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A Necessary Long-Term  
Planning Framework**

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# Canadian Naval Future: A Necessary Long-Term Planning Framework

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In 1997 I wrote a paper arguing that Canadian naval policy remained stalled, contentious, and political.<sup>1</sup> My concerns then were that despite the very thorough examination of naval requirements during the 1994 Defence Policy Review, those requirements were still not widely understood and that the government seemed unwilling or unable to provide the funding necessary to uphold the newly established policy. That paper was the first of a series that systematically examined the function of navies in the post-Cold War era and the types of naval capabilities Canada needed. A common theme in those papers was that, despite clear evidence that Canada was being well served internationally by its Navy, there was a lack of political resolve to implement a sensible naval policy to sustain key naval capabilities over the long term. The recent accident in HMCS *Chicoutimi* showed that even the rationale for maintaining modern naval capabilities is still not understood by many politicians, by the media, and by many military experts.<sup>2</sup>

The deteriorating state of the Canadian military is no secret today.<sup>3</sup> The military structure has returned to a condition we called “rust out” in previous similar situations. Equipment replacement has been postponed for so long that, regardless of the political priority assigned, there are significant capability gaps while the forces wait for new equipment. Yet the Navy, Army, and Air Force still have to deploy at short notice in all corners of the world. What concerns me today is that despite warnings and public criticism, the government does not seem to have grasped the longer-term implications of the present situation: without new equipment and higher funding levels, their expectations for reliable forces that can deploy quickly cannot be met much longer. And there doesn't seem to be any sense of urgency to address this problem. Admittedly, the prolonged transition to a new leader of the Liberal Party and the resulting delay in re-calling Parliament pushed defence issues to the back burner.

What is missing, at least in the public domain, is a coherent plan to rebuild the Canadian military and maintain existing capabilities while waiting for the next generation of military equipment. Some people are calling for a new defence White Paper to address this problem, while others believe the existing defence

policy is adequate and that an appropriately funded long-term force development plan is all that is needed. This is complicated by the oft-expressed view that the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in September 2001 changed the equation, and so everything that pre-dates those outrages is obsolete. This view overlooks the much broader international situation that both spawns terrorism and provides the targets for its outrages.

Although there is some truth in the view that terrorism has changed the battle-space and so national security requirements must also change, the call for change is being driven by more than just the implications of terrorism. Several other issues are involved, including technological changes and the reluctance of many politicians around the world to accept the fact that we are living in a period of intense social change, perhaps unequalled in Western society by any series of events since the Reformation. Even though international terrorism is the present threat to our society and our standard of living, it may not always be the dominant threat. Other equally threatening situations may well arise, and we will need to be able to counter them. Hence, the seemingly ad hoc defence policy is not only short-sighted but is also poor use of scarce resources. Rather, it makes far more sense to return to basics and ask, "What should Canadians expect their military to be able to do?"

### **Military Planning in an Unstable International System**

Most people now accept that we live in an uncertain and unpredictable world with little prospect for stability in the near term. The political system, however, seeks short-term solutions that play well in public opinion polls rather than striving to implement longer-term solutions to problems that may not see returns in the current government's mandate. This means that not only are we unable to predict the future course of international politics, we also cannot predict political responses to specific incidents. This situation is made more complicated by the increasing influence of domestic issues – partly as a result of direct interventions by special interest groups and ethnic organizations – on the foreign policy process.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the problems facing Canadian defence planners today are complex and multi-faceted. There are, however, some constants:

- ◆ Effective international crisis management and domestic security operations now require sophisticated information management, rapid response to potential or real incidents by versatile forces, and the political will to make tough decisions quickly;
- ◆ Creating the right forces to be an effective world actor while maintaining national security takes vision well beyond a single political mandate. For instance, elections are held every five or fewer years, but it takes over ten years to build a warship. Bad equipment decisions today will lead to the wrong capabilities for the future; and
- ◆ The military, and thus navies, will always be instruments by which foreign and national security policies are implemented. In the policy process, the role of the military is to suggest ways in which the government can best make use of military capabilities. This requires policy activity at two distinct levels: the maintenance and development of military capabilities (such as the exercise of control over areas of land, sea, or airspace), and the actual employment of those capabilities to meet specific government objectives. Keeping these two policy activities synchronized requires a long-term vision and careful planning.

Of necessity, military planning today does not make provision for radical change in the prevailing international situation. It cannot, because of the 40-year cycle of the new equipment procurement process for major platforms. It has to be assumed that a ship or aircraft ordered today will remain useful until the end of its life. Systems and weapons can be modernized relatively easily to keep pace with new technologies, but platforms tend to be kept in service far longer. Much of the time required to bring new platforms and equipment into service is a function of complex political contracting requirements and the reluctance of governments to buy new military equipment offshore and off-the-shelf. In part, therefore, the constraints of the procurement process are self-induced.

But what if the world situation changes? Perhaps the Western liberal democracies will lose their will to intervene; there are certainly many people who believe that the present trend in neo-imperialism is unsustainable in the long-term. Iraq will be a test. Certainly, the war on terrorism is polarizing much of the world. In the face of such unpredictability, and because of long procurement time, investments made in military capability must provide a high degree of flexibility to meet changing circumstances.

So, the questions that need to be answered are “What future world?” “What Canada in that world?” and “What military capabilities will Canada need?” Some also ask “How does one plan for the future on a limited defence budget?” but this presents everything through the clouded glass of today’s defence budget rather than getting the right answers to the three basic strategic questions. The absence of a coherent answer to these three strategic questions produces the proverbial “shaving of the ice cube” and protection of service rice bowls, rather than creating the right mix of capabilities to meet long-term national security requirements. We have to find a way to put the partisan or turf based political cart firmly back behind the strategic horse. Ideally, what is needed is a core definition of the military’s precise role in the broad context of national and global security that transcends partisan politics in establishing Canada’s long-term security requirements. This philosophy should be easily translated into military capabilities as a necessary first step in acquiring platforms, sensors, and weapons.

Getting defence policy right, or at least striking a balance between the many political pushes and pulls, is a huge task and one that should not be undertaken without some public input, perhaps along the lines of the 1994 Defence Review, where expert opinion on defence matters was sought across a broad spectrum. The federal government is now planning to issue an internally developed defence policy which will be referred to parliament for review and consideration. This paper addresses the main naval issues that should be introduced into such a comprehensive review.

### **The Strategic Rationale for a Canadian Navy**

Canada must continue to maintain an appropriate balance of flexible contingency forces if our politicians want to remain active on the world stage while also ensuring national security, regardless of how troubled or complex the world becomes. That was the strategic conclusion reached in the 1994 Defence Review, which formed the foundation of the subsequent defence policy. That policy failed because the government did not implement it, not because the strategic rationale was flawed. For the Canadian Navy, the 1994 *Defence White Paper* was a sensible policy because it established a prudent mix of naval contingency

capabilities that also served as the basis for force planning and operational training. It set out the Navy's role as follows:

- ◆ To assist in the evacuation of Canadians from threatened areas;
- ◆ To deploy a naval task group of up to four combatants (destroyers, frigates, or submarines) and a support ship with appropriate maritime air support;
- ◆ To maintain one ship with the NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic;
- ◆ To provide one ship on an occasional basis to serve with the NATO Standing Naval Force Mediterranean; and
- ◆ To provide forces for national maritime security and sovereignty protection.

Since 1994, those naval capability requirements have not changed significantly, apart from deploying ships operationally with US formations and enhancing the maritime data management process. The policy and related force development and training plans were not implemented because the government failed to provide the funds necessary to maintain those capabilities, while still expecting the Navy to undertake the assigned tasks.

Under the 1994 policy, the Navy was to have both a diplomatic role and be a contingency force against threats to national and international security. This echoed traditional Canadian naval policy, upheld since the onset of the Cold War some 40 years earlier, that it was uneconomical and impractical to maintain two fleets, one for domestic operations and another to support diplomatic initiatives and contribute to international security. In this, it was accepted that ships, submarines, and maritime aircraft designed and equipped for the more difficult tasks in distant waters could easily undertake defensive tasks in home waters when necessary. The reverse is not the case. Ships designed and built for offshore tasks cannot be effective elsewhere. The oceans are not benign environments, and those who have spent any time at sea know that operational effectiveness drops rapidly as the sea gets rougher: small ships quickly become ineffective in rough water whereas larger ships can continue to function in much higher sea states.

The new security environment, particularly as it has evolved in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, is very much more inclusive, with military operations placing much greater emphasis on multilateralism and “jointness” as well as on inter-agency cooperation in homeland security. However, we must remember that jointness—among military forces as well as other government departments and agencies—is merely a management tool and not a strategy or doctrine in its own right. However, jointness is the most complex form of military operations and, like multilateral operations, it requires extensive training and compatible equipment and procedures. Experience has shown that one cannot be “joint” if one does not have individual service capabilities first. Paul Hellyer made this mistake in 1964 when he attempted to create what became known as the “Triphibious” Force, which was found to be a vastly expensive and unworkable concept.<sup>5</sup> Also, the concept of a purely Canadian joint force is flawed. It is virtually impossible to envisage a unilateral Canadian joint operation anywhere outside Canadian territory. Moreover, the reality of international military operations is that armies integrate with other armies and navies with other navies. Only in the highly specialized area of amphibious operations is there any integration of joint forces. Individual services have unique tasks, especially in national security, and jointness is merely the means by which individual service capabilities are integrated operationally in specific situations.

Even though military operations are often referred to as *peacekeeping* or *peacemaking* in the new security environment, they are, in fact, crisis management operations, or, if we are absolutely honest about it, they constitute limited warfare in that the political objectives they seek are limited in scope rather than focused on the total destruction of another state’s military structure. Such military operations today are extensions of the diplomatic process, intensifying when diplomacy has failed to find a solution to a crisis or to prevent one. In this, military operations are now conducted in four phases, each closely linked to diplomatic action:

- ◆ Early warning operations conducted through surveillance, intelligence gathering, and analysis;
- ◆ Initial and rapid response to a developing or existing situation either through the deterrent deployment of military forces or in the direct application of coercive or punitive force;
- ◆ Deployment of follow-up forces to establish and maintain order; and
- ◆ Commitment of military and civilian assets for peacekeeping and restoration.

Over the years, there has been a political preference for using naval forces in making the initial response to crises. The reasons for reliance on naval forces are self-evident: they can deploy in days rather than in weeks, they do not require re-configuration if the mission changes, and they are more self-contained and self-sufficient than army or air force formations. Crisis management tasks exploit the inherent flexibility and capabilities of warships (including submarines, which can also play an important role in the early warning and intelligence gathering phase) and naval aircraft. In the uncertain and unpredictable future, governments will find, as they have in the past, that naval forces offer them greater flexibility in providing force and influence in international relations than either armies or air forces. The forward deployment of naval forces, even committing them to combat, carries a much lower political risk than the deployment of land forces.

The political attractiveness of navies was well summarized by D.P. O'Connell:

[by] their ambiguity, navies alone afford governments the means of exerting pressure more vigorously than diplomacy and less dangerous and unpredictable in its results than other forms of force, because the freedom of the sea makes them locally available while leaving them uncommitted. They have the right to sail the seas and the endurance to do so for the requisite periods, while land forces cannot present a credible level of coercion without overstepping the boundaries of national sovereignty.<sup>6</sup>

However, stability will only be achieved by army units on the ground. Although sea power remains the "great enabler," as Colin Gray reminds us,<sup>7</sup> it is not the sole means by which a crisis or war will be ended.

Over the past 50 years successive Canadian governments have used their Navy widely to show concern over developing situations, as in Haiti in 1964 and 1993-94, in the first response to a crisis as at the onset of the Korean War, in the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War and in the 2001 War on Terrorism (*Operation Apollo*). They have also used the Navy as an instrument of diplomacy in a host of situations in the Caribbean, the Southern Atlantic and throughout the Pacific, while also relying on those ships, submarines and aircraft to provide a major contribution to international security within NATO and, after 1990, in international coalitions

in such places as Somalia, the Adriatic, and the Persian Gulf.<sup>8</sup> From this, it would seem that the Canadian government now recognizes that versatile naval forces, rather than specialized forces, continue to be a sound investment in national security, no matter what happens in the future. If this is so, why is there no comprehensive policy to maintain those forces into the future?

### **What Does the Future Hold for the Canadian Navy?**

Within the present complex world situation, naval planning for the future – determining the right balance of capabilities – needs to be imaginative and innovative. It is not enough to plan to replace the status quo: *Operation Apollo* proved that the forces and related management concepts were inadequate for such prolonged operations at considerable distances away from home. Moreover, the new emphasis on homeland security has naval implications that raise complicated questions. Hence, the key strategic question becomes “What naval policy and programs for Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” In answering that question, the naval force structure envisaged by the *1994 Defence White Paper* provides a better point of departure, because it provides the necessary naval flexibility for both domestic and international requirements.

Many analysts have set out the strategic arguments for maintaining Canadian naval forces.<sup>9</sup> The key issues today can be summarized by looking at three questions:

- ◆ Does Canada need a joint Rapid Response Force?
- ◆ Who should be responsible for the maritime aspects of homeland security?
- ◆ Does Canada need a submarine capability?

These issues have become controversial, even emotional at times, and the intensity of the debate as well as the diversity of views sometimes makes one wonder whether the advice being given to government and opposition parties is completely realistic or projected sufficiently far into the future. Also, special interest groups frequently enter the debate and use the media to further their views, which are usually directed more towards specific capabilities than strategic and operational factors. The *Chicoutimi* incident and the

intense media coverage it garnered is a good example of how a lack of knowledge of the basic principles quickly produces a distortion of the facts.

Before moving on to address the three questions, it is useful to review, briefly, the overarching principles of contemporary naval operations. Reduced to simple terms, the primary task of the Canadian Navy today can be thought of as *sea control*.<sup>10</sup> To be sovereign at sea, a state must be able to control whatever takes place in waters under national jurisdiction. Exercising national control over a body of water requires that three criteria be met:

- ◆ It must be known exactly who is using those waters and for what purpose;
- ◆ An unequivocal expression of government authority in those waters must be maintained; and
- ◆ The government must be able to respond quickly and effectively to violations of the law or threats to national security.

Similarly, to conduct military operations in other parts of the world it is vitally important that the area of operations be kept secure by controlling the movement of other vessels. Both requirements for sea control call for the gathering and analysis of information, the physical presence of warships, and the ability to respond quickly and effectively to actual or potential threats. The Canadian Navy has provided this sea control capability for a series of international operations, such as *Operation Apollo*, as well as for many domestic incidents, and only one fleet was needed to meet these tasks. *Sea control* is thus the common denominator in the three questions.

### **Does Canada Need a Joint Rapid Response Force?**

Canada already has a very effective international rapid response capability in its navy. Canada has been enormously well served by a succession of national naval task groups over the past 15 years. Those forces, more than any other arm of the military, provide the government with the flexibility to make a variety of responses to international crises and developing situations. The Navy has always been the vanguard force in Canada's response to foreign crises, and there is no sound strategic reason to change that.

The government's recent announcement of its intention to move ahead with the procurement of multi-purpose fleet support ships has not changed my basic concern over the lack of a comprehensive and coherent policy with full political support. In fact, this concern has heightened over time, as the Navy's operational capability erodes, seemingly without plans to modernize the fleet as a whole. The April 14, 2004, announcement on the new Joint Support Ships could be seen as an attempt to make some headway with major defence programs, but as some critics were quick to point out, it was "too little, too late." That one program is not enough on its own to sustain the mix of naval capabilities that have brought great credit to Canada on the world stage, especially since the end of the Cold War. What is even more troubling is the implicit acceptance by the government that the existing support ships will have to remain in service until the new ships arrive in about ten to fifteen years.

The strategic concept for the new Joint Support Ship fails to address an overarching strategic question: "Which is more important, a high-readiness fleet replenishment ship or a low-readiness Army cargo ship?" In all but a few unique situations, the tasks are mutually exclusive. The answer must be political, based on the requirements of foreign policy and on the need to make Canadian interventions in international crises. Only by having more than three of these ships can that dichotomy be resolved. Moreover, I am not yet convinced that the Canadian Army can make the necessary intellectual, doctrinal, and structural changes necessary to exploit the full contingency capability inherent in the conceptual new ships. Using the carts and horses analogy again, fleet replenishment should be the horse and the army sea-lift the cart. The key point about fleet replenishment ships is that they are force multipliers, and without them the frigates and destroyers will only function on short tethers unless they are part of foreign formations, simply because they will not have the integral logistic support system that lies at the heart of naval flexibility.

The Joint Support Ship is still vulnerable politically. For instance, we do not know how or where the ships will be built, because we have allowed the national ship-building capability to wither, and spending that kind of money off-shore is not acceptable. Can that industry be re-built, or has the prolonged lack of orders caused it to erode beyond recovery? Under a scenario where defence funding continues to be constrained, this very expensive program may come at the cost of other equally important naval programs.

In the case of the 1987-89 nuclear-powered submarine program, a controversial concept was allowed to progress to the point where eight frigates were sacrificed to get the submarines. In the end, we got neither the frigates nor the submarines. It is to be hoped that the new support ship is not going ahead at the expense of replacement for the *Tribal*-class destroyer leaders, which are the core of the task group concept. The naval task group concept has proven time and time again that it serves Canada well at home and overseas. Again, we need to answer a strategic question, "How are Canada's interests best served?"

Some support exists for a new Canadian amphibious capability as a new "Vanguard" force for rapid response to international crises. My reasons for opposing this concept are a matter of public record.<sup>11</sup> Simply, even if such a capability was created and made operational, which would take around fifteen years, there is the political question of where, when, and how it would be used. As presented at first, it was an armed intervention capability which, besides being very expensive to put in place, required a major shift in Canadian defence and foreign policies that, *inter alia*, would require acceptance of casualties on a level comparable to a war. The lack of a clear national policy on military intervention became clear during the 2004 election campaign when both major parties avoided a potentially contentious issue by not specifying the new ships' capabilities. Ironically, the Conservative proposal for a "hybrid" carrier as the nucleus of a new rapid response force may serve to secure the Joint Support Ship's future, as it now seems that both parties are apparently calling for the same vehicle.<sup>12</sup>

Before committing to either the Joint Support Ship concept or the more radical amphibious strike capability, we need to be sure that the huge investment in those capabilities will pay dividends over the next 40 years, which is their expected life. How many more Sierra Leone-type situations will there be that Canada will be invited to put right? The Australian analogy is not appropriate because we live in a very different neighbourhood and have very different national interests. This is one of those instances where foreign policy must lead defence policy. The requirement for the underway replenishment function of the ships is self-evident. As the Navy has shown over the last 35 years (since the commissioning of HMCS *Provider*), integrating a fleet replenishment ship into a task group increases operational flexibility immeasurably, for without that capability frigates and destroyers, with their helicopters, can only operate within a few days sailing from a refuelling port, or else they have to depend on the support ships of another navy. The

implications of not having that degree of integral support are just as severe for national security operations in Canada's huge ocean domain, with only limited port facilities in several areas, as they are for international operations. The land force support role is not yet self-evident: to be strategically legitimate it needs a clear government statement on future participation in intervention operations and on the deployment of land forces in crisis management roles.

### **Who should be responsible for the maritime aspects of homeland security?**

Clearly there is a need to improve the overall Canadian national security structure, but how to do it remains contentious. Joel Sokolsky and others argue that homeland security should become our primary defence concern, simply because of our proximity to and relationship with the United States. Canadian security has always been of more concern to the Americans than it is to Canadians.<sup>13</sup> Sokolsky advocates a shift in emphasis from the present priority given to the Navy supporting foreign policy multilaterally to more distinct continentalist policy with greater operational integration with the forces of the United States. This thought was amplified by Dwight Mason when he said that

[t]he Canadian Navy is an effective and significant force, particularly when deployed with the U.S. Navy. Building on this record and experience, the United States would undoubtedly welcome the prospect that Canada would seek the ability to deploy and sustain 4 frigates anywhere in the world for a period of a year every year. New supply ships are a key to this, but so also are recruitment, training, continued modernization, and ultimately, replacement (of the existing fleet).<sup>14</sup>

Balancing domestic and international requirements is more complex than many realise, especially in situations where decisions have to be made quickly. For instance, in talking about decision-making in the maritime dimension of homeland security, Senator Colin Kenny always asked "Who is going to drive the bus?" Until the bureaucratic "rice bowl" issue is solved, that question will remain unanswered. Driving the bus entails accountability, budget management and making tough decisions. Despite the logic of creating a better national security decision-making structure, there is a risk that this will only gel when a major national security crisis occurs in Canada. Making symbolic changes for short-term situations could well

have adverse implications in the longer term; a long-term solution is needed, and the sooner the better. In the meantime, there are some sensible steps that can be taken.

First, the Navy's lead in providing the real-time command, control, and information management systems should be universally accepted, because the Navy is the only organization equipped to do it. Then, the funding necessary for complete interoperability across government should be provided. This now seems to be moving ahead, perhaps slowly because not only must bureaucratic inertia be overcome, but also the intellectual dimension of interoperability needs to be entrenched throughout government. This requires abandoning some deeply entrenched bureaucratic concepts and creating a much clearer long-term vision of national maritime security.

Second, the Navy doesn't belong on the waterfront except in its own dockyards. It can provide some diving and explosives disposal (EOD) support, but it should not be responsible for policing commercial ports. Port security today is too complicated and should be done by those who understand port and cargo handling operations.

Third, law enforcement and intervention at sea are specialized jobs. At the moment there are only two organizations qualified to do them: the RCMP and the military. The Coast Guard should not be invited into this field. The experience of the 1995 Turbot "war" where the Coast Guard resorted to the use of force imprudently and without traditional Cabinet authority, should be adequate reason for not using the Coast Guard in intervention tasks. Instead, they should continue to be responsible for marine safety and ice breaking and leave intervention to those trained in doing it. The use of force needs to be kept under firm political control and only authorized when all other measures have failed. For these reasons, a military command structure is needed to control the use of force on behalf of the government.

Fourth, the Navy should be doing the majority of the sovereignty and security coastal patrols over, under, and on the water, because it alone is equipped to do it efficiently. Exercising sea control is the pre-requisite for virtually every naval activity when threats or potential threat exist, and today it demands modern, high-speed data-processing systems and related communications. Hence, it is a naval task, because only the

Navy has the capability to do it properly. DFO should retain its fishery patrol responsibility, including the air patrols, but that function should not be confused with national security, despite the fact that it makes a useful contribution to the overall maritime picture. Further, because of the need for rapid and effective response to developing situations in homeland security at sea, with realistic rules of engagement, there is only room for one set of ship operators.

In the longer term, when considering replacements for the maritime coastal patrol vessels, the Navy will need to design and build a new class of ocean patrol vessels to be part of the integrated surveillance, presence, and response process. The Navy had this role in the 1950s and early 1960s and there is no reason why it cannot do it again. But the next generation of ships should not be small, relatively inexpensive vessels, as some advocate; they will have to be warships with high endurance and excellent sea-keeping qualities and be capable of complex information management operations. Years of bitter experience has shown that small ships cannot carry out sustained operations in rough weather and do not provide the flexibility needed at sea today.

Fifth, the RCMP and the Navy need to develop a set of joint rules of engagement for homeland security and, more importantly, a means for managing them politically. This seems to be the greatest weakness in the planning process at the moment. This, too, is a function of the “Who will drive the bus?” issue.

Sixth, Arctic/northern security is a problem again.<sup>15</sup> Despite the fact that it only becomes a public matter every 10 to 15 years, there is a need to be better prepared for an incident in those waters. This requires surveillance, presence, and the ability to respond quickly—things that we cannot do today. One solution that has been put forward is that the Navy re-assume its Arctic role from the 1950s and get back into the icebreaker business. In time, this might make sense, but it would unnecessarily disrupt the present core of expertise. However, consideration should be given to having the Coast Guard transfer operational control of their heavy icebreakers to the Navy when those vessels are operating in northern waters so that an effective air and surface Arctic patrol regime can be established.

## **Does Canada need a submarine capability?**

There are many reasons submarines will continue to be strategically important in both international crisis management and homeland security roles:

- ◆ They can conduct a wide range of covert operations including the insertion and recovery of special forces, conducting information warfare operations, and non-provocative surveillance and reconnaissance, which allows them to be “first in, last out”;
- ◆ They can provide 24-hour-a-day coverage in all weather conditions while remaining ready for new tasking, and their inherent versatility enables them to counter threats to themselves as well as provide protection for adjacent friendly forces; and
- ◆ They have the capacity to embark and operate new payloads such as remotely operated and unmanned underwater vehicles and other unmanned sensors in a wide range of tasks.

These attributes make the modern submarine unique, and explain why those vessels should remain in the forefront of both naval and joint force planning. Whereas submarine operations could once be categorized as either offensive or defensive, a third concept of operations now exists in which submarine capabilities have much wider application. It is this latter dimension of submarine operations, especially when they are integrated with new and emerging technologies, that holds enormous promise for the future. For instance, could not the Canadian contribution to the NATO standing forces, or any multinational force for that matter, be a submarine? Dwight Mason provides the American perspective on this new multilateralism:

The United States also welcomed Canada’s acquisition of the four Upholder class submarines. The US Section of the Permanent Joint Board on Defense (PJBD) and the Department of Defense at very senior levels were strong supporters of this decision. These are excellent boats...These new submarines can make an important contribution to surveillance of the Atlantic and Pacific approaches to North America. They can also make useful contributions to operations abroad where littoral states are involved. The most important benefit to the United States of the new Canadian submarine program is the opportunity it presents for training US naval forces. This is true because

the United States has no diesel submarines and has had no good way to train against the very difficult undersea threat they present. Now this will be possible. The importance of such training is obvious when one considers that countries like Iran and North Korea have very capable diesel submarine fleets.<sup>16</sup>

Although it is the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capability of modern submarines that should be of particular concern to Canada, their other capabilities are still important. We need to look at the submarine as a force multiplier rather than as a legacy system from previous wars. The *Victoria*-class gives Canada the opportunity to exploit new technologies, especially in information management operations, something that could not be done to the same extent before they were acquired. In this, we should also look at the submarine as a means of implementing the information revolution at sea in both the Canadian military and the R&D communities.

### **The Naval Program for the Future**

By far the greatest problem facing naval planners today is that of linking acquisition with block obsolescence. Where naval platforms are overdue for replacement, solutions need to be found that prevent lapses in related capabilities. Here, the recent Canadian track record has not been good.

- ◆ The replacement for the *Sea King* helicopter has been under consideration since the mid-1980s, but it was only in November 2004 that the government signed a contract with Sikorsky to deliver 28 Cyclone helicopters starting in 2008;
- ◆ Replacements for the fleet support ships in one guise or another have been sought since the early-1990s, and it will be at least ten years before new vessels enter service;
- ◆ The means of replacing the fleet command and control and local air-defence capabilities has been debated for the last decade with no results.

The problem is that none of these replacement programs, when fully funded, will enhance fleet capability for at least eight to ten years – perhaps longer for the warships. By that time the existing fleet will be verging on obsolescence.

Present fleet capabilities are inadequate for the full range of tasks that need to be carried out under the prevailing defence policy, which is still that promulgated in 1994 (with some marginal changes). This situation is compounded by the long lead times for replacing destroyers, support ships and helicopters. Hence, the remaining ships and aircraft need to be modernized within the next decade if they are to remain effective and if Canada is to maintain an effective naval capability for both homeland security and international crisis management.

Obviously, this is not going to be solved in one huge naval modernization program—the costs and personnel implications are enormous. Therefore, some concept of a phased modernization program needs to be introduced over the next 15 years. This is being discussed in naval circles under the concept of “transformation,” but to date this concept lacks adequate definition and, importantly, political concurrence. What may be required is something akin to the destroyer and submarine upgrade programs introduced in the late 1980s to bridge the capability gap created by delaying the procurement of the *City*-class frigates. On the basis of priority going to the maintenance of the present minimum capability that can meet both national security tasks and provide a limited commitment to international security operations, a phased program with the following criteria would be needed:<sup>17</sup>

- ◆ First, place orders for new destroyers (as task group command ships), new helicopters, and fleet support ships;
- ◆ Second, to maintain the operational capability *status quo* (albeit below that considered ideal) for the next five to ten years, three or four of the *City*-class frigates should be converted to provide command-and-control and air defence capabilities. In addition, to offset the inevitable loss of the existing fleet support ships, which will soon become too expensive to operate as technological orphans, two or three commercial tankers should be bought or taken-up on long leases and given the necessary underway replenishment capability. Here, the British experience in converting commercial vessels for military

tasks during the 1982 Falklands War should be exploited. As that experience also showed, with imagination and initiative, land-force sea-lift requirements can be provided adequately from commercial vessels. The maritime patrol aircraft will also need equipment upgrades during this period. Replacements for the existing frigates should be ordered during this period as well;

- ◆ Third, the *status quo* needs to be extended to 2015 and beyond, pending arrival of the new destroyers and fleet support ships, by modernizing the remaining frigates, submarines, and patrol vessels. Orders should also be placed for replacement of the *City*-class frigates and for new general-purpose patrol vessels able to sail into the northern waters—these may, in fact, be the same or very similar vessels. The next generation of submarines and the replacement maritime patrol aircraft will have to be ordered at about the same time;
- ◆ Fourth, from 2015 to about 2025 the new force structure will begin to come into being, but it will take many years before the full capability package becomes completely effective because the impact of the inertia of the last decade. The requirement for training will dictate a significant increase in the numbers of people serving in the new Navy, and their training will require many skills that are different from those used today. In many ways recruiting and training people for the Navy will be every bit as complex and demanding as the equipment procurement process.

Not only is this program ambitious, it would also take enormous political courage to authorize, but this sort of capabilities planning has to be done with at least a 25-year horizon, rather than the present, politically motivated five-year time frame. It also begs the question, “How does the government deal with the shipbuilding requirement?” Clearly, the capacity to build modern ships has to be restored in Canada if a phased program of modernization and new construction is to be undertaken.<sup>18</sup> Despite the musings of some politicians, a sovereign state cannot be dependent upon another state to provide its national security resources.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, one clear trend in international relations and in the complex and controversial process of trying to keep order in a volatile world is the preference for comprehensive crisis management strategies. By

many names, such as *peacemaking*, *peacekeeping*, or *peace-building*, we have adopted crisis management strategies on many occasions. The key is to take action in sufficient time to prevent the situation from deteriorating. Experience has shown that navies and other sea-based forces are best suited to this task. Since 1990 the Canadian Navy has been used frequently and widely in international crisis management tasks, and it has acquitted itself very well under many complex and demanding situations.

Unfortunately, this successful operational record of Canada's Navy is not well known, and the even the rationale for maintaining the various naval capabilities, including maritime aviation, seems to be misunderstood. As a result, the programs needed to maintain those capabilities in the future have not yet been activated. Unless such action is started soon and given an appropriate high priority, the Canadian Navy will not be able to provide for its government the same flexibility of response to crises at home and abroad as it has over the past 12 years. Simply, failure to plan ahead for the replacement of key naval capabilities has lead to a situation where ships, maritime aircraft and their systems fall further and further behind technologically and become less and less able to provide for the maritime security of the homeland and contribute effectively to international coalitions.

Over the years, there has been a political preference for using naval forces in making the initial response to crises. Used well, with the precision of a scalpel rather than with the crudeness of a chain saw, naval forces incur the lowest degree of risk of any branch of the military. Versatile naval forces, as opposed to specialized forces, will continue to be a sound investment in national security no matter what happens in the future. But Canadian politicians do not seem to be convinced of this, and therein lies the problem of maintaining an effective and appropriate mix of naval capabilities to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The government has yet to establish what it wants its Navy to do, if it is different from the naval policy essentially established in 1994. If the answer is "Much the same as it has been doing, because that provides the best contingency capability," then some version of a phased modernization program is necessary, with some interim improvisation to retain key capabilities while new ships are being built. But the naval capability mix problem will not be resolved without first reversing the politically directed demise of the national shipbuilding industry.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Peter T. Haydon, "Canadian Naval Policy: Still Stalled, Still Contentious, and Still Political", *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Summer 1997, 6-13.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, the 5 October 2004 CTV interview on the developing *Chicoutimi* incident with Col. M. Drapeau.

<sup>3</sup>Several well-argued papers and articles have described and discussed the deteriorating situation. For instance, see Brian MacDonald's "After Mass Extinction of the Canadian Forces: Capital Budgets and Future Options Policy", *Atlantic Council of Canada Paper 12/02* (7 November 2002), The *National Post* Editorial "Rebuild our Military" 24 June 2003, Sharon Hobson's "Canada - Readiness at a Price", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 September 2003, Chris Wattie, "Operation Cutback: Funding shortfall of \$635-million could lead to major chopping, including fewer bullets and coastal patrols", *National Post*, 1 April, 2004, and Lawrence McDonough, "The demise of Canada's Armed Forces: Both exaggerated and ongoing", *IRPP Policy Options*, April 2004, 31-37.

<sup>4</sup>The prevailing problems of Canadian Foreign Policy and the impact on defence policy are discussed well by Bill Dymond and Michael Hart in their "The Potemkin Village of Canadian Foreign Policy", *IRPP Policy Options*, December 2003 - January 2004, 39-45.

<sup>5</sup>My paper, "Canadian Amphibious Capabilities: Been There. Done it. Got the T-shirt" in the Winter 2001 edition of *Maritime Affairs*, also available on the Navy League of Canada's Maritime Affairs website <http://www.navyleague.ca/eng/ma/papers>.

<sup>6</sup>D.P. O'Connell, *The Influence of Law on Sea Power*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 3-4.

<sup>7</sup>Colin Gray, "Sea Power: The Great Enabler", *Naval War College Review*, Winter 1994, 18.

<sup>8</sup>The history of how various governments have used the Canadian Navy to further diplomatic objectives and support international crisis management operations is well documented. The most comprehensive work is *Canadian Gunboat Diplomacy: The Canadian Navy and Foreign Policy*, Ann L. Griffiths, Peter T. Haydon and Richard H. Gimblett, eds., (Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 2000). Laura J. Higgins *Canadian Naval Operations in the 1990s: Selected Case Studies* (Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 2002) expands on the more recent operations, and Richard Gimblett's *Operation Apollo* (Ottawa: Magic Light Publishing, 2004) brings the narrative up to the present.

<sup>9</sup>The key points can be drawn from: Fred W. Crickard and Peter T. Haydon, *Why Canada Needs Maritime Forces*, Naval Officers' Association of Canada. 1994; my 1997 paper "Canadian Naval Policy: Still Stalled, Still Contentious, and Still Political"; my paper "What naval capabilities does Canada need?" in Edward L.

Tummers, ed., *Maritime Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Halifax, Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 2000), 131-162 of which a shorter version was published under the same title in the Spring 2001 edition of the *Canadian Military Journal*, 21-28, and my Spring 2001 paper "Canadian Naval Requirements for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" written for the Council for Canadian Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century also available at <http://www.navyleague.ca/eng/ma/papers>.

<sup>10</sup>*Sea control* is the extension of the traditional naval function of *command of the sea*, but under the concept of limited control of areas of strategic importance advocated by Sir Julian Corbett rather than one of complete control envisaged by Rear-Admiral A.T. Mahan. The brief discussion here is drawn from my own book *Sea Power and Maritime Strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A "Medium" Power Perspective* (Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 2000).

<sup>11</sup>See my letter to the *National Post*, "A Military Flight of Fancy" on 5 May, 2004.

<sup>12</sup>See Lewis MacKenzie, "Projecting force abroad", *National Post*, 10 June 2004.

<sup>13</sup>Joel J. Sokolsky, *Realism Canadian Style: National Security Policy and the Chrétien Legacy* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, June 2004); also, Dwight N. Mason, *Canadian Defense Priorities: What Might the United States Like to See?* Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Policy Papers on the Americas, Volume XV, Study 1, March 2004.

<sup>14</sup>Mason, *op.cit.*, 7.

<sup>15</sup>This one of the troubling issues addressed in the Navy League of Canada's excellent paper *Canada an Incomplete Maritime Nation*, available at <http://www.navyleague.ca/eng/ma/papers>.

<sup>16</sup>Mason, *op.cit.*, 7-8.

<sup>17</sup>The Submarine Operational Update Program (SOUP) converted the three *Oberon*-class from a largely training configuration into effective ASW platforms to help alleviate the shortfall in surface ASW force promised to NATO. The Destroyer Life Extension Program (DELEX) improved select sensors in the existing destroyer escorts enabling greater ASW capability between the ship and its integral ASW helicopter. These were stop-gap measures but prevented the fleet rust-out from become a national embarrassment.

<sup>18</sup>See Peter W. Cairns, "Crisis in Naval Shipbuilding?" *Canadian Defence Review*, January 2004, 14-18. Also available at <http://www.navyleague.ca/eng/ma/papers>.