

Taking Stock

Maurice Tugwell

Volume 20, numéro 1, spring 2000

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs20_01art02

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Tugwell, M. (2000). Taking Stock. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 20(1), 7–8.

Taking Stock

by

Maurice Tugwell

When David Charters asked me to fire up my word processor and produce something to mark the 20th anniversary of the Centre's founding, I reached for Vol 1, No 1 of *Conflict Quarterly*, as this publication was then called. That first issue provides a kind of benchmark for assessing the relevance of our chosen field and measuring our progress over 20 years in promoting academic study. By necessity, we began by writing a high proportion of the journal ourselves, in contrast to subsequent years when the journal became what it ought to be - a lively exchange of facts and ideas from scholars the world over.

The field we selected was "low intensity conflict," both as a feature of the Cold War (we are talking about 1980) and as a freestanding collection of conflict methods described in our Editorial as "all types of political violence and coercion short of full-scale war - terrorism, propaganda and subversion, theory and practice of ideological conflict and war by proxy - with particular reference to conflicts directly or indirectly affecting Canada."

It was difficult in those days to separate the USSR and its commitment to "Active Measures" (low intensity conflict by another name) from other unconventional wars around the globe. As the United States sought to counter the Soviets by similar methods, particularly in the developing world, all the old military, political and ethical questions of means and ends came back to haunt them. Western publics seem to like being at peace or, when unavoidable, fully at war in some Great Crusade. Everything else, it is felt, is politics, or at least it ought to be. However, these optimistic notions had taken a battering in 1979-80, with the Soviets bargaining about in Afghanistan, and American diplomats held hostage in Tehran. Neither of these events could be seen as peaceful, but nor did they add up to full-scale war between major powers.

So we believed then that our field of study was important and relevant, and I think the subsequent 20 years have borne us out. As for research, one has only to scan the Journal's pages to see that David Charters' insistence on quality has paid off. This has been achieved in parallel with an impressive record of in-house studies, publications and conferences, as well as teaching.

For those who still have doubts, the incredible extent (and success) of Soviet active measures before the 1990 collapse, particularly in influence operations and the stealing of secret technology, is documented for all to read in Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin's book, *The Mitrokhin Archive*. When we prepared our book, *Deception: Studies in the East-West Context*, in the late '80s, we were obliged to rely upon open source material and hope that our interpretation and judgment of Soviet operations would stand the test of time. We never dared hope to see our work verified so completely and so soon.

The collapse of the Soviet Union changed the map of global conflict but hardly reduced its scale. Globalization has embraced the informal market for weapons, including some of mass destruction, as well as enabling organized crime to form something approaching a new level of government around the world. Police and military are pricing themselves out of reach and, lacking funds to meet new challenges, governments and communities may be turning to the private sector for security of sorts. The privatization of violence, first discussed ten years ago, seems now to be a reality. Will the mercenaries whom we recruit to save us from national and ideological enemies deliver us into the hands of the barons of crime?

As post-docs like to say: more research is needed in the field.