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MDS Research Project

**Optics and Expediencies:
Understanding the Perception and the Role of the Canadian Forces in
Canada's Shifting Political Landscape**

By /par

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ABSTRACT

Historically, Canada has been drawn into international conflict and used these missions to foster significant independent foreign policy positions. The attainment of national independence for Canada is commendable, we are a peaceful democracy that is the envy of the world; though our independence was achieved peacefully, the protection of that independence rests with the Canadian military. How and why successive governments use the Canadian forces to achieve political ends is the subject of this paper.

This paper argues that the Government of Canada cannot continue to ignore the development of military policy and in particular an effective maritime strategy. In the past, crises have been the incendiary that forced the government to develop policy, a practice that needs to stop. As Canada begins to look to the North to develop the untapped bounty of natural resources, it is imperative that a maritime strategy be developed to articulate Canada's sovereignty in the vast Arctic regions.

INTRODUCTION

Because the Canadian public has historically been removed from and generally disinterested in military matters, Canadian politicians have been likewise disengaged. One example of this disconnect was the seemingly nonchalant approach taken by Mr. Claude Bachand, Member of Parliament (Bloc Québécois), during a not-so-friendly questioning of the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Henault and Chief of the Maritime Staff, Vice Admiral MacLean. Bachand said the following:

To my mind, it's quicker to keep our eyes and ears open for illegal activities across the country and to maintain surveillance of our coasts with aircraft and UAVs than it is with submarines . . . UAVs perform better and are more cost effective to operate than submarines. I'm not implying that submarines serve no purpose. Great Britain and the US continue to operate a fleet of nuclear submarines. These remain important vehicles to these two nations.¹

With that approach to defence matters--an approach that parallels those of Canada's past--it is not surprising that domestic politics has had a detrimental affect on Canadian defence policy. Since the end of the Second World War, the Canadian military has been the victim of optics and political perceptions. The military has been either enhanced or downsized, restructured or renewed, depending on a politics of shifting expediencies. That fickleness begs an important question: Why is it that, in a wealthy country like Canada, governments tend to ignore national security and provide so little leadership in

¹ Statement and follow-up question by Mr. Claude Bachand, Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, evidence, Wednesday, October 20, 2004, 1st session, 38th parliament, page 7. Mr. Bachand went on to lecture the CDS and CMS on the value of UAVs for some time. Further research into previous committee testimony in order to determine whether Mr. Bachand received expert advice on UAVs was indeterminate. The point is that Canada's two most senior military experts in national defence and security were on the receiving end of a predetermined maritime surveillance strategy, from a committee member with limited military knowledge and whose mandate was to review policy and not tactics. The CDS and CMS were testifying before the committee to explain why the CF acquired four used Trafalgar Class SSKs. The committee called for the two senior officers in light of the fire on board HMCS CHICOUTIMI.

the delivery of strategic policy? *The answer can only be that the Prime Minister and cabinet have difficulty understanding the role of military power and national security strategy and therefore allow the military to be at the behest of political expedience.*

Under the current political system in Canada, two committees have responsibilities for defence issues. The first, called the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans' Affairs (SCONDVA), is comprised of elected parliamentarians, while the second, the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence (SCONSAD), is comprised of non-elected senators. Though both committees are partisan by nature, they serve as the government's only forum to provide oversight of decisions that affect national defence. The dismal effectiveness of these committees was summed up in the words of the SCONDVA committee chairman in 2005:

Obviously Canada is a democracy and we have what I believe is an outstanding military, given the resources that governments have directed to the military over a period of time. I quite frankly and unabashedly say it hasn't been enough—by various governments of different stripes, I might add. We all hope, on both sides of this table, that we shall direct more of the Canadian taxpayers' dollars to the Canadian forces.²

Despite the best intentions of these committees, the hard work of pro-military lobby groups, and the efforts by military professionals themselves, there appears to be little political will, historically and today, for the senior leadership of government to provide support to the military. That lack of political will is precisely the historical condition that this study examines.

The research approach herein necessitates some explanation of boundaries and context. In order to examine the historical condition of tepid political support to the

² Pat O'Brien, Chairman, House of Commons Canada, Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, evidence, Wednesday, October 20, 2004, 1st session, 38th parliament, page 20.

Canadian forces and national security, I will use the maritime domain as the basis of my study. My focus, then, is not on the military writ large, but on maritime strategy and the political understanding of sea power as it pertains to the Canadian navy.

The idea that sea power can be used in support of national ambitions is by no means a new concept. Military theorists such as Mahan,³ and more recently Gray⁴ and Friedman,⁵ have been writing about and researching this idea for decades, and concluding, in each case, that sea power has played a significant role in the emergence of great powers. Their body of work, however, often fails to examine the conditions of smaller powers, the so-called middle-power states, of which Canada can be classified. Because theorists have neglected to link middle-power status to sea power, one should not assume that there is no linkage. On the contrary, middle powers can and have demonstrated significant world influence through the use of sea power.⁶ Unfortunately, the political leadership of middle powers have often failed to recognize the enabling advantages, economically and strategically, that sea power delivers. Canada is a textbook example: despite a rich maritime tradition, it has often ignored sea power despite the efforts of the military leadership to promote its cause. And, ironically, this indifference has manifested itself within a context of positive deployments and exercises: in almost every decade since 1910, Canada has deployed her navy on international operations that

³ Alfred T. Mahan, Captain (USN), *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1957).

⁴ Colin S. Gray, *The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

⁵ Norman Friedman, *Seapower as Strategy: Navies and National Interests* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001).

⁶ Peter Haydon, "Sea Power and Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century: A "Medium" Power Perspective," *Maritime Security Occasional Paper (MSOP) No. 10*. Halifax: Dalhousie University Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 2000.

have resulted in great benefit to the country and ultimately great pride to the political leadership. The historical situation can only be described as a strange double vision. Canada's freedom, economic prosperity, and status in the world have been gained, in part, from her armed forces despite the often-neglectful attitude towards that same military.

This paper examines the historical condition of tepid political support for the military in three chapters. Chapter one examines historical trends in foreign policy development with a focus on the role of the military. This chapter contends that because Canada was initially dependent on British imperial security and focused on European alliances, Canadian foreign policy has been responsive to conflict and not anticipative. Most military policy, it shows, was focused primarily on Article 5 responses that left governments of the day with the option of debating Canadian involvement in conflict while carefully gauging the whims of its electorate. The events of 9/11 initiated a new, all-government approach to national security and maritime strategy, and this change has had a profound effect on cooperation among various federal departments.

Chapter two examines the creation of the Canadian naval service and the differing views of Canada's contribution to maritime strategy. It considers the historical conditions under which Canadian politicians asked whether Canada should establish its own naval force or contribute cash grants to British led imperial defence. The chapter contends that Prime Minister Laurier envisioned a naval service that would be closely aligned with the Royal Navy, but would be under Canadian command. It also shows how political pressure and differing opinions on maritime security from the Conservative opposition party and nationalist and imperialist groups torpedoed the naval service within

a year of its creation. The chapter concludes by suggesting that an understanding of naval power played a woefully small role in the political debate of that time. Rather, the overriding factor was ensuring competing interests were appeased, a motive that ensured that the naval service had no substance and therefore soon collapsed.

Chapter three examines the Cuban Missile Crisis and how the Prime Minister and cabinet of that era failed to understand their obligations under the NORAD collective security arrangements with the US. The Cuban Missile Crisis highlights the PM's disinterest in defence commitments, despite receiving obstinate advice from his military advisors. This chapter, like the previous one, concludes that cabinet was expected by the military to manage and not debate the situation in a time of heightened security.

Finally, in the conclusion, the paper examines the recent government announcement that it intends to acquire armed arctic icebreakers for Canada's navy. The paper concludes with a new operative question that has travelled with Canada since the early days of its sovereignty: is this the murmurings of a Canadian government that finally understands that a properly equipped navy could some day be in a position to defend a Canadian foreign policy issue?

FOREIGN POLICY AND MARITIME STRATEGY

The sea has always been part of Canada's history and today it is a critical part of Canadian economic interests. Those interests include an integral dependence on international and domestic trade; the management of marine resources and environmental protection; and the need to keep Canadian waters safe. Canada's maritime interests are widespread, extending well beyond the confines of its own territorial waters. As a leading international importing and exporting trading country, Canada's stability at sea and on land is fundamental to the maintenance of economic growth and high standard of living. Although the Cold War is over and there seems to be no immediate military threat to Canada, sovereignty and national interests can still be threatened at sea. Canada is not immune from acts of violence, from challenges to our sovereignty, or from illegal activities in our waters.

Despite the importance of the oceans to Canada, there has never been a strong national interest in developing significant maritime forces. Only in time of war has it been perceived as necessary to maintain a large navy and an associated air arm. This fickle interest in maritime affairs has been reflected not only in hardware capability but also in the policy forum, and it is this indifference that this chapter explores. The Canadian government has consistently avoided articulating an effective maritime strategy and therefore the individual stakeholders have been forced to go their own way concerning important policy areas. The navy, as one of the most important stakeholders, has taken it upon itself to *chart a course*, and has developed policy despite the lack of a coherent national strategy.

The primary obligation of the Canadian Forces is to defend Canada and Canadians, particularly from external military threats.⁷ They also play a key role in protecting Canadians from internal threats to their security; therefore, there is an important need for a complementary maritime strategy that brings all of the different government agencies together to harmonize and coordinate maritime security missions.

Canadian Foreign and Defence Policy

Historically, for political and economic reasons, Canadian foreign policy has always been directed predominately towards the European continent. Political relations and defence policies have therefore all developed certain basic themes. Political and economic relations are strongest with the US, the Commonwealth, Western Europe, and the French language colonies. Multilateral relations are primarily conducted through the United Nations and its related agencies. The long-standing defence ties are with Western Europe and the United States through NATO and NORAD.

Since Confederation, Canada's economic lifeline has been foreign trade. Economic relations are in turn closely tied to important security and political relations. These foreign relations have changed over the years but can generally be categorized into three distinct periods of political and defence policy throughout Canada's history: imperialism, isolationism, and internationalism.

The demands of imperialism dominated most of the activities of Canada's early history. These demands were underscored by an overt sentimental and legal attachment to the British Empire, which required Canada to pay a dual loyalty to Canada and

⁷ Department of National Defence. *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy*. (Canada: April 2004), http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/docs/Publications/NatSecurnat/natsecurnat_e.pdf, Internet; accessed 1 April 2007, 47.

Empire. It is hard to imagine today that during this imperial period Canada was responsible for domestic policy only; anything external was negotiated through and by the British Foreign Office in London. This situation changed after World War One when Canada gained greater autonomy in the interwar period. Although French-English relations and the conscription issue had much to do with Canada's budding independence, there was shrinking desire in Canada to maintain the dual loyalty to Canada and the Empire. Certainly, by the end of World War One, Canada's demand for a separate membership in the newly formed League of Nations showed nascent Canadian nationalism. Then, in 1931, the Statute of Westminster, ended Canada's obligatory reliance on Britain to negotiate foreign affairs.⁸ Canada was now free to establish autonomous diplomatic relations with the United States, the newly created Commonwealth, and any other country of its choosing.

When imperialism faded, it left a legacy of Canadian discontent with European affairs in its wake. European politics had left too many Canadians dead in France and Belgium, and this resentment forced Canada to minimize its obligations under collective defence, a position that became manifest as isolationism. Canada gladly followed the French and British policies of appeasement toward the expansionary policies of Germany and reduced military funding accordingly. However, isolationism, although worth mentioning, was hardly a policy worth following when, in 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Throughout the war, Canada rebuilt its ties with the European powers but did so in an autonomous manner, leveraging economic advantages and the importance of Canada's contribution to the Allied cause.

⁸ G.P. de T. Glazebrook, *A History of Canadian External Relations* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), 90-91.

By the end of the war, Canadian leaders realized that building strong international institutions was the best way to manage conflict between countries. One important feature of this new internationalist stance was that Canada became firmly aligned with the United States and Western Europe against the Soviet Union and the Communist Block. The key figure in pioneering this stance was Lester Pearson, first as Undersecretary of State for External Relations in 1946, then as Secretary of State for External Affairs in 1948, and finally as Prime Minister in 1963.⁹ From a military and internationalist perspective, the tide turned when Canada agreed in 1949 to join a peacetime military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. During his first speech as Foreign Minister, Pearson emphasized the government's strong position on collective security: "the Canadian government has made it clear that it is not only willing, but anxious, to join the other North Atlantic democracies in establishing a regional collective security pact for the North Atlantic".¹⁰ Two months earlier, the Minister of National Defence, Brooke Claxton, addressed the House of Commons and declared one of Canada's objectives was: "to work out with other free nations plans for joint defence based on self-help and mutual aid as part of a combined effort to preserve peace and to restrain aggression."¹¹ Under Pearson's leadership, Canada played an important role in structuring the new Commonwealth. Additionally, Pearson was a strong advocate of

⁹ Canada, *The Prime Ministers of Canada*, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/key/pm/index.asp?Language=E> Internet; accessed 1 April 2007.

¹⁰ Department of External Affairs, Information Division Reference Papers, No. 33, 'Statements made by the Canadian Government on the Proposed North Atlantic Treaty, 20 January 1948-25 October 1948,' 29 October 1948 (Ottawa, mimeographed) quoted in: James Eayrs, *In Defence Of Canada, Growing Up Allied*, (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1980), 58.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Canada's commitment to and participation in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. What followed were significant international military and diplomatic commitments. Canadian troops and ships were sent to Korea in 1950, followed by a very active role in United Nations peacekeeping operations. It should be noted that for the most part the Canadian public supported these international military and diplomatic activities, and the internationalist position. The defeat of John Diefenbaker's government in 1963 over Canada's position on accepting US nuclear warheads onto Canadian soil was an indication of the public's internationalist support.¹²

Although successive Canadian Prime Ministers, in particular Trudeau, have weakened the strong internationalist brand of Canadian foreign policy, the two components of global involvement – defence and foreign trade – have always been present in varying degrees in Canada's foreign policy.¹³ In 1968, Trudeau announced a major review and follow-on reduction of Canada's force posture in NATO.¹⁴ The resultant reduction in military capability was short-lived, when, in November of 1976, the Parti Québécois was elected, a political party dedicated to Québec's political separation from Canada. According to Dewitt and Kirton, Trudeau immediately recognized the

¹² In 1963, Canadian politicians debated the contentious issue of whether or not to accept nuclear weapons. John Diefenbaker, then Prime Minister, was reluctant to admit nuclear warheads onto Canadian soil. His minority government was defeated on a vote of confidence in the House of Commons, and in the ensuing election, the nuclear issue was heavily debated. The Liberals, under Pearson's leadership, promised to accept nuclear warheads and were returned to power with a minority government.

¹³ It should be noted that in one of his last acts as Prime Minister, Trudeau agreed to allow the United States to test an unarmed cruise missile over Canadian territory. Additionally, during his "farewell tour," Trudeau visited several European capitals with his proposals to bridge the frigid relations between East and West. Although unsuccessful, it was further evidence of a strong Canadian internationalist posture.

¹⁴ David Dewitt and John Kirton, *Canada as a Principal Power: A Study in Foreign Policy and International Relations* (Toronto: John Wiley and Sons Canada Limited, 1983), 70.

significance of political instability, and, in particular, how this instability would be perceived by the Americans:

The Trudeau government, feeling that Canada was vulnerable, turned anxiously to see the US reaction, and the US, in its own national interest, responded with a pro-federalist co-operative program symbolized in an American invitation for Pierre Trudeau to address the United States Congress in February 1977. . . . For Canada, this implied a revision of its earlier approach to the politico-military demands of NATO in its Atlantic and central European theatres. From 1975 onward, Canada purchased new tanks, long-range patrol aircraft, and interceptor aircraft to replace the aging weaponry that implemented its NATO military roles.¹⁵

Mulroney, hampered by a burgeoning deficit, continued to advance foreign policy issues along the lines of trade and economics, a strategy largely adopted by his successor, Chrétien. What was striking during the last two decades of the twentieth century was the face of foreign and defence policy. Trudeau publicly cut military commitments to NATO in Europe and slashed the defence budget at home. He openly negotiated these reductions and firmly entrenched Canada as a “middle power.” Unlike Trudeau, Mulroney and Chrétien were unwilling to negotiate new defence arrangements with allies and did what has become the current operating principal for Canadian defence policy, namely delivering policy and strategic direction to Canada’s military by the annual budgeting process.

Throughout the past three decades it has become increasingly expensive to equip Canada's military with the modern military hardware needed. This prohibitive cost meant that Canada could no longer afford large forces. While the so-called “peace dividend” provided some relief as Canada pulled its forces out of Europe, the country could not avoid the eventual rust out that plagued military equipment. More than anything, it was

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

that equipment that backed up Canada's international defence commitments. Therefore, as a cynic might observe, what better way to renege on international commitments than to under-fund equipment acquisition. Peacekeeping, a manpower-intensive but not equipment-dependent activity, was seen by Canada as a minimum response to a wider military contribution. This manpower-intensive response was an easy foreign policy route; Canada could claim support of the 'blue berets' while abrogating NATO military commitments.

Canada continues to use this tactic, which has invited criticism from many fronts at home and abroad.¹⁶ It may seem that Canada has not lived up to its military commitments (for instance reducing naval ship participation the Standing Naval Force Atlantic), but given the challenging economic situation in the 1990s, Canada can be forgiven for not having the means to fund discretionary operations. But while this economic argument is compelling, why has Canada not in turn restructured foreign policy commitments and provided follow-up domestic policies and strategies? The answer lies in the complex nature of the Canadian legislative process and the widespread disagreement among authoritative bodies on the need for change and on the appropriate response.¹⁷

¹⁶ For national and international criticism of Canadian military funding see: Dr. Alan G. Sens, "Living In A Renovated NATO," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 1, No 4 (Winter 2000-2001): 79-86. Douglas Alan Ross, "From a Cheap Ride to a Free Ride to No Ride at All?" *International Journal*, Vol 50 (Autumn 1995): 721-730. David G Haglund, "The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited: (Geo) Political Metaphor and the Logic of Canadian Foreign Policy." *The American Review of Canadian Studies*. Vol 29, No 2 (Summer 1999): 211.

¹⁷ Janice Gross Stein, "Ideas, Even Good Ideas, Are Not Enough: Changing Canada's Foreign and Defence Policies," *International Journal* Vol L, no. 1 (Winter 1994-5): 60-70.

From examining foreign and military policy historically, the focus will now shift to the maritime domain to take up these questions. In the process I will explore the effect that a hollow foreign policy has had on domestic strategy.

Maritime Strategy and Naval Policy

A direct link between how a country espouses foreign policy, national security objectives, and military strategy exists. Canada's position on international issues has a direct impact on the security of Canadian citizens at home or abroad and therefore Canada needs an effective strategy that delivers this security. From a bottom-up perspective, a strategy can be created by the type and capability of the military and constabulary forces available. Given that some components of this capability, for instance warships, take years to develop, it is obvious that Canada's foreign policy is driven to a large extent by defence commitments from previous generations. If this were indeed the case then previous Canadian governments should have made investments in the future of Canadian foreign policy that would be discernable in the fleets of today. Unfortunately, this is not the case and today the Canadian government finds itself in an embarrassing position, unable to exert appropriate sovereignty in the high Arctic, unable to police and exert influence in Canadian fishing zones, and even unable to stop the tide of criticism from within that Canada is an incomplete maritime nation.¹⁸

It stands to reason that naval policy in Canada can only be effectively delivered from a comprehensive maritime strategy that is in lock step with consistent foreign policy. Unfortunately, Canadian history has shown that equipping Canada's navy has rarely been about sea power or backing up foreign policy initiatives. More often than not, the navy has been equipped in direct response to a threats-based approach. For example, during the Cold War, Canada maintained a strong anti-submarine warfare

¹⁸ See Navy League of Canada, *Canada, An Incomplete Maritime Nation: A Look At The Major Policy Issues Affecting The Vitality And Potential Of Canada's Maritime Sector*, <http://www.NavyLeague.ca/eng/ma/advocacy/2003paper.asp>, Internet; accessed 1 April 2007.

capability, based on the NATO Alliance collective defence posture. Since the end of the Cold War and the diminishment of the Soviet submarine threat, a renewed emphasis on sea power and the employment of Canada's navy has not taken place. This is because the navy had already replaced its fleet with multi-purpose ships that could execute more than just anti-submarine missions.

In theory, Canada's political leaders tell the military what they want the military to do. In practice, this does not occur because political leaders lack the understanding of the sometimes-restrictive roles warships and military forces perform. In this climate, the leadership of the military and the leadership of the government establish a relationship in which policy is often initiated from the bottom up. Civilian control of the military is firmly established in parliamentary democracy, therefore, the approval of all policy occurs at the political level and although initiated by the Generals, they do not have the final word. What is imperative is that the military leadership provide a solid long-term understanding of military power that is anchored in the need to provide politicians with forces that are multi-purpose. In a round about way, then, the military leadership is partially to blame for failing to ensure the current fleet has the capability to operate in the high Arctic or the ability to exert influence within the exclusive economic zone. However, as the previous section highlighted, failure to meet one's international obligations can be achieved easiest by under funding that commitment.

As Canadians look to the north to exert sovereignty and develop the vast untapped natural resources, it cannot be overemphasized that Canada is currently in need of an effective maritime strategy. This strategy must be responsive and reflective of Canada's current fleet of civilian and military ships and should be an expression of the nation's

interests in all activities related to the sea. While naval forces are one means of communicating this interest, true maritime strategy has a much broader scope:

Maritime strategy involves the other functions of state power that include diplomacy, the safety and defence of merchant trade at sea, fishing, the exploitation, conservation, regulation and defence of the exclusive economic zone at sea, coastal defence, security of national borders, the protection of offshore islands as well as participation in regional and worldwide concerns relating to the use of oceans, the skies over the oceans and the land under the seas.¹⁹

In Canada, the realm of maritime strategy is the responsibility of far too many federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdictions to be effective. The Department of National Defence is but one player (and it is not the objective of this paper to suggest that National Defence should be the lead agency). However, the importance of equipping the navy to meet the needs of a maritime strategy is much more complicated than equipping the Solicitor General, Fisheries and Oceans, Border Services, or Foreign Affairs, all of which have leading roles in creating an effective maritime strategy. Canadian naval ships are built to withstand the harsh blue-water environment and combined with the need to be multi-purpose, are much more expensive to build than ships built for coast guards or police forces.

The lack of an effective maritime strategy has certainly not stopped some federal departments from publishing their own guiding documents. For instance, in 1999, the Department of National Defence led the way with *Leadmark: The Navy's Strategy for 2020*. *Leadmark* can best be described as the orphaned son of a nationally-led Canadian maritime strategy. It should have been the direct result of overarching government policy on how the navy would deliver capability to the Canadian people. *Leadmark* filled an

¹⁹ John B. Hattendorf, "What is Maritime Strategy?" *Naval History and Maritime Strategy: Collected Essays* (Kreiger Publishing, 2000): 236.

important strategic void and was a comprehensive vision of Canada's naval strategy. It was a much-needed examination of the global and structural trends that will pose challenges to national security in the future. These trends include global economics, information technology, demographics, and the environment.²⁰ The vision of *Leadmark* is clearly explained and, more importantly, this vision is tied to the security of Canada under five broad headings: Inter-State Conflict, Intra-State Conflict, Natural and Civil Disasters, International Crime, and Terrorism.²¹ However, when reading and digesting *Leadmark*, what quickly becomes apparent is the lack of input from a superior political body, for example the cabinet, that is primarily concerned with all aspects of maritime security. For instance, when *Leadmark* explains the notion of understanding threats to Canada, the reader is left wondering who has made this determination: "Although never formally codified, the notion holds that, with its territorial boundaries safe from direct conventional military assault, Canada is made more secure by seeing to the resolution of global problems at their source, before they can expand to threaten the Canadian heartland."²² This describes a strategic scenario in which Canadian forces have been directed by the government to proceed overseas to engage in combat operations. Such operations are never authorized unless directed from the political level, thus *Leadmark* ventures into territory in which it simply should not be.

Furthermore, lacking any strategic direction, *Leadmark* is forced to take an ironic approach when promoting the importance of the document: "Although intended primarily

²⁰ *Leadmark: The Navy's Strategy for 2020* (Ottawa: Directorate of Maritime Strategy, 2001) 76-77.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 77-86.

²² *Ibid.*, 11.

for naval and maritime air personnel, it will be of interest to the larger Canadian security and defence community, and to other Canadians with interests in national defence and international security.”²³ Combined with the lack of policy direction, one may infer from this statement that civilian policy makers are the intended audience of *Leadmark*.

Naval Policy, A New Era

Almost every Canadian is directly or indirectly connected to Canada’s oceans. The Navy League of Canada, in a recent critical paper observed: "Most homes and individuals use something almost every day that either has a maritime origin or has been transported by sea."²⁴ While this connection has often been an ignored aspect of Canadian life, what cannot be ignored is the attention that the world’s oceans now garner because of security and environmental awareness. Real or not, the threat to Canadian interests has generated vast amounts of discussion and probing, with some groups determined to get the message across that Canada will soon be the next victim of an international terrorist attack. The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence argues that this scenario is more a question of when as opposed to if.²⁵ Although the reliability of such statements is questionable, the Senate Committee’s interest in

²³ *Leadmark*, 3.

²⁴ Navy League of Canada, *Canada, An Incomplete Maritime Nation . . .*, 6.

²⁵ Canada, Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *Canada’s Coastlines: The Longest Under-Defended Borders In The World*, Vol I, October 2003, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/defe-e/rep-e/rep17oct03vol1-e.pdf>, Internet, accessed 1 April 2007. 8. “Furthermore, as the U.S. government is very aware, Canada is a potential conduit for those wishing to strike at the heart of America. The fact that Canada and the United States have the largest trading partnership in the world, with more than 85 per cent of Canadian exports going to the United States, makes attempts to trans-ship terrorist personnel and weaponry through Canada to the United States more a question of “when” than “if.” The likelihood of a direct attack on Canada itself falls within the same realm of probability.”

national security, post 9/11, is historically a typical Canadian political response; Canadian policy makers originate policy based on crisis.

As a fundamental obligation to the people of Canada, the government must ensure the security of Canadians: “There can be no greater role, no more important obligation for a government, than the protection and safety of its citizens.”²⁶ Spurred on by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and in the wake of overwhelming international interest in security, the Canadian government initiated policy action and produced *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy (NSP)*. The policy was an attempt to take an all of government approach to the issue of Canadian security. The policy broadly covered intelligence, emergency planning and management, public health emergencies, transportation security, border security, and international security.

For the first time since the FLQ attacks of the early 1970s, the Government of Canada, in this document, displayed a serious approach to improving transportation security -- in particular, marine security. The *NSP* detailed a plan that included new responsibilities and accountability frameworks for the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Minister of National Defence. The *NSP* also recommended the following security provisions: establishing Marine Security Operations Centres, staffed by various Other Government Departments to deal with marine security threats; increasing on-water presence to conduct surveillance, interdict and board suspect shipping; enhancing secure communication infrastructures in all departments concerned with marine security; closer working relationships with

²⁶ Department of National Defence. *Securing an Open Society* . . . , vii.

Canadian and United States marine agencies; and strengthening security at ports and other marine facilities.²⁷

All of the objectives of the *NSP* seem complementary; they also seem to be what is fundamentally required to establish a solid security foundation. What is required more than anything, however, is political will - sweeping reform of the legislation that governs the various federal departments covered in the *NSP*. There are far too many federal government departments (established by parliamentary statute laws and acts), that have within their mandate, roles that overlap other federal government departments. These overlapping jurisdictions and areas of responsibility require the stakeholders to demonstrate cooperation. For instance, in the Great Lakes district, it would be hard to imagine the Canadian Coast Guard gladly handing over three patrol boats to the RCMP to conduct surveillance and enforcement. Yet that is exactly the sort of responsibility sharing that must occur for the *NSP* to be effective.²⁸

Traditionally, the government enforced marine security by various acts of parliament, laws, and statutes. These acts and statutes certainly provide for marine security but do so in isolation of each other. The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence identified the problem with this approach:

The problem lies with multiple jurisdictions – any one of which might be assigned the “lead” during any crisis – trying to create a cohesive security structure when nearly all of the components of that loose “structure” are mandated with other priorities. This is ad hocery at its Canadian best.²⁹

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁸ Department of Transport, News Release, GC No. 001/05, For release April 22, 2005, *Government Of Canada Announces New Marine Security Initiatives*, <http://www.tc.gc.ca/mediaroom/releases/nat/2005/05-gc001ae.htm>, Accessed 01 April 2007,

²⁹ Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *Canada's Coastlines . . .*, 65.

In order to impose the cooperative spirit onto federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdictions, the Government of Canada has provided funding and infrastructure arrangements for two Marine Security Operations Centres (MSOCs) located in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Esquimalt, British Columbia. The intent of the MSOCs will be to bring together all marine-related agencies to share the burden of maritime security with the hope that collectively these agencies will cooperate genuinely. Unfortunately, the responsibility for policing within Canadian waters is dispersed out among Border Services, RCMP, and Fisheries and Oceans, and the overlap of these jurisdictions will be difficult for the leadership within the MSOCs to resolve. This is significant because the navy is currently providing the organizational leadership within the MSOCs, and as indicated, the navy has no jurisdiction within Canada's territorial waters.

The MSOCs will be located within the confines of the current naval infrastructure, a locus that is misleading. Under current legislation, the navy is involved in constabulary activities when one of the above departments requires a naval ship for transportation to an area of interest. Therefore, Canada's navy, more importantly the ships, have become a key component to the national security policy. It would therefore seem logical that this relationship is properly articulated in a Canadian naval policy. The only progress made in this area was the release in 2005 of the *International Policy Statement: Defence*, in which recognition was given to the military's traditional expeditionary role:

To carry out these activities, the Canadian Forces will re-examine their entire approach to domestic operations. In the past, Canada has structured its military primarily for international operations, while the domestic role has been treated as a secondary consideration. At home, the military's response has been to assemble a temporary force drawn from existing structures designed for other purposes,

using the resources immediately available to the local commander. Clearly, this approach will no longer suffice.³⁰

This could be interpreted to imply that National Defence will begin to take on constabulatory roles. How the navy fits into constabulatory roles has been the subject of many debates that will not be examined here. However, the strong words in the *International Policy Statement* make clear that a new Canada-centric approach to national defence is about to begin. The navy's role and function in this new defence environment needs to be articulated in an effective and meaningful naval policy.

Conclusion

Historically, Canada has relied heavily upon the seas for its economy and security. The free use of the world's oceans for trade is fundamental for our national well-being and high standard of living. Ours is a country that continues to develop important maritime shipping, resource, and industrial interests. This dependence on the seas makes the establishment of a strategy based upon national security and maritime policy critical. Even though the waters for which Canada is responsible may appear free of military threats, they are not immune from other challenges to national security and sovereignty. In keeping with Canadian history, the Canadian government has often had a hands-off relationship with the Canadian military in the area of domestic security. Until 9/11, the navy certainly followed this pattern. Although successive defence white papers spoke of domestic security, there was little done in the way of legislative reform.

³⁰ Department of National Defence. *Canada's International Policy Statement; A Role of Pride and Influence in the World: Defence*, http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/reports/dps/pdf/dps_e.pdf, Internet; accessed 01 April 2007, 18.

As it has done historically, the Canadian navy will continue to remain involved in NATO and will continue to participate in coalitions and in United Nations Security Council Resolution enforcement. While these foreign operations have normally been part of a coalition, the need to operate domestically will become a defining feature of the new naval landscape. In light of the recent international security environment, a follow-on defence and maritime security policy should be reflective of a comprehensive government approach. The Canadian navy must balance a strategy that is focused on international and domestic matters. While this balance has traditionally tipped in favour of the international, there is no doubt that the navy, “the can do service” will evolve itself to provide domestic support and leadership.

LAURIER'S VISION

A case study of the creation of Canada's navy policy underscores the motivations of the political participants and their agendas. The purpose of this study is to examine how the navy was created with the right intentions, but how these intentions became little more than dry kindling during an election campaign. In order to answer the question, *why was the Canadian navy created?*, it is important to begin by introducing three domestic factors that played a deciding role in Canada's early history. The first is that Canada had inherited from Britain a three-mile limit, beyond which Britain had total influence and control. Canada, although internally independent since 1867, had, by British law, no right to foreign expedition or dialogue. If Canada wished to venture beyond three miles, it first had to request authority from Britain. It was for this reason that Canada created a Fisheries Protection Service. Before that policy, the Royal Navy (RN), in an effort to foster better relations with the US, were refusing to interdict American fishermen operating within the Canadian declared fishing zones. Canada's only option to limit this theft was to create the Fisheries Protection Service, which despite their capability deficiencies, worked carefully to eliminate American incursions into Canadian waters.

The second domestic factor that characterized Canada's early history within the context of naval policy was Canada's total isolation from any other maritime threat. There were no neighbouring islands that could serve as a base to launch an attack against Canada. Newfoundland and Bermuda were both part of the British Empire and Greenland was part of Denmark, a traditionally small peaceful state. Moreover, Canada had an extremely long coastline, along which natural defences such as bare coastlines, ice-rimmed shores, and stern climate were protection enough. Canada was well protected by

geography from any possible enemy. The only possible enemy that could invade Canada was the neighbour to the south, and, in this relationship, there was no indication that feelings were bad. Militarily, the conclusion drawn from this was that the only attack that could be mounted against Canada would come overland, from the United States, and since the Americans had already expelled the British from the continent in the Revolutionary War, the British would likely never come to the defence of Canada if the United States invaded. Only an army, then, could defend Canada from the United States and certainly not a navy.

The third and final domestic factor that characterized Canada's early history within the context of naval policy was the fact that some Canadians continued to feel such a close relationship with the British Empire that continuing a strong alliance and membership in the RN was an unquestioned duty for Canada. Canada owed its livelihood to the seas, and the RN stood guard over these waters, in good times and in bad. To some, Canada's refusal of this alliance, would be considered a dereliction of our duty as members of the British Empire. Indeed, many English-speaking Canadians felt as if they were Britons living abroad and happily sung the praises of their heritage with membership in Loyalist organizations such as Empire clubs and the Navy League of Canada.

It was within the context of these three domestic factors that Canada's naval service was created. Had all three factors been equally examined, a logical person may have concluded that Canada did not require a naval service at all, perhaps even that the Monroe Doctrine was protection in itself.³¹ However, one can never underestimate the

³¹ The Monroe Doctrine is a U.S. doctrine which, on December 2, 1823, proclaimed that European powers should no longer colonize or interfere with the affairs of the nations of the Americas. The United

will of political institutions and the need to respond to alarmist predictions. And so it was under political pressures that Canada's naval service was born: in the midst of nationalist sentiment from Québec, imperialist emotion from Ontario, and the need to make political hay from the Official Opposition in Ottawa. The man who navigated these three constituencies was Canadian Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, and, as we shall discover, his vision and leadership resulted in more than just compromise.

In order to focus the case study on the creation and then failure of political support of the Canadian navy, this chapter examines two historical themes. The first theme is the independent Canadian stance that Prime Minister Laurier voiced during the 1902 and 1907 Colonial Conferences. Seen from the European position, it appeared as if Laurier was all but ready to abandon support of the RN and that Canada was ready, albeit financially restricted, to form its own naval service that would be closely aligned with the RN.

The second theme focuses on the domestic politics of the day: namely, Laurier's desire to navigate the middle ground and to develop a Naval Service Act that appeased the concerns of Quebec nationalists, supporters of the Central Canadian Navy League, and supporters of Opposition leader Borden's Imperialists. Viewed in this context, it becomes clear that Canada's navy really was created on the floor of the House of Commons. In some ways, it is a miracle that Laurier's navy even left harbour, but as this case study will show, the navy soon ran aground on political rocks.

States planned to stay neutral in wars between European powers and its colonies. However, if these latter types of wars were to occur in the Americas, the United States would view such action as hostile.

Laurier and the Empire Front

When Prime Minister Laurier attended the Colonial Conference of 1902, his delegation intended to focus on trade issues and not on military affairs. Although imperial defence was always on the minds of the British, Laurier was neither prepared nor expecting the salvo he received. Then First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Selborne, tabled a memorandum that was meant to discourage the colonies from forming their own naval service, independent of the RN. The document explained that the most important contribution the Dominions could make was to cultivate their own mentality of maritime affairs and become aware of the importance of security of the seas. Since the Empire depended upon security of the seas, the future of the Empire also depended upon maritime security.³² The memo was mainly a pitch for funding and was meant to play on the delegates' feelings of loyalty to the British Empire. The Dominions were, therefore, encouraged to take a greater share of this responsibility, but under a British Admiral.

Unfortunately, for the British, Laurier had different plans for the future of the RN and it did not include transfers of Canadian men or capital. Laurier developed the concept that Canada would be a nation within the British Empire. He became convinced that it was possible for Canada to be an independent nation and still be part of the British Empire. Laurier said: "Canada might attain virtual independence, secure control of her own destinies at home and abroad and yet retain allegiance to a common sovereign."³³

³² Gilbert N. Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada, Its Official History, Volume I, Origins and Early Years* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952), 107.

³³ Oscar Douglas Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfred Laurier Volume II 1896-1919* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1965), 110.

Laurier and his colleagues at the Colonial Conference of 1902 made this nationalist position on contributions to the RN clear. He refused to contribute money for reasons of establishing a more robust colonial self-government. Laurier disclosed his feelings on contributions to the RN during his opening remarks when he pointed out to the attendees that not all countries present had the means to provide for imperial defence:

. . . the differences in geography, the differences in wealth, the differences in, if I may say so, in different stages of civilization . . . compel me as far as I am concerned, to take views upon many of the subjects to which you have referred which perhaps in the end may be a little at variance with those which you have yourself expressed.³⁴

Laurier built on this viewpoint during the conference debates by explaining that Canada was spending a considerable sum of money on basic infrastructure such as roads, canals, railroads, and harbours in order to modernize a colony of the British Empire. He pointed out that Britain had not spent public money to build similar transportation mechanisms, that this cost was borne by private funding. He concluded his argument by stating that if the British Empire was to be truly equitable, (and all the Dominions would benefit from better more efficient transportation networks in Canada), then Canada should not be forced to contribute financially to imperial defence.

It should be noted that British Prime Minister Chamberlain was let down by the strong independent stance of Laurier. Chamberlain simply could not understand how Canada failed to see that a large encompassing navy was the best structure for Empire defence: “. . . in Sir Wilfred Laurier he had met a man of equal firmness, equally adroit in argument and tactics, and better informed in the lessons of the Empire’s past and in the

³⁴ Maurice Ollivier, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1937 Volume I* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1954), 159.

realities of colonial interest and opinion.”³⁵ Laurier was providing the British with every indication that Canada was ready to take over the maritime defence of itself.

Additionally, according to Tucker’s research, it was during the 1902 conference that First Sea Lord Selborne held a private discussion with Laurier in which Laurier revealed that Canada was contemplating the creation of a local naval force, although no more specific information was detailed.³⁶ However, as Selbourne must have known, in the case of naval requirements, words are cheap. What Canada intended to do with this policy issue remained to be seen.

When Laurier returned from the 1902 conference, the country barely noticed his proud and independent nationalist stance. Canadians were still too focused on the continental railroad to be concerned with imperial defence. Laurier, ever the politician, correctly gauged the Canadian mood and promptly disregarded his intention to create a naval service, at least until the next Colonial Conference.³⁷ During the next five years, despite Laurier's strong rhetoric in the presence of the British, he produced little to further the nation’s goal of establishing a naval defence. Arguably, the only significant advance was establishing ownership of the bases in Halifax and Esquimalt, something the British were hoping Canada would see as unavoidable.

In Europe, however, the dreadnought crisis was building steam and the British were starting to sweat. During the Colonial Conference of 1907, the Admiralty staked the British Empire’s claim to the waters of the Dominions with the following statement

³⁵ Skelton, 113.

³⁶ Tucker, 109.

³⁷ According to Skelton, “The country was more interested . . . in box-cars than battle-ships.”, 114.

by Lord Tweedmouth, First Lord of the Admiralty: “there is one sea, there is one Empire, and there is one navy, and I want to claim in the first place your help, and in the second place authority for the Admiralty to manage this great service without restraint.”³⁸

Tweedmouth later toned down these strong words by asking the Dominions to provide for their own coastal defences, primarily against raiders, insisting that these vessels cooperate with larger units of the RN. This form of cooperation would necessitate, as is the case today, common training and doctrine, something Tweedmouth must have known the Dominions could not have nurtured in isolation. Thus, the only way to deliver this cooperation would be to have RN-led fleets, something the Dominions were now trying to avoid in their quest for colonial independence.

Canada (represented by Minister of Fisheries and Marine, L. Brodeur) replied to Tweedmouth’s request by stating that Canada already had a fleet that was capable of raider protection on the seas and Great Lakes, a duty taken over from the Admiralty. If the First Sea Lord wanted the Dominions to take over responsibilities for their defences against raiders, then Canada had such fleets in place.³⁹ Tweedmouth immediately backed down from his original criticism of Canada and formally recognized Canada’s efforts and expenditures in coastal defences. Clearly, the British were testing the waters to determine if the colonies were willing to fund a naval strategy that would be based on Britain’s ongoing dreadnought competition with Germany. No Dominion at that time, including Australia, could have been threatened by Germany’s navy, so why would they provide financial support to a navy strategy and fleet that had no direct threat to their

³⁸ Ollivier, 248.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 252.

homeland, other than to show support to the Empire. Clearly Canada was not showing that support, and the political indicators back home, specifically within Canada's nationalist community, reflected this. Ironically, the only community in favour of cash grants to Britain were the Québec nationalists. They were in favour of this idea because it would isolate Canada from further entanglements in European wars. If Canada had a large blue water naval capability, it was just a matter of time before it was drawn into European conflict, something the Québec nationalists wanted to avoid.

Laurier, speaking to a motion that the colonies ought to help in naval defence by means of contributions, reiterated the idea that there was too great a financial disparity between Britain and the colonies and that Canada would do well just to support basic public works projects, including building a trans-national railroad.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he added that if the British needed aid they should consider that they could now transport their army by rail from Halifax to Vancouver within days, an improvement over the weeks it would take by sea. This, in Laurier's opinion, was true Commonwealth cooperation. On conclusion of this conference, Canada could not simply return home and do nothing. Laurier had to return and table his motion for a Canadian Naval Service.

Laurier and the Domestic Front

It was in fact a member of Robert Borden's Conservative opposition that first gave notice that he intended to table a motion that Canada should provide a naval defence of its own coastline. George Foster, who was once a Minister of Fisheries and Marine under the MacDonald government, felt that it was time Canada had a navy. Foster's resolution spoke only of the idea of a coastal defence:

⁴⁰ Tucker, 113.

That in the opinion of this house, in view of her great and varied resources, of her geographical position and national environments, and of the spirit of self-help and self respect which alone benefits a strong and growing people, Canada should no longer delay in assuming her proper share of the responsibility and financial burden incident to the suitable protection of her exposed coast line and great seaports.⁴¹

The immediate reaction, even within his own party, was predictably Canadian. The Québec wing of the Conservative Party, taking a position opposite to the Québec nationalists, objected on the grounds that this motion was a conspiracy; there was no threat to Canada and this was a simple ruse by the Navy League of central Canada to have the colonies replace the overseas squadrons that the Admiralty now needed in home waters.

What could not be avoided was the fortunate timing of Foster's initiative. Concurrently, the British government was raising the alarm over another European arms race, this time concerning the Germans, who were rapidly building dreadnoughts that would soon outnumber the RN's dominant fleet.⁴² The response from the Dominions was immediate. In Canada, Prime Minister Laurier used the British alarm to his own political advantage. What started out as Foster's initiative for Canadian coastal protection became the basis for a much larger Canadian Naval Service in close cooperation with the Imperial Navy. The following excerpt from the motion highlights the cautious attitude and subservient position Canada was willing to take, a position that reflected Canada's total dependence on Britain for foreign policy positions:

⁴¹ Tucker, 122.

⁴² Michael L. Hadley and Roger Sarty, *Tin Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders 1880-1918* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 25.

The House will cordially approve of any necessary expenditure designed to promote the speedy organization of a Canadian naval service in cooperation with and in close relation to the imperial navy, along the lines suggested by the Admiralty at the last Imperial Conference, and in full sympathy with the view that the naval supremacy of Britain is essential to the security of commerce, the safety of the Empire and the peace of the world.⁴³

When Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Marine, L. Brodeur, went to the Imperial Defence Conference in July of 1909, the British attitude had changed and they were in no position to hold Canada to previous requests for purely financial support.⁴⁴ Instead, the Admiralty offered two older but capable Apollo-Class cruisers as interim training ships and provided RN volunteers until Canada could train and replace them with a Canadian local crew.⁴⁵ Positions at RN training establishments such as the Royal Naval College were guaranteed for Canadians. The Admiralty's support for a Canadian navy had solidified to the extent that benefited a country willing to help foster Imperial defence.

On shipbuilding, Laurier extended his earlier nationalist position to propose ideas that prevail to this day. When the Admiralty suggested that Canadian ships be built in Britain, with a few Canadians observing, Laurier's response was consistent.⁴⁶ Despite the fact that Canada had no local naval shipbuilding capacity and lacked the marine engineering expertise, the added cost of building in Canada was deemed to be worth it, and with that stance, it could be argued that the term 'regional industrial benefit' was born. Laurier saw to it that the large sums of money would be spent in Canada, and the nation would be the beneficiary of this new industrial undertaking. Canadian firms

⁴³ Tucker, 125.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 114-116.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁴⁶ Tony German, *The Sea Is At Our Gates* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 29.

jumped at the chance to build four cruisers and six destroyers.⁴⁷ However much like the EH101 helicopter fiasco of the 1994 election, when parliament dissolved in July 1911, so did indigenous shipbuilding.

As skilfully as Laurier judged Canada's dormant appetite for naval affairs in 1902, he was unable to repeat this brilliance during his last months as Prime Minister. In the province of Québec, the election campaign of 1911 was notable because the navy became a significant election issue. The Conservatives, in an attempt to steal the nationalist vote, branded the navy an instrument of the Empire. The Conservatives won the election and the navy lost the support of Laurier it desperately needed to survive. The shipbuilding contracts were sunk and Borden, always the Empire loyalist, initiated a new round of negotiations to contribute financial support to Imperial defence. British Prime Minister Churchill welcomed Borden's interest and further offered to share the responsibility for directing naval policy as well.

In a direct response to a request from the British, Borden's government tabled bills demanding funding for three dreadnoughts, all three to be built in Britain, under the control of the RN. There was a stipulation that the three ships could in the future be recalled to be part of a Canadian unit of the RN. This was a political compromise that served everyone but the early volunteers of the navy, whose future was now very much in doubt.

For Admiral Kingsmill and the Canadian Naval Service, this situation was a perfect storm. The previous Liberal government dominated the Senate and when Borden's funding requests arrived, they were roundly defeated. The public barely

⁴⁷ Tucker, 164.

noticed that after establishing a navy in 1910, there was no plan to acquire new ships and the door of providing the Admiralty cash grants had just been closed forever. Within a year of its birth, the naval service was reduced to two rapidly declining ships on each cost. More important, however, was the complete lack of progress the government had made in developing a naval policy or vision. This indecisiveness was soon reflected in the morale of the sailors: “In 1912 and 1913, 126 new enlistments were more than offset by 149 desertions.”⁴⁸

Because the need for a Navy was born on the floor of the House of Commons, it was not surprising that after a change of government, the momentum of the Naval Service Act soon slowed to bare steerageway. Laurier’s vision of Canadian independence through organized national naval forces was not a concept Borden could swallow. Despite Churchill’s guarantees of joint control of maritime forces, Borden and the political body could not see naval power for what it was. When the Senate, in an act of revenge for the defeat of Laurier’s Liberals, defeated Borden’s funding requests, the Senate also showed their ignorance in naval affairs. The politicians could not put party politics ahead of themselves and do what was right for the navy and the nation. Having an expeditionary navy at home or a contractual connection to a navy in Britain was not yet attainable for the young country of Canada. Any dividends that were generated by the threat of Germany’s dreadnought navy were quickly discounted by a profound misunderstanding of naval purpose. Placing the need for a navy in expedient terms has been a principal reason why Canadian politicians have consistently neglected the navy

⁴⁸ German, 30.

when it was not required for war-fighting duties. As Commander Peter Haydon observed:

In many respects, it is the foreign policy dimension of a naval or maritime strategy that sets the actual force structure and capabilities. A state that upholds a foreign policy of active internationalism is likely to require that its navy be able to go almost anywhere, function effectively in the face of danger, work with a wide range of other navies, and generally be seen as a symbol of the home state.⁴⁹

Prime Minister Laurier understood naval power and worked hard to make his independent Canadian vision a reality. He could see beyond the three-mile limit, see that someday Canada would not be restricted by the statutory handcuffs of British control. It should be noted that Laurier's initial shipbuilding plan, destroyers and escorts, was exactly the type of effective contribution that Canada could have made combating the Kaiser's U-Boats in World War I. Unfortunately, Britain and loyalists in Canada were so enamoured in the dreadnought crisis that they failed to realize the smart contribution small-ship navies could make.

⁴⁹ Haydon, *Sea Power and Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century*, 71.

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

*A socially responsible military would be one that engages in, and is expected to engage in, responsible dissent without crossing the largely indefinable line into disobedience. Finally, a socially responsible military, like other institutions in a democratic society, would be part of the system of checks and balances—a check, when necessary, on the impetuosity of civilian officials given to precipitous action, and a balance against civilian strategic shortcomings where they exist.*⁵⁰

In order to further the argument that political command and control of the Canadian military is often confused and misunderstood by the political leadership, this chapter of the paper will study the Cuban Missile Crisis and the way in which the political leadership at the time hesitated to make the decisions needed to protect Canada's interests. The aim of this case study is to illustrate that Prime Minister Diefenbaker did not understand the bilateral NORAD agreement and hesitated to direct the military as required by the agreement. It is important for political leaders to understand the roles of militaries and how they fit into the structure, indeed the foundation, of a country. On occasion, a government will see a military force as a drain on a country's capital and therefore largely ignore what the real essence of a military is for: security of the country.

In only a few instances throughout Canada's history has the military received so much attention and become a hot-bed issue for the government of the day. The Cuban Missile Crisis is a good example because combined with the debate on nuclear weapons in Canada, these two events were directly responsible for a vote of non-confidence that toppled the Diefenbaker Conservative's minority government. The purpose of the case study is to point out that military forces cannot be ignored or used as pawns in the evolution of a political party's domestic or foreign policy objectives. This case study

⁵⁰ Gregory D. Foster, "Civil-Military Relations," *World Affairs* Vol 167, no. 3 (Winter, 2005): 96.

begins with a brief background of the Cuban Missile Crisis and then introduces the participants involved in the crisis. The behind the scenes military events will be examined and then a look at the necessity for these events to unfold. By examining the lessons learned from this case study, and, in particular, how military leadership made the right decision in a vacuum of political indecision, one can conclude that Canada's navy, the can do service, always prepares itself for national security.

Background

On the afternoon of October 22, 1962, the *chargé d'affaires* at the United States Embassy in Ottawa telephoned the Prime Minister's office requesting an appointment on behalf of Livingstone Merchant, the former United States Ambassador to Canada, who would be arriving that afternoon from Washington bearing an urgent personal message from the President⁵¹. Merchant arrived that afternoon and met with Diefenbaker, Douglas Harkness, the Minister of National Defence, and Foreign Affairs Minister Howard Green. During this meeting, Merchant outlined the stand that the American President would take in a nation-wide television address to be delivered that evening. United States Air Force reconnaissance had revealed that the Soviet Union was turning Cuba into a base for offensive missiles capable of destroying the most heavily populated areas of North America. President Kennedy, Merchant told the Prime Minister and his Ministers, would charge the USSR with a threat to world peace, and he would order a naval quarantine on the further shipment of offensive military equipment to Cuba.

⁵¹ There are several accounts of the events that transpired. See Peyton V. Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs, 1961-63* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 27-64. Robert W. Reford, *Canada and Three Crises* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1968). Peter C. Newman, *Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963). Peter T. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canada's Involvement Reconsidered* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993). Tony German, *the Sea is at our gates* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

The Reactions

After the meeting, the Minister of National Defence went immediately to National Defence Headquarters and met with his Chiefs of Staff.⁵² A request was soon received from NORAD headquarters in Colorado Springs, requesting that the Canadian government bring its forces to a state of readiness known as Defcon 3, and to initiate other measures to improve the operational capability of the Canadian area of command. The US government had already given this approval and the NORAD Deputy Commander, RCAF Air Marshall Roy Slemon, was anxious for Ottawa's permission to bring the Canadian sector to the same status. The Canadian Chiefs of Staff approved the NORAD request, and so did Harkness. Most of the discussion in the Minister's office that evening concerned the actual mobilization arrangements.

When Harkness reported the mobilization arrangements and higher Defcon status to Diefenbaker later that evening, the two men agreed that because the higher alert condition would affect other federal government departments, the final approval would not be taken until the next day. Diefenbaker wanted to consult first with the Federal Civil Defence Organization, an emergency preparedness organization that fell under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's Office.

When Cabinet met the next day, the cooperative mood ended when Foreign Affairs Minister Howard Green urged his fellow Cabinet Ministers to ignore the request from the Americans. He reasoned that because the President did not consult the Canadian Prime Minister over the impending crisis, as was the requirement of the

⁵² For the best account of the dialogue that occurred within the confines of the defense establishment, see Peter T. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canada's Involvement Reconsidered* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), and Tony German, *the Sea is at our gates* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).

NORAD agreement, then Canada should not blindly follow the Americans down the path of conflict with the Soviets. Diefenbaker supported Green's position and swung the cabinet against Harkness who was ordered not to permit the alert of the Canadian Forces. When Harkness returned to Defence Headquarters, the Chiefs of Staff tried desperately to get him to urge a change in Diefenbaker's decision, but the Minister's hands were tied and he could not order the alert.

Despite the view of Diefenbaker, Harkness ordered the military to change its defence posture in a discreet manner so as not to gain national attention. Unofficially, the Minister of Defence had conceded to the American request. The American Pentagon expected Canada to act soon. RCAF Voodoo aircraft and Bomarc missiles provided protection for the populated centres of Toronto and Montréal, and American military leaders expected these same military assets to protect American cities as well.⁵³

Further down the chain of command, although frustrated that nothing overt could be conducted, things were being done that helped prepare the battlespace. Within the operations centres of Canadian and American naval headquarters, staffs were already monitoring the ever-increasing number of Soviet submarines operating in the Western Atlantic. In Halifax, Rear Admiral Kenneth Dyer, Flag Officer Atlantic Coast, was following the growing submarine threat and had already made up his mind that he would react, despite not having the authority to change the alert status of the Atlantic Coast Fleet.⁵⁴

⁵³ Desmond Morton, *The Military History of Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985), 247.

⁵⁴ Dyer did not seek the authority to act. This will be examined later in this chapter.

By chance, the Atlantic Command fleet was conducting an anti-submarine exercise and it was Dyer's plan to use this exercise as a cover for the naval reaction. As part of this cover, the fleet gradually and covertly began to increase fleet readiness and prepare for war. Dyer and his Maritime Air Deputy, Air Commodore Clements, immediately ordered an increase in surveillance activity off the east coast, where their forces were already tracking two Soviet submarine contacts. In the Halifax Dockyard, ships quietly loaded war shots, finalized shore based training, and quietly slipped out of the harbour. In Shearwater, Greenwood, and Summerside, anti-submarine equipped aircraft readied for the extremely difficult task of locating and tracking the best Soviet submarines. Within the next twenty-four hours, Dyer cancelled all long leaves, ordered all naval forces to prepare for war, including cancelling a training exercise.⁵⁵

Preparations were made somewhat easier on October 24, when escalation in the crisis finally convinced Prime Minister Diefenbaker to order the armed forces to go to low-alert status. However, Diefenbaker was still very concerned about raising public concern and therefore insisted that overt preparations were prohibited.

As the Canadians unofficially prepared for war, the United States navy prepared to activate a submarine barrier to the south of the Grand Banks. As the number of submarines in the western Atlantic continued to rise, the United States asked Dyer's Atlantic fleet to assume major anti-submarine responsibilities extending as far south as the approaches to New York harbour. Dyer crossed the threshold of government direction and should have asked his superiors in Ottawa for further direction. Instead, he

⁵⁵ The RCN's most valuable and effective ASW asset at that time was the aircraft carrier HMCS BONAVENTURE. At the time of the crisis she was conducting an exercise off the coast of England with five Canadian destroyers.

accepted the challenge, and within days, every available Canadian warship and maritime aircraft was at sea or maintaining the submarine barrier.

The swift RCN action was very much appreciated by the USN. After the crisis had ended, the USN task group commander sent a message to CANCOMARLANT thanking him for his support. The USN Commander in Chief of the Atlantic fleet noted in his final report:

The large-scale movement of amphibious forces to the Caribbean required VP aircraft coverage. Canadian Argus aircraft under CANCOMAIRLANT [the RCAF commander for the Atlantic] increased their surveillance and their assistance and cooperation in ASW throughout the crisis contributed significantly to the ASW effort. Without this valuable assistance, much of the western Atlantic area would not have been accurately covered.⁵⁶

By October 28, international diplomacy had hammered out a tentative resolution to the crisis. In Ottawa, Diefenbaker and Green wanted to stand down the forces from alert status, despite the advice from both Canadian and American military commanders. The submarine threat on the Atlantic seaboard was at its highest level since the departure of German wolf packs during the Second World War. Operations plots showed that there were still potentially a dozen Soviet submarines operating in the western Atlantic and they showed no sign of leaving station. Dyer and his staff pressed for continued vigilance and, once again, the tension built between Halifax and Ottawa. Dyer once again emerged as the dominant personality and was able to carry on with a high intensity ASW operation until the Soviet submarine threat abated.

⁵⁶ Joel J. Sokolsky, *Canada and the Cold War at Sea, 1945-68*. Paper presented to the Conference on the Canadian Navy in the Modern World, Halifax, October 16-18, 1985, (Toronto: Canadian Forces College, 1985), 56.

In order to understand why Admiral Dyer ordered the fleet to such a high readiness level in preparation for continental defence, it is necessary to understand Canada's maritime responsibilities within the context of NATO defence. Under the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) structure, Canada was given responsibility for an area of the Atlantic that stretched from its eastern coastal waters to the mid Atlantic. The senior naval officer in Halifax, Flag Officer Atlantic Coast (FOAC), served as Commander (CANCOMARLANT). This structure, based on the perceived need to 'convoy' American forces to Europe, forced the RCN to begin establishing a closer relationship with the USN. Canadian senior naval officers were stationed in Norfolk within the SACLANT organization, and they developed an operational identity with their fellow USN counterparts. Given this familiarity, it is not surprising that during the Cuban Missile Crisis, senior officers were looking more towards SACLANT for direction than to Ottawa. When and if a crisis came, the response within the SACLANT context, was almost routine; it was a practised element to almost all naval exercises.

Because of Canada's responsibility to conduct surveillance and share this information with the USN, the communication links were well-established, and the two navies understood each other's responsibilities and how they fit into the SACLANT sphere. The context for this cooperation must be considered. In the 1950s and 60s, the nuclear age had just begun. Satellites that can today be relied upon to provide instant tracking of enemy fleets did not exist. It was therefore the nature of sea power that vast areas of the oceans required surveillance. Additionally, because of the nature of a nuclear attack, naval forces had to be ready for deployment at a moment's notice. Given this

readiness level and the efficient working relationship with the USN, Canadian naval forces proceeded to sea during the Cuban Missile Crisis under the generally accepted idea that this was what they were trained for and the time had now come. Responding in the way it did was what NATO had been in part designed for. That responsiveness was an element to most exercises, and therefore responsiveness was a practised routine.

The Military Leadership

In order to examine the events surrounding the Cuban Missile Crisis, it is necessary to understand the military, political and operational leadership. In particular, it is important to study the personalities involved and their vision and ideals. The military bias and service loyalties are equally important as the dynamics of the cabinet process and political leadership posturing.

The Chief of the Canadian Naval Staff during the Cuban Missile Crisis was Vice Admiral H.S. Rayner.⁵⁷ Headquartered in Ottawa, the Naval Chief of Staff was the highest naval appointment in the country and this officer reported directly to the Minister of National Defence. Originally from Ontario, Rayner joined the RCN after completing high school in 1928. Because the Royal Naval College of Canada had been closed in 1922, Rayner was sent directly to the Royal Navy for his occupational training. During the Second World War, he held numerous commands and with wartime expansion, he found himself rapidly promoted. By all accounts, Rayner was a strong and competent naval officer. He was a recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, the citation of which reads: "For courage and enterprise in action against enemy submarines." His

⁵⁷ Biographical information extracted from Michael Whitby, Richard H. Gimblett, Peter Haydon, *The Admirals: Canada's Senior Naval Leadership in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), Chapter 9 and Appendix II.

additional decorations included Croix de Guerre avec Palme en Bronze (France), Legionnaire - Legion of Honour (France), a second DSC, and two Mention-in-Dispatches. According to Wilf Lund, Rayner was a reserved man who possessed a strong professional ethic and exceptional integrity.⁵⁸ Lund describes Rayner's loyal character with a quote from a Government Report on the development of defence policy in Canada:

He [VAdm Rayner] was a most competent and highly respected officer in the RCN, and his utter conscientiousness, loyalty and strict sense of duty coupled with a sense of humour made him loved and respected by all, and made a better person of all who had the good fortune to really know and work with him.⁵⁹

The loyalty that Lund refers is quite simply the loyalty to his country's security and to the navy that he served. According to Haydon's examination of the events, the actions of Rayner during the Cuban Missile Crisis are reflective of the difficulties that also plagued Mr. Harkness as Minister of National Defence.⁶⁰ Rayner neither openly supported nor appeared to provide, through official channels, clear guidance to the Atlantic Coast Fleet. It appears as if Rayner was doing his best to avoid any further political confrontation that could potentially make the situation worse. From a practical perspective, Rayner must have known that Admiral Dyer was acting and was condoning these actions by his silence. Rayner's staff would have been in constant contact with Dyer's staff in Halifax and informal information networks most likely kept Rayner informed.

⁵⁸ Wilfred G. Lund, *The Rise and Fall of the Canadian Navy, 1945-1964: A Critical Study of the Senior Leadership, Policy and Manpower Management* (PhD thesis, University of Victoria, 1999), 450.

⁵⁹ Colonel R.L. Raymont, *The Formulation of Canadian Defence Policy, 1945-1964* (February 1978, 79/17, DHist): 93-94, Quoted in Wilfred G. Lund, *The Rise and Fall of the Canadian Navy, 1945-1964: A Critical Study of the Senior Leadership, Policy and Manpower Management* (PhD thesis, University of Victoria, 1999): 450.

⁶⁰ Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 220.

At the time of the crisis, the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Brock, claims that he was the officer who ordered Dyer to take action and establish the anti-submarine screen. In his memoirs of the events surrounding the Cuban Missile Crisis, Admiral Brock states:

I ordered him to cancel a major sea exercise in progress at the time or “to change the nature of the exercise” by redeploying four large task groups and two of our submarines in another simulated exercise. This resulted in the establishment of a war patrol and anti-submarine barrier in our Atlantic sea area of responsibility.

I set up my war room in Ottawa which was in continuous communications with both the Maritime Commander Atlantic and the Maritime Commander Pacific. I organized a very close scrutiny of Soviet fishing ship activities in and around the east coast of Canada and paid particular attention to shadowing of the Soviet fishing headquarters ship *Atlantika*. I ordered delays in the refit dates of certain units of the fleet and also stopped the decommissioning of some of the other units. I also kept my Chief informed of as much of this as I thought he would like to hear. Knowing he could not confide in the Minister, I wanted to give my boss freedom from political accountability.⁶¹

Naval officers are often blunt. Brock’s statements therefore suggest that everything expected of naval forces was being done while at the same time trying to protect the chain of command. Insulating Rayner from the activities of the Atlantic fleet was easy, especially since the man who was giving the orders was technically not part of the operational chain of command. Brock’s feelings on the necessity of reacting are also revealed in his comments on the subject as examined by Joel J. Sokolsky:

. . . the action of the White House and the Pentagon in deploying a United States blockade around Cuba automatically impinged upon Canadian activities and particularly the prudent disposition of Canadian ships. . . Failure to honour the RCN’s solemn obligations, as embodied in Canadian and American defence arrangements, would have been too degrading and traitorous to contemplate. Without orders, leadership or any confidence that there would be any political

⁶¹ Jeffery V. Brock, *The Thunder And The Sunshine* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 110-112.

backing, the RCN took measures, which had to be taken and the Canadian people had every right to expect from those responsible for the actualities of defence.⁶²

Many years after the crisis, Lund interviewed Admiral Dyer and determined that Dyer was in constant communication with Rayner throughout the Cuban Missile Crisis.⁶³

Although Admiral Brock suggested in his memoirs that he was the officer directing Dyer in Halifax, a supposition supported by Haydon, Lund's conclusion contradicts both Brock and Haydon. What is important is that within the triangle that was the naval leadership, all three officers were acting in a manner they felt was appropriate, within the NORAD agreement. How the events were shadowed from the Minister of National Defence is best left to an altogether separate case study.

The Political Leadership

Just as there were differences in opinion in the chain of military command, there were stark contrasts in the political ideologies of the ministers of the two departments involved in the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Department of Foreign Affairs was led by Howard Green, who was strongly opposed to the stationing of nuclear weapons in Canada and often expressed his concerns about the American military and foreign policy. The Department of National Defence was led by Douglas Harkness, a veteran of the Second World War and a man who had a much better than average background in military affairs.

Howard Green was a westerner by birth and was educated at the University of Toronto. He served in the 54th Kootenay Battalion of the First World War and eventually

⁶² Sokolsky, 55.

⁶³ Lund, 522.

settled in Vancouver where he practised law with a small legal firm. He turned to politics in 1935 and was elected to the House of Commons as the Member of Parliament for the riding of Vancouver South. In 1942 he and Diefenbaker both attempted to lead the Conservative party only to finish third and fourth respectively. When the Conservatives finally came to power in 1957, Green was made a cabinet minister and, upon the death of Sidney Smith in 1959, Green was appointed as Minister of External Affairs. Diefenbaker selected Green primarily because, like Diefenbaker, he was an advocate of strengthening the ties with Britain and had an aversion to the United States and American foreign policies.⁶⁴

Harkness was also a Westerner. He was educated at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, where he was first introduced to the army as a reservist in the militia. In 1939, at the age of thirty-six, he was called up for action and proceeded overseas the following year. He served throughout the European theatre and won a medal of bravery for his actions while serving in Sicily. Upon his return to Canada, he immediately entered politics and was elected to represent Calgary East in the election of 1945. He became a member of the cabinet in 1957 and after two junior cabinet appointments was named Minister of National Defence in 1960.

Though Diefenbaker was close to Green, the same could not be said for Diefenbaker and Harkness. In his memoirs, Diefenbaker notes that after Harkness had upset some farmers as Minister of Agriculture, he should be moved:

. . . it was then that I decided that Defence would be a natural for him. He had a very good record in the Second World War and I thought that he would adopt an

⁶⁴ Reg Whitaker and Steve Hewitt, *Canada and the Cold War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2003), 150.

attitude towards the senior defence officers similar to the one he had towards the farmers, I was mistaken.⁶⁵

Harkness was admired by his senior military officers for his serious stand on defence issues and the importance that he placed on military priorities. The Minister of National Defence is a difficult cabinet position due to the number of personnel in the department, the large annual budget allocation and the risk that comes with the appointment. The minister assumes the country's greatest responsibility upon taking office. Douglas Bland accurately described the importance of the duty and the potential for failure:

This particular duty places a special burden on the minister to act rightly, because in so many ways the safety of the nation resides in his hands. Other ministers can fail and their departments with them but with no more harm to the nation than to lose face and money. The failure of a MND may well occasion not only a loss of blood and treasure but the humiliation or loss of all the nation.⁶⁶

Unlike Harkness, who had extensive military experience, Howard Green had little experience in foreign affairs. Indeed, he had not been outside Canada since his service in World War One.⁶⁷ He was a close confidant of Diefenbaker and had earned a reputation as a Diefenbaker loyalist from his former junior ministerial positions. Green was notably a proponent of disarmament, and it was this position that influenced most of his decisions and advice to Diefenbaker. When the Conservatives lost the 1963 election to the Liberals over the stationing of nuclear weapons in Canada, arguably one of the few times a federal election was ever decided over a foreign policy issue, Green was often blamed. During

⁶⁵ John Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Memoirs of the Rt Hon. John G. Diefenbaker, Vol II: The Years of Achievement, 1957-1962* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada Ltd. 1976), 46.

⁶⁶ Douglas Bland, *The Administration of Defence Policy in Canada 1947 To 1985* (Kingston: Ronald P Frye & Company, 1987), 93.

⁶⁷ Whitaker and Hewitt, 150.

the Cuban Missile Crisis, at a time when Canada's security was threatened, Green's only concern was the position his government should take on the issue: "if we go along with the Americans now, we'll be their vassals forever".⁶⁸

Diefenbaker was equally culpable in his cavalier attitude toward defence. In his memoirs, he displayed little regard for the military with statements such as:

. . . from time to time, the Pentagon and the Defence Department put their heads together and decided that they wanted a certain policy followed and the Pentagon could work on the State Department and the U.S. Government and the Defence Department here could work on the Canadian Government.⁶⁹

In his defence, it should be noted that Diefenbaker was unclear on the requirements of the NORAD agreement. He agreed to sign the agreement in 1957, just after taking power as Prime Minister, based on the private recommendations of General Foulkes, the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff.⁷⁰ There was no discussion in cabinet or debate in parliament before the decision was taken.⁷¹ According to Haycock:

As for Diefenbaker, he was a novice; he did not ask the correct or relevant questions which indicated that he had very little idea of what he had to easily, almost nonchalantly, agreed to.⁷²

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁶⁹ Peter Stursberg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Lost* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 23.

⁷⁰ The Diefenbaker-led Conservatives won the 1957 election by defeating the St. Laurent-led Liberals who had been in power for 22 years. Diefenbaker campaigned on a strong nationalist and red-Tory platform and upset the Liberals to form a minority government. Therefore, Diefenbaker was not eager to debate publicly defence issues and risk being seen as abandoning his campaign platform that included accusations that the Liberals were too American friendly.

⁷¹ Ronald Haycock and Michael Hennessy, "Assuring Global Stability. The Road to Innocence: Canada and the Cold War, 1945 to 1963," Bernd Horn, Editor, *The Canadian Way of War : Serving the National Interest* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006), 250-251.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 251.

The attitudes, perceptions, and relationships of these three politicians are clearly reflected in the decision-making sequence of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Green wanted to deny the American request based on his stubborn position that the Americans did not consult Canada over the blockade. Diefenbaker wanted to deny the American request because he felt this was more American posturing against Cuba, and he was not convinced the threat was real.⁷³ Harkness, the man trusted with Canadian security, did not appear troubled by the American request, and he saw no reason not to order the alert. In the end, Diefenbaker's leadership was questioned more than anything and the historical record has not been kind in this regard. The Opposition Liberals seized on the apparent Conservative government split, and soon took the opportunity to defeat Diefenbaker's minority government.

Command and Control: Operational Leadership

In 1950 there was a single minister responsible for control and management of the Canadian forces.⁷⁴ He was assisted by three military advisors: the Chiefs of Staff of the navy, army, and air force. These Chiefs of Staff were then charged with the control and administration of their respective services. Responsibility for operations was delegated to the operational commanders of the three services, and in 1962, there were many operational commanders reporting to the three Service Chiefs. Out of necessity (and

⁷³ Diefenbaker doubted the authenticity of the U.S. intelligence information and aerial photographs. He wanted a United Nations inspection team to confirm the American claims. When the same photographs were offered to French President de Gaulle, he swept them aside and commented "A great government such as yours [the United States] does not act without evidence." See Peyton V. Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs, 1961-63* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 57-58.

⁷⁴ Canada, Department Of National Defence, *The Evolution Of The Structure Of The Department Of National Defence 1964-68: Report Of The Task Force On Review Of Unification Of The Canadian Armed Forces*, Ottawa, November 1979, P A-21. Quoted in Peter T. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canada's Involvement Reconsidered*, (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), 88.

possibly from the lessons of unified allied command in World War Two), there was considerable autonomy in the way in which these operational commanders conducted their affairs.

The National Defence Act came into force in 1951 to add the position of Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff. His position was focused on non-operational activities such as procurement and administration among the Service Chiefs. The Chairman was officially responsible for coordinating, and not controlling, the operations of the Canadian Forces.⁷⁵ This made him part of the bureaucracy and not part of the more important operational structure with a position in a chain of command hierarchy. According to Haydon, the Chairman “had no overriding vote over the service Chiefs of Staff and was only able to present unanimous or split service views to the minister. In crisis management, however, the Chairman was virtually impotent because the minister exercised control of the forces through the Service Chiefs of Staff.”⁷⁶ In summary, the direction from political superiors concerning defence policy was the responsibility of the Service Chiefs of Staff. In the absence of clear political direction, planning was largely controlled by either ministerial decision or the more likely staff process that regulated budget expenditures within fixed budgets for each service.⁷⁷

Therefore, in 1962, there appeared to be no system that allowed the government to issue joint orders and provide command of the Canadian military during a crisis such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. By today’s post 9/11 standards, this command and control

⁷⁵ Controlling the operations of the Canadian Forces did not take place until 1964, with the creation of the Chief of Defence Staff.

⁷⁶ Haydon, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 90.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

situation was problematic; it was the height of the Cold War and Canada's commitment to North American air defence was anchored in a quick response, nuclear or otherwise. According to Haydon, the origins of this relationship lay in the 1950 reorganization that essentially maintained political control over the military by administrative and fiscal means.⁷⁸ At that time, the only requirement for centralized control was under NATO procedures, such as an article 5 response. The feeling was that the RCN would ultimately be under the command of an international command, which would be preceded by lengthy political negotiation and consultation. This disposition towards Allied command was reflective of the Second World War experience when Canadian Forces were also under the command of the Allied leadership and not under a national command structure.

In the post-World War Two, new NORAD era, it was believed that Canada could simply command forces by saying no to American requests for continental defence.⁷⁹ This broke an established pattern of military operations, as the Cuban Missile Crisis illustrated. According to Haycock, the Canadian politicians were confusing NATO with NORAD because the NORAD communication and coordination activities were almost an entirely military function and were outside the daily sphere of political discussions:

. . . the Prime Minister, then under substantial public pressure in parliament and elsewhere to explain what he had done, again naively claimed that NORAD as simply an extension of Canada in NATO. Since the Canadian electorate approved of the latter, surely, he likely thought, they would accept the former. Added to this were the implications that there would be, as in NATO, multilateral consultation and collective security.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁹ Jocelyn Ghent-Mallet and Don Muntan, "Confronting Kennedy and the Missiles in Cuba 1962," in Don Muntan and John Kirton, eds, *Canadian Foreign Policy: Selected Cases* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1992), 86.

⁸⁰ Haycock and Hennessy, 251.

A whole host of inter-service NORAD agreements constituted the operational structure for North American defence. It was under these agreements that operational commanders, for example Flag Officer Atlantic Coast, coordinated routine operations without the requirement to seek higher authority. As Haydon states: “joint Canada-US military operations in the nuclear age became routine functions in which there was little need to involve either politicians or the chiefs of the three service staffs unless unusual or unexpected events occurred.”⁸¹

Unfortunately, it took the Cuban Missile Crisis for the civil authority in Canada to wake up to the realities of military command and control. The Defence Minister’s view of Diefenbaker’s decision-making paralysis was the evidence he needed to order the unofficial change in the posture of Canada’s military. In any democratic society, this is not a healthy chain of events, but is something that occurred nonetheless. The Opposition Liberals were aware of this, and the process soon changed with the change in Government. In today’s digital world, it would be hard to conceive of a situation in which Ottawa, so bogged down in political infighting, could not notice a change in military defence posture. Likewise, civil control of the military is today very closely managed.

Disinterest in routine military operations was not a surprising situation for Canada or for any other NATO nation at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Since the end of World War Two, Canadian politicians had been able to reduce defence issues to a low priority because national security had not been an issue since the defeat of Nazi Germany. In the 1950s and early 60s, there was a feeling among the political elite that

⁸¹ Haydon, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 92.

control of the military in times of crisis could easily be regained and efficiently exercised.⁸² So the real issue during this period was differentiating between what was considered “routine” and “crisis”, a distinction that required strategic consultation. According to Haydon, the chain of command believed that political control was only necessary when the normal peacetime situation was disrupted. Because this arrangement had been streamlined, commanders were able to exercise a degree of discretion in how they carried out their responsibilities within the geographic limits of their assigned areas. Therefore, as Haydon explains, “For instance, a need for greater surveillance of Soviet maritime activities or for training exercises was sufficient justification for a maritime commander to deploy ships and aircraft on his own authority.”⁸³ Theoretically, this situation has not changed; Commander MARLANT is also charged with force generating ships by conducting periodic maritime exercises. However, it would be difficult to imagine a situation today in which a naval exercise was ordered on short notice in the face of a potential international nuclear crisis. This would certainly raise a few eyebrows in the Maritime Staff not to mention CANADACOM.

Unfortunately, in 1962, this obvious gray area was only made worse by Diefenbaker’s inability to make a decision when the country’s security was threatened.⁸⁴ Overall, the Cuban Missile Crisis illustrated that the Canadian Government could not exercise control over the Canadian military, despite the recent Glassco Commission’s discovery of the shortcomings in Canadian military command and control.⁸⁵

⁸² Ghent-Mallet and Muntan, 86.

⁸³ Haydon, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 97.

⁸⁴ Newman, 340.

Commissioned in 1960 and published in 1963, the study of government organization revealed command and control weaknesses within the military. According to Haydon's research on the Cuban Missile Crisis, the senior leaders in the Department of National Defence knew the details of this criticism well before the crisis and were taking some steps to correct the deficiency. Not surprisingly, when the newly elected Liberals came to power in 1963, the new Minister of National Defence, Paul Hellyer, immediately implemented reforms to military command and control.

Diefenbaker himself acknowledged that the situation was handled poorly. In his memoirs he noted that the Cuban Missile Crisis "served as a rallying point for the gathering forces of rebellion within the conservative party."⁸⁶ Harkness took a different view of the situation from his political counterparts and wanted to support the Americans, and Canada's NORAD arrangements, as best he could. Additionally, Harkness listened to the advice of his senior military leadership and, despite the political ramblings, did what he felt was required of a Minister of Defence. The dialogue in the background, in particular the anti-American stance by Green, did not prevent Harkness from making the decision he needed to make for the security of Canada. Although active aggression did not materialize, had Canada not taken the steps necessary to defend against a Soviet attack because of political posturing, there would be no forgiveness. The interim alert that Harkness ordered was the right thing to do at the time, despite the anxieties of his political colleagues.

⁸⁵ Royal Commission on Government Reorganization, *Vol 4 Special Areas of Administration* (Ottawa, Queen's Printer 1963), 76.

⁸⁶ John Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Memoirs of the Rt Hon. John G. Diefenbaker, Vol III: The Years of Achievement, 1957-1962* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada Ltd., 1976), 151-153.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Atlantic Coast Fleet deployed 22 destroyers, an aircraft carrier and its 28 aircraft, 2 submarines, 12 shore-based Tracker aircraft, and 32 Argus patrol aircraft, not including auxiliaries and harbour defence vessels.⁸⁷ There had been at least 29 Soviet submarine contacts in the western Atlantic during the crisis. Canadian units, not including subsurface fixed sonars, had logged more than 130 exposure contacts on them. For Canada's navy this was a remarkable achievement and for SACLANT proof that continental defence cooperation worked.

In true Canadian fashion, the achievement went unheralded. Minister Harkness, Vice Admiral Rayner, and Rear Admiral Dyer acted in good faith, but they stretched the conventions of civil control over the military to the breaking point. What had been done was necessary, but attention could not be drawn to the navy's achievements without underlining the state of crisis within Canada's political and military institutions. The navy's outstanding anti-submarine professionalism and dedication during extreme crisis became nothing more than a footnote in maritime history.

⁸⁷ German, 272.

CONCLUSION

In 1975, W.A.B. Douglas published the now-famous article entitled, *Why does Canada have armed forces?*⁸⁸ The article examines how various Canadian Prime Ministers shaped the Canadian nation by using expeditionary and in some case discretionary Canadian military operations to further Canadian independence. Douglas further examines the role that Canadian military forces and accompanying foreign policy have played in determining the Canadian nation, but examines the question of the Canadian military in such a way that the reader is left wondering if the Prime Ministers fully understood the role of the military. Although written over thirty years ago, the article still resonates and has significant meaning today. Canada's contribution to and military leadership in the Afghanistan mission appears to be surviving the current Conservative minority government, but the question remains how much longer Canada will remain committed. Extrapolating from the hypothesis of Douglas, once the Prime Minister realizes that the political saturation point has been reached--i.e. that positive political recognition within NATO and the terror-obsessed Washington becomes secondary to burgeoning economic costs and waning political support in Canada--then the mission will end and the troops will be returned home. While success in Afghanistan, however, does not translate to electoral success in Canada, the opposite is not true. Any form of failure in Afghanistan opens the Prime Minister to many hurdles that can simply be avoided by a mission viewed as discretionary. It may be too early to determine if the saturation point has been reached, but one thing is clear: that the Afghanistan mission is a threat to the stability of the current Conservative minority government.

⁸⁸ W.A.B. Douglas, "Why Does Canada Have Armed Forces," *International Journal: Canadian Institute of International Affairs*, Vol XXX, No. 2 (Spring 1975): 259-283.

Canada's mission in Afghanistan is especially germane to the thesis of this paper, which has examined how political perceptions of the Canadian military have sometimes confused the role of the military until a crisis arises and political necessities dominate once again. Excepting World Wars and prior to 9/11, National Defence has never dominated the national agenda; indeed, as James Eayrs has argued, the men selected as ministers of national defence were expected to keep a low profile.⁸⁹ Despite the prescribed low profile, the experience of the last century has been that Canadians have not been able to resist involvement in wars and crises. Moreover, a distinct Canadian participation, active and otherwise, has been found to be more rewarding than neutrality. Nevertheless, it was crisis more than anything that drew focus to the military. The Korean conflict, very much a discretionary mission, provides an example, one that, for the time in Canadian history, precipitated raising a force of professional soldiers that were committed to overseas combat. This was done despite the vocal opposition of Québec public opinion, which was not an easy debate for Prime Minister St. Laurent. Similarly, the Cuban Missile Crisis, as examined in chapter three, proved that defence issues were thin political ice that had to be traversed cautiously. The aggressive American position sensitised the Diefenbaker government to mutual defence requirements and entrenched the message that defence issues cannot be taken lightly.

Douglas answers his question by stating: "we have armed forces because policy-makers – in the main Prime Ministers themselves – found them useful for achieving national goals, particularly recognition as an independent country."⁹⁰ This notion of

⁸⁹ James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Peacemaking and Deterrence*, Vol III, (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1972), 18-26.

independence will insinuate itself further as Canada comes to grips with its often-ignored Arctic regions and our government attempts to enforce sovereignty claims. The 2005 *International Policy Statement (IPS)* on this issue articulated the need to examine Canadian Arctic security, acknowledged the neglect of the Canadian North, and confirmed the urgent need to develop a policy.⁹¹ What is clear is that the navy will have a significant role to play in the Arctic. The Conservative Party's 2005 election platform, which included a plan for the permanent presence of the Canadian Forces in the North, recognized this role. Their plan included increasing surveillance capability, commissioning three armed icebreakers capable of carrying troops, building Canada's first Arctic deepwater port near Iqaluit, and opening a military training facility on Cambridge Bay on the Northwest Passage.⁹² In justifying this plan, Mr Harper stated that "The single most important duty of the federal government is to protect and defend our national sovereignty. . . . As prime minister, I will make it clear to foreign governments — including the United States — that naval vessels traveling in Canadian territorial waters will require the consent of the Government of Canada."⁹³ In his first speech as Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Gordon O'Connor echoed the Prime Minister's words, outlining the importance of the Canadian Arctic and the future challenges in claiming Canadian sovereignty. The Minister stated that "This is why the government has developed an ambitious plan to bolster Canada's military capabilities in the Arctic.

⁹⁰ Douglas, 281.

⁹¹ Department of National Defence, *Canada's International Policy Statement . . .*, 17-19.

⁹² This remobilization harkens back to the strategic importance of the south Baffin area, recalling the US Air Force's 1942 use of the nearby flats to re-supply Soviet stores, and the subsequent use of the flats as part of the DEW line network in the 1950s.

⁹³ Michel Comte, "Conservative Leader Harper Asserts Canada's Arctic Claims," <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=1429085&C=america>, Internet; accessed 01 April 2007.

It's our intention to devote more people, more equipment and more money to the defence of our great Northern areas.”⁹⁴ Although the government has yet to release a new policy statement on how the military will execute the Minister’s “ambitious plan,” there has been no shortage of media and academic speculation on what the policy should contain. When journalist David Pugliese of *The Ottawa Citizen* claimed to be the recipient of a “leaked” DND proposal, his 31 January 2007 article on the future make up of Canada’s military, initiated considerable debate among stakeholders on the future of military capability in Canada.⁹⁵ The debate spilled over into the online *Broadsides* webpage of the *Canadian Naval Review*, where an online discussion among maritime stakeholders and academics revealed striking differences of opinion on an appropriate Arctic maritime capability.⁹⁶ Although the contributors differed in what should constitute appropriate maritime forces for the Arctic, there was overwhelming agreement that a strategy is well overdue. Pending the release of the Minister’s strategy, and given the debate among maritime stakeholders on what the strategy should involve, one thing is certain: Canada needs a comprehensive maritime strategy. Given the existing Arctic maritime capability of the Canadian fleet and the ability for other nations to operate in Canada’s North, Canada must acquire the means to show its resolve in protecting its sovereignty.

⁹⁴ Gordon J. O'Connor, Speech by the Honourable Gordon J. O'Connor, Minister of National Defence, at the Conference of Defence Associations Institute Annual General Meeting, February 23, 2006, http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=1860, Internet; accessed 01 April 2007.

⁹⁵ David Pugliese, “Forces want to scrap gear, save for new,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, 31 January 2007, A1.

⁹⁶ Canadian Naval Review (Broadsides) “Debating Defence and Naval Policy,” *Canadian Naval Review*, <http://naval.review.cfps.dal.ca/forum/topic1.php>, Internet; accessed 20 April 2007.

Maritime security and strategy is a complex problem that involves many departments and jurisdictions. To be effective, maritime security requires coordination, a sharing of information and intelligence, and close cooperation. Canada's historical ad hoc approach to military policy development should not be allowed to stall or disrupt the development of maritime strategy. Because the government is responsible for the security of its citizens, its assertiveness with regard to maritime security must change. In addition, in the broadest sense, Canada needs a better way to develop thoughtfully national security policy. Policy cannot continue to be developed abruptly by multiple departments simply in response to crises. Security is too important to be left to the shifting winds of expediency.

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