Pan-Canadian Focus Group Workshop: Realistic and Credible Policy Advice for Canada's Defence Review

On 8 August 2016, 34 academics, 14 students and 10 government participants were invited to Carleton University to engage in a defence review workshop funded by a grant from the DND's Defence Engagement Program (DEP) and coordinated by the Conference of Defence Associations Institute, Queen's Centre for International and Defence Policy and Carleton's Centre for Security, Intelligence and Defence Studies. Participants were drawn from the former Security and Defence Forum (SDF)-funded centres, along with representatives from the Conference of Defence Associations (CDA and the CDA Institute (CDA Institute) and the Canadian Global Affairs Institute in a day-long workshop designed to examine four broad policy issues: the threat environment; the status of the Canadian Armed Forces; force readiness, and missions and allies. For each theme and via a series of Red Team exercises, 5 priorities were identified.

Outlined below is a summary table followed by the narrative for each of the 5 focus groups. If you want additional background information about the Red Teams, the evolution of thinking that led to the 5 priorities for each focus group and the scene setting document sent prior to this red team workshop, please email Andrea.Charron@carleton.ca or see the full report on www.carleton.ca/csids

Workshop Findings

Threats/Environments menaçants	The Forces/Les forces	Readiness/Préparation	Missions & Allies/Missions et alliés
Great Power transitions are eroding International Institutions (i.e. backsliding of democratic states, laws of armed conflict).	End of multipurpose combat capable force; develop specializations within a coherent and accessible narrative that situates defence within broader government security agenda	Enhanced Surveillance and control of Canadian airspace and water. Timely and credible response. (Interoperability with 5 eyes).	Growing resource and political demands for defence of North America (does not include Mexico), and its effect on our ability to operate elsewhere
Technological threats, including cyber	Derive structures and size from national security objectives, cognizant of budgetary constraints	Enhanced cyber, intel, surveillance	NATO collective defence, balancing deterrence while engaging Russia
Threats to Canadian Maritime Interests (Coastal Arctic and sea lanes of communication).	Develop gender and cultural lenses to achieve integrated security; requires intellectual shift via training and education	Ability to play a credible and effective role in allied operations (NATO/US) to address state and non state threats. Refer to #1 in regards to interoperability	Clear criteria for overseas operations
Violent Transnational Nonstate Actors (regional criminal networks and global terrorist groups).	Need multiple/alternative career models and transition strategies to enhance flexibility and optimize force structure (for both reg. force and reserves); e.g. give army reserve operational roles	Enhance search and rescue (Esp. Arctic)	Limited role in Pacific and South America (Defence diplomacy)
Questions regarding proliferation and use of WMD	Be restrictive with the commitments made with very expensive and specialized capabilities e.g. space, cyber, SOF, fighters, submarines	Enhanced whole of government Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief *Working assumption priorities remain 1) CND defence, 2) defence of N. America 3) allied operations & assumes procurement issues, funding issues solved	Longer, fewer missions rather than shorter and many. Need expertise, local knowledge and committed to success

Threats/Environments menaçants

1. Great Power transitions are eroding International Institutions (i.e. backsliding of democratic states, laws of armed conflict).
2. Technological threats, including cyber.
3. Threats to Canadian Maritime Interests (Coastal Arctic and sea lanes of communication).
4. Violent Transnational Nonstate Actors (regional criminal networks and global terrorist groups).
5. Questions regarding proliferation and use of WMD

The participants seemed to agree that Russia and China were of particular concern to Canada. However, the nature of the particular threat was not easily articulated. On the one hand, both states, but especially Russia, have enough nuclear weapons to destroy key North American cities. Both also have offensive cyber attacking capabilities and sizeable conventional forces. On the other hand, both are important partners to deal with other crises around the world such as Syria in the Middle East. China, in particular, is the trading giant of the world and so characterizing it as a 'threat' was resisted given that Canada needs to have a healthy economic relationship with China, given its status as the second largest economy in the world.

The other category of threat that was articulated in several ways, although not stated outright, was the backsliding of the number of democratic states and/or the quality of the democratic institutions within a state. This is particularly concerning because many of these states also have nuclear, biological and chemical weapons' ambitions without the requisite state checks and balances to ensure material cannot be stolen and/or weapons launched prematurely/unintentionally. Criticism of Israel and India was muted, despite their nuclear capabilities, largely because of their ability to control access to the weapons and stable decision-making processes. Conversely, North Korea, Pakistan and Iran were routinely lambasted largely as a function of the lack of such controls.

Given that Canada depends on international trade, protection of sea lanes of communication was considered important, but not a role Canada could take on far from home. Instead, Canada should consider the protection of its own maritime boundaries (in conjunction with other government agencies). Note, references to protection of maritime territory usually referenced Canada's Arctic and the Northwest Passage. There is still an assumption that Canada's Arctic is under threat of invasion/occupation/incursion by foreign actors and that it needs to be protected. This view, while widespread, is counter to DND's and DoD's assessment of the Arctic.

Violent transnational actors that include terrorists (especially Islamic terrorists and more specifically Sunni-based terrorist groups like the Islamic State or Boko Haram), criminal gangs (like Hell's Angels and the Rock Machine) and transnational networks that sow anarchy (for example, Anonymous) were all considered "threats" to Canada broadly speaking, but not all of them require a defence response. Fighting international terrorism abroad is squarely within the mandate of the armed forces but within Canada, it is a constabulary issue, as is dealing with transnational criminal gangs and other networks. That being said, the fact that these criminal gangs can be a source of funds and/or support to terrorist groups means that the CAF needs to be aware and informed of their existence. The guiding principle of preparing for highly likely events, versus unlikely events is still sound.

Finally, cyber threats and “unanticipated events” (Donald Rumsfeld’s famous unknown unknowns) were identified as issues of concern for Canada. The level of defence involvement, however, is not clear. DND/CAF presently has a mandate to protect its own cyber connections/networks; Public Safety has the mandate to protect civilian networks. However, with the call for more “whole of government” activity/operations, military networks can become vulnerable if other government agencies are not properly protected. While not an issue for the defence review per se, the dependence of DND on Shared Services Canada to provide service and protection to non-secret networks was raised. Canadian defence officials may also have to consider whether or not Canada wants to develop and launch offensive or even preemptive offensive cyber capabilities (of course the delineation between offence and defence is very blurred).

The unanticipated crises that could involve the CAF range from new transnational actors to a new war in a state previously thought to be stable or an ally of Canada. (For example, events in Turkey call into question what NATO’s stance will be should Turkey threaten the alliance). South and Central America get very little attention and yet they are in Canada’s backyard. There is also growing concern about the instability created by massive waves of migrant and refugee movements around the world. The role for the Canadian military, however, is limited as was demonstrated by the recent influx of Syrian refugees in which military barracks were prepared but not used. More likely is aid to G7/NATO/UN maritime patrols in the Mediterranean or elsewhere or aid in establishing Government of Canada screening camps/compounds located near large refugee populations.

For the most part, the threats identified are not dissimilar from those articulated in the 1994, 2005, and 2008 defence white papers and are in-line with the defence plans of allies dealing with crises in a post-9/11 era.

Threats discussed but not included in the top 5 include:

What to do with the United States if:

1) It retreats from international engagement, as could be the case with the election of Donald Trump. Or conversely,
2) If its engagement in the world (e.g. 2003 invasion of Iraq) creates situations, like the rise of ISIL, that pose threats to Canada and the rest of the world.

While not a threat per se, the fact that Canada is so dependent on the United States means that Canada is vulnerable to its “big mistakes” (including the 2008 financial collapse of the U.S. markets), while at the same time benefiting from its trade and collective defence promises to Canada. Therefore, U.S. foreign and defence policies remain of primary interest to Canada and need to be tracked closely. This dependence still creates grudging loyalty at best among Canadians, and malign suspicion at worst. The fraternity of the military uniform and the closeness of the Canadian and the U.S. militaries engaged in joint missions overseas, or on a permanent footing via NORAD, remain essential to the ability of the Canadian government to rise above the internal and external polar shifts in attitudes toward Americans especially in times of crises.

Another category of threats is potentially existential. Climate change, leading to rises in sea levels, could, for example, wipe-out low lying states like the Netherlands, Singapore and Bangladesh. These effects, however, may take years and therefore, it is very difficult for the

government to plan for and/or maintain sustained attention on the effects of climate change. The Canadian military has a limited role to play in Canada's climate change policies other than to try and be as energy efficient and environmentally-focused in its operations/procurement/training decisions, continue to prepare for its aid to the civil powers' role in times of extreme weather events (which could include the relocation of populations from weather-effected areas) and consider where climate change pressures (such as the lack of fresh water) may sow the conditions for armed conflict in the world in the future.

The Forces/Les forces

1. End of multipurpose combat capable force; develop specializations within a coherent and accessible narrative that situates defence within broader government security agenda
2. Derive structures and size from national security objectives, cognizant of budgetary constraints
3. Develop gender and cultural lenses to achieve integrated security; requires intellectual shift via training and education
4. Need multiple/alternative career models and transition strategies to enhance flexibility and optimize force structure (for both reg. force and reserves); e.g. give army reserve operational roles
5. Be restrictive with the commitments made with very expensive and specialized capabilities e.g. space, cyber, SOF, fighters, submarines

Common themes evident in all of the discussions concern the need to fix recruitment/retention policies (for both the regular forces and reserves). Related, there were many calls for an (re)investigation into the different classes of reserves (especially the Army Reserves) including how they are trained and managed, and whether these categories of reserves still make sense in today's economic market. Furthermore, the process to switch from reserves to regular forces needs to be fixed, as it is an unnecessarily lengthy process. More attention needs to be paid to not only the diversity of the makeup of the forces but also the cultural training the forces receive to operate in locations around the world.

Another theme was to consider the skills and trades of the current forces and consider what might be needed in the future. Example, is the forces recruiting/training cyber specialists? If so, is there a career path for them within the armed forces? Do we need generalists or specialists? Are the forces exposed to different world views (for example, do they understand the implication of UN Security Resolution 1325 that focuses on the protection of women in conflict? Is this sort of training given to non-commissioned and Commissioned officers? And/or does more attention need to be paid to the traditional hands-on military training (e.g. target shooting etc.?) and is equal attention given to NCMs and Officers?)

Yet another debate was whether or not the Canadian armed forces should be able to participate in any type of mission/operation, especially overseas, or whether it should develop niche areas of expertise in consultation with allies. For example, one suggestion, given Canada's limited overall troop size, is to have larger cadre of special forces, augmented with specialized niche battalions (logistics or training perhaps). Others disagreed and felt that Canada is already too 'niched', should restrict the commitment of its specialized forces, and concentrate on training the forces to be able to complete a variety of operations

and missions that run the gamut from aid to the civil powers in natural disasters to large combat missions overseas.

Training is often the first pillar to be cut in fiscally austere times and that needs to change. This trend toward cutting training resources is a function of the fact that the government often makes budget decisions based on available funds first rather than the role and structure of the forces.

The majority of participants felt that Canada needed multi-purpose, combat capable forces, but concerns were expressed that constant reference to combat roles suggests that Canada only seeks such roles which is inaccurate. Related, the government needs to be more transparent and clear about what the forces are being sent to do (particularly for overseas missions), how success will be measured and what exit criteria entails. In other words, the narrative that the government uses to justify/explain why the forces are required needs to be clear, consistent and regularly evaluated.

Many of the participants noted the fact that few in the academic defence community had in-depth understanding of how the forces are trained/recruited/promoted. This is limited to a small cadre of experts (appropriately at Canadian Forces College). DND and the CAF are encouraged to invite academics on training exercises and missions so that a wider array of academics can understand and appreciate better the types of issues/problems discussed and how the forces are trained.

Readiness/Préparation

1. Enhanced Surveillance and control of Canadian airspace and water. Timely and credible response. (Interoperability with 5 eyes).
2. Enhanced cyber, intel, surveillance.
3. Ability to play a credible and effective role in allied operations (NATO/US) to address state and non state threats. Refer to #1 in regards to interoperability
4. Enhance search and rescue (Esp. Arctic)
5. Enhanced whole of government Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
   *Working assumption priorities remain 1) CND defence, 2) defence of N. America 3) allied operations & assumes procurement issues, funding issues solved

Rather than focus on platforms and/or operations/maintenance (O & M), it was felt that the desired effects were a better place to start in deciding the readiness of the forces. A major preoccupation of all groups contemplating the forces' readiness wrestled with how to ensure that the right type and number of forces was available/prepared in time to achieve the specific aims of the government, which still run the full range of missions from aid to civil power right through to combat missions. Advanced intelligence and surveillance is one way to build in preparation time for the forces with a particular need to ensure Canada is defended first, followed by defence of North America, with international operations having a greater degree of discretion.. This necessitates trained analysts to interpret the information/intelligence gathered in a timely manner delivered in a timely and useful format to policy makers.

DND/CAF needs to continue to:

1) Shape relationships and partnerships (at the local, provincial, national and international levels), integrate planning/play book development, train/conduct exercises with the goal of mitigating/preparing to
2) Anticipate threats
3) Respond to threats
4) Stabilize situations
5) Transition and reflect on the process and outcome

The aerial search and rescue role of the military was raised a few times. First, it is an expensive role. Second, few other allied countries mandate their military with such a role. That being said, few other states have as much territory and/or extreme weather conditions with which to contend. The military is the only profession with unlimited liability and the skills/platforms used for search and rescue is not antithetical to other roles the forces are asked to undertake. Similar arguments can be made for the Forces' aid to the civil authority role. The concern, however, is that the Forces' SAR and aid to the civil authority mandates can obfuscate assessments of whether the Forces are the best organization to fulfill these roles, instead of perhaps discretely supporting other government departments and agencies.

Given that Canada rarely operates alone, interoperability of platforms, skills and processes is key for the Canadian Armed Forcesto remain relevant and credible. Note, however, the idea that Defence must promote Canadian industry was not discussed.

As technology changes, so does the need for laws (Canadian and international) and ROEs to change as well. This requires policy makers, both inside and outside of the military, to consider the consequences of new actors, techniques, types of wars, and the continued 'revolution of military affairs'.

Finally, civil-military affairs no longer get the attention it once did especially during the Cold War. With a military that is potentially becoming less reflective of civil society (because of their size and the lack of conscription or total war experience among the general public), there is concern about a growing military-civilian divide that needs to be addressed. Civilian oversight MUSTbe retained at the political level (AND not at the bureaucratic civil service level). Political leaders need to ask tougher questions of military leadership; likewise military leadership needs to manage better the expectations of government as to what they can reasonably achieve given fiscal and other pressures.

Missions & Allies/Missions et alliés

1. Growing resource and political demands for defence of North America (does not include Mexico), and its effect on our ability to operate elsewhere
2. NATO collective defence, balancing deterrence while engaging Russia
3. Criteria for overseas operations:
    - Do agree with the RoEs?
    - Is there a clear end state?
    - Do we agree with the end state?
    - Are allies and partners contributing?
    - Acceptable command and control structure?

- Legal mandate?
- Regional buy-in?
- Enough Canadian assets to influence the mission

4. Limited role in Pacific and South America (Defence diplomacy)
5. Longer, fewer missions rather than shorter and many. Need expertise, local knowledge and committed to success

There was general consensus that the order of operations/attention for the CAF needs to remain defence of Canada then North America and then elsewhere. NATO was favoured over UN operations for a variety of reasons including the current threat posed by Russia, the experience of operating within a NATO collective defence framework and relative ease of working with allies versus UN partners. In other words, given two operations that require Canadian assistance, one NATO-led and one UN-led, the majority of academics would chose a NATO mission. However, it was clearly recognized that is not necessarily the current government's preference. (It is noted, for example, senior military officers and senior public servants attending the National Security Programme at Staff College are visiting Africa this year.)

As well, many argued for fewer overseas missions *per* se, especially given limited capabilities and resources. Instead, Canada should focus upon a select few missions, along with a long-term commitment in order for the CAF to gain expertise, local knowledge that should, ultimately, lead to a more successful outcome. These assumptions as well may not align with current government priorities that seem to favour immediate impact benefitting many crises/conflicts in the world.

Defence of Canada and North America, the assets required and the amount of resources they take is often overlooked. There is mounting evidence that the defence of Canada and North America is likely to become more costly and more important given: 1) rust out of equipment (read especially North Warning system); 2) need for new technology to respond to changing threats (e.g. the growing threat of cruise missiles versus lack of any ability of Canada to defend against them) 3) and a United States that is requiring more from Canada in terms of contributions. Given that a larger portion of DND budget is likely needed for Canada and North American defence, then this has implications for operations abroad.

First, it is highly unlikely Canada can contribute any response of significance to a conflict in the Pacific (read especially South China Sea). Instead, Canada's defence diplomacy skills (e.g. port visits, multilateral training exercises) are a more likely and appropriate response. Similarly, the impact Canada can make in theatres close to home in South and Central America must be considered. Growing instability in South America is a very short distance from threatening Canada and the United States. More attention needs to be paid to events in this part of the world. Again, however, Canada is more likely to contribute via defence diplomacy than in terms of deploying personnel.

Overseas missions are fraught with complications (historical experience with disastrous UN missions are especially an endearing effect on resistance to UN missions). Rather than fixating on the mission umbrella, Canada is wise to formulate criteria that will help the government decide if a contribution by the CAF is in Canada's interest. This is not to say that the criteria should be a hard-and-fast-must-tick-each-criterion prescriptive list. Rather, the list will help guide the government, the public and the CAF with a set of key decision thresholds to consider in advance of any mission rather than the ad hoc, after-the-fact justification that often happens

when a crisis develops and the UN/NATO/ad hoc coalitions scramble for contributions. Some of the criteria includes:

1. Agreement with the RoEs
2. a clear end state to the crisis and to Canada's involvement
3. Significant allied and partner contributions
4. Acceptable command and control structure
5. Legal mandate
6. Regional buy-in