

Canadian  
Forces  
College

Collège  
des  
Forces  
Canadiennes



## CANADIAN DEFENCE IMPERATIVES AND THE MAKING OF DEFENCE POLICY: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF STRONG, SECURE, ENGAGED

Maj L.A. Bond

**JCSP 44**

***Exercise Solo Flight***

### **Disclaimer**

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2018.

**PCEMI 44**

***Exercice Solo Flight***

### **Avertissement**

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2018.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 44 – PCEMI 44

08 May 2018

DS 568— ADVANCED TOPICS IN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES

**CANADIAN DEFENCE IMPERATIVES AND THE MAKING OF DEFENCE  
POLICY: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF STRONG, SECURE, ENGAGED**

By Major L.A. Bond

*“This paper was written by a candidate attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”*

*“La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.”*

Word Count: 4,580

Nombre de mots : 4,580

## **CANADIAN DEFENCE IMPERATIVES AND THE MAKING OF DEFENCE POLICY: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF STRONG, SECURE, ENGAGED**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Liberal government's release of the 2017 Defence Policy – Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE) – was a highly anticipated event. By the time it was released in May 2017, Prime Minister Trudeau's Liberal Party had been in office for over two years, and had been promising major changes in defence policy. Prime Minister Trudeau established a change agenda early in his tenure, having ended the bombing component of the mission in Iraq and Syria against Daesh immediately upon taking office, while promising a return to peacekeeping missions. The widely consultative nature of the review heightened the anticipation and the excitement of the document as those with insider access suggested major changes were afoot.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, the most significant factor that fueled the anticipation and excitement for the new policy was the election of President Donald Trump in November 2016. President Trump's shocking ascendancy to the White House was driven by a promised radical disruption to the status quo, and it created anxiety throughout many of the world's capitals. Trump had promised some major changes that directly affected Canada-US relations, such as a renegotiation of NAFTA and a demand that NATO partners take more responsibility for their own defence. During a NATO conference shortly after the Trump Administration entered office, Defence Secretary Jim Mattis told NATO "to increase military spending by year's end or risk seeing the U.S. curtail its defence support."<sup>2</sup> He said, "No longer can the American taxpayer carry a disproportionate share of the defence of Western

---

<sup>1</sup> This observation is based upon the author's conversations with senior leadership who were involved in the consultation process.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Lamothe and Michael Birnbaum, "Defense Secretary Mattis issues new ultimatum to NATO allies on defense spending," *Washington Post*, 17 February 2017.

values. Americans cannot care more for your children's future security than you do.”<sup>3</sup> SSE, released just a few months after President Trump assumed office, has been viewed as the Canadian response to the radical changes in US global leadership.<sup>4</sup>

While CAF leadership is tepidly optimistic, many defence critics remain acerbically skeptical of SSE. Kim Richard Nossal has pointed out that the Liberals' new approach to defence is actually nothing new, but conforms to long standing government patterns in dealing with defence and national strategy. He says, “Every new ministry since Diefenbaker has followed what has become a time-honoured tradition: in the first couple of years in office, the new government publishes a defence review – but only one, no matter how long the government remains in power.”<sup>5</sup> Nossal predicts that new defence policy will be either quickly forgotten, or overcome by events, stating:

it is already clear that [the current government's efforts will be] largely the same symbolic exercise that every government since Pearson has engaged in: write a defence policy review that trumpets how very different the new prime minister is from the proceeding government, and then put it on the shelf for the remainder of the ministry.<sup>6</sup>

Eugene Lang makes similar predictions, pointing out that, “the last four defence policy statements had a shelf life of no more than a few years each, before they were overtaken by events of succumbed to forces beyond their control.”<sup>7</sup> The challenge for the Liberal government has been, therefore, to develop a policy that is nested within Canadian strategic culture that addresses Canada's enduring

---

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Linda McQuaig, “Flexing military might is capitulation to Trump, despite Liberal spin,” *Toronto Star*, 19 July 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, “Introduction: Canada and the Year in Review,” in *The Strategic Outlook for Canada: 2017*, edited by David McDonough & Charles Davies (Canadian Defence Academy Institute, 2017):1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Eugene Lang, “The Shelf Life of Defence White Papers,” *Policy Options*, 23 June 2017.

geopolitical features while demonstrating a new direction for defence that is sustainable and enduring. It has to be able to reassure allies while convincing Canadians that increased spending on defence is worth the cost.

A year into the implementation of SSE, it is worthwhile to reflect on whether Prime Minister Trudeau's Liberal government has been able to achieve a balanced policy that is poised to achieve interoperability, reassure allies and grow defence at a pace that will endure future elections. To date, SSE remains relevant and appears to have achieved its goal of reassuring Canada's allies that this government intends on taking defence spending and modernization seriously.<sup>8</sup> However, the credibility that the document developed upon its release is at risk of slipping due to challenges associated with implementing the policy: namely meeting spending goals, acquiring new equipment, and answering the call for greater engagement in peace and security missions. The ambitions laid out in the policy are of such a magnitude that it will be extremely difficult for any future government to meet more than a couple of the initiatives outlined in the policy unless global security drastically deteriorates to the extent that Canadians are willing to make sacrifices in other areas of government spending.

The following paper will have three parts. Part one will examine the enduring elements of Canadian grand strategy, including the imperative to be a part of alliances and partnerships and to contribute to collective defence agreements. Part two will examine the logic of burden sharing as well as Canada's approach to burden sharing with

---

<sup>8</sup> Julia Manchester, "Trump praises Trudeau for Canada's increased military spending," *The Hill*, 16 June 2017.

its key partnerships. The third part will examine Canada's commitment to burden sharing and collective defence as articulated in SSE to include the proposed mission contributions and increased spending.

## **ELEMENTS OF CANADIAN STRATEGIC DESIGN**

The two enduring features of Canadian defence strategy making that have persisted since confederation have been the lack of imminent threat to national sovereignty and a drive to contribute to the defence of its partners and allies. The lack of any immediate threat to Canadian territory means that there is no sense of immediacy or urgency driving Canadian defence policy.<sup>9</sup> Douglas Bland points out that, "National funds are always limited and, because there are no threats nor any imperative purposes for defence spending, defence policy will be driven by what is available, not by what is needed."<sup>10</sup> The Canadian public does not perceive any threat that would justify large defence expenditures. With the exception of periods of national mobilization, defence spending receives a lower priority when it comes to deciding on funding allocations in the annual budget, thereby allowing the governments in power to redirect funds that would have otherwise been used for defence on other more popular programs.

Not confronted by a threatening adversary on its borders, Canadian defence requirements are thereby driven by a desire to contribute to multinational alliances in the preservation of the international system and the maintenance of peace and security.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Christian Leuprecht and Joel J. Sokolsky, "Defence Policy 'Walmart Style': Canadian Lessons in 'not-so-grand' Grand Strategy," *Armed Forces and Society* 41, no 3 (2015): 542.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Bland, "Everything Military Officers Need to Know about Defence Policy-Making in Canada," In *Canadian Strategic Forecast 2000: Advance or Retreat? Canadian Defence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 2000): 18.

<sup>11</sup> Leuprecht & Sokolsky, "Defence Policy 'Walmart Style' ..., 545.

Canada engages in what the current Chief of Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance, has referred to as “contribution warfare.”<sup>12</sup> Canadian defence is fuelled by a spirit of voluntarism, that is to say a willingness to contribute to coalition efforts based on available capabilities. Canada does what it can, knowing that its larger allies will make up for contribution deficiencies in order to supply the forces required to complete the mission.

Canadian’s lack the appetite for an expanded peacetime military buildup is perfectly consistent with Canada’s geostrategic position as a middle power with deep ties to two major powers.<sup>13</sup> Christian Leuprecht and Joel Sokolsky have coined the term “realism Canadian style” to describe Canada’s foreign and defence policy approach. In their article entitled, “Defence Policy ‘Walmart Style’: Canadian Lessons in ‘not-so-grand’ Grand Strategy,” they explain that the criticism of Canada as a “free-riding” nation is unfair, and a more appropriate description would be “easy-rider”.<sup>14</sup> Canada’s approach is nested within realist logic and is the result of “deliberate, adroit, and largely successful choices.”<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, Canada has historically spent only as much as it needs to, has a military that is neither too large for its limited defence requirements, nor too small to be able to participate in coalition efforts and contributes sufficiently to be a global player relative to its size and influence. David Pratt reflects a similar line of thinking, pointing out that, “It is not unreasonable to ask why we would spend large

---

<sup>12</sup> Originally quoted in Jonathan Vance, “Tactics without Strategy or Why the Canadian Forces Do Not Campaign,” in *The Operational Art: Canadian Perspectives, Context and Concepts*, edited by Allan English, Daniel Gosselin, Howard Coombs & Laurence M. Hickey (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Joseph T. Joekel and Joel J. Sokolsky, *Canada and Collective Security: the Odd Man Out*, (New York: Praeger, 1986): 42.

<sup>14</sup> Leuprecht and Sokolsky, “Defence Policy ‘Walmart Style’ . . . , 541.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 543.

amounts of money on defence and sacrifice other public policy priorities when the results of Canadian spending a lot of money versus a little were largely the same.”<sup>16</sup> To date, Canada has suffered few serious consequences for its minimalist approach to defence.

Yet, this “easy-riding” approach has its dangers if there are not course corrections from time to time. If underspending is sustained over a prolonged period of time it leads to equipment deficiencies and capability shortfalls. Costly acquisition projects are fraught with controversy as successive governments have a difficult time convincing the public of the urgency for advanced weapon systems needed by the military in order to keep pace with potential adversaries. As major acquisition decisions, such as the replacement for the CF-18 fighter jets for example, are delayed the military is left with aging and increasingly obsolete equipment. As a result of capability deficiencies, Canadian missions are often exercises in showing the flag and representing the interests of a government who has traditionally been “less concerned about winning on the battlefield than about being seen on the battlefield.”<sup>17</sup> Writing over 30 years ago, Joseph Jockel and Joel Sokolsky observed an enduring feature of Canadian defence policy, stating, “the Canadian Armed Forces... are stretched so thin over so many roles that all of their contributions to collective security are, at the very best, militarily questionable tokens.”<sup>18</sup>

These logically consistent choices of “realism Canadian style” have occurred within a relative dearth of grand strategic aspirations, a space more suited to tactical decisions in response to near term issues. Retired Lieutenant General Ken Pennie, former

---

<sup>16</sup> David Pratt, *The 2007 Ross Ellis Memorial Lectures in Military and Strategic Studies: Is there a Grand Strategy in Canadian Foreign Policy?* (Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2008): 29.

<sup>17</sup> Leuprecht and Sokolsky, “Defence Policy ‘Walmart Style’ ...,” 551.

<sup>18</sup> Jockel and Sokolsky, *Canada and Collective Security...*, 9.

Chief of the Air Staff, recently claimed that, “Canada tends to operate at the low end of the spectrum....Canada has never developed high-end strategy which would pull all aspects of national power into a cohesive holistic framework to achieve identifiable outcomes.”<sup>19</sup> Tony Battista, the current Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Defence Academy, adds that “Unlike most other ‘middle powers’, [Canada] publishes no regular assessment of the global security trends and threats faced by the country, and has no articulated comprehensive strategy for safeguarding its interests.”<sup>20</sup> Lacking a genuine threat to its middle power status, Canada has developed a national style that nests itself in the current international order and selectively engages in focus areas in an ad hoc and reactive basis.<sup>21</sup>

Douglas Bland maintains that the lack of long term strategic thinking is due, in part, to the central role that the Prime Minister plays in setting the defence agenda. The election cycle limits the timeframe for strategic thinking to five year blocks. Any long term thinking on defence is highly contingent on the staying power of any particular government. As such, Canada’s defence policy is “whatever the prime minister of the day happens to think it is, or say it is.”<sup>22</sup> Defence policy will be shaped by the ideological inclination of the Prime Minister and has tended to be reactive rather than proactive. Bland adds, “Political leaders direct and manage defence policy sporadically from crisis

---

<sup>19</sup> Ken Pennie, “Strategic Outlook for Canada: Plus CA Change?” in *The Strategic Outlook for Canada: 2017*, edited by David McDonough & Charles Davies (Canadian Defence Academy Institute, 2017): 47

<sup>20</sup> Tony Battista, “Foreword,” in *The Strategic Outlook for Canada: 2017*, edited by David McDonough & Charles Davies (Canadian Defence Academy Institute, 2017): iv

<sup>21</sup> David S. McDonough, “Introduction”, in *Canada’s National Security in the Post 9/11 World: Strategy, Interests and Threats*, edited by David S. McDonough (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012): 6.

<sup>22</sup> Bland, “Everything Military Officers Need to Know...,” 15.

to crisis and issue by issue, free from the fetters of any national strategy.”<sup>23</sup> In sum, the structure of Canadian politics is such that the Prime Minister plays a central role in setting the direction of defence policy, but the strategic reach is limited by term lengths.

In one crucial area, however, the Prime Minister of the day can set a strategic direction that will set the tone of his or her term in office – the manner in which Canada will relate to its allies and participate in collective defence. For former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Canada’s defence partnerships became gradually less important, as he steered Canada away from multilateral alliances and pursued security engagements on a case by case basis.<sup>24</sup> Prime Minister Trudeau was quick to implement a course correction and re-center Canadian defence priorities in line with its traditional allies in accordance with traditional Canadian strategic culture. According to Nossal, Canada’s strategic culture has always involved an expansion of a ‘realm’ that Canadians felt an obligation to defend, be it the British Empire, North American defence or the Transatlantic partnership.<sup>25</sup> Unlike Harper, Trudeau recognized that Canada’s integration and participation in the league of democratic alliances is an enduring feature of Canada’s defence.

## **LOGIC OF BURDEN SHARING**

Yet, does Canada’s chronic underspending and lack of strategic vision mean that it “free-rides” on the back of its defence and security partners? As members of a collective defence organization, the individual member states of NATO are responsible to

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Karolina MacLachlan & Zachary Wolfrum, “Diplomacy Disturbed: NATO, Conservative Morality and the Unfixing of a Middle Power,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 1 (2015): 44-5.

<sup>25</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, “Defending the ‘realm’: Canadian strategic culture revisited,” *International Journal*. (Summer 2004): 504.

make appropriate and proportionate defence contributions to the alliance. This contribution is referred to in the literature on NATO as burden-sharing. In their book, *The US, NATO and Military Burden-Sharing*, Peter Kent Forster and Stephan J. Cimbala provide the most frequently cited definition of burden-sharing quoted in the literature; “burden-sharing is the distribution of cost and risks among members of a group in the process of accomplishing a common goal.”<sup>26</sup> The two key concepts in this definition are “costs” and “risks”, for some members focus more on the costs and others on the risks.

The burden-sharing debate is as old as the alliance and continues to be one of the main sources of friction between member states. Within the burden-sharing calculus, individual states rationalize defence needs against defence outputs or expenditures relative to what benefits it receives from participating in a collective defence organisation. David Haglund and Stephane Roussel explain that democratic alliances provide a rational justification for reduced defence expenditure. They state:

[T]here is an important sense in which liberal-democratic norms and principles help to instil in the smaller alliance partner, Canada in our study, a desire to minimize commitments made to ‘imperial’ defence. These norms and principles do not guarantee that minimization will always characterize the smaller power’s policy... but they do supply a ‘rational’ basis for Canada’s normally seeking to contribute as little as it thinks it can get away with, under the circumstances of the day.<sup>27</sup>

According to the logic of collective defence, the collective contribution of multiple states provides a deterrence factor that protects smaller states. Larger states, however, end up

---

<sup>26</sup> Peter Kent Forster & Stephan J. Cimbala, *The US, NATO and Military Burden-Sharing* (London & New York: Frank Cass, 2005): 1.

<sup>27</sup> David G. Haglund & Stephane Roussel, “Is the Democratic Alliance A Ticket to (Free) Ride? Canada’s ‘Imperial Commitments,’ From the Interwar Period to the Present.” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 5, no 1 (2007):3.

assuming a greater proportionate share of the burden because they have a greater vested interest in the overall deterrence effect of the alliance.

There have been some benefits that the entire body has enjoyed on account of this arrangement. Collective defence has allowed for a certain degree of flexibility amongst its members, confident that as a bloc they are too large to attack. The result has been that member countries are arguably more prosperous and free than would have otherwise been the case if they would have maintained the balance of power alliance structure that was commonplace prior to the Second World War. Smaller states have been able to take advantage of the security umbrella provided by collective defence to reinvest money that would have otherwise been spent on defence on other segments of their society, such as social programs. Larger states are able to increase their influence by absorbing additional states under its security umbrella, and by extension its sphere of influence.<sup>28</sup>

However, many partners have become overly reliant on collective security guarantees. If one or two states become militarily impotent the alliance is still able to function, but if a large part of the alliance becomes ineffective then it places an undue strain on the major powers to carry the burden. This has become the case since the end of the Cold War as many partner states have chronically underspent for decades and have allowed their militaries to become borderline obsolete. The costs of security have changed, the risks are different, the group has expanded and the goals have shifted. With

---

<sup>28</sup> Joel Sokolsky in a conversation with the author.

each of these factors, member states have adjusted their position with respect to burden-sharing relative to their defence policies.<sup>29</sup>

The resulting imbalance has become a major domestic policy issue in the US as threats to abandon the partnership have been growing in popularity amongst the American electorate. Most member states have by in large adopted defence policies relative to US contributions, thereby becoming comfortable with letting the US remain the dominant contributor by a significant margin, whereas the US has had to develop policies independent of the alliance contributions while continuously pressuring the alliance members to contribute more in order to ease the US burden.<sup>30</sup>

Defence spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) has been the standard measure of national commitment to burden sharing on collective security that is the most often quoted and discussed both by the US leadership and by NATO secretary generals. Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus amongst defence academics that defense spending as a percentage of GDP is not an effective, accurate or useful measurement of burden-sharing contribution,<sup>31</sup> and the current Liberal government does not believe that percentage of GDP spending is an accurate representation of Canada's

---

<sup>29</sup> Ida M. Oma, "Explaining States' Burden-Sharing Behaviour within NATO," *Cooperation and Conflict* (2012): 563.

<sup>30</sup> Graeme P. Herd & John Kriendler, "NATO in the age of uncertainty: Structural shifts and the transatlantic bargains?" in *Understanding NATO in the 21st Century: Alliance strategies, security and global governance*, editors Graeme P. Herd and John Kriendler (London and New York: Routledge, 2013): 2. One of numerous recent examples was the retirement speech of former U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, who said, "NATO could face a 'dim if not dismal' future if military spending shortages, national caveats, and the political will to contribute to NATO missions were not addressed, given, among other things, that this generation's 'emotional and historical attachment to NATO' is 'aging out.'"

<sup>31</sup> Keith Hartley & Todd Sandler, "NATO Burden-Sharing: Past and Future," *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 6 (1999): 669; Benjamin Zyla, "NATO and post-Cold War burden-sharing: Canada the laggard?" *International Journal* (Spring 2009): 399.

contribution to NATO.<sup>32</sup> At a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in February 2017, Trudeau said, “When you look at the countries that regularly step up – delivering troops, participating in missions, being there to do the heavy lifting in the alliance – Germany and Canada have always been amongst the strongest actors in NATO.”<sup>33</sup>

If member states are not able to account for their contribution based on a spending metric, an explanation that accounts more for risks and contributions may substitute. In Canada’s case part of the rationale for outsized contributions to dangerous NATO missions such as International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) can be explained using a contribution based metric and applying the rationale of the alliance dependency theory. According to this theory, “the greater a state’s dependence on an ally, the more likely it is to accommodate its protector’s request for support.”<sup>34</sup> Alliance dependence theory seeks to explain why states contribute when they are not compelled to because they are dependent on the US security guarantee and do not want to upset Washington with a lack of meaningful contribution.<sup>35</sup> Repercussions may not be direct and immediate, but they can manifest themselves in other aspects of their separate bi-lateral relations. Canada is particularly vulnerable to the dynamics of alliance dependence due to its economic integration with the US. There are also some trade-offs for states that are bound to the alliance in this way, as it places them in a dilemma between autonomy and security,

---

<sup>32</sup> Mike Blanchfield, “Trudeau says Canada one of NATO’s ‘strongest actors’ without committing more money,” *The Canadian Press*, 17 February 2017.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Oma, “Explaining States...,” 565.

<sup>35</sup> Tim Haesebrouck, “NATO Burden Sharing in Libya: A Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (2016): 3; Martial Foucault & Frederic Merand, “The Challenge of Burden-Sharing,” *International Journal* (Spring 2012): 425.

fearing entrapment into participating in a conflict that is not in their own national interest on the one hand, and being abandoned as a punishment for not aligning on the other.<sup>36</sup>

Benjamin Zyla has argued against using a GDP indicator as the measurement of contribution to collective security, claiming that it is a relic of the Cold War era for the alliance and does not reflect NATO's new security role and functions.<sup>37</sup> Keith Hartley and Todd Sandler agree, arguing that the levels of participation in NATO peace-keeping operations also need to be accounted for in assessment of burden-sharing.<sup>38</sup> Zyla advocates six different metrics to measure allied contributions: first, the number of active duty personnel; second, the number of peacekeepers deployed on non-UN financed missions; third, contribution to NATO's common budgets; fourth, the contribution of member states towards NATO's rapid reaction forces; fifth, the level of spending devoted to infrastructure improvements; and sixth, and the level of foreign assistance.<sup>39</sup> Zyla claims that when viewing contributions to collective security in this light Canada's contribution is consistent with its demographics and economic performance. Although Canada is well below most states with respect to relative spending, it is consistently one of the top contributors to NATO missions when measured relative to overall number of active duty military personnel.<sup>40</sup>

Even though defence spending as a percentage of GDP is widely viewed as a weak indicator of allied contribution to collective defense, it remains the principle metric

---

<sup>36</sup> Oma, "Explaining States...", 565.

<sup>37</sup> Zyla, "NATO and post-Cold War...", 358; Benjamin Zyla, "Who is free-riding in NATO's peace operations in the 1990s?" *International Peacekeeping* 23, no. 3 (April 2016): 417.

<sup>38</sup> Hartley & Sandler, "NATO Burden-Sharing...", 673.

<sup>39</sup> Zyla, "NATO and post-Cold War...", 359.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

used by the alliance to pressure those who spend less to spend more. This pressure by the US to increase defence spending does not necessarily directly affect NATO member defence policies on spending, but it does force them to demonstrate contribution in some meaningful way. As such, all NATO members need to include elements of how they are going to meet their commitments to the alliance and how they share some of the burden of collective defence. SSE should be read as Canada's statement on how it intends to meet its commitments to burden-sharing, even if there is no current projection to reach the 2 percent benchmark.<sup>41</sup>

### **CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION – STRONG, SECURE, ENGAGED**

SSE aspires to reverse the trends in underspending and underequipping with an ambitious spending forecast coupled with a robust framework for multi-mission contributions. It is indeed ambitious in every respect – increased spending, equipment upgrades and acquisitions, increased personnel, and a robust contribution to expeditionary operations. Spending is set to increase 70 percent over a ten year period from CAD 18.9 billion in 2016-17 to CAD 32.7 billion by 2026-27.<sup>42</sup> Mission commitments are to expand to enable the CAF to deploy up to 6,500 personnel on seven separation missions of various sizes and durations.<sup>43</sup> It is so ambitious that one cannot help but wonder how the Liberal government, with its legacy of neglect of defence spending, will overcome its historical tendencies and fulfill its promises. Is the new

---

<sup>41</sup> Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, "Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy," (Ottawa: DND, June 2017): 43. As a percentage of GDP the Liberal government aims to reach 1.4 percent by 2024-25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

direction on defence a true revolution of thinking within the Liberal Party, or is it a political sleight of hand?

In his analysis of defence policy statements and spending promises, Eugene Lang notes that the pattern over the last few decades sees the policies lasting from a couple of months to a couple of years at best.<sup>44</sup> He points to three main forces undermine defence policy statements: first, structural debt phenomenon; second, shifts in the global political landscape; and third, change in government. Structural debt is the most significant factor, as, “Structural deficits...invariably lead to some form of departmental spending restraint or austerity initiative.”<sup>45</sup> He adds that, “defence can never be exempt from a spending restraint initiative...Cutting the defence budget in austere times is in fact one of the few areas of Canadian public policy where there has been a rock solid bi-partisan consensus for a generation.”<sup>46</sup> However, Lang is optimistic that the structural deficit phenomenon does not apply in the current case because the current deficit is not structural; however, this could change depending on the Liberal’s spending patterns.

In his monograph entitled, *Following the Funding in Strong, Secure Engaged*, David Perry examines the challenges associated with implementing the cost of SSE and evaluates the likelihood that the Liberal government will achieve the spending goals that it has set for itself.<sup>47</sup> The main challenge he foresees in the short term is the department’s ability to actually spend the allocated funds.<sup>48</sup> He notes that “In the first fiscal year of the

---

<sup>44</sup> Lang, “The Shelf Life...”

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> David Perry, *Following the Funding in Strong, Secure Engaged*, (Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, January 2018):1.

<sup>48</sup> Eugene Lang follows the same line of reasoning in, *Use It or Lose It: SSE and DND's Chronic Underspensing Problem*, (Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, May 2018).

policy, DND is on track to deliver barely better than half of the intended spending on new equipment and infrastructure.”<sup>49</sup> He agrees with Lang that the main long term threat is debt restructuring, pointing out that “The history of Canadian defence budgeting would indicate that Strong, Secure, Engaged funding will not survive any federal deficit reduction exercise.”<sup>50</sup> Perry also suggests that although the Liberal government has made a concerted effort to demonstrate how the new policy demonstrates Canadian commitment to burden-sharing within the NATO spending benchmarks, there is no indication that the spending will come anywhere near the 2 percent range, likely topping off around 1.4 percent. As such, the spending program is not as ambitious as it would seem at the outset since “the policy would see the share of GDP devoted to defence rise from a post-Cold War low point but only return to where it was at the end of the Decade of Budget Darkness.”<sup>51</sup>

The timing of the release of the document could not be more deliberately programed, coming as it does on the cusp of NAFTA renegotiations. James Eayrs noted a feature of Canadian defence in 1965, stating,

The main and overriding motive for the maintenance of Canadian military establishment since the Second World War has little to do with our national security as such [...] it has everything to do with underpinning our diplomatic and negotiating position vis-à-vis various international organisations and other countries.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Perry, *Following the Funding ...*, 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>52</sup> James Eayrs, “Military Policy and Middle Power: The Canadian Experience,” in *Canada’s Role as a Middle Power*, edited by J. King Gordon (1965): 84, quoted in Leuprecht and Sokolsky, “Defence Policy ‘Walmart Style’ ...,” 545.

Canada's current low level of defence spending and equipment acquisition puts it in a weak negotiating position for NAFTA renegotiations. Yet, a promise to spend more on defence and to acquire more equipment, while committing to a robust relative contributions to a number of varied operations, means indirectly that Canada will be buying US produced arms, thereby making it a more reliable trading partner.

For Canada, economic well-being and defence are closely linked to its relationship with the United States.<sup>53</sup> Canada has developed a dependency on US trade that has subsequently become a vulnerability. Richard Kim Nossal, Stephane Roussel and Stephane Paquin highlight that one of the consequences of "Canada's economic sensitivity and vulnerability is that any foreign policy issues become linked to Canadian-American relations,"<sup>54</sup> adding that, "Little wonder, then, that Canadian officials frequently demonstrate considerable sensitivity to how their foreign policy decisions are likely to be received in Washington."<sup>55</sup>

Canada's strategic link with the US is a key facet of Canadian grand strategy, and it is one that has been threatened by the unpredictable behaviour of President Trump on a number of key strategic issues. David Pratt highlights the centrality of this relationship for both Canada and NATO, saying, "Like the rest of our NATO allies, Canada looks to the United States for leadership on strategic issues. When the leadership is absent, Canada's strategic objectives suffer. Whether we like it or not, on a geostrategic level, we

---

<sup>53</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, Stephane Roussel & Stephane Paquin. *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015): 34.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-6.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

are joined at the hip with the Americans.”<sup>56</sup> Roy Rempel mirrors these features of Canadian foreign policy, maintaining that the irony of the Canadian position is that the main way for Canada to achieve any sort of independence in the international system is to have an effective partnership with the US.<sup>57</sup> For Pratt and Charles Doran Canada’s greatest soft power asset rests in its ability to maintain a healthy relationship with the US. They highlight that, “When coordination of policy is at its best between Ottawa and Washington, Canada is able to communicate with the United States not only on bilateral matters but also on multilateral matters in a fashion that perhaps no other government can.”<sup>58</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Given its ambition and the associated prolonged implementation timeline, the Liberal Government’s Defence Policy should be read more as an exercise in reassuring Canada’s allies than as an earnest effort to dramatically reverse the long decline of Canada’s competitive military capability. Trudeau’s approach to multilateralism and a renewed commitment to liberal values is one of the best ways to adjust to an unpredictable American President. As Doran and Pratt point out that Canada’s multilateral approach “has also been critical as a means of moderating or tempering the U.S. inclinations towards unilateralism and as an instrument for expressing Canadian

---

<sup>56</sup> Pratt, *The 2007 Ross Ellis Memorial Lectures...*, 36.

<sup>57</sup> Roy Rempel, *Dreamland: How Canada’s Pretend Foreign Policy Has Undermined Sovereignty*, (Montreal & Kingston: Breakout Press, 2006): 5.

<sup>58</sup> Charles F. Doran, & David Pratt, “The Need for a Canadian Grand Strategy,” in *Canada’s National Security in the Post 9/11 World: Strategy, Interests and Threats*, edited by David S. McDonough (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012). 35.

values, interests and aspirations.”<sup>59</sup> Pratt adds, “The absence of an American grand strategy presents a challenge for Canada because, as the early Cold War demonstrated, we are at our best when we are working synergistically as a part of a larger scheme with allies toward a common objective.”<sup>60</sup> Canada needs its partners in defence and as such needs to show that it will remain a good partner in its own right.

Nossal holds a more cynical view, arguing that the relative decline of US power and global dominance is going to force Canada to be more pro-active with its defence requirements. He believes that Canada is no longer going to be able to simply default to working with the Americans but will have to become closer to its other allies and partners, which in turn will require that it assume greater proportions of the burden. He believes that the only way for Canada to truly remain “engaged in the world, Canadians would have to agree to spend vastly more than we do now on defence.”<sup>61</sup> The unpredictability of the US role and the underwriter on NATO security has meant that all partner nations have had to reconsider their own contributions and levels of commitments. For Nossal this means that policy analysts and defence critics are going to have to carefully monitor this space for pending redirections and shifts in US focus. The next few years promise to be unpredictable.

Yet, unless the status quo shifts dramatically, it is hard to imagine the current government not following the standard pattern in defence policy making. The current

---

<sup>59</sup> Doran, Charles F. and David Pratt. “The Need for a Canadian Grand Strategy.” *Canada’s National Security in the Post 9/11 World: Strategy, Interests and Threats*. Ed David S. McDonough. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012): 28.

<sup>60</sup> Pratt, *The 2007 Ross Ellis Memorial Lectures...*, 36.

<sup>61</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, “Canada’s Strategic Outlook: A Long-Term View,” in *Vimy Paper Volume 36 – 2018: The Strategic Outlook for Canada, Canadian Security and Defence in a New World (Dis)Order*. edited by Craig Leslie Mantle and Christopher Cowan (Conference of Defence Associations Institute, 2018): 9.

government has much to gain in its trade negotiations and global engagement strategy by articulating lofty aspirations, while incremental renegeing on defence commitments will cost little politically. Canadians want a military that can participate and make symbolic contributions to noble causes. As long as it has a force of educated, well trained and adaptive personnel, it will be able to make contributions to a wide range of coalition operations. Successive governments have learned that Canada will continue to be asked to contribute its forces, no matter how outdated its equipment, so there is no real urgency to build a force that is truly competitive on the world stage. Thus, only a true shock to the international system will force Canada to make substantial changes to the way it implements ambitious defence policies.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bland, Douglas. "Everything Military Officers Need to Know About Defence Policy Making in Canada." *Canadian Strategic Forecast 2000: Advance or Retreat? Canadian Defence in the 21st Century*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 2000: 15-29.
- Government of Canada. Department of National Defence. "Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy." Ottawa: DND, June 2017.
- Forster, Peter Kent and Stephan J. Cimbala. *The US, NATO and Military Burden Sharing*. London & New York: Frank Cass, 2005.
- Foucault, Martial & Frederic Merand. "The Challenge of Burden-Sharing." *International Journal* 67, no 2 (Spring 2012): 423-429.
- Haesebrouck, Tim. "NATO Burden Sharing in Libya: A Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no 10 (2016): 2235-2261.
- Haglund, David G. "The NATO of its dreams: Canada and the cooperative security alliance." *International Journal* 52, no. 3 (summer 1997).
- Haglund David G. & Stephane Roussel. "Is the Democratic Alliance A Ticket to (Free) Ride? Canada's "Imperial Commitments," From the Interwar Period to the Present." *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 5, no. 1 (2007): 1-24.
- Hartley, Keith and Todd Sandler. "NATO Burden-Sharing: Past and Future." *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 6, (1999): 665-680.
- Herd, Graeme P. and John Kriendler. "NATO in the age of uncertainty: Structural shifts and the transatlantic bargains?" in *Understanding NATO in the 21th Century: Alliance Strategies, Security and Global Governance*. Editors Graeme P. Herd and John Kriendler. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Holloway, Steven Kendall. *Canadian Foreign Policy: Defining the National Interest*. Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2006.
- Jockel, Joseph T. and Joel J. Sokolsky. "Canada and NATO: Keeping Ottawa in, expenses down, criticism out...and the country secure." *International Journal* 64, no.2 (Spring 2009): 315-336
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Canada and Collective Security: the Odd Man Out*. New York: Praeger, 1986.

- Lang, Eugene. "Use It or Lose It: SSE and DND's Chronic Underspensing Problem." *Canadian Global Affairs Institute* (May 2018).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Shelf Life of Defence White Papers." *Policy Options* (June 23, 2017).
- Leuprecht, Christian and Joel J. Sokolsky. "Defence Policy 'Walmart Style': Canadian Lessons in 'not-so-grand' Grand Strategy." *Armed Forces and Society* 41, no 3 (2015): 541-562.
- McDonough, David. *Canada's National Security in the Post-9/11 World: Strategy, Interests and Threats*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- MacLachlan, Karolina, and Zachary Wolfraim. "Diplomacy Disturbed: NATO, Conservative Morality and the Unfixing of a Middle Power." *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 1 (2015): 43-69.
- Nossal, Kim Richard. "Defending the 'realm': Canadian strategic culture revisited." *International Journal* 59, no.3 (Summer 2004): 503-520.
- Nossal, Kim Richard, Stephane Roussel & Stephane Paquin. *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015.
- Oma, Ida M. "Explaining States' Burden-Sharing Behaviour within NATO". *Cooperation and Conflict* 47, no.4 (2012): 562-573 .
- Paris, Roland. *Missing in Action: What Happened to Canada's Foreign Policy?* Ottawa, Canada: University of Ottawa Centre for International Policy Studies, 2013.
- Perry, David. *Following the Funding in Strong, Secure Engaged*. Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, January 2018.
- Pratt, David. *The 2007 Ross Ellis Memorial Lectures in Military and Strategic Studies: Is there a Grand Strategy in Canadian Foreign Policy?* Calgary: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2008.
- Rempel, Roy. *Dreamland: How Canada's Pretend Foreign Policy had Undermined Sovereignty*. Montreal & Kingston: Breakout Press, 2006.
- Segal, Hugh. "A Grand Strategy for a Small Country." *Canadian Military Journal*, (Autumn 2003): 3-6.
- Shea, Jamie. "Keeping NATO Relevant." *Policy Outlook* (April 2012): 1-17.
- Stone, Craig J. & Binyam Solomon. "Canadian defence policy and spending." *Defence Peace and Economics* 16 no.3, (Aug 2006): 145-169.