselves to missions mandated by the United Nations or NATO? Are there other missions that we might undertake independently?
- How can we balance the military's defensive role in Canada (largely looking toward our Arctic possessions and as part of the larger North American defence alliance with the United States) and whatever role we decide to play in international military operations?

Prepare a chart outlining your group's conclusions and share it with the other members of your class.