

Canadian National Defence Policy Review Roundtable

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I would like to thank the Department of National Defence (DND) for inviting me to contribute to this defence policy review roundtable. My remarks will suggest that this timely review of national defence policy should lead to the creation of a smart defence policy for Canada. A smart Canadian defence policy will have at least four key pillars. First, it is based on the principle of primacy of prevention. Second, it should provide the policy space for nuance interface between soft and hard Canadian defence infrastructures. Third, it creates visible global military identity that ensure healthy security environment for Canada. And finally, it sets the context for Canada to leverage existing and future international security institutions and arrangements to enhance and protect Canadians.

By primacy of prevention I mean that deterring threats, stopping threats from materialising into attacks and developing a healthy security environment should be the cornerstone of Canadian defense policy. This means that the bulk of energy, resources and attention should focus on preventing the emergence of new threats and eliminating and/or reducing existing threats to Canadian security. This will require a well resourced DND capable of forecasting where conventional and non-traditional threats to Canadians might emerge, and that has a first class defense diplomacy apparatus capable of creating goodwill that discourages conventional or even non-conventional actors from resorting to either covert or overt attacks in the resolution of political disputes/differences with Canada. Prevention is cost-effective and the most efficient way to approach national defence but it is perceived as boring in a reactionary-wired world. Preventative activities do not often grab national headlines in the same way that reactionary responses do. Neither do they attract national honours and merits nor advance careers as quickly as reactionary actions do. As a result, preventative activities are often after-thoughts in defense policy and/or backburner issues in the operationalization of defence policy. This review should lead to the establishment of a new defence policy that makes prevention its center piece and alleviates preventative activities and operations to the level where they become the most valued things in the defence industry.

This defense policy review should open up the policy and discursive space for DND to interface soft and hard Canadian defence infrastructures in nuance and seamless ways. The status quo policy places undue emphasis on Canadian defence infrastructures but the first and best line of defence for a country is rather the soft defence infrastructures such as values that its has and projects. The defence policy review should set the tone for the emergence of new defence culture and vision build around Canadian values such as respect for diversity and multiculturalism, humility and politeness, inclusivity and equality, social justice as well as service to others. These

values have inbuilt conflict resolution mechanisms and can create healthy security environment for Canada over the long term. The defence policy review must ensure that these Canadian values interface with Canadian hard defence infrastructures and mainstreamed in DND and CAF activities, operations, and programs. The DND and CAF can in turn set the standard and show other Canadian organizations the best ways to build national institutions based on these conflict prevention values.

At the international level, DND should draw on brand Canada to create distinctive and visible global identity markers for our men and women in uniform. Canada has global reputational advantages that can be built upon to create a national defense posture that enhances overall Canadian security. For better or for worse, Canada is generally perceived especially in non-Western societies as peaceful, open, honest, and tolerant society. This may not necessarily reflect the reality, but it opens up the opportunity for DND to position CAF as the intermediary between Western military establishment and the defence institutions in the rest of the world. This role if performed well can potentially have long-term beneficial impacts on both Canada and global security.

The review should lead to the creation of defence policy that is in-sync with 21st century global security configurations. A Canadian defence policy that aligns with the current international security landscape will at the very least acknowledge the reality that the CAF cannot and should not defend Canada on its own. This review should enhance the capacity of DND to craft a plan to leverage existing and future international security institutions to strengthen Canadian security and to defend Canada when needed. Canada's defense assets including total budget which can realistically rise up to 1.5% of GDP over the next 5 years point to the simple fact that we should have targeted and more focused approach to defence. Aiming for full spectrum of defence capacities is a recipe for doing nothing impactful. Someone will have to pick up our slacks and will come at a great cost to the reputation of men and women in uniform. We need to carve out a niche but that role has to be visible in both the North American and trans-Atlantic security landscape. We should identify areas that we have comparative advantage and provide the kind of services that our NORAD and NATO allies will appreciate and happy to rely on us.

Another reality that must be acknowledged in this process is the fundamental changes that have occurred in multilateral peace and security arena in the last two decades or so. The multilateral peace missions that Canada had a major seat at the table has ceased to exist. Classical peacekeeping operations authorized and exclusively managed by the UN has given way to regional-led but UN supported peace missions. Some of these regional-led peace initiatives are *ad hoc* and coalition of the willing type of mission but majority of them are anchored in a regional institutions and are here to stay. Most of them emerged and/or are emerging in regions such as Africa and Asia that have historically impacted on Canadian security. The review should put DND in such a position that it is able to work with these homegrown regional security arrangements to at the very least prevent spillovers of insecurities to Canada. It is essential that DND and CAF develop a strong footprint in regional security institutions such as the African Union that are at the forefront of the new multilateral security innovations. That said, the UN

security system still remains an important and indispensable insurance policy. This review should provide a path for DND to strengthen its relationship with the world body.