Between the Lines: Canadian Foreign Correspondents and the Construction of Canada's Cold War Identity

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Between the Lines:
Canadian Foreign Correspondents and the Construction of Canada’s Cold War Identity

by

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A THESIS
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to reveal how Canadian foreign correspondents constructed a Canadian perspective in their reports on key Cold War conflicts. Four Cold War conflicts and four correspondents were selected; The Suez Crisis (1956) as reported by Peter Worthington for The (Toronto) Telegram; erection of the Berlin Wall (1961) as reported by Stanley Burke for CBC Television; the Vietnam War (1971-73) as reported by Joe Schlesinger for CBC Television; Nicaragua’s civil war (1981-1984) as reported by Oakland Ross for The Globe and Mail. With the application of critical discourse analysis the reportage revealed that there was a common, unspoken, Canadian perspective or sensibility expressed by the correspondents. Most of their reports focus on people who are victimized by the clashes between the super powers. They dwell on the people who are caught in the middle of violent Cold War conflicts over which they have very little control. Analysis also revealed that except for Worthington’s reports from The Suez Zone in 1957-58, the mention of Canada or Canadians is rare, as is the posturing by the Soviet Union and the United States, posturing that sometimes threatened to break out into nuclear war. Instead, these Canadian correspondents were more concerned about the hapless men, women and children, caught in the crossfire of the proxy wars fought by the Soviet Union, the United States, and China. Although interviews with correspondents revealed that they hadn’t given much thought to what a Canadian perspective would entail, the perspective in their reportage reflects Canada’s history and identity as a country that values surviving rather than domination. It also reflects Canada’s history as a country that often found itself caught between the demands of two super-powers – Britain and the United States. During the Cold War federal leaders sought to carve out a role for Canada in which it sought common ground with smaller nations rather than become completely subservient to the demands of its key ally – the United States. This public shunning of the U.S. is another key theme in the reports of the four foreign correspondents.
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents. They never talked about it much, but war was much more of reality for them than it has ever been for me.
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The central symbol for Canada - and this is based on numerous instances of its occurrence in both English and French Canadian literature - is undoubtedly Survival, La Survivance…hanging on, staying alive.

Margaret Atwood
INTRODUCTION

When Joe Schlesinger accepted a job with The Herald Tribune in Paris in 1961 he had lived and worked in Canada for only ten years after hurriedly exiting from Communist Czechoslovakia. But those ten years had changed his outlook on the world: “I had recovered from the hurts of Europe; I had become a Canadian in a wider sense than just having a piece of paper say so. Canada had changed my outlook, my set of references for looking at the world and my place in it. I was more self-confident and optimistic, less prone to looking over my shoulder,” Schlesinger wrote in his memoir *Time Zones* (1990).

Over a long career, most of it during the Cold War era, Schlesinger broadcast reports from various locations directly affected by the hostilities between the U.S. and the Soviet Union including Berlin, Vietnam, China, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Schlesinger’s Canadian outlook no doubt influenced his reporting from Cold War conflict zones as it must have influenced the dozens of other Canadian foreign correspondents who were based around the world during the Cold War and crafted their reports on various conflicts for a specifically Canadian audience.

This study was designed to reveal how Canadian identity was manifested in some of those published newspaper and television reports filed by Anglophone Canadian correspondents during certain events over the 40-year span of the Cold War. The research question guiding the investigation was: How did Canadian foreign correspondents construct a Canadian perspective on key Cold War conflicts? This question prompted other more specific queries such as: What exactly were these Canadian correspondents saying in their published or broadcast reports when, for example, the Berlin Wall was erected to keep East Germans from flooding into West Germany? Or when the U.S. started bombing North Vietnam? Did they present a perspective that differed from the U.S. view? With whom did these correspondents appear to identify? How did Canadian correspondents convey Canada’s role in a world dominated by the two superpowers? Were they influenced by Canadian foreign policy? Did they reflect Canadians’ shifting sense of national identity?

There’s no question that after the Second World War Canada was in a much better position to assert authority and actively participate in post-war recovery efforts than most European
countries or Britain. While it had contributed much in the way of personnel and resources to the war effort, Canada was not ravaged by war. The resource-based economy was relatively strong; it was better off economically than France, Britain, Japan or Germany. Canada was also an influential member of the British Commonwealth which meant it had strong multi-lateral relationships around the globe (Bothwell, 2007; Holmes, 1969; Whitaker & Marcuse, 1994).

Holmes (1969) asserts Canada became much more active in the foreign relations arena after the Second World War because it came out of the war relatively unscathed and because circumstances had changed. The United States and Britain became allies and Canada was seen as important to the maintenance of that relationship. Holmes also attributes much of Canada’s success at international relations and its reputation as a peacekeeper to Lester Pearson. Pearson had been trained as a professional diplomat and became a major architect of the UN and NATO as well as one of the most respected foreign ministers on the international stage during the post-war era. Bothwell (2007) notes that when Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for his leadership concerning the establishment of a UN peacekeeping force during the Suez crisis, Canadians felt so proud “they forgot that the prize was awarded to Pearson, not Canada” (p. 361).

Canada’s sense of national identity blossomed in other ways during the Cold War era. The Pearson government initiated a cultural reform agenda that included an enhanced national broadcasting system, a national film board, a national library, a national gallery, a flag, and a national anthem. Canada’s sense of accomplishment and identity was further enhanced by the highly successful Expo 67 held in Montreal during the centennial of the founding of Canada, and by the establishment of a national system of public health insurance – Medicare – also in 1967.

Given events on the world stage and the surge of projects designed to engender a distinct national identity, to be “Canadian” during the Cold War era particularly in relation to Canada’s role on the international stage meant having: a sense of dependence along with independence; a sense of having an important role in world affairs; a sense of being different than Americans; a tendency towards survival rather than domination; a willingness to give up sovereignty on some foreign policy issues to the United Nations.
In order to answer the research question the reports of four Canadian foreign correspondents – Peter Worthington, Stanley Burke, Joe Schlesinger, and Oakland Ross - who witnessed four different Cold War conflicts were analyzed using the methods of critical discourse analysis.

Peter Worthington reported for The Toronto Telegram from Egypt and Gaza when the first United Nations Emergency Force which consisted of 5,000 soldiers based around a 1,000-man Canadian contingent was dispatched there during the Suez Crisis. Since Canada became so identified with UN Peacekeeping forces because of the work of Lester Pearson, and Worthington was among the first Canadian journalists on the scene, his reports are key to understanding how this aspect of Canadian identity was originally portrayed.

Stanley Burke was a CBC television journalist based in London during the Berlin crisis of 1961. He was on the scene when East German refugees began flooding into West Germany through Berlin to escape the repressive government of East Germany which was controlled by the Soviets. And he was on the scene when the wall was erected to stop emigration to the West. He did several news reports as well as documentaries on the situation. While Canada was not directly involved in this confrontation between the Soviets and the western powers (led by the U.S.), as a member of NATO and key ally of the United States Canada certainly had a stake in the outcome.

The reports of Joe Schlesinger from Vietnam when he was Far-Eastern correspondent for CBC television were also analyzed. Canada was not directly involved in the Vietnam War but there was a good deal of public pressure on Canadian politicians to openly condemn U.S. involvement. It was also during this time period that Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau initiated diplomatic relations with China, an ally of the North Vietnamese and to that point hostile to western interests.

The reports of Oakland Ross who was the Latin American correspondent for the Globe and Mail were the fourth set of reportage to be analyzed. Ross filed reports from Nicaragua during the early 1980s when that country was in the midst of a civil war provoked by Cold War hostilities.
For U.S. President Ronald Reagan the war in Nicaragua was really a fight against the Soviet Union, or the Evil Empire, as he dubbed it.

Three of the four correspondents – Oakland Ross, Joe Schlesinger, and Peter Worthington – were interviewed in order to gather recollections of their experiences as foreign correspondents and determine how they constructed a Canadian point of view in their reports.

Much of Canada’s Cold War history is written as though news media reports, investigations and commentary about the Cold War were simply incidental to the larger cultural, economic and political forces at work. But since pervasive and easily accessible mass media, particularly television, was a mainstay of Cold War society, it is difficult to believe that news media accounts of Cold War conflicts, especially those presented from the site of the conflicts, were insignificant; that they didn’t reflect a sense of Canadian identity and had no influence on Canadians’ sense of identity in general. Since there is a paucity of scholarly study on the work of Canadian foreign correspondents this study fills some of that gap and contributes to a fuller picture of Canada’s Cold War history.
2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE COLD WAR

2.1 The Western Front

The stage was set for the Cold War even before the official end of the Second World War in 1945. Ferguson (2006) notes that the de facto partition of Germany had already begun as early as November 1943 when U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed to hand over the Prussian port of Konigsberg to the Soviet Union and move the Polish border westward.

After the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, the Yalta Conference was convened during which the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union agreed to divide up the rest of Germany into zones of occupation. From the new Polish frontier to central Germany became the Soviet zone of occupation. Western Germany was divided up between Britain, the United States and France; Berlin became a four-power island in the Soviet zone. The Soviets also retained control of Eastern Europe where they had defeated the Nazi occupation during their push to Berlin and the ultimate defeat of Hitler’s army.

In March 1946, Winston Churchill, who was no longer Prime Minister of Britain but leader of the opposition in the House of Commons, delivered a speech at a small mid-western college in the United States. In this speech Churchill warned that the Russians were expanding their territory and influence through the spread of the Communist Party. Churchill referred to the “Iron Curtain” that separates democratic Europe from the totalitarian regimes in the Russian sphere of influence:

> From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe, Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow (Churchill, 1999, p. 8).
Churchill also spoke of the necessity of an organization like the United Nation if catastrophic wars were to be avoided especially in light of the possibility of the danger of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of undemocratic countries (Churchill, 1999, p. 4).

The day Churchill gave this speech - March 6, 1946 – has been called the beginning of the Cold War because the former British Prime Minister gave notice of what he saw as a pre-eminent threat to western Europe and the Anglo-American alliance. Churchill had given a similar prescient speech in the British House of Commons in 1938 when he thundered against Britain’s acquiescence to the Munich Agreement:

In 1938, his warning had set limits to Neville Chamberlain’s flexibility: as events bore out Churchill’s analysis of the consequences of the Munich Agreement, his speech became the standard by which British policy would be judged. The same can be said for the Fulton speech: nothing that Churchill did thereafter, not even as prime minister, was of comparable importance to what he did on March 6, 1946, merely by opening his mouth (Rahe, 1999, p. 50).

Germany as it had been no longer existed but the Americans became determined that West Germans should realize self-government as soon as possible. They were also determined to reinvigorate battered Europe, particularly Germany’s industrial sector. In 1947 U.S. President Harry Truman established the European Recovery Program (commonly known as The Marshall Plan) which aimed to reconstruct a devastated Europe through the infusion of U.S. aid on a massive scale. The Marshall Plan would eventually cost between $12 and $13 billion before being subsumed by U.S. defense spending on NATO and support for a variety of bilateral aid programs in the early 1950s. According to Agnew & Entrikin (2004), The Marshall Plan was by many measures a successful international aid program which had more than purely philanthropic aims. Among other things, a devastated Europe was an invitation to Soviet political meddling, an opportunity for rebuilding export markets for U.S. businesses, and a chance to experiment with creating an open world economy that would not experience repetition of the economic and political disasters of the previous twenty years.

What appears beyond dispute, however, is that the plan had two major impacts, irrespective of either its quantitative effect or its motivation. One was the political–
psychological boost its massive economic assistance gave to a recovering Europe. The other was its undoubted contribution to the divergence in political-economic paths of western and eastern Europe (Agnew & Entrikin, 2004, p. 23).

The perceived threat from the Soviet Union and its subservient states in eastern Europe spurred Britain and European countries to eventually organize the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in an effort to defend themselves and counter the threat from Stalin.

The origins of NATO are traditionally found in British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin’s policy of Western Union. The policy, introduced in early 1948, was a direct response to the worsening state of East-West relations and what Bevin felt was a crisis of confidence within the West toward a Communist threat. It therefore called for the creation of a Western European system of countries to counter the Communist threat from both a military and a non-military perspective (Milloy, 2006, p. 9).

Bevin went on to successfully negotiate the Treaty of Brussels on 17 March 1948, establishing military and non-military links between Britain, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg. He made no secret of his hope that the policy would ultimately lead to the creation of a third force equal in strength to both the United States and the Soviet Union. But that was not to be. A year later the United States, Canada, Portugal, Italy, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland along with the original five signed the North Atlantic Treaty and NATO was established. The battle lines had been drawn and they would last for the next 40 years.

2.2 The Eastern Front

Alliances were also shifting in Asia. The war in the Pacific that had begun when Japan bombed Pearl Harbour in Hawaii in 1941, ended in 1945 when the United States dropped nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima killing about 120,000 people. At the same time, the Soviet Union declared war against Japan. Unbeknownst to Japan, Stalin had promised the U.S. that the U.S.S.R. would enter the war against Japan within three months of the defeat of Germany.

The Soviets moved a million-man army into Manchuria in north-eastern China which the Japanese had occupied since 1931. The Japanese were now at war with virtually the entire

But that didn’t end the regional conflicts that had been simmering for decades. When France fell at the beginning of the Second World War, Japan moved into Indo-China – Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos – and then retreated when they were defeated at the hands of the U.S. In China, which the United States considered an ally, The People’s Liberation Army led by Mao Zedong had the largest guerrilla army in the world and had been waging war for twenty years. In May 1949 the Communist forces proclaimed the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese leadership fled to the island of Formosa (now Taiwan). Mao had already made it clear that he intended to align China with the Soviet Union and in December 1949 he went to Moscow to pledge his allegiance to Stalin in return for the Manchurian ports (Ferguson, 2006).

It is also significant that in many of these countries Communist-backed anti-colonial movements were on the rise. In Vietnam there was an armed insurgency determined to oust the French, and later the Americans. In Malaya, a Communist inspired guerrilla movement drew thousands of Chinese labourers who had been imported to Malaya by the British. The British were forced to quit India in 1947. Indonesia had allied itself with Japan during the Second World War in hopes of throwing out The Dutch (Swift, 2004).

During the war against Japan, the future of the Japanese possession of Korea was rarely discussed. Stalin wanted a friendly government on this frontier as elsewhere. The Americans did not want the Red Army too close to Japan. They divided the peninsula into zones of occupation along the 38th parallel. U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt – a committed anti-colonialist – saw Korea as simply a colony, which must have its independence. But he felt it would need to be supervised for many years until it was ready for independence.

The Koreans on both sides of the border had other ideas and were not content to sit idly by while the Soviets and the Americans managed them. In June 1950, the North Koreans launched a cross-border raid which pummelled South Korean forces. In Washington it was argued that if Communism was allowed to expand its territory any further, no coalition could ever be formed that would be able to confront it. Also, it appeared to the Americans that Communism had now
moved beyond subversion to direct invasion. President Harry Truman, fearful of another Communist victory, ordered American forces to South Korea (Swift, 2004).

America’s European allies cared nothing for Korea, but they worried that aggression there, if left unchallenged, might lead to aggression in Europe. They also had to consider the possible damage to NATO if they ignored America’s current needs. Britain, France and 13 other nations, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, sent forces and five other nations sent medical units. A U.S.-led coalition, only nominally acting in the name of the UN, was about to fight the first open battle of the Cold War (Swift, 2004).

2.3 Nuclear Arms

Hanging over all this international conflict and tension was the development of nuclear weapons. The U.S. was the first country to use nuclear bombs when they dropped them on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The U.S.S.R. detonated its first atomic bomb in August 1949 just before the Chinese Communist Party won its victory in September. There was a strong feeling in the United States that it was failing to meet the Communist challenge adequately, that it was showing weakness. In April 1950 a crucial policy document, NSC-68, called for a major expansion of American military might. The feeling was growing that the next Communist challenge must be met by force.

By 1977 the two main powers had (according to one estimate) nearly 11,000 warheads between them. By the time the arms race reached its height, about 1985, they had well over 30,000. Data on the warheads possessed by the other nuclear powers is uncertain. They certainly possessed significant arsenals (Swift, 2004).

2.4 The Cold War’s Collateral Damage

The nuclear weapons were never used. But that didn’t mean that the Cold War didn’t have victims. Thousands of people were killed in various countries as a result of armed conflicts promoted and resourced by the United States and the Soviet Union. The localized conflicts featured governments, armies, rebel forces, and guerrillas acting as proxies for the Communist Soviet Union and the capitalist United States. The following is a list of the key developments
and conflicts that occurred between the Korean War in 1950 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989:

2.4.1 The Suez Crisis 1956

Conflict erupted in October 1956 after Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, an economic life-line for Britain which had been controlled by the British and the French. Nasser made his controversial move after the British and the Americans reneged on loans to build a great dam at Aswan on the Nile, a project Nasser considered vital to Egypt’s economy. The British and the Americans had changed their minds about investing in Egypt because they were suspicious of Nasser’s ties to Communist countries. He had bought arms from Communist-controlled Czechoslovakia at a time when the Soviet Union was exerting absolute authority over Eastern Europe.

In an effort to reassert control over the Canal, the British and French allied with the new nation of Israel which bordered on Egypt and had its own interests to protect. The Israelis crossed the Egyptian border on October 29. The British and French, as had been agreed beforehand, issued an ultimatum to the Egyptians – and the Israelis. It stated that the Suez Canal was endangered and asked them to stop fighting and withdraw ten miles from the Canal, which then would be “temporarily” occupied by the British and French. The Egyptians refused, so the British and French bombed airfields outside Cairo.

2.4.2 Vietnam 1954-1975

By 1955 the French had been defeated by Ho Chi Minh’s forces, the Paris Peace Accords between France and Vietnam had left Vietnam a partitioned country, and the U.S. had begun direct aid to the government of South Vietnam in hopes of defeating Ho Chi Minh and his backers – The Soviet Union and China. By 1963 it was becoming increasingly clear to American observers that the Viet Cong or National Liberation Front - both a political organization and an army - was winning the war in South Vietnam.

Between 1963 and 1965 in a step by step process President Lyndon Johnson and his advisors led the United States into a bloody and complex war in Vietnam. Early in his presidency Johnson approved increasing the number of military advisors to 23,000; approved an intense bombing
campaign of North Vietnam and its supply routes that ran through Laos; and provided two battalions of U.S. marines to help defend Danang air base in South Vietnam where the bombing raids originated. By 1965 General Westmoreland, Johnson’s appointed military commander in Vietnam, decided it was time for the U.S. to take over the ground war since South Vietnamese troops were so ineffective. He requested 150,000 troops and Johnson acquiesced.

As the war intensified between 1965 and 1967 Ho Chi Minh, the president of North Vietnam, poured more and more human and material resources into the conflict. In addition, assistance received from China and the Soviet Union helped North Vietnam bounce back from losses incurred by the U.S. bombing campaigns and kept war materiel flowing into the south. While the United States wanted a contained war that would minimize their losses but assure victory, North Vietnam saw the conflict as total war (Anderson, 2002).

The cost of the war became the subject of heated debate and demonstrations in the United States. And when Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968 he was eagerly looking for the United States to get out of the war with honour. It took four more years of fighting, destruction, negotiating, and ultimately compromise before a formal agreement in 1973 ended the American war in Vietnam. Two years later, Hanoi’s quest, begun in 1945, to bring an independent and united Vietnam under its control reached its goal when North Vietnam’s troops entered Saigon.

**2.4.3 The Soviet Invasion of Hungary 1956.**

In early November 1956, the Red Army invaded Budapest in order to put down a student-led rebellion that had received some support from Hungarian Communist leaders. The city centre was soon crushed and outlying districts saw considerable bloodshed, but the fighting was over in a few days. Savage repression followed. The west did not intervene even though the Hungarians begged them to.

**2.4.4 Castro’s Communist Revolution in Cuba 1958**

In December 1958 an armed guerrilla movement led by Fidel Castro ousted Fulgencio Batista, the U.S. backed dictator. At the outset of the revolution Castro said he was not a Communist. But after several disputes with the United States he sought aid, trade and arms from Moscow and
received it much to the chagrin of the United States which was only 70 miles away from Cuba’s shores.

2.4.5 *Invasion of Cuba by U.S. supported Cuban exiles – The Bay of Pigs April 1961*

In April 1961 a brigade of Cuban exiles numbering about 1400, landed at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. But the exiles, who had been recruited by the CIA, proved to be poorly trained and equipped. The ship carrying most of their radios and ammunition was destroyed before it reached shore. And although the exiles had anticipated they would provoke a popular uprising against Castro there was no uprising. Castro’s experienced troops fought well and enjoyed complete popular support. The exiles found themselves trapped; they received no American military support and surrendered within three days. For President John Kennedy the fiasco was a massive humiliation.

2.4.6 *The Erection of the Berlin Wall August 1961*

After thousands of East Germans crossed over into West Berlin in hopes of finding a better life in the west, the Soviets decided they had a problem that needed fixing. Soviet President Nikita Khrushchev wanted to plug that loophole so he demanded that western troops leave Berlin. The West was thrown into confusion. Nobody wanted to abandon Berlin, and yet maintaining their foothold in the city might mean war. Eventually, the Soviets solved their Berlin problem unilaterally. On August 13, 1961, East German police and troops sealed off West Berlin from East Germany. Over the next couple of months a concrete wall was built around West Berlin making it almost impossible for East Germans to cross over. The wall stood for the next twenty-eight years but nuclear war had been avoided.

2.4.7 *The Cuban Missile Crisis October 1962*

In the summer of 1962 after gathering photographic evidence that a site for medium-range ballistic missiles was being constructed in Cuba, U.S. President John Kennedy issued an ultimatum to the Soviets via national television. He told the audience that the U.S. had already undertaken a naval blockade of Cuba to prevent Soviet nuclear warheads from reaching the island and was prepared to invade Cuba if Soviet Premier Khrushchev didn’t back down and
remove the missiles. Kennedy offered to pull out of a U.S. base in Turkey, Khrushchev backed down and Kennedy called off the invasion.

2.4.8 The Six Day War June 1967

By the 1960s the American commitment to Israel was growing. America was already seen as Israel’s ally, which pushed the Arabs towards the U.S.S.R. They began a major Soviet-supplied arms build-up while Israel purchased American, British and French weapons. The stage was being set for all-out war. And after air skirmishes between Israel’s Mirage jet fighters and Soviet supplied MIGs, war broke out on June 5, 1967. But it was a devastating catastrophe for the Arabs. On every front they collapsed. When the Soviets insisted that Israel must accept a ceasefire or they would intervene it provoked full-blown crisis in east-west relations. For the first time since its installation, following the Cuban Missile Crisis, the ‘hotline’ was used in earnest. The Soviet message was that Israel must accept a cease-fire or they would intervene. A Soviet naval landing in Israel appears to have been prepared but never launched. The U.S. Sixth Fleet would certainly have interfered. In the end, both the super powers hesitated to risk a world war and the crisis ended when the U.S. urged Israel to accept a ceasefire.

2.4.9 Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia August 1968

When Czechoslovakia Communist leader Alexander Dubcek lifted censorship and began initiating political reforms designed to give Czechoslovakia more independence from Moscow, other eastern European countries such as Poland began to clamour for the same reforms. The Kremlin decided Dubcek must suppress the reform movement and agree to Soviet troops permanently stationed in Czechoslovakia or be removed from office. When increasingly threatening signals were ignored, an invasion was prepared. On 20 August 1968, paratroopers seized the airports and tanks and troops poured across four frontiers. Cities were occupied and the communications network quickly came under control. Soviet control of east Europe was reaffirmed and the limits of reform clearly spelled out.

2.4.10 Angola 1975

The governing Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the rebel group Unita were bitter rivals even before the country gained independence from Portugal in 1975. The
Soviet Union and Cuba supported the then-Marxist MPLA, while the U.S. and white-ruled South Africa backed Unita as a bulwark against Soviet influence in Africa. After 16 years of fighting that killed up to 300,000 people, a peace deal led to elections. But Unita rejected the outcome and resumed the war and hundreds of thousands more were killed. Another peace accord was signed in 1994 and the UN sent in peacekeepers. But the fighting steadily worsened again and in 1999 the peacekeepers withdrew, leaving behind a country rich in natural resources but littered with landmines and the ruins of war.

2.4.11 Nicaragua 1979-1990

The Sandinista Revolutionary Front deposed U.S. supported Dictator Anastasio Somoza and assumed control of the government in 1979. The Sandinistas were originally a student movement with roots in Marxism but over the years gained support from all sectors of society. When the Sandinistas assumed control of government they pledged to establish a socialist society along the lines of the Cuban model. The Sandinistas also espoused a virulent anti-Americanism as most Nicaraguans saw the United States as the source of their poverty and oppression. When relations between the Sandinistas and the United States deteriorated, the Nicaraguans sought assistance from the Soviet Union which was only too happy to establish a second base in the Americas. When Nicaraguan exiles started a guerrilla war against the Sandinistas, U.S. President Ronald Reagan authorized money and other forms of support for the rebels. The Sandinistas responded by deploying their Soviet-supplied army to fight the rebels. Nicaragua was engulfed in civil war for about ten years, a conflict that drained the economy and severely hampered the Sandinistas’ reform programs.

2.4.12 Afghanistan 1979

When the government of Afghanistan, which was controlled by the Soviet-supported People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan, lost control due to unpopular policies and inter-ethnic conflict, the Soviets invaded in order to restore stability and put down a Muslim threat on its border. Initially resistance was urban and in provinces bordering Pakistan. But soon 15 Mujaheddin, or resistance groups, were fighting in mountainous areas disrupting important transportation routes. The U.S. and China (which had broken with the Soviets by the early 1970s) were happy to arm the Mujaheddin. By 1985 they were receiving the latest American ‘stinger’ missiles, able to
shoot down Soviet helicopters. The war was fought with intense savagery. The Mujaheddin frequently tortured prisoners to death. Soviet forces employed ‘migratory genocide’: destroying crops to force the population to flee the land. Afghanistan became the Soviet Union’s Vietnam. Soviet losses were heavy and the war was not popular at home. In 1989 Michael Gorbachev decided to cut his losses and withdrew the Soviet troops.
3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Three streams of literature were focused on for this analysis of the reporting of Canadian foreign correspondents during the Cold War. The first stream is literature concerning Canada and the Cold War. There is abundant literature about the Cold War in general, particularly the ideological and strategic positions of the United States and the Soviet Union. Some of it is relevant to this project. But because the main focus is Canada’s role during the Cold War, that literature is of prime concern. The second stream deals with journalism and includes the history of war journalism and foreign correspondence as well as journalism theory, particularly the construction of news, journalistic accounts of events, and the intersection of news and culture. The third stream of literature deals with national identity and how identity is revealed through discourse analysis, particularly the discourse of journalists reporting on a specific topic.

3.1 Canada and the Cold War

The political history of Canada during the Cold War has been well documented in such works as Bothwell’s *Alliance and Illusion* (2007), Whitaker’s and Marcuse’s (1994) *Cold War Canada: the making of a security state, 1945-1967*, and Whitaker’s and Hewitt’s (2003) *Canada and the Cold War*. They provide extensive detail on the events and issues that impacted Canada during the Cold War as well as the domestic debates and policies that ensued. John Holmes, a diplomat and later an academic, wrote extensively on the behind-the-scenes debates and negotiations with Canada’s allies, enemies and those caught in the middle. Holmes (1981) also authored *Life with Uncle? The Canadian American Relationship*. Thompson and Randall (2008) provide an extensive look at Canada’s historical alliance with the U.S. and a long term view of its impact on Canada’s foreign policy, economy and culture, including important details and insights concerning Cold War relations.

Although scholars disagree about the motivations for certain policies and positions taken by Canada’s political leaders during the Cold War, they do agree that Canada tried to assert some degree of independence even though it was a strong ally of the U.S. and a leading light in the western alliance against the Soviet Union. Bothwell (2007) argues that while much has been made of Canada’s peacekeeping role during the Cold War, seeking an independent position for itself was not a departure from past performance. Rather Prime Ministers Louis St. Laurent and
Pierre Trudeau mimicked the behaviour of their predecessor, war-time Prime Minister Mckenzie King

Over Suez in 1956, nuclear warheads in 1963 (Cuba), Vietnam in the 1960s, NATO garrisons in 1969, energy supplies in the 1970s and 1980s, Canadian governments declined to follow where their more senior allies wished them to go. Older patterns therefore persisted. Canadians had a collective identification with their allies that saw the country into – and eventually through – the Cold War. In return, they expected that their allies, meaning mostly the Americans, would not tread indelicately on Canadian toes. Most of the time, the allies obliged (Bothwell, 2007, p. 6)

Thompson and Randall (2008) assert that “the main motif in U.S.-Canadian Cold War relations was U.S. pressure for cooperation and conformity and an understated Canadian counter effort for an independent voice” (p. 172).

There’s no question that immediately after the Second World War Canada was in a much better position to actively participate in post-war recovery efforts than most European countries or Britain. While it had contributed much in the way of personnel and resources to the war effort, the country was not ravaged by war. The resource-based economy was relatively strong; it was better off economically than France, Britain, Japan or Germany. As well, Canada was an influential member of the British Commonwealth which meant it had strong multi-lateral relationships around the globe.

Holmes (1969) argues that Canada became much more active in the foreign relations arena after the Second World War because circumstances had changed. The United States and Britain became allies and Canada was seen as a lynch pin in that relationship. This is evident in the famous “Iron Curtain” speech by Winston Churchill given in the United States in 1946 and broadcast throughout the U.S. and Canada. In the speech Churchill refers warmly to Canada’s unique position as a North American country with strong ties to the Commonwealth:

The United States has already a Permanent Defence Agreement with the Dominion of Canada, which is so devotedly attached to the British
Commonwealth and Empire. This Agreement is more effective than many of those which have often been made under formal alliances. This principle should be extended to all the British Commonwealths with full reciprocity (Rahe, 1999, p. 6)

To understand how Canada positioned itself during the Cold War era, it is necessary to understand the situation that Canada and other western nations found themselves in at the end of the Second World War. With the final defeat of Hitler’s Germany, the allies were acutely aware that had they acted sooner, had they stood together against Hitler rather than follow the route of appeasement, they might have been able to stop him earlier, save millions of lives and prevent the destruction of much of Europe.

Canada was not considered a great power in the period immediately following the Second World War. But its cities had not been bombed and its economy was strong compared to Britain and Europe. Canada had also earned credibility with other western nations as it had made a substantial contribution of men, material and resources to the Allied war effort. But the price paid during the Second World War also left Canadians determined not to go through such a devastating conflict again:

Canada had swung courageously to Britain’s side in the mother country’s hour of greatest need but Canada also made its own small contribution to the diplomatic fiasco that led to the war. The postwar lesson was clear: Canada should now do what it could as a middle power to encourage the formation of the instruments of collective security against the menace of totalitarian aggression and play its fair part in shouldering the burden of the alliance’s defence (Whitaker and Marcuse, 1996, p. 5).

Another important ghost that worried Canadian policy makers in the postwar years was American isolationism. For more than two years, between December 1939 and the American entry into the war at the end of 1941, Britain and the Commonwealth had stood (alone after the fall of France) against the seemingly irresistible Nazi armies. The memory of those two difficult years convinced the British and the Canadians that they needed to bring the Americans onside so that their leadership and military and economic resources could be harnessed to stop the
expansionist designs of the U.S.S.R. This fear of American isolationism was short-lived but it did drive important changes in the western alliance:

It is difficult now for us to credit this concern given the unbounded enthusiasm the Americans began to show as early as 1947-48 (and have shown ever since) to seize and exercise this position of leadership. And yet Canadians, conditioned by the war, feared the return of American isolationism, and acted accordingly (Whitaker and Marcuse, 1996, p. 6).

By the time Americans had decided to abandon isolationism, the United Nations had been established and was considered a new world government. Canada had been on board in the early stages of the UN and pushed for recognition of middle powers such as itself so the organization wouldn’t be controlled by the super powers. Canada’s contribution to the UN went down well at home: “The end of the conference (in 1945 in San Francisco) marked the beginning of the memorialisation of a new Canadian identity in world affairs. History was not just being made in San Francisco; it was also being shaped” (Chapnick, 2005, p. 154).

Many diplomats and scholars credit Lester Pearson with Canada’s success during the early stages of the UN. However, Chapnick (2005) argues that the real credit should go to Liberal Prime Minister McKenzie King who held office continuously from 1935 to 1948. Trained in law and social work, King published his only significant scholarly work, Industry and Humanity in 1918 as the horrors of the First World War became fully realized. It was meant to be a discourse on the future of industrial relations, but its promotion of negotiation and conciliation as a means of conflict resolution was equally relevant to the discord among nations and ethnic groups. International conflict, King reasoned, was just like industrial strife, and “the acceptance of nations of the principle of investigation before resort to hostilities would mark the dawn of a new era in the history of the world” (Chapnick, 2005, p. 22).

By the end of the Second World War, King had been Prime Minister of Canada for a total of 21 years, the longest serving Prime Minister in Commonwealth history. He led the Liberal party for over 29 years, and established Canada’s international reputation as a middle power fully committed to world order. Bothwell (2007) claims that King was moved to play a larger and unwelcome role in relations among the great powers in 1945 after the Americans had bombed
Japan into surrender. It was then that King realized that because Canada (as a source of uranium, scientists and engineers) had played such a key role in the development of the atomic bomb, he had a responsibility to see that the growing tensions between the Soviets and the western allies did not escalate to the point that the bomb would be used again and thus became an enthusiastic supporter of the UN.

Canada was also a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and very much on the inside of this relatively small club. The first stage was secret “security conversations” among the United States, Britain, and Canada, and in the summer of 1948, U.S. undersecretary of state Robert Lovett met in Washington with the ambassadors of Canada and the Brussels Pact countries (Thompson and Randall, 2008, p. 178).

NATO was eventually established in 1949 and included the United States, Canada, Britain and nine countries in Europe. It was a military alliance based on security guarantees and mutual commitments in the face of what was perceived to be an expansionary Soviet threat. It also became the main multilateral forum for Canadian/trans-Atlantic relations. Escott Reid, a diplomat who worked closely with Lester Pearson, explained that Canada had to “avoid being left alone with the United States . . . because of the great disparity in power between the two countries. NATO, along with the United Nations and the British Commonwealth, offered an opportunity “to redress the balance in North America.” Canada also wanted NATO to be more than “an old-fashioned military alliance” (Thompson and Randall, 2008, p. 179). Article II of the charter, inserted at Canada’s request, called on the signatories to “contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles on which those institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being.”

In the aftermath of the Second World War, alliances had shifted rapidly. The United States, Britain and Canada no longer considered the Soviet Union an ally as it had been during the war against Hitler’s Germany. Britain was no longer the imperial power it once had been, and had been severely set back by the war. The United States, once leery of entanglements with other nations, gave up its isolationist stance and eagerly took on the leadership of the western alliance against the Soviets. Since the U.S. and Britain were key to the alliance, Canada became the
natural go-between for two nations that had at one time been at war with each other and had had a somewhat distant relationship ever since. Canada’s politicians and diplomats had decades of experience working with the British as a member of the British Empire and later the Commonwealth. Canada also had decades of experience working with its progressively dominant neighbour to the south. Because of its unique position, Canada was on the inside of key postwar organizations that came to dominate the early years of the Cold War.

3.1.2 The Cold War and Canada’s Golden Years of Diplomacy

Holmes (1969) asserts that Lester Pearson was key to Canada’s success at this time. After a long career in the Canadian Foreign Service, Pearson was appointed Secretary of State for External Affairs by Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent in 1948. Pearson had been trained as a professional diplomat and he became a major architect of the UN and NATO. The rapid growth of Canada’s stature was inextricably associated with Pearson’s position as one of the most respected foreign ministers of the post-war era. According to Holmes (1969), Canada went “through a remarkably swift transition from the status of a wartime junior partner in 1945 to that of a surefooted middle power with an acknowledged and applauded role in world affairs ten years later” (p. 35).

Pearson’s reputation as a peacekeeper, and by association Canada’s reputation, was cemented in 1956 during the Suez Crisis. The crisis erupted after Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, an economic life-line for Britain which had been controlled by the British and the French. Nasser made his controversial move after the British and the Americans reneged on loans to build a great dam at Aswan on the Nile, a project Nasser considered vital to Egypt’s economy. The British and the Americans had changed their minds about investing in Egypt because they were suspicious of Nasser’s ties to Communist countries. He had bought arms from Communist-controlled Czechoslovakia at a time when the Soviet Union was exerting absolute authority over eastern Europe.

The British and French allied with the new nation of Israel, which bordered on Egypt and had its own interests to protect, in an effort to reassert control over the Canal. The Israelis crossed the Egyptian border on October 29. The British and French, as had been agreed
beforehand, issued an ultimatum to the Egyptians – and the Israelis. It stated that the Suez Canal was endangered and asked them to stop fighting and withdraw ten miles from the Canal, which then would be “temporarily” occupied by the British and French. The Egyptians refused, so the British and French bombed airfields outside Cairo.

Both Canadian Prime Minister St. Laurent and Pearson were not sympathetic to the British role in the affair even though Canada and Britain were longstanding allies. They believed the crisis would seriously divide western allies and jeopardize the role of the UN. They were also concerned that it would undermine the blossoming Anglo-American friendship, something Canada very much wanted to foster.

With St. Laurent’s approval and support, Pearson flew to New York on November 1.

Very early the next morning, in the course of a debate in the UN over the Israeli invasion of Egypt, Pearson made the proposal for a “United Nations force large enough to keep these borders at peace while a political settlement is worked out.” The U.S. supported Canada on the proposal much to the dismay of British Prime Minister Anthony Eden who had already dispatched an invasion force to Egypt.

The Canadian resolution was eventually passed and a UN force replaced the British and French forces and stood between Arabs and Israelis although the Canal remained blocked for months. A year later Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts (Andrew, (1993); Bothwell, (2007); Holmes, (1969); Holmes 1979).

According to Bothwell (2007), Pearson projected an image that matched the Canadian self-image. He seemed to stand for good conduct in international affairs, reliability, and firmness. He was named president of the UN General Assembly and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957. “Canadians took pride in his achievements, either at the time or, in the case of his political opponents, some years later. In taking pride, there was among Canadians a certain amount of self-regard” (p. 391).

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, elected for the first time in 1968, was also key to Canada’s Cold War stance as an influential middle power. Trudeau kept Canada firmly engaged in NATO, but often pursued an independent path in international relations. He established Canadian diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China in 1970,
before the United States did, and in 1973 became the first Canadian Prime Minister to visit that country. Wright (2007) in his book *Three Nights in Havana: Pierre Trudeau, Fidel Castro and the Cold War* contends that Prime Minister Trudeau’s long standing relationship with Cuba and Fidel Castro was a reflection of his desire for independence in a world of superpowers. Of course, Canada had already steered an independent path when it came to its relationship with Cuba. At least that’s how it appeared.

In 1960 when the U.S. declared a full blown trade embargo after Castro cosied up to the Soviet Union and then nationalized virtually all major U.S.-owned industrial and agricultural firms in Cuba, Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker refused to take Canada down that path. But according to Wright (2007), recently declassified U.S. State Department documents reveal that far from encouraging Canada to support the embargo the United States secretly urged Diefenbaker to maintain normal relations with Cuba because it thought that Canada was well-positioned to gather intelligence on the island. The Eisenhower administration only asked that Canada not be used as a back door for industrial supplies, equipment and machinery from the U.S. to Cuba.

The difference between the approach of Diefenbaker and Trudeau provides further evidence of the path Canada trod during the Cold War; it was at once a firm ally of the United States while at the same time intent on reaching beyond that relationship so it did not become completely dependent on its neighbour to the south.

Diplomats, politicians, scholars and journalists often refer to the early years of the Cold War in Canada as the “Golden Years” or “Golden Age of Canada’s Foreign Policy.” Cohen (2003) writes that after the Second World War Canada “punched above its weight…it had influence authority and affection…truly and deeply, Canada had a place in the sun” (p. 21). On three important counts, he adds, Canada was an effective diplomat, a strong soldier, and a generous donor of aid to other countries.

Arthur Andrew (1993), a former Canadian ambassador, refers to the “Golden Age of External Affairs” (p. 180). He argues that during this time the Department of External Affairs reached its peak of influence: “Canada had a destiny to be in all things a Middle
Power, an agent of influence for moderation in the geopolitical middle; a crossroads and entrepot, politically, ideologically, culturally, commercially and spiritually” (p. 181).

Paradoxically, Canada’s Golden Age was also the era during which its relations with the United States had never been more interconnected and fixed. The United States was the undisputed leader of the western alliance against the Soviet Union, and Canada quickly became a willing partner in most of the policies and strategies adopted by the U.S. to counter the Soviets. According to Thompson and Randall (2008) the Cold War created a “degree of intimacy” between Canada and the United States that the war against Germany had never demanded.

There is some dispute about exactly which years were the Golden Years. Escott Reid, a Canadian diplomat who helped shape the UN and NATO and served as Canadian High Commissioner to India, wrote that Canada’s “golden decade” was between 1941 and 1951 (Reid, 1969, p. 185). Historian Michael Bliss believes that the Golden Age extended from after the Second World War until 1967, the year of Canada’s centennial. Before he became leader of the Liberal Party, Michael Ignatieff said that he believed that the Golden Age began with Prime Minister Mckenzie King and ended after Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau left office (Cohen, 2003). Andrew (1993), in his memoir about life with Canada’s External affairs department asserts that the Golden Age ended when Trudeau assumed office in 1968.

It was taken for granted that he would be would be well-disposed to the like-minded folk of External Affairs. Pierre Trudeau never said anything to disabuse them, although in retrospect he gave some pretty clear signals. Ultimately his attitude toward the Department led to its downgrading and to the weakening of the one group within the government that could have helped him achieve the sort of recognition on the world stage that he so actively sought during his last years in office (p. 85).

While there is disagreement about exactly which years can be described as Canada’s Golden Years, there is agreement that in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and for at
least ten years after that, Canada was more influential in world affairs that it had ever been before.

There’s another factor that shouldn’t be overlooked in describing the context of Canada’s “Golden Years.” There were a number of highly skilled and experienced diplomats in the Department of External Affairs who by extension of their personalities and characters came to manifest and symbolize Canada’s growing influence and success in the world arena at the time. Chief among them was Lester Pearson. Pearson was born near Toronto, the son of a Methodist minister. He attended the University of Toronto and served in the First World War. He then studied at Oxford and later taught history at the University of Toronto until 1928 when he joined the Department of External Affairs as a foreign service officer. In 1935, as Europe was drifting towards war, Pearson was sent to London as first secretary in the Canadian High Commission and stayed there until 1941. He served as ambassador to Washington from 1945 to 1946 when Prime Minister McKenzie King called him home to become Undersecretary (deputy minister) in the Department of External Affairs. He resigned in 1948 to run as a Liberal candidate and was elected. By that time, Louis St. Laurent, Pearson’s former boss at External Affairs, had become Prime Minister. St. Laurent’s first cabinet included Pearson as Minister of External Affairs.

As Pearson was already well known in diplomatic circles he easily navigated many of the meetings and conferences held in the postwar era to address concerns of collective security. While he was Minister of External Affairs, Pearson remained a key figure at the UN; he headed the Canadian delegation from 1946 to 1956 and was elected president of the UN General Assembly in 1952-53. As chairman of the General Assembly’s Special Committee on Palestine, he laid the groundwork for the creation of the state of Israel in 1947. When the Suez crisis erupted in 1956 and Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egyptian territory, Pearson proposed and sponsored the resolution which created a United Nations Emergency Force to police that area, thus permitting the invading nations to withdraw with a minimum loss of face.

According to Cohen (2003) two other Canadian diplomats, Hume Wrong and Norman Robertson, were also key players in the postwar years determined to keep Canada as independent as possible while at the same time having influence in the circles of power. Wrong went overseas and joined the British Expeditionary Force and saw action on the Western Front after he was
rejected for service in the First World War by the Canadian army. After university (Oxford) he became a foreign service officer and as a diplomat assumed several positions in Washington. He was also permanent Canadian delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva; and deputy minister of External Affairs.

Norman Robertson, like Pearson and Wrong, also attended Oxford. He taught economics at the University of British Columbia and was twice High Commissioner to Great Britain. He was also deputy minister of External Affairs, ambassador to Washington, and clerk of the Privy Council.

With similar backgrounds and ambitions Pearson, Wrong and Robertson had strong working and personal relationships and drove many of the foreign policy decisions in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Cohen (2003) suggests that:

> What matters most today is the idealism they embraced, the diplomacy they practiced, and the standard they set. Each, in his own way, reflected Canada’s great hopes at a time when this country was finding its voice as a trading nation, a military power, and a diplomatic force. Wrong, Robertson and Pearson came of age when Canada was pressing for new roles on the world stage, and it was they who largely scripted and played them (p. 9).

The character, experience and ambitions of these diplomats at a time when circumstances conspired to cast Canada as the lynchpin between the U.S. and Britain boosted Canadian influence: Canada could punch above its weight and thus became much more influential in international circles than it had ever been. As Wrong, Robertson and Pearson tried to establish counterweights to the influence of the United States they pushed for Canada to become the world’s biggest joiner. According to Cohen (2003), they found “balance and ballast for Canada in international organizations, and they enjoyed some of their greatest triumphs there” (p. 15).

What exactly was it about Canada’s so-called Golden Age that left such an impression both at home and abroad? Cohen (2005) attributes Canada’s success in the international arena to particular values and roles that Canada manifested during the Cold War era:

- A peacekeeper, keeping peace when we could.
- A soldier, making war when we must.
- A social worker, making Canada one of the world’s leading donor nations.
- A trader, committed to the commerce which generates some 43 per cent of Canada’s wealth.
- A builder, erecting the architecture of the post-war order such as the United Nations, The World Bank and the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade, and NATO.
- A diplomat in Korea, in Suez, in Vietnam…the world’s honest broker and helpful fixer (p. 29).

Cohen sees Canada’s Golden Age of foreign policy as extending well into the 1980s. Others argue that by then Canada was simply living off the reputation it had earned during the Second World War and in the ten years after the war ended. Escott Reid (1969), a Cold War diplomat, argues that Canada played an important role after the Second World War because a gap had been created in the western world and Canadian leaders and diplomats organized themselves so they could move into that gap:

If there is a moral to be drawn from the golden decade of Canadian foreign policy, the moral is surely this: Where there is a gap and where we in Canada have prepared ourselves to act and act wisely, we can play an important role in world affairs (P. 184).

John Holmes (1976) argues that by the 1970s Canada had lost a lot of its influence on the U.S. and other nations because Canadian foreign policy became much more aligned with U.S. policy. He asserts that Canada wasn’t forced to conform but that the U.S. moved closer to Canadian positions on controversial issues such as China, Cuba, Vietnam and détente: “Our example was certainly not what moved them, although in the case of China it was a catalytic factor. The convergence cannot be attributed to structural causes - better means for consultation and coordination” (p. 85). Instead, Holmes contends, Canadian leaders and diplomats learned to recognize their powerful neighbour’s “tender” spots and to do as little as possible to aggravate them while at the same time holding on to their own agenda.

Canadian leaders were also able to use international institutions as safe havens where they could come out from under the wing of the mighty U.S. and speak their piece. It’s clear that Canada’s
determination to push for and become active in post-war international institutions such as the UN and NATO was in its best interest as a middle power. Without these organizations, Canada wouldn’t have had a stage on which to parade its ideas and suggestions for collective security; it wouldn’t have had an audience for its calls for negotiation and compromise. The UN might have needed Canada to give it credibility in its early stages but not as much as Canada needed the UN. Without it, Canada would have been much more beholden to the United States and much less likely to openly question U.S. policy and strategies during the early stages of the Cold War, much less likely to be influential in the international arena.

As Escott Reid (1969) points out, circumstances in the post-war world created a power vacuum that Canada was ready, willing and able to fill. It didn’t do so out of altruism but because doing so was in its best interest. That it could take such decisive action and have it matter on the international stage is why that period between the end of the Second World War until about 1960 is referred to as Canada’s Golden Years.

3.1.3 Canada as Peacekeeper

The most important legacy from those years is without doubt Canada’s role in UN peacekeeping forces. For about 35 years after the first Canadian contingent of peacekeepers was deployed to keep the peace following the Suez crisis, Canada was the world’s leading peacekeeper: “peacekeeping became a mission, a mantra, and a métier. Canada adopted it, adapted it, advanced it and enhanced it, making it the essence of its internationalism” (Cohen, 2003, p.60). Between 1947 and 1986, Canada participated in 19 missions. Canadian peacekeepers went to Korea, Lebanon, The Congo, the Balkans, West New Guinea, Mozambique, Haiti and El Salvador, to mention just some of the places they were posted to. In 1988, The United Nations Peacekeepers won the Nobel Prize for Peace and Canadians could boast that not only had Canada had a role in establishing the peacekeeping force, it had never refused a mission. One in ten of the world’s peacekeepers was a Canadian. When the global community called, Canada always answered. In 1964, for example, when hostilities in Cyprus threatened to ignite a war between Turkey and Greece and fracture the unity of the southern flank of NATO, a worried Lyndon Johnson telephoned Prime Minister Lester Pearson for help. Canadian troops were en route to the Mediterranean before parliament had even debated the issue. Canada’s blue helmets,
as the peacekeepers came to be known, patrolled the green line dividing Cyprus for almost thirty years.

Canada’s new role on the international stage went over well at home. A role in which Canada was seen as a peace broker or peace keeper and as independent from the U.S., fit with the ideals of Canadians in all regions of the country. It also fit with Canada’s increasing ethnic diversity. By 1971 the majority of immigrants entering Canada were of non-European heritage; today over 70 per cent of Canada's immigrants are non-European. 1971 was also the year that the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau recognized and encouraged Canada’s ethnic pluralism by establishing its multicultural policy. The policy made English and French the two official national languages but celebrated respect for pluralism as the true basis of Canadian identity (Troper & Weinfeld, 1999). Some public opinion polls showed that it was in fact an ideal and an image that transcended many of the differences that Canadians had amongst themselves.

A Gallup poll taken in 1956 posed this statement: “If trouble in IndoChina increases, Canada should stay out of it.” Fifty nine percent of respondents answered in the affirmative. Quebecers registered the highest percentage of agreement (72) while in the Maritimes, Ontario, the Prairies and BC just over half of respondents agreed. A Gallup poll taken in 1960 clearly demonstrates that even as the U.S. and the Soviet Union were building up their vast and dangerously armed camps, Canadians looked to the United Nations for a solution to the impasse. When presented with the statement “it is very important that we try to make the UN a success” 77 per cent of respondents answered in the affirmative. Other Gallup polls dealing with Canada’s participation in NATO, and UN missions also registered positive response. The polls clearly illustrated that participation in international bodies was desirable for Canada although it was also clear that the experience of previous wars had left a hard core of isolationism in Quebec (Schwartz, 1967).

Canada as peacekeeper was an image that appealed to people across the country whether they were Canadian-born or new immigrants. There were overtones of romance, adventure and intrigue and it was relatively inexpensive. It was a foreign policy that served domestic purposes because it fed the fires of nationalism and created a unity of purpose (Gordon, 1969). A survey published in 1997 found that 83 per cent of Canadians believed that Canada played a
“substantial” or “very substantial” role in international peacekeeping. People surveyed in other countries concurred with that view but not as much as Canadians did (Cohen, 2003, p. 61).

If some Canadians thought they qualified for sainthood because of their peacekeeping efforts, others saw it as simply a realistic response to the dangerous conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union:

…it can be argued that Canada’s efforts are eminently practical. Situated in the line of flight of Soviet and American ICBMs, Canada’s only defence is peace. Anything that may lead to the attainment of this goal is in the best interests of the nation, and it is difficult to fault the argument that peacekeeping is Canada’s most effective military contribution to peace. Certainly it is a more useful contribution than adding a penny’s worth of powder to our American cousin’s overkill capacity (Granatstein, 1969, p. 161).

It’s tempting to see Canada’s “Golden Years” as simply the halcyon days of the department of External Affairs and the federal government in general. In the pre-war years, particularly during the Depression, the federal government had seemed impotent in the face of grave social and economic problems. Populist provincial premiers such as Alberta’s William Aberhart and Quebec’s Maurice Duplessis seized the day and attacked the federal government as incompetent and indifferent to the woes of their citizens. The Second World War provided the federal government with the rationale for centralizing economic authority and putting people back to work (Whitaker and Marcuse, 1994, p. 14). The postwar recovery was managed by a federal government that confidently assumed managerial powers over the private sector and the provinces as well:

This was the era when the influence of the ‘mandarins’ of the Ottawa civil service reached its zenith; the golden age of the Ottawa bureaucracy. Under the careful guidance of the Ottawa elite, Canada became permanently aligned internationally in the new power-bloc relations that emerged with the Cold War. At the same time, the domestic launching of the Cold War was managed by a central bureaucratic elite that had never
had – and was unlikely to ever have again – such scope for influence over events (Whitaker and Marcuse, 1994, p. 14).

3.1.4 Canada as a U.S. Satellite

Behind the image of the eager international Boy Scout and peacekeeper, lay another reality that wasn’t so palatable for a lot of Canadians. During the Cold War, Canada was such an eager ally of its powerful neighbour to the south that the U.S. came to expect that Canada would simply toe the line, and usually it did.

According to Thompson and Randall (2008) the Cold War created such strong ties between the two countries that Canada barely had room to move:

Both countries became charter members of the multilateral North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, and a year later, Canada followed the United States into a shooting war in Korea. Soviet nuclear bombs and long range bombers made Canada indispensable to continental defense against transpolar air attack and prompted a peacetime U.S. presence in the Canadian Arctic and the bilateral North American Air Defense Agreement (NORAD) in 1957. A series of Defense Production Sharing Agreements seemed the logical corollary to military merger, and America’s cold war quest for raw materials security further encouraged economic integration. Unlike earlier periods, U.S. direct investment in Canada and bilateral trade increased simultaneously. (p. 171).

American radar networks soon spanned Canada’s North, and Canada’s military forces were consolidated under U.S. command through NATO and NORAD and armed with standardized American weapons. This strategic merger was so complete that in 1960 a Canadian colonel could observe ironically that “Canadians are obliged to accept a larger measure of dictation on defense matters from Washington than they were ever willing to take from London” (Thompson and Randall, 2008, p. 175).

Sometimes, Canadian support was so taken for granted that the Americans didn’t even inform Canadian politicians beforehand of critical developments. This was certainly the case during the Cuban Missile Crisis in the summer of 1962. After gathering photographic evidence that a site
for medium-range ballistic missiles was being constructed on the island, U.S. President John Kennedy issued an ultimatum to the Soviets via national television. He told the audience that the U.S. had already undertaken a naval blockade of Cuba to prevent Soviet nuclear warheads from reaching the island and was prepared to invade Cuba if Soviet Premier Khrushchev didn’t back down and remove the missiles. Khrushchev did back down and Kennedy called off the invasion. Even though Kennedy had brought the world to the brink of nuclear war and Canada was its partner in NORAD, the Canadian ambassador to the U.S. was not summoned to the U.S. State department until the 11th hour. Prime Minister Diefenbaker received a briefing only after Kennedy’s television address had been scripted (Thompson, Randall, 2008).

Canada was also not considered a key player during the Berlin crisis of 1961 even though the stand-off between the Soviets and the western alliance took place in the heart of Europe which NATO had pledged to protect from Soviet expansion. Instead, the U.S. under the leadership of the newly elected President John Kennedy took the lead and used the confrontation which went on for several months, to rattle its sabres and increase its arsenal of weapons.

The confrontation in Berlin, which threatened to escalate into nuclear war, had its roots in the division of territory among the Allies at the end of the Second World War. Although divided from West Germany by barbed wire and landmines, East Germany was not physically separated from West Berlin which was occupied by the United States, Great Britain, and France under agreements made in 1945. The Western allies could maintain their position because those agreements guaranteed land, water, and air access to the city. West Berlin was a liberal, democratic, capitalist beacon for East Germans, and hundreds of thousands moved there by simply walking across an imaginary line. By 1961 the Soviets estimated that 1.2 million East Germans had taken advantage of this large political loophole to improve their lot (Bothwell, 2007, p. 180).

Soviet President Nikita Khrushchev wanted to plug that loophole so he demanded that western troops leave Berlin. The West was thrown into confusion. Nobody wanted to abandon Berlin, and yet maintaining its foothold in the city might mean war. The Berlin crisis necessarily involved the whole of NATO, but it was being managed by only the three Western occupying powers, the United States, Great Britain, and France. The Canadian government would have
preferred to bring the matter before the NATO Council, where all members could discuss it. This suggestion got short shrift from the Americans, British, and French, who wanted to preserve their privileged position.

Eventually, the Soviets solved their Berlin problem unilaterally. On August 13, 1961, East German police and troops sealed off West Berlin from East Germany. Over the next couple of months a concrete wall was built around West Berlin making it almost impossible for East Germans to cross over. The wall stood for the next twenty-eight years but nuclear war had been avoided. Bothwell (2007) contends that the Diefenbaker government dithered for most of the Berlin crisis because there were divisions in cabinet and External Affairs about what course to take. In the end, Diefenbaker and Canada stood solidly behind their allies and approved additional troops for Canada’s armed forces even though Canada’s status in NATO had been diminished during the standoff.

The Americans’ deep involvement in the civil war in Vietnam also became a source of discomfort for Canada. Unlike the Australians and New Zealanders, Canada never sent fighting forces to Vietnam. Not that the U.S. President Lyndon Johnson didn’t ask if Canada was willing to help. He did and was refused by Lester Pearson who became Prime Minister after the defeat of the Diefenbaker government in 1963. Pearson even went so far as to suggest during a speech at an American University in 1965 that the U.S. should take a pause from its bombing campaign (Rolling Thunder) against North Vietnam to see if the Hanoi regime would be willing to negotiate. If it wasn’t, he added, increased U.S. military pressure might be the answer. Johnson was outraged and told Pearson “you pissed on my rug.” From then on official Canadian objections to U.S. actions in Vietnam became quite muted (Bothwell, 2007, p. 224).

When public opinion in Canada against the war in Vietnam intensified just as it was in the United States, Pearson found himself caught between his inclination to call for a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam so the possibility of negotiations could be explored, and Canada’s intimate relationship with U.S. defense policies and strategies. In 1967, a group of professors at the University of Toronto wrote to Pearson and called upon the government to reveal all military production contracts related to the Vietnam War, and to consider refusing to sell arms to the U.S. until U.S. intervention in Vietnam ended. In his reply to them, Pearson wrote that while the
Canadian government was also concerned about the “human suffering, the wasted resources and lost opportunities for human betterment occurring in Vietnam,” he was convinced that negotiations to end the war would not come about “simply because the Canadian Government declares publicly that this would be a good idea” (Pearson, 1969, p. 135). Pearson then went on to explain to the professors why it would be extremely difficult, almost impossible, for Canada to refuse to sell arms to the U.S. given the standing defense production sharing agreements between the two countries:

This relationship is both necessary and logical not only as part of collective defence but also in order to meet our own national defence commitments effectively and economically. Equipments required by modern defence forces to meet even limited roles such as peace keeping are both technically sophisticated and very costly to develop, and because Canada’s quantitative needs are generally very small, it is not economical for us to meet our total requirements solely from our own resources. Thus we must take advantage of large scale production in allied countries (Pearson, 1969, p. 136).

Pearson then goes on to say that the arrangement with the U.S. not only provided Canada with equipment at the lowest possible cost but also allows Canada to offset that expense by reciprocal sales south of the border. In essence, Pearson admitted that his public criticism would have little influence on the situation in Vietnam, and that his hands were tied when it came to taking action that might convey Canada’s opposition to the deepening conflict. Only ten years had passed since the Suez Crisis when Pearson as Canada’s External Affairs minister had been able to wield considerable influence at the UN and help bring about a peaceful resolution. But Canada and Pearson had the support of the U.S. during that crisis. By 1967 the two countries were clearly at odds over the Vietnam War but there was little that Pearson, even as Prime Minister, could do to change the situation.

3.2 National Identity

The self-perception of an entire nation is difficult to define and assess. In an essay entitled What is a Nation?, delivered first as a lecture at the Sorbonne in 1882, Ernest Renan (1996) argues that a nation is more than just a collection of people of the same race or ancestral heritage, who speak
the same language, practice the same religion and share common geography and interests. This
would certainly be true of Canada which is a mainly a country of immigrants of various races,
ethnic backgrounds, religions and language preferences. Renan goes on to say that a nation is a
“soul, a spiritual principle” that is rooted in both the past and the present. It is a people’s
collective memories of their past accomplishments, glories, griefs and failures that bind them
together. These common memories also inspire people to agree to live together and make the
most of their joint inheritance.

Anderson (1983) proposes that a nation is an “imagined political community – imagined as both
inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 15). It is imagined, Anderson argues, because even the
member of the smallest nation will never know most of their country men and women, meet
them or even hear of them. Yet, in their minds, their imagination, they will see themselves as
having much in common. The nation is imagined as limited because it always has boundaries
and limits. It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which the
Enlightenment and Revolution encouraged self-determination rather than divinely ordained rule.
And most importantly, Anderson proposes, “a nation is imagined as a community, because,
regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always
conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 16).

3.2.1 Canadian National Origins

Canada and United States are close neighbours with a myriad of connections and commonalities
but their national origins were born of different histories, cultures, religious beliefs, philosophies
and politics and that in turn deeply affected their perspectives on international relations

In an essay entitled “Adapted Organic Tradition” and published in Daedalus in 1988, John J.
Conway, professor of Canadian Studies at University of Massachusetts (Amherst), compares
several aspects of Canadian and American political history and concludes that while Americans
cherish individualism and personal liberty above community, Canadians see too much individual
liberty as a threat to community which, to them, is inherently necessary for survival. Conway
builds his argument on several points of political philosophy that were prevalent at the time the
U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) and Constitution (1787) were developed and written, and when Canada was founded through the British North America Act about 100 years later.

That the two countries were founded in completely different circumstances— the U.S. by rebelling against the British Crown and Canada by reaching an agreement with the British Crown which gave it a certain amount of independence while at the same time remaining within its protection and largesse – is seen by Conway as setting the stage for philosophical and pragmatic differences that prevail to this day. Those differences in political philosophy and cultures were often manifested during the Cold War when Canada endeavoured to promote multilateral relations with other nations rather than strictly adhere to the Americans’ singular mission to defeat Communism regardless of cost or consequences.

Conway traces the roots of American political and social values back to the early Puritans who settled New England and brought with them a religious view based on the concept of the individual alone with God, unaided by a priestly or episcopal intermediary. This fundamental belief fostered an intense individualism which became secularized in the 18th and 19th Centuries and was epitomized in the writings of Henry David Thoreau who advocated for total freedom to do whatever he thought was right, regardless of how his actions might affect the community at large, or the community as represented by democratic government.

There is no counterpart to Thoreau in Canadian history, Conway states, because French and British settlers to Canada did not bring with them the “dissidence of dissent or the protestantism of the Protestant religion.” Canada was settled mainly by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists who believed in the concept of original sin, a doctrine of imperfection that was simply not part of the American liberal code of unlimited progress and expansion. For the early Americans, man had a direct and personal connection to God, that no other person or institution could interfere with. When that religious belief became secularized the inherent individual authority of each person was still affirmed. Individual liberty or freedom was a paramount value because it allowed man to create his own future or follow his own destiny rather than be subject to the whims and authority of religious or state institutions such as Popes, Kings or Queens.
The ideas regarding individual liberty and the right of man to act according to his conscience that shaped the Constitution of America’s New Republic were the ideas of European Enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. They rejected the credo that monarchs ruled by divine right and claimed that the monarch’s power came through the assent of the people. They also believed that man had been corrupted by civilization and the self-serving, manipulative institutions that controlled most people’s day to day lives. Humans needed to regain a more natural state that allowed them the freedom to govern themselves through an agreed upon social contract which ensured that the will of the majority prevailed. These were revolutionary ideas that provoked both the American and French revolutions (Clark & Smith, 1963).

Canadians on the other hand, particularly Anglo-Canadians, had a much different view. The men who founded Canada through the British North America Act did not see themselves as revolutionaries. In fact, according to Conway, they looked askance at the philosophical abstractions that had led to the heated rhetoric and politics south of the border. For them, the British monarch was the embodiment of the union of church and state (since the monarch was also head of the Church of England). The Crown was not seen by most Canadians as a usurper of the rights of the individual but as a legitimate guardian of freedom within the rule of law that was necessary to securing human rights. The people (the majority) were not sovereign; the Crown was sovereign because it was emblematic of both a tradition of rule of law and God’s law.

Conway points to this belief as stemming from the political philosophy of Edmund Burke, an 18th Century Irish politician, statesman and author considered the father of modern Conservatism. Burke wasn’t one to promote revolution, or the driving force of popular will. He believed in a more organic type of change that moved slowly and deliberately so the proven traditions of the past could be conserved for future generations. For Burke, a restraint on liberties was necessary if all men were to exercise their rights, and The Crown provided a unity under which men were free not to conform if they didn’t want to as opposed to being coerced by the popular will. This allowed for more diversity which in turn encouraged various groups of people (ethnic, religious or political) to flourish by holding on to their particular traditions and views rather than be subsumed by one identity.
For Conway, American conservatives are actually 18th Century liberals. And while Canada is often portrayed as being more “liberal” it was founded on original Conservative values.

Liberalism when it came to Canada was not the liberalism of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment but that of William Ewart Gladstone whose passion for liberty was equalled only by his passion for the Church of England, as by law established (p. 385).

3.2.2 Differing Attitudes to War and Peace

The most instructive instances of the differences between the two societies, according to Conway, can be found in the attitudes that govern their discussions of war and peace. The state of nature of Americans is John Locke’s state of nature; a state of nature where peace, goodwill, mutual assistance and preservation prevail.” The Declaration of Independence in fact reinforces Locke’s view when it states every American is guaranteed the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” For Americans, war shatters this vision and seems to replace it with the state of nature as envisioned by Hobbes: “where exist no arts; no letters; no society and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”

Conway argues: “For Americans war is not the natural order of things as it is for Canadians, and indeed for many other peoples of the globe. Peacemaking thus becomes a permanent, one-time solution to problems of world order rather than an art, as it is for Canadian diplomats, and by extension Canadian electors” (p. 391).

This difference between the Canadian and American perspective on peacemaking can be traced to the circumstances that prompted the founding of each country. When the colonists of New England declared independence from Britain they were well aware that they were a small frontier society surrounded by much bigger powers: the British to the north, the French and Spanish to the south and west. The Americans were reluctant to organize an army because they believed that gave government too much authority; and they didn’t yet have a navy which was essential to military and economic power. They also didn’t want to ally with any of the imperial powers as they believed that would
compromise their independence and their desire to expand their own territory (Maslowski, 1999).

From the very beginning the Americans saw themselves as innocents surrounded by hostiles; as the Adam and Eves of the new world charged with protecting their Garden of Eden from those who would over run it and restrict their liberty. This sense of mission, writes Conway, has “come close to making America, in the eyes of Americans, something akin to a religion as well a nation” (Conway, 1988, p. 388).

Canadians, on the other hand, were born into allegiance – to the French, the British, the Crown, and the Church. The colonists were used to fighting wars on behalf of the Imperial powers. They looked to the standing army as a source of protection, even if it was the King’s army. And while Americans opted for volunteer militias to protect the home front and then later for conscription to the national army, Canada relied almost completely on volunteers and never went short. Conway asserts this is so because the idea of service to the community through allegiance to the Crown was deeply embedded in the Canadian way of life. “Volunteering was seen as a dimension of freedom, an honourable form of service, whereas the conscript serves, at least initially, as a passive object in the hands of a remote authority” (p. 393). For Canadians war was a constant threat; not so much on their own soil but certainly for the Imperial powers that founded the country and to whom allegiance was owed if Canadians were to expect their protection, especially from the expansionist Americans. Conway also points to the fact that Canada came into being as a result of various regions being organized into loose affiliations. Canadians are used to having to negotiate between themselves in order to survive as a nation.

3.2.3 Developing Canadian Identity

There is some key literature written during the 1960s that focuses on aspects of Canadian national identity at the time. W. L Morton’s classic, *The Canadian Identity* (1961) explains Canada’s development as both a dependent and independent nation. Morton writes that despite Canada’s northern orientation and isolation, its economic dependence at first on Britain and then on the U.S., Canadians learned to reconcile national aspiration
and external support. Morton attributes this dual nature of Canada to the “Canadian achievement of the secret of Commonwealth, that free association in self-government is a bond of union which may yet outlast the controls and authority of empires, however strong” (p. 112).

Many of Conway’s ideas about the philosophical and political differences between Americans and Canadians sprang from those of W.L. Morton’s *The Canadian Identity* published in 1961. Morton wrote that to Americans “revolution has meant liberty…to Canadians not revolution but empire has meant liberty” (p. 32). Morton also points out that the imperial sovereignty that Canadians were familiar with operated within self-imposed limits: “Not only did it rarely, except in matters of trade, legislate for a colony without its consent or to prevent a breakdown of government” (p. 32). Morton also argues that revolutionary fervour in the colonies of New England benefitted Canada and gave it the best of both worlds: the protection of the Monarch and the freedoms gained by the Americans when they rebelled against what they saw as unfair legislation imposed by the British. He uses as an example the uprising in New England in the 1770s against taxes imposed by the British which resulted in a pledge not to tax the American colonies in the future; a pledge which was freely extended to all the other colonies, including those in Canada. Thus, Canadians never had to fight a battle for no taxation without representation; they simply capitalized on the success of the Americans.

Canada’s role as a member of the British Empire when it was at its zenith was key to Canada’s character but so was the fact that Canada became an active member of the British Commonwealth. The Commonwealth was founded in principle in 1917 and in practice in 1931 with the Statute of Westminster. At the urging of the Irish Free State, the Union of South Africa and Canada, the Parliament of the United Kingdom declared that imperial sovereignty had come to an end in all the Dominions that had been included in the British Empire. The Crown remained to connect the nations of the Commonwealth which were numerous and far flung and included India, Kenya, Australia, and Singapore but had no power over their governments.

The free association and cooperation among member nations that was the hallmark of the Commonwealth withstood the tensions of the Second World War. Morton also suggests that it was this kind of cooperation among widely disparate cultures and political systems, in which
Canada played a key role, that led to Canada’s key participation in the United Nations after the Second World War.

A Canadian is perhaps not the best commentator on the Commonwealth, for he is likely to see its evolution as a victory of Canadian experience. But a Canadian may say that the Commonwealth can only be left to the working of that evolution in freedom from which it rose and of the principle of free association by which it lives (p. 57).

For Morton and Conway Canada is a cautious, cooperative and orderly nation because as a member of the British Empire and a neighbour of the United States it learned that was the best way to survive. Canadian experience teaches two clear lessons, writes Morton: the only real victories are victories over defeat, and endurance is more important than triumph. “The pride of victory passes, but a people may survive and have its way if it abides by the traditions which fostered its growth and clarified its purpose “(p. 112).

James M. Minifie, a correspondent for CBC Radio during the Second World War and later posted in Washington D.C. for 15 years, concurred with the origin and consequences of the basic philosophical differences between Canada and the United States in Peacemaker and Powder Monkey (1960) which was published a year before Morton’s seminal work. Minifie, who was born in England and grew up in Saskatchewan, considered himself an “American” but saw Canadian values as quite different from those of the United States.

“In Canada,” he wrote, “change comes by evolution not revolution. To point the contrast, the powers of the British monarchy have been modified by changing needs, until today it has few executive functions left” (p. 77). Unlike the United States which gained its independence through violent revolution, most countries in the British Empire and later the Commonwealth gained their independence through what Minifie calls “peaceful adaptation.” Minifie also points to the U.S. political system which pits the legislative branch against the centralized powers of the Presidency as another example of the kind of raw conflict that leads Americans to want to settle disputes by force rather than negotiation.

This heritage has left Americans with the conviction that when problems appear utterly intractable, the time comes when recourse to a violent solution is not only inevitable but
righteous. Force is in the American tradition. Its two historical applications (the War of Independence and the Civil War) are not seen by Americans as perpetuating evil, but as an almost divinely approved and conducted mission, a holy war. It is this tradition which makes tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union so dangerous (p. 77-78).

These traits are well documented by Schwartz (1967) in *Public Opinion and Canadian Identity* in which she tracks Canadian public opinion on a variety of topics through public opinion polls taken between the early 1940s and the 1960s. Schwartz acknowledges that national identity is an abstract concept, or metaphor, that can be difficult to determine because it is collectively held. But she also argues that it is concrete enough that it can be recognized and measured.

Out of the interaction of historical events, actions of governments, activities, personalities, and ideologies of leaders, and conflicts and accommodations between interests, a nation emerges, and in so doing, acquires a distinctive character. This image of the nation then provides the focus for the personal identities of its members, sometimes lying dormant and other times becoming mobilized in the self-definitions of citizens (p.9).

One of the Gallup polls Schwartz documents was taken in 1960 and clearly demonstrates that even as the U.S. and the Soviet Union were building up their vast and dangerously armed camps, Canadians looked to the United Nations for a solution to the impasse. When presented with the statement “it is very important that we try to make the UN a success” 77 per cent of respondents answered in the affirmative. Another Gallup poll taken in 1956 posed this statement: “If trouble in Indochina increases, Canada should stay out of it.” Fifty nine percent of respondents answered in the affirmative.

It is also important to remember that during the post-Second World War era Canadians’ sense of national identity blossomed in many different ways. Immigration patterns changed and Canada became a more multicultural society. Many Canadians had strong connections to Third World nations such as Canada’s Commonwealth partner India which had rejected colonial status for self-determination and independence. As Bumsted (2001) argues, an essay written in 1948 by Charles Vincent Massey, a former Canadian ambassador to the U.S., provided the fertilizer for much of that growing sense of the need for self-determination following the Second World War.
Massey insisted that Canadians were different from Americans and those differences should be embodied through the arts, letters and intellectual life of the community. He then set out a reform agenda for national culture that included an enhanced national broadcasting system, film production, a national library, a national gallery, a flag, and a national anthem which for the most part was undertaken by the Pearson government. Canada’s sense of accomplishment and identity was further enhanced by the highly successful Expo 67 held in Montreal during the centennial of the founding of Canada, and by the establishment of a national system of public health insurance – Medicare – also in 1967. As public policy, Medicare stood in direct contrast to U.S. public policy on health care and went on to become one of the most important aspects of Canadian pride and identity.

It was also during this time that CBC television was in its ascendancy. As a publicly funded, mass medium CBC television had more reach and more resources, both financial and journalistic, than any other Canadian broadcaster. As people turned away from newspapers as their main source of news and looked to television, CBC came to both reflect and define Canadian identity. As it confidently stated in a presentation to the Cultural Policy Review Committee in 1981: “The CBC today is the major provider of information and discussion about Canadian life and issues. It offers a Canadian point of view of the world and an international perspective on Canada” (p. 13).

This need to view the world from a Canadian perspective arose out Canada’s close association with the United States and the flood of American goods, entertainment, and attitudes into Canada. Despite the philosophical differences that Canadians and Americans may have about governance and their place in the world, Canadians live in a country that is saturated with American culture in all its forms. Taras (2003) sees Canada’s development as distinct from the United States but at the same time in danger of being overrun by it:

Much of what has made Canada such an exceptional experiment in human relations - our openness to new ideas, our acceptance and celebration of different and multiple identities, our postmodern sensibilities, and our strong belief in individual rights - also makes us exceptionally vulnerable to outside forces. It is difficult to guard frontiers in a country that remains so open to the flow of people and ideas (p. 17).
Taras (2007) points out that the term “Canadianization” was once used by European observers to describe countries that were in danger of having their culture taken over by another and was considered one of the worst fates. When it comes to bare facts about the degree of Americanization in Canada one only has to look at our communication industries: 95 per cent of the movies that we watch are American. So are 84 per cent of the retail sales of sound recordings, 85 per cent of the prime time drama that we watch on English-language television and 75 per cent on French language TV and almost 85 per cent of magazine sales at newsstands (Schultz 2003).

Much of that communication from south of the border can be described as “news” from an American point of view. During the Cold War the three main U.S. television broadcasters – ABC, CBS, and NBC -- were readily available in Canada, as were U.S. magazines such as Time, Newsweek and Life. This “American” discourse on the Cold War and all the crises that erupted during that era certainly became part of the Canadian discourse about the Cold War.

3.3 Identity and Discourse

National identity doesn’t just emerge out of shared experience; according to Wodak et al (2009) national identity is the product of discourse. The imagined community as described by Anderson is “constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly the narratives of national culture” (Wodak et al, 2009, p.22). As a special form of social identity, national identities are produced and reproduced, readjusted, and reconstructed, discursively. These narratives feature both the imagined and the real and are communicated in a variety of ways:

…we assume ‘national identity’ to imply a complex of similar conceptions and perceptual schemata, of similar emotional dispositions and attitudes, and of similar behavioural conventions, which bearers of this ‘national identity’ share collectively and which they have internalised through socialisation (education, politics, the media, sports or everyday practice (Wodak et al 2009, p. 4).

In a study of national identity and discourse in Austria, Wodak et al (2009) found that the common conceptions shared by Austrians included ideas of a homo Austriacus; of a common culture, in the past, present and future; of a distinctive national territory; and of notions of and attitudes towards other national communities and their culture, and history. Austrians were
disposed towards solidarity with one’s own group as well as towards excluding the ‘others’ from this constructed collective (p. 4). It’s inevitable that within a nation some social and institutional narratives conflict with each other but this is still seen as part of the national narrative. A good example of this would be the ongoing tension in Canada between the province of Quebec and its quest for sovereignty and the responsibility of the federal government to hold the country together. Wodak et al (2009) also emphasize that national identities primarily focus on national uniqueness. National communities tend to forget the differences between members when they focus on their uniqueness as compared to other nations.

Wodak’s discussion of identity and discourse raises questions about the discourse of Canadian foreign correspondents during the Cold War. Since some Canadian media organizations, CBC Radio and Television among them, were intent on providing journalistic reports of Cold War crises from a Canadian point of view, what exactly did that entail? How was the Canadian point of view expressed in the reports of foreign correspondents? Was it simply not the American view? Or was it something more than that? Was there a distinct Canadianess about it?

Wodak’s argument implies that Canadian foreign correspondents would have been influenced by discourses of national identity: that their perspective would have emerged out of the discourses that they encountered about what it meant to be Canadian. But since Wodak also argues that national identity is not static, that identity is constantly being produced, reproduced and reconstructed discursively, the reportage of the foreign correspondents also contributed to that discursive construction and reconstruction.

Overall, the literature provides criteria for what is considered “Canadian” during the Cold War era particularly in relation to Canada’s role on the international stage. They include: a sense of dependence along with independence; a sense of having an important role in world affairs; a sense of being different than Americans; a tendency towards survival rather than domination; a willingness to give up sovereignty on some foreign policy issues to the United Nations.

3.4 Journalism and Foreign Correspondents

The literature for this section covers the history of foreign correspondence, particularly in Canada; the history and specific requirements of war journalism; and journalism as an expression and influence on culture.
3.4.1 History of Foreign Correspondence in Canada

To understand the role and influence of Canadian foreign correspondents on public consciousness during the Cold War it is important to know how newspapers, radio and later television originally gathered news from other countries.

3.4.1.1 Newspapers and Foreign Coverage

Before the Second World War the large English daily newspapers such as The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, The Toronto Telegram, The Montreal Star and the Vancouver Sun occasionally used their own foreign correspondents although they relied mainly on U.S. and British press cooperatives such as Associated Press, United Press International and Reuters for most of the news from afar.

Associated Press was the largest of these news agencies and was the main source of foreign news for early Canadian newspapers since there was no Canadian equivalent. Established in 1848 by six newspapers, The Associated Press (AP) was a New York-based news agency that gathered news reports from newspapers in the eastern U.S. and also had a string of correspondents many of whom were telegraph operators who had been gathering and transmitting news informally to anyone who would buy. It was during the American civil war, which was of interest not just across the U.S. but abroad, that AP agents established themselves as fast and reliable reporters and AP established itself as an agency that could gather news reports and distribute them to client newspapers who could not afford to send their own correspondents to the battlefields. In 1886 AP posted an agent in Cuba in anticipation of what would eventually be known as the Spanish-American War. In 1889 AP dispatched an agent to the South Sea Islands to report on an international dispute which involved warships from several nations. Since AP’s most important customers were U.S. newspapers, AP reports were naturally biased in favour of American interests (Gramling, 1969). Nevertheless, they were eagerly sought by Canadian newspapers.

By 1884 the Canadian Pacific Railway which by then stretched across Canada had acquired Canadian rights to the much coveted Associated Press report. This was not unusual since telegraph lines followed railroad tracks and were owned by the railroad companies. The telegraph companies and their agents became the main transmitters of both formal and informal news reports. But many newspaper proprietors were not happy with the terms laid down by
Canadian Pacific. In 1910 Canadian Press Limited was incorporated as a national holding company for AP rights in Canada. But it wasn’t until 1917 that Canadian newspapers expanded Canadian Press Limited’s operations into a national, non-profit, news-gathering cooperative. Soon after CP established a London bureau so Canadian newspapers would have more detailed reports from Britain than AP supplied (Nichols, 1948). Coverage of British events by AP had long been a sore point for many Canadian newspaper owners:

A notable instance of this indifference was the shallow summary of results furnished by the Associated Press, of the British elections in 1905, in which A.J Balfour was succeeded by Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, whose cabinet included such men as Asquith, Lloyd George, Churchill, Haldane and Edward Grey. That election founded a new dynasty in British politics. It was of tremendous interest to Canada, but the primary interest of The Associated Press was to satisfy the ordinary American reader of that day and unquestionably it was exercising correct news judgment in its appraisal of American interest in British affairs (Nichols, 1948, p. 8).

AP’s thin coverage of British affairs had already prompted the owners of the Montreal Star and the Toronto Telegram to staff a bureau in London that supplied reports more appropriate for Canadian newspapers. This bureau provided more in-depth coverage of the 1905 election than AP but in general it did not attempt “anything more than a brief daily cable, largely confined to the doings of Canadians in London and the high spots of British happenings of special interest to their readers in Toronto and Montreal” (Nichols, 1948, p. 9).

3.4.1.2 Coverage in Canadian Newspapers of Foreign Wars

Canada’s role as a member of the British Commonwealth and a strong ally of Britain led to its military participation in British-led wars. The Boer War (1899-1902) marked the first time Canada dispatched troops in significant numbers for an overseas conflict. British and Dominion forces were pitted against the Afrikaner Republics of South Africa and the Orange Free State. By the time the war ended, more than 7300 soldiers and 16 nurses had sailed from Canada to South Africa, and approximately 270 perished there.
Activities at the front were reported almost daily in the Globe and Mail during the first month of the conflict. The stories took up most of the newspaper’s front page and were compiled by Special War Services of The Globe which included Associated Press and Special Correspondents. No names appeared on any of the stories as was the practice of the day. Most of the AP dispatches were from London and appeared to be a compilation of reports from military authorities and articles in British newspapers many of which had correspondents at the front. However, there was a Globe correspondent who travelled to South Africa and also reported from London. Charles Frederick Hamilton sent regular dispatches back to The Globe for about two years. In September 1900 he wrote:

Lord Roberts’s annexation of the Transvaal, as I have pointed out, is generally regarded as proof that in the opinion of the military authorities both at home and in South Africa, the war is practically over. The Stock Exchange takes this view, and most of the Kaffir shares show a slight rise on the prospect of a speedy renewal of mining operations (Hamilton, 1900, Sept. 5).

After the war ended, Hamilton co-authored a book about Lord Roberts, the British Commander in Chief during the war in South Africa.

Canada’s participation in the First World War (1914-1918) was the country’s first major overseas engagement. As the war proceeded the Canadian force grew to four infantry divisions totalling 80,000 men by 1916. In all, approximately 620,000 Canadians served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF); well over 60,000 lost their lives during that war.

Even though the Americans did not join the war at first, AP supplied all the war news for Canadian newspapers. The Canadian government, military authorities, newspaper owners, and the general public found this quite unsatisfactory because they wanted more complete news of Canadians at the front (Nichols, 1948, p. 146). But Canadian Press was loath to pay for its own correspondents. In 1916 the Dominion government asked Canadian Press to nominate six “newspapermen” one of whom would be selected by the government to become the battlefield correspondent. The government would then pay the correspondent’s salary and expenses, including cable fees. CP members balked at the idea of a government sponsored correspondent and agreed to send their own correspondent to the front. Stewart Lyon of the Toronto Globe was
selected. He was paid $40 a week and joined Canadian forces in France in March 1917. But when it came time to replace him CP members, particularly in the west, were reluctant because they found the cost strained their operations. A poll of the members disclosed considerable opposition to the continuance of the service. But after an impassioned letter from J. Frederick Livesay, general manager of Canadian Press, in which he said they would be severing “the only link The Canadian Press has with the Canadian Army at the front” the members relented and another correspondent was dispatched (Nichols, 1948).

In total there were three CP correspondents covering the Great War for Canadian Press, but never more than one correspondent at the front at any one time. The Canadian correspondents encountered many difficulties and delays with the cable system because CP, unlike AP, couldn’t afford commercial telegraph rates so transmitted reports using cheaper press rates. This meant the cable companies always gave preference to AP’s cables, and those sent by Canadian correspondents were often sent days after the event (Nichols, 1948, P. 148). Frequently Canadian correspondent dispatches were not delivered until American agencies or newspapers had taken the cream off the news with their faster cables.

Following the end of the First World War, CP sent a correspondent to Vladivostok, Russia. Canada had mounted a small contingent that joined British, American, and Japanese forces who were battling Bolshevik guerrilla forces. “The enemy avoided conclusive battle, the invaders suffered cold and privation, there was little of real news interest to a war-weary world, and the transmission of even skeleton cables on the Canadians’ activities was chancy and expensive” (Nichols, 1948, p. 149). The Canadian government paid the correspondent’s salary and expenses.

Even after Canadian Press established correspondents abroad, AP was still the main supplier of foreign news for Canadian newspapers. It was not until the Second World War to which Canada contributed considerable resources as an ally of Great Britain, that Canadian news media organizations organized cadres of foreign correspondents and organized foreign operations in order to bring news of the war home to Canadians from a Canadian perspective. Two years before the war started, CP set up offices in the AP building on Fleet Street in London and was able to coordinate its news with news coming from other agencies in Europe. Although both AP
and Reuters provided significant news reports and general coverage of Europe, coverage of Canadians and their activities, or news that was of specific interest to Canadians, was not their priority.

The AP, efficient and dependable was deficient only in its light coverage of Empire news and in its natural tendency to present news of international affairs from the American point of view. Reuters and Press Association, both British-owned and controlled, were reasonably attentive to Empire news; their general news reflected the British international outlook. With the two reports before them in London, Canadian editors ironed out occasional inconsistencies. (Nichols, 1948, p. 227)

Nevertheless, some CP board members had their doubts about AP’s ability to cover the war fairly, especially given that the U.S. did not enter the war at its outset in 1939. To allay their fears, CP president, W. Rupert Davies, travelled to Europe at his own expense to meet and talk with AP correspondents in European capitals. When he returned he told the CP board that he was impressed “with the calibre of the men who represent AP in Europe. Any suspicion that AP is anti-British is in my judgment, without any foundation whatsoever” (Nichols, 1948, p. 229).

Despite the expansion of CP to London, and correspondents placed there by a few other Canadian newspapers, the front page coverage in most major Canadian newspapers of the declaration of war by the Allies against Hitler’s Germany on September 1 1939 did not have a Canadian slant. The Globe and Mail’s front page was topped with the headline “Invasion of Poland”. Ninety-five per cent of the page was taken up with coverage of the outbreak of the war, most of it supplied by AP. There was one CP story at the bottom of the page. The Toronto Star’s headline read “Nazis Invade Poland”: all of the stories were provided by AP or UPI. The Vancouver Sun’s front page featured articles supplied mostly by British United Press. The Calgary Herald, on the other hand, used four CP reports on its front page including the main story at the top of the page. The Herald also featured an article from “The Herald’s London Bureau” which was provided by the correspondent for the Southam newspaper chain. Compared to the other newspapers it definitely made an effort to provide a Canadian perspective on war in Europe.
3.4.1.3 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was established as a Crown Corporation in 1936 – in the midst of the Depression - by an Act of the Canadian Parliament. This was in the early days of radio and a publicly funded Canadian broadcaster was seen as necessary to stop the infiltration of U.S. private broadcasters into Canada. It was also seen as a way to educate and inform Canadians from coast to coast about Canada in a way that U.S. broadcasters were not equipped or willing to do.

The Royal Commission on Broadcasting (also known as the Aird Commission) which had recommended that the government subsidize a national radio network believed that “radio could become a great force in fostering national consciousness and unity.” In its report to Parliament the commission also noted that an increased proportion of programming originated outside Canada “and that this tended to mould the minds of the young in ideals and opinions not specifically Canadian” (Weir 1965, p. 108).

When Prime Minister R.B. Bennett established a parliamentary committee to follow-up on the Royal Commission’s recommendations, he said: “Properly employed radio can be a most effective instrument in nation-building, with an educational value difficult to estimate,” (Weir, 1965, p. 110)

For ten years Canadian Press offered its news service to CBC free of charge - “as a contribution to the nation” (Nichols, 1948. p. 264) - because CBC had no advertising. For a long time CP was CBC’s only source of news. By the time CP began charging for the service it was still fundamental to CBC newscasts.

In its early days CBC focused on cultural and educational programming. But in 1939 only three years after it was established, CBC radio (with both English and French networks) was faced with an enormous challenge. War had been declared in Europe and Canada was on side with Great Britain. Thousands of Canadians went overseas to participate in the war effort, and thousands more at home worked in industries that supplied war materials; others eagerly awaited news of family and friends overseas.
The United States did not enter the war until 1941, so initially the CBC was a key North American broadcaster of events in Europe.

The CBC sent a team of correspondents and technicians to cover most theatres of war, its first foray into overseas operations. In the winter of 1940-41 more than a thousand recordings were made in six months. Three half-hour programs were sent to Canada every week “recorded flights in the air, rides in tanks, interviews with soldiers, sailors, airmen, officials, doctors, nurses, visits to the camps of the Canadian Active Service force (Weir, 1965, p. 269). In 1941 CBC News was created as a separate department of CBC.

In 1945 the CBC’s Overseas Service was on the front lines when the allies routed German forces. Matthew Halton and Marcel Oiumet landed in Normandy only moments after the first assault on D-Day. CBC correspondents were also on hand at the Italian front. CBC correspondents entered Caen with General Montgomery’s troops; they were also on hand for the liberation of Paris where they were involved in street fighting (Weir, 1965, p. 273).

According to Knowlton Nash, a CBC journalist and anchor who covered many foreign assignments, it was war time coverage that put CBC on the map (Nash, 1996, p. 205). During the first years of the post-war era, Canadians across the country tuned into CBC radio’s nightly news broadcasts. But at the time CBC News was essentially a rewrite news service with a few freelance foreign correspondents.

It wasn’t until the introduction of CBC Television in 1957 that the network began collecting news, not just disseminating it. CBC News hired reporters across the country, established permanent news bureaus overseas, and sent along cameramen to record events for television audiences.

3.4.2 The Practice of War Journalism

Conventional journalistic practice results in the construction of a report, or story, that fits within the broad requirements of what is considered of public interest, or news. For foreign correspondents the news they construct has to be relevant and comprehensible to a primary audience that is often thousands of kilometres, several time zones and culturally distant from the correspondent’s location. If they want to connect to their audience, Canadian correspondents
must look at events they are witnessing and the material they gather for their news reports through a Canadian lens. Otherwise the news from afar is not likely to be of interest to a Canadian audience. But what exactly is news and why is it important? And what constitutes a Canadian lens? Is it simply being a Canadian by birth? Or is it a particular perspective that is a common cultural touchstone?

Although the term “foreign correspondent” is used in this thesis, the main focus is on journalists who witness violent political conflicts or military engagements and produce published or broadcast reports of their observations and experiences as well as analysis of these events that is designed for an audience in their home country or nation. They can also be defined as “war journalists” or “war correspondents” but since that term is somewhat limiting and the range of reporting undertaken by Canadian journalists who are posted abroad by their employers is usually wider than war coverage, the term “foreign correspondent” is more appropriate for this study.

The words “correspond” and “correspondent” have various meanings that overlap each other. Correspondent can mean something equivalent or similar; one who communicates with another by letter as part of a regular exchange; and one employed by a newspaper or broadcaster to contribute regular news reports or commentary from a location distant from the home office.

*The First Casualty: From Crimea to Vietnam: the War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Mythmaker (1975)* was the first important contribution to a comprehensive look at the history and role of the professional war correspondent. The work has been updated and reprinted several times, the latest edition published in 2004. It traces the development of professional war correspondents from the mid-19th Century through more contemporary times. Knightley also discusses major issues faced by war journalists such as censorship, propaganda, and journalistic objectivity.

Knightley (2004) states that modern war reporting - professional journalists reporting from the battlefield - began with the Crimean War (1854-1856). Before Crimea, British editors either reprinted news from foreign newspapers or relied on soldier correspondents to send regular letters from the field. The development of telegraphic communication in the mid-1800s facilitated the work of foreign correspondents, particularly war correspondents, and contributed
to the influence and commercial success of daily newspapers. According to Dell’Orto (2002) the birth of U.S. foreign correspondence (not necessarily war correspondence) coincided with the popularization of newspapers and the professionalization of journalists. By all accounts the first American editor to establish a regular corps of foreign correspondents in Europe was James Gordon Bennett of the New York Herald. He sailed to Europe in 1838 on the return trip of the first trans-Atlantic steamboat to set up his new news bureaus.

There is a substantial body of literature written by war correspondents and foreign correspondents that falls into the category of memoir. These works focus mainly on the experiences and reflections of particular journalists. Such titles include: War in Korea (1951) by Marguerite Higgins, a reporter for the New York Herald Tribune; Dispatches (1978) by Michael Herr, who reported on the Vietnam war for Esquire Magazine and Rolling Stone; and History on the Run: Trench coat memories of a foreign correspondent (1984) by Knowlton Nash, a CBC television journalist. While each war, including the Cold War and various small wars, produces a crop of memoirs by correspondents, comprehensive literature, particularly before the Vietnam War, is thin.

A handful of Canadian foreign correspondents active during the Cold War – Joe Schlesinger (1990), Knowlton Nash (1984), , and Peter Worthington (1984) – have written personal memoirs of their experiences and these accounts do provide valuable details and insights into the role of the Canadian foreign correspondent at that time and will be referred to in more detail in later sections.

However, none of these memoirs dwell on theories about news as an important part of the public agenda, public consciousness, or national identity. Worthington and Schlesinger have much more personal quests and scarcely mention the relationship of their reports to the larger Canadian culture. Instead, it is implied that although they believe that what they do as foreign correspondents is significant, they don’t really explain how or why it is significant. Knowlton Nash does make reference to the interplay of news and public opinion but it is only briefly mentioned on the last page of his memoir.

There is always so much at stake when journalists report from a war zone. People are being killed and injured and yet the truth of who is doing what to whom can be difficult to determine
because the journalist can see only part of the picture. Journalists are also under extraordinary pressure to create a version of events that coincides with the version offered by government and military authorities. What the journalist eventually produces is often the result of many conflicting demands:

Journalists are expected to function variously during war: to be present enough to respond to what is happening, yet absent enough to stay safe; to be sufficiently authoritative so as to provide reliable information, yet open to cracks and fissures in the complicated truth-claims that unfold; to remain passionate about the undermining of human dignity that accompanies war, yet impartial and distanced enough to see the strategies that attach themselves to circumstances with always more than one side. (Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p.4).

War journalists who make us see things in a different way than what the propaganda of government or the military urges upon us, who lead us to think about a conflict in terms of history, context and the human cost go beyond the simple recording of factual information from the front; they are also reporting from their own zone of morality.

Journalists face different pressures and dilemmas when they report civil conflicts such as Bosnia and Kosovo or when they find themselves confronted by the genocide in Rwanda. The pressure to put their personal ethics of honesty and conscience above their professional ethic of objectivity and impartiality, to make a clear moral choice between reporting the facts or taking sides and pleading a cause, is one some reporters can withstand and others cannot (McLaughlin, 2002, p. 5).

All serious journalists contend with the constant juggling of ethical values and conventional journalist practice. But the requirement for objectivity in the face of violent conflict is particularly disquieting for journalists, as are questions of allegiance, responsibility, truth and balance (Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p. 3).
3.4.3 Journalism and National Identity

Literature that examines and theorizes about the construction and influence of news is also important to this research. Key works in this field include Gans (1979) *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*; Schudson (1995) *The Power of News*. Schudson offers valuable insight into the intersection of journalism and culture that is highly relevant to the research in question. He discusses news constructed by journalists as a composite, shared, ordered and edited product that is an important element of “public consciousness” in democratic societies. Schudson also discusses the role of the reporter as a 19th Century invention “that has evolved a life of its own and a unique self-consciousness” (p. 94).

Gans (1979) discusses news and journalism as key elements of national identity. He hypothesizes that one journalistic function is to “construct nation and society, to put flesh on otherwise vague concepts, and thus help to make them real” (p. 297). For Gans, the news is always organized within the framework of national identity and common understanding:

Strictly speaking, journalists gather information on what individuals and groups do to and for each other in a wide range of institutions, agencies and communities. But as they translate that information into news, they frame it in a national context, and thereby bring the nation into being…journalists help impose unity on what is otherwise a congeries of individuals and groups acting inside a set of geographic and political boundaries (p. 297).

For Gans keeping up with the news is maintaining contact with society and nation. While Gans’s perspective may seem dated today given the evolution of communication technologies, news media and global connectedness, it is important to remember that he was looking at news and journalism as it presented itself during much of the Cold War era. For that reason his work is highly relevant to this study.

By reading, listening to and watching the news as produced in the U.S., Gans asserts, one can deduce certain over riding and enduring American values. He lists them as: ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order and national leadership. This raises an interesting question: What values could one deduce by reading, listening to, and watching the news as produced in Canada?
In regards to the value of ethnocentrism, Gans (1979) states that the clearest expressions of ethnocentrism, in all countries, appear in war news. He points out that while reporting the Vietnam War, the news media describe the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front as “the enemy” as if they were the enemy of the news media. Weekly casualty stories reported the number of Americans killed wounded or missing and the number of South Vietnamese killed; but the casualties on the other side were impersonally described as the “Communist” death toll or the “body count” (p. 42). This raises another interesting question. Can this be said about reports filed by Canadian journalists on the ground in Vietnam?

Schudson’s (1995) discussion of the intersection of culture and journalism is also relevant to these questions. He sees journalism and the news it produces as a key part of contemporary culture and suggests that it must be seen as both a set of concrete social institutions and a repertoire of historically fashioned literary practices. It is also important to see how these institutions and practices are set within and in orientation to political democracy.

For Schudson, news as constructed by journalists is a composite, shared, ordered and edited product that is an important element of “public consciousness” in democratic societies and something that people need and long for as they try to make sense of the world:

Some people seek partisan abstracts and analysis, but others less confident that parties, cults or sect represent their own views, want independent observers, people wise to the ways of politics but without strong commitments to a party, people able to read politicians well, to know them intimately, to see them and see through them (p. 2).

Schudson (1995) also discusses the role of the reporter as a 19th Century invention “that has evolved a life of its own and a unique self-consciousness” (p. 94). Reporting as an occupation is tied to the development of mechanized transportation, the telegraph, and the emergence of widely circulated daily newspapers and is the result of, and a contributor to, a democratic market society and an urban commercial consciousness. But what exactly is a reporter, he asks? A historian? A political activist or reformer? A skilled stenographer? A writer? All of the above?
Schudson also argues that while the gathering and sorting of observations and information by journalists is key to the public agenda or public consciousness in a democratic society, journalists view themselves and their work with too narrow a lens:

> When journalists portray themselves as hard-working, well-informed professionals whose idealistic streak and dedication to truth are dimmed only by competitive pressures, deadlines and conservative owners and allegiance to official rules, they bask in their integrity as professionals. This represents their own subjective experience but at the same time it misrepresents journalism as a whole. Journalism is not the sum of the individual subjective experiences of reporters and editors but the source or structure that gives rise to them (p. 12).

Gans’s and Schudson’s theories regarding the connection between news and national identity or public consciousness are developed solely within the context of U.S. politics and culture. Nevertheless, they do offer a perspective on the priorities and decisions made by numerous actors that are part and parcel of news as presented by journalists. The situations are not always applicable to the Canadian news media, or general political context, but there is enough common ground to make these works relevant.

Taras (1990) *The newsmakers: The media’s influence on Canadian politics* provides a Canadian perspective on the subject of news construction and its influence on culture and identity. Taras points out that a new journalistic ethic – critical journalism – emerged in Canada and the United States in 1960s. The premise behind critical journalism is that journalists, as professionals and delegates of the audience, have an obligation to comment as well as report the news. As the conflict in Vietnam wore on, followed by the Watergate scandal, many journalists, including those in Canada, came to believe that it was important that they not become the handmaidens of government but instead should develop a more critical approach to government policies and decisions, that they take an oppositional stance to government. Taras concludes that since journalistic practices are a principal element of how news is selected, written and presented, news has become the product of how journalists see their role. It is precisely the self-image, or self-perception, of the journalists that I want to uncover through this study. Do the foreign correspondents see themselves as promoting Canada’s efforts at independence during the Cold
War? Do they see themselves as promoters of Canada’s reputation as a peacekeeper? Do they see themselves as critics of Canada’s foreign policy, or boosters?

Geraldine Muhlmann, a French academic and journalist, also studies how journalists engage with and create a public consciousness. She is particularly interested in how the journalist’s self-perception affects his/her relationship with the audience. She asks if the journalist seeks to unify the audience by creating a sense of “we”; or if the journalist is what she calls a “decentring” kind of journalist who rejects the idea of a common “we” and seeks to up-end accepted ways of looking at the world and introduce new and challenging perspectives (Muhlmann, 2008, 2010).

Muhlmann (2010) labels the journalist who seeks a sense of “we” with his/her audience as a witness-ambassador. Her explanation of the witness-ambassador is highly relevant to the role of the foreign correspondent because it entails both the idea of witnessing and the idea that tangible experience is a guarantee of the “truth” of whatever is recounted. Muhlmann also discusses what she refers to as the “implicit mandate” that a reporter enters into with the public: to provide it with an account acceptable to all, the account that anyone could have given if they had been put in the position of the witness. There is, according to Muhlmann, a pact between the reporter and the audience: “it is because they are witnesses that they can be good ambassadors; and because they are ambassadors and honour this mandate, that they must be witnesses” (p. 34).

The witness-ambassador “addresses a public perceived as a unified entity, or at least as an entity that is capable of being unified, and that has a right to obtain what is its due, that is, a description that is not exclusively singular but applies the criteria of common sense and so presents a common reality” (Muhlmann, 2008, p. 9).

The journalist who is a witness-ambassador often seeks to unify the audience by focusing on a conflict between “us” and “them”. “Them” can be all sorts of “others” that the journalist portrays as not fitting with or living up to standards understood as essential to commonly understood reality. In this way, for example, a reporter could give an account of refugees fleeing during a civil war so as to produce in the audience an identification with those refugees, recognition that they are “ours” while at the same time focusing attention on the persecutors responsible for the suffering witnessed and hence identified as the “other” (Muhlmann, 2008, p. 72). By addressing “strangeness” or treating certain behaviours as anomalies, the journalist is
emphasizing what is considered normal, or acceptable. This is particularly relevant to foreign correspondents who are usually witnesses to cultures and societies that are different than their own and often in situations such as conflicts or crises that are not common in their home country. This portrayal of strangeness, of unfamiliar context, can unify an audience because it can reinforce the sense that people in the audience have of being the same as each other when compared to the people and situations abroad that they are watching or reading about.

The witness-ambassador seeks to unify the audience even when he/she is recounting failures of society such as inadequate care for the mentally ill or increasing crime rates because it is understood that the audience will see them as a failing on its part and will want to rectify the situation, to re-centre society. A Canadian foreign correspondent who fits the witness-ambassador archetype would, according to Muhlmann’s theory, understand that he/she is a representative (ambassador) of other Canadians who has been sent abroad to “see” for them and to recount what is seen so that Canadians may have a common, or unified, understanding of the situation. There would be a bond between the foreign correspondent and the audience, a common understanding of their view of reality.

Of course, entering into a pact with the “public” can have its disadvantages. As Walter Lippmann has pointed out, what if the public is not capable of grasping complex issues? Or is biased and uninformed? Or simply does not want to know to the truth? This is obviously one of the limitations of the witness-ambassador; he/she is anchored to the failings or apathy of the audience and may in the end be stymied by them.

Muhlmann (2008) also describes another kind of journalistic approach, what she calls the “decentring method”.

Decentring journalists see from somewhere, from a singular place, their own, not from everywhere, or from whatever they ‘ought’ to see. By accepting this situation, they can try to change it, sow conflict in it, or work on it. As soon as they claim to travel in otherness as easily as they would travel in a “we”, chameleons merging everywhere they go (the temptation of ubiquity), or as soon they claim to fuse with an instituted ‘other’, to the extent of becoming their representative (the temptation of unifying the dominated),
they betray the singularity of their gaze, which is the keystone of the decentring method (Muhlmann, 2008, p. 193).

For Muhlmann, George Orwell is a strong example of the decentring journalist, particularly in his account of the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia*. She sees him as birthing a new perspective which is challenging to the accepted view and to the journalists who wrote about the civil war from afar. Orwell’s personal experiences fighting at the front gave him a bodily experience of the conflict that went far beyond the ideological views imposed on it by others: “we find here the idea that this labour requires ‘real contact’ with events, and not an abstract and remote vision, because such a vision is particularly susceptible to ideologies” (p. 215).

Muhlmann refers to Orwell as a “reporter in exile”, an exile that had to be recreated over and over again. For Orwell, even ignorance of events that he could not know about since he was living the life of an ordinary soldier is part of the story he has to tell and lend it authenticity. Unlike other journalists who have access to information that provides them with the big picture, Orwell reports only what he knows and experiences at the time:

> It is the body of a man with his knowledge but also his ignorance - an ignorance which is still knowledge since it is experienced, and painfully – that constitutes the weapon against ideology, the only anchor of the exile, the source from which comes his gaze (Muhlmann, 2008, p. 217).

New journalism as practiced by such notables as Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, and Joan Didion is also labelled by Muhlmann as decentring journalism because it is written from a singular point of view, or gaze, it is not trying to find common ground with the audience but seeks rather to uncover new ground.

For Muhlmann, war journalism is the ultimate decentring journalism because by its very nature it severs the relationship between journalist and audience: She sees the perpetrators and the victims as ‘others’ in relation to the public:

> All those who ‘are there’, whatever their role in this violence, whether they are perpetrators, victims or eyewitnesses directly exposed to the traumatic situation, constitute an otherness in relation to an exterior public. This is why violence presents the journalist with a terrible challenge; if it means an irreparable breach between those who
are there and those who are not, is it even possible to envisage creating a connection beyond the breach, without it being inevitably misrepresented? (p. 227)

In the end, argues Muhlmann, violence cannot be witnessed, experienced, and recounted at the same time. A massacre is hidden when it is being committed; it is only in the discovery and retelling that the public comes to know about it. But the actual experience still remains invisible. The audience doesn’t see it and experience it as it is happening. It is up to the journalist to reconstruct the violence and present it in the past tense, not the present tense.

The journalism which takes violence as its subject pushes the decentring approach to danger point; can the otherness constituted by violence really be represented, made visible to the public that ‘wasn’t there’, when this otherness is actually characterized by an invisibility for those who ‘are there’ (p. 257).
4: METHOD

4.1 Selection of Data

In order to examine how Canadian foreign correspondents constructed a Canadian perspective on key Cold War key conflicts after the Korean War eight conflicts were focused on: the Suez Crisis, the Soviet Invasion of Hungary, the erection of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban revolution, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the Six Day War, and the Contra War in Nicaragua. Coverage of these events in Canadian newspapers and on television was then scanned to determine which reporters had been on the ground, reporting on the conflicts. They couldn’t simply be reporting from Canada or the United States about these conflicts. There was no Canadian reporter on the ground in Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis so that conflict was eliminated. The Suez Crisis and the Soviet invasion of Hungary occurred within weeks of each other. Since Canada played a significant role in the Suez crisis it was logical to focus on it rather than the Hungarian situation. By scanning coverage in Canadian media of the remaining conflicts it was determined which ones had been consistently covered by a single Canadian reporter located at the site of the conflict. In the end four Canadian journalists and their coverage of key Cold War conflicts were selected: Peter Worthington who reported from the Suez Zone about the Canadian peace keeping forces and the plight of Arab refugees for The (Toronto) Telegram; Stanley Burke, who reported on the plight of East German refugees fleeing to West Germany and the eventual erection of the Berlin Wall for CBC Television; Joe Schlesinger who reported for CBC Television on the war in Vietnam after most of the U.S. ground troops had left; Oakland Ross who reported from Nicaragua for The Globe and Mail in the aftermath of the Soviet-supported Sandinista Revolution and the emergence of U.S.-backed guerrillas who opposed it.

A search through microfiche files of The Telegram and Saturday Night Magazine from 1955, 1956, 1957, and 1958 which had to be brought in from two libraries in other parts of Canada produced the Worthington articles. A search of CBC television’s onsite archives in Toronto produced footage by Stanley Burke from Berlin and Joe Schlesinger in Vietnam; a search of The Globe and Mail’s digital archives produced articles filed from Nicaragua or neighbouring countries involved in the cross-border war by Oakland Ross.
Two lengthy newspaper articles, and two magazine articles based on Peter Worthington’s experiences in the Suez Zone in 1957-58 were retrieved for analysis.

Four reports filed between 1961-62 and focusing on the Berlin Wall by Stanley Burke of the CBC were retrieved from CBC archives. Even though only four were available they are all much longer than today’s typical televised news report which usually lasts less than two minutes. The longest of Burke’s reports is 30 minutes, one is 15 minutes, another 12 minutes and the shortest is five minutes.

Sixty-five items filed by Joe Schlesinger from Vietnam or neighbouring countries between 1971 and 1973 were on record at the CBC television archives but only four scripts had been archived. Since the film footage, which had been reproduced on video, could not be copied or removed from CBC premises the items were viewed on the premises and notes were taken as to content. The CBC did provide a list with dates and a short introduction of each report filed by Schlesinger.

A search of The Globe and Mail’s digital archives resulted in 60 articles filed by Oakland Ross between 1981 and 1984 from Nicaragua or neighbouring countries involved in the cross-border war. It is interesting to note how the quantity of reports prepared for both television and newspapers increased dramatically after the 1960s because of the developments in communication technology such as video cameras and digital transmission via computers.

4.2 Analyzing the Data

All the reports were then analyzed using the methods of discourse analysis to determine if and how national identity was revealed. As Tonkiss (2004) explains:

Discourse analysis involves a perspective on language that sees this not as reflecting reality in a transparent or straightforward way, but as constructing and organizing the terms in which we understand that social reality. Discourse analysts are interested in language and texts as sites in which social meanings are formed and reproduced, social identities are shaped, and social facts are secured (p. 373.)

According to Tonkiss, such an approach is often associated with the work of the French scholar, Michel Foucault and his interest in how the discourse helped to produce the very categories, facts
and objects that they claim to describe. Discourse analysis is particularly applicable to “expert” language such as that used in news media reports but it can also be used to analyze political speeches, parliamentary debates, and everyday language and conversation on particular topics. Van Dijk (2001) has developed a method he calls Critical Discourse Analysis which focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of power and dominance in society” (p. 353). This method is valuable for this research project since the published and broadcast reports of the Cold War Canadian foreign correspondents are a type of discourse that deals with power relations, particularly Canada’s relations with the two super powers – the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Van Dijk used Critical Discourse Analysis in a (2002) study, *Mediating racism: The role of the media in the reproduction of racism*. He collected hundreds of newspaper articles in which race or talk of racism was a factor and then analyzed them according to predetermined criteria so as to ascertain what themes and perspectives emerged about the topic.

Cotter (2001) points out that while texts have long been analyzed as linguistic artefacts, analyses of media texts and their impacts are now being informed by research in the fields of cultural studies, critical theory, semiotics, political science, sociology, history, and a broad range of scholarly activities that make up communication and media studies (p. 430).

Since the reports of the correspondents to be examined span four decades of the Cold War it is important to keep in mind Wodak et al’s (2009) argument that “the concept of identity (apart from the formal sense of the term used in logic and mathematics) never signifies anything static, unchanging, or substantial, but rather always an element situated in the flow of time, ever changing, something involved in a process” (p. 11). Canada’s role in the world and vis-à-vis the United States shifted over the course of the Cold War. Was that reflected in the reports of the foreign correspondents? Over the course of the Cold War technology allowed for more frequent coverage of conflicts in other parts of the world. Did the correspondent’s perspective change because of that?

By applying discourse analysis to the published and broadcast reports of four Canadian foreign correspondents covering the Cold War, history, political science, journalism theory and communication theory will be brought to bear on the analyses. As this is an interpretative process
that relies closely on the study of specific texts, discourse analysis does not lend itself to hard and fast ‘rules’ of method. It seeks to identify key themes and arguments; looks for variations in text; and pays attention to silences. The tactics that I adopt as an analyst will come from engagement with the data rather than from a strict textbook approach. This method also allows for the agency and individuality of each journalist to be revealed so they can become influential actors who shape and develop identity rather than faceless agents of conformist mass media.

Since conventional journalistic practice demands that journalistic articles be constructed using specific elements - point of view, main topic, theme, sources of information, main actors, and key words, these lenses were used for a primary analysis of the published texts and broadcast scripts. Once that analysis had been completed the resulting data was analyzed for overarching themes, sources of information, main actors, omissions, and key words such as Canada or Communist. Since each reporter was dealing with a particular aspect of the Cold War and the reporting was spread over four distinct periods of the Cold War the topics covered by each reporter cannot be compared. But the perspective of each reporter as it relates to a Canadian sense of identity can be compared to establish whether consistent themes emerge, or not. It can also be determined if the texts reveal a Canadian perspective particularly in relation to Canada’s role on the international stage given the criteria for a Canadian sense of identity during the Cold War era that were previously identified: a sense of dependence along with independence; a sense of having an important role in world affairs; a sense of being different than Americans; a tendency towards survival rather than domination; a willingness to give up sovereignty on some foreign policy issues to the United Nations.

4.3 Interviews

Three of the four Canadian correspondents were interviewed in order to gather recollections of their experiences in conflict zones and to determine how they defined a Canadian perspective and then constructed it in their reportage. A list of 14 questions (Appendix) was drawn up and used as a guide for each interview. While all the correspondents were asked all the questions the interviewer added other questions prompted by remarks made by the interviewee. Thus, each interview produced a unique recorded conversation. This method is known as a semi-structured interview because the interviewer has a framework of themes to explore but may adapt questions
as needed (Baker & Ellece, 2010, p. 127). The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using the methods of critical discourse analysis. According to Kvale (1996): The interview covers both fact and meaning levels of the interviewee’s experience and is useful for obtaining an in-depth account of the research participant’s life experience as well as meanings as constructed by the research participant.

Since critical discourse analysis was applied to the documents retrieved and the interviews, historical, political and media context is provided for these reports by the foreign correspondents. Some biographical information on each reporter is also included since it is assumed that each individual would have some effect on the final text even though they were working for media organizations that had pre-determined ethics, priorities, standards and modes of operation.

4.4 Limitations

The reportage of the four foreign correspondents examined for this study is but a small slice of the thousands of items sent back to Canada by reporters posted abroad. So it cannot possibly determine the general perspective of most Canadian foreign correspondents - only a handful who reported during the Cold War. It also has a narrow focus – reportage of key Cold war conflicts - whereas Canadian foreign correspondents have covered a much wider scope of events and issues some of which have a direct Canadian connection. The study was also limited to published and broadcast reports for Anglophone news organizations. French Canadian reporters would likely have a different perspective when reporting for their audiences than their Anglophone counterparts.

Another limitation is the fact that all the news organizations that employed the foreign correspondents who are the focus of this research were based in Toronto. It could be argued that because Toronto was Canada’s media hub during the Cold War and all the correspondents were employed by Toronto-based news media organizations, the identity that emerges in their reports is a Toronto, or central Canadian, identity. Does it take into account the identity of western Canadians, or Canadians living on the east coast, or in the north? There is no question that Toronto was the media hub of Canada at the time and still is today. It has more newspapers both national and local, than any other Canadian city. It is home to the CBC and CTV television
networks, national magazines such as Saturday Night (now defunct), Maclean’s and Canadian Business are based in Toronto, as are most major Canadian publishing houses.

It is also clear that in the post-Second World War recovery period in Canada, the country was managed by a strong federal government (also headquartered in central Canada) that assumed managerial powers over the private sector and the provinces. It was the golden age of the Ottawa bureaucracy which guided both international and domestic affairs and had never had – and would never have again - such widespread power and influence (Whitaker and Marcuse, 1994, p. 14).

During most of the Cold War, influential central Canadian media, and powerful politicians and bureaucrats in Ottawa set the tone for the rest of the country. Only the large, well-financed media organizations based in Toronto could afford the expense of regular foreign correspondents. The political rebellions in Quebec and western Canada against the power of the federal government occurred in the later stages of the Cold War. During most of the Cold War the politicians and the bureaucrats in Ottawa held enormous sway over the Toronto-based news media, and vice versa. So it is indeed appropriate to examine the reportage of four correspondents who were employed over a significant period of time by these influential, Toronto-based news media organizations in order to determine how they constructed a Canadian perspective on certain Cold war conflicts and thereby influenced their audiences.
5: ANALYSIS OF DATA

5.1 Suez Crisis/Peter Worthington

Prime Minister Lester Pearson’s reputation as a peacekeeper, and by association Canada’s identity, was established in 1956 during the Suez Crisis. Conflict erupted after Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, an economic life-line for Britain which had been controlled by the British and the French. Nasser made his move after the British and the Americans backed out of promised loans to build a dam at Aswan on the Nile, a project Nasser considered key to Egypt’s economy. The British and the Americans had changed their minds about investing in Egypt because they were suspicious of Nasser’s ties to Communist countries. He had bought arms from Communist-controlled Czechoslovakia at a time when the Soviet Union was exerting absolute authority over eastern Europe.

In an effort to reassert control over the Canal, the British and French allied with the new nation of Israel which bordered on Egypt and had its own interests to protect. The Israelis crossed the Egyptian border on October 29. The British and French, as had been agreed beforehand, issued an ultimatum to the Egyptians – and the Israelis. The ultimatum declared that the Suez Canal was endangered and asked them to stop fighting and withdraw ten miles from the Canal, which then would be “temporarily” occupied by the British and French. The Egyptians refused, so the British and French bombed airfields outside Cairo.

Both Canadian Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and Pearson were not sympathetic to the British role in the affair even though Canada and Britain were longstanding allies. They believed the crisis would seriously divide western allies and jeopardize the role of the UN. They were also concerned that it would undermine the blossoming Anglo-American friendship, something Canada very much wanted to foster.

Pearson flew to New York on November 1. The next day in the course of a debate in the UN over the Israeli invasion of Egypt, Pearson made the proposal for a “United Nations force large enough to keep these borders at peace while a political settlement is worked out.” The U.S. supported Canada on the proposal even though British Prime Minister Anthony Eden had already
dispatched an invasion force to Egypt. The Canadian resolution was eventually passed and a UN force replaced the British and French forces and stood between Arabs and Israelis. The UN force consisted of 5,000 soldiers based around a 1,000-man Canadian contingent. A year later Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts (Andrew, (1993); Bothwell, (2007); Holmes, (1969); Holmes 1979).

5.1.2 The Canadian Correspondent

Peter Worthington reported for The (Toronto) Telegram from Egypt and Gaza after the first United Nations Emergency Force was dispatched there during the Suez Crisis. At the time The Telegram was the second largest daily newspaper in Toronto after the Toronto Star. It carried mainly local news and was inclined to Conservative views on the editorial pages.

Worthington was 30 years old when he went to the Suez Zone for The Telegram. He was born in 1927 into a military family – his father had been a captain in the Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) and also served in the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Navy during the Second World War. The younger Worthington served with the PPCLI during the Korean War. After earning his BA and Bachelor of Journalism, respectively, at UBC and Carleton University he wanted to be a sports reporter but was assigned to cover local news at The Telegram instead. He was a roving reporter for The Telegram from 1956 to 1971, covering many coups, wars and revolutions. He was one of the first Canadian journalists to go to the Middle East after the United Nations deployed troops there during the Suez crisis in 1956. He followed up those assignments with coverage in Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan. He was the only western journalist in Angola at the beginning of the terrorist uprising that would mark the beginning of a 14-year civil war that became a Cold War hot spot when the superpowers were drawn into the conflict. Worthington was also Moscow correspondent for The Telegram from 1964-1967.

In 1971 Worthington co-founded The Toronto Sun and then became its outspoken editor-in-chief. In 1982 he ran for a Progressive Conservative nomination in Toronto but lost. He then ran as an independent and lost again. Two years later he won a PC nomination but lost the election. He wrote a regular column for the Toronto Sun until his death in May 2013.

Worthington wasn’t in the Suez Zone when the British started dropping bombs near Cairo. The Telegram used Associated Press and Canadian Press to cover the crisis as well as some freelance
stringers in Cairo. Reuben Slonim, a Telegram staff writer, reported from Israel. He later travelled into Egypt but fled on a refugee plane after Egyptian authorities threatened to make his life difficult because he was a Jew. He recounted his experience in a front page story with the headline “Tely Man Escapes as Terror Stalks.” In the article he wrote: “Terror stalks Egypt by day and by night. It has forced British and French nationals and Jews of whatever nationality to quit the country. Greeks, Armenians and Coptic Christians – four million of them – are asking whether their turn is next” (Slonim, 1956, November 20).

When Worthington went to the Suez Zone Canadian troops had been there for just over a year. As I searched through microfiche of The Telegram for Worthington’s articles about Suez it became quite evident that while there was coverage of the troops’ departure from Canada there was very little on the ground coverage of the Canadians’ activities in the Middle East.

Worthington’s coverage of Canadian peacekeeping troops patrolling the Suez Zone was his first overseas assignment. Because he had been in the military before becoming a journalist he convinced the Telegram’s managing editor that he would be the best reporter to send there to see how the troops were spending Christmas. Telegram management was reluctant to send him at first but Worthington worked through the defence department and arranged a free military flight to Naples, a U.S. flight on to Cairo, and hope of a UN transport flight to Gaza. He then went back to management and told them he would use his holiday time and pay for all expenses himself (he was earning $60 a week at the time). They agreed to let him go and file reports to the newspaper (Worthington, 1984, p. 48-49).

By his own admission Worthington knew very little about the Middle East but he did know the army and how it worked. And he even knew some of the officers posted in Egypt. This certainly helped him gain their confidence and trust.

5.1.3 The Worthington Reports from the Suez Zone

The first article filed by Worthington from Egypt is datelined Rafah, Egypt, and was published above the fold on the front page of The Telegram on December 24, 1957, just over a year after Canadian troops were sent to the Middle East as part of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). The headline read: “Indians’ Gift: Gave Our UN Men Christmas Day Off” (Worthington, 1957, December 24).
For this report Worthington focuses on Canadian troops and their celebration of Christmas. He leads the piece with the information that Indian troops have agreed to replace the Canadians for Christmas Day so they can have a day off: “Non-Christian soldiers performing one of the most Christian-like acts ever seen among the United Nations Emergency Force here are helping make Christmas complete for Canadians serving in the Suez Zone” (Worthington, 1957, December 24). Worthington also quotes a sergeant from Cape Breton who said: “This has done more to bring us closer together with the Indians…we won’t forget it” (Worthington, 1957, December 24). For the most part the article is light in tone and describes in some detail how the Canadian soldiers are spending Christmas: opening presents from home, serving each other dinner and enjoying nightcaps, and producing humorous skits about life in the military. They even have Christmas trees imported from Italy and lots of odd Middle Eastern decorations for them (Worthington, 1957, December 24).

Worthington portrays the Canadians as stalwart in the face of unfamiliar weather, geography, food, language and culture: “The troops are homesick and lonely, but they aren’t moping about it. Sure, they would like to be with their families but if they were stay-at-home types they wouldn’t be in the army in the first place” (Worthington, 1957, December 24). Worthington also describes how the soldiers started a fundraising campaign for Arab refugee children in the Gaza strip.

While Worthington portrays the Canadians as familiar, well-intentioned, and stalwart in the face of difficulties, the Egyptians are portrayed as dishonest, dirty and illiterate. He quotes one soldier as saying: “For excitement we can try to catch a Bedouin stealing our kit.” When describing how officers served enlisted men Christmas dinner, Worthington writes:

Throughout the army officers were to be waiters and serve their men Christmas meals. Depressing as it may sound, the men are amazingly happy with the food here. While complaints are as rare as clean Arabs, the officers were put through their paces by the troops.

The Egyptian house boys watching all this tradition were delighted and amazed at all the shenanigans. And speaking of house boys, few of whom had ever heard of Christmas before, they presented Canadian friends with Christmas cards and their version of
Yuletide greetings. One card read – painfully but clearly printed – “Dear Lietant, I wish you Christmas and Happy Year, signed - Abdul.” While everyone smiled at it, no one laughed. All were more touched than they would admit (Worthington, 1957, December 24).

A month later the Toronto Telegram published an article filed by Worthington from Jabalia Refugee Camp, Gaza. The headline read: “21,000 Refugees and Not One Hope” (Worthington, 1958, January 28). The article focused on life in the second largest refugee camp in the Gaza Strip – “more than 21,000 people wedged into one room quarters” (Worthington, 1958, January 28).

The camp was one of 18 established after the United Nations partitioned Palestine in 1947 allotting half of the former British protectorate to the new state of Israel. In 1948 war broke out between Palestinian Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Jewish fighters eventually expanded the original boundaries established by the UN which resulted in over 200,000 Arab refugees fleeing their homes and land to seek asylum in what is now known as the Gaza Strip which borders on Egypt (El-Abed, 2009).

Worthington’s piece on the refugee camp was crammed into the bottom half of the front page of the second section of the newspaper. It was underneath 10 head shots of young women who were vying for “Queen of the Dance” at St. Michael’s College School in Toronto.

Worthington describes the mood at the camp in the first paragraph:

“They look at you blankly with expressionless eyes; there is no emotion on their faces, yet a tension which is a mixture of hopelessness and hate grips the place. It is disturbing, it is frightening, it is an Arab refugee camp” (Worthington, 1958, January 28).

Worthington then proceeds to describe the rituals of daily life at the camp:

- “A typical meal served in a flat, tin plate is a spoonful of grey-yellowish boiled wheat into which is dumped a ladle full of boiled spinach. Into this a cod liver oil pill is tossed. And over the whole unappetizing-looking mess a small ladle of hot oil is poured. “

- “The refugees cluster at tables, bolt their food and leave to make way for the next wave of eaters.”
“When a table is cleared a “sweeper” comes and collects all the bits and spillings into a pan. This is put into the pot again. Nothing is ever wasted.”

“There is no such thing as waste. Garbage pails are almost unheard of.”

(Worthington, 1958, January 28).

Worthington also describes a maternity ward in the small hospital which averages five to eight births a day. Midwives mostly attend to the birthing mothers who are sent back to their family accommodation after about three days. Births outnumber deaths at the camp by almost five to one and the infant mortality rate is low.

The only references to Canada in this article are by way of comparison to Canadian standards of living and the situation in the camp:

The medical clinic is something a Canadian doctor could hardly fathom or appreciate much less experience. Western doctors can’t imagine how the assembly treatment method functions, yet it does.

The doctor in the Jabalia refugee camp averages 150 to 200 patients a day. He runs from patient to patient and back again. He delegates unheard of medical power to his few nurses and they in turn put untrained nurses to work (Worthington, 1958, January 28).

Worthington also compares housing standards: “By Canadian standards the living quarters are crowded. Five people live in a room barely nine feet square. To some it is the best accommodation they have ever had. To most it is better than nothing” (Worthington, 1958, January 28).

This article was labelled as first of a series but microfiche records of each edition of The Telegram for the next two months did not contain any further episodes.

Another article based on Worthington’s experiences in the Suez Zone appeared in the March 1, 1958 edition of Saturday Night Magazine. At the time Saturday Night Magazine was a prestigious general interest magazine published every two weeks in Toronto. Its main focus was policy, politics, economics, arts, and culture and it featured longer articles than those found in newspapers by prominent academics, politicians, journalists and artists.
This Worthington article – entitled SNAFU in UNEF - focuses on the Canadian peacekeeper contingent in the Suez Zone and the difficulties they are having dealing with the “civilians” at United Nations headquarters who oversee and supply the operation.

Before he gets into the UN snafus (the term emerged out of the Second World War and stands for “situation normal, all fouled up”) Worthington describes the mood of the Canadian troops. He opens the piece with these four paragraphs;

The unhappiest group of Canadians in the world today is probably the 950 or so soldiers serving with United Nations Emergency Force along the Egypt-Israel border.

The troops dislike the desert, dislike Egyptians and dislike their fence-sitting job. But what gripes them the most is the attitude they feel Canada and the people at home have adopted towards them. The soldiers refer to themselves as “Canada’s forgotten force” and suffer from an ailment that might be described as “acute homesickness”.

They feel that when the Canadian government loaned them to the United Nations as “Middle East Police” they not only helped win the Nobel Peace Prize for Lester Pearson, but, also, for the time of their service ceased to be thought of as Canadians by countrymen at home. As a result, a sort of wistful bitterness pervades the Canadian headquarters camp at Rafah, Egypt.

“No one at home knows what we are doing here, cares what happens to us, or how we are getting along,” a corporal from the Maritimes complained recently. “Newspapers seldom mention us unless it’s when someone gets blown up by an Egyptian mine or is accused of smuggling dope” (Worthington, 1958a, March 1).

The rest of the 1500 word article details some of the mistakes made by the United Nations staff when it came to fulfilling orders for supplies requested by the troops. They received 2,000 gallons of cough syrup instead of 2,000 small bottles. Rat-springs for vehicles were read as rat traps and sent to the Middle East. And instead of inexpensive walkie-talkies the UN sent over four huge wireless sets valued at $20,000 but no walkie-talkies (Worthington, 1958a, March 1). Worthington also details how local civilians are giving the Canadians grief.
If doors aren’t bolted natives creep into quarters and loot while occupants dream. One Canadian officer went to bed in his tent a while back and when he awoke in the morning everything including the tent had been stolen. Even the wallet under his pillow was gone (Worthington, 1958a, March 1).

Worthington concludes the piece with a description of the mission that is at odds with the lofty intentions and persuasiveness that garnered Lester Pearson the Nobel Peace Prize and instead paints a picture of dispirited soldiers without much to do coping with life in unfamiliar geography and culture.

But whatever else it may be, life in Egypt is not what Canadians expected when they left Canada. The actual task of watching the border actually seems a secondary one for our troops since less than 150 of them, the armoured 56 Recce Squadron are physically involved in it.

Instead of fighting to keep Egypt and Israel peaceful, Canadians here are fighting to keep their own morale from sinking into self-pity, fighting to keep UN civilians from sabotaging the military system with Snafus and hoping above all that when their date for rotation comes up the Arabs won’t have stolen the homebound plane (Worthington, 1958a, March 1).

A year later (March 28, 1959) another article by Worthington about the plight of Arabs in refugee camps appeared in Saturday Night Magazine. Entitled “Year of Decision for Starving Arab Refugees”, the 2,000 word article focused on the abysmal living conditions of a million Arab refugees who had been displaced by the Palestine war and were living in camps administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). At the time there were 57 camps spread over four host countries – Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

Worthington opens the piece with a dramatic description of the mood he encountered in the camps:

Any Arab refugee camp is depressing.

To an outsider even the best of the camps is disturbing and rather frightening. Bleak-eyed children who don’t laugh or play or shout; women haggling like harpies for a cup of
rationed flour; dispirited men squatting on their haunches and stoking fires of self-sorrow as they view the work with hate, distrust, and fear. Everywhere there is a tense feeling of hostility. Hate is a snake writhing in the souls of all Arab refugees - hate of Israel, hostility towards the United Nations, anger at Britain and America (Worthington, 1959, March 28).

Worthington then points out that the United Nations will decide later in the year if UNWRA’s mandate will be extended or if the agency should be killed or replaced. The situation is of special interest to Canada for three reasons:

- “Canada has a stake in the Middle East that we didn’t have ten, or even five, years ago.”
- “Next to the United States and Britain, Canada is the largest contributor to UNRWA - $2,075,000 in 1958.”
- “Canada has assumed the administrative load of caring for the soldiers of the nations that comprise the UEF.” (Worthington, 1959, March 28).

The article features photos of life in the camps and vivid descriptions by Worthington of the physical conditions in the Wadi Seer, an “unofficial” camp on the outskirts of Amman:

Streams of sewage and foul refuse pour down the hill past doors, and in some cases through dwellings, to the gutter by the road. Swarms of flies like angry black clouds descend on garbage and children who crawl and squall along the gutters.

…the unofficial camp has a gagging stench; it’s like being slowly strangled and you can’t speak without your voice latching. It’s physically exhausting trying to breathe, without smelling the biting odour (Worthington, 1959, March 28).

Worthington then points out that visiting an UNRWA camp after experiencing Wadi Seer is “elevating”. He concludes that although UNRWA has provided no long term solution, the situation would much worse if the agency hadn’t stepped in to address the refugee problem. But Worthington also suggests that a lot more needs to be done:

It would seem that despite the humanitarian need for UNRWA, a revised set of goals and methods is needed even more. The political needs almost outweigh the social ones. It is
simply not enough to keep refugees alive, sheltered and fed, and boast of an educational program that doesn’t supply jobs or outlets for learning (Worthington, 1959, March 28).

5.1.4 Worthington’s Memoir and Interview

In his memoir Worthington (1984) makes it quite clear that he became a journalist simply because at the time (1953) journalism offered a more adventurous life than the military:

Increasingly, I was unenthusiastic about a peacetime military career. After all, for twenty years my father had been a peacetime soldier and suffered all the inevitable frustrations. I couldn’t see whiling away my life on garrison duty, participating in annual war games in the Arctic, or serving around the world on UN duty (Worthington, 1984, p. 40).

Throughout his memoir Worthington gives personal, first-person accounts of the events and conflicts that he witnessed during his career as a correspondent for The Telegram. When he goes to the Middle East during the Suez crisis he recounts all the many obstacles that he had to overcome to get to Egypt and then Gaza. And once there, he writes, he was not at all sympathetic to the UN forces, especially the UNEF officers because they were not fighting in a real war. He refers to the UNEF in Gaza “as a bluff that worked” (p.51). Worthington also makes it clear that from the beginning he was adamantly opposed to Canada’s peace keeping efforts because they made the country look weak. For Worthington, Lester Pearson’s proposal for a UN peace keeping force in the Suez was something to be ashamed of, not proud of:

It was Canada’s most glorious international moment and, for some, the thing that made it fashionable for Canada to be a de facto neutral in world affairs and the quasi-official peace arbiter and do-gooder. Ever since, Canada has been reluctant to stand up firmly for any good cause, be it self-determination for Biafra, independence for Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia free of Soviet tanks, Solidarity in Poland, freedom for Grenada, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cambodia, even Taiwan or Somalia. The only tyranny the Canadian government adamantly and vocally opposes is South Africa (Worthington, 1984, p. 47).

Worthington’s memoir narrative is a story about him and his adventures as a heroic journalist determined to tell the truth (as he sees it) about the injustice and oppression suffered by people in
various parts of the world. He takes on what could be considered a very American attitude towards Communism: it is the enemy that must be defeated at all costs. He is extremely critical of Lester Pearson whom he sees as soft on Communism, and Pierre Trudeau who he casts as a “Canadian Castro.”

But while he makes his political views clear, Worthington doesn’t offer much insight into the role of journalism, or the news, and their relationship to the larger political culture or public consciousness. He doesn’t discuss what it meant to him to be a Canadian correspondent or how that influenced his perspective. Instead he writes that he liked being a foreign correspondent because it gave him much more freedom to state his opinions than if he had been a reporter working in the traditional newsroom setting:

> For over 25 years in journalism I avoided as much as possible getting involved in political reporting, either the local municipal level or the provincial and federal levels. I preferred the international scene, where one could avoid the picayune, paint with a broad brush, comment on world events…Besides, international affairs were more stimulating and challenging: what to do about China (cooperate), how to negotiate with the USSR (toughly), should we give aid to Tanzania (no), what to do about Albania (nothing), and so on (Worthington, 1984, p. 43).

During the interview with Worthington which took place about six months before he died, he said he had one key criterion when it came to deciding what stories to cover: “Basically I would operate on the thesis that if it interested me it would presumably interest someone else” (Personal communication, December 4, 2012).

Worthington said he didn’t specifically look for Canadian angles to the events or issues that he covered, he was more interested in getting a sense of the conflict he was witnessing by experiencing it as ordinary people involved in it were experiencing it.

> … initially I’d go out and get involved in the story, get attacked by the police or get into a demonstration where something is happening, a colour story, and so you're writing the colour story, and as the days go by you're starting to learn more and more about the thing, and after you finish the assignment with a three or five part series. Then you can write what it was really all about and conclude with what you think is going to happen. I really
believe in this because I think the journalist on the spot has probably a better understanding of what is going on than a diplomat who is isolated. The journalist has got a very grounded view of what is happening and I think there's an obligation to present what you think is likely. And then the trouble with that is of course, you stand or fall. Sometimes you're right, sometimes you're wrong…if more usually you're right, you keep doing it (Personal communication, December 4, 2012).

Worthington said he was aware of Canadian foreign policy regarding countries that he was reporting from but it wasn’t his first point of departure when deciding what would make a good story:

Well you're there in the first place because of a big story. …and the more you do it, the more you start knowing. But I think steadily you start seeing the Canadian involvement. Vietnam is a classic case, because in Vietnam, I went there in the sixties, and it was the war I was doing and it was in collision with a lot of the Canadian attitudes. And I can remember, and I don't think I'd ever be mistaken for some left wing peacenik or something, but I wrote at the time I couldn't understand why America was fighting the war it was and I thought they must be trying to get a trained guerrilla army to invade Cuba. It was the only thing that made logic to me because I didn't feel that they could win (Personal communication, December 4, 2012).

Worthington also said it never occurred to him to try and determine what it meant to have a Canadian perspective on events.

I’ve always been really impatient with the Canadian fixation on their identity. Canadian identity to me is bizarre, I mean that’s what I am, never felt anything else, never wanted to be anything else and never really thought too much about it. This is what you are and I think in journalism it seems to be a bigger concern within Canada than outside. I get increasingly frustrated about Canadians’ hunger to be loved. And I get impatient with Canadians who travel with maple leafs all over them and get very insulted if somebody mistakes them for American. It’s the most logical thing in the world to be mistaken for American. You know I mean? It’s not an insult at all. Government also gets far too embroiled in what people think of them. I think we’ve been far too nice, and too sensitive
about what might be seen as criticism. And I think we have far more influence than we think we have as a country and in recent years, last ten years, this has increased (Personal communication, December 4, 2012)

His main thought, Worthington said, was to try and present the story so that Canadians would have a better understanding of what was happening. He didn’t view the story from the point of view of key political players but from the perspective of ordinary people caught up in conflicts over which they didn’t have much control. When he was based in the Soviet Union he remembers that a lot of journalists wrote about “who was standing next to whom on the Kremlin wall”. He said Soviet politicians didn’t care much about those sorts of articles. What upset them more were articles about the failures of their economy. For example, Worthington wrote about factories producing only right-handed gloves, and apartment building balconies with no entrances. Or the fact that people wanted to work in factories that produced heavy items such as train wheels because they were more likely to get a bonus for producing weightier goods than because the factory made a profit on whatever it was making.

Worthington also said that as a Canadian journalist, usually on assignment by himself, it was often difficult to get the attention of authorities when needed for information or interviews because the larger media organization from the United States, Britain and some European countries were always given higher priority. It could also be difficult to get first dibs on communication channels especially in the days when telephone, telegram, or telex were used to relay a foreign correspondent’s reports. As a Canadian he often had to wait in line while journalists from larger organizations filed first.

But there were also advantages to being the lowly Canadian:

You could go under the radar so to speak, probably get things that maybe they couldn't. And you had more flexibility, you could go to places, you didn't have to stay in the center of communication. If I didn't write for two or three days it was not the end of the world because I could be off doing something elsewhere (Personal communication, December 4, 2012)

Worthington’s experience in the Canadian navy and army before becoming a journalist had a profound influence on both the way he practiced journalism and on his perspective as a
Canadian. He admits in his memoir that he left the military life because in the post-Korean war period life in the military had become dull. He wasn’t enthused by the thought of a series of peace keeping missions. He thought that journalism would be the next best thing to the adventurous life that the military had offered.

…when I got into journalism I realized from the start that if you are going to wars and revolutions or crisis of some kind, it’s much better to go as a journalist because then you can leave, you’re not there for the duration. You see it for a while and it’s all instructive. I don’t think there’s any conscious feeling that it’s dangerous or anything. I guess it is when you look back at times. But it’s always calmer in the eye of the hurricane than on the fringes (Personal communication, December 4, 2012)

Worthington’s military background also informed his image of the typical Canadian:

I think soldiers are sort of a microcosm of Canadians. Somebody once said and I thought it was very perceptive, in Italy, he said his memory of soldiers were people who are dead tired and soaking wet, hungry, and inexplicably cheerful. And if you look at World War Two especially, these guys are always mugging for the camera. They’re laughing or something similar (Personal communication, December 4, 2012)

Worthington certainly didn’t see Canadian diplomatic staff as typically Canadian. In general, he found them not helpful and in a few cases obstructive. He recalled when he was in Czechoslovakia in 1968 after the Soviets had moved in to quell a local uprising. He was the only Canadian journalist on the scene because he got there before the borders were sealed. He called the Soviet action an “abomination”, an occasion as a journalist when his emotions completely coincided with the facts of what was happening on the ground. He wrote his story but there was no way to get it out so he went to the Canadian Embassy hoping he would be allowed to use their communication networks. But the Canadian embassy would not help. According to Worthington, he was told by embassy staff that he was on his own; they did not want to upset the Czechoslovakian government. So he went to the U.S. Embassy and they transmitted his stories to Canada.

In his memoir, published in 1984, Worthington wrote about how his first assignment in the Middle East influenced the rest of his career as a foreign correspondent:
My first exposure to the vagaries of the Middle East influenced me more greatly than I realized. While one had to be impressed with the Israelis, I found myself unable to shake the feeling that the Arabs had been badly done by - not so much by Israelis, but by the rest of the world. I could see no interest on the part of anyone to solve the refugee problem, other than to talk about it. Everyone seemed anxious to exploit it, with very few thinking of the long-term future of displaced Palestinians. A certain responsibility lay with Israel and Western countries, and the Soviet Union was agitating the brew; thus it meant that ideological battle lines were drawn with innocent Palestinian refugees helpless in the middle. It was clear the status quo would continue indefinitely.

I didn’t know it at the time, but I was on my way as a foreign correspondent of sorts – fifteen years of specializing in civil wars, revolutions, crises and uprisings, to be followed by eleven years of saving democracy every day except Saturday by determining editorial policy on the upstart Toronto Sun (Worthington, 1984, p. 55).

5.1.5 Findings

Worthington’s reporting from the Middle East during the period that Canada was involved in the Suez peacekeeping mission highlights several aspects of his journalistic perspective. He said during the interview and in his memoir that he didn’t consciously think of himself as Canadian when deciding what perspective to take on a story. He considered what was interesting to him and assumed it would be interesting to his audience in Canada. He doesn’t have Gans’s nation building in mind, nor does he see himself as creating culture as Schudson would see it. But as a former Canadian soldier Worthington was very attuned to the environment of a Canadian military operation. He understood from experience what was important to soldiers and officers, and his familiarity with that life made it easy for him to relate to individuals and encourage them to talk to him.

This is obvious in his stories about life in the Canadian peacekeeping camps. He knows the language of the soldiers, he knows the exact terms of the equipment they use, he knows how to assess the situation from their point of view. He knows how soldiers view civilian organizations compared to military organizations and he knows that most soldiers prefer action to simply policing borders.
He also assumes the viewpoint of the soldier when he talks about their impressions of the local population. He describes how the soldiers feel wary because their personal possessions and camp resources are often stolen. He describes how the soldiers feel superior to their poor and uneducated hosts because Canadians have a higher standard of living. When Worthington is reporting about the military he doesn’t seem to distinguish himself from them; he is more soldier than journalist; he doesn’t step back and view the situation in an objective manner but instead steps into the shoes of the soldier and reports from that perspective.

Taking into account Muhlmann’s theory of the witness-ambassadors and how they seek to unify the audience, it would appear that Worthington is seeking to unify a segment of the Canadian audience – those who are serving or have served in the military, those who have family who have served in the military, and Canadians in general who have respect for the work of the military. Given that this was 1957-58, little more than ten years after the end of the Second World War that would have included a lot of Canadians. But even though Worthington identifies with the soldiers he also casts the peacekeeping mission as less heroic and noble than it was usually portrayed at the time by Canadian politicians and diplomats. He presents the reality of the situation for the individual soldier rather than a glorious tribute to Canada’s peace keeping efforts. The articles about the soldiers impart a sense of betrayal: that the politicians and diplomats have downgraded and trivialized the work of the military.

Worthington’s articles on the Arab refugees present a completely different aspect of Worthington’s journalistic practice. He doesn’t know these people, doesn’t speak their language, and has never lived in the abject poverty that they are experiencing. And yet he identifies with their anger and resentment; he feels it as they do. He is appalled at the living conditions and goes into great detail about day to day life in the refugee camps; to the point that a reader can smell the food, and the sewage; taste the dust, and dirty water; feel the exhaustion of a doctor who treats 150 to 200 patients a day. In his reporting about the peacekeepers, the local population is demeaned and portrayed as an uncivilized “other.” But in his reporting about the refugee camps, the Arab refugees are dignified with a universal humanity. In effect, Worthington is saying; no fellow human being should have to put up with this. He doesn’t appear to be the witness-ambassador intent on unifying his readers. Instead he seems more like one of Muhlmann’s decentring journalists who portray the situation from a very personal, and
emotional point of view based on his grounded experience that may well shock the reader into seeing Arab refugees and the work of the United Nations in a new light.

It may have been easier for Worthington to identify with the Canadian soldiers because he had been one. But he also identifies with the Arab refugees. He portrays their world from their perspective, as if he were living it. He doesn’t consult anyone else for an opinion or information about the situation. He simply reports what he sees and experiences. In both cases this could be described as a “Canadian” perspective for Worthington identifies with people caught in the middle of conflicts; the soldiers who were sent to the Middle East on a mission that was a new kind of military operation for both them and the world at large; and the Arab refugees who became victims of noble causes and were then largely left to fend for themselves.

It is also interesting to note that Worthington does not mention the Soviet Union, Communism, or the United States. There is no direct reference to the Cold War. But he does refer to the United Nations in both positive and negative ways leaving the impression that the United Nations is an important player when it comes to solving some of the direst problems in the Middle East. At the time, this could be considered in line with Canada’s foreign policy and Canadians’ identification with the United Nations as an effective multi-lateral forum.

5.2 The Berlin Wall/Stanley Burke

During the Berlin crisis of 1961 Canada was not considered a key player even though the stand-off between the Soviets and the western alliance took place in the heart of Europe which NATO had pledged to protect from Soviet expansion. Instead, the U.S. under the leadership of the newly elected President John Kennedy took the lead and used the confrontation which went on for several months to rattle its sabres and increase its arsenal of weapons.

The confrontation in Berlin, which threatened to escalate into nuclear war, had its roots in the division of territory among the Allies at the end of the Second World War. Although divided from West Germany by barbed wire and landmines, East Germany was not physically separated from West Berlin which was occupied by the United States, Great Britain, and France under agreements made in 1945. The Western allies could maintain their position because those agreements guaranteed land, water, and air access to the city. Consequently, West Berlin became
a liberal beacon for East Germans and by 1961 the Soviets estimated that 1.2 million of them had crossed over (Bothwell, 2007, p. 180).

Soviet President Nikita Khrushchev demanded that western troops leave Berlin so the city would no longer be a divided capital. At first the West wasn’t sure what to do. Nobody wanted to abandon Berlin but they didn’t want a war either. The crisis was managed by only the three Western occupying powers, the United States, Great Britain, and France. Even though Canada was a member of NATO it mostly sat on the sidelines.

Eventually, East German police and troops sealed off West Berlin from East Germany and over the next few months a concrete wall was built around West Berlin making it almost impossible for East Germans to cross over. The wall was eventually extended for 155 kilometres (96 miles), of which 43 kilometres ran roughly north-south and cut Berlin in two. Another 112 kilometres isolated the enclave of West Berlin from the surrounding East German state.

The length of the Wall was surrounded by a buffer zone that came to be known as “no-man’s land”. It varied from the width of a street to about 300 metres and effectively barred any human use of the area. For more than 106 kilometres of its length, the Wall was composed of panels of reinforced concrete to a height of 3.60 metres, with a rounded top providing no toe- or hand-hold for any would-be climber. The rest was composed of metallic grill fencing.

A total of 302 watchtowers and 20 bunkers were manned by seven units of 1,000 to 1,200 soldiers each. The Wall was also protected by 124 kilometres of patrol routes, 127 detector and alarm devices, 259 paths for guard dogs and 105 kilometres of ditches dug to trap vehicles.

The watchtowers, some 250-300 metres apart in the city centre, were connected by paths for the guards on patrol. With lampposts every 30 metres, the Wall was also the best-illuminated part of all Berlin. By contrast, East Berlin was quite dark at night (Facts about the Berlin Wall, 2009, 11 September).

5.2.1 The Canadian Correspondent

Stanley Burke was a CBC television journalist based at the United Nations during the Berlin crisis of 1961. He was on the scene when East German refugees were flooding into West Germany through Berlin to escape the repressive government of East Germany which was
controlled by the Soviets. And he was on the scene when the wall was erected to stop emigration to the West. Burke, who was 38-years-old when the wall was erected, filed several news reports as well as documentaries on the situation.

Burke was born in 1923 in Vancouver, the son of prominent industrialist, Stanley senior, who was the president of Boeing Canada from 1937 to 1947. Stanley Sr. moved in international political, literary and science circles and eventually became a millionaire (Lee, 1967, June 10). The younger Burke worked for a short while at the Vancouver Province when he was only 19. He then joined the Royal Canadian Navy and served as a lieutenant in anti-sub boats during the Second World War. After his discharge he earned a Bachelor’s degree in Agriculture and then joined the Edmonton Bulletin as a reporter. While he was working as reporter in Edmonton he began contributing talks to a CBC Radio news program called News Roundup. But he ran into trouble when someone in Toronto heard a rumour that he was a card carrying Communist.

Burke later told a magazine writer: “Sure I went to meetings…it was student stuff. Actually I went along as a devil’s advocate. I never joined the party” (Lee, 1967, June 10).

Burke did, however, consider himself a radical. During an interview for a lengthy profile of him published in The Globe and Mail in 1970, he said:

I’ve always to some extent bucked the system. That’s how I got into torpedo boats in the navy. There was a waiting list for them from here to the English Channel, and I got it because I had a row with my flotilla senior officer – I was skipper of an anti-sub boat off Newfoundland – and I was dragged up before the captain of destroyers, not on a formal charge but for preliminary investigation. I doubt if ever such a charge would be laid and I had very good case because the officer involved was an unstable character, definitely a certain Queegishness there, so they decided to get rid of us both. And since I had applied for torpedo boats, away I went (Clery, 1970, October 24).

After the brush with Communism was reported to his superiors, Burke continued contributing to the CBC although he was told he would be bounced if his reports got too political. He later started a turkey farming operation but it failed. In 1953 he joined the Vancouver Sun. Later that year while he was still with The Vancouver Sun he won a United Nations-sponsored essay
contest that gave him a month’s stay at the UN. It was there that he tasted international politics for the first time (Lee, 1967, June 10).

In 1957 when the CBC’s UN correspondent resigned Burke was given the posting.

Burke rubbed shoulders with the great at the UN. He sat beneath Dag Hammarskjold’s sharp-line abstracts in the Secretary General’s 39th floor office to discuss the world situation and greeted “a very tragic” Jawaharlal Nehru, “an absolutely sparkling” Harry Truman and Nikita Khrushchev during his presidency of the UN correspondents’ association” (Lee, 1967, June 10).

With camera crews who worked with him on assignment he had a reputation for being scrupulously democratic and calm when others were panicky. But he could also become obsessed by some particular aspect of a story and doggedly pursue details to the point that the story was never put together (Clery, 1970, October 24).

One of his colleagues described him as being a typical West Coaster who “likes nothing better than to beat a set course into the wind in a small boat” (Clery, 1970, October 24). In 1962 CBC posted Burke to Paris; and in 1965 to England. From his European base he pushed off to such locations as Capetown when Hendrik Verwoerd was assassinated, and Rhodesia when Ian Smith made his unilateral Declaration of Independence.

While Canada was not directly involved in the confrontation between the Soviets and the western powers led by the U.S. over Berlin, as a member of NATO it certainly had a stake in the outcome, so it is worthwhile to determine what perspective Burke adopted in his reports.

5.2.2 Burke Reports from Berlin/ August 20 1961

Burke’s perspective - a journalist concerned about people caught in a conflict between two powerful players - is first revealed in a 1959 CBC program in which he participated. Entitled “Defence Against Tomorrow” the program featured several CBC correspondents, including Burke who was based at the United Nations at the time, as well as academics and military leaders discussing what Canada should do given the development of ballistic missiles by both the United States and the Soviet Union.

At one point during the discussion Burke says: “Haven’t we become obsessed with weapons? Aren’t we overlooking the real struggle in the world…the fight of two billion people for freedom
and against misery? If the western nations want to retain some sort of world leadership they must associate themselves with the dramas of the majority of mankind. Something seems seriously out of balance when Canadians spend 400 times more on weapons than world development through the United Nations.”

Later Burke says: “Canadians at the UN have been attempting to play a role outside the western alliance …the prime role for Canada is to have a relationship with these countries.”

On August 13, 1961 East German police sealed off the border between East and West Berlin and commenced to build a wall that would stand until 1989. On Sunday August 20, 1961 CBC Television’s weekly program News Magazine focused on the crisis in Berlin with Stanley Burke reporting from the beleaguered city. The episode was titled “This Week in Berlin: People and Power” and ran for thirty minutes (Burke, 1961, August 20).

The technology was still quite primitive compared to today: Norman Depoe, the host of the program, sat at a desk with a telephone. He told the audience that he had “newsmen” standing by in Berlin, Washington, Moscow and London. He then picked up the phone and began asking Burke questions. Burke would answer but only Burke’s voice was live. There was no televised image of him standing with a microphone surrounded by what would be recognized as West Berlin. Only a photo of Burke was shown on the screen along with some black and white film of events in Berlin shot the previous week.

Burke spoke about “people who voted with their feet” by leaving East Germany in droves. He called the standoff in Berlin a “worldwide clash of power systems with the front line running through Berlin.” He also called the crisis “more dangerous, more complex, and more difficult to understand” than anything that had happened since the start of the Cold War.

Burke reported there had been a “lift in morale” when U.S. vice-president Lyndon Johnson visited West Berlin the day before but in general, he said, the west had been “slow” to respond to the crisis. “Could it be (19)’39 or worse?” he asked. He also commented that it was ironic that the Americans were helping the Germans only 16 years after the end of the Second World War during which they had fought against them (Burke, 1961, August 20).
Norman Depoe, the program host, then talked with correspondents in Washington and London. James M. Minifie in Washington said President Kennedy was not planning any economic retaliation or other reprisals at this point although the U.S. had sent 1,500 reinforcements to its West German bases. An NBC correspondent (Frank Berkholzer) comes on the line from Moscow and reports “that everyone (in Moscow) is delighted now that the border is closed.”

The rest of the program is then given over to Burke who talks about how he and a film crew ventured into East Berlin. They had some film taken away by police that was later given back. But before they left they managed to get footage of a soldier escaping from East to West Berlin. Burke and the film crew then go to a refugee camp in West Berlin where there are “endless lines.” He interviews some refugees with the help of an interpreter. One man tells him the East German government took his ship because he was not a member of the Communist Party.

Burke concludes by asking the question “How much should we be willing to risk for two million former enemies?” He also said that “Berlin emphasizes the failure of Communist Germany and brings into question the entire future of the eastern European regime.” But for the west “the loss of Berlin would threaten NATO and its influence around the world,” he adds.

The program ends with a shot of the Brandenburg Gate with a voice-over by Burke: “A display of power: on one side over people with little freedom, on the other people with far more freedom and some hope” (Burke, 1961, August 20).

Burke does not mention Canada at all. But the whole program seems based on the assumption that Canadians are very interested in what is happening in Berlin. And while Burke mentions the power play by the main actors in the Cold War he places much more emphasis on the people affected by the power play than he does the main actors. He rarely uses the word “Communist” to describe East Germany or the Soviets and he describes the response of the west to the crisis as “slow.” He doesn’t focus on troop build ups or manoeuvres or the propaganda of political leaders. But through script and images Burke portrays East Berlin and East Germany as repressive and stark places to live. He identifies with the people who are seeking freedom and a better standard of living and seems to imply that most Canadians would identify with them as well.
5.2.3 Burke Reports from Berlin/August 27 1961

A week later CBC Newsmagazine goes back to Berlin and Stanley Burke but only for five minutes. There is film of Burke in front of a water truck on the East Berlin side of the city that has bombarded a West Berliner who ventured too close to the border. The film also shows an American Patton Tank that is just down the street from the water truck. This segment on the Berlin crisis is much more focused on a military confrontation than the previous week’s segment. And Burke refers to the situation as “the first direct, close range power confrontation since 1948.” But overall not much has changed in the past week so Burke doesn’t have much new to report. But like the week before, there is no mention of Canada or its role in the crisis (Burke, 1961, August 27).

5.2.4 Burke Reports from Berlin/August 19 1962

A year after the East Germans sealed off the border with West Berlin and started building the wall across all of East Germany, Burke went back to Berlin to provide CBC News Magazine with another look at the wall and the crisis that had led to its construction. The item lasts for 15 minutes and provides dramatic footage of life on both sides of the wall. Burke’s piece begins with protesters in West Berlin marching and calling for the wall to come down. There is also footage of memorials to those who have died trying to escape East Germany. Burke comments that this is the only wall in history designed to keep people in rather than out and adds that the concrete and other materials used to build the miles of wall would have been better used for apartments, and that the 18,000 soldiers who are guarding would have been better used to produce goods “for people who live in a drab world behind the wall” (Burke, 1962, August 19). Since Burke had permission to cross into East Berlin, he and his camera crew provide footage of people in the streets. One scene shows East Germans buying lottery tickets: “A socialist concession to human nature,” according to Burke.

The CBC correspondent then interviews John Peet, a former Reuters correspondent who is now editor of an East German state publication.
Peet, who is British, explains that East Germany wants West Berlin to become a demilitarized neutral city but he is confident that the Soviet Union will not use force to throw America out of West Berlin. He says he assumes that an agreement of some sort will eventually be reached. At one point during the interview Burke asks: “How does the East German regime justify shooting its own people?”

Peet replies: “From the point of view of the East German government it’s an international frontier and like sentries everywhere they will open fire if challenged.”

Burke: “But they are escaping?”

Peet: “East Germany was being bled white because so many skilled workers were leaving. The whole rebuilding of the country was suffering. We couldn’t stand for it…it was costing us billions of dollars” (Burke, 1962, August 19).

Burke then interviews the leader of an “escape committee who tells him he has helped bring out 55-60 escapees and that 4,000 East Germans have escaped since the wall went up. Burke concludes at the end of his piece that “the prestige of two mighty power systems is staked here in Berlin. Neither side can afford to retreat. As for the wall, the west probably doesn’t want it down because it’s too valuable a symbol that can be viewed by thousands of people” (Burke, 1962 August 19).

Again there is no mention of Canada in Burke’s 15 minute item even though it has been prepared for a Canadian audience. He definitely paints the East German government as a repressive, militaristic regime, but he speaks of the conflict between “two mighty power systems” as if he is a representative of other Canadians and is simply looking on without any particular role to play. The piece focuses on the injustices and poverty suffered by people living in East Germany rather than the high stakes confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States.

5.2.5 Burke Reports from Berlin/September 2, 1962.

Two weeks later Burke filed another report that focused on the Berlin situation for CBC Television’s News Magazine. This 12-minute item is all shot in East Germany. According to Burke: “every foot of film and every word had to be recorded while police were turned the other
way or when they didn’t realize it was a camera from the west.” The footage shows people at a tea garden, at a zoo and listening to music. Burke then interviews a taxi driver whose face is hidden. The driver said his life would be much better if he were driving a taxi on the west side of the border. He says “life is not getting better and there is “no future” (Burke, 1962, September 2)

The film footage also shows people lined up at a bakery and working on a collective farm. Burke then interviews a foreign businessman who tells him that when his East German colleagues first meet him they tell him they are Communists but later when he gains their trust they admit they are against the system. A woman interviewed by Burke talks about how expensive food is to buy and that it takes three or four years to get a car (Burke, 1962, September 2)

Without exception, all the people that Burke interviews in East Germany are critical of the system. They are not identifiable and are interviewed in shadowy, dim locations. The overall effect is of a place that is both frightening and depressing. As in the other pieces filed by Burke from Berlin there is no mention of Canada, its role in NATO, or its links with either West or East Germany.

5.2. 6 Findings

Burke’s televised reports from Berlin do indeed reflect the opinion that he expressed in the 1959 CBC television program about weapons development in which he said: “Aren’t we overlooking the real struggle in the world…the fight of two billion people for freedom and against misery?” All the items that he filed for CBC – just before the construction of the wall, during the tense standoff when the wall was first put in place, and the next year - focus on the impact of the wall on the people living close to it – especially the people on the East German side. Burke doesn’t dwell on the clash between the Soviets and NATO but mentions it only as context. His real interest is the people caught in the clash. He actually puts himself in some danger to get their stories which in itself tells a story about the difficulties that most people who live there face on a daily basis. He never mentions Canada, or Canadians. It would be difficult for the casual viewer to know that Canada was even a player in this standoff through its membership in NATO. In
that sense, Canadians have no particular role in the drama but like the citizens of East and West Berlin are simply caught in the middle of it. Burke seems to be seeking unity with his audience by appealing to their understanding of what it would be like if they were living in Berlin and at the mercy of militant super powers.

5.2.7 Burke After Berlin

In 1966 Burke was called back to Canada by the CBC to become the anchor of CBC Television’s flagship news broadcast the nightly National News, the first journalist to be appointed to the position. Before Burke, anchors had come from the ranks of news readers. But CBC news managers wanted more journalistic input for the news and as a consequence Burke got caught in a lengthy dispute between the news readers union and the news writers union. He also found it difficult to remain indifferent or objective about the news of the day, and was not as smooth a news reader as his predecessors (Lee 1967; Clery 1970).

His personality and the situation with the unions that he found himself caught in created a good deal of tension and some embarrassing on air moments for Burke and in 1969 he resigned from the CBC (Stanley Burke leaves CBC, 1969, August 30). At the time the war in Biafra was claiming thousands of lives and Burke was so distraught by the situation that he devoted himself to relief work. He had covered the conflict as a foreign correspondent and had definite opinions about who was to blame for the war and what he saw as the meager efforts of the west to intervene and provide aid to the people. In an article in the Toronto Star he accused the federal government of “downright lying” (Ottawa is lying about Biafran war, 1969, December 22) about the situation in Biafra during a speech to a church group:

“Our government sent Hercules transport planes to fly in supplies and then didn’t make the flights on the grounds that the planes would damage the airfields there, that they weren’t suitable for the job. That’s downright lying” (Ottawa is lying about Biafran war, 1969, December 22).
Pierre Trudeau was prime minister at the time and he countered some of Burke’s accusations by saying the situation in Biafra had been exaggerated (Ottawa is lying about Biafran war, 1969, December 22).

Burke never returned to the CBC although he continued to live in Toronto and was active in many circles:

Stanley Burke is often seen in Toronto in rapt talk with other communicators in the Four Seasons’ Lounge, relaxedly chairing forums in the St. Lawrence Centre, earnestly addressing campus groups, loudly contending at community meetings. What he is saying is different. It is about ecology and survival, communications and nationality, political systems and people and power. But because the facial expressions are the same (as when he was a correspondent and anchor) and his deep voice plays on its familiar measures, what he is saying is not being fully heard. And it should be fully heard. It could be dangerous (Clery, 1970).

Burke also went on to write satires of Canadian history, politics and identity disguised as children’s books. In all, he and Roy Peterson, the editorial cartoonist at The Toronto Star collaborated to produce six books published between 1973 and 1987. The first one, *Frog Fables and Beaver Tales* (1973) focuses on the growing calls by some Quebec politicians for separation from the rest of Canada. At the beginning of the story Burke refers to a race of Beavers who lived in a swamp called Canada where they were prosperous and happy (Burke and Peterson 1973, p. 7). They wished all the other animals in the world could be as happy as they were. So the Beavers would go to the United Assembly of all the animals and say, “Love one another and be like us.” But the other animals were quarrelsome and did not love one another and the Beavers would go away saddened (p. 7).

Burke then introduces a “wise beaver named Lester who persuaded the United Assembly to form an animal army to keep the peace….this pleased the Beavers enormously. They went around slapping their tails and telling one another what wonderful animals they were” (p. 9).
The story also includes detailed descriptions of how the Beavers were caught in a clash between the Eagles and the Bears.

All this puzzled and worried the Swamp Creatures. The Eagles told them that the Bears were their enemies too, but the swamp creatures were not sure. The Bears, they knew, had never started an animal war, and they had certainly never harmed the creatures of the Swamp. What’s more, none of the Swamp creatures had ever seen a Bear. Eagles, however, were all too familiar. They were seen everywhere and they controlled everything, including the poplar trees which the Beavers needed for food.

“We are slaves to the Eagles!” wailed the Beavers. “What shall we do?” (Burke and Peterson, 1973, p. 13).

In his second book – *Days of the Glorious Revolution* (1974) – Burke tells the story of how certain news media luminaries take over the government of Canada because they think they are smarter than anyone else. In this book the narrator makes several statements about how news reporters had a “Sacred Rule” which was that they were never supposed to express opinions.

… of course, all the Communicators broke the rule all the time but they did so in accordance with certain time-honored practices.

It as alright, for example for a news-animal to express his own ideas by saying things like “well informed sources here believe…”

Or he could interview himself, while shaving in the morning, and then report: One highly-informed observer said privately today…”

Or if one of the two other news-animals agreed with him on something, he could objectively say: Many experts here believe…” (Burke and Peterson 1974, p. 9).

Later in the story Burke mentions the All-Swamp Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) which “created Unity” through objectivity: “The ABC must always be Objective and if Lloyd Blanderson (news reader) knew what he was talking about then he might get involved. Then he might not be Objective. And this would be bad for Unity, and might cause trouble for the ABC” (p. 37).
Blood, Sweat and Bears (1976) was a satire in which Canada was portrayed as a giant hockey league consisting of various teams of animals such as the Beavers and the Frogs. There are also the Eagles from down south who try to take over Canada’s game.

In 1989 when the Berlin Wall was finally torn down, Burke wrote an article for the Globe and Mail about his experiences as a foreign correspondent witnessing the erection of the wall and the impact that had on the people living on either side.

Above all there is the memory of U.S. and East German tanks grimly facing one another at Checkpoint Charlie. Hundreds of them. It gave you a strange unreal feeling because it looked like a movie set but it was all too real. One night I went into East Berlin to sense the mood with a German-speaking diplomat as a guide – foreigners were permitted to cross the border. In a tavern, we found people speaking viciously against the government and I said I could record them on a miniature tape recorder. They agreed and I picked an astonishingly outspoken conversation. As the bierstube closed, however, someone shouted that we were spies and half an hour later we were in a grim-looking jail somewhere deep inside East Berlin (Burke, 1989, November 13).

Burke also recounted how he had filed a report on a West German stepping across the line and spitting. An East German riot tank had responded with a blast of water and U.S. troops readied smoke and tear gas grenades. Nothing else happened; and although Burke didn’t witness the incident he used it in his report as an example of the building tension. By the time he got back to his hotel there was an urgent message from Toronto requesting a report on the “new crisis”. As it turned out by the time Burke’s low key story had gone through all the news agencies it had turned into a story about a full-blown war threat: “I have always remembered that incident as an example of how wrong news perceptions can be” Burke wrote in the article (Burke, 1989, November 13).
5.3 Vietnam 1971-1973/Joe Schlesinger

5.3.1 Context of Vietnam War

Vietnam was originally part of the Chinese Han dynasty until it achieved independence in 938 AD. For several hundred years various indigenous dynasties controlled sections of Vietnam and fought among themselves and invaders for control. The Nguyen dynasty founded by Emperor Gia Long was the final dynasty. The traditional Confucian political and social structure that it represented collapsed under the colonial rule of the French, who rose to dominate Vietnam and neighbouring Cambodia and Laos in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An empty shell of the monarchy remained until both it and French colonialism fell victim in the 1950s to revolutionary changes. The partitioning of Vietnam by the French into three pays (countries), as the French called Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina, reversed centuries of Vietnamese efforts to create national unity (Anderson, 2002).

The Japanese briefly occupied Vietnam after the fall of France in 1940, the early days of the Second World War. When the Japanese surrendered at the end of that war, the French re-established themselves in Vietnam with the approval of the British and the Americans who wanted to resuscitate France as a European power in order to better confront the growing strength of the Soviet Union (Futrell, 1981). But occupying Vietnam was not easy for the French. By the time of the Japanese surrender the Viet Minh had emerged as the leading nationalist group seeking independence. Under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, who had lived in the Soviet Union and was a Communist sympathizer, they had established control of Hanoi in the north of the country and proclaimed the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

To the north, the Chinese watched warily. The nationalists preferred the French because they were concerned about the threat of the Chinese Communists under Mao-Tse-tung. This resulted in a neutral stance on the part of China that fuelled the struggle for power between the Viet Minh and their French occupier. A guerrilla war of low intensity soon developed. In 1946, however, after fruitless negotiations between the French and Ho Chi Minh the violence escalated. When a French patrol boat in Haiphong harbour clashed with Vietnamese militia the French responded by brutally bombarding the city, killing 6000 civilians.
According to Robert Futrell, a U.S. military historian, American policy makers had conflicting feelings about the war between the French and the Viet Minh. On one hand they were sympathetic to the Vietnamese nationalists so were reluctant to see France restore control by force – they wanted French authority to enjoy the support of the Vietnamese people. But the Americans were also uneasy about Vietnamese independence because it might produce a Communist state and become part of the growing global threat to the U.S. and its allies (Futrell, 1981, p. 246). The final triumph of the Chinese Communists in 1949 seemed to confirm the worst American fears. In 1950 both Communist China and the Soviet Union recognized Ho Chi Minh’s Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

At that point France was considering a withdrawal from Vietnam because it feared it would not be able to compete with the increasing resources supplied to the Viet Minh by China and the Soviet Union. A few months later it requested economic and military assistance from the Americans (Condit, 1988). The military assistance the Americans agreed to provide had three priorities: first; responding to emergency requests to enable French forces to meet immediate threats, this included the supply of ammunition, barbed wire, and napalm so the French could secure Haiphong; second; improving French military capabilities by providing fighter aircraft; third, and least important; the development of indigenous Vietnamese armed forces (Futrell, 1981).

The U.S. was involved in a higher priority war in Korea but the materiel directed to Vietnam helped the French. High Commissioner and Commander in Chief Gen. Jean de Lattre de Tassigny said in January 1951 that U.S. air resources “especially Napalm bombs, arrived in the nick of time (Futrell, p. 251).” Further French victories compelled the Viet Minh to abandon battles and they retreated to lower-key guerrilla operations. By 1955, the French had been defeated; the Paris Peace Accords between France and Vietnam had left Vietnam a partitioned country, and the U.S. had begun direct aid to the government of South Vietnam in hopes of defeating Ho Chi Minh and his backers – The Soviet Union and China.

By 1963 it was becoming increasingly clear to American observers that the Viet Cong or National Liberation Front - both a political organization and an army - was winning the war in South Vietnam. The failure of South Vietnamese forces during the battle of Ap Bac was of
critical importance for the future of the conflict. South Vietnamese President Diem hamstrung his own forces by ordering them not to take heavy casualties in an effort to avoid controversy. Thus it appeared to the Americans that the South Vietnamese regime was more concerned with its own power than a pursuit of victory. The United States then organized and participated in a coup to get rid of Diem in order to fulfill their agenda. By 1963 there were 16,000 American military advisors in Vietnam, most of them sent there during the presidency of John Kennedy (Anderson 2002; Vandemark 1995).

The assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 brought Lyndon Johnson to power. Johnson did not want a controversial war that interrupted his agenda for social change:

As a Democrat he realized that he had to be tough on Communism, and as a believer in Cold War theory he also realized that the U.S. had to contain Communist expansion at the 17th Parallel. Finally Johnson was and would remain quite frightened of the possibility of a superpower clash over Vietnam. Thus, the distracted new president realized that he had to make a stand in Vietnam—but one that would not cause controversy or an overreaction on the part of the Soviets (Wiest, 2003).

Nevertheless, between 1963 and 1965 in a step by step process Johnson and his advisors led the United States into a bloody and complex war in Vietnam. Early in his presidency Johnson approved increasing the number of military advisors to 23,000; approved an intense bombing campaign of North Vietnam and its supply routes that ran through Laos; and provided two battalions of U.S. Marines to help defend Danang air base in South Vietnam where the bombing raids originated. By 1965 General Westmoreland, Johnson’s appointed military commander in Vietnam, decided it was time for the U.S. to take over the ground war since South Vietnamese troops were so ineffective. He requested 150,000 troops and Johnson acquiesced.

As the war intensified between 1965 and 1967, Ho Chi Minh, the president of North Vietnam, poured more and more human and material resources into the conflict. In addition, assistance received from China and the Soviet Union helped North Vietnam bounce back from losses incurred by the U.S. bombing campaigns and kept war materiel flowing into the south. While the United States wanted a contained war that would minimize their losses but assure victory, North Vietnam saw the conflict as total war (Anderson, 2002).
In January 1968 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong assault forces began coordinated attacks on urban areas, provincial capitals, government offices, and U.S. and South Vietnamese military installations. Known as the Tet Offensive this would become a turning point in the war because it became all too clear that U.S. strategy was failing and that both American soldiers and Vietnamese civilians were paying a heavy price for that failure. The fighting in early 1968 produced some 2,300 ARVN dead and enormous numbers of civilian casualties and refugees. This strain on the ARVN and the dislocation of the population severely handicapped pacification efforts. The Tet Offensive came as a shock and surprise to the American people and confronted them and their leaders with the prospect that much more time and money and many more lives would be required if the United States was to continue to defend South Vietnam (Anderson, 2002).

Discouragement and outright anger about the U.S. involvement in the war peaked in late 1969 when a report by Seymour Hersch on the bloody My Lai incident was published in several U.S. newspapers. Hersch reported that the incident, in which 102 Vietnamese civilians were brutally killed in an attack on their village under orders from platoon commander Lieutenant William Calley, was under investigation by the U.S. army. Within weeks My Lai and its horrifying revelations about U.S. participation in the war became front page news; “suddenly, nearly every war correspondent who had been in Vietnam had an atrocity story to tell (Knightley, 2004, p. 431).

The cost of the war became the subject of heated debate and demonstrations in the United States. And when Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968 he was eagerly looking for the United States to get out of the war with honour. It took four more years of fighting, destruction, negotiating, and ultimately compromise before a formal agreement ended the American war in Vietnam in 1973. Two years later, Hanoi’s quest, begun in 1945, to bring an independent and united Vietnam under its control reached its goal when North Vietnam’s troops entered Saigon.

5.3.2 Canadian Foreign Policy and the Vietnam War

The Americans’ deep involvement in the civil war in Vietnam became a source of discomfort for Canada. Unlike the Australians and New Zealanders, Canada never sent fighting forces to Vietnam. Not that U.S. President Lyndon Johnson didn’t ask if Canada was willing to help. He
did, and was refused by Lester Pearson who became Prime Minister after the defeat of the Diefenbaker government in 1963.

When public opinion in Canada against the war in Vietnam intensified just as it was in the United States, Pearson found himself caught between his inclination to call for a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam so the possibility of negotiations could be explored, and Canada’s intimate relationship with U.S. defence policies and strategies.

Only ten years had passed since the Suez Crisis when Pearson as Canada’s External Affairs minister had been able to wield considerable influence at the UN and help bring about a peaceful resolution. But Canada and Pearson had the support of the U.S. during that crisis. By 1967 the two countries were clearly at odds over the Vietnam War but there was little that Pearson, even as Prime Minister, could do to change the situation.

When Pierre Trudeau was elected Prime Minister in 1968 Canadian policy on Vietnam remained much the same even though Trudeau didn’t have the same interest in promoting Pearson’s vision of Canada as an international peace broker. He was more concerned with revamping the entire department of foreign affairs so that it reflected his vision of Canada.

    Trudeau questioned all of the foreign policy myths of post-1945 Canada: “Quiet Diplomacy,” the “helpful fixer” role, the “linchpin” function, the “special relationship.” Nothing was sacred. Former Canadian ambassador to Washington Charles Ritchie, reassigned to London, found “the climate in Ottawa very anti-NATO” and heard “a great deal of talk of neutrality for Canada based on the Swedish model. Even “the ‘British connection’ seems to be receding out of view. Only the crown remains” (Thompson and Randall, 2008, p. 232).

Trudeau and President Richard Nixon didn’t see eye to eye on most issues including U.S. intervention in Vietnam. But “Trudeau never nagged Nixon to make peace as Pearson and Paul Martin had done with (President) Johnson. He understood that no Canadian should harbour illusions that friendly counsel from Canada would bend Nixon on the war” (Thompson and Randall, 2008, p. 251).
Trudeau and his immediate entourage, particularly Ivan Head, a law professor with an interest in foreign relations, believed that the disruption of the West and the destabilization of many Third World countries were no surprise. They attributed it to decolonization, a shift of political power away from white-skinned Northern countries towards the Third World and they believed economic power must shift as well.

For Trudeau, Canadian foreign policy was to be conducted on two planes, one short-term, looking to Canada’s historic links to Europe and its economic dependence on the United States, the other gazing south into a future dominated by Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Third World, Trudeau told a Calgary audience in May 1968, was crucial to Canada. A focus on southern regions was not simply a matter of altruism: an impoverished world was an unstable world and more susceptible to the sway of Communism.

Under Trudeau, Canadian officials took pride in Canada’s approach to the Third World as less rigid and confrontational than that of the old colonial powers, preoccupied with self-justification and self-interest, or the United States, obsessed with anti-Communist ideology. Canada was even prepared to overlook the frequently extreme rhetoric of Third World governments, in the interest of building bridges and shoring up relations (Bothwell 2007, p. 314).

Although Trudeau’s emphasis on relations with the Third World was specific to him, in many ways his views of Canada’s position vis-à-vis the United States and its other allies was the same as Pearson’s and Diefenbaker’s. He believed Canada could never compromise its NATO commitments and was constrained by “orthodox alliance priorities.” And although he loathed the totalitarianism and repression imposed in Communist countries he sought dialogue rather than open conflict.

Trudeau believed that in a world that was ideologically polarized, armed to the teeth and flirting with nuclear disaster, dialogue was preferable to confrontation. Finding a common language of peace and security thus meant engaging one’s adversaries at a level that recognized their humanity. Anything less, Trudeau believed, was both dishonest and dangerous. (Wright, 2007, p. 92)
As he tried to carve out a more independent role for Canada, Trudeau made some dramatic gestures that were often seen as an affront to established U.S. policies. In 1970 his government established diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China despite opposition from Washington. The U.S. was deeply involved in war in Vietnam at the time but Trudeau was anxious to end China's isolation, convinced that it made little sense to ignore rather than deal with a major power in international affairs. In 1973 he became the first Canadian Prime Minister to visit that country.

Canada’s most direct involvement with the Vietnam War was as a member of the International Commission for Supervision and Control that was established by the Geneva Conference on Indo China of 1954. The Conference of representatives of the Soviet Union, United States, France, Great Britain, and China aimed to supervise an armistice between the French Union Forces (FUF) and the Viet Minh. The three member countries appointed were Canada, India and Poland. Canada was seen as an ally of Europe and the United States; Poland an ally of the Soviet Union; and India as neutral. Because India was considered the neutral party it supplied most of the administrative personnel. Although originally established to supervise the cease fire between the French and Viet Minh forces the ICSC continued its work through the American intervention in the war.

The bulk of the Commission's personnel were Indian. In March 1955, for instance, there were 160 Canadians (of which 135 were military personnel), about the same number of Poles, and 1,086 Indians (of which 941 were military personnel). This was in keeping with the decision at the New Delhi preparatory meeting that personnel of the international secretariat and the staff for the three ICSCs in Indochina would be provided principally by India. The strength of the Commission dwindled from a peak of approximately 1,500 at the end of 1955 to some 300-odd by the end of 1971; as good an indication as any of the declining fortunes of the Commission in Vietnam. The general recommendations of the ICSC were to be made by majority vote. But the three-country makeup of the Commission meant that it was usually difficult to reach a majority vote or a unanimous vote. As a result, the Commission could observe and report but had little impact on the activities of American, South Vietnamese or North Vietnamese forces (Ramesh, 1984).
5.3.3 News Media and Vietnam

In the early years of the Vietnam War, particularly before the Tet offensive, most American news coverage of the war was highly supportive of U.S. intervention. Despite the general support, government and military leaders often criticized news coverage for portraying U.S. efforts in the war as ineffective and misguided. Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon accused the media of undermining public support and thereby making it much more difficult for the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces to gain the confidence of both Americans and the Vietnamese (Hallin, 1986; Knightley, 2004)

This public criticism left the impression that most journalists were determined to end what they saw as an unjust war.

According to Knightley (2004) this was hardly the case.

There is only one flaw in this: the correspondents were not questioning the American intervention itself but only its effectiveness. Most correspondents, despite what Washington thought about them, were just as interested in seeing the United States win the war as the Pentagon (p. 417).

Hallin (1986) attributes the generally supportive attitude about the war on the part of journalists and media organizations to two powerful forces: “The routines of objective journalism, which tied the news closely to official sources and the Washington agenda, and the ideology of the Cold War, which locked events in a framework of understanding that made fundamental questioning of American policy essentially unthinkable” (p. 109-110).

That framework of understanding which envisaged the United States as a democratic, free nation fighting the totalitarian Soviet Union was rarely questioned in the United States. And although the paranoia of the McCarthy hearings was behind them, by the early 1960s Americans still saw themselves as the best equipped to fight “Communism” wherever it might appear. There was also another factor which led to a generally supportive press in the early days of the war. The very nature of the war made it difficult to report on. It was not like the Second World War or even the Korean War; this was a very different war:
It became a war like no other, a war with no front line, no identifiable enemy, no simply explained cause, no clearly designated villain on whom to focus the nation’s hate, no menace to the home land, no need for general sacrifice, and therefore no nationwide fervour and patriotism. It was a vicious war in a tiny distant, devastated and backward nation, against what Bernard Kalb of CBS described “as the most faceless foe in our history” (Knightley, 2004, p. 418).

This war was also very different from the Second World War because there was no formal censorship: “because Vietnam was a limited war in which U.S. forces were formally "guests" of the South Vietnamese government, censorship was politically impractical…so for the first time in the twentieth century the media were able to cover a war with nearly the freedom they have covering political news in the United States” (Hallin, 1986, p. 9).

Knightley (2004) argues that in the early days of the war the U.S. media were so compliant that two key aspects of the war in Vietnam were hardly touched on by reporters – the corruption and racism. According to Knightley, most journalists changed dollars and pounds on the black market and bought stolen army goods (p. 421). Other journalists witnessed horrific violence perpetrated by U.S. troops on Vietnamese civilians who they saw as all the same and deserving of inhumane treatment whether they knew for sure or not that they were helping the enemy. But in most cases the journalists did not report these incidents.

British journalists might have had a less biased view of the Vietnam War but Knightley (2004) criticizes the major British newspapers for not taking enough interest in it to have correspondents based there rather than sending them in for short and intermittent stays. He also argues that when the U.S. escalated its involvement in Vietnam most American journalists saw themselves as part of the war effort. Some, particularly reporters with small newspapers that couldn’t afford to send reporters too far afield, even accepted offers from the military for all-expense paid junkets to Vietnam to see the war for themselves.

Another key influence on how the Vietnam War was reported by American journalists was the rise of television as a form of mass communication. Vietnam was the first televised war.

Television news came of age on the eve of Vietnam. The CBS and NBC evening news broadcasts took their present form in September 1963, expanding from fifteen minutes to
half an hour. As it happened, the pagoda raids at the end of August had just pushed the Buddhist crisis onto the front pages. So the first exclusive stories the expanded shows were able to broadcast had to do with Vietnam: Kennedy granted interviews to Cronkite and Huntley-Brinkley in which he tried, somewhat ambiguously, to clarify U.S. policy toward Diem… Two years later American troops went to war under the glare of the television spotlight (Hallin, 1986, p. 105).

It didn’t take long for television to surpass newspapers and magazines as Americans’ preferred source of news.

The evidence most often cited for the preeminent power of television is a series of surveys conducted by the Roper Organization for the Television Information Office. The first was taken in 1964 and showed newspapers and television running about even in the number of people saying they "got most of their news" from each medium. With multiple responses permitted, 58% said television; 56%, newspapers; 26%, radio; and 8%, magazines. Since then the balance has shifted in favour of television; in 1972, the last year Vietnam was a major news story, TV led newspapers by 64% to 50% (Hallin, 1986, p.106).

Because of the demands and limitations of the medium, television news reports were constructed and organized differently than newspaper or magazine reports. Hallin (1986) suggests that the same overarching framework of reliance on official sources and the ideology of the Cold War informed television journalists as well as newspaper journalists. But while broadcast reports were highly dependent on official sources in Washington and Vietnam, television reporting contained little of the articulated geopolitical world view that the (New York) Times had invoked to explain American intervention in its early phases. Instead of world geopolitics, television reports featured either official sources talking about the war or film from the battlefields of Vietnam.

Although it became conventional wisdom in the United States that Americans grew to oppose the war because of bloody television images delivered to their living rooms this is not the whole truth. Hallin (1986) suggests that as the war ground on…and as political divisions increased in the United States, journalists shifted along the continuum from a more cooperative or deferential
stance to a more adversarial stance toward officials and their policies. Many journalists were also shocked by the brutality of the war and by the gap between what they were told by top officials and what they saw and heard in the field.

5.3.4 Television in Canada

By 1955, CBC/Radio-Canada's television services were available to 66 per cent of the Canadian population (CBC/Radio-Canada, 2000). The demands of television news were different than those of newspapers which through Canadian Press had supplied most of the material CBC used in its news programs. As a result, in 1957 the network began collecting news, not just disseminating it. CBC News hired reporters across the country, established permanent news bureaus overseas, and sent along cameramen to record events for television audiences. The scope of CBC news changed dramatically with the advent of television. CBC became one of the founding members of the British Commonwealth International Newsfilm Agency which was organized to furnish news film independent of American sources. CBC management also hired several freelancers in various locales to provide news and film in a Canadian context. By 1958 it had correspondents at the UN, in Washington, London, Paris and Hong Kong (Rutherford, 1990). For most of these correspondents, and their successors, their work included both observing and reporting on the political and current events that were relevant to Canadians from the safety of their bureaus in foreign capital cities such as Washington DC as well as venturing out to dangerous Cold War conflict zones such as Suez, Berlin, Cuba, and Vietnam. But this was not just news gathering. It had another purpose. According to Tony Manera (1996), a former President of CBC, “This international presence makes it possible for the CBC to cover world events from a Canadian perspective. It is crucial for Canadians to be able to see the world through Canadian eyes if Canada is to pursue foreign policies independent of the United States” (Manera, 1996, p. 50).

5.3.5 The Canadian Correspondent

Joe Schlesinger was born in Vienna in 1928 and raised in the former Czechoslovakia. He and his family were living in Bratislava in the late 1930s and witnessed the rise of Hitler from close range. In 1939 Schlesinger’s parents sent him and his younger brother to Britain under a program that invited Jewish children to study and board with local families. That decision saved the
young boys’ lives because their parents were eventually killed in the Holocaust. After the war Schlesinger returned to Czechoslovakia and by 1948 was working for The Associated Press in Prague. Two years later the Communists began arresting journalists and colleagues urged him to leave. He slipped out of the country, applied to immigrate to Canada and landed in Vancouver where he worked as waiter, construction worker and seaman before studying at University of British Columbia. He started working for the campus newspaper (the same one as Peter Worthington) which led to a job at a Vancouver newspaper.

Schlesinger worked for the Toronto Star, UPI in London, The Herald Tribune in Paris and then back in Canada where he started at the CBC in 1966. For 28 years Schlesinger worked as a foreign correspondent for CBC, covering natural disasters, political upheavals and conflicts from Vietnam to the Middle East to El Salvador. He was in Russia with former U.S. president Richard Nixon, in Vietnam when troops were on the ground, in Tehran when the Shah fell and in Prague during the Autumn Revolution of 1989.

In his memoir (Schlesinger, 1990) Schlesinger goes into great detail about his upbringing in Czechoslovakia, the rise of Hitler’s authority and his escape with his brother to England. He also vividly describes what it was like to go back to Czechoslovakia after the Second World War only to witness the rise of the Communist party and eventual takeover of the government. When he eventually escapes Czechoslovakia for a second time and immigrates to Canada he feels that he has been given a fresh start, that by 1961 his life has finally begun:

\[
\text{I had recovered from the hurts of Europe; I had become a Canadian in a wider sense than just having a piece of paper say so. Canada had changed my outlook, my set of references for looking at the world and my place in it. I was more self-confident and optimistic, less prone to looking over my shoulder. I was ready to tackle the world once again (Schlesinger, 1990, p. 124).}
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There’s no question that Schlesinger’s childhood and adolescent experiences during the rise of Fascism and then Communism greatly influenced his journalism. Throughout his memoir he writes about witnessing ordinary people suffering at the hands of fanatical ideologues, ruthless dictators, faceless bureaucracies, failed revolutionaries or invading armies. For Schlesinger
thousands of people suffered unnecessarily because of the battle between ideologies that was so integral to the Cold War.

Schlesinger witnessed the war in Vietnam firsthand in the early 1970s. Looking back on that experience in his memoir he writes that while the Americans have faced up to what Vietnam did to them they have not fully confronted what they did to Vietnam:

When they talk of the damage done to humans by Agent Orange, they talk of the injury done to Americans. Only rarely have I heard talk of the much greater injury done to Vietnam, where not only the people were sprayed but the very land was poisoned. Vietnam reportedly has one of the world’s highest cancer rates, especially among women living in areas sprayed with Agent Orange (Schlesinger, 1990, p. 190).

Schlesinger also witnessed the civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua in the 1980s; civil wars that were actually proxy wars between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. He concluded that the real enemy in both these countries was not Communism or Capitalism but poverty and injustice. Even though the extreme right had the upper hand in El Salvador, and the revolutionary left was in charge in Nicaragua, the two countries were engrossed in a similar campaign: they were groping for a way out of the trap of poverty and injustice that history had imposed on them; rebels in the hills were contesting power and governments in their capitals were contesting the flow of history (p. 259).

Schlesinger’s view of events during the Cold War in many ways echoes those of Lester Pearson and the other Canadian diplomats during Canada’s “Golden Years” of foreign policy. He was more interested in resolving long standing disputes that put ordinary people at risk than declaring an enemy. Perhaps this is not surprising since Schlesinger’s upbringing and experience as a child, adolescent and young man unfolded in Second World War Europe and England. Like Canada, he was more tied to history and politics across the Atlantic than to the history and politics of Canada’s neighbour to the south.

Schlesinger’s memoir doesn’t dwell much on the role of journalism, or the news, in the public consciousness of Canada. And other than his reference to what it means to feel Canadian, Schlesinger doesn’t spend much time discussing Canadian foreign policy. The few exceptions
include his account of trying to convince Chinese officials to get him a visa for China, which at the time was closed to most western journalists, on the grounds that Canada had declared its intention to open diplomatic relations with China despite U.S. opposition. For Schlesinger, being a foreign correspondent was not about openly promoting Canadian values, or Canadian foreign policy but about ensuring that there are “just and decent men” in the world, as well as just and decent societies. “The evils of a cruelly unjust and obscenely indecent society killed my parents. These same evils killed millions of others and poisoned the lives of many millions more then, before, and since” (p. 328), he writes on the last page of his memoir.

When asked during his interview about what a Canadian perspective meant to him, Schlesinger broke the question down into two aspects. He said a Canadian perspective often involved introducing a “Canadian angle” such as when Canada was the first western first country to establish relations with the People’s Republic of China. This event had a direct Canadian connection and was of interest to not only Canadians but people around the world. So the Canadian perspective was easy to determine. Schlesinger also mentioned the work of The International Control Commission as a story that had a specific Canadian perspective because Canada was a member of the Commission and this would be of interest to other Canadians.

A more subtle aspect of the Canadian perspective, Schlesinger said, was the freedom on the part of Canadians to report more negative details about the war than Americans had. Schlesinger also said that Canadian reports from Vietnam didn’t contain the American point of view and that absence made for a more Canadian perspective:

…all those stories we're talking about, it isn't that you necessarily had to sort of accentuate something Canadian but you're also leaving out the American tilt on it, which was obviously more American quotes than Canadian ones in a sense. So even the negative was important to them, the fact that you got out the CBC stuff without the American tilt. And that may not be Canadian but it made it independent of other sources of news we received here. We weren’t getting BBC TV or radio or online news at the time (Personal communication, December 6, 2012).

Schlesinger also talked about how his experiences in both Nazi and Communist Czechoslovakia influenced his perspective when reporting as a Canadian correspondent. He said he wasn’t like a
lot of émigrés from Communist countries who adopt extreme right wing views because of their horrific experience when they were young in Hungary or Czechoslovakia; he said he left those attitudes behind and adopted a more “Canadian” perspective:

There's a saying at Pier 21 in Halifax… they took a quotation of mine and put it on the wall there. It says ‘I came to Canada as a refugee and for me Canada is a refuge still’. And that's an important thing, sharing that, the double loyalty thing, I didn't have a double loyalty thing, there was nothing to be loyal to, it isn't like coming out of Italy and still feeling for the old country then, I mean the old country had rejected me twice right? Now I am quite fond of it, I like going back to the Czech Republic et cetera, but still I would never want to live there (Personal communication December 6, 2012).

Schlesinger was emphatic that he didn’t think of himself as having an “émigré perspective”, he thought of himself as having a “Canadian” perspective because after ten years in this country he had discarded all the antagonisms brought on by the Second World War. Canada’s relative distance from those antagonisms provided a refuge and changed his attitude.

Speaking specifically about his coverage of Vietnam, Schlesinger said he was often disgusted by the attitude of U.S. soldiers towards the Vietnamese:

…you went to fire bases and you saw soldiers who were high, smoking stuff, and there was a kind of contempt for the Vietnamese. There were units of South Vietnamese army that were very good, the paratroopers and the marines, and I tried to describe the difference. If you were in the South Vietnamese army you were in the South Vietnamese army not for two or three years like a troop of Americans, you were in it period. And it made for a completely different kind of attitude towards the war than you would have if you were a career soldier who was trying to make it in Vietnam and then back at Fort something or other you’d be promoted and have a better career (Personal communication, December 6, 2012).

When asked if he thought this perspective was “Canadian” Schlesinger said: “I don't know whether it's Canadian, but it was certainly not American...” (Personal communication, December 8, 2013). His perspective, Schlesinger added, was no different than the point of view of Europeans who were covering Vietnam, and of some Americans “who couldn’t quite report what
they were seeing” (Personal communication, December 6, 2012).

European journalists saw Canadians as being distinct from both Europeans and Americans. And for that reason they valued Canadians’ influence in NATO. Schlesinger also said that Canada was perceived by other journalists as a country that was known for brokering peace rather than provoking war.

Schlesinger himself fit into this image as he was more interested in the sociological aspects of the country experiencing violent conflict than the ideologies driving the conflict. He wanted to know what made people do what they did; why did they adopt certain ideologies in the first place? He also identified with people who were caught in the middle of wars and other violence, which he described as a “psychological” advantage.

I remember An Loc because for days or weeks - I don't know how long, it was - we were broadcasting reports titled “On the Road to An Loc”. Shells were going off everywhere and my reports were being broadcast on NBC as well as CBC. So that was my great coup in Vietnam. But the other thing was just watching, you know, just watching to see how people reacted when the 1972 offensive was on and people fled. I felt for them because they were refugees. I remember doing a piece on these bullock carts coming out with stuff and it was useless stuff. But it reminded me of home because I remember my mother when she shipped us out of Czechoslovakia, I remember she shipped off linens and some table silvers and a little menorah… but they didn't ship themselves out (Personal communication, December 6, 2012).

Schlesinger said he was much more interested in the lives and circumstances of ordinary people than the larger themes of foreign policy, or ideological differences. When asked if he thought this was a particularly Canadian perspective he emphatically agreed. But he cautioned that it was easier for Canadians to take that attitude because they weren’t usually the ones “doing the shooting”, that was usually the Americans. Canadians should not assume “moral superiority” because they are in a better position to identify with victims; “all it is, is putting yourself in the situation of someone else” (Personal communication, December 6, 2012).

Most of the time Schlesinger was assigned to cover specific events or issues by CBC producers, although he had freedom within the assignment to make his own decisions about how to cover
the story. He said that the producers did not discuss who the audience might be or what they might be interested in. He said they were more interested in technical details such as the length of the report and when they could expect to get it. This is quite different from the newspaper reporters interviewed. They had much more freedom to set their own agendas and decide what events and issues merited coverage or would be of interest to Canadians.

5.3.6 Schlesinger’s Reports from Vietnam

According to CBC archival records a total of 65 items were filed by Schlesinger from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and broadcast on CBC news programs between February 11, 1971 and December 21, 1973. The VHS videos were retrieved from CBC archives and viewed. Only six hard copy scripts were available. None of the video material has been digitized so it is not possible to copy it and view it outside CBC facilities. Most of these items were two to three minutes in length – some shorter, others between three and five minutes.

5.3.7 Vietnam/1971

When Joe Schlesinger first went to Vietnam as a CBC correspondent in 1971 the Americans had significantly reduced their ground forces from a high of 543,400 in April of 1969 to 239,200 by June of 1971. The Americans were still conducting bombing campaigns against Viet Cong supply routes through North Vietnam and Cambodia. But direct U.S. involvement was winding down.

Schlesinger began his tour of the region with a report broadcast on February 22 from Laos where he interviewed Albert Hart the senior Canadian on the International Commission for Supervision and Control who had come to Laos to consult with Colonel Danah Archambault the Canadian military representative on the ICSC. The clip is only 1:15 sec and basically introduces the ICSC and two key Canadians who are participants (Schlesinger, 1971 February 22).

CBC broadcast only three stories from the region by Schlesinger between February and October of 1971. Two are filed from Laos, and one is from Longan province in South Vietnam. In the latter piece (2:02 sec), Schlesinger refers to stalled Paris peace talks and also describes how the U.S. made its deepest bombing penetration into North Vietnam – 200 miles north of border. He also talks about how the fighting has decreased in South Vietnam (Schlesinger, 1971, March 16).
It is not until October of 1971 that Schlesinger files a series of six items from South Vietnam which are broadcast between October 16 and December 19. In these pieces he focuses on the pull out of U.S. ground forces. The first item is about a base called Red Beach which was occupied by Marines designated to protect the Da Nang airbase. Schlesinger refers to the base as a ghost town and notes that where once it housed 12,000 Marines now there only 7,000. The film footage shows empty housing units and windswept roadways. He remarks that the “bloody” battles of the late 1960s came at a “heavy cost” to the Americans. At the end of the item Schlesinger asks if the American and South Vietnamese forces have really achieved anything significant given the price they paid (Schlesinger, 1971 October 16).

On November 29 and December 1, CBC broadcast items filed by Schlesinger from Cambodia. One (1:10) is from an area controlled by the South Vietnamese Army. Schlesinger is at an army base and points out that many of the recruits are young boys and girls (Schlesinger, 1971 November 29). The second report (1:28) features Schlesinger travelling with airborne South Vietnamese troops as part of Operation Total Victory into a forward area free of “Communist” resistance (Schlesinger, 1971, December 1).

On December 13 CBC broadcast two items from the region filed by Schlesinger. The first (2:02) is a report on the 196th Brigade of the First Cavalry, one of the last American ground combat units left in Vietnam and engaged in the defence of the Da Nang airbase (Schlesinger, 1971 December 13).

A second item (2:02) focuses on how South Vietnamese troops have pushed deeper into Cambodia. They have massive United States air support but there are not American troops on the ground in Cambodia and there are not many left in Vietnam either (Schlesinger, 1971, December 13a).

Schlesinger also filed a piece that focused on street kids in Saigon. The footage shows them getting money from soldiers. But Schlesinger also points out that while the Americans are pulling out they are leaving many problems behind including the thousands of children of mixed parentage who are in orphanages around Vietnam. He points out that there is no help from the U.S. government for these orphans and then shows one child who is to be adopted by an American sergeant (Schlesinger, 1971 December 13b).
Two items from Vietnam are broadcast on December 16, 1971. In the first one (2:30) Schlesinger discusses “Vietnamization” which is a term used by the U.S. to indicate that it is now the responsibility of the Vietnamese to sort out their future, not the responsibility of Americans. Schlesinger focuses on the impact of this policy on education and concludes that it demonstrates “Americanization much more than Vietnamization” (Schlesinger, 1971, December 16).

The second item (1:58) focuses on the export and import of goods into Saigon and the security that surrounds even the trade in vegetables. This is mainly a piece about everyday life in Vietnam post-U.S. intervention, although Schlesinger does remark that Vietnam “still needs U.S. dollars even though the soldiers are gone” (Schlesinger, 1971 December 16a).

5.3.8 Vietnam /1972

During 1972 CBC broadcast 29 reports by Schlesinger filed from Vietnam. It is clear at this stage of the war that the main issue is how South Vietnamese forces are going to bear up against North Vietnamese forces now that the Americans have pulled out their ground troops. With U.S. intervention no longer the issue that it was, western media attention shifted away from Vietnam; it was now simply a civil war without the global ramifications that it once had.

The first item broadcast in 1972 (January 2) was another report (1:53) on the homeless street urchins of Saigon, one of the devastating side effects of the war (Schlesinger, 1972, January 2). This report is obviously part of the package on Vietnam that Schlesinger put together in late 1971. Since the Christmas/New Year period is usually short of news, it is interesting that some of Schlesinger’s Vietnam pieces were used to fill those program slots. They were obviously seen as “background” news rather than “breaking” or timely news. Nevertheless, it is also obvious that the CBC was still committed to covering Vietnam even though the Americans had pulled out and the conflict was less crucial to the balance of power in the Cold War.

The next item broadcast (February 28) involved an interview with David Jackson, the Canadian representative on the International Commission for Supervision and Control. This is a relatively long item (5:17) and in it Jackson complains that the Canadian delegation to the ICSC has been ignored by the North Vietnamese since the United States initiated a surge of bombing in North Vietnam in order to destroy supply routes to the south (Schlesinger, 1972, February 28). While
no mention is made of it in the interview, U.S. president Richard Nixon had begun his historic visit to China only a few days earlier (February 21). While this item highlights Canada’s role in the Vietnam conflict, it also portrays Canada as somewhat paralyzed because it is clearly regarded by the North Vietnamese as an American ally. This is a much different role for Canada than emerged earlier in the Cold War when Canada was seen as an effective peace broker.

As the North Vietnamese gained ground in South Vietnam during 1972, Schlesinger focused on covering the ground fighting. He filed several reports on the fighting between April 25 and May 24 and even managed to obtain an international scoop on the one of the nastiest battles of the period.

In his memoir - *Time Zones: A journalist in the world* (1990) – Schlesinger writes that he found out about the North Vietnamese offensive when he was in Cambodia:

Much to Washington’s and Saigon’s surprise the communists struck at South Vietnam on March 30, 1972, with a force of 120,000 North Vietnamese regulars supported by tens of thousands of Viet Cong guerrillas. They came in from the east in Cambodia and Laos and from North Vietnam through the demilitarized zone, the famous DMZ. They had Soviet heavy artillery, rockets and tanks. This was no longer the guerrilla war of old. This was a conventional offensive on a big scale (Schlesinger, 1990, p. 167).

By the time Schlesinger reached Saigon, the North Vietnamese had captured Loc Ninh which was only 100 miles to the north. They then advanced down the highway to An Loc, a rubber plantation town. In the memoir Schlesinger recounts that the only way into An Loc was by helicopter but neither the American nor South Vietnamese command were willing to take in reporters. So Schlesinger and his camera man - a freelance photographer - went down the ranks and found a South Vietnamese colonel, a paratrooper, who agreed to let them into the next helicopter scheduled to ferry the wounded and supplies. The helicopter barely lands and comes under attack as it discharges its passengers but Schlesinger never mentions any of this in his broadcast reports from An Loc.

On April 25 1972, CBC broadcast reports filed by Schlesinger from Vietnam on the “Communist” attacks on South Vietnamese artillery posts (Schlesinger, 1972 April 25). This is followed by a report on a village where “Communists” are scaring the locals (Schlesinger, 1972,
On May 7 a report about the South Vietnamese rounding up suspected Viet Cong sympathizers in the city of Hue is broadcast (Schlesinger, 1972 May 7).

Schlesinger reports from An Loc for the first time on May 9 and this report is followed by four more that describe the situation there. All the reports feature the sounds and sights of gunfire, helicopters, aerial bombing, and marching troops. It is more than obvious that Schlesinger is in the middle of a dangerous situation. But it is not clear who is gaining advantage. These reports have narrowed the conflict to the question of “who is winning today?” And for the most part, the story is told from the South Vietnamese point of view. It is also clear that the images are more gripping and tell more of the story than the spoken script. Given the time limitations – all the items range between 1:24 sec and 2:55 – there is no explanation of background or context. These are simply reports from the middle of fierce fighting, a chance to be in the middle of the action (Schlesinger, 1972 May 9; May 12; May 12a; May 13; May 23).

Schlesinger ends this stint in Vietnam with a relatively long (4:57 sec) item on the daily press briefings in Saigon by South Vietnamese Army officers (Schlesinger, 1972, May 24). The briefings are somewhat chaotic but they do show the sort of events that are regularly organized for foreign journalists and are considered part of the job. It is a glimpse into how news stories are constructed, not something that is usually discussed. This is followed by a report (2:15) on a Canadian Vietnamese rehabilitation Centre, 440 miles north of Saigon, which was built to help crippled war victims get back to normal life (Schlesinger, 1972 May 24a).

After several months absence, Schlesinger returned to Vietnam and filed 14 items that were broadcast between September 28 and December 20. In this series of reports Schlesinger looks at how the North Vietnamese have gained control in some parts of the country and the effect that is having on the people. He revisits An Loc and files a report (2:12) on the refugee children of the Montagnard tribesmen in the area. Their parents are trapped in territory controlled by the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese government is not doing much to help them (Schlesinger, 1972 September 28). Schlesinger also reports on areas in the Mekong delta where up to 40 per cent of Vietnamese live. Here again the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have advanced and “villagers have learned to live with the war” (Schlesinger, 1972 September 29).
To demonstrate the uncertainty with which people in the region live, Schlesinger visits an old man who was shot when the Viet Cong and South Vietnamese started shooting at each other: “but the old man was sick in bed and couldn’t hide and so he was hit. It happens here every day, has for years and is likely to go on until the war ends, whenever that might be…” (Schlesinger, 1972, October 1). Schlesinger continues on to the city of Hue where frontline fighting is only 18 miles away and reports on efforts to rebuild there after the spring offensive. In this item he focuses on one family that is trying to rebuild its home and small business. He quotes South Vietnamese officials as saying that they are holding the Communists back and continuing with rebuilding efforts (Schlesinger, 1972, October 2). In another report (Schlesinger, 1972, October 5), Schlesinger is standing on the highway near An Loc to demonstrate how the North Vietnamese are trying to block all roads to Saigon. On October 7 CBC broadcasts a Schlesinger report (3:33) on how the war is affecting the Vietnamese economy with prices rising and employment opportunities decreasing (Schlesinger, 1972, October 7).

On November 1 Schlesinger once again reports on how the war is affecting villagers who are caught between the South Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong. Footage includes villagers along the road, a pan of a village, soldiers at the side of the road, and a soldier with a rifle looking at map. Schlesinger and the footage paint a clear picture of the uncertainty faced by villagers who are forced to take to the roads to avoid the fighting (Schlesinger, 1972, November 1).

Schlesinger also files a piece during this period that is analysis of Vietnamese President Thieu’s political strategy.

Mr. Thieu’s strongest objection to the Paris Peace pact is that it will leave North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam. But these North Vietnam forces represent his strongest claim to American aid…military and economic…aid which he will need in the fight to save his political life” (Schlesinger, 1972, November 1a).

Schlesinger also filed a report that provides a short (2:00) history of the Vietnam conflict that traces developments from the time that Ngo Dinh Diem was killed in a coup in 1963 orchestrated by the United States. Schlesinger describes Diem as a patriot who stood up to the Americans and the Communists. Even the current president (Thieu) celebrates the legacy of Diem in an effort to rally the people behind him and is still seen as a national patriot (Schlesinger, 1972, Nov. 5).
Another November 5 report focuses on the bombing by the United States of targets in North Vietnam; according to Schlesinger “American military sources said the targets were military and the escalated bombing was designed to blunt a Communist build-up before a ceasefire” (Schlesinger, 1972 November 5a).

Reports broadcast on December 17, 18, and 20 focus on U.S. bombing raids and the general confusion and mayhem in Vietnam as the peace being negotiated in Paris begins to take shape. Schlesinger points out that the U.S. air force is still operating in Vietnam and also helping to build a Vietnamese air force. Schlesinger also reports that there is still confusion on the ground about which military forces control particular areas as two sides prepare for a ceasefire (Schlesinger, 1972, December 17; 18; 20).

5.3.9 Vietnam/1973

On January 27, 1973, the United States, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), and the Viet Cong’s Provisional Revolutionary Government signed an agreement in Paris to end the hostilities. There was to be a cease-fire in place which left North Vietnamese troops in the South. The few remaining U.S. troops were to leave, and U.S. POWs would be released. Due to South Vietnam's unwillingness to recognize the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government, all references to it were confined to a two-party version of the document signed by North Vietnam and the United States—the South Vietnamese were presented with a separate document that did not make reference to the Viet Cong government. This was part of Saigon's long-time refusal to recognize the Viet Cong as a legitimate participant in the discussions to end the war (Anderson, 2002).

Both sides agreed to the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Laos and Cambodia and the prohibition of bases in and troop movements through these countries. It was agreed that the DMZ at the 17th Parallel would remain a provisional dividing line, with eventual reunification of the country "through peaceful means." An international control commission would be established made up of Canadians, Hungarians, Poles, and Indonesians, with 1,160 inspectors to supervise the agreement (Anderson, 2002).

Schlesinger began his reporting on Vietnam in 1973 by focusing on the peace accord and the Canadian role in the supervisory and control commission. In his first piece of the year (Jan 27)
he explained Canada’s role on the commission and personalized the Canadian participation by often referring to “we” when discussing what the Canadians were up against when it came to supervising the ceasefire with the Hungarians, Poles, and Indonesians (Schlesinger, 1973, January 27).

Schlesinger files another item (5:35) on January 29 in which ceasefire violations are shown and discussed. A few days later he spoke with Major General Duncan McAlpine, Commander of the Canadian troops taking part in the peacekeeping mission with International Commission for Supervision and Control (Schlesinger, 1973, February 2).

On February 7 CBC broadcast an item from Schlesinger on a village under fire with vivid footage of the fighting and refugees on the run that he and his cameraman had visited at the beginning of the ceasefire and then returned to after a week. Schlesinger describes the situation;

They’re still fighting at An Loi. In fact the fighting has never stopped since then, the Viet Cong are still inside the village. Fifty South Vietnamese soldiers have died trying to retake it. The number of Communist dead is not known…there’s only a fanciful figure from the Saigon command. Those who did manage to get out of An Loi have now been homeless since Sunday. They’re camped out in churchyards, in schoolyards, in public buildings in Trang Bang. (Schlesinger, 1973, February 7).

Schlesinger then goes on to show that the villagers are drafting a complaint sheet addressed to the ICSC. But Schlesinger ends the item with a pessimistic view of what the ICSC can accomplish for these people;

But the ICSC teams are still a long way from getting to Trang Bang to hear the complaint of the people of An Loi. First it must establish its teams throughout the country. There are hundreds of villages which have become battlegrounds in this past week…so for the people of An Loi their wait for the international peace observers may be long (Schlesinger, 1973, February 7).

On March 7 and March 10 CBC broadcasts two more pieces by Schlesinger in which he describes the ongoing fighting between the South Vietnamese and the Viet Cong and the effect on villagers who are forced to flee (Schlesinger, 1973 March 7; March 10). On April 27
Schlesinger interviews Michel Gauvin, the Canadian delegate to the ICSC. Gauvin says that the Canadians have dominated and do most of the organizing for the commission because they have the most experience. He also says there would be more ceasefire violations if it weren’t for the ICSC (Schlesinger, 1973, April 27).

For the rest of 1973 Schlesinger continues to focus on ceasefire violations and the effect on people and the economy in Vietnam. In one item he reports that Canada has failed in an attempt to have the ICSC formally condemn the Viet Cong for a violation of the peace agreements. He also points out that as many people are being killed in Vietnam during the ceasefire as there were before it – 100 a day. In one report he visits a military cemetery “where the bodies keep arriving faster than they can be buried” (Schlesinger, 1973, May 4).

In his final item from Vietnam in December 1973, Schlesinger provides a wrap-up of the ICSC activities. Canada is to be replaced by a delegate from Iran. Schlesinger is very derogatory about Canada’s role:

> Canada found itself at loggerheads with the Hungarians and Poles who supported the Viet Cong….Canada called a spade a spade and it didn’t get us very far…the ICSC is merely the last in a series of frustrating assignments. And when it turned out as we thought it would we just shrugged our shoulders and walked away. (Schlesinger, 1973, December 22)

This is Schlesinger’s final report from Vietnam.

5.3.10 Findings

It’s difficult to find a narrative theme in the reports filed by Schlesinger in 1971 – his first year of reporting from Vietnam. He begins by interviewing the Canadian representatives on the International Commission for Supervision and Control. And while this is certainly a Canadian perspective on what is happening in Vietnam at the time there is very little explanation of what ICSC work entails and why Canadians are key figures. Schlesinger’s reports later in the year focus on the American pullout from Vietnam and the remaining U.S. troops. Although in his memoir and interview it is clear that Schlesinger found the U.S. presence in Vietnam to be mostly destructive, there is no indication of this in his reporting. Instead, he assumes a more
neutral position when he reports on the abandoned military bases and the U.S. bombing runs into North Vietnam. At one point he joins airborne South Vietnamese troops as part of Operation Total Victory. He refers to the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese as “Communist” resistance which is the language or labels used by Americans to describe the war: a fight against the threat of Communism. In reports aired in December, close to Christmas when the news cycle slows down and audiences are otherwise engaged, Schlesinger filed reports of a more sociological nature. One was about the orphans of U.S. servicemen left to fend for themselves in the streets; a second report focused on the security that surrounds the import and export of even ordinary items like vegetables. There is a hint of criticism in a report that Schlesinger files about “Vietnamization” – a policy of the U.S. intended to make the Vietnamese more responsible for their own future. Schlesinger said the program looks more like “Americanization” than “Vietnamization.”

At the beginning of 1972 Schlesinger interviews Canadian officials from the ICSC, just as he had done at the beginning of 1971. But for most of 1972 Schlesinger focused on the advances being made by Viet Cong troops and how that impacted the lives of ordinary people struggling to get by. He first heard about the huge Viet Cong advances while he was in Cambodia and by the time he got to Saigon the Viet Cong were less than 100 miles away. Schlesinger ventured out closer to the embattled towns and was able to capture the intense fighting. From his reports it appeared the civil war had broken open and that it was only a matter of time before the North Vietnamese took the whole country. A series of reports by Schlesinger focuses on the fighting with an emphasis on who is gaining the upper hand and how they are doing it. This is classic battlefield reporting: a reporter in the midst of the mayhem, trying to assess who is winning and who is losing. As in his earlier reports Schlesinger often refers to the Viet Cong as the “Communists” and since he can travel with the South Vietnamese military, the incidents are all viewed from the perspective of the South Vietnamese who are being overrun.

Later in 1972 Schlesinger files more items on the ongoing battles between South and North Vietnamese forces but these reports focus much more on the impact of the fighting on villagers caught in the middle. He reports on old people, children, families on the run, families rebuilding, rather than the ups and downs of the fighting. Towards the end of 1972, Schlesinger focuses on the devastating bombing runs undertaken by the U.S. in an effort to bring the Paris peace negotiations to a resolution of the dispute.
By early 1973 the Paris Peace Accords have been signed. Once again, Schlesinger begins the year with interviews with Canadian ICSC officials. The ICSC is now supervising the ceasefire so has assumed a key role in the stabilization of the situation. For the rest of the year, Schlesinger focuses on ceasefire violations with particular emphasis on how life in Vietnam has not changed much for many people despite the peace accord. He also examines the role of the ICSC from the point of view of the people living with continued warfare. For the most part, Schlesinger is pessimistic about the ICSC’s capability to do anything substantial to solve the problems encountered by ordinary people. In one report villagers are shown writing a letter to the ICSC. But Schlesinger ends the report by saying that it is doubtful that ICSC representatives will even get to the village to hear the formal complaint.

When referring to the ICSC Schlesinger often uses the pronoun “we” which indicates that he sees himself and his audience as identifying with the key Canadian role in the organization. But he also expresses strong disappointment in the work of the ICSC and the lack of leadership provided by Canadians when it came to solving some of the pressing issues it had to deal with. This would certainly be an example of the witness/ambassador as described by Muhlmann (2008). Schlesinger’s report could be seen as “unifying” the audience not only because of the Canadian participation in the ICSC but because as Canadians we should aspire to do better.

But in much of Schlesinger’s work it is difficult to ascertain who he sees as his audience. Many of his reports seem to take a neutral perspective – they are neither pro- nor anti-American when focused on U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In many ways that reflects the Canadian government’s position at the time: it didn’t want to fight in the U.S.’s war but it was also reluctant to openly criticize the U.S. Many of Schlesinger’s reports create the impression of a neutered role for Canada, one in which Canada is simply an invisible bystander.

When Schlesinger reports from the battlefield as he often does in 1972, the footage is dramatic and compelling. But there is little explanation of what is actually happening and why it might be important. One could argue that it is necessary to take viewers to the heart of war so they can see and sense what it is like. Muhlmann (2008), however, would argue that it is impossible to relay the truth about experiencing violent conflict. The reporter cannot experience it and report about it at the same time. Reports on violence are always constructed after the fact and often obscure
the violence rather than reveal it. It is also important to consider that television by its nature requires action and drama, even if it is only in two minute segments which was the length of most of Schlesinger’s reports. And Schlesinger himself in both his memoir and his interview expressed pride about the fact that he was able to get reports out about the fighting in An Loc and other regions before other networks. Yet, out of all his reports, these are the ones that seem the most undirected to a particular audience. Why would Canadians be interested in this battlefield reporting when Canada has no stake in it? What perspective is appropriate when Canada has no stake in the outcome?

When Schlesinger focuses on the impact of the fighting on ordinary people it could be argued that he is seeking to have his Canadian audience identify with these people. He is appealing to their common humanity, or as Muhlmann (2008) describes it, he is seeking to unify the audience by pointing out how different the circumstances for the Vietnamese are compared to the average Canadian while at the same time knowing that Canadians would understand what it would be like to have to flee your home, abandon your farm, or see your loved ones killed. Consequently, when Schlesinger focuses on these sorts of stories his identification with Canadians seems at its strongest.

5.4 Nicaragua /Oakland Ross

5.4.1 Nicaragua and the Cold War

Nicaragua, the largest country in Central America, was the site of intense Cold War drama after the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) overthrew the longstanding dynasty of the Somoza family and assumed control of the government in September 1979. Within a relatively short time the Sandinistas and the U.S. government were at loggerheads and Nicaragua turned to Cuba and the Soviet Union for material and political support. This further alienated the U.S. government and Nicaragua became embroiled in a stand-off between the Soviet Union and the United States.

5.4.2 Nicaragua’s Rocky Relationship with the United States

The Sandinistas grew out of a student movement that espoused Communist and Marxist-Leninist ideology but they received widespread support from various opposition parties, the private sector
and the population at large during the armed uprising (Ramirez, 2011). The common bond was the desire to get rid of President Anastasio Somoza and his corrupt and repressive government which had been staunchly supported by the U.S. government. The U.S. support for the Somoza dynasty which began in 1937 provoked strong anti-Americanism in Nicaragua. But the antipathy towards U.S. foreign policy had begun decades before the first Somoza took office.

According to Bermann (1986) U.S. Marines, sailors, or mercenaries have landed in Nicaragua at least 11 times since 1853. One of the most notorious incidents began in 1854 during a civil war between Liberals and Conservatives. American supporters of the Liberals asked a soldier of fortune who was living in San Francisco at the time to organize a troop of soldiers and go to the aid of the Nicaraguan Liberals. After a few setbacks, William Walker and his Liberal allies eventually established a coalition government with the Conservatives. In 1856 Walker was named president and soon after legalized slavery and declared English the official language. Walker was eventually overthrown and executed (Walker & Wade, 2011) but his infamy lived on and his defeat is still commemorated with a public holiday.

That was not the end of the kind of political instability which often pushed politicians to call for American aid. U.S. Marines occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1925. They were called upon again in 1926 and stayed until 1933. They withdrew only after General Augusto Cesar Sandino led a sustained guerrilla war against the Conservative government and the U.S. occupation. Before they left, the Americans established the National Guard, a combined military and police force trained and equipped by them and designed to be loyal to U.S. interests. Anastasio Somoza García, a close friend of the American government, was put in charge of the National Guard. He was one of the three rulers of the country at the time, the others being Sandino and President Juan Bautista Sacasa. The President and Sandino settled their differences through negotiation but in 1934 Somoza had Sandino assassinated by the National Guard. Hundreds of men, women, and children from Sandino's agricultural colony were executed later. Somoza eventually deposed President Sacasa and took over the presidency in January, 1937 (Bermann, 1986).

Because of his successful armed resistance to the Marine occupation, Sandino, the illegitimate son of a coffee plantation owner and a peasant woman, became a national hero. His legendary life became a symbol of national independence and anti-Americanism that would prevail throughout the Somoza dynasty which was propped up with money and arms from the United
States. The National Guard, also seen as an American proxy, enforced the Somoza dictatorship with often ruthless methods. But throughout it all the spirit of Sandino was kept alive and would later inspire other revolutionary movements.

While in the grip of the Somoza dynasty, Nicaragua remained one of the poorest nations in the western hemisphere. Even though it was rich in agricultural resources such as cotton and coffee, most Nicaraguans lived without enough food, clean water, education or medical attention. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2000) Nicaragua’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at (U.S.) $999 per capita in 1975, considerably lower than the U.S. ($19,364) and Canada ($14,535).

When the Sandinistas’ armed resistance gained steam in the late 1970s, Cuba was already well entrenched in the Soviet camp. It had turned to the U.S.S.R. for assistance after Fidel Castro’s successful revolution in 1959 against the U.S. supported government of Fulgencia Batista. One of Castro’s first acts as president was the confiscation or nationalization of properties and businesses owned by Americans and Cubans who had supported Batista. As retaliation, the U.S. declared a full blown trade embargo of Cuba. Canada, however, maintained trade relations with Cuba.

In 1961, 1,400 Cuban exiles participated in a botched invasion of Cuba that had been funded and organized by the U.S. government and its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In 1963, Soviet President Nikita Khrushchev and U.S. president John F. Kennedy went head to head over shipments of Soviet missiles to Cuba, only 90 miles from the coast of Florida. The Soviets eventually backed down but not before the world was brought to the brink of nuclear war. As Castro encouraged and supported other revolutionary groups in Latin America, including the Sandinistas, relations between Cuba and the U.S. remained tense throughout the Cold War. And when the Sandinistas actually succeeded in taking control of government in Nicaragua and forced the Somozas into exile, the Sandinistas quickly made it clear that Nicaragua’s revolution would adhere to the model established in Cuba.

We declared that our objective was to achieve a Socialist society based on a proletarian dictatorship, after a period of alliances with the bourgeoisie, the shorter the better. And the very existence of the Government Junta was set forth as the first example of those
alliances, which would have to end sooner or later according to history’s dialectical history. The FSLN aspired to consolidate itself into a Marxist-Leninist party. It declared a fight to the death against Yankee imperialism, and it proclaimed adhesion to the Socialist camp which we were supposed to join as soon as possible. (Ramirez, 2011, p. 74)

This strategy meant that not only would Nicaragua look to Cuba for inspiration and material aid, but like the Cubans, it would also eventually turn to the Soviet Union for support of all kinds. “When the revolution triumphed in 1979 we were already destined to disagree with the United States. It was inevitable. They were the source of everything that had gone wrong in our history,” writes Sergio Ramirez (2011) who served as vice-president of the Sandinista government from late 1979 until it was defeated at the polls in 1990. U.S. President Jimmy Carter, fearful that Nicaragua would become another Cuba, offered significant financial assistance. The Sandinistas took the money but they refused to kow-tow to the Americans.

Nicaragua could not feel secure sharing geopolitical spaces with its enemy, and it would have to find a place not only alongside Cuba, where its sympathies already clearly lay, but with the Soviet Block in military and economic terms. Only in this way protected under that umbrella, could the revolution survive (Ramirez, 2011, p. 94.)

As the Sandinistas tried to remake the country, the very people they had relied on during the armed conflict began to oppose them. Small farmers and rural workers in the north of the country didn’t like the Sandinista’s plans for collective farms; they wanted land of their own. Within two years of the Sandinista triumph some of the rural opposition and former officers of the National Guard had mounted a guerrilla operation against the Sandinistas. And when local Sandinista officials who were often brought in from urban areas, tried to silence the rural people, the resistance grew stronger (Leiken, 2003; Ramirez, 2012). The movement was dubbed “Contras” - Spanish for counter-revolutionary - and by 1982 was openly supported with arms and money by U.S. President Ronald Reagan. Reagan called the Contras “freedom fighters” and saw them as an important line of defence against the Soviet Empire and its expansionism in the U.S.’s back yard.
The Sandinista’s alliance with Cuba and the Soviets also led the U.S. to declare a trade embargo with Nicaragua in 1985 which created extremely difficult conditions for most Nicaraguans as so much of the country’s economy was tied up with the United States. The combination of the trade embargo plus the fact that the government had to man and finance a civil war created widespread hardship that led to even more opposition to the Sandinistas. (Christian, 1985; Leiken, 2003; Ramirez, 2012)

5.4.3 Canadian Foreign Policy and Nicaragua

Unlike the United States, Canada traditionally did not have strong economic or political influence over Nicaragua, or Central America in general. According to Lemco (1991): “Canadian contacts with the region were largely through short-term trade missions or through the work of Catholic missionaries. Business contacts were few because of the pervasive sense that Central America was dominated by the United States due to a long term relationship built on long-term trade and security arrangements (p.3).” This changed when Pierre Trudeau became prime minister in 1968. Trudeau wanted Canada to be much more involved with countries in the developing world, regardless of their political leanings, and he wanted a foreign policy that put more emphasis on North/South relationships. He saw Canada and Latin America as having mutual interests because both were so entangled with the United States.

We have to take greater account of ties which link us to other nations in this hemisphere – in the Caribbean, Latin America – and of their economic needs. We have to explore new avenues of increasing our political and economic relations with Latin America where more than 400 million people will live by the turn of the century and where we have substantial interests (Stevenson, 2000).

Trudeau even went so far as to strike up a relationship with Fidel Castro. Cuba had long fascinated him: in 1960 he attempted to canoe there but didn’t make it; he spent three weeks there right after Castro’s successful revolution; and in 1976 Trudeau became the first leader of a NATO country to visit Cuba. Castro eagerly hosted Trudeau, his wife Margaret and their infant son, Michel. Tens of thousands of Cubans lined the streets to welcome Trudeau who at one pointed chanted Viva Cuba! Viva Castro! Trudeau and Castro became lifelong friends and when
Trudeau died in 2000 Castro travelled to Montreal to be an honorary pall bearer at his funeral (Wright, 2007).

Not surprisingly, Canada took a much more liberal view of the Sandinista victory in 1979 than the United States. Canada didn’t have much in the way of economic or security interests to protect in Nicaragua as did the U.S. Prime Minister Trudeau made it clear that he supported the right of the Nicaraguans to choose what kind of government they wanted during an address to the Commonwealth Hemisphere Meeting in St. Lucia in 1983:

> States have the right to follow whatever ideological path their peoples decide. When a country chooses a socialist or even a Marxist path, it does not necessarily buy a “package” which automatically injects it into the Soviet orbit. The internal policies adopted by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean …do not in themselves pose a security threat to this hemisphere (Lemco, 1991, p. 5).

For Trudeau the violent political conflict in many Latin American countries during the 1980s had more to do with people seeking economic and social justice than with encroaching Communism. The United States, on the other hand, saw the conflicts as providing entry for Communism and Soviet interference in countries it considered as its own back yard. Since Canada was an important ally of the U.S. and an important trading partner, Trudeau never went so far as to explicitly condemn U.S. influence in the region, even when the U.S. openly supported the Contra war against the Sandinista Army in Nicaragua. According to Lemco (1991): “Canada had and continues to have too much at stake in its relationship with United States to humiliate its chief ally (p.6)”

While Canada did not openly criticize the United States for its policies regarding Nicaragua, Canada supported Nicaragua by providing aid programs and loans. In January 1984 the Canadian government approved a $13.4 million line of credit for agricultural supplies, livestock, and equipment. In addition, $7 million was designated for the construction of a potable water project, and $11.8 million for a geothermal power station (Lemco, p. 68). The U.S. trade embargo of Nicaragua in 1985, prompted Canadian officials to step up the loans and aid. They no doubt saw an opportunity to increase trade with Nicaragua but they also saw an opportunity to differentiate Canadian policies from U.S. policies without much consequence. For example,
Canadian representatives to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank made it known that they did not approve of Washington’s campaign to block development loans to Nicaragua (Lemco, p. 69).

Even after Brian Mulroney, a Progressive Conservative, was elected Prime Minister in 1984, Canada’s position regarding Nicaragua did not change. Mulroney’s external affairs minister, Joe Clark, surprised many NGO aid organizations when he made it clear the Mulroney government would not pull back from Nicaragua:

That was a period when U.S. policy in Nicaragua was intensely controversial, and many Canadian NGOs simply assumed that a Progressive Conservative government would adopt a hardline Reaganite position towards those countries. We did the opposite, opposing the U.S. blockade of Nicaragua, finding ways to deliver development assistance that were not controlled by recipient governments, often working deliberately with local Canadian NGOs. Sometimes, as in Guatemala and El Salvador, we entrusted those NGOs with running aid programs that we did not want the local government to co-opt or distort. Most importantly we found ways to work together – state and non-state – ultimately allowing Canada to play a significant role in the Contadora peace process, which led to a negotiated end to civil wars in Central America through the Esquipulas process (Clark, 2013, p. 63).

When Clark visited Nicaragua in 1987, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega acknowledged that Canada had an active and positive policy toward Nicaragua, through its aid program and quiet refusal to take part in the U.S. economic blockade (Lemco, 1991, p. 74). In October 1988 when Nicaragua was devastated by a hurricane on its Atlantic coast Canada contributed $250,000 of emergency aid. After public pressure to be more generous, Canada contributed $2.3 million in additional funds. Various NGOs raised $900,000 for the relief effort. By contrast the United States blocked all humanitarian aid shipments to Nicaragua as part of its overall embargo (Lemco 1991, p. 79).
5.4.4 Canadian NGOs and Nicaragua

The Canadian government’s stance vis-à-vis Nicaragua meant keeping quiet about U.S. actions against Nicaragua while at the same time lending support and financial aid to the Nicaraguan government. It was as though it had one foot on shore and the other foot in an unpredictable and fast flowing river. This two-legged approach was much the same approach that Canada had adopted throughout the Cold War. It was particularly reminiscent of the Canadian position on Vietnam, another Cold War conflict in which Americans were deeply involved while Canada watched from the sidelines. Even though there was significant public opposition in Canada to the war in Vietnam, Canadians never became as active in that conflict as they did during the clash between the U.S. and the Sandinistas. Dozens of Canadian non-governmental organizations not only lobbied the government in support of the Sandinista government and the Nicaraguan people in general, they organized financial and material aid as well as volunteers to work in Nicaragua (Lemco 1991; McFarlane, 1989).

These organizations included several large church groups, trade unions, and development agencies such as Tools for Peace. Some of these NGOs were so active in Central America that they often knew more than the Canadian government about what was happening on the ground. In 1979 when the Sandinistas took over in Nicaragua, “John Simons of the Canadian Labour Congress was already in Managua speaking with junta members and trade unionists about what Canada could do to provide emergency aid to the war-torn country” (McFarlane, 1989, p. 162). Simons was not only the first Canadian official to meet with the Nicaraguan junta, he was also a member of the first foreign delegation to make it into Nicaragua’s capital.

When he returned home, Simons convinced the CLC executive to organize Operation Solidarity which quickly raised $250,000 from union organizations. The funds were collected so quickly that Canadian aid was the first to reach Nicaragua from anywhere in the world after the fall of Somoza (McFarlane, 1989, p. 164). In 1980 a national conference on Nicaraguan Solidarity was organized in Saskatoon. By the end of the conference teachers’ unions from Quebec and British Columbia promised to undertake their own fundraising drives. And even though Canadian NGOs had already poured $2 million in aid into revolutionary Nicaragua, they promised to come up with several million dollars more (McFarlane, 1989, p. 166).
In 1987, when Canadian External Affairs Minister Joe Clark visited Central America, the largest Christian denominations (Anglicans, Catholics, United Church, Lutherans) asked him to pursue certain policy goals that included: speaking out publicly against U.S. support for the Contras; opening an embassy in Managua; increasing Canada’s aid package to the region, especially Nicaragua and Costa Rica because they had better human rights records (Lemco, 1991, p. 150).

According to David Bickford a long-time official with External Affairs it was sometimes difficult for the department to keep up with the NGOs.

It used to be that we could say in External Affairs that we are the people with the expertise. We could say, “We’ve got a man down there on the spot who can tell you the way it is.” Now the churches come back and say, “No, we had a team down there last week, and this is the way it is” (McFarlane, 1989, p. 166).

The Canadian government was intent on exercising caution when it came to Nicaragua because it did not want to openly challenge the U.S. It was well aware that the Nicaraguan government was receiving material and financial aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union and yet it continued to provide support and aid to Nicaragua. And while U.S. president Ronald Reagan often spoke publicly about the Soviet/Communist expansion in Central America, the Canadian government didn’t appear to perceive the alliances as a threat. The Canadian NGOs who were active in Nicaragua displayed no such caution towards U.S. policy and didn’t appear to consider Nicaragua’s alliance with the Soviets as important. For the most part they saw themselves and their activities as direct opposition to U.S. policy in Central America and the extension of a helping hand to a revolutionary government that had liberated the population from oppressive and greedy dictators who had been under the thumb of the United States.

The Canadian government was no doubt influenced by the lobbying and activities of NGOs determined to play a part in Nicaragua’s revolution. Lemco (1991) suggests that the NGOs forced government officials to consider administering programs on moral grounds rather than just strategic ones. But in the end, the Canadian government did not change its stance. Lemco (1991) also suggests that the fundraising and other activities carried out by NGOs allowed the federal government to reduce aid without much impact on Nicaragua.
Once again the Canadian government found itself caught in a Cold War conundrum: It didn’t want to offend the United States, its most important ally and yet it didn’t fully agree with the hard stance the U.S. maintained against the Soviet-supported Sandinista government.

5.4.5 The post-Vietnam Influence on News Media in Nicaragua

Between the end of the war in Vietnam and the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua the attitude of the U.S. news media towards U.S. policy abroad had changed considerably. By the time U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam and the civil war between the North and South Vietnamese ended, the United States was in political turmoil over its unsuccessful entry into the conflict.

The war deeply divided both the political actors and the general public. For many Americans their country had become the cowboy in the black hat rather than the white hat. They saw it as willing to use its military might to further U.S. interests even if that meant putting its young people in harm’s way and killing and wounding thousands of civilians, as happened in Vietnam. At the beginning of the conflict the U.S. news media had framed the conflict as necessary armed resistance to the threat of Communism. Some journalists based in Vietnam such as David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan of The New York Times repeatedly questioned U.S. military strategies and tactics but they didn’t disagree with the goal of U.S. participation. For the most part, the U.S. news media framed American participation in the early years of the war as a legitimate policy (Hallin, 2003).

But as the war wore on and U.S. casualties mounted, opposition grew at home. Hallin (2003) found that media coverage became more critical in 1968 and 1969 – after public opinion polls showed in 1967 that the majority of Americans disapproved of President Lyndon Johnson’s handling of the war. Public opinion was also manifested in the success of antiwar candidates in the Democratic primaries in 1968 and the growth of protest movements.

Hallin also credits a shift in elite opinion: policymakers and their military commanders were having second thoughts about the war and speaking to journalists about them. In addition, some soldiers in the field were openly saying that this was a senseless war and they wanted out. This had significant impact because “the main characters in television’s portrayal of Vietnam, in this living room war, were the American soldiers in the field. In this sense Vietnam coverage was no different from traditional American war coverage” (Hallin, 2003, p.4).
In the end, journalists such as Halberstam and Sheehan were proven correct in their assessment: U.S. forces couldn’t defeat home-grown, resilient forces on distant, unfamiliar terrain. These journalists viewed and judged the conflict in Vietnam up close rather than relying on propaganda emanating from government and military authorities. They challenged their own government rather than playing the patriotic card. This critical perspective influenced other journalists who in turn became more critical of U.S. policy and behaviour abroad. This new outlook was never more evident than in a broadcast commentary in 1968 by CBC News Anchor Walter Cronkite. Cronkite had just returned from Vietnam and he concluded that the U.S. “was mired in a stalemate.”

In the 1970s when journalists at the Washington Post revealed that President Nixon had been involved in criminal activities (the Watergate scandal), even more journalists began to see themselves as critics of government rather than boosters. The premise behind critical journalism is that journalists, as professionals and delegates of the audience, have an obligation to comment as well as report the news. As the conflict in Vietnam wore on, followed by the Watergate scandal, many journalists, including those in Canada, came to believe that it was important that they not become the handmaidens of government but instead should develop a more critical approach to government policies and decisions and take an oppositional stance to government. Since journalistic practices are a principal element of how news is selected, written and presented, news became the product of how journalists saw their role (Taras, 1990).

With a newly developed critical eye on their government, many U.S. journalists framed the Sandinista revolution much differently than journalists before them had framed the early days of the conflict in Vietnam. Leiken (2003) refers to the framing as the “post-Vietnam paradigm.” He points to the example of several American journalists with prestigious newspapers who arrived in Nicaragua a few months before the Sandinista triumph in 1979:

…the Americans shared a house in Managua and a division of labour for covering the breaking news. But unlike their Vietnam predecessors, the group in Managua also shared a highly critical view of what the U.S. government “was trying to accomplish.” …they believed that Washington failed to appreciate “the strength and popularity of the Sandinista guerrillas” (Leiken, 2003, p. 22).
Leiken conducted a study of news stories from Nicaragua published or broadcast between 1979 and 1990 when the Sandinistas were defeated in an election. The study included the work of correspondents for The New York Times, The Washington Post, and U.S. television networks. He found a notable difference between the frame of the Nicaraguan stories and the framing of stories about the Vietnam War. One key difference was the coverage of the Contras - the armed resistance against the Sandinistas that sprang up in rural areas.

The Contra leadership included former officers of the National Guard as well as some high level Sandinista guerrilla commandantes who had split with the movement for various reasons after it took over the government. By early 1982 U.S. President Ronald Reagan had approved a plan for covert operations against Nicaragua including $19 million that would be administered by the CIA and used to train Contra forces which Reagan called “Freedom Fighters.” But according to Leiken the U.S. news media were more inclined to see the Sandinistas as freedom fighters and the Contras as bands of thugs. Leiken also found that the reports filed by most U.S. journalists overwhelmingly predicted an easy victory for President Daniel Ortega and the Sandinistas in the 1990 election. But the Sandinistas were defeated for the first time since they came to power. Leiken argues that journalists didn’t dig deep enough; didn’t get beyond the Sandinista propaganda; and didn’t realize that many Nicaraguans were afraid to tell journalists or the pollsters what they really thought about the Sandinistas and how they were going to vote.

Journalists perceived in Nicaragua another example of a deluded U.S. foreign policy thwarting a country of peasants pursuing freedom; another dictatorship hated by the people, installed and propped up by the United States; another National Liberation Front falsely portrayed by the U.S. government as Communist; one more newly independent country, led by a broad national movement, resisting the colossus of the north and its proxies (Leiken, 2003).

It’s understandable that the Sandinistas would portray the Contras as immoral thugs and that they would promote their own re-election. But it does appear, as Leiken asserts, that U.S. journalists were caught up in a post-Vietnam paradigm in which they saw the U.S. as wearing the black hat and pursuing illegitimate aims. Even the former Sandinista Vice-President, Sergio Ramirez (2011), acknowledges that the Contras were originally founded by farmers in the northern part of Nicaragua who had never been partial to the Sandinistas and were disappointed when the
Sandinistas organized collective farms rather than distributing plots of land. The farmers also resented the urban Sandinistas sent by the party to keep them under control.

Leiken’s assessment of the U.S. news media’s coverage of Nicaragua is supported by Soderlund (2001) who conducted an analysis of articles pertaining to Nicaragua in U.S., Canadian and British newspapers. He found “press criticism of the Johnson and Reagan administrations’ policies towards the Dominican Republic, Grenada and Nicaragua – was strongly stated, if not dominant in the reporting (p. 295). Soderlund also found that while Canadian news media often framed stories much the same way as Americans did, the framing was not so pronounced in newspapers such as The Globe and Mail that didn’t rely completely on reports from U.S. journalists:

It is significant that The Globe and Mail which relied on American-originated material to a far lesser extent than The Ottawa Citizen provided a less Cold War-oriented picture of the conflict including less emphasis on Cuban involvement, to its readers. Overall, between 1981 and 1983 we see a decrease in the use of Cold War language in both Canadian newspapers, while the use of this type of language remained relatively unchanged in the American newspapers (Soderlund, 2001, p. 85).

5.4.6 The Correspondent/Oakland Ross

Oakland Ross was 29-years-old when he began his posting as the Latin American correspondent based in Mexico City for The Globe and Mail between 1981 and 1985. Following his assignment in Latin America Ross spent two years for The Globe and Mail in Africa where he was based in Zimbabwe. He was the Middle East correspondent for the Toronto Star based in Jerusalem from 2007-2009.

Born and raised in Toronto, Ross describes himself as from an upper middle class family that provided him with a privileged life while he was growing up.

My early life had been a sort of North American idyll – pony club meetings on Saturdays and riding lessons at The Hunt Club on Sundays. My summers were a swirl of horse shows and tennis matches. There’d be fox hunting in the fall, skiing every weekend in winter and annual pilgrimages to Antigua and St. Lucia with my mother and father and
innumerable sisters. I’d been extremely lucky in my choice of place to be born and my selection of parents to bear me (Ross, 1995, p. 12).

Ross’s comfortable upbringing didn’t deter him from going to Latin America where the poverty rate averages about 40 per cent. But the posting made him realize that he had a certain perspective on poor people that he hadn’t been so aware of before:

In those days, I had a tendency – common to North Americans of an upper-middle-class sensibility - to think of “poor people” largely in the abstract. A couple of years spent living and working in Latin America had moderated but not entirely overcome this habit of mind. I still tended to see the poor as a faceless mass, a kind of undifferentiated backdrop to some significant event or other. They might briefly be drawn on stage, as victims of famine or war or an earthquake. Then they would be pushed back into the wings. They were people to whom terrible things sometimes happened but who barely existed in the interim, or at least not as fully realized individuals. For me, in a sense, the poor were less than real. But, in time, that impression changed (Ross, 1996, p. xiii)

For Ross, this shift in perspective affected the way he wrote about the people, events, issues, and places that he encountered during his years as a foreign correspondent in both Latin America and Africa:

I decided that I wanted to avoid this trap, this tendency to present people who are different from myself - especially poor people – as some kind of colourful but not entirely human collective, as people who are exotic perhaps, picturesque maybe – but certainly not like me. To the extent that I could manage it I wanted to write about people as though we were members of the same species. Because we are. This may not seem like a revolutionary ambition, but neither is it the invariable norm of Western journalism (Ross, 1996, p. xix).

Ross also decided that he wasn’t going to write about “news” in the traditional sense of the word. People didn’t have to be “newsworthy”; they didn’t have to be caught up in a drama that was somehow larger than their own (Ross, 1996, p. xxi).
Ross decided this after accompanying a family from one of the slums of Mexico City to the funeral of a man who was a husband, father, son, son-in-law, brother or friend to those in attendance, as well as a key income earner.

As far as I could tell, the mourners of Jose Molina Corona were important to no one but themselves. They were the cast, the crew, and the audience; this story was their own; and that was precisely what made it important to me. This was a lesson I was to learn and forget, and learn again, over and over, during a decade on the road in Latin America and Africa: just tell the stories and let the news take care of itself (Ross, 1996, p. xxi).

Ross has authored four books – a memoir of his travels in Latin America (Ross, 1996) and three works of fiction (Ross 1994; Ross 2001; Ross 2013). Guerrilla Beach (1994) was Ross’s first foray into imaginative literature. It is a collection of short stories which draws on his experiences as a foreign correspondent in Latin America. His second book A Fire on the Mountains: Exploring the Human Spirit from Mexico to Madagascar (1996), is a collection of essays about his travels in Latin America and Africa as a foreign correspondent. The Dark Virgin (2001) is a novel set in Mexico during the five centuries between the conquest and the revolution. His third work of fiction – Empire of Yearning – is also a historical novel set in Mexico and was published in 2013. Ross currently lives in Toronto and is a feature writer for the Toronto Star.

In December 2012 I interviewed Oakland Ross at his residence in Toronto using the questions that had been drawn up as part of this research project. I talked with him for two hours about his assignment in Latin America, in Nicaragua in particular, and about the work of a Canadian foreign correspondent in general.

Early in the interview when I asked him if he felt he had a responsibility to report from a Canadian perspective he replied that a Canadian perspective was an attitude that came naturally, not something that a correspondent consciously adopted:

To a large degree these things are almost unconscious. You don't have to deliberately contrive them. The fact is I was working for a Canadian newspaper and when you are writing for any given newspaper you are very conscious of who your audience is even if you don't sit down and think about it deliberately a lot of the time. Your whole
experience of working for that newspaper informs you (Personal communication, December 5, 2012).

Ross said that as a foreign correspondent he looked for Canadian ties to events or issues that he was covering. This might involve a Canadian politician, executive, or celebrity that was visiting the region. Or it might involve an example of a contradiction in Canadian foreign policy in the region. For example, he cited an incident in Angola when he saw an armoured personnel carrier with Canadian-made tires even though Canada had a complete trade embargo with Angola at the time. So he wrote a report about what he had seen (Personal communication, December 5, 2012). In another instance, he filed stories about the peace mission of Canadian New Democratic Party leader, Ed Broadbent, to Central America in 1982.

While he was alert to Canadian angles associated with events and issues, Ross saw his assignment as much more encompassing than simply reporting on direct Canadian links to the region. He was well aware that American reporters, particularly reporters with the New York Times, set the pace in terms of day to day political coverage of Nicaragua. He also knew that his newspaper – The Globe and Mail - had access to and used those reports along with reports by correspondents for Associated Press (AP) and Reuters.

At first I spent a lot of time fretting, fretting, fretting about what I was doing and looking over my shoulder and watching other reporters and I saw other reporters do the same thing...and you would grind yourself into nothing by doing that. I decided...I am over simplifying a bit...but to a large extent I decided I am just going to follow my own nose and I am going to live or die by that. And by and large that's what I did. I didn't second guess myself...once I decided to do a certain story in a certain way I just did it. Never mind what anybody else was doing and I figured I wouldn't make the right calls every time but if I made the right calls often enough this would work out well for everyone. So that's what I did (Personal communication, December 5, 2012).

Since Canada was not a major player in Central America either politically or as a trading partner, Ross widened his perspective and focused on stories that would describe what life was like for people who were living through a civil war that had roots in historical dominance by the U.S. and later the Cold War.
Certainly as a Canadian covering a civil war in Nicaragua during that period of the 1980s, coming from a middle power that doesn’t throw its weight around in other parts of the world, perforce puts you in a very different position as a journalist from any American reporter given the position they were in, particularly those from the big U.S. outlets whether it’s TV or newspapers. Their readers certainly do have an iron in the fire, hugely in this case. Everything they write is informed by that, whereas the perspective of the Canadian is quite different. You are not compelled by those same pressures and that often frees you up to write lots of stories that for example are not so political.

Typically a Canadian reporter in Nicaragua at that time would be free to do all kinds of stories about people, about the culture, about the way people lived day to day that maybe American reporters - not that they didn’t do those stories - but that they might be under more pressure to be following the day-to-day political developments because those had real impact in the U.S. and for many of their readers in a way that wasn’t true of a Canadian journalist or a Canadian (Personal communication, December 5, 2012).

Ross also spoke about the fascination for a correspondent of being a journalist in a country at war and how that creates situations outside of the direct conflict itself that make for engaging stories:

Actually, it may seem a little bit insensitive but for a journalist there’s a wonderful thing about war. That is a callous thing to say but just speaking from the professional perspective. If you are in a country at war everything becomes interesting because everything is highlighted against the backdrop of the conflict. For example, if there is a beauty contest, Miss Managua, for example, that might not be necessarily so gripping if it were a country just going about its daily activities...not being bothered by anyone. But a beauty contest set against a backdrop of war suddenly becomes a special kind of window on the impact of war, on the resilience of the people caught up in war...or any of that...a wedding, a funeral...any kind of normal event that goes on every day in every country of the world but if it goes on in a country at war it becomes gripping and fascinating in a way that wouldn't be true otherwise. So it doesn't really matter where you are from or what your nationality is ...and again I hate to say this...in a way writing stories about
Ross was well aware that Canadian politicians and diplomats were keenly interested in anything that was published in The Globe and Mail, Canada’s equivalent of the prestigious New York Times. As a Globe reporter, he said, he was warmly received at embassies and consulates throughout Latin America. Diplomats were eager to provide briefings and to hear what he had found during his travels:

…they would be happy to have you come by and brief you. It would always be, would almost always sort of be off-record or on background and then you would develop close relations with these people and they would be there as often as you needed them. It was horse trading of information; not espionage or anything like that but just a sharing of impressions certainly (Personal communication, December 5, 2012).

Some Canadian diplomatic staff were so aware that whatever Ross wrote would be read by politicians and high level bureaucrats in Ottawa that they sometimes asked to see his stories before he filed them. He refused but was not averse to sharing with them “impressions” of what he was seeing and hearing throughout the country that he was touring. He recounted an incident where information in a story he had written about political developments in Argentina was relayed to him by a Canadian diplomat who was unaware that the information had originally come from one of his colleagues down the hall.

…as a Globe reporter you had that sense of your audience as being…it’s exaggerated…but you had a sense of it being a composite of the Canadian elite. Routinely that feeling, that impression would be reinforced by events. I was conscious of that when I wrote. Also, that what I wrote would have more political impact…. and it would have. In Ottawa the Globe and Mail was read by just about every politician or high level civil servant…that’s not true of the Toronto Star. So you did have maybe a feeling that what you wrote for was the Canadian equivalent of the New York Times that’s for sure (Personal communication, December 5, 2012).

Ross also found that any journalist working in Central America at the time had to have good relations with U.S. embassy officials because the United States had such a stake in the region.
Their political and military intelligence was always superior to anyone else’s and they were usually willing to brief journalists on a regular basis: “…if you weren't making contact at the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Military group then you weren't doing your job, because it was vital. Now it was very, very difficult for a foreign reporter to make the same kind of, same level of contact at an embassy for obvious reasons as Americans could. But you had to be doing that” (Personal communication, December 5, 2012)

Ross said he was well aware that the Americans had their own agenda when it came to supplying information so when he could he would cross check it with diplomats from other countries who picked up information in diplomatic circles on both a formal and informal basis. Ross also relied on clergy and other people such as nuns and nurses who worked with the Roman Catholic Church in organizations designed to provide on-the ground-aid to Nicaraguans embroiled in the civil war. He explained that because the church had deep roots in Latin America its representatives were in close touch with all levels of society and could usually provide credible information about what was happening on the ground as opposed to propaganda emanating from the opposing factions in the war. He also spoke with local journalists to get a sense of how they viewed the situation. Ross said contacts with embassies, churches and local journalists provided a start for a story. Then he would go out into the field and investigate for himself. Towards the end of the interview Ross spoke about his basic approach when deciding how to cover a story.

…what do you do if you're a journalist and you come into a story whatever it is, whether it's a meeting at the local school or a revolution in Central America, you look around to see who is the power here, and to some degree you set yourself up in opposition to that power. Mindfully, but within a framework you establish that your position here is to look very sceptically at power and maybe to be somewhat less sceptical of the victims of power  (Personal communication, December 5, 2012).

Ross went on to say that journalists who approach a story from either an extreme right or left wing point of view take the easy way out “because they know the answer to every question that was ever asked.” It is much more difficult, he said, to try and determine on a daily basis who is the victim and who is the assailant. That’s why, to his mind, the best journalists are “the other
people who are constantly drifting around in the middle, are constantly having to torment themselves with these questions, well who is right, who is wrong, and that's the challenge. I think the best journalists are the people in the middle tormenting themselves” (Personal communication, December 5, 2012).

When I asked him if he thought that might be a particularly Canadian perspective, he replied:

I never thought of it that way, you know, probably it is. I mean now that you say it, because of the position that we find ourselves in. Rarely are we on absolutely one side or the other, until the current government, but until then you know, it was rare for Canadians to take, to stake out a position on one extreme or the other, but always to act as a broker, to the extent that we could, that was what we prided ourselves on, on peace keeping rather than fighting. And so that was your country's role and as a journalist you have to know you are influenced by that, informed by that so probably yeah (Personal communication, December 5, 2012).


The Globe and Mail published 52 articles written by Ross and focusing on Nicaragua between April 9 1981 and November 24 1984. During this period the Sandinistas had entrenched their control of the government of Nicaragua; the Soviet Union was providing support of various kinds to Nicaragua, and U.S. President Ronald Reagan had authorized financial support for counter-revolutionary forces operating in Nicaragua from across the border in Honduras. It is also the period leading up to the first general election since the Sandinista revolution in 1979. All the articles are about Nicaragua; 35 were written while Ross was in Nicaragua. The rest were datelined from other locales in Latin America.

5.4.6.1: Nicaragua/1981

Ross began his Latin America posting in 1981. He wrote ten articles from or about Nicaragua that year –two focused on a visit to the region by Canadian NDP leader Ed Broadbent; four articles were filed from Nicaragua; and four were written from Honduras but focused on the growing border conflict between counter-revolutionaries and the Nicaraguan military. These
articles cover Ross’s first foray into Nicaragua and the internal political conflicts that were arising since the overthrow of the Somoza dynasty.

Ross’s article about Ed Broadbent’s visit to the region to promote a peace plan for El Salvador where rebels and government forces supported by the United States were immersed in a bloody civil war is one of the few articles written by Ross during his coverage of Nicaragua that focuses on a Canadian.

Since Broadbent’s visit was sponsored by Socialist International and Broadbent was a Canadian rather than an American he was warmly received by Sandinista officials in Managua. Broadbent addressed Nicaragua’s Legislature and according to Ross told the members “Canada’s Parliament continues ‘to show a profound sympathy’ with the social transformation taking place in Nicaragua since the overthrow in 1979 of the late dictator Anastazio Somoza, he said” (Ross, 1981, June 4).

Ross also noted that while the U.S. had cancelled $75 million worth of wheat shipments to Nicaragua because it suspected Nicaragua of arming Salvadoran rebels, the Canadian government had recently approved a $15 million wheat shipment to Nicaragua.

Two days later Ross filed an analysis piece from Managua about Broadbent’s peace mission. He pointed out that Broadbent was not warmly received by government officials in El Salvador and that his quest was largely in vain because the United States opposes compromise as a way to resolve the conflict (Ross, 1981, June 6).

A few days later Ross interviews Salvadoran refugees in a Nicaraguan camp and describes in lurid detail the kind of violence that forced them to seek shelter in Nicaragua (Ross, 1981, June 17). This article appears to be a follow up to Broadbent’s visit in that it emphasizes the dire need for some sort of peace plan in El Salvador. Ross then goes on explore post-revolutionary Nicaragua and discovers that even though there are strong ripples of dissent particularly from the Catholic Church and business interests the Sandinista commandantes are confident, in control of government, and still very popular (Ross, 1981, June 17; Ross 1981, June 18). In his last article filed from Nicaragua during this tour, Ross pulls together several colourful incidents that occurred during his travels. One of them includes a pointed reference to Canada in a pro-government newspaper.
Canada and the United States were given separate but equal treatment on a recent front page of El Nuevo Diario, a fiercely pro-government Nicaraguan newspaper. “This is infamy” the paper roared above a story about U.S. charges that Nicaragua is receiving heavy military equipment from the Soviet Union.

Then just below the story was printed another article – this one praising the efforts of 27 college students from Thetford Mines Que., who are donating their labour in a Nicaraguan housing project financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

“This” gushed the newspaper in an equally bold headline “is solidarity.”

So, you see, there is a difference after all. (Ross, 1981, June 18a)

Toward the end of 1981 Ross travels to Honduras to cover the elections there. The stories that he filed from Honduras included a lot of references to Nicaragua and the ongoing conflict between counter-revolutionary exiles based in Honduras many of whom were once members of Somoza’s feared National Guard and the Sandinista government.

The day before the election Ross filed a story about the killing by Honduran police of three young men who according to the police were “Sandinista revolutionaries from neighbouring Nicaragua who intended to disrupt Honduran elections” (Ross, 1981, November, 28).

In an article published a few days later on The Globe and Mail’s front page, Ross details a meeting with two former members of Somoza’s National Guard who have sought him out to tell him that they hate Communists and they are winning support from peasants, workers and students. The spokesman also says the counter-revolutionary forces - National Liberation Army (ENL) - have 400 armed members and 6,000 supporters (Ross, 1981, Dec. 4).

Although he doesn’t quote anyone by name Ross refers to “diplomatic sources” to dispute the claims made by the counter-revolutionaries:

Prospects for the Nicaraguan counter-revolution seem dim, at best. Roberto of the ENL claims moral support "from the democratic countries of the free world" - but it takes more than moral support to win a war.
"If anything, they (the Nicaraguans) are less effective than the Cuban exiles - if that's imaginable," a Western diplomat said.

Unofficially, the view in Washington is that the Nicaraguan revolution can be weakened more successfully by internal opposition than by exile groups, most of which have been discredited by their links to Gen. Somoza (Ross, 1981, Dec. 4a).

The next day The Globe and Mail published a story by Ross which describes a visit to the Honduran/Nicaraguan border area where fighting between Sandinista forces and counter-revolutionary forces is a regular occurrence. Ross quotes a colonel in the Honduras army who says “We are worried that Nicaragua is preparing for dominion over the whole region, (Ross, 1981, Dec. 5).” Ross also spoke with Nicaraguan soldiers on the other side of the border.

5.4.6.2 Nicaragua/ 1982

During 1982 there were only four stories written by Ross about Nicaragua published in the Globe and Mail. The four relatively short pieces (500 to 1000 words) were filed between November 2 and November 16 and focused mainly on the destabilization of post-revolutionary Nicaragua by internal political and economic forces, and external pressures from the United States.

Ross makes it quite clear in the articles that there is no doubt that the U.S. has mounted a campaign to destabilize Nicaragua so the Sandinista government will collapse. He quotes Sandinista government officials on this issue but no other sources are directly quoted. He also refers to an article on the subject published by Newsweek magazine. He writes about Nicaragua’s burdensome debt and the weak economy but again no sources are named. Instead he refers to unnamed economists and “western” diplomats. This is a shift from 1981 when more sources from both government, the private sector, the Catholic Church as well as ordinary citizens were quoted and named.

An analysis piece that Ross filed at the end of this tour and that ran on The Globe and Mail’s front page sums up what he found while in Nicaragua.

    The economy is collapsing, local businessmen and their capital are fleeing, powerful sectors of the Church are openly hostile, the enemies of the revolution are increasingly
dangerous - and the official "state of emergency" grinds on from month to troubled month. If the U.S. Government's over-all policy for Central America includes the slow, deliberate strangling of revolutionary Nicaragua, then it seems to be working. After more than three years in power, the former guerrilla commanders who now rule Nicaragua are still the most popular and certainly the most potent political force in the country. But the task of remaining that way is growing more difficult and more delicate with each passing day (Ross, 1982, November 16).

5.4.6.3 Nicaragua 1983

Between April 9 and May 13 1983 13 articles written while Ross was travelling in Nicaragua appeared in The Globe and Mail. Two other articles written during this period were filed from Honduras and focus on the activities of counter-revolutionary forces based just across the Nicaraguan border.

This collection of news stories focuses on the war between Sandinista military forces and the armed counter-revolutionary groups that oppose the Sandinistas. For the first four articles (April 9-13) Ross travels into northern Nicaragua and accompanies Sandinista troops as they search out the counter-revolutionaries. He then returns to Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, and writes about the tensions between the Sandinista government and the Catholic Church. The third week of April he returns to northern Nicaragua to investigate the presence of and support for the counter-revolutionary forces. In early May he travels to Honduras to assess the activity of the counter-revolutionary forces based just across the border from Nicaragua.

The first of Ross’s correspondence from Nicaragua during this period ran across the top of the Globe and Mail’s front page under the headline “Din of war explodes along Nicaragua’s north border” (Ross, 1983, April 13). For the article Ross has joined Sandinista troops as they search out and attack counter-revolutionary forces so he can report what he witnesses, as is demonstrated in this excerpt:

Crouching amid sparse vegetation at the summit of an overlooking ridge, we watched twin plumes of smoke slowly rise from the next valley and curl into the hot heavy afternoon air.
At my side knelt several young Nicaraguan reservists, clad in brown shirts and green khaki trousers, their rifles at the ready. Ahead of us the fusillades of gunfire continued to erupt, lasting 30 or 40 seconds at a time before subsiding, only to explode once again (Ross, 1983, April 9).

This article goes on to describe how Ross, a photographer from a French press agency, and a sergeant in the Sandinista army who had hitched a ride with them had met up with the reservists as they were driving along a road near Jalapa in northern Nicaragua. The reservists then offered to take them closer to the skirmishes between the Sandinista troops and the Contras (the Spanish word for counter revolutionaries and the word the Sandinistas most often used to refer to the anti-Sandinista forces). Ross’s front page article is reportage that describes in detail his experiences with the Sandinista troops.

In the same edition of the newspaper on page 11 there is a backgrounder on the situation in northern Nicaragua by Ross that is written in a more personalized style. In this piece Ross describes the impact of the conflict on this particular part of Nicaragua. He describes how even though the Sandinistas have beefed up their presence in this remote part of the country that has not stopped the flow of refugees who want to escape the fighting. The last paragraph sums up the situation this way:

The good news for Jalapa is that the Sandinista revolution has brought the town a new hospital. The bad news is that already, that hospital is needed to treat victims of yet another war (Ross, 1983, April 9a).

Another story from this trip to northern Nicaragua is about Ross’s experiences with a second Sandinista patrol (Ross, 1983, April 11). He also visits Ocatal – a town of about 21,000 – and describes a public meeting with the Sandinista Defence Committee, neighbourhood groups established by the Sandinistas to keep watch on the local population and educate it about the work of the Sandinista government (Ross, 1983, April 13).

After returning to Managua Ross writes about the increased tension between the Sandinista government and officials of the Nicaraguan Roman Catholic Church following a one-day visit by Pope John Paul II. He also files a story about an interview with Tomas Borge, the Sandinista minister of the interior, who promises democratic elections will be held in 1985. Ross writes that
during the interview Borge makes a point of acknowledging Canada as having a much better attitude towards Nicaragua than the United States:

The minister who earlier this month was denied permission by Washington to deliver a series of lectures at U.S. universities, issued “a salute to the brotherly people of Canada” for inviting him to address two audiences at Quebec colleges and York University in Toronto.

The invitation was issued immediately after Mr. Borge was denied permission to travel to the United States. The move was warmly received in pro-Sandinista circles in Nicaragua, and the semi-official newspaper – El Nuevo Diario – put the story on its front page with a headline referring to Canada as ‘free territory’(Ross, 1983, April 23).

This is the only reference to Canada in this series of articles and it doesn’t appear until the last two paragraphs of the story.

Ross then headed up to northern Nicaragua to investigate the activities of the counter-revolutionaries and the population that supports them. He doesn’t join a Contra unit but he talks with locals including Miskito Indians who constitute the majority of the population in this area. He finds that thousands of them were forced to resettle as the Sandinistas saw their communities as a threat to security because they sympathized with the counter-revolutionaries.

In Sumubila, the largest of the settlements, with a population of approximately 2,700, roughly 80 per cent of the people sympathize with revolutionaries in Honduras and most have family members among the contra bands, according to a settlement official (Ross, 1983, April 25)

Ross filed another story from Sumubila in which he details letters written by people of the settlement who are looking to locate family members who have either fled to Honduras or were resettled somewhere else. The letters are collected and forwarded by the Red Cross. Ross also travelled to another Miskito settlement and wrote about efforts by the Sandinistas to win people over. His final article from the region is filed from Puerto Cabezas where Ross writes that the people of the area prefer isolation and were never sympathetic to the Sandinista revolution (Ross, 1983, April 30).
On his return to Managua Ross filed a story that brings together all his observations, experiences and interviews of the previous month to present an overview of the situation in Nicaragua. He points out that the Sandinista government has stepped up its political propaganda campaigns while the economy flounders and most Nicaraguans are suffering because of it: “Never less than shrill, the level of revolutionary, anti-imperialism rhetoric has lately become positively ear-splitting. However there are plenty of good, threatening reasons for the Sandinistas to be concerned” (Ross, 1983, April 30a).

Ross also writes that while Sandinista opponents often label them as “Marxists” there is not much evidence of this in the day to day life of the country: “Despite recurrent charges about the radicalization of the revolution, Nicaragua is not a conspicuously more Marxist – or less non-Marxist – society than it was, for example, two years ago (Ross, 1983, April 30a).” Nevertheless, Ross writes, the Sandinistas have not been generous to their opponents – the Catholic church, business groups and one newspaper – but have “relentlessly hounded (them) for their perceived sins.”

A few days later Ross files a story from Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. The article reports on an interview with a spokesman for one of the Nicaraguan opposition groups in exile. The spokesman contradicts U.S. President Ronald Reagan who days earlier said funding the counter-revolutionaries was legal because they were intercepting the arms flow into El Salvador. Ross quotes the spokesman as saying that the counter revolutionaries “have never intercepted any arms” bound for El Salvador, and are interested only in ousting Nicaragua’s ruling Sandinistas (Ross, 1983, May 2). The story ran across the top of the Globe’s front page. On May 13 The Globe published a story filed by Ross from Tegucigalpa which focuses on the possibility of war breaking out between U.S. backed Honduras and Nicaragua. It also includes information from people in the border area who say they have seen counter-revolutionary troops and arms moving back and forth between Honduras and Nicaragua. The source of this information is not specified.

5.4.6.4 Nicaragua /1984

During 1984 all but three of 16 articles filed by Ross and dealing with Nicaragua focused on the November elections in Nicaragua and the aftermath of the Sandinista victory at the polls.
One exception was a column filed from Mexico City in which Ross pulls apart the Reagan administration’s rationale for placing mines around two commercial harbours in Nicaragua which damaged a dozen ships. The U.S. government had said the mining was intended to stop shipments of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador but according to Ross’s anonymous sources no arms had been intercepted; if they had, he wrote, it would have been widely publicized by the U.S. Ross concludes that the mining is simply a dishonest attempt to undermine the Sandinista government: “It seems to me, however, if you are to undermine someone else’s government then you should just say so. Otherwise, people might get the idea that you are doing something wrong” (Ross, 1984, April 21).

In early October Ross filed two reports from Rio de Janeiro which focused on truce talks between a top Sandinista government official and the leader of an influential opposition party. The talks took place during the conference of an international alliance of democratic socialist parties which was attended by Canadian New Democratic Party leader Ed Broadbent. When the talks fell apart, Mr. Broadbent was quoted as blaming the Nicaraguan opposition party leader for putting unrealistic demands on the table (Ross, 1984, Oct. 2; Ross, 1984, Oct. 3)

At the end of October, Ross returned to Nicaragua to cover the first general election since the Sandinista revolution. His first article during this period was a column in which he wrote that the outcome of the election, which the Sandinistas would undoubtedly win, would not change the Reagan administration’s view that Nicaragua is an enemy of democracy in the region. This position is a “double standard” Ross wrote, because the U.S. supports many governments in Latin America such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Chile which all rest on very shaky democratic pillars and are held together by quasi-dictatorial presidents (Ross, 1984, October 27).

Four reports filed by Ross between November 3 and November 7 focus on the election and the result of the vote. Before the votes are counted Ross noted that a Sandinista victory would not deter the United States from its threats of military intervention in Nicaragua. Ross also cautioned that a lot of questions have been raised about the integrity of the election process that could taint the outcome (Ross, 1984, November 3; Ross, 1984, Nov. 5). The U.S. presidential election which saw Ronald Reagan elected for a second term was held a day after the Nicaraguan election.
Two days after the Nicaragua election the votes were still being counted and the Sandinistas were leading by 67 per cent. Ross filed a story about the vote count and some of the irregularities in the voting process. The article also mentioned that a Sandinista government minister had been killed during a firefight between Sandinista troops and counter-revolutionaries in northern Nicaragua. And for several paragraphs at the end of the article, Ross focuses on reports in the U.S. news media that warn of Soviet MIG-21 fighter jets, helicopters and other weapons being shipped to Nicaragua for use against anti-government forces which are backed by the United States (Ross, 1984, November 7).

During the following week (November 9 -17) Ross focused his articles on the threat of an imminent attack by the United States on Nicaragua. In a November 9 article Ross reports that the Sandinista government is preparing for an attack from the United States and has asked the United Nations to intervene (Ross, 1984, November 9). The next day a column written by Ross appeared in the Globe and Mail in which he describes the anxiety experienced by Nicaraguans as they hear the sonic booms of U.S. fighter jets and witness preparations for war. Ross does not take a neutral position as tensions escalate. He sees the United States as the aggressor against a small country that would never be able to defend itself against American might.

No sooner had the polls closed in the United States on Tuesday than the velvet presidential glove was put away, to be replaced with the rather more familiar mailed fist. Before the apparent pre-electoral softening of U.S. policy towards Nicaragua it had been widely agreed that just about the only thing the Sandinistas could do to please Mr. Reagan would be to drop dead. It’s beginning to seem that way again (Ross, 1984, November 10).

Two days later an article by Ross ran across the top of the Globe and Mail’s front page. It was headlined “Sonic booms from spy flights fuel tension in Managua.” In the article Ross describes how twice in one morning sonic booms from U.S. SR-71 spy planes which had violated Nicaraguan air space rocked the capital (Ross, 1984, November 12). Five days later The Globe published a story by Ross about teenagers being trained for military duty in the event they would be needed to defend Nicaragua against the Americans. He quotes a youth in the story:

In a confident and articulate defense of Nicaragua’s position in Managua’s brittle relationship with Washington, 16-year-old Livia Caro argued that war has become more
likely following U.S. President Ronald Reagan’s recent re-election. She told a pair of visiting North American journalists that the United States wishes to prevent Nicaragua from becoming an “example of liberation” for the rest of Latin America. By contrast she spoke glowingly of the Soviet Union and of Managua’s close ties with Moscow (Ross, 1984, November 17).

The next three articles that Ross filed were a departure from the previous articles which focused on accelerating hostilities between Nicaragua and the U.S. and the role played by the Soviet Union which was supplying Nicaragua with armaments. These articles would be described in journalistic parlance as soft, as opposed to hard news. They could also be described as context or background because they focused on the history and personalities of leading figures in Nicaragua. There is a profile of President Daniel Ortega, as well as profiles of his mother and the mother of an influential opposition leader, Pedro Joachim Chamorro. These articles provide richer context and detail than regular news stories and convey a sense of everyday life in Nicaragua. They also speak to the deep political divisions within the country and the dedication of people who are determined to remake Nicaragua as they see fit (Ross, 1984, November 19; November 23; November 24).

The last article filed by Ross from Nicaragua was an opinion piece about a Sandinista revolutionary who had been exiled from the country during the uprising against Somoza. Giaconda Belli returned after Somoza was ousted and had been called upon during the recent election to design the Sandinista’s successful election campaign. Ross describes her as a savvy advertising and public relations practitioner who is not only dedicated to the Sandinista cause but is glamorous as well: “not your usual wild-eyed revolutionary” (Ross, 1984, November 24a).

5.4.7 Findings

The 52 articles written by Ross between 1981 and 1984 that were analyzed included both reportage and opinion pieces. Read and studied in sequence they present a journalistic narrative of events and issues in Nicaragua between 1981 and 1984. They describe the early days of the revolutionary government, the internal and external forces that oppose it, and its struggle to remain popular with the Nicaraguan people as well as international supporters.
These articles would not have been read in isolation or even in sequence by most Canadian readers. They often appeared in the newspaper on inside pages accompanied by articles about Nicaragua supplied by the New York Times, Associated Press or Reuters. Were they written from a Canadian perspective? Is there something in the content that can be described as clearly intended for Canadian readers?

The articles didn’t provide day by day, or blow by blow reports of the political tensions between Nicaragua and the United States which was the preoccupation of most of the U.S. reporters. It is clear that for the most part Ross left reporting of those developments to his American counterparts. Most of those developments, as they appeared in the Globe and Mail, would have been reported from an American point of view. The only instance when Ross did cover day to day developments was in 1984 after the Nicaraguan and U.S. elections when it appeared that the U.S. was preparing to attack Nicaragua. Ross also didn’t report on the day to day political tensions between Nicaragua and its neighbours in Central America. He left that to the local news media.

Instead Ross focused on what was happening on the ground. He witnessed and investigated the impact of a Cold War conflict on this small, impoverished country. Not from the point of view of a player that had a stake in the outcome, but from the perspective of a journalist who believed struggles for freedom and dignity are inherently interesting to readers back home.

During his first year of reporting from Nicaragua, Ross’s articles are cautious. He makes it clear that the Sandinista’s revolutionary government is in control and has overwhelming popular support and that it is a needed change after the years of oppression under the Somozas. But Ross’s stories also included opposition voices that point out the undemocratic aspects of the new Sandinista government.

During 1982 Ross filed only four stories from Nicaragua. In one of his last stories for that year he wrote that the economy was collapsing and opposition forces were gaining strength. By this time it was clear that the United States had embarked on a campaign to destabilize Nicaragua politically and economically. The U.S. was also funding and training counter-revolutionary forces, commonly called “contras.”
By 1983 the tensions had erupted into a low intensity civil war. Ross went to northern Nicaragua where he travelled with Sandinista troops and interviewed Miskito Indians who had become allies of the counter-revolutionaries.

In 1984 Ross focused on the first election since the Sandinista revolution as well as the troubles that continued to plague the Sandinista government and the people of Nicaragua. It is clear in Ross’s opinion pieces from 1983 and 1984 that he sees the United States as an aggressor against a poor and weak country that can barely sustain itself let alone fight a war. He does not see the interference of the Soviet Union in the same way.

5.4. 7.1 Sources

Ross’s articles rely on his own observations, anonymous briefings and background information from diplomats, official spokesmen for the Sandinista government, official spokesmen for opposition parties, Catholic Church clergy and lay workers, business representatives, military officers, local news media reports, international news media reports, and ordinary citizens of Nicaragua.

A reader gets a sense of a journalist touring the country and speaking with various people about what is happening there from their perspective. As Ross said in his interview, he gets a sense of what might constitute a story from talking with local diplomats and journalists and then seeks to test it by going out into the field to see for himself. Most of the articles are between 600 and 1000 words but they often contain quotes from people interviewed. Some of them are named; others are quoted anonymously often for their own protection.

The articles don’t rely on the same named sources but feature a variety of individuals. And one category of sources (government or Catholic Church, for example) doesn’t get preferential placement over other sources. Some articles lead with comment from military spokesmen, others lead with quotes from refugees, others from opposition forces.

5.4.7.2 Language

Ross is quite cautious in his use of language. His articles rarely refer to the Sandinista government as leftist (5), socialist (4), Communist, or Marxist. His preferred term is “revolutionary government.” His preferred term for the armed insurgents that oppose the
Sandinistas is “counter-revolutionaries.” He refers to them as “rightist” once. He uses the phrase “anti-Communist” in two articles in which counter-revolutionaries refer to themselves as “anti-Communist”. His most common descriptor for the counter-revolutionary forces is “U.S.-backed” and that is not always used when referring to them. They were commonly called “Contras” by Nicaraguans so Ross uses that term mostly when he quotes other people talking about them.

Even though the Sandinista government was receiving trade, aid, and military resources from the Soviet Union Ross’s articles rarely refer to the Soviet Union (2), Moscow (1), or the Eastern Bloc (1). Ross does point out when weapons used by the Sandinista military or militias are Soviet made as in Soviet AK-47s, Soviet M-52, Soviet helicopters, Soviet T-55 tanks, Soviet-built MIG 21 combat aircraft. He also specifies the type of American-made weapons used by counter-revolutionaries and the U.S. military that at one point was harassing Nicaragua with mines and spy planes.

Ross never uses the term “Cold War” in any of his stories about Nicaragua.

The United States is mentioned in 17/52 articles.

Canada is mentioned in eight of the 52 articles.

5.4.5 Conclusion

The articles filed by Oakland Ross from Nicaragua when he was the Latin American correspondent for The Globe and Mail play down the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union that was at the root of the civil war. While he mentions the influence of the Soviet Union it is always mentioned in passing rather than as the focus of any of the stories. Ross focuses instead on the emergence of a revolutionary government in Central America that is at odds with the United States and the impact of that tension on Nicaraguan society. While he is not openly sympathetic to the Sandinista cause, he doesn’t portray them as Soviet or Cuban-style Communists. He makes it clear that Nicaraguans are better off in general than they were before the revolution that overthrew the Somoza’s long standing dictatorship. But critics of the Sandinistas are also featured in Ross’s articles long before they gained much popular support.
Ross’s approach is different than how Leiken (2003) describes the approach of U.S. reporters covering Nicaragua at the same time. Leiken criticizes U.S. reporters for being blindly supportive of the Sandinistas and overlooking the local origins and support for the counter-revolutionaries. He suggests that U.S. reporters were trying to redress their support of U.S. government policy during the war in Vietnam. Ross, on the other hand, does raise local criticisms of the Sandinista government and also investigates as much as possible the ideology and activities of the counter-revolutionaries. He does this well before 1983 when the Reagan administration bolstered counter-revolutionary forces and the conflict broke open. Ross also points out that Sandinista economic policies are damaging to most of the population and will likely be a source of discontent until they improve.

In general, Ross approaches this Cold War conflict as a local affair. One in which Nicaraguans are fighting for freedom and independence from the United States, a struggle which is costing them dearly. Ross writes as a witness to the universal struggle for justice complete with all the human hopes and failings that such a struggle entails. Like Canadian foreign policy at the time, he plays down the dispute between the super powers and chooses instead to focus on the people caught in the middle.
6: COMPREHENSIVE FINDINGS

6.1 Reportage

When the reportage of each correspondent is examined particular themes emerge.

When reporting from the Suez Zone, Worthington identifies with the Canadian soldiers who have been sent as part of the United Nations peacekeeping force. He regrets that their role has been trivialized and that they are not doing the work of “real” soldiers. He disparages the local Arabs as dishonest and uneducated, another burden that the Canadians have to contend with. But he also portrays the peacekeeping force as a beneficial multi-cultural collaboration in which troops from India are willing to cover for the Canadians on Christmas day so they can have a traditional Christmas celebration.

During his investigations in the Middle East, Worthington also identifies with Arab refugees living in dismal refugee camps throughout the region. This identification seemed to reach beyond Canadian national identity and had more to do with a common humanity experienced by Worthington and the refugees. It is also clear in Worthington’s writings from the Suez Zone that he sees the United Nations as a powerful influence in both a negative and positive sense. He decries how the UN bureaucracy can so disrupt the normally efficient routines of the Canadian military. But he also looks to the UN, and Canada’s role at the United Nations, as the best hope for improving the lives of the thousands of Arab refugees.

As for the United States, the Soviet Union, Communism and the Cold War? They are barely mentioned in Worthington’s published articles. Instead he casts Canadian soldiers, Arab refugees, and the United Nations as the main players.

Worthington’s narrative about how he was so determined to get to the Suez Zone and the Canadian peacekeeping force despite objections from his employer speaks to his zeal to report on the Canadian connection to a key Cold War conflict. He obviously saw it as important enough to pay part of the cost himself as well as personally sort out the logistics of going halfway around the world.

Stanley Burke’s reportage from Berlin is devoid of any mention of Canada even though the situation in Berlin in 1961 brought the super powers to the brink of war and Canada was a
member of NATO and had bi-lateral defence agreements with the United States. Burke refers to the standoff between the Soviet-backed East Germans and the western alliance as the most serious threat to world peace since the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939. But he doesn’t keep the focus of his reports on that aspect of the armed confrontation. Instead, Burke focuses on the people escaping to West Berlin, the thousands of refugees waiting in camps on the West German side, and the people who cannot leave East Germany once the wall is constructed. Burke’s sympathy is obviously with the people who are trapped in East Germany living under a repressive regime. He goes to some lengths to get their stories; he has his film confiscated; and at one point spends a couple of days in jail.

As with Peter Worthington, Burke’s identification with the East Germans appears to reach beyond any common national identity and has more to do with a perceived common humanity.

There is a significant difference between the number of stories filed by Worthington and Burke and the number filed by Joe Schlesinger and Oakland Ross. The difference has to do with advances in communications technology between the mid-1950s and the 1970s and 1980s. Worthington’s stories were filed by telephone (which wasn’t always reliable) or telegraph (cable) which was slow and often difficult to find in remote places. When he was with Canadian troops he could use their communications equipment. But in general it was difficult to file stories and there was a time lapse of several days or even a week between the time the story was written and when it appeared in the newspaper.

Burke’s reports were in the form of mini-documentaries which were filmed and then had to be physically shipped from Germany to Toronto. Joe Schlesinger’s early reports from Vietnam were also shot on film that had to be shipped to Hong Kong where it was then transmitted via satellite. Later, when video cameras were introduced, reports were edited and transmitted via computerized technology. The time lag between shooting the story and having it appear on television was shortened considerably.

When Oakland Ross began reporting from Latin America he had to rely on telephones and telex machines at the local telegraph office to get his reports to The Globe and Mail. Portable computers were slowly introduced, reducing both transmissions costs and time.
Joe Schlesinger’s reports from Vietnam can be divided into four distinct themes. His early reports (1971) focus on the withdrawal of U.S. ground troops and its impact on the war between South and North Vietnam. He takes a neutral stand when discussing the withdrawal of U.S. troops, neither criticizing nor praising their participation in the war. His personal views, however, were not neutral. In his interview he spoke disparagingly of the conduct of U.S. troops in Vietnam and of the U.S. bombing raids into North Vietnam and neighbouring countries which provided supply routes for the Viet Cong.

Schlesinger introduces the Canadian connection to Vietnam early in his coverage by reporting on Canada’s role in the International Commission for Supervision and Control. This is a second theme but it is not a strong one. The ICSC is portrayed as ineffective, and the Canadian personnel as frustrated by their lack of power to enforce de-militarized zones, and ceasefires. At the end of his reporting from Vietnam (1973) Schlesinger express his disappointment with Canada’s role in the ICSC; as he saw it, Canada simply did not fight hard enough to make the ICSC effective.

Another theme of Schlesinger’s reports is the fighting between South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese forces. The reports feature the sounds and sights of gunfire, helicopters, aerial bombing, and marching troops. Schlesinger is in the middle of a dangerous situation but it is not clear what is actually happening. These reports narrowed the conflict to simply a question of “who is winning today?” And for the most part, the story is told from the South Vietnamese point of view. Schlesinger often refers to the North Vietnamese as “Communists” as if that alone explains why they are the enemy of the South Vietnamese. Almost no context is provided; it is difficult to understand why the North and South Vietnamese are fighting each other and how this dispute developed. This is predictable given that most of Schlesinger’s reports were limited to between two and three minutes. It also speaks to the demands of television and how those demands can make it difficult for viewers to understand what is going on even though they are being given firsthand accounts from the battlefield. This concurs with Schudson’s (1995) view that the structures required of journalism affect how the journalist reports subjective experiences.

Schlesinger’s fourth theme is the impact of the violence on Vietnamese civilians. Most of his reportage on this theme occurs in the latter part of his coverage from Vietnam. He files several
items describing how villagers are impacted by the advancing North Vietnamese forces. After the Paris peace accord is signed he focuses on people who are still caught in the middle of armed clashes even though a ceasefire has been declared. It is in these reports that Schlesinger appears to identify the most with the people he is reporting on. He confirmed this in his interview, recalling how he remembered what it was like to be a refugee, and all the things people try to carry with them as they flee.

Except for Schlesinger’s coverage of Canada’s role in the ICSC, Canada is absent from his reports. There is no reference to Canada or its policy regarding the war in Vietnam. However, it is significant that CBC chose to keep covering this war even though international attention shifted from the region after U.S. ground troops departed. It speaks to a sense of responsibility to report on violent conflicts that cause immense human suffering even though one of the biggest players had vacated the field.

Oakland Ross’s reports from Nicaragua provide a cohesive narrative of the four years after the Sandinistas established a revolutionary government and then found themselves under attack from U.S. backed counter-revolutionaries. Early on in his reports Ross provides historical context for the Sandinista revolution. He describes the changes that the revolution has brought to Nicaraguan society, changes that he sees as for the better given the way Nicaragua was governed in the past. But Ross goes beyond idealizing the Sandinistas as some U.S. journalists did. He holds them accountable to democratic ideals such as pluralism and civil liberties. He speaks with people who are both supportive of and opposed to the Sandinistas and begins to sketch out what will become the defining divisions in Nicaragua’s political life. When armed resistance to the Sandinistas emerges, Ross makes a determined effort to contact the counter-revolutionaries and their supporters. He also goes out into the field with Sandinista troops and reservists. Unlike Schlesinger’s televised reports for the CBC, Ross’s reports are longer and more detailed, making it easier for a reader to understand the roots of the conflict and where it might be headed.

While Ross always seems to have the big picture in mind, his reports are also grounded in interviews and observations of Nicaraguans. He interviews, government officials, nuns, priests, NGO workers, political leaders, military officers, and ordinary Nicaraguans. He often travels out of the capital city to remote locations in order to gather first hand information.
Even though Nicaragua became a Cold War hot spot in the 1980s, Ross doesn’t cast the situation as a standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States. Instead, he focuses on the struggle by Nicaraguans for self-determination and prosperity. When the United States threatens to attack Nicaragua, Ross writes an analysis piece about what he sees as the unjust, bullying treatment of Nicaragua by the United States. He never levies that kind of criticism at the Soviet Union. Nor does he refer to Nicaragua as a victim of the Cold War.

References to Canada in Ross’s reportage occur when Canadian officials visit the region, usually in an effort to promote peace talks. And since many Canadian NGOs were supportive of the Sandinistas and active in Nicaragua, Ross quotes Nicaraguan government officials when they refer to Canada as a friend, unlike the United States. But for the most part Canada is absent from Ross’s reportage from Nicaragua.

6.2 Interviews

During the interviews with Worthington, Schlesinger and Ross, each of the correspondents said that they didn’t have a conscious Canadian perspective in mind when they were reporting on Cold War conflicts for a Canadian audience. Worthington went so far as to say said it never occurred to him to try and determine what it meant to have a Canadian perspective on events: “I’ve always been really impatient with the Canadian fixation on their identity. Canadian identity to me is bizarre, I mean that’s what I am, never felt anything else, never wanted to be anything else and never really thought too much about it” (Personal communication December 7, 2012). Schlesinger said that he had adopted a “Canadian” perspective on world affairs after living in Canada for ten years but it wasn’t top of mind when he was covering events in Vietnam in the early 1970s. Ross said that as a Canadian journalist he had an embedded Canadian perspective that was “just natural”; something he took for granted as a foreign correspondent but didn’t consciously define.

Stanley Burke in his writings and comments to journalists writing about him after he left the CBC, appears to be the most concerned about expressing Canadian identity compared to the other correspondents. During his posting as CBC correspondent at the United Nations Burke became supportive of a particular role that Canada could assume in world affairs. He saw it as a multi-lateral relationship that would de-emphasize the struggle between the Soviets and the
United States and carve a more peaceful path. When he took up the cause of Biafra after he left CBC Television he criticized the Canadian government for not taking a more active role in resolving the conflict. And in his published satires he focused on what he sees as Canada’s subordinate relationship with the United States and its struggle to find its true identity and assert its independence. The books are also critical of the CBC for not allowing him to publicly express these sorts of opinions.

It is relevant to note that three of the four correspondents were directly affected by the Second World War. Worthington and Burke both served in the Canadian armed forces. As a boy, Schlesinger was forced to leave Czechoslovakia after Nazi Germany occupied the country. Both of his parents later died in a Nazi concentration camp. Worthington said his service in the Canadian army led him to believe that the Canadian soldier is the most representative of the ordinary or average Canadian. Schlesinger said he felt “Canadian” after living in Canada for ten years and leaving behind the resentments and scars that still festered in a Europe battered by the Second World War. Both Worthington and Schlesinger were keenly aware of how their war experience shaped their perspective on the events that they were witnessing.

There is no indication that any of the correspondents thought of themselves as shaping Canadian culture as Schudson (1995) or Wodak et al (2009) would define it. During the interviews Ross, Schlesinger, and Worthington didn’t define or characterize the audience for whom they were preparing their reports. Worthington said if a story interested him, he presumed it would interest other people. Ross acknowledged that Canadian diplomats and politicians were keen readers of his reports in the Globe and Mail but beyond that the audience is more anonymous. Schlesinger was more concerned about preparing reports that suited editors and producers at CBC than the general audience.

### 6.3 Revealing Canadian Perspective

Even though the correspondents did not report having a conscious identification with the audience, there is evidence that at times the correspondents were assuming the role of the witness/ambassador and seeking to unify their audiences as discussed by Muhlmann (2008). Worthington accomplishes this when he reports on the Canadian peace keeping force in the Suez Zone. Another example is Burke’s reporting from Berlin in which he records the stories of
ordinary East Germans in vignettes that Canadians could easily identify with. Schlesinger’s angry denunciation of Canada’s role on the ICSC seeks to have Canadians aspire to something better. There are also examples of Muhlmann’s (2008) decentring journalism. Worthington’s emotional report on life in Arab refugee camps seems intended to wake people up, to have them see and feel something that is outside their everyday experience of the world. Ross’s angry denunciation of the United States bullying tactics against Nicaragua is such a contrast to his other carefully constructed reports that it could be seen as jarring rather than unifying.

Gans (1979) asserts that war reporting tends to bring out the ethnocentricity of the reporter who sees the enemy as “his” enemy and frames the story in that way. But it is clear from most of the reports of these Canadian correspondents that that is not case for them. Of course, Canada was not a key antagonist or defender in any of the Cold War conflicts that they covered, so a more neutral role was appropriate. But Canada was closely allied with the U.S. and was a key member of NATO, so in the broad sense, an enemy of the United States was also an enemy of Canada. Nevertheless, the reports of these correspondents didn’t seem particularly pro-American or anti-Soviet. Of all the correspondents, Schlesinger adopts the term “Communist” the most when describing the Viet Cong in Vietnam, a term that certainly framed that war as the U.S. government saw it.

Ross hardly uses the term “Communist” at all even though the U.S. framed the Nicaraguan revolutionary government as a Communist threat to the U.S. It is also evident in these reports that there is very little criticism of the U.S.S.R. Burke’s reports on the Berlin Wall go the furthest as he describes in detail what it is like for East Germans trapped behind the wall and forced to live under a repressive Communist regime.

After Worthington’s reports from the Suez Zone (1957-58), Canada almost disappears from the reports of these correspondents. There is hardly any reference to Canada or Canadians in coverage of the Berlin Wall, Vietnam, or Nicaragua. Of course, Canada played a much more significant role in the Suez Crisis – a key player at the United Nations and a key contributor to the peace keeping forces – so there was a much clearer Canadian connection to this armed conflict. But judging from the reports of the other correspondents that were examined, Canada was largely absent when it came to participating in or resolving the later conflicts. Canada
appears to be the silent partner of the United States and the muted voice of opposition to the Soviet Union. In Ross’s reports from Nicaragua, the United States is portrayed as much more of a villain than the Soviet Union.

While Canada as a nation, as a political or military player was largely absent from the reports of these correspondents, there is a strong theme that runs through their reports that could be described as a Canadian perspective or sensibility since it emerges from the reportage of all the correspondents even though they were reporting about different conflicts and the conflicts were spread over 40 years of the Cold War. Most of the reports by these correspondents focus on the people who are victimized by the clashes between the super powers. They dwell on the people who are caught in the middle of violent Cold War conflicts over which they have very little control. Rather than focus on the posturing by the Soviet Union and the United States, posturing that sometimes threatened to break out into nuclear war, these Canadian correspondents were more concerned about the hapless men, women and children, caught in the crossfire of the proxy wars fought by the Soviet Union, the United States, and China.

Peter Worthington even portrays the Canadian soldier as a victim of sorts; someone who has been commanded to give up fighting in favour of peace keeping even though that is not why he joined the army. In other reports from the Suez Zone, Worthington focuses on the plight of the Arab refugees and describes them as having been betrayed by the United Nations and the western alliance. Stanley Burke’s coverage of the Berlin Wall is constructed around individual stories of East Germans refugees who made it to West Berlin, or East Germans who were desperate to leave but couldn’t once the wall was constructed. Joe Schlesinger’s reports from Vietnam are more varied. Some of his early coverage describes the impact of the departure of U.S. ground troops on the ongoing war between the South and North Vietnamese. Later reports focused on the day to day fighting as the Viet Cong advanced. But the Schlesinger reports that seem to have the most cohesiveness and clarity are the reports he prepares on the impact of the war on ordinary Vietnamese trapped in towns or villages as the fighting rages around them.

Oakland Ross’s three-year narrative on Nicaragua as a Cold War hot spot, carefully constructs the dilemmas and difficulties faced by everyone from politicians to poor farmers as they try to hold their lives together.
7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to reveal how Canadian foreign correspondents constructed a Canadian perspective in their reports on key Cold War conflicts. Four Cold War conflicts and four correspondents were selected; The Suez Crisis (1956) as reported by Peter Worthington for the The (Toronto) Telegram; erection of the Berlin Wall (1961) as reported by Stanley Burke for CBC Television; the Vietnam War (1971-73) as reported by Joe Schlesinger for CBC Television; Nicaragua’s civil war (1981-1984) as reported by Oakland Ross for The Globe and Mail.

The printed reports of these correspondents were obtained through microfiche files (The Telegram), and digital archives (The Globe and Mail). The broadcast reports were retrieved from CBC archives and viewed at CBC’s facilities in Toronto. These reports were then organized and studied individually using the methods of critical discourse analysis to determine if they revealed a Canadian perspective on events.

Three of the four correspondents - Peter Worthington, Joe Schlesinger and Oakland Ross were then interviewed separately in Toronto about their experiences as foreign correspondents and how being Canadian and reporting for a Canadian audience influenced their decisions about what to report on and how to report it (Appendix 1).

Criteria were established for what was considered “Canadian” during the Cold War era particularly in relation to Canada’s role on the international stage. The criteria included: a sense of dependence along with independence; a sense of having an important role in world affairs; a sense of being different than Americans; a tendency towards survival rather than domination; a willingness to give up sovereignty on some foreign policy issues to the United Nations.

The analyses of the reportage revealed that except for Worthington’s reports from The Suez Zone in 1957-58, the mention of Canada or Canadians is rare, leaving the impression that Canada as a nation, or as a political or military force was largely absent when it came to participating in or resolving the later Cold War conflicts.

But while Canada may not have been much mentioned specifically, there is no question that an underlying Canadian identity is very much in evidence in the reportage of these four
correspondents. Analysis of their reports revealed that there is a common, unspoken, Canadian perspective or sensibility expressed by these correspondents. Most of their reports focus on people who are victimized by the clashes between the super powers. They dwell on the people who are caught in the middle of violent Cold War conflicts over which they have very little control. Rather than focus on the posturing by the Soviet Union and the United States, posturing that sometimes threatened to break out into nuclear war, these Canadian correspondents were more concerned about the men, women and children, caught in the crossfire of the proxy wars fought by the Soviet Union, the United States, and China.

This perspective reflects much of Canada’s Cold war foreign policy, history and identity:

- The endurance on the part of ordinary people when it comes to just plain surviving in difficult circumstances rather than dominating is very much in evidence in these reports.
- The reports also reflect Canada’s history as a country that often found itself caught between the demands of two super-powers – Britain and the United States – and had to learn how to fend for itself, rely on others for mutual support, and negotiate.
- Canadians’ sense of independence is very much present in these reports. All of the correspondents spoke about how they wanted to present a view of the conflicts in question that would be different than that of correspondents from more powerful countries. The Canadians wanted to go “under the radar” so they could present a view of the country they were in that was different than what other news agencies were reporting. This usually meant focusing on the people caught in the middle of conflicts rather than on the protagonists.
- During the Cold War federal leaders sought to carve out a role for Canada in which it sought common ground with smaller nations rather than become completely subservient to the demands of its key ally – the United States. This public shunning of the U.S. is another key theme in the reports of the foreign correspondents. The correspondents’ reports indicate that Canada is neither pro-American, nor Anti-American but has established a reserved distance from the behemoth to the south and is more interested in the people who are victims of U.S. power.
The Canadian correspondents also go to some effort to include coverage of the United Nations, the International Commission for Supervision and Control, and the Contadora Peace Process in Central America. This speaks to Canada’s willingness to participate in international organizations rather than go it alone or submit to a powerful ally.

During the interviews with the correspondents it was revealed that none of them had reflected much on what it meant to have a Canadian perspective on what they were reporting for a Canadian audience. Each one said the Canadian point of view came naturally and was not something that they could explicitly define. However, they did agree that being a Canadian correspondent meant travelling “under the radar” and reporting on stories that the bigger news agencies ignored in favour of the news of the day. The correspondents also agreed that these sorts of stories were what they liked doing the most. So it would appear that these correspondents did prepare their reports with a Canadian perspective even though they were not entirely conscious of it.

7.2 Interpretation

The findings of this research raise all sorts of questions about Canadian identity; about how Canadians, particularly foreign correspondents, see themselves and their country in relation to the rest of the world and in relation to their audience. Why did their primary goal as a correspondent have more to do with their personal interpretation of successful journalistic practice rather than a conscious Canadian perspective? Why did they not have a clearer idea of who the audience was and what was important to it? It would appear that the correspondents didn’t give these questions much thought and were more concerned about standard journalistic practice than how they may have been shaped by Canadian culture, or how they in turn were shaping Canadian identity and culture. This is not to say that they had a responsibility to be patriotic or to repeat nationalistic propaganda but only that they were sent abroad to obtain a Canadian viewpoint on world affairs and yet it didn’t seem clear to them what exactly that was. They were left to decide for themselves.

In the last decade or so many Canadian news organizations have pulled back on coverage of international events. Overseas bureaus have been closed and correspondents called back to Canada because the cost of these operations is so exorbitant. But there are still some
correspondents in the field including those for CBC, CTV News, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, Sun newspapers, and the National Post. But what exactly is the Canadian viewpoint that their employers and their audience want from them? Why is it important to have a Canadian reporter cover international events as opposed to an American or a British reporter? Is it just that Canadian viewers want that familiar Canadian voice? Want the comfort of knowing that it is a Canadian telling them what is going on? Do Canadian news organizations simply want to be seen as having one of their own on the spot during an international crisis?

Canada’s role in international affairs has changed since the Cold War. Canada is no longer the peace broker; no longer a key player at the United Nations; nor an instigator of security or cultural alliances with smaller or developing nations. Canada had a much more defined role in international affairs during the Cold War than it does now. So what do we now expect of our foreign correspondents? Do we actually need them now that news and information from almost every country in the world is readily available on the Internet and through social media? Is the Canadian perspective as it relates to people caught in the middle of political violence over which they have little control outdated?

These are important questions for news organizations as they wrestle with the shifting media landscape and try to determine how to best use their resources. And they are important questions for journalists as they negotiate their relationship with their audiences and the society they shape and are shaped by. Canadians, as with citizens of any country, have much in common with each other. So it is predictable that they would expect that commonality to be apparent in the reports of Canadian foreign correspondents. Yet, it is clear from this study that the Canadianess provided by most of the foreign correspondents in their coverage of Cold War conflicts was subtle rather than self-conscious.

7.4 Further Research

A broader study of the discourse of Canadian foreign correspondents would likely provide even more insight into their self-perceptions, how they perceive their role vis-à-vis their audiences in Canada, and how they perceive Canada’s role in international affairs. It would also be worthwhile knowing how Canadian correspondents framed international events that had a direct Canadian connection, such as: Pierre Trudeau’s breakthrough in diplomatic relations with China;
Canadian pressure to end apartheid in South Africa; Canadian participation in the war in Afghanistan; Canada’s refusal to enter the war with Iraq.

A brief examination of coverage of two of these events – Canadian pressure to end apartheid in South Africa and Canada’s participation in the war in Afghanistan – reveal very distinct approaches that if examined further could provide insight into the differences in perception by Canadian foreign correspondents of Canada’s role in the world before and after the Cold War.

When Nelson Mandela died in December of 2013, Michael Valpy, who had been The Globe and Mail’s correspondent in South Africa in the 1980s, wrote an article recalling his experiences there. At the time Mandela was still in prison, South Africa was in the midst of violent upheaval as pro-and anti-apartheid forces took to the streets, and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was at the forefront of a movement to impose international economic sanctions on South Africa in order to end apartheid. Mulroney had stood up to the opposition of both British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and U.S. President Ronald Reagan on this issue.

In the 2013 article, Valpy wrote that he had to be based in neighbouring Zimbabwe because his employer adhered to a Commonwealth resolution not to base correspondents in South Africa but instead locate them across the border.

As a consequence Canadian correspondents in Harare had to apply for a new visa and work permit for South Africa every three months rather than once a year: “If the government didn’t like what they wrote, the renewal took longer and longer until, in my case, I was told there would be none. There was nothing to do but go home” (Valpy, 2013, December 13).

Valpy’s reporting from the front lines of the violent, often bloody clashes between government forces and demonstrators had displeased the South African authorities. But Valpy also made sure he went deeper than that. Here is his account of one particular incident in which his Canadianess aided his efforts to report on the people caught in the violence.

The clergy figured prominently in my South Africa. It was on the doors of priests, Anglican and Roman Catholic alike, that I knocked when I went into townships then burning and bloodied by “unrest.” They knew it was against the law, but they still opened up, introducing me to their communities and letting me use their churches or homes to interview people.
The fierce Bishop Nkoane couldn’t remember my name, but he never forgot my nationality. Once he hid me from security police in a church basement in Soweto. After the thumping of the boots overhead had faded, a door opened and he bellowed: “Come up, Canada. Come up into the sunshine of the Lord!” (Valpy, 2013, December 13).

Oakland Ross eventually replaced Valpy as The Globe and Mail’s correspondent in South Africa but he too was eventually refused a visa.

Between the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States, Canada’s role in the world shifted. It didn’t seek to broker peace but through NATO participated in both the First Gulf War (1990-1991) and the war in Afghanistan (2001-2012). Graeme Smith, correspondent for The Globe and Mail in Afghanistan, was embedded with Canadian troops based in Kandahar and also reported from other parts of Afghanistan on the violent and complicated effort by NATO and dozens of international agencies to rid the region of the Taliban and forge a democratic government.

After his Afghanistan assignment ended, Smith took a leave and wrote a book about his experiences. The first paragraph indicates that Smith had an entirely different perspective than Valpy or the four foreign correspondents studied for this research project:

We lost the war in southern Afghanistan and it broke my heart. When I started following the surge of troops into Kandahar and surrounding provinces in 2005, I felt excited by the idea that the international community could bring the whole basket of civilization to the south: peace, democracy, rule of law, all those things. Now the foreign troops are withdrawing. We have abandoned our lofty goals (Smith, 2013, p.1).

It is clear in Smith’s introductory passage that he is identifying with Canada as an active participant in the war. And from that vantage point Canada is seen as having failed, as not being strong enough or smart enough to succeed. There is a self-consciousness about being Canadian and reporting on Canadian efforts in Afghanistan. This correspondent is no longer just the engaged observer, or the witness/ambassador who identifies with the people caught in the middle of a violent conflict. He identifies with the people who are causing much of the conflict. Thus, in this instance, Smith confirms Gans’s (1979) findings that the clearest expressions of ethnocentrism, in all countries, appear in war news particularly if that country is an active
participant. Further study of Smith’s reportage from Afghanistan would determine if this was a consistent theme.

Further research is also needed to determine exactly what news media organizations expect from their foreign correspondents in terms of a Canadian perspective on events abroad. How do they ensure that Canadian reports are distinctive when compared to American or British reports? How do they decide which countries/events to cover? Why do they believe it is important to have foreign correspondents? How do they determine what their audiences are most interested in when it comes to news from abroad?

Since journalism and journalistic practice are integral to the work of a foreign correspondent, further research with journalists might yield insight into how they perceive the role of the foreign correspondent. Does nationality matter? Or does the loyalty to conventional journalistic practice rank higher? Is there such a thing as the “tribe” when it comes to foreign correspondents? No matter where they are from they are all essentially looking for and constructing the same stories?

In the age of the internet and social media, Canadians get their news from abroad in all sorts of ways. As most Canadians have never been directly involved in a war, the impressions and information they obtain through the news media of various violent political conflicts are key to their understanding of war, wherever it might be. Further research might yield information on what media sources are most important or most credible to Canadians. It might also yield insight into which parts of the world Canadians are most interested in knowing about.
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APPENDIX

Interview Questions for Correspondents

1. As a Canadian foreign correspondent did you feel you had a responsibility to report from a Canadian perspective?

2. If you did, what did that entail?

3. If you didn't, what perspective did you take?

4. Did you experience your perspective as being different from other foreign correspondents? If it was different, how was it different?

5. As a Canadian was your journalistic practice different from other correspondents? If so, how was it different?

6. As a Canadian foreign correspondent how did you decide which stories should be covered? Which stories could be ignored? How did you decide what angle or perspective to take on that story?

7. Were you aware of what the wire services, U.S. broadcasters, and other influential media were covering? Did you follow their lead or seek to do something different?

8. How influential were your editors or producers back in Canada when it came to deciding what stories should be covered and what angle to take?

9. Who did you envision as your audience?

10. How did Canadian foreign policy on particular issues influence the way you reported a story?

11. Did you see yourself as influencing Canadian foreign policy?

12. While you were posted abroad, what kind of relationship did you have with Canadian diplomats, foreign service officers, and other representatives?

13. What kind of relationship did you have with representatives of your host country while posted overseas?
14. In hindsight, what was the most challenging aspect of your role as a Canadian foreign correspondent?

15. Was it important to have a Canadian perspective on international affairs during the Cold War?

16. What is your understanding of Canadian identity? Has it changed since the Cold War?