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ADJUSTING THE ARMY RESERVE MANDATE

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ADJUSTING THE ARMY RESERVE MANDATE

AIM

1. The aim of this paper is to expose the historical legacy basis under which the army reserve (AR) is maintained and how the current reforms efforts run contrary to that legacy structure of the AR. Foreign military's examples of reforms will be used to broaden the perspective of the current innovations that are being pushed ahead. This paper will then propose options for the Canadian Army (CA) to optimize the AR and orient their use exposing the dual strategic and operational needs of the AR force. It is clear that this research on the AR does not apply without further thinking to the Navy or Air Force reserves, but the primary logical deductions remain pertinent. Many of the final recommendations are based on an expanding allocation of resources for the CA as stated in the current defence policy.¹

INTRODUCTION

2. The militia, or AR, has been a cornerstone of military strength long before the founding of the nation. The roots of many communities and the history of Canada are intertwined with the actions of militia units and its leaders.² Since the end of the combat mission in Afghanistan, budgetary, recruitment and retention issues have plagued the AR³ and endangered its mandate exposing a model that is ineffective in prolonged

¹ Government of Canada. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Last accessed 25 October 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy.html>, 36-38, 43-45, 67-69.

² David A. Morris, *The Canadian militia from 1855: an historical summary*, Boston: Boston Mills Press, 1983.

³ Government of Canada. Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada: Report 5 – Canadian Army Reserve – National Defence, Spring 2016. <https://www-deslibris-ca.cfc.idm.oclc.org/ID/10050623>, 9-16.

peacetime. In 2015, under direction of the federal government, the CA issued the Strengthening the Army Reserve (StAR) directive.⁴ However, while the StAR measures have expedited recruitment, given new specialization to specific units in the form of “mission tasks” and formalized regular force support, it maintained the basics of the force employment in place and no profound restructuration of the AR across Canada has happened. For the purpose of this paper, we will define operational reserve as a reserve force whose primary purpose is to reinforce units of the regular force with individuals and formed elements up to platoon-size to support regular force operational deployments. Alternatively, we will define a strategic reserve as a reserve force whose primary purpose is to generate formed units, acting inside a reserve brigade or not, in response to a major crisis in Canada or abroad which is beyond the integral capacity of the regular force.

3. As recently as early 2017, it was mentioned that Canada’s reserve force “serves both as a strategic and operational resource for the CAF.”⁵ However, a few months later when the new Defence White Paper was unveiled, there was no more the mention of a strategic reserve role but instead a new vision for the reserve force. Indeed, the current defence policy approach to full-time capability through part-time service sees the AR “units and formations bring together the contributions of these various part-time Canadian Armed Forces members to provide 24/7 defined readiness capability according to the new and enhanced roles assigned to them.”⁶ This new policy endeavours to fix the

⁴ Government of Canada. Canadian Army. “StAR: Strengthening the Army Reserve”. Last accessed 25 October 2019. <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/star/index.page>.

⁵ Government of Canada. Departmental Results Report 2016-2017. Last accessed 25 October 2019. <http://www.dnd.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-departmental-results/2017-index.page>.

⁶ Government of Canada. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy. Last accessed 25 October 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy.html>, 68.

annoyance that reservists bring an unreliable contribution in time of peace by getting together various individual reinforcements to send them out as part of a Battle Group in a far-reaching mission.⁷

4. The AR structure that is in place is not designed to support an expeditionary effort with sustained individual reinforcements or formed groups in time of peace. Many employer and colleges find it very difficult to accept a year long absence, when all the pre and post deployment training is included, while few provincial laws protect reservists adequately from adverse penalties when they deploy.⁸ A clash exist between how the AR is conceived for maximum recruitment with a Pan-Canadian reach and what is envisioned for its operational use. The following discussion will bring more clarity on this clash.

DISCUSSION

5. AR units have been established years before the First World War started and, as the oldest dominion, Canada was one of the first to “work towards a more ‘homogenous Imperial army’, including common war establishments for units and formations and the adoption of standardized training manuals to be issued by the [British] War Office.”⁹ However, all the leaders of the dominions were reticent to admit openly that they were

⁷ Government of Canada. Canadian Army. “StAR: Strengthening the Army Reserve”. Last accessed 25 October 2019. <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/star/index.page>.

⁸ James Boddy, “Military Alchemy: Increasing the Army’s Operational Output with Allied Reserve Initiatives.”, Joint Command and Staff Program course paper, Canadian Forces College, 2019, 105.

⁹ Douglas E. Delaney, “Army Apostles: Imperial Officers on Loan and the Standardization of the Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Armies, 1904–1914.” *War in History*, Vol 23 issue 2 (2016): 169-189. https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1177/0968344514552436?utm_source=summon&utm_medium=discovery-provider.

agreeing to an expeditionary force, opting instead for “militias or territorial forces that were effectively liable for home defence only.”¹⁰

6. While Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier understood the pressing need for Canada to defend itself and that, as a dominion he could not refuse a war that England was declaring, he was also aware that he could determine the country’s level of involvement. More mobilizing power did not necessarily mean more participation abroad. Therefore, the rationale for the expansion and professionalization of the militia was to possess a scalable capacity to contribute meaningfully to a major war as the country saw fit. This rationale drove the expansion of the militia even during time of deep cuts.¹¹

7. The Second World War saw the militia deploy its full mobilizing power with as many as 730,000 soldiers at the height of the war from an initial regular force of 4,169 officers and enlisted.¹² Since the peace with the United States was strong and enduring, Canada never saw the need a large standing army. The CAF always looked for a small professional force that could be enhanced by mobilizing its militia units and fast-track training for replacements.¹³ The militia was never intended to be mobilized in time of peace, but rather remain a potent force, albeit cheap, that facilitate access to culturally diverse immigrant populations over vast distances by using local regiments.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Britton Wade MacDonald, *The policy of neglect: The Canadian militia in the interwar years, 1919-39*, Philadelphia: Temple University, 2008, 23.

¹² Ibid, 46.

¹³ J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011, 173.

8. These militia units were not located for training with each other as a brigade or for access to facilities, but rather to be local to the communities they were emerging from and to follow the main centers of population. Our 2017 defence policy boast that “[n]inety-seven percent of Canadians live within a 45 minute drive of a Reserve unit.”¹⁴ However, while the location of AR units follow more or less the population centers of Canada with a stronger presence than there is people in the Maritimes and Prairie provinces than in Alberta and BC, the contrast is more evident when looking at attendance. As of 2015, only four units in Ontario and Quebec were below 60% of authorized manning strength as opposed to 27 units in the rest of Canada.¹⁵

9. While StAR is trying to mitigate these challenges, it would be more effective for an operational reserve that looks to strictly provide reinforcements for Battle Groups to relocate in Ontario and Quebec where the potential seems untapped. However, the “strategic reserve” foundations of the units and a Pan-Canadian view following demographics are still in place and prevent efficiency. While a strict operational reserve mandate is now Canada’s policy for its reserve force, the structure of units in the AR has not changed to support this. Historical, economical and political reasons may support this choice, but it is not efficient to get the most out of the \$724 million, or 4.6% of the defence budget in 2013, invested directly to train the AR.¹⁶ Other countries have faced this political pressure and responded with varying policies to reform their reserve forces.

¹⁴ Government of Canada. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy. Last accessed 25 October 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy.html>, 67.

¹⁵ Government of Canada. Office of the Auditor General of Canada..., 39-44.

¹⁶ Ibid, 5.

10. The Australian Army Reserve (AAR) recent example proves that the lack of structural reforms along with the mandate is not an issue based on Canadian management, but rather an historical legacy that is hard to change. In recent years, the AAR has moved to an operational support for its reserve,¹⁷ “deploying company groups to the Solomon Islands and later to East Timor. But it arguably has done so relatively inefficiently, without resolving its underlying force structure issues.”¹⁸ Maj Smith, an AAR officer argued that:

Not only were structural changes not realized [after moving to an operational rather than strategic mandate] but fundamental questions about task, cost and purpose of the Reserve went unanswered, reflecting a ‘political economy’ to protect existing force structures based on romanticized unit traditions and political affiliation rather than Australia’s strategic interests.¹⁹

11. As they were under the same Imperial Army less than a century ago, the AR and AAR have the same roots²⁰; it is therefore logical that they have the same structural problem when changing the mandate from strategic to operational.

12. The British Army underwent reforms after drastic reductions of the Army by 20,000 positions happened in 2010.²¹ Trying to offset this loss while maintaining a

¹⁷ Nakra, Dashk, “Australian Army Completes Restructuring Under Plan Beersheba,” Jane’s Defence Weekly, 6 Nov 2017.

¹⁸ Smith, Mark. Focusing the Army Reserve: force structuring as an operational rather than strategic reserve. Australian Defence Force Journal: Issue No 193 (2014): 40-55. https://www.defence.gov.au/adc/adfj/Documents/issue_193/193_2014_Mar_Apr.pdf.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Douglas E. Delaney, “Army Apostles: Imperial Officers on Loan and the Standardization of the Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Armies, 1904–1914.” War in History, Vol 23 issue 2 (2016): 169-189. https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1177/0968344514552436?utm_source=summon&utm_medium=discovery-provider.

²¹ Patrick Bury, “Future Reserves 2020: perceptions of cohesion, readiness and transformation in the British Army Reserve”, Journal of Defence Studies, Vol. 18 issue 4 (2018): 411-32. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14702436.2018.1511373>

capability to grow in times of crisis has been the UK's approach. "While the British Army Reserve could be employed as a strategic reserve, its role clearly highlights its existence as an operational reserve that exists to augment the Regular Force."²² Critically, the MoD have identified the risk of using the reserve strictly as an operational pool, as this approach negates any leadership opportunity for the British Army Reserve units other than acting as recruitment and administrative centers.²³ It could also leave units continually undermanned and prevent them from leveraging any form of meaningful unit training which is necessary to maintain a credible strategic reserve.

13. NATO has recognized the necessity of strong reserve forces to bolster armies. It states that reserve forces "are recognised as indispensable to the Alliance's defence at the earliest stages of a conflict since their main role is to be available to fight as soon as there is the need to mobilise forces."²⁴ This statement is not surprising and shows the premium NATO is putting on the ability of member states to not only maintain their forces, but generate more forces than they currently have and remain reliable partners in time of war. As was the case for the Korean war, Canada generated new units based on existing regiments not only to respond to the UN crisis, but also not to endanger its commitments in Europe.²⁵ Canada has created the same conundrum as was during the Cold War: we have joint defence commitments in the Baltic that will stretch our capacity in such a case where a conflict in Asia or Africa occurs that will threaten Canada's prosperity and

²² James Boddy..., 54.

²³ United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, *Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom's Reserve Forces* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2011), 16.

²⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Reserve Forces", last accessed on 25 October 2019. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69345.htm?

²⁵ David Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, 54.

interests. A strategic reserve will become key in such a case to either cover commitments that it can on its own, such as OP UNIFIER or to bolster a regular force brigade.

14. The recent aggressions by Russia in Eastern Europe has also awoken some hard rationale about the need for a major mobilization by many allies in Europe. “As a result of the increasing tensions in the Baltic Sea region caused by the Russian military exercise ‘Zapad’ 1, some member states and some non-NATO states have introduced compulsory military service for their citizens.”²⁶ Compulsory service shows a calculation that standing armies alone are not sufficient in the minds of Canada’s allies for the defence of their home country. As of 2018, thirteen European countries, such as Finland, Sweden and Ukraine, have made this calculation and decided to keep or reintroduce mandatory military service in spite of its political cost. This calculation negates the argument that modern wars will be fought too quickly for mobilization and will only involve standing armies.

15. The recent conflict in Ukraine shows how protracted the Russian hybrid warfare approach can become, pressuring rotation of new units on an ever-increasing front. A conflict under the threshold of war involving a non-NATO member, but with who we “share fundamental values and common approaches to key global issues”²⁷ such as the Kingdom of Sweden that has a diaspora of 330,000 people in Canada, could realistically a major CAF commitment. That effort would be beyond the regular force capacity and necessitate the use of a strategic reserve in a rapid timeframe. The current Strong,

²⁶ Gligor Vaidean, “Army’s Reserve and Active Reserve Training Systems,” International Scientific Conference “Strategies XXI”, Vol. 2 (2018): 284-90. <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/2043183326?pq-origsite=summon>.

²⁷ Government of Canada. Global Affairs Canada. Last accessed 25 October 2019. https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/sweden-suede/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/canada_sweden-suede.aspx?lang=eng.

Secured, Engaged vision for the AR as an operational reserve is ill-prepared for such a scenario that would be critical to our credibility as a fighting force.²⁸

CONCLUSION

16. The current defence policy in Strong, Secure and Engaged along with the StAR directive have done a lot to energize the AR in supporting operational deployments.

However, the profound changes needed to make this an efficient effort have not materialized. Moreover, the signs of the need for a strategic reserve in a major war are evident with our allies, but the AR will be unprepared for this task. The eminent

Canadian historian, Jack English, resumed it best in an article in 2011:

The trouble with this approach [of using the AR as an operational reserve] was that the more reservists were called out for regular force augmentation, the fewer leaders and instructors were left to train Militia personnel in their units. Without a strong leadership cadre to train an infusion of recruits, the Militia base risked shrinking to the point of not being able to sustain the augmentation of the regular force.²⁹

17. A solely operational reserve mandate is risking the AR survival as potent strategic entity.³⁰ The argument that many reservists return to their units from helping the regular force with a baggage of experience, runs contrary to the fact that the AR saw its strongest retention problems in the years following the end of the combat mission in Afghanistan

²⁸ Government of Canada. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Last accessed 25 October 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy.html>, 67-69.

²⁹ Jack English, "The role of the militia in today's Canadian Forces" in Strategic Studies Working Group Papers, Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, Sept 2011.

³⁰ Garri Benjamin Hendell, "The Individual Ready Reserve: Reforming the Army's Hidden Legions," *Military Review*, Vol. 92 no. 4 (2012): 53-57. <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1024809956?pq-origsite=summon>.

where more than 4,642 reservists deployed.³¹ Many of these experienced soldiers either left the AR when the fighting stopped or simply transferred to the regular force.

RECOMMENDATION

18. A few measures are recommended to be taken to secure the operational reserve mandate and maintain a strategic reserve capacity:

- a. As part of the StAR initiative, execute a 2020 update that will assess which units have successfully integrated the “mission tasks” and officially direct these units to be operational reserves. They will provide individual replacements and specialist platoons in operations other than war.
- b. Ensure the remaining AR units receive a clear strategic reserve mandate with tasks to respond quickly to natural disasters, act as mobilized formed units in a deployed brigade and focus their training on conventional warfare.
- c. Move units that have been chronically undermanned in parts of the country to Ontario and Quebec to tap into areas where militia service is popular. This effort will allow a more agile system of recruitment of reservists responding to evolving economical prospects and immigration demographics of Canada’s geography.
- d. Procure anti-armor and air defence equipment, along with simulators, to bolster a credible field survivability for strategic AR units. This effort can not only leverage current procurement efforts, but also generate a higher level of recruitment for reservists while still staying within their funded training time.
- e. Get strategic AR units to focus their efforts by allowing participating in short duration NATO exercises, such as SPRING STORM in Estonia and SABER GUARDIAN in South-East Europe, as a formed small battalion which will validate their capacity on a rotating basis and stimulate retention and recruitment. Following the rule that twenty-one AR positions guarantee the presence of one soldier, this is inside the AR capacity.³²

³¹ Government of Canada. Office of the Auditor General of Canada..., 5.

³² James Boddy..., 79.

19. These measures will confirm the sustainability of the AR and position it to respond to the challenges of the next decades.

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