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The Canadian Army Reserve: The Right Fit for Homeland Defence

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THE CANADIAN ARMY RESERVE: THE RIGHT FIT FOR HOMELAND DEFENCE

The largest component of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Primary Reserve (PRes), the Army Reserve (ARes), is chronically under-utilized. For decades successive Canadian governments have been unable to design a holistic PRes force that leverages their untapped capabilities into the defence strategy. There have been attempts; however, the numerous stakeholders involved in developing this strategy have made the solution space convoluted and at times, combative. Moreover, political willingness and time has factored into the problem space. As a result, the role of the PRes, and for the purposes of this paper the ARes, has not deviated and remains to augment the Regular Force.

The most recent look into the status of the ARes was conducted by the Auditor General of Canada in 2016. Many recommendations were put forward detailing the requirements necessary for the Regular Force Army to implement for the ARes. The Auditor General simply provided a list of solutions to the symptomatic problems within the ARes but failed to see that these were a result of a larger wicked problem, the ARes does not have a mandated and defined core function within the CAF.

Homeland defence is a traditional purpose and relevant given the ARes location distribution throughout Canada. It is also not a new recommendation and has been proposed throughout the decades even as recently as Lieutenant-General Leslie's Report on Transformation (2011), Jack English with the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute. (2011), and David Pratt (2010).¹

¹ Andrew Leslie, "Report on Transformation 2011 : Rapport Sur La Transformation 2011," desLibris (2011), 52; Jack English, "The Role of the Militia in Today's Canadian Forces," Strategic Studies Working Group Papers. Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute and Canadian International Council (2011), 3; David Pratt, "Replenishing Canada's reserves," *Globe and Mail*, 26 October 2010.

Global security and stability structure is changing and threats to Canada remain. Coupled with climate change and an increase in natural disasters, Canada will continue to require a homeland defence system that is reliable and capable to address the current and future needs of Canada.

For a small investment, there is significant untapped potential in the ARes. Yet the ARes has been treated as discretionary for much of its history.² This paper contends that the ARes would have a better fit within the Canadian Armed Forces if it were assigned an independent mandate from the Regular Force Army as Canada's primary homeland defence for domestic emergencies with enacted limited liability of up to 30 days.

Using the study of Strategy and Structure and the concept of fit, this paper will look at the ARes and its lack of fit within the CAF currently and how the proposed operational purpose will improve the overall fit of the CAF. As mentioned, the lack of consensus amongst stakeholders and the persistent and resistant problems that have arisen because of ill-defined defence policy, makes this a wicked problem.³ Stakeholder positions will be assessed within the analogy of fit to provide perspective on the current state and how the proposed role would potentially impact stakeholder perceptions.

The Concept of Fit

The argument can be made that before the Korean War, the ARes fit within the CAF as a framework for mobilization and connection with Canadian communities. It was

² C.P. Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve 1995-2019* (Ottawa: Durnovaria Press, 2019), xvi.

³ Val Morrison, "Wicked Problems and Public Policy," National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy (June 2013), 1.

after the Korean War at the start of the Cold War, that the ARes fit within the CAF was questioned by government.

The concept of strategic fit was introduced by Alfred Chandler. It is a concept within the study of organizational research and management and the relationship between strategy and an organizations components and structure.⁴ Moreover, all organizations must be structured in a way that most effectively handles the contingencies in their external environment.⁵ Fit can only be derived when an organization has the strategy in place and an organization structured and resourced to meet that strategy. Figure 1 lays out the concept of fit as requiring strategic direction which drives structure. Structure influences the organization fit with the external environment. As the environment changes, it drives strategy review and further guidance. Within structure, it is also important to ensure mutually reinforcing activities in creating and sustaining advantage within the external environment.⁶

As stated in the introduction, defining, and assigning a core function to the ARes is a wicked problem. The nature of the problem and the best solution cannot be agreed upon by all the stakeholders.⁷ In order to determine the problem, first a solution must be proposed.⁸ When analyzing the solution and what actions need to be taken to solve it, the problem may reveal itself. Stakeholders are an important piece to creating a solution to a wicked problem.⁹ However, stakeholders may have very different ideas on what the

⁴ Prescott C. Ensign, "The concept of fit in organizational research," *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior* (July 2001): 294; Nicolaj Siggelkow, "Change in the Presence of Fit: The Rise, the Fall, and the Renaissance of Liz Claiborne," *The Academy of Management Journal* 44, no. 4 (2001): 838.

⁵ Ensign, "The concept of fit in organizational research ...: 299.

⁶ Siggelkow, "Change in the Presence of Fit...: 839.

⁷ Morrison, "Wicked Problems and Public Policy..., 1.

⁸ Morrison, "Wicked Problems and Public Policy..., 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*

defined problem is. In the process of creating fit for the ARes, stakeholder collaboration between all components is critical.¹⁰

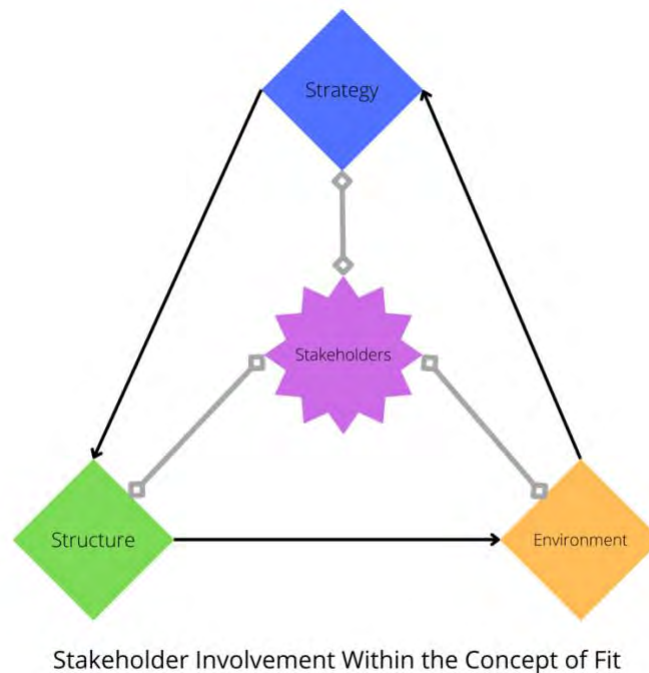


Figure 1 – Stakeholder Involvement Within the Concept of Fit

The CAF should be analyzed as a system of interconnected choices: choices with respect to activities, policies and organizational structures, capabilities, and resources.¹¹ If an organization has a tight fit, it is flexible and mutually supportive. Figure 2 outlines the current concept of how the CAF operational elements fit together to be mutually supportive. If we add in the ARes, it does not have a place within the puzzle. Instead, it has been made to sit outside the puzzle, but tied only to the Reg F Army. Pieces of it are

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Siggelkow, "Change in the Presence of Fit...": 839.

drawn into the Army as required to augment the capability gaps. It does not have fit within the current structure and this lack of fit creates an unused capability.

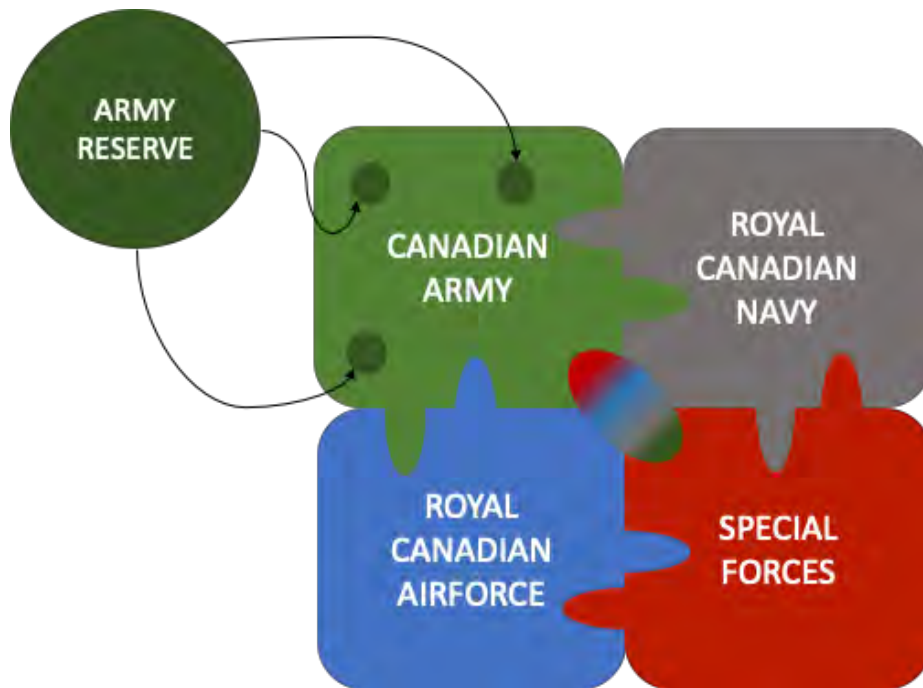


Figure 2 – Current CAF Structure Demonstrating Lack of Fit

Ideally, the ARes should be seen as a system within the structure as depicted in Figure 3. Each system mutually supporting each other. This cannot be achieved unless the ARes has a core function that fits within the tasks of the Army and the CAF, allowing it to be a mutually supportive/supported system.



Figure 3 – The Canadian Armed Forces as a Tight-Fitting System.

History of the Army Reserve

The ARes is Canada’s largest and longest serving reserve organization going back 60 years before the Dominion Militia Act of 1868.¹² To this day, the ARes is the face of the CAF within both large and small urban centres, specifically 123 units in 117 different cities across Canada.¹³ These units “serve as a tangible, locally-rooted, centrally-administered, unified yet diverse representation of the country.”¹⁴

The Cold War redefined how the Canadian government, and most other NATO countries, considered their military forces. In particular, the constant threat of nuclear attack prioritized forces in being versus forces in waiting.¹⁵ The role of the ARes at that time was to provide a framework for national mobilization as was enacted for both World War I and World War II. The need for national mobilization was seen to be a remote

¹² English, “The Role of the Militia in Today’s Canadian Forces...”, 7.

¹³ Éric Tremblay, and Howard Coombs. “Canadian Armed Forces Reserves – *Quo Vadis?*” *Canadian Military Journal* Vol. 16, No. 3 (Summer 2016): 19.

¹⁴ Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve...*, 3.

¹⁵ English, “The Role of the Militia in Today’s Canadian Forces...”, 11.

possibility as the likelihood of a conventional military state on state war was considered almost impossible and thus not worth planning for.¹⁶

From 1963 to 1993 the authorized strength of both the Reg F Army and the ARes were consistently cut. In addition, over 72 ARes units were closed in rural and small towns.¹⁷ From 1965 until the present day, the primary role of the ARes has flip flopped between providing a framework for national mobilization and augmenting the Reg F.¹⁸ As will be discussed below, both roles are inappropriate as the *raison d'être* of the ARes. Beginning in 1994, at the end of the Cold War, NATO nations, including Canada, began to rejuvenate their small Reserve Forces. The Fall of the USSR caused a significant transformation within the geopolitical environment that has created new threats. These new threats are causing nations to rethink how they approach conflict and diplomacy, and what structures are suitable to address these new capability needs.¹⁹

Attempts at rejuvenation began with the 1994 White Paper, followed by Land Force Reserve Restructure from 2000-2006, and finally Strengthening the Army Reserve (StAR) in 2016. The reason for so many initiatives to rejuvenate the Reserves was because the Regular Force Army ignored these government directions and policies by slashing ARes funding, taking equipment specifically procured for the ARes, and failing to draft any ARes policies and guidance as directed by the government.²⁰ StAR was the only initiative that gained early momentum with an infusion of temporary funding for

¹⁶ English, "The Role of the Militia in Today's Canadian Forces...", 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12; Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve...*, 4.

¹⁸ English, "The Role of the Militia in Today's Canadian Forces...", 12.

¹⁹ Guillaume Lasconjarias, "Send the Reserve! New Ways to Support NATO through Reserve Forces." (Research Paper NATO Defense College, Rome No.99, November 2013), 2.

²⁰ English, "The Role of the Militia in Today's Canadian Forces...", 2, 14; Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve...*, 45.

recruiting. However, in the end, this initiative is also failing because of a lack of funding resources.

Tensions between the Reg F Army and the ARes were high going back to the 1990's and to this day remain difficult at times. However, in the words of C.P.

Champion:

It should always be remembered that, whatever, the regulars and militia might have squabbled over, the fundamental cause of this endless destructive fight over resources was the unwillingness of the politicians, and the public, to provide sufficient funding for either the regulars or the reserves, let alone both.²¹

The Problem Space

The first and arguably the most important issue is strategic direction. Canada's current defence policy was issued in 2017, Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE). The title encapsulates the overarching responsibilities of the CAF: To be strong at home, secure in North America, engaged in the world.²² Regarding ARes purpose, SSE states the Reserve Force will be further integrated into the total force providing full-time capability to the CAF through part-time service.²³ The government objective is to amalgamate the Reserve components with their respective Reg F components such that any task or duty conducted, it will be indistinguishable who completed it.²⁴

The concept of total force was adopted in the late 1980's where regular forces and reserve forces were considered two parts of a single Total Force mutually supporting one another. Unfortunately, the Reg F support to the ARes did not materialize in part because

²¹ Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve...*, 262.

²² Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2017), 14.

²³ Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged...*, 68.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

the Reg F had too few resources of their own to share, but more importantly, Reg F and ARes unit locations and training schedules do not match. Most Reg F units reside on large bases while ARes units are spread throughout the country and are not always co-located or in proximity. In addition, Reg F units work a standard Monday to Friday work week while Reservists work evenings and weekends. Thus, the ARes was exploited as a source of individuals to fill out the Reg F ranks but little if any support was given towards the ARes.

As the ARes has no strategic or centralized concept of employment, it left their employment in the hands of the Reg F Army. As noted by Major-General Éric Tremblay, this created a service-driven use of ARes capacity that was not necessarily aligned with strategic needs. The ARes are only able to produce organizations that can react to contingencies on an *ad hoc* basis because they are not assigned operational tasks and are not resourced to be employed in such a fashion.²⁵ By creating the policy of augmentation, the CAF committed one part of the Army to feed upon another part of the Army, and by doing so they destroyed its own capacity to sustain and multiply itself.²⁶

To improve the augmentation support from the ARes and to meet the requirements set forth by the Auditor General in 2016, the Army has developed the concept of operationalizing the ARes through the assignment of mission tasks.²⁷ ARes units are to be assigned specific unit mission tasks and required to force generate a platoon (30 personnel) within that specialty for overseas operations as required.²⁸ On the

²⁵ Tremblay, “Canadian Armed Forces Reserves – *Quo Vadis...*”, 20.

²⁶ Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve...*, 38.

²⁷ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report 5 – Canadian Army Reserve – National Defence*. (Canada Communications Group, 2017), National Defence Response to recommendations.

²⁸ Canada, Department of National Defence, 3350-1 (Dir ARes 2), Canadian Army Operation Order – Strengthening the Army Reserve (Ottawa: Canadian Army, 2016), 6; Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged...*, 68.

face, this looks to be an improvement to individual augmentation; however, it is still augmentation. The remainder of the ARes unit after it has deployed its mission tasked element overseas, will be left with only the assigned task of Territorial Battalion Groups which are formed on an *ad hoc* basis as required for domestic operations only at the request of the Reg F. In addition, losing leaders and instructors to deployments makes it difficult for the remaining unit to train their personnel. All the tasks assigned to the ARes are in support of the Reg F Army and therefore, should be categorized as augmentation. These tasks represent capabilities within the ARes, but not a core function.²⁹

What makes the defining an ARes core function an especially wicked problem, is the unwillingness of the stakeholder who has the decision-making authority, to assume the responsibility of issuing proper direction, in this case the Federal Government. Moreover, although there was some government policy in place, the required strategic implementation of this policy was not always recognized within the Department of National Defence, by the CAF, or the Army.³⁰ In doing this, the Reg F Army has been forced to its breaking point and is now too small to carry out all its assigned tasks.³¹

The second issue is a matter of structure. The authority and regulations which structure the CAF are housed within the National Defence Act and the Queen's Regulations and Orders. The NDA stipulates that Reservists can be called out on service only if ordered by Governor in Council. Canada views its Reserves as a purely voluntary force. It now becomes clear why the ARes has never been assigned a core function other than augmentation. If a national emergency were to occur today, the Reg F would not

²⁹ Dan Doran, "Redefining the Army Reserves for the 21st Century," *Canadian Military Journal* Vol 13 No. 2 (Spring 2013): 77.

³⁰ English, "The Role of the Militia in Today's Canadian Forces...", 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

factor the Reserves as a significant contributor because there is no obligation to serve thus they cannot adequately plan how many Reservists will arrive or for how long they will stay.³² When put in this context, it is easy to see how the Reg F came to see the ARes as the “Army’s Reserve” and not an independent capability.³³

The Solution Space

The proposal put forward in this paper closely aligns with the recommendation in the 2011 Report on Transformation. Lieutenant-General Leslie recommended Canada’s Army be divided into two force generating commands. The first division would consist of the Reg F Army whose core function would be to provide all international deployable elements for operations and high readiness tasks. The second division would be the ARes whose core function would be homeland defence with a secondary task of augmenting the Reg F on international operations. Each division would mutually support each other as required.³⁴

The current distribution of ARes units across Canada is one of the primary reasons this core function aligns with the ARes. However, the framework that would be required to carry out proper homeland defence would see the ARes growing to a strength of 45,000 personnel, an enhanced presence in Canada’s arctic, and growing from the 10 reserve brigades currently in place to 23 brigades across the country. This structure would provide Canada with a robust ability to provide troops for expeditionary operations as well as homeland defence tasks.³⁵

³² George Petrolekas, “Reserve Options” (Canadian Global Affairs Institute, July 2016), 3.

³³ Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve...*, 341.

³⁴ Leslie, “Report on Transformation 2011...”, 52.

³⁵ English, “The Role of the Militia in Today’s Canadian Forces...”, 33.

Although it should not be the *raison d'être* of the ARes, the CAF should be prepared for the possibility of national mobilization in support of conventional force, state on state war. Having plans for mobilizing on a reserve framework of 45,000, would be prudent and provide a strategic hedge against the unpredictable nature of future conflict.³⁶ In light of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the probability this level of conflict will not arise does not seem as remote as once thought.

A growth of this size and capability must come as direction from the government. Followed with ample funding and resources to execute the growth and sustainment. In the end, the growth of the ARes to this level and capability will still be cheaper than growing the Reg F Army to a comparable size. A suggested wise investment of government funding.³⁷

A key component for the success of this structure is the necessity for ARes personnel to be available for all homeland defence tasks as they arise. To achieve a coordinated and predictable response, the Canadian government should enact limited liability for all ARes for the purposes of homeland defence only. Unlike the United States National Guard, employment on expeditionary operations would remain voluntary. Section 31 of the NDA allows the Governor in Council to place any Canadian Armed Forces component, unit, or element on active service anywhere in Canada at any time for reason of an emergency. Active service does not mean full-time employment. An Order in Council can be issued that captures a broader scope of CAF personnel like was done in 1989 when all members of the CAF were (and still are) on active service for the purpose

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2; Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve...*, 286, 283, 322.

³⁷ English, "The Role of the Militia in Today's Canadian Forces...", 33.

of fulfilling Canada's NATO obligations.³⁸ If the ARes is deemed to be on active service for the purpose of homeland defence, section 33 and 276 of the NDA would authorize Canada to call up ARes personnel to aid civil powers in homeland defence.³⁹

At this point, it is important to look at the perspective of two important stakeholders: ARes personnel; and civilian employers. ARes officers and soldiers have made significant contributions to international deployments including the Balkans and Afghanistan, and many domestic operations. This clearly demonstrates the desire of the ARes to serve and the capacity of the Reserve Forces to continue within these roles.⁴⁰ However, up to this point, Reservists have always volunteered for operational service.

Being placed on active service with a limited liability to serve will change the dynamic of how reservists serve. However, the ARes can approach the change with structures in place that can alleviate concern from ARes members and address the misgivings or family/civilian situations that may preclude availability. For example, when the ARes reaches full or close to full strength, it would have the capacity to develop internal organizations at various stages of readiness. This would allow immediate action upon call up of the Reserves and maintain a readiness of follow-on forces that would require additional time to deploy. In addition, there will be some organizations within the ARes that will need to be protected from call up such as those personnel within the

³⁸ Law Office of Rory G. Fowler, "Full Time Service is Not Active Service (or Active Duty)," accessed 27 May 2022, <http://roryfowlerlaw.com/full-time-service-is-not-active-service/>; National Defence Act, R.S., c N-5, s 31 (1985).

³⁹ National Defence Act, R.S., c N-5, s 33 (1985); National Defence Act, R.S., c N-5, s 276 (1985); This interpretation of the NDA is from one person only. Before implementation, further analysis of this proposal would require significant review by Canada's Judge Advocate General and likely changes to the National Defence Act in order to ensure the legislation concerning limited liability is understood.

⁴⁰ Tremblay, "Canadian Armed Forces Reserves – *Quo Vadis...*", 21.

recruiting and training systems. For someone who is unable to serve on short term call ups, employment within these protected organizations would be an option.

The second key stakeholder is the civilian employer. Potentially increased employment of ARes members on short term domestic operations will take away reservists from their civilian employment. Employment protection legislation will be critical to ensuring Reservists can continue to serve as the citizen soldier. The United States Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA) is a very interesting legislation that applies to all employers both federal, state and local governments, and private employers. Although this legislation forbids the discrimination of Reservists within the hiring process, inconsideration for promotion, and indiscriminatory lay-offs, these issues still arise. The US reports that the unemployment rate for reservists is three times higher than the average.⁴¹

Canada has developed different federal and provincial job protection legislation. Each of these measures are unique and challenging to interpret.⁴² One consistent federal legislation would alleviate the confusion and would address the different employment concept proposed for the Reserves. Canada's well established Canadian Forces Liaison Council is a good foundation to continue the education and awareness with civilian employers to ensure reservists are given the time they need to serve their country.

Conclusion

The CAF is a system of systems that all need to work together. However, there is no fit among our systems as one system continues to subordinate another rather than seeing it as an integral equal piece of the total system. The CAF has been assigned

⁴¹ Lasconjarias, "Send the Reserve!...", 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 4.

significant and important tasks within Defence Policy and the Regular Force cannot do it alone. In the face of rising state actors, increased alliance obligations, and domestic emergencies caused by mother nature and climate change, Canada cannot afford to discount or subordinate the Reserve Forces any longer.

How the ARes is viewed by the Canadian government, Reg F Army and the public needs to change dramatically if the ARes is to remain relevant through the 21st century.⁴³ The Canadian government and the people of Canada need the willpower to force change upon the CAF and support a large injection of funding for the rejuvenation of the ARes, with strict enforcement on where and how it is to be spent.⁴⁴

Globally, how nations are employing their Reserves is changing and countries have put a greater reliance on their Reserve Forces.⁴⁵ By adopting the proposed framework for the ARes, Canada would position itself to be a notable contributor to NATO through a stronger Reg F and a more robust ARes that is equipped and trained to meet the variety of tasks assigned to it. However, without a core function, the ARes will continue to be under strength, under resourced, and under-utilized.

⁴³ Doran, "Redefining the Army Reserves...", 77.

⁴⁴ Petrolekas, "Reserve Options...", 6.

⁴⁵ Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *Answering the Call: The Future Role of Canada's Primary Reserve*. (1st sess., 37th Parliament, Interim Report, December 2011), 23.

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