

Notes prepared for the
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Security and Defence Policy: Six Points of Reflection

First: “Defence policy is guided by foreign policy.”¹ Foreign policy articulates national security interests and sets priorities for the employment of the various arms of the Canadian government, including the Canadian Armed Forces. Lacking the guidelines of an established national security policy, as is presently the case, diminishes the prospects for critical review of current defence policy, promotes caution rather than innovation, and decreases the likelihood of consideration of reorientation of the Canadian military and its missions. It is essential the government conduct this defence review in tandem and collaboration with other key ministries, especially Global Affairs Canada.

Second: This Review should be conducted with a forward horizon of fifteen to twenty years. The global security environment and Canada’s position within it is in flux; indeed one can assume that in relative terms it will decline. The respected NIC’s *Global Trends 2030*, among other such reports, portends a world where security threats arise from the effects of climate change, population movements, urbanization, clashes of culture, asymmetric strategies and conflicts, information warfare, and new technologies. The Canadian military has made significant steps in adapting to the post-Cold War and post-911 environments. Adaptation and innovation must continue; this Review should not focus on short-term rebuilding of Canadian capacities dictated by procurement priorities and reinforcement of policies in train.

Third: A reorientation of Canadian defence policy. The defence of the Canada’s three maritime perimeters, especially the Arctic; cooperation with the US and with key allies; and response through multilateral missions to international and regional security crises remain fundamental. However, it is necessary to change the attitude that Canada needs to sustain broad spectrum interoperability with the US and NATO, requiring full-fledged combat capabilities on land, sea, and in the air, to best address these critical priorities. This because (a) we can’t afford it at current levels of expenditure, (b) the government will not go to the 2+ % levels of GDP required to fund it, and (c) our current dysfunctional procurement systems yield overly expensive equipment, which arrives years beyond the operational environment for which it was optimally designed.

Fourth: The Canadian Armed Forces constitute a remarkably resilient institution; its men and women consistently achieve significant results in the most challenging domestic and foreign

¹ Defence Policy Review Public Consultation Document 2016, p. 3.

environments. The Canadian Forces excel at, and have international comparative advantage in, key areas: mission logistics, disaster relief, maritime surveillance and interdiction, training, and Special Forces operations, among others. We should reorient our defence policy and Canadian forces and related government capacities to focus on enhancing and utilizing these key functional capacities. Doing so certainly has implications: On the one hand, no large expeditionary force deployment; On the other hand, operating (apart from the Canadian perimeter) in multilateral contexts, assessing and assigning our contributions to the range of missions (UN, UN-authorized, and NATO) on the basis of how such functional engagements make specific “Canadian” contributions to mission needs.

Fifth: Canadian foreign and defence policy must be recast on a multi-regional basis, i.e. beyond its persistent Euro-Atlantic predisposition. Most importantly this means coming to terms with the rising role and relevance played by Asian states and their resultant implications for Canadian economic, political, and security interests.² This is not to underestimate the challenges posed by distance and logistics or the current, general Canadian political and public discomfort concerning unfamiliar regional contexts and complex and confusing transnational conflicts. A better-informed, orchestrated, sustained engagement strategy is required, involving selective employment of Canadian forces, consistent participation in key multilateral forums, and cultivation of targeted, bilateral relationships. Regaining our status as an attentive actor and contributing our assets, where and when they can make distinctive contributions, (exercises, disaster response, training, peace operations), is prerequisite to achieving the seats at regional tables and the recognition that Ottawa seeks.

Asian states, China in particular, are critical to achieving solutions to the global problems which threaten Canadians’ well-being—management of global finance, climate change, environmental degradation of the oceans, transformation of the Arctic. Meeting and adapting to the security implications of these require both long-term and short-term planning. Thus, already and increasingly in the future, the Canadian military will find itself, in and beyond the Asia Pacific, interoperating (formally or informally) with their Asian counterparts. Augmenting our military to military relations throughout the region should be a priority, as should be bolstering the analytical capacities of the Department.

Sub-Saharan Africa has become a region of security concerns for Canada—as the locale of extremist, transnational conflicts that threaten continental spillover, the source of pandemic disease, continuing humanitarian crises, and zones of failed governance. Canadian Forces have been engaged, and are likely to be increasingly so, in missions in Africa. Here Canadian comparative advantage on delivery of humanitarian and health services as well as logistical support and special operations are further enhanced by our bilingual capacities. Consideration should be given to establishing relationships with the African Union and its peace operations division.

Finally: It is necessary and in the mutual interests of all concerned—students, academics, experts, officials, and the uniformed forces—for reestablishment of productive lines of communication and (re)building of a community of informed engagement and debate on Canadian defence and security policy. Over the last decade this has been largely eroded. Taking advantage of digital technologies, a national network could and should be mounted, one with

² See *Building Blocks for a Canada-Asia Strategy*. Vancouver: Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. Available at <https://www.asiapacific.ca/research-report/building-blocks-canada-asia-strategy>.

modest, sustained funding, particularly directed to the support of the younger generation whose services will be required in government, the military, and academe.