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NATIONAL SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY:

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Don Macnamara

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The government's stated intention to undertake a comprehensive defence policy review over the next year, including public consultation, is encouraging.¹ They would do well to remember that the first and most important obligation of government is the security of the country, its sovereignty, and the safety and well-being of its citizens – a fact that political leaders, bureaucrats, and citizens alike must remember, even if that seems particularly challenging in Canada.

On that point, the government would benefit from the development of a *comprehensive national security strategy* – one that would comprise not only individual policies but also integrate major areas to permit a real 'whole-of-government' approach to national security, not just defence.

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A consensus of what, precisely, constitutes our vital national interests would permit a rational and logical analysis of issues and trends related to the consequences of action or inaction, and the identification of policy responses appropriate to prevent or mitigate their impact, ultimately leading to integrated policy formulation. The need for such a strategy should be evident. Our contemporary world is full of complex events, issues, trends, risks, and threats that can, and do, affect Canada's national interests either directly or indirectly, and *not* simply from a defence perspective.

This analysis is intended provide a relatively simple explanation of a logical and rational approach to a comprehensive national security strategy. The development of such a strategy may not be easy. But that should be pursued through a logical and systematic approach; a road map for those who may be charged with the responsibility to develop it.

Strategic Planning and a Comprehensive National Security Strategy

Systematic 'strategic planning' was an activity developed in military operations research communities during the late 1970s. In their book *Strategic Planning and Forecasting*, William Ascher and William Overholt proposed a strategic planning model that simplified the many components of other methods so that understanding of the steps and process was significantly improved.²

An adaptation of their Strategic Planning Model has been used in teaching the approach and processes since that time. In effect, it follows a simple formula: **INTERESTS** (*values, objectives*) + **ENVIRONMENT** (*political, economic, cultural, security, technological*) = **STRATEGY** (*policies: foreign, security, economic, science, social*). A similar approach (see Figure 1) was developed as a collaborative effort between Brigadier-General Dr. George Bell (Ret'd) and this author. It was used as the foundation for the curriculum at the National Defence College of Canada and has been taught as

FIGURE 1: An approach to a National Security Strategy



a model to formulate a National Security Strategy since 1982.³

A “comprehensive national security strategy” may in turn be defined as a set of ‘whole of government’ integrated policies – foreign, defence, economic, technological and socio-cultural – that articulate the ways and means by which Canada’s national interests can be protected, promoted and preserved. Events, trends, and threats can negatively impact those interests in a “globalized” world. If the international system is conceived as a system of systems, then a change or activity in any one system (or even a component of one) can affect all other components – each country and each factor.

Using ‘national interests’ as the means to identify or test the effects can lead to a rational process

and ultimately relevant and responsive set of policies. Key questions that must be asked include: What are Canada’s interests – our values and goals? What issues, risks or threats are developing in our domestic and international environments? What impact may they have on our interests? What are the ways we can protect and advance our interests? What are the available means – resources and constraints? What is the strategy – policies and plans?

These questions provide a guide that would permit a tasked committee or study group to pursue appropriate policies, although it is beyond the scope of this paper to address each in detail.

Vital Interests, Values, and Goals

Canada’s ‘national interests’ is a term misused all too frequently by politicians to emphasize or justify a Canadian activity or response to a situation. Seldom, if ever, are the specific interests identified.

In 1848, British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, in an address to the House of Commons, offered perhaps the most widely quoted statement on this subject: “We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual and these interests it is our duty to follow.” More recently, American political science scholar Elmer Plischke devoted a full chapter of his 1988 book *Foreign Relations – Analysis of its Anatomy* to discussing the ‘national interest’ con-

cept, its use and abuse. His lengthy definition may be paraphrased as:

*National interests are those fundamental determinants, intrinsic needs, operational criteria or ultimate standards in accordance with which a nation frames its national purposes and goals.*⁴

Noteworthy is Plischke's characterization of Donald Nuechterlein's development of the use of national interests as a tool for both analysis and policy development. In his 1979 book *National Interests and Presidential Leadership*, Nuechterlein defined the term 'national interests' as "the perceived

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needs and desires of one sovereign state in relation to the sovereign states comprising its external environment,”⁵ thereby differentiating it from the 'public interest' which refers to dealing with the internal domestic environment. He further identified the four basic national interests that should underpin all states' foreign and security policies: Defence, Economic, World Order, and Ideological.

National interests are, essentially, a combination of the fundamental values of a nation combined with the fundamental interests (or goals) to be achieved and maintained. Rather than conceptually separate, a country's fundamental values will in reality both inform and form its national interests. For Canada (and most democracies), our societal values are: **Democracy** – a freely, elected and representative government, leading to the rule of law; **Individual Freedom** – to pursue one's interests without interfering with the rights of others; **Human Rights and Social Justice** – valuing the individual human life.

Using Nuechterlein's approach, Canada's national goals and interests could be stated as follows:

1. **Security** – The protection of its national territory and sovereignty; the protection and safety of its citizens and their assets; and the protection of North America in accordance with our various treaties and other arrangements with the United States.
2. **Economic** – The pursuit of the economic well-being of the nation and the prosperity of its citizens; and protection of its market-based economy.
3. **Stable World Order** – Promoting and maintaining a rules-based international system of peace and trade; and the mitigation and prevention of conflict and disorder that may affect the nation's economic well-being or security.
4. **Protection and Promotion of Canadian Values** – Democracy (rule by consent of majority) and the rule of law; individual freedom and human rights / social justice (recognizing the intrinsic

value of the individual human life).

This list should not be interpreted as an order of priority; however, it should be recognized that they are indeed a hierarchy of interdependency. Security is the first and most important responsibility for government, allowing for the achievement of all the other goals. But it is also dependent upon national prosperity to provide the means to pay for the requisite capabilities for defence, intelligence, security, and public safety. For Canada, a healthy and competitive trading economy is dependent upon conditions of global stability to ensure that prosperity. Maintaining and promoting fundamental values is the foundation of the society that enables the citizenry to pursue their own interests while contributing to the well-being of the nation.

Levels of Intensity/Impact

National interests can and should be used as a lens through which to view international and national issues, trends, risks, and threats, thereby allowing for analysis and assessment on the impact of those factors on Canada, their consequences, and the specific policy areas that need to be addressed. To start, one needs to undertake an assessment on the level of intensity or impact of each national interest (see Figure 2).

- **Vital** (in any catastrophic sense such as nuclear threat 'survival' level) – a situation that may cause serious harm to the nation unless very strong measures are taken, including military

FIGURE 2: National Interest vs Intensity Matrix

	Intensity / Levels of Interest			
	Vital <i>Critical</i>	Major <i>Serious</i>	Human <i>Important</i>	Peripheral <i>Bothersome</i>
Defence of Canada / North America				
Economic well-being				
Stable world order / Int'l Security				
Promotion of Cdn values				

*This matrix, adapted from the original Nuechterlein matrix, illustrates the way in which issues and threats are assessed and displayed.

force. It may not be just a defence matter but also economic, world order, or even ‘values’ (such as humanitarian) interest.

- **Major** – if the nation’s political, economic and ‘values’ interests are likely to be affected by the events or trends unless timely corrective action is taken to prevent them from becoming ‘vital’ matters, e.g., matters subject to diplomatic negotiations.
- **Humanitarian** (natural disasters, famine, epidemics, ‘genocide’) – an additional response-level necessary because ‘our values demand it.’
- **Peripheral** – events or issues in which the nation’s direct interests are not involved, but those of individual citizens or commercial entities in another country may be at risk and for which diplomatic or consular involvement may be required.

Equally important is to create an ‘audit trail’ (see Figure 3) for the means by which the most important issues have been identified, the interests that are affected, and the intensity of impact of each. Considering this audit trail along with the previous ‘National Interests vs Intensity’ matrix (remembering, of course, that some issues may affect more than one interest and at more than one level of intensity) will create a graphic picture of the most important and relevant risks or threats affecting Canada’s interests. Similarly, sorting the Issue, Trend, Risk, and Threat by policy goals and policy responses will create a ‘menu’ that will identify the various policy areas and the relevant

FIGURE 3: Audit Trail: Sorting Risks

Audit Trail: Sorting Risks*					
Issue, Trend, Risk, Threat	Source	Interests Affected	Consequences Impact of Occurrence	Policy Goals / Areas Affected	Strategic Policy Response

* This matrix was developed by the DND Policy Group Strategic Assessment Team in 1977-78 for use in preparing the first Strategic Assessment for Canada.

government departments and agencies that have to be involved.

Assessment

Unlike our principal allies, Canada lacks a strategic intelligence capability to undertake a comprehensive strategic analysis and assessment of the international environment, which could lead to an agreed ‘view of the world’ on the major elements affecting Canada’s security.

The Australian Office of National Assessments is a useful model for Canada. It has a staff of about 150, including management and analysts, and now has an overall responsibility for coordinating the activities of the other members of the Australian intelligence community. It also has a centre

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for ‘open source’ (unclassified) intelligence that contributes to overall intelligence assessment, gleaning information from news media and popular/academic journals down to individual organizations’ pamphlets and other written material. Such an office is certainly desirable and necessary for Canada, including for the re-organization and consolidation of our own intelligence assets, but a full analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.

In Canada, there is also no government document(s) that could contribute to the next steps in articulating a comprehensive and integrated set of policies. This speaks to a critical weakness in Canada’s ability to produce the desired comprehensive national security strategy. *The Strategic Outlook for Canada 2016*, authored by Ferry de Kerckhove and published by the CDA Institute provides a semblance of such a strategy, with the added credibility and oversight of not being an internal government document.⁶ Many other reliable assessments can also be used as background documents and consolidation for the purpose of undertaking this strategy development.

Resources and Constraints?

A comprehensive national security strategy will require the identification and assessment of what ‘whole of government’ assets and capabilities – including Diplomacy, Intelligence/Information, Military and Economic, (DIME) – may be necessary and what may be actually available.

One of the limiting factors in non-military departments will be the relatively small number of deployable personnel, meaning those with the appropriate training and readiness for the tasks at hand. Readiness, in military terms, means the capability for relatively quick response and would include health, physical fitness, immunization, and personal equipment availability and accessibility. Personnel policies must also be in place for mandatory or optional deployments, including medical

coverage and insurance covering compensation for death or injury on deployments. Civilian deployability also means an organizational and staffing policy to ensure the staff available to keep the various normal departmental functions intact while some personnel are deployed.

Failing to have a *non-military* 'depth' would represent immediate limitations to any policy that would assume government civilian deployment. This would likely result in the Canadian Armed Forces being seen as the 'default resource,' hence affecting their own readiness and availability for the use of force as necessary. In addition, there may be financial constraints limiting the purchase of appropriate equipment, both military and civilian, in a timely manner.

The overall strategy will have to state the 'what' and the 'why,' starting with clarification of each of the departmental/policy areas outlined in the various analyses, how their integration intends to achieve a set of outcomes, and the identification of capabilities and constraints. Individual policies addressing DIME components will identify the issues, the interests affected, and the means and restraints by which the issues will be addressed, including articulation of the policy implementation plan and stating the expected outcomes and the 'who,' the 'how,' the 'where,' and the 'when.'

Understanding Canada's Geo-strategic Realities

At the outset of establishing a comprehensive national security strategy, policy planners need to recognize and understand the perceptions and realities of Canada's geo-strategic position.

Canada is the second largest country in the world, has the world's longest coastline (bounded by three oceans), and shares a land border with the United States that stretches from sea to sea. About 90 percent of our population (37th in the world) is strung out within 200 km of the US border, and more than 60 percent is concentrated in the industrial heartland between Quebec City and Windsor, Ontario. With its exceptional natural and human resources, Canada is among the wealthiest countries in the world, rated as having the 10th largest GDP globally and 6th largest in NATO. Equally important, its military expenditures as a percentage of the GDP (1 percent) are also among the lowest in the alliance (20th of 27 NATO members).

Sovereignty is traditionally measured by having supreme, independent authority over one's geographic area and, as a corollary, the capability to enforce that authority. Sovereignty protection remains a daunting task for Canada, given the country's geography, population, its powerful adjacent neighbour with whom we share land, sea, and air approaches to North America, and the huge uncertainties concerning the future global security environment.

That situation is further complicated by the reality that the Canadian North represents 40 percent

of Canada's territory – but contains only 0.3 percent of the national population, widely dispersed in settlements, small towns, and three small cities. The resource-rich Arctic is becoming more accessible as sea ice melts and more open water appears for longer periods. The North also encompasses major air and sea approaches to Canada and the United States, which means the capacity for effective surveillance of the North – including the detection, interception, identification, deterrence, deflection or destruction of intruding aircraft and ships – is both fundamental to our sovereignty defence and critical to the security interests of the United States.

Canada and the United States are closely linked by interlocked security, economic, financial, trade, cultural, social, and historic ties – arguably more than any other two independent countries in the

“In truth, Canada has a history of a ‘forward defence’ or ‘deployment strategy’ – to defend Canada and our interests as far as possible from our homeland before potential threats approach or directly threaten Canadian or other North American territory.”

world. Since the Ogdensburg Agreement of 1940, and then the North American Aerospace Defence Agreement of 1958, the joint defence of North America with the United States remains an imperative. In reality, however, we are largely ‘consumers’ of US homeland security. To become ‘producers’ of security, we must also contribute to the defence against threats outside our country (e.g., threats to our allies’ security and prosperity).

In truth, Canada has a history of a ‘forward defence’ or ‘deployment strategy’ – to defend Canada and our interests as far as possible from our homeland before potential threats approach or directly threaten Canadian or other North American territory. Yet such an approach is today currently beyond our own capability.

Should the US in particular perceive that we are unwilling (or increasingly unable) to contribute effectively to the defence of Canada's land, sea or air approaches, they would logically have to take measures to protect themselves. To defend themselves as far away from their homeland as possible could well mean doing so over Canadian territory or air and maritime approaches, effectively resulting in a loss of Canadian sovereignty. There is an implicit assumption by many that the United States would be obligated to defend Canada – but this fails to recognize that such activity could clearly represent a forfeiture of Canadian sovereignty.

Conclusion

Global strategic awareness combined with rational and systematic risk and threat assessment concerning our national interests, supported by evidence-based policy development, are essentially the first and most important issues to be understood by strategic policy planners. They are the paramount considerations in terms of the capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces that would be

sufficient to make an effective contribution to our own defence as well as that of our closest allies.

Even with such contributions, however, interoperability with the armed forces of our closest allies and particularly the United States should be seen as an over-riding strategic factor in protecting our fundamental vital interest – protecting Canadian sovereignty and the very existence of Canada as an independent country.

It is therefore essential that a clear, logical, and relevant comprehensive national security strategy be developed in light of the vital interest of Canada – the security and the sovereignty of our country. Critical decisions regarding Canada's response with capabilities to ensure national sovereignty must be based on evidence and analysis and not whim or opinion – and certainly not on arbitrary budgetary decisions. Canada is a country worth defending!

This Analysis is based on a longer article that was published in Frontline Defence, which can be accessed at <http://defence.frontline.online/article/2016/2/4356-National-Security-is-the-Government%E2%80%99s-First-Responsibility>.

About the Author

Don Macnamara, *an analyst and commentator on national and international security affairs, retired as a Canadian Air Force Brigadier-General after having spent 37 years in the Canadian Armed Forces. He subsequently joined the faculty of Queen's University (now Smith School of Business) teaching international business and strategy in undergraduate, MBA and Executive Programs for 20 years. He is also a member of the Advisory Council of the CDA Institute. (Don has been an academic colleague of Dr. Don Nuechterlein, whose work is referenced in this article.)*

Notes

1. See Government of Canada, “Defence Policy Review,” <http://dgpaa-pp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/index.asp>.
2. William Ascher and William Overholt, *Strategic planning and forecasting: Political risk and economic opportunity* (New York: Wiley, 1983).
3. Peter Layton, “Making a Canadian National Security Strategy,” *ON TRACK* (Fall 2015): pp 37-40.
4. See Elmer Plischke, *Foreign Relations: Analysis of Its Anatomy* (New York: Greenwood, 1988).
5. Donald Nuechterlein, *National Interest and Presidential Leadership: The Setting of Priorities* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), p. 74.
6. Ferry de Kerckhove, *The Strategic Outlook for Canada 2016: In Search of a New Compass, Vimy Paper 27* (Ottawa: Conference of Defence Associations Institute, 2016).

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151 Slater Street, suite 412A
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H3
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151 rue Slater, bureau 412A
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151 Slater Street, suite 412A , Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H3
Phone / Téléphone: +1 (613) 236 9903

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