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## **Guns or Butter: Defining the Canadian Armed Forces’ True Military Purpose**

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## **GUNS OR BUTTER: DEFINING THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES' TRUE MILITARY PURPOSE**

*“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, then [sic] to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Because the innovator has for enemies in all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new . . . [because of] the incredulity of men, who do not readily believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them.”*

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*<sup>1</sup>

*“This bill provides for the amalgamation of the Navy, Army and Air Force into a single service and will provide the flexibility to enable Canada to meet in the most effective manner the military requirements of the future. It will also establish Canada as an unquestionable leader in the field of military organization.”*

Paul Hellyer, Minister of National Defence<sup>2</sup>

### **AIM**

1. The aim of this service paper is to discuss Canada’s military role in the future and the arrival at a critical point in time due to current circumstances. There is an opportunity for Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) senior decision makers to be bold, make hard decisions, and build a foundation that will take the CAF into the future with relevance. From the bottom looking up, it appears that institutional leaders continue to release doctrine, policy, and strategy but when considered all together, there lacks a clear and consistent message about the CAF’s overarching role, and consequently its value, within the global security construct. Deep rooted service rivalries and stove piping continues to divide Canada’s military instead of promoting a cohesive, supportive organization in which services also maintain their history, heritage, and identity. Critical periods in the CAF’s history demonstrate that organizational change is possible, but never has the focus been on the CAF’s role or capability as a warfighting entity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

2. The CAF is currently facing a series of challenges that affect relevance in the military community. There is a need for evolution but meaningful organizational change requires a

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<sup>1</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. W.K. Marriott (Cleveland: Duke Classics, 2012), 43.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Hellyer in Larry Milberry, *Sixty Years: The RCAF and CF Air Command 1924-1984* (Toronto: Canav Books, 1984), 367.

catalyst<sup>3</sup>. Advancing technology and aging equipment combined with a seemingly insurmountable political will to spend on defence, or processes in place that make it difficult to do so, have put the CAF in a challenging position of remaining relevant amongst allies. A reputation crisis caused by sexual misconduct at the highest levels, a worldwide pandemic, the AUKUS agreement, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and a 10,000 personnel deficit can serve as the catalyst. But these factors even pale in comparison to the rising Indo-Pacific threat. If Canada is not prepared to support its allies and protect global security in the wake of this threat materializing, it will cause significant harm to Canada's standing in the world.

3. Tradition, stove piping, and inter-service competition within the CAF are preventing the organization from achieving its highest potential. Canada's military has a proud tradition stemming from involvement in the world wars, earning Canada recognition from the international community. But internal conflict and a mindset of competition, not cooperation, has slowly eroded the CAF's ability to maintain this reputation. The focus continues to be on Canada's contribution to NATO and NORAD in economic terms, i.e. spending 2% of GDP on defence, which the CAF ultimately has little or no control over, but not how the CAF can contribute military forces. Since the combination of political constraints, a small population coupled with large geography, and personnel shortages make it impossible to the CAF to achieve the same level of capability as its allies, there is a need to focus resources and provide the global community with capabilities, or skills, that are second to none in the world, thus making the CAF a partner of choice on operations.

## DISCUSSION

### Canadian Armed Forces History of Identity Struggle

4. Canada was inhabited by indigenous populations before being colonized by France and Britain in the early 1500s. Canada became a British dominion and the military adopted British practices.<sup>4</sup> This led to closer ties with its colonizing countries than any others. The relationship with the United States before WWII was virtually non-existent but in 1938 President Roosevelt declared "I give to you assurance that the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened . . ."<sup>5</sup> The perilous global security environment that followed in the early 1940s then forced Canada and the US closer together and led to the creation of NORAD. Following the war, Prime Minister Pearson's focus on peacekeeping operations, and subsequent Nobel Peace Prize, began to shift the Canadian public's view of the military. Canadian's "fell in love with peacekeeping," an idea that resonated with Canadian culture, and consequently fell "out of love with the true purpose of a military—to be ready to fight wars."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Michael K. Jeffery, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation: Institutional Leadership as a Catalyst for Change* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009), ix.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Granatstein, *Who Killed the Canadian Military*, (Toronto: Harper Collins Publisher Ltd., 2004), 38.

<sup>5</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed*, 15.

5. Early in his military career, Paul Hellyer noted that “there was little effective cooperation between the services when each concentrated almost exclusively on its own interests,” and became frustrated by Canadian military “service triplication.”<sup>7</sup> Others also recognized these inefficiencies and as Minister of National Defence, Hellyer pursued unification of the Canadian Forces (CF) in 1968. Some efficiencies were gained but even more was lost as the forces began a decline that continued, ending with the extreme cuts imposed by Jean Chrétien. Hellyer had a reasonable vision that aimed to save money by eliminating triplication and address the ongoing inter-service competition. Hellyer defined the main roles as support to NATO, NORAD and UN peacekeeping with a vision of forces that would fight together on land, at sea, and in the air.<sup>8</sup> However, he failed to recognize the fundamental differences between the services and the impact of eliminating service identity.

6. Operations, logistics, support, personnel and administration were easily combined under one functional command but the personal goals of those in power took over and drove further change, compounding the already significant stress to the organization. Additionally, several unintended consequences arose. First, the “money saved” by decreasing inefficiencies led to a reduction in budget rather than being reinvested into the military. Positions were likewise eliminated rather than being reallocated. Second, bases were closed reducing the military footprint in communities further exacerbating the public “out of sight, out of mind” view. Thirdly, low budgets, more than the loss of uniform, led to significantly low morale. Finally, and maybe most importantly, civilians seemed to take over the organization. The divide between military soldiers and military bureaucrats<sup>9</sup> began and the CF became “captive of a system it could not change—or master.”<sup>10</sup> This divide is still present today. In the years that followed the return to Chiefs of Staff, triplication crept back in and the competition between them began anew. They started separating functions such as promotion systems and staff colleges, resulting in segregation that can still be seen today in career management and succession planning, professional development, doctrine, information management, and training.

7. As CDS, General (Ret’d) Hillier correctly identified that a more focused approach would be a better strategy for Canada rather than three fully combat capable services<sup>11</sup> but his conclusion of focusing on the army was not supported. In the absence of political direction in the form of a defence policy, and no commitment for more money, it was up to Gen Hillier to forge ahead with his ambitious transformation. The priority for change was the command and control structure and “the development of sustainable integrated forces.”<sup>12</sup> In the end, this transformation, like unification and the recent creation of Chief of Professional Conduct and Culture, focused on the structure of the organization but not its military purpose or capabilities.

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<sup>7</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed*, 70.

<sup>8</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed*, 74.

<sup>9</sup> Military soldiers includes soldiers, sailors and aviators at the tactical and operational level as opposed to military bureaucrats, who were military leaders at the strategic level working in conjunction with Minister, Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs).

<sup>10</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed*, 89.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffery, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation*, 23.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffery, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation*, 28.

Many of the resulting changes have since been reversed or amended, but that is not to say that they did not achieve any positive change.

## **The Future of Warfare**

8. The future of warfare is increasingly complex given pan-domain environments, technological advancement, and overall unpredictability of the type of conflict that will arise. It is dangerous for any state to assume that any type of warfare is in the past, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine proves. War and conflict will continue to be unpredictable and is "unsuitable for trend analysis"<sup>13</sup> which means Canada and its allies must be prepared for all types of conflict, including gray-zone and below threshold. In comparing Canada to other global powers and allies (Annex A), it is clear that most are in a completely different category considering the size of their militaries and defence budget. The closest comparison is Australia who, despite having a smaller population and military and lower GDP, has a \$20B budget surplus over Canada. This reinforces how the Canadian public's ignorance of global security threats manifests in political reluctance to increase defence spending. The constraints that limit Canada's ability to match peers may not be significant since the CAF has recognized that it cannot deter or defeat hostile powers alone and must combine with NATO, FVEY and other key partners.<sup>14</sup> However, indications that Canada does not take defence seriously undermines the CAF's ability to remain relevant to key partners and key capabilities must still be maintained so that Canada can contribute meaningfully to global security.

9. Many sources agree that the future of warfare necessitates "more, and more ready forces rather than the rotational" system of the past,<sup>15</sup> "long-term viability and readiness"<sup>16</sup> and an "agile [and] modern approach to defence."<sup>17</sup> Looking at Op Serval in Mali as an example, the French focused on small scale ops by design and through doctrine,<sup>18</sup> which may be a strategy that Canada can look to adopt to achieve high-levels of operational capability with limited personnel. This focus is enabled by modern, technologically advanced, and sufficient equipment. Any shift in capability to small, highly operational deployment packages must be supported by the budget.

10. The Canadian public, whether overtly or subconsciously, demands the highest commitment to a high moral code from its military organization. There is a strong movement occurring within the organization that demands better of the higher echelons. These factors

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<sup>13</sup> Christopher Coker, "Targeting in Context," In *Targeting: The Challenges of Modern warfare* (The Hague, Netherlands: Asser Press (Springer), 2016), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence, *Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept: Prevailing in an Uncertain World*, (Ottawa: CJOC, 2022): 4.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher G. Cavoli, "Hard power is a Reality," YouTube, January 9, 2023, 4:45 to 5:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFhlAHnRbg>.

<sup>16</sup> Department of National Defence, *CDS/DM Directive for Defence Reconstitution and Modernization*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2022): 8.

<sup>17</sup> Government of Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, (DND: Ottawa, 2017), 63.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Shurkin, "What it means to be Expeditionary: A look at the French Army in Africa," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 82, (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2016): 77.

combined suggests that advancing the CAFs values during operations, at home and abroad, will play a big role moving forward. The CAF can be the global leader in maintaining high moral values during operations, but there is a culture, mindset, and training regime that must come with it. CAF members must be adequately prepared to operate in cultural environments that are vastly different from Canada, and there must be support afterward to help them deal with the ramifications. The CAF can be the example to other military organizations that operations can be conducted with the utmost respect for human life and dignity. This approach will make the CAF stand out amongst our peers and make CAF involvement in operations desirable. Not every CAF member needs to be a SME on gender and cultural perspectives, but they should be trained to ask pertinent questions and consider the implications of gender and culture in everything they do.

11. The new generations are inherently more tech savvy than those that came before. Additionally, the equipment that CAF will procure is more advanced than ever. These factors suggest that the CAF must increase the number of skilled members in these areas to manage, interpret, and disseminate information collected and be prepared to detect, prevent, and counter threats so that the CAF can operate in the information and cyber domains. More qualified cyber operators employed across Canada and more intelligence personnel to manage the increasing work load associated with advanced capabilities are required. The CAF must also continue to train members to operate without technology. The nature of the cyber domain is that it is increasing challenging to detect and prevent cyber-attacks. Therefore, CAF members must be prepared to maintain the highest level of operational capability in degraded conditions.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Divesting and Investing**

12. Divestment is necessary to progress the future of the CAF and is often overlooked. Although divestment will cause friction and likely be unpopular, it is necessary to ensure proper focus on the CAF's most critical capabilities. CAF senior leaders will need to thoroughly assess the contribution of some capabilities and decide which of them can be divested to free up resources to support other capabilities. Divestments also include disposing of equipment and infrastructure that is no longer functional or needed, as recognized by SSE initiative 103.<sup>19</sup> Examples of some capabilities that might be divested include the Snowbirds Air Demonstration Team, the SkyHawks Parachute Team, the Naval Tactical Operations Group, and the Army Regimental System. Counter-arguments to divestment of units include the fact that members of these organizations will release if the unit is disbanded, leaving the CAF no further ahead. Although that may be true, not having to fund and staff these units going forward still stands to benefit the CAF *if* the positions and funds are then reallocated within the organization. The intent of divestment is not to reduce the size or budget of the CAF, but to focus the limited personnel and funding on critical capabilities. Divestment of some of the more peripheral functions also

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<sup>19</sup> Government of Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 77.

serves to indicate that the CAF is a serious military force and not distracted by non-warfighting activities.

13. Investments are a necessity and although the actions of the past decades that cancelled procurement projects and decimated personnel numbers cannot be corrected overnight, a clear and firm decision must be made to signal an intent to fix those events. Some recent procurement projects, such as the new naval ships and the recently announced F-35 fighter aircraft, demonstrate a commitment towards re-building CAF capability. The risk is that the necessary infrastructure, cybersecurity, and management systems, along with the personnel to support these functions, will not be in place or sufficient to support these new capabilities. Other areas to invest or reinvest include the medical occupations, cyber and information ops, integration of gender and culture perspectives and multi-domain awareness into all aspects of CAF operations (including strategic, operational, and tactical levels, training and exercises). Since the closure of many military hospitals, most medical personnel have been forced to work in civilian facilities to maintain their credentials. Recent interviews with medical branch career managers suggest that medical personnel are critical to operations and joined the CAF because they want to be in the military. They are also looking for more demanding and rewarding career within the organization, including more opportunities for advancement. This issue and the current shortage of medical personnel for military members' dependents can be resolved by rebuilding military medical facilities and expanding to include care for dependents.

## CONCLUSION

14. Granatstein quotes an economist's saying "for guns or butter" and believes that Canada is rich enough to have both. We can focus on butter but without guns, someone else could easily come and take it.<sup>20</sup> The process of unification and transformation prove that significant organizational change is possible, but not easy. Both Hellyer and Hillier faced many of the same challenges that the CAF struggles with today, but neither of their initiatives addressed the reality that the CAF is a military force which must be ready to fight wars. Changes such as those suggested will be met with resistance and must be supported by clear aims and objectives. This will ensure that the decades of turmoil following unification will not be repeated and significant de-moralization will not occur. Separate service identities and unified forces are not mutually exclusive. Understanding the difference between jointness and multi-domain integration and being able to operate in a joint environment is critical not only to CAF joint operations, but also so that CAF members can easily integrate into combined joint operations. Canada needs to shift focus to capability, agility, responsiveness, integrated and interoperable troops that can deploy anywhere in the world to meet the threat as it exists at any given time, from conventional to gray zone to cyber. The CAF must focus on the following.

- a. Realities. Acceptance that Canada's population and non-militaristic mindset limits the CAF and working within these constraints.

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<sup>20</sup> Granatstein, *Who Killed*, 10.



- b. Re-focus on domestic operations to include SAR, Arctic patrol and aerial interception, and ensure adequate resources for domestic disaster relief (medical supplies, fire and flood relief, etc). Focus on maintaining smaller force packages at high level of readiness to deploy anywhere in the world in support of, but with a big impact on, *joint* allied operations.
  - c. Rebrand. Change the perception of the CAF amongst political leaders, the Canadian public, and within DND by advertising the CAD as a real warfighting entity with the equipment and personnel to back it up.
  - d. Reinvest in the medical branch to re-open military hospitals and provide medical care to CAF dependents across Canada.
15. By finally defining the CAF purpose and role in the world as a military force, and supporting that purpose with the equipment and personnel, the CAF can move forward as a relevant contributor to allies and key partners.

**Annexes:** A. Comparison of Canada to other Global Powers

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# Annex A: Comparison of Canada to other Global Powers

Country	Founded	Population (Density/km <sup>2</sup> )	Total area (km <sup>2</sup> )	GDP (nominal) (\$ trillion)	Armed Forces (Reserves)	Defence Budget (B USD) (% of GDP)
Canada	1867	39,292,355 (4.2)	9,984,670	2.200	68,000 (27,000)	26.4 (1.4)
United States	1776	333,287,557 (33.6)	9,833,520	25.035	1,358,500 (799,500)	782 (3.42)
Australia	1901	26,053,900 (3.4)	7,692,024	1.725	60,330 (29,740)	46.9 (2.0)
UK	1066	67,791,400 (270.7)	242,495	3.198	148,000 (37,000)	36.307* (2.2)
France	843	68,042,591 (105.4627)	643,801	2.936	208,750 (141,050)	53.127* (1.7)
Russia	879	147,182,123 (8.4)	17,098,246	2.133	1,154,000 (2,000,000)	65.9 (4.3)
China	2070 BCE	1,411,750,000 (145)	9,596,961	18.321	2,035,000 (510,000)	293 (1.7)
Germany	962	84,270,625 (232)	357,592	4.031	183,638 (29,000)	56 (1.4)
South Korea	918	51,844,834 (1,313)	100,363	1.804	555,000 (2,750,000)	50.2 (2.8)
Japan	660 BC	337,975 (330)	377,975	4.301	247,150 (56,000)	53.1 (1.19)

\*converted from local currency