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WHAT NAVAL CAPABILITIES DOES CANADA NEED?¹

by Commander (ret'd) Peter T. Haydon

To define Canada's future naval requirements we need to embark on a two-part analysis. The first evaluates world and national trends to see what problems may need solving by naval forces, and by those of Canada in particular. This analysis, of course, requires that a number of assumptions be made on Canada's future foreign policy, the role of the military in implementing that policy, and on the function of the military in maintaining national security in its broadest sense. The second analysis examines the political acceptability of any future Canadian naval force structure. In many ways, the second study is more important than the first because there is absolutely no point in the naval staff proposing a new force structure and a related strategy if they run contrary to the prevailing political views of an appropriate naval policy for the country.

Canadian history is rich with examples of the failures of various naval staffs to understand the prevailing political factors. This does not mean that political factors are immovable obstacles in the policy process; rather, that there is only a limited degree of political flexibility in situations short of war or when the country is under dire threat. This can be explained with an example. In 1961, the Royal Canadian Navy took itself through a great exercise to determine its future needs. The study directive was pretty simple, and might even apply to today's situation:

To define the purpose of the Navy and make recommendations concerning the role, tasks, and composition of the fleet required to meet the Navy's responsibilities in the future in the most effective and economical manner. This will entail an examination of the probable nature of naval forces and design of weapons systems required during the next twenty-five years.²

One of the main reasons for initiating the study was "the rapidly accelerating pace of technological and scientific development in the fields of weapons systems and fighting equipments will continue to impose considerable and increasing strain upon RCN resources..." The study was a failure. The study director, Rear-Admiral Jeffry Brock, got carried away with the naval dimensions of the study at the expense of the political factors, and proposed a new fleet structure that failed to take heed of the fiscal climate of the day. Not only was the proposed fleet structure unaffordable, it contained concepts that lay outside the prevailing political view of necessary Canadian naval capabilities. Moreover, the proposed fleet was beyond the capability of Canadian industry to build. What made sense to the Navy made absolutely no sense

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politically. Predictably, the study was buried by political directive almost as soon as it was published, and little more was heard of it for 25 years.

Rather than go through the standard litany of the principles of sea power and maritime strategy³, a look at the other side of the coin can be made by examining political and public perceptions of naval policy in Canada. Why is this so important? The answer, simply, is that it is in this realm that any future force plan will

Navy”, but I don’t think Gray had the modern concept of ‘jointery’ in mind when he said that.

What all this means in naval terms is that states require a balance of naval capabilities that allows them to respond quickly to threats and challenges to national security, national interests and sensitivities at home and abroad. In this, foreign policy invariably becomes the determining factor in establishing the naval force structure. Why? Three factors drive military missions conducted in support of foreign policy: mobility, interoperability and sustainability. It is these capabilities that define the modern navy, because a navy with these three capabilities can undertake almost any overseas or domestic task, provided, of course, they have the right operational equipment. ‘Being there’ just isn’t enough; one has to be able to contribute to the work at hand to be useful. However, there are those who see no need for the Canadian Navy to be used internationally other than as a means of transport. They would, in all probability, be happy to see the Navy become a para-military coast guard. This dichotomy of naval function is not easily resolved. This paper attempts to make some sense of the issues.

Before moving on to look at the dichotomy between foreign and domestic tasking for a navy, one other point should be clear: *navy* and *naval* are used as inclusive terms throughout this paper, covering all types of naval, maritime aviation, amphibious and coast guard forces.

THE ‘FOREIGN’ VERSUS ‘DOMESTIC’ DICHOTOMY

A state that upholds a foreign policy of active internationalism is likely to require that its navy be able to go almost anywhere, function effectively in the face of danger, work with a wide range of other navies, and generally be seen as a symbol of the home state. A state that is more self-centred, on the other hand, will require that its navy be structured to meet potential problems in its own territory and, possibly, in the adjoining security zone where it exists. Overseas deployments, if made, are likely to be token good will visits to neighbouring states. These examples, of course, are extremes and a host of variations lie between them, including the present Canadian condition which upholds active internationalism while trying to embrace a ‘soft power’ approach to crisis management.

States seldom make radical changes in their foreign policy. When they do, it is invariably in response to a significant change in domestic politics. A major change in government ideology, for instance, can result in changes in external policies. This nearly happened in Canada in the late 1960s when Pierre Trudeau challenged the wisdom of continuing Canadian involvement in NATO. There are some that will argue that his ‘challenge’ was merely intended to twist the tiger’s tail and make the government rationalize foreign and defence policy from a new perspective; others believe that he was serious and only agreed to stay in NATO reluctantly after an extensive review of all the options and their implications.⁴ In some ways, we are going through a similar rationalization today as traditional foreign and defence policies are put under the political microscope.



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HMCS Athabaskan, one of the modernized Tribal-class destroyers.

live or die. It is necessary to preface these observations with a few assumptions to get out of the mire normally associated with futures and forecasting.

ASSUMPTIONS

The first assumption is that the present international system is in a state of flux. We are, in fact, between two systems: the bipolar Cold War system and something that has yet to take shape. The consensus is that it will take quite some time before the new system becomes recognizable, let alone functional. Until then, we will live in an unstable and unpredictable condition with much potential for dispute, disagreement and conflict between a wide range of state and non-state organizations.

The second assumption is that when the industrialized states see their interests — which are primarily economic and territorial — at risk, they will move quickly to intervene and restore stability. They will also intervene, as we saw in Kosovo, when their ‘democratic’ values are affronted. Today, though, states intervene collectively rather than unilaterally, except within their own areas of jurisdiction.

The third and last assumption is that the international trend in intervention operations, with the USN and the RN as the trend-setters, is for rapid response to crises with the early deployment of forces, and that those forces will invariably be ‘joint’ and multilateral. This is really little more than a return to the old adage that the war isn’t over until you have your own soldier standing on the enemy’s front doorstep, and that it takes the navy to get him there! Historians would say that we have merely come back to Sir Edward Gray’s quip (sometimes attributed to Jackie Fisher) that “The British Army should be a projectile to be fired by the British

The world is changing and Canada is changing, so it is natural to examine the nature of Canadian external relationships and the role Canada should play on the world stage. The majority of Canadians, if one gives credence to public opinion polls, seem comfortable with the now-traditional role of active internationalism. Likewise, most Canadians also believe that this role should be played within the framework of the United Nations. However, there is also general acceptance of the fact that the UN is limited in how it can respond to crises — largely a function of its political structure — and thus, some responses must be made multilaterally under other forms of coalition.

Most industrialized states are also moving towards foreign policies that embody a concept of 'rapid response to crisis' in the belief that a quick and decisive response to an international crisis is more likely to pay dividends than anything else. This does not mean that they have given up on diplomacy — far from it. The emerging concept of crisis management clearly integrates military and diplomatic initiatives with a clear understanding that, in some situations, economic measures also have an important role to play. The lessons of Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq have been heeded. This does not sit well with some NGOs, but the fact remains that force remains the natural companion of diplomacy.

There are those who believe that air power alone can provide the necessary force to support diplomacy. They tend to champion Bosnia and Kosovo as the reason for their beliefs. However, the prevailing conditions of future crises and the availability of local host-nation facilities may not always let air power be used in that way. Some crises will have to be addressed using sea power, and some may even prove too difficult to make a meaningful intervention at all. What is emerging from the defence ministries of many industrialized states is a crisis management strategy that can be summarized as *together, jointly, from the sea*. This acknowledges that no one service can resolve every crisis, and that a multilateral response to crisis, either under the authority of a UN resolution or with the UN's tacit agreement, is necessary to legitimize intervention. While the 20th century essentially saw the world move from *Pax Britannica* to *Pax Americana*, the 21st century will likely see a shift to a more universal concept of coalition response to crisis.

The domestic perspective of the dichotomy holds that naval force structure is a function of several variables, largely geographic and economic, that include not only the presence of potentially hostile neighbours but also the extent of waters under national jurisdiction and how they are used. How national maritime security policy is shaped and upheld is thus a function of both the national attitude towards ocean use and management, and the stability of the neighbourhood.

Navies tend to be more concerned with security aspects, but today are becoming increasingly more

involved in ocean management. Although some states maintain coast guards with a mandate for ocean management, the trend for the majority of maritime states is to use naval resources for much of that work. The reason is that the capabilities needed for national security — surveillance, presence and response — are essentially the same as those needed for ocean management.

To be sovereign at sea, a nation must be able to control whatever takes place in the waters under its jurisdiction.⁵ To be able to control one's own waterspace effectively is the fundamental statement of sovereignty by the state to the rest of the world. For that reason, it is also the concept upon which national security is maintained. This applies to the territorial waters within 12 nautical miles of the shore, to the waters of the 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and to the adjoining areas of the continental shelf. If a state does not maintain the capability to control all activities in the waters under its jurisdiction, it can be seen as tacit acceptance that others can use those waters as they please and without regard or respect to the law. This is an abrogation of sovereignty. Just as respect for sovereignty is a function of the respect for the state's ability to use force as the means of last resort, law enforcement requires that there be sufficient force available to compel compliance with the law. On its own, a non-military coast guard cannot provide the necessary guarantee, and certainly would not be able to manage violence should the need arise.

As a function of national wealth, the oceans are an integral element of national security and demand an appropriate degree of protection. Some states take an almost haphazard approach to maritime security, believing that regulations alone are enough to prevent abuse.



HMCS *Montréal*, seventh of twelve Canadian Patrol Frigates, entered service in July 1994. These frigates will be the mainstay of the Canadian Navy for many years.

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Unfortunately, that is a dangerous assumption because respect for the law is far from universal. Other states maintain extensive naval capabilities and keep careful watch over their waters at all times. Canadian policy has verged on *laissez faire* as a result of the absence of a direct military threat to national security, and an entrenched belief in the rule of law and in the basic willingness of mankind to uphold those laws. Yet, when

things go wrong, as they did during the 1995 Turbot Crisis and during the recent spate of illegal Chinese immigration, there is invariably a quick call for the military to 'do something'. The gap between established national security policy and the requirement for adequate response capabilities is not easily resolved. This is because entrenching the necessary capabilities would require a considerable investment of public funds for a contingency that defies actuarial rationalization. It is one of those situations where politicians find it much easier *not* to have a precise policy. However, this creates a nightmare for naval planners, who have to maintain a naval force able to respond to all likely situations without adequate political guidance.

THE FORCE PLANNING DILEMMA

The dilemma facing naval planning staffs today is how to balance their fleet structures to respond to two types of employment which in some respects seem almost mutually exclusive. To meet foreign policy objectives, naval forces must be able to deploy away from the 'home' areas and be compatible with the naval forces of allies and coalition partners. The issue then manifests itself in a series of questions: "How much force to deploy?" "For what periods?" "With whom will

management factors such as critical mass, rotation, weapons certification, maintenance and sustainability. These are levels of detail which he or she has no need to understand. So, it is up to the naval staff to present their political masters with a workable model that shows clearly what force structure and related infrastructure are needed to deploy an operationally significant ship or task group. But the case has to be presented in a way that it can be understood easily.

Explaining what those naval forces will be required to do is the more difficult undertaking because future requirements for the use of sea power cannot be predicted. The list of missions that could be undertaken might easily be seen as a shopping list from which politicians could pick and choose. It is not difficult to imagine a group of them saying, "We'll do sea control and naval diplomacy, but not power projection or strategic deterrence! Those are not Canadian roles." Again, politicians cannot be expected to understand automatically the finer points of naval operations today; these things have to be explained carefully.

To today's politician, the concept of war makes little sense other than in an historical context. The UN Charter bans war, and no formal war has been declared in over 50 years. Moreover, they simply cannot see a situation developing that could lead to a traditional war. This aversion to war is why alternative terms for the use of military force have been coined. The Americans speak of "operations other than war" as a way of covering the host of ambiguous situations that fall short of the traditional interpretation of war but still involve the use of force. Canadians, unfortunately, have come to believe that the world's problems can be solved by peacekeeping; the consequence of which is that every military deployment to an area in turmoil is quite mistakenly called 'peacekeeping'. We are not going to solve this because the term has become entrenched. The point to note here is that there is absolutely no sense telling a politician that the primary function of the navy is to fight wars, no matter how true that statement may be. The rationale for the navy has to be explained in terms the politician can understand and relate to. Doing this requires some understanding of the political perception of naval policy in Canada.

POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS

From a political perspective, the present debate on Canadian naval policy has returned to familiar ground, familiar in that the issues today are remarkably similar to those of the first decade of the 20th century, to the inter-war years, and to the period immediately after the Second World War. The present situation also resembles the debate on naval policy that took place during the 1994 defence policy review. Now, as on past occasions, two profoundly different views of the type of naval policy Canada should adopt dominate the debate. On one hand is the internationalist or 'blue water' philosophy endorsed by the 1994 White Paper but only given token support since then and now clearly under siege. The other perspective is essentially continental-



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HMCS *Preserver*, one of the two remaining operational support ships (AORs) nearing the end of their service life, which will have to be replaced by a more versatile 'afloat logistics and support' vessel.

they work?" and "What types of operations will they conduct?" For the Americans, the answer is quite easy: "Everything, everywhere, and for long periods." Canada doesn't have the same commitment to internationalism, and so more precise answers are needed.

Recent Canadian naval policy has seen the need to be able to deploy task groups, single ships, submarines and maritime aircraft detachments on a variety of tasks as "extensions of government policy over the sea". As a result, over the last ten years Canadian naval forces have deployed to most parts of the world under a wide range of situations. In other words, the government has made full use of the existing capability. This approach is very similar to what has happened with other 'medium power' navies.⁶ But we should ask, "Can the government achieve its foreign policy objectives with a smaller naval capability?" This is a tough question. The political answer is probably, "Yes", while the naval answer is almost certainly "No". The politician is unconcerned with

ist, seeing the need only for a coast guard. This view was put forward by the *Canada 21 Council* in 1994, based on a paper written for them by Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Bland of Queen's University⁷, and which was roundly rejected by the Special Joint Committee as a result of widespread public support for the internationalist naval policy.

The *Canada 21* perspective has not gone away. Those who share the *Canada 21* vision tend to champion the liberal democratic ideal of a peaceful world in which reasonable men solve their differences by negotiation and, thus, compromise. As we found in 1994, those arguments are often persuasive, but invariably lack depth in that they fail to take due account of the unexpected, or the fact that not everyone is 'reasonable'.⁸ More significantly, in their zeal for the new order, the advocates of the *Canada 21* solution fail to consider the implications of the proposed changes to the military structure. For instance, the *Canada 21 Council* made the recommendation that:

The modern frigates that have just been procured should continue in operation to patrol our contiguous oceans, but they should abandon their antisubmarine role and should, in the long term, be replaced by much smaller ships, more appropriate to the new role than is the present fleet.⁹

One problem with that view is that there is absolutely no recognition of the traditional naval role in diplomacy and crisis management. It is an entirely 'continental' perspective, lacking an understanding of national or international maritime issues. This view is still widely supported, so any future proposal to government for a naval force structure and related employment strategy will almost certainly run the gauntlet of criticism from those who do not understand the value of navies as extensions of state policy over the sea and thus advocate their elimination. Thus, any future naval force plan has to explain not only the return to Canada on the investment, but also what will happen if those capabilities are not maintained.

As yet, there is no public debate on future naval policy; it is almost entirely internal and part of the much larger process of trying to maintain a useful military under increasing fiscal constraint in a very confused external situation. The essential problem almost certainly is that the place and value of the Navy is not yet entrenched in the overall Canadian political system. As many have argued, Canadians have a continental mentality despite the country's considerable dependence on the oceans in the process of generating wealth. Naval staffs are faced with the problem of dealing with a political elite that have little naval let alone maritime or even military experience or interest — they are indeed continentalists, as were virtually all their predecessors. And they invariably seek solutions to problems from a basis of land-based capabilities. This puts navalists at a distinct disadvantage. However, a well-argued case for an appropriate naval policy is likely to gain public and political support if it can be shown that it serves Canada's national interests, as happened in 1994.

The significance of the continental mind-set in the policy process is often misunderstood. Yet, when we delve into our history, there are useful lessons to be learned.

William Lyon Mackenzie King was the central figure in Canadian politics for four decades. During that time, he upheld a consistent naval policy that we speak of today as his view of a "good workable little fleet". Interpretations of what was meant by *workable* and *little* varied widely over time, but his consistent view held that a modest number of destroyers and coastal defence vessels were all that was needed to defend Canada's coasts and maintain an adequate naval presence to keep the Americans out. Mackenzie King acknowledged that Canadian interests were also served by sending the odd destroyer on a foreign port visit. However, he was emphatic that there would be no naval expeditionary forces or deployments in support of Imperial defence. The Canadian contribution to Imperial defence would be to keep Canadian waters secure for use by allied forces.¹⁰

Efforts by the RCN to change this policy all failed, until in 1943 Mackenzie King allowed the fleet to expand and take on a greater role in the final push to victory. When the Navy hung onto the carriers, cruisers and fleet destroyers after the war, Mackenzie King and the Chiefs of the other two services naturally objected. In their eyes, the Navy was making a fundamental change in a well-entrenched naval policy without good reason, and so the Chiefs attacked. But for the Korean War, the naval aviation capability would have gone in the early 1950s.¹¹ So, at the beginning of the Korean War, fundamental Canadian naval policy was changed from that upheld by Mackenzie King for 40 years by default, rather than as a result of a well-argued proposition. The policy would be challenged on more than one occasion by both the Chiefs of Staff and ever-sceptical politicians. For instance, without some astute politicking in NATO on a number of occasions, the Navy would have been in trouble with the rationale for the number of destroyers needed.¹² Submarines were also an enormously hard sell politically, even simply as ASW training platforms, because they overstepped what was held to be traditional Canadian naval policy.¹³ In other words, Canadian naval policy has always had discernible political limits; it merely took the various Chiefs of Naval Staff and, unfortunately, many of their successors in the unified military system, a long time to recognize just what were the parameters.

Generally, the naval staffs of the 1950s were able to convince their political masters of the need for a balanced fleet, but there were difficulties. A classic example of things that went wrong is the 1961 Brock Report, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, which should have been tempered but instead was allowed to go forward. Another major political misstep was Vice-Admiral Rayner's inability to convince Hellyer of the need for a balanced naval force, and thus of the operational requirement for the general purpose frigate and fleet air defence.¹⁴

The fleet of the 1970s, depleted by the loss of the carrier because it was unaffordable and reluctantly considered of less value to NATO than five or six destroy-

ers,¹⁵ had to run the gauntlet when Trudeau challenged the very basis of Canadian defence policy on first becoming Prime Minister.¹⁶ The naval staff of the day had to re-learn how to work the political system to make their case. It took almost two years to write the background paper that substantiated the need for a naval force as the basis for the new frigates. Once again, the Naval Staff had to find the right way of explaining just what it was that the Navy did that warranted the expenditure of large amounts of public money on its maintenance. This was not an easy task, but eventually Cabinet agreed to stabilize the destroyer force at 24. Interestingly, the prime minister stated at the time that the intent was to “produce a minimum combat-capable ship”¹⁷ reflecting, perhaps, some of the traditional Liberal Party concerns for sea power which essentially echoed the naval philosophy of Mackenzie

result of any deliberate action or intent, rather it comes from an unconscious reaction to fiscal constraints, accompanied by a less than complete understanding of the benefits of maintaining a blue water fleet. However, as in the past, a general acceptance exists that a range of naval capabilities is politically useful. The issue, politically, is “what capabilities should be maintained”?

Defining those capabilities and gaining political acceptance of them has always been the Navy’s largest hurdle. Sometimes the naval staff has been successful, other times they have not fared as well.¹⁹ For instance, inasmuch as the Brock Report was bad politics, the 1993 *Naval Vision*,²⁰ on the other hand, clearly struck a better political note. However, in 1994 the political climate was right; the Special Joint Committee wasn’t about to make radical changes and, anyway, the majority of input to their hearings supported the naval status quo. Unfortunately, *Adjusting Course*²¹ fell somewhat short of the mark in explaining the rationale for the fleet. Although this shortcoming reflects some weakness in the document,²² the early demise of political support for the 1994 White Paper was a contributing factor. As a counterpoint, the British did an excellent job with their policy statement, *The Fundamentals of British Maritime Doctrine*: it was obviously pitched at a civilian audience and very easy to read. However, the British have a distinct advantage in that their political leaders have an understanding of sea power and its uses.

What this means is that whatever Canadian naval policy document comes next, it has to be set in the right political context, and it has to accomplish what Sam Huntington defined as establishing the service’s legitimacy in the public eye by answering the question, “What function do you perform which obligates society to assume responsibility for your maintenance?”²³ He argues that failure to answer this question adequately is often a reason why individual services do not enjoy ‘public’ support. It seems sensible, therefore, to understand the political framework into which such a statement would be made.

READING THE POLITICAL TEA LEAVES

With a new majority Liberal government having just been re-elected, it is unlikely that there will be any radical changes in foreign and defence policy in the coming years. Neither issues were raised during the election campaign. If there is one aspect of foreign policy that might be amended by the government, it is the controversial commitment of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs to ‘soft power’, particularly since some of our allies have been concerned about the longer-term implications of his initiatives. It is fair to say that the greater number of Canadians prefer that their country not be out of step with the rest of the world, especially with our traditional allies in NATO. A little disagreement with the United States over its foreign policy is seen as a good thing as it preserves Canadian independence. But, in dealing with international problems, there is fairly widespread acceptance that we should work with either American or NATO formations. The main thing is that Canadians expect their government to be a team player on the world stage.

King. The decision to proceed was a compromise between national sovereignty requirements and NATO commitments at a time when there was a crisis in the Canadian shipyard industry of great concern to a number of ministers.¹⁸ The fleet was not a political ‘given’, it had to be fully substantiated with domestic and collective security requirements carefully interwoven. At a time when DND was still strapped for cash, and when a political undertone advocating getting out of NATO was evident, the new frigates could have been in deep trouble. That someone had the good sense to link the Cabinet submissions on the shipyard and the new naval policy almost certainly saved the day. This took considerable political acumen, almost certainly with the involvement of the Defence Minister of the day, Barney Danson. In all of these situations, naval policy was established politically as a result of a convoluted process in which the naval staff had to explain the need for a specific force structure and the implications of not having that capability.

What happened since the mid-1960s has been a slow transition from a remarkably versatile blue water fleet, back towards a force structure more closely resembling Mackenzie King’s “good workable little fleet” of destroyers and coast defence vessels, as well as four very controversial submarines. However, this is not the



HMCS *Winnipeg* and Sea King helicopter, sunset.

CFB Esquimaux Photo by: Cpl Dave Payne P.XDO0-0016-0

Internationally, the dominant strategy — albeit in embryonic form — is one of international teamwork, and can be summarized as one of rapid response to crisis *together, jointly, from the sea*. We see this in the new force structures under development in such places as Australia, Britain, France, the Netherlands and the United States. In theory, Canada has adopted a parallel strategy, but so far that does not include the early commitment of significant armed forces and still seems to lack the firm commitment — political and economic — to make the necessary equipment and organizational changes for the Army.

Until Canada makes a firm commitment to a rapid response strategy, the government should not expect to be included in the ‘first team’ in maintaining order in the world. Although the commitment to provide combat-capable forces to international crisis management operations is largely a foreign policy issue, the concept as presented now seems to reflect an underlying notion of avoiding casualties other than in the face of the most severe challenges to national security or affronts to national sensitivities. In this regard, one must question whether the present policy would be seen by our traditional allies as carrying our weight on the international stage.

If asked, the majority of Canadian politicians would probably say that they wanted the Navy to still be able to do what it has been doing for the last ten years. Most of those politicians are, however, smart enough to decline any invitation to be more specific as to future locations and types of operations. The general sentiment is likely, “I am very glad we have a navy that can represent Canada around the world and make a meaningful contribution to world peace.” However, as Joseph Jockel points out in his recent book, politicians would like to have those capabilities without having to pay for them.²⁴ Thus, the issue comes back to one of analysing just what it is that the Navy has done in the last ten years, and what reasons exist for those capabilities to be maintained.²⁵

Douglas Bland has done a great deal of thinking and writing about the nature of Canadian defence policy, and among the things he has argued is that defence policy is “going to be whatever the prime minister says it’s going to be”.²⁶ The historical record, however, does not seem to support that assertion. While it may be true for the authoritarian management style of Prime Minister Chrétien, it certainly does not hold for Brian Mulroney, Pierre Elliott Trudeau or Louis St. Laurent, all of whom ensured that defence policy was made through Cabinet consensus. Even at the height of Trudeau’s zeal for defence reform, he always accepted the majority wishes of his Cabinet, even though, at times, those views ran contrary to his own inclination. Even John Diefenbaker, the original one-man political band, heeded the advice of his Cabinet colleagues on many defence issues, albeit sometimes reluctantly.

What we have to remember is that the defence policy-making process is political. It always has been and always will be, short of a near-revolutionary change in the style of Canadian government. The other fact is that governments tend to be change-resistant in the big policy issues; change is usually made incrementally, at the

margins. In other words, policy will be nibbled to death rather than completely revised. This, too, can be substantiated by the history of recent Canadian defence policy decision making. Nevertheless, every now and again, some military programme will be castigated or terminated for purely political reasons. As often as not, this is a way of showing who is in control; the general purpose frigate decision of 1963 and the EH-101 helicopter fiasco of 1993 are good examples. They are also good examples of the fact that sometimes such decisions are made without looking at the full implications.

CONCLUSION

From a political perspective, it does not matter a great deal what naval force structure is proposed, provided it meets some basic criteria:

- it must be affordable;
- it must not be seen as an increase in the present capability (modernization excepted), with which there seems tacit agreement;
- it must further Canadian concepts of active internationalism; and
- it must provide adequate security for Canada’s ocean domain.

In addition, it must be seen to have some political benefits to Canadian industry.

This may seem a blinding flash of the obvious, but it makes the point that no matter what fleet structure the naval staff uses as the basis for future procurement, they must first embark on a public education campaign to address Sam Huntington’s basic question, “What function do you perform which obligates society to assume responsibility for your maintenance?”²⁷ With due respect to the authors of *Strategy 2020*, that document simply doesn’t help answer that question. Yes, ‘jointery’ is the ‘in’ thing at the moment, but unless the fundamental rationale for maintaining naval forces is understood and accepted, gaining political and public support for replacing and upgrading existing forces and capabilities will be a doubly difficult undertaking.

This paper essentially advocates the one thing many serving naval and military leaders almost certainly do not want to hear: continuing the status quo — but for good reason. As this paper has tried to show, the status quo has proven that it provides an excellent return to Canada and Canadians for the relatively small investment made in naval capabilities. It has also been argued that reducing or removing any of the present capabilities — overall capabilities rather than specific equipment-related capabilities — will have an adverse effect on Canada’s ability to play a meaningful role on the world stage in the 21st century.

The political leadership appears to be comfortable with an early 21st century interpretation of Mackenzie King’s “good workable little fleet”, provided the Navy can show that it is indeed still useful. The naval staff’s foremost task is thus educational — explaining just what it is that the Navy gives to Canada, and what would happen if it were not there. Perhaps, one way of

approaching this would be to write the 'son' of *Adjusting Course*, by whatever name, for a range of audiences. Something uniquely Canadian, embracing the simplicity of the excellent book, *The Fundamentals of British Maritime Doctrine*, would be a good place to start. The naval staff would almost certainly find that if

they can master the simple explanations, the more complex arguments will be far more readily accepted, politically and publicly.



NOTES

1. This paper is based on a presentation made to the Naval Board in Ottawa on 3 April 2000 and subsequently published in full as "What Naval Capabilities Does Canada Need?" in Edward L. Tummers, ed., *Maritime Security in the 21st Century* (Maritime Security Occasional Paper No. 11), (Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, September 2000), pp. 131-162, and is republished here with permission of both the Naval Board and the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies.
2. Naval Board Minutes, No. 646, 5 April 1961, Item 646-1 "Ad Hoc Committee on Naval Objectives".
3. My monograph, *Sea Power and Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century: A "Medium" Power Perspective* (Maritime Security Occasional Paper No. 10) (Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 2000), covers the theoretical aspects of this analysis.
4. The policy review process that preceded the 1971 Defence White Paper is far more complicated than generally realized. Its origins, as were those of the 1975 Defence Structure Review, were primarily economic. Trudeau certainly entered the process with a bang in April 1969 when he established that he wanted things done differently, but his motivation was founded on nationalist rather than ideological principles in addressing the fiscal crisis that was threatening to destroy DND.
5. To control what happens in waters under national jurisdiction, three criteria must be met: (1) it must be known exactly who is using those waters and for what purpose; (2) an unequivocal expression of government authority in those waters must be maintained; and (3) the state must be able to respond quickly and effectively to violations of the law or threats to national security. Hence, for the majority of modern navies, sea control will be their principal mission in peace and in war.
6. By definition, 'medium powers' are those who invariably participate with responsibility and effectiveness in world events within a partnership of 'like-minded' states.
7. Douglas Bland, "A Strategy of Choice: Preparing the Canadian Armed Forces for the 21st Century", *Canadian Foreign Policy*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1994, pp. 109-136.
8. See Colin Gray, *Canadians in a Dangerous World* (Toronto: Atlantic Council of Canada, 1994).
9. Canada 21 Council, *Canada 21: Canada and Common Security in the Twenty-First Century* (Toronto: Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, 1994), p. 64.
10. This view is based on discussions with LCdr Richard Gimblett, and on his excellent analysis contained in his unpublished PhD Thesis, *Gunboat Diplomacy, Mutiny and National Identity in the Postwar Royal Canadian Navy: The Cruise of HMCS Crescent to China, 1949*.
11. The minutes of the Chiefs of Staff Committee in March 1950 show very clearly that Admiral Grant, the CNS, was indeed in trouble defending the naval air capability. Air Marshall Curtis, CAS, was intent on having control of everything that flew, and General Foulkes, CGS and CCOS, was equally convinced that the RCN did not need an integral air capability which was consuming one-third of the naval budget.
12. Frequent references are made in the minutes of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, mainly attributed to the Chairman, General Foulkes, that the RCN were maintaining the fleet on the basis of NATO force requirements they themselves had created. It was not until the advent of Paul Hellyer as Minister of National Defence in 1963 that the political system challenged the NATO force goals that the RCN traditionally used to substantiate the various building programs.
13. The push to get Canadian submarines began in 1951, and it wasn't until 1963 that the politicians finally approved the acquisition plan. Even then, the program fell far short of what the Navy needed. Naval staff estimates tabled during the submarine procurement process called for over 1,000 submarine-days a year for RCN and RCAF Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) training and for ASW research. The 'staff' number for submarines in 1962 was a compromise of nine: three of British origin – even taking over the old "A" class of the RN's Sixth Submarine Division in Halifax – and six of a more modern design, with the USN Barbell-class being a clear favourite.
14. See Peter T. Haydon, *When Military Plans and Politics Conflict: The Case of Canada's General Purpose Frigate Program* (McNaughton Papers, Vol. II) (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, November 1991).
15. The reasons for the decision were largely financial but also reflected NATO priorities: 5-6 destroyers were of greater tactical value to the Allied strategy than one ASW carrier. The decision to scrap *Bonaventure* was made in February 1969, and was the result of a "corporate" decision without much regard for any specific 'naval' considerations. In the various factors that came into the decision was the lack of senior naval presence in Ottawa to speak up authoritatively on the tactical impact of losing the carrier. Other factors were the success of the destroyer-helicopter concept which, some believed, made the carrier dispensable. In view of the relatively lower costs of operating helicopter-carrying destroyers (DDHs), the argument for keeping *Bonaventure* was hard to substantiate in a period of belt-tightening. The CDS's Planning Guidance Directive (D 36/69 S 3120-10 of 22 September 1969) closes the chapter by simply stating that *Bonaventure* would be "withdrawn from operational service 1 Jan 70" and pay off by 31 March that year.
16. A comprehensive defence review was already in progress when Trudeau became prime minister, but his 3 April 1969 statement essentially laid the groundwork for doing things differently, particularly with respect to the naval aspect of the defence program.
17. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting on 22 December 1977 (Serial 57-77) to discuss "Maritime Surface Ship Requirements" (Cabinet Document 545-77 of 14 December 1977), p. 38.
18. The shipyard crisis was discussed in Cabinet on 15 December 1977 (Cabinet Documents 323-77 and 495-77 of 25 October 1977).
19. I have not included the 1987-89 nuclear-powered submarine program in this discussion. Clearly, it fell outside the parameters of traditional Canadian naval policy and while it may have appeared to have Cabinet backing in theory the realities of the cost and long-term implications would have proved divisive. The political need for the program, even in theory, was tied to the issue of gaining American acceptance of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic - which was eventually acknowledged in the January 1988 Ottawa Agreement. Some now believe that the Canadian naval leadership of the day allowed itself to be co-opted by the political expedient. Acquiring a limited number of SSNs made strategic sense during a Cold War scenario, the rationale used in 1958 was just as valid in 1986 when the thought of using the French Rubis-class SSN was introduced as one of the options in the submarine replacement program (CASAP). However, what makes naval sense seldom makes political sense in Canada.
20. DND, Maritime Command, *The Naval Vision: Charting the Course for Canada's Maritime Forces into the 21st Century* (Halifax: Maritime Command Headquarters, May 1994).
21. DND, Maritime Command, *Adjusting Course: A Naval Strategy for Canada* (Halifax: Maritime Command Headquarters, April 1997).
22. The weakness are that it was too academic, did not flow, and lacked the more simplistic argument that was needed for the non-naval target audience. In fact, it would have been better had it been written in two parts: one the external consumption and one for internal use.
23. Samuel P. Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy", *Proceedings*, Vol. 80, No. 5, (May 1954), p. 484.
24. Joseph T. Jockel, *The Canadian Forces: Hard Choices, Soft Power* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1999).
25. A study of the Canadian Navy's employment in support of both domestic and foreign policy over the period 1990-2000 will be conducted in Halifax over the next 12 months under a research grant. The study will include an examination of the infrastructure, maintenance and training required to sustain that level of activity and operational readiness. The results will be published in the fall of 2001.
26. Douglas Bland, "Everything Military Officers Need to Know About Defence Policy-Making in Canada" in David Rudd, Jim Hanson and Jessica Blitt, eds. *Advance or Retreat? Canadian Defence Policy in the 21st Century* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 2000), p. 29.
27. Samuel P. Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy", *Proceedings*, Vol. 80, No. 5 (May 1954).