

Canadian Defence policy for the 21st Century Promoting Canada's international reputation

The present debate on Canadian defence policy is a welcomed and much needed one. Canada's defence policy is constrained by two defining determinants, absence of a direct existential threat and limited resources, which bounds the scope and breath of our policy options. These two factors structure the role and objectives of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) as well as the resources and capabilities the CAF need. I make the argument that in order for Canada to face the security challenges of the 21st Century and promote Canadian international reputation, *we should encourage a greater specialization of the Canadian armed forces*. Furthermore, there is a specific need to reorganize the logic of our procurement process by emphasizing the need to acquire capabilities that will provide Canada with an added-value contribution to international intervention, either under UN auspices or with allies.

Determinants of Canadian defence policy

Any sensible debate on the future of Canadian defence policy should recognize two defining determinants. First, Canada is an extraordinarily secured country, with limited short and medium term security threats. The international system might be perceived as uncertain or even unstable by some states, but this is not Canada's reality. In fact, we should develop an evidence-based approach to defence policymaking using a bayesian mind set. In short, we should assess a based probability to Canada's security threat and update Canadian defence policy grounded on new information. In this perspective, Canada's defence policy would be both "realistic", founded on current – not future and improbable – security realities, and "flexible" in order to allow our defence policy to adapt rapidly to an evolving security environment.

Second, there is little political will, especially in the context of expanding budgetary deficits in Ottawa, to increase defence expenditure significantly in the short to medium term. The aspirational target to devote 2% of GDP to military budget (which would more than double Canada's current defence budget to reach over 40 billion dollars) remains improbable. Two propositions follows. Firstly, Canada can ill afford to waste resources by acquiring capabilities that do not contribute directly to CAF's core missions or gamble on in-development platforms. In short, in an environment of limited resources, Canada should focus on low-risk, smart procurement process. Secondly, in such an austerity setting, Canada has to obtain as much value from its procurement as it can. In essence, Canada's procurement policy should be one of procuring for impact instead of focusing on replacing existing capabilities.

With these considerations in mind, there is little rationale or resources to endorse a defence policy arguing for a multipurpose combat capable Canadian armed forces. *Canada should instead restructure its defence policy by encouraging a greater specialization of the CAF*. Such specialization would essentially focus on those capabilities required to establish a Fortress Canada policy and contribute to international peace and security in an ad hoc, limited, approach.

Canadian defence priorities

Canada's security interests are circumscribed to two main priorities. The first priority of the Canadian armed forces should be to defend Canada and the North American continent. Both are, in

fact, intertwined and should be understood as the two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, as Canada provides for its basic strategic needs, it contributes to continental defence. On the other hand, as it participates fully to US continental defense initiatives (such as NORAD, NATO, and ballistic missile defense), Canada also furthers its defensive standpoint.

The second priority of the CAF should be to contribute to international peace and security in a discretionary fashion. However, such a proposition remains vague and undefined. There are only a limited number of actual security issues that affect Canadian interests and with limited resources we cannot intervene everywhere. Thus, the defining principle to Canada's international contribution should be to bolster its reputation amongst our key allies, the United States and NATO allies, as well as within international organizations such as the United Nations through peacekeeping. In this respect, Canada should focus on an added-value contribution to international interventions, seeking highly specialized capabilities valued by our allies and international organizations. It makes little sense to offer capabilities that other nations already bring to international interventions. In this sense, Canada's participation remains unnoticed and Canada is thus unable to leverage properly its international contribution.

Procure for impact: leveraging defence policy to increase Canadian reputation abroad

Considering the two defining core missions of the CAF, Canada should first focus on capabilities that directly contribute to Canada's defensive requirement. This would be articulated in a defensive posturing to Canadian and North American defence. The CAF core mission is to defend our sovereignty and should thus focus on a Fortress Canada mentality centered around four main tasks: 1) Surveillance; 2) Cybersecurity; 3) Maritime coastal defence; 4) Air interdiction/ballistic missile defence. Military procurement and SOR should emphasize how equipment aligns with these specialized tasks.

Second, Canada should procure for impact: acquire capabilities and equipment that directly add value to Canadian contribution to military intervention. This reputation-based procurement assessment would be predicated on a number of propositions. 1) Focus on capabilities desired by allies. There should be an honest conversation with our key allies to understand what they value as a contribution. Such capabilities could focus on logistics (Medical, Combat engineers, heavy airlift); capacity building and training (SOF); winter warfare and training. 2) Buy off-the-shelf platforms, which confers the advantage of acquiring equipment for the immediate needs of the CAF that can increase Canadian reputation in multilateral mission at a known price with known capabilities.

In conclusion, a defence policy review must also encompass an assessment of its procurement policy. Canada's defence policy is unique. First, because there is no credible security threat that directly menaces Canada, we do not have the rationale for a strategic-based approach to military procurement. Second, considering the limited resources (in terms of military expenditures) Canada should not engage in a capability-based approach to procurement. Because Canada's defence priorities remain circumscribed, we should focus on a two-prong approach to military procurement: focused on Fortress Canada and defensive capabilities, and centered on developing a reputation-based assessment of military requirements in order to contribute to international peace and security.