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HMCS *Iroquois* (foreground), HMCS *Regina* (left rear), and HMNZS *Te Mana* in the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation "Apollo", May 2003.

DEFENDING THE CANADIAN PUBLIC

by Dr. Don Munton

Is there a role for the Canadian public in debating and making defence policy? Is the public up to the challenge?

The conventional wisdom would suggest not. Many observers, at least among the elite, would argue the masses have too many distractions, too many biases, too little interest, too little knowledge, and too little understanding of the subtleties of military matters to think logically about security. Canadians, it is also frequently argued, are preoccupied by peacekeeping and ignore other vital strategic concerns. The consequence? The public is forever "getting it wrong," as one analyst has put the matter. The public voice on defence policy is an "incoherent cacophony."¹ If that were true, it would be easy to conclude the public has little to offer to debates about defence and thus need not be taken seriously as a contributor to such debates. This article takes issue with any such conclusion and with these not uncommon views about the inadequacies of the Canadian public.² It does so not on the grounds that such conclusions and views would point to a basic problem for Canadian democracy, but rather on the grounds that they are simply incorrect.

Such criticisms of the public arguably make unrealistic assumptions as to how the average Canadian should view defence and security issues. It is simply unreasonable to expect Canadians to regard their own defence preparedness in the same manner in which, say, Israelis regard theirs. The threats to Canada are less clear, less proximate, less immediate. Unlike the United States, Canada is not a great

power with a perceived need for a very large military and for nuclear weapons. Unlike India and Pakistan, it does not have a half-century-old border dispute with a neighbour. And Canadians have no sense they stand alone. The Canadian strategic situation is thus simply different. Strategic considerations do not impinge on either governmental policy or the public consciousness to the extent that they do in other countries. These differences need to be kept in mind. But it does not follow, *ipso facto*, that the average Canadian has no strategic sense.

THE PUBLIC AS SIMPLE STRATEGISTS

Perhaps the most basic concept of strategic thinking is the *danger of attack or war*. As the Euro-American realist Hans Morgenthau has noted: "The generally professed and most frequent actual motive for armaments is fear of attack, that is, a feeling of insecurity."³ The classic security policy prescription here is: "*Si vis pacem, para bellum*" (If you want peace, prepare for war). This is a maxim passed on from the Greeks and Romans, and one still followed today. Preparedness means having the appropriate military capability to deter and/or meet plausible external threats. Deterrence requires sufficient military capability to be able to inflict costs on a would-be attacker greater than any potential benefits to be gained by that attacker. If and when deterrence should fail, then one has to be prepared to meet and defend against attack.

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The premise of this article, however unlikely, is that the mass public understands these basic elements of security policy. They understand furthermore that military preparedness and military roles ought to be such as to deal with perceived threats.

To be sure, no public consensus exists on such matters. Not everyone in the mass public will agree on all the relevant judgments. On the contrary, differences in views across the spectrum of individuals are to be expected, as they are among experts, within and outside of the Canadian Forces (CF). To accept the existence of different public views, however, is not to assume these views collectively represent an “incoherent cacophony.” On the contrary, as public opinion data show, the Canadian public has a “logic of security.”⁴

The nature of threat-preparedness connections is illustrated in general in Table 1. A strategic connection exists if Canadians afford a high priority to assigning and equipping the CF to counter threats or developments they regard as likely and/or important (i.e., upper left quadrant of the table). Similarly, a strategic connection exists if Canadians afford low priority to measures to counter developments they regard as unlikely and/or unimportant (i.e., lower right quadrant). On the other hand, a failure of strategic logic would exist if Canadians gave no priority to meeting or countering threats they perceived to be likely or important, or if they gave priority to roles for which there no related threats. To pursue these connections, we first shall examine the external threats perceived by Canadians, then the priorities they prescribe in terms of missions and roles for the Forces, and then the connections between these, if any. The bulk of the data employed herein derives largely from two public opinion surveys carried out for the Department of National Defence (DND) in the late 1990s.⁵

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What are the major threats to Canada in the public mind at the onset of the new millennium? The 1998 and 1999 DND surveys asked their respondents to evaluate the likelihood of a range of potential threats.⁹ The results are shown in Table 2. The responses fell roughly into three groups. Those threats judged most likely represented a wide range: a major natural disaster in Canada, ethnically-driven civil war in a region like Kosovo or Africa, a major terrorist incident in North America, and a major industrial/environmental accident like Chernobyl. The basis of some of these perceptions seems clear: if it has happened recently then it could well happen again. At the same time, the high proportion of those surveyed in 1998 and 1999 who thought a terrorist attack in North America was likely is rather striking – over 70 percent – particularly in the wake of 11 September 2001.

The next most likely group of threats includes both the conventional and unconventional: a regional war “to deter rogue military states,” a regional war involving weapons of mass destruction (e.g., India and Pakistan), and a computer attack by terrorists or a rogue state. The question about a regional war likely invoked the Gulf War; the wording of this question, however, seems somewhat problematic, as it confuses war and deterrence. That question-phrasing problem aside, many Canadians clearly expected something along the lines of the war against Iraq.

The threats judged least likely (from the list offered to the respondents) were the launch of a missile at North America by a rogue state or terrorist group, a new Cold War

	Likely / Important Threat	Unlikely / Unimportant Threat
Priority Role	X	–
Non-Priority Role	–	X

Table 1 – Strategic Connections between Threats and Roles

EXTERNAL THREATS

Given the common perception that the Cold War is a thing of the past, it is not surprising that Canadians would perceive the threats to Canada differently than they did, say, in the 1950s and 1960s. What is perhaps more surprising is that their perceptions of these threats had changed even before the official end of the Cold War.⁶ Polls conducted by the author in 1987 and 1988 showed most Canadians thought a Soviet attack unlikely or very unlikely. Few viewed the USSR as the greatest threat to world peace.⁷ Most believed a nuclear war was more likely to come about by accident than by deliberate attack, and few thought the USSR would be the sole cause.⁸

	1998	1999
Major natural disaster in Canada (floods, forest fires, ice storm)	88	85
Ethnically driven civil war in a region like Kosovo or Africa	80	79
Major terrorist incident in North America	73	76
Major industrial/environmental accident – like Chernobyl	61	72
Regional war to deter rogue military states, such as the Gulf War	70	68
Regional war involving weapons of mass destruction (eg, India and Pakistan)	41	63
Computer attack by terrorists or a rogue state	–	60
Launch of a missile at North America by a rogue state or terrorist group	–	43
New “Cold War” involving China and/or Russia	–	42
Major war involving many countries, such as World War II	29	33

Table 2 – Likelihood of Future Threats, 1998-1999 (% responding “likely”)

Source: DND surveys, 1998, 1999

Source: DND surveys, 1998, 1999

Issues	1998	1999
Illegal drugs entering Canada	66	72
Spread of biological and chemical weapons	61	65
Spread of nuclear weapons	59	65
International crime	48	55
Ethnic violence	45	54
Spread of advanced conventional weapons	47	51
Illegal immigrants	*	50
Illegal fishing in Canadian waters	44	49
Terrorism	45	48
Climate change	38	40
Religious extremists	31	36

* indicates a question not asked on a survey

Table 3 – Concern about Security Issues, 1998-1999
(% of respondents concerned or very concerned)

involving China and/or Russia, and a major war involving many countries, such as the Second World War. Canadians, reasonably, do not expect a revival of the Cold War or another world war. All three of these threats are of the conventional military variety (if the focus is on the nature of the threat of a missile attack rather than the source).

The likelihood of a threat developing, however, is only part of any strategic calculation. The seriousness of threats is another. When asked an open-ended question on the 1998 and 1999 DND surveys (“What is the single most important threat to Canada in the world today?”), the most common responses were: nuclear/atomic weapons, bombs, war or world war. These amounted to only 13 or 14 percent of all respondents, however. Open-ended questions such as this one are notoriously difficult for mass publics – as they are for others of whatever level of expertise. The ‘blank sheet’ effect of asking people for the most important threat to their country is predictable: the responses are highly scattered, and many individuals have no ready answer. This result is less a matter of the public’s lack of expertise and more a problem with the nature and structure of the question. While defence experts would almost surely come up more often with some sort of response to a question of this sort (that is, their non-response rate would be lower), some of them might well argue that the question as posed is impossible to answer. And such an expert group would likely offer an equally diverse set of responses.

More useful indicators of the seriousness of publicly-perceived threats would be closed-ended questions that raise a variety of alternative threats to be evaluated. The

responses to a question of this sort on the 1998 and 1999 DND surveys follow a quite different pattern. (The question wording was: “I am going to read you a list of issues facing Canadians. On a scale of one to five [five being very concerned and one being not concerned at all] can you tell me how serious a concern each issue is to the well-being of Canada?”) The results are shown in Table 3.¹⁰ The top three threats about which Canadians express concern are illegal drugs entering Canada, the spread of biological and chemical weapons, and the spread of nuclear weapons. Of the three, the top two are arguably non-conventional threats. The case might be made that the third is as well, given that it relates not to a superpower nuclear war but rather to nuclear proliferation (perhaps, but not necessarily, both horizontal and vertical proliferation).

The next highest ranked group of threats is heavily unconventional in nature, and includes international crime, ethnic violence, illegal immigrants, illegal fishing in Canadian waters, and terrorism. The exception here is the danger of the spread of advanced conventional weaponry. The lowest ranked threats in terms of degree of expressed concern were climate change and “religious extremists.” Neither appears to have much presence in Canadians’ thinking, as of 1999 at least.

The nature of this question on the 1998 and 1999 DND surveys raises yet another issue. The list of threats provided to the respondents does not include many that might be categorized unambiguously as conventional threats. It curiously omits any reference to the sort of threats included in the earlier questions. For example, there is no mention of the launch of a missile at North America by a rogue state or terrorist group, a new Cold War involving China and/or Russia, and a major war involving many countries, such as the Second World War. Given these omissions, we thus cannot conclude from the results in Table 3 that Canadians’ threat perceptions are now focused on emerging and unconventional problems.

To make that case more convincingly we might examine data from a survey carried out by the author in 1989. The respondents were asked then to rate the importance of a range of issues, including “major war.”¹¹ See Table 4. (The question wording was: “Listed here are a number of international problems that may affect Canada’s security. Please rank the importance of each problem: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important.”) The top rated threats were environmental pollution and international

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“Fighting a war to protect Canada and to maintain international peace and security were regarded by the vast majority ... as priority roles for the Canadian Forces.”

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Important (Total)
Global pollution	54	36	90
International crime(such as drug trafficking)	51	35	86
International financial and monetary instability	26	48	74
Spread of diseases	33	39	72
World trade conflicts and protectionism	22	47	69
Terrorism	32	34	66
Major war	34	25	59
Abuses of human rights	20	36	56
Poverty and hunger in developing countries	14	30	44

Table 4 – Perceived Problems Affecting Canada’s Security (% of respondents)

crime (for example, drug trafficking). Next, in a group, were terrorism, international economic problems (including financial and monetary instability as well as trade conflicts and protectionism), and spread of diseases. (Polls in the United States suggest that Americans had a similar ranking of most serious threats, though they did not rate the environment as highly as did Canadians.¹²) Major war is well down the list. It does get a higher ranking than abuses of human rights and poverty and hunger in developing countries; Canadians apparently do not see political-socio-economic conditions in distant lands as matters of much direct relevance to their security. The relatively low rating of the threat of major war, however, suggests Canadians are indeed more concerned about new, unconventional threats than conventional ones.

Two conclusions emerge here. First, Canadians now tend to downgrade, though not dismiss, the likelihood of the traditional threats of a conventional attack and major war. Second, and correspondingly, they appear to have become concerned about a wider range of largely non-military threats. These threat perceptions seem to have been well in place by the 1980s, prior to the demise of the old Soviet Union, prior to the emergence of global warming as a hot topic, prior to the street battles over the World Trade Organization and, of course, prior to the events of 11 September 2001. If my argument about the mass public’s ability to develop a logic of security has any validity, then these perceptions of threat should be linked to preferred roles for the Canadian Armed Forces.

ROLES FOR THE CANADIAN FORCES

Despite the end of the Cold War and the Canadian withdrawal of troops from Europe, and despite being considered a “non-military” people, Canadians overwhelmingly believe their country needs the Canadian Forces. The 1998 and 1999 DND poll results make this approval of the military institution manifestly clear. Between 80 and 90 percent think the CF are “doing a good job.” Almost three in four Canadians think the Forces are needed a “great

deal;” most of the rest say they are “somewhat” needed. Thus only about one in every twenty Canadians thinks the CF are only needed a little and one or two in a hundred think they are not needed at all. The belief that the Forces are needed is not merely a recent phenomenon, i.e., a consequence of the proliferation of peacekeeping roles in the 1990s. Polls in the late 1980s also show that over 90 percent of Canadians believe the CF are needed a great deal or somewhat.¹³

This being the case, what is it the Forces do so well? And for what roles are they needed? Let me repeat the basic premise here: if individuals in the mass public have a simple logic of security then, at the most basic level, they should make connections between external security developments and appropriate policy responses. That is, they should base their ideas for the CF and Canada’s security policy on the threats and needs they perceive. At a fairly general level, at least, there should be some sort of connection between perceived threats on the one hand, and the readiness and roles of the Canadian Armed Forces on the other.

To be sure, the CF cannot be expected to meet all potential threats. Some threats simply do not merit a military response, or even a response by persons with military training, and are not those to which one could reasonably expect a CF response under normal circumstances. These would include, for example, world trade conflicts and protectionism, spread of diseases, international financial and monetary instability, poverty and hunger in developing countries, and global environmental issues (e.g., climate change). While one could envisage a cataclysmic situation where, for example, a worldwide epidemic – a new SARS – might require mobilization of military forces within Canada, such would not be ‘normal’ circumstances. Nor is there a military role in dealing with climate change. While the proliferation of advanced conventional weapons would engage some of the policy expertise of DND, it would not offer an operational role for the Forces unless a conventional war were waged specifically to disarm a state with these capabilities. (The public opinion surveys being considered

Source: DND surveys, 1998, 1999

Roles	1998	1999
Peacekeeping/peace/keeping the peace	52	54
Protect/defend Canada/sovereignty	32	30
Disaster relief in Canada/elsewhere	17	14
Help other countries/world/foreign aid	7	10
Protect/defend Canadians	10	8
Protect/protection/defending	5	5
Emergency/crisis response in Canada	6	4
Support to other countries/assist allies/U.S.	2	4
Help people/Canadians help people in need	4	3
Emergency rescue/search and rescue	3	2

Table 5 – Roles for the Canadian Forces
(% naming each role, top ten responses only)

here, of course, predate international concerns that developed during 2002 about Iraqi compliance with United Nations Security Council resolutions.)

A clear military role exists with other threats perceived by Canadians. These include ethnic violence or an ethnically driven civil war in a region like Kosovo or Africa, and such likely developments as a regional war ('to deter' rogue military states or for other aims). Also included would be a major terrorist incident in North America, countering illegal fishing in Canadian waters, and preventing drugs or illegal immigrants from entering Canada, and a major natural disaster in Canada (floods, forest fires, ice storms), as well as such less likely situations as the launch of a missile at North America by a rogue state or terrorist group, a new Cold War involving China and/or Russia, a major conflict such as the Second World War, and the use of nuclear weapons.

Respondents to the 1998 and 1999 DND surveys were presented with an open-ended question: "In your opinion, what is the role of the Canadian Forces?" Each respondent was allowed up to three responses. See Table 5. At first glance the results might suggest that Canadians view peacekeeping as the most important role of the Canadian Forces, that the defence of Canada is a distant second priority, and that all other roles trail badly. Certainly this was the conclusion drawn by Pollara, the Department's pollster.¹⁴ The same conclusion could be derived from polls in the 1980s.¹⁵

This notion that Canadians largely, or only, think of the CF in terms of peacekeeping is arguably a mistaken reading of the survey results. Since the question posed here was an open-ended one, the respondents replied in their own words. Pollara's staff then took these 'raw' responses and grouped them all into the categories shown in the table. The polling firm provided no explanation in its report to

DND of the categorization process for this table or of the categories themselves. (In social science jargon, it provided no coding rules.) It seems reasonable, however, to do some re-organization of the results on the basis of the labels in the table itself. In particular, it makes much good sense to combine the very similar-looking categories involving protecting and defending Canada, Canadians, and Canadian sovereignty. It also makes sense to combine the categories of helping other countries in the world, providing foreign aid, and helping people in need. This re-categorization provides the results shown in Table 6.

The re-categorized data offer a quite different picture. While peacekeeping is still the single most-often-mentioned role, that of defending Canada and protecting Canadian sovereignty now comes a very close second. Indeed, given the margin of error in such surveys, the difference between the designated top roles in one of the two years of results is not statistically significant (1998). Substantively, the differences for both surveys are unimportant. The two roles are given more or less equal weight by the public. Possible civil roles (disaster relief in Canada or elsewhere, emergency or crisis response, search and rescue, helping people) now come in a respectable third.

In short, a re-analysis of these recent polls actually shows that the public recognizes both peacekeeping and defence of Canada as the major roles for the Canadian Forces. In fact, this pattern goes back at least twenty years.¹⁶ A CROP poll in 1980 asked Canadians if they thought that the CF were trained mainly to defend Canada, to engage in peacekeeping, to patrol Canada's coasts, or to perform other roles.¹⁷ While one in three respondents answered peacekeeping (35 percent), those who leaned toward either defending Canada or patrolling our coasts totaled fully 40 percent. A very similar picture emerges from a 1988 poll done for DND by Decima Research, the Mulroney government's pollster.¹⁸ When asked which CF role should be the top priority, 32 percent chose peacekeeping and emergency aid. At the same time, 21 percent pointed to

"Canadians overwhelmingly believe their country needs the Canadian Forces."

Roles	1998	1999
Peacekeeping/keeping the peace	52	54
Protect/defend Canada, protect sovereignty / defend Canadians, protection general	47	43
Disaster relief – Canada/elsewhere, emergency response, search & rescue, help people	30	23
Help people/other countries/world/foreign aid	11	13
Support to other countries/assist allies/U.S.	2	4

Table 6 – Roles for the Canadian Forces: Re-categorized
(% naming each role)

Source: DND surveys, 1998, 1999 (table re-organized from original source)

Role	1998	1999
Peacekeeping/Peace/Keeping the peace	27	34
Protect/defend Canada/sovereignty/Canadians/defence/defending	27	27
Disaster relief in Canada/elsewhere, emergency response, help people in need	9	7
Help other countries/world/foreign aid	2	2
Don't know/refused	15	12

Table 7 – Most Important Role of the Canadian Forces, 1998-1999: Re-categorized (% saying important)

defending Canada, 14 percent said ensuring others do not enter our territory without consent, and 13 percent suggested working with our allies to prevent Soviet aggression. Thus, about the same number of respondents defined the role as defence of Canada as did those who opted for peacekeeping (an aggregate total of 35 percent compared to 32 percent), and a near majority (48 percent) put the emphasis on national defence more broadly defined to include alliance roles. The prominence of the defence-of-Canada role also emerges in the 1989 and 1990 DND polls.¹⁹ An open-ended question about the major role of the armed forces found a majority of respondents (in both years) pointing to defence broadly defined. Once again, about a third emphasize peacekeeping. These results are remarkably consistent. Canadians are not as fixated on peacekeeping as some reports would suggest.

Role	Important
Fight a war to protect Canadian territory	88
Participate in international peacekeeping operations	84
Counter terrorism in Canada or in Canadian embassies abroad	82
Fight a war alongside our NATO allies to maintain international peace and security	81
Monitor and defend North American airspace in co-operation with U.S.	79
Fight a war alongside our NATO allies to stop ethnic cleansing and genocide	76
Protect vital sea lanes in use for supply between North America and a war zone	72
Assist civilian police forces in maintaining law and order	71
Participate in coalition operations under the UN	71
Prevent illegal drug smuggling into Canada	70
Prevent illegal immigration	55
Use force to prevent illegal fishing	43

Table 8 – Importance of Combat Roles, 1999
(% indicating important or most important)

The DND-Pollara 1999 survey pursued the matter of roles for the CF by distinguishing between combat and non-combat roles, and asking the respondents about each separately. The questions this time were closed-ended and involved evaluating the importance of a series of roles. For example: "I am going to read you a list of combat roles (or non-combat roles) where the Canadian Forces maintains [sic] a capability to act in Canada and abroad. On a scale of one to five (five being the most important and one being the least important) can you tell me how important these roles should be for the Canadian Forces?" See Table 8.

For the combat roles, those rated at the high end (4 or 5) on the 5 point scale by most respondents (around 80 percent or so) included peacekeeping operations, countering terrorism in Canada or in Canadian embassies abroad, monitoring and defending North American airspace in cooperation with the Americans, and fighting a war alongside Canada's NATO allies to maintain international peace. The highest ranked role, however, was fighting to protect Canadian territory.

The second set of roles (generally chosen by around 70 percent) includes fighting a war alongside our NATO allies to stop ethnic cleansing and genocide, protecting vital sea lanes in use for supply between North America and a war zone, assisting civilian police forces in maintaining law and order, participating in coalition operations under the United Nations (UN), and preventing illegal drug smuggling into Canada. Interestingly enough, despite all the media attention in Canada given to the arrival and detention of groups of migrants during 1999-2000, most Canadians do not regard preventing illegal immigration as a relatively high priority role for the CF. Similarly, despite much attention given to foreign and domestic over-fishing in Canadian and international waters, relatively few Canadians regard preventing illegal fishing as a top priority for the military. These roles were regarded as important or most important by 50 percent and 40 percent respectively.

The non-combat roles take on a somewhat different flavour. See Table 9. The roles or missions top-rated (4 or 5 out of 5) by most respondents (80 percent or more) included conducting major relief operations to help Canadians during natural disasters, evacuating Canadians from foreign countries in times of war or natural disasters, providing search and rescue services to Canadians, providing non-combat units like hospital and supply units to areas of conflict, supporting UN humanitarian relief efforts, and monitoring shipping to prevent dumping of toxic waste.

Those non-combat roles viewed as important by slightly fewer respondents (generally 60 to 70 percent) included assisting civilian police when requested, assisting civil authorities in monitoring illegal drug trafficking, monitoring Canadian airspace, and monitoring for illegal immigration and illegal fishing.²⁰

Role	Important
Conducting major relief operations to help Canadians during natural disasters	95
Evacuating Canadians from foreign countries in times of war or natural disasters	91
Providing search and rescue services to Canadians	89
Providing non-combat units like hospital and supply units to conflict areas	83
Supporting United Nations humanitarian relief efforts	82
Monitoring shipping to prevent dumping of toxic waste	80
Monitoring peace agreements once the warring parties have stopped fighting	77
The ability to assist civilian police when requested	74
The ability to assist civil authorities in monitoring illegal drug trafficking	68
Monitoring Canadian airspace, landmass and waterways for illegal immigration	65
Monitoring ships fishing illegally	58

Table 9 – Importance of Non-Combat Roles, 1999
(% indicating important or most important)

STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

If individual Canadians think strategically, even in simple terms, we should find the priorities afforded military roles for the Canadian Forces are related to the threats perceived to be likely and/or important (as suggested in Table 1). That is, roles connected to the threats considered likely or important should receive priority consideration, and those roles related to threats considered neither likely nor important should not receive priority consideration.²¹

At the macro level, that is, in terms of aggregated public opinion, there are indeed some apparent strategic connections. Three of these stand out in linking likely or

important threats and high priority roles. The possibility of a major natural disaster in Canada (flood, forest fire, ice storm) was seen by most as a likely threat development, and conducting major relief operations to help Canadians during natural disasters was the top ranked non-combat priority. Evacuating Canadians from foreign countries in times of war or natural disasters ranked as the second-highest non-combat priority and is a logical extension of the first. It too thus represents a logical connection between threat and role. Another threat of high likelihood was ethnically-driven civil war in a region like Kosovo or Africa. Apart from direct Canadian military assistance to one side of such a conflict (an involvement that would have to rate as highly improbable), the obvious Canadian response to such a threat would be to offer peacekeeping forces, as happened in Bosnia, Kosovo, and elsewhere. Involvement in such peacekeeping missions was, of course, one of the Canadian public's high priority 'combat' roles. A third connection exists between the high likelihood of a major terrorist incident in North America and the high-priority combat role of countering terrorism.

Both major war and a regional war (such as in the Gulf) were considered less likely, but this sort of situation was nevertheless rated as (understandably) important. Fighting wars to protect Canada and/or to maintain international peace and security were regarded by the vast majority of respondents as priority roles for the Canadian Forces. While drug smuggling was regarded as an important threat, preventing and monitoring such an activity were regarded by fewer as important roles for the Forces. In contrast, illegal immigrants and illegal fishing in Canadian waters were matters of concern to fewer Canadians and, correspondingly, were rated as priority roles by fewer respondents.

These connections are summarized in Table 10. (In each cell, the threat is noted first, followed by the role.) Note also the general absence of threats rated as likely or important for which the corresponding CF role was given a low priority. Certain threats, some perceived to be important and some perceived to be less important, are not connected by the public to any serious role for the CF. These would include, for example, the spread of nuclear weapons, climate change and the problem of religious extremists.

	Likely and Important Threat	Important Threat	Less Important Threat
Priority Roles	Natural disaster / Relief Violence or war abroad / Peacekeeping Terrorist incident / Countering terrorism	Major war / Defence of Canada and Fighting war Regional war / Maintain world peace	
Medium Priority Role		Drug smuggling / Prevent smuggling	
Non-Priority Role		Drug smuggling / Monitoring smuggling	Illegal immigration / Monitoring and prevention Illegal fishing / Monitoring and prevention

Table 10 – Strategic Connections: Likely or Important Threats and Priority Roles

STRATEGIC THINKING AT THE MICRO LEVEL

The connections found above are what might be termed macro- or aggregate-level relationships. That is, they are cast at the level of aggregated results for the entire set of respondents. They tell us that Canadians in general perceive certain threats and in general favour certain roles for the CF. These macro connections do not tell us whether the individuals who are most concerned about certain threats tend to favour particular roles.

It remains to be shown, for example, that those individuals who are most concerned about regional conflicts around the world and about ethnic violence also tend to favour, rather than oppose, Canada engaging in peacekeeping operations in such situations. To identify the kind of strategic connections individuals make, we would have to examine closely the raw survey data and look for these relationships at the micro (or individual) level. While it would be highly desirable to be able to look for such relationships in the 1998 and 1999 DND surveys, the data required to do this are not available. Pollara, the polling firm, has not released the raw data from these surveys, even to DND (which, of course, paid for the surveys), even though it is common practice for polling firms to do so when working with other government departments. And the statistical results included in the Pollara report to DND are of no help in answering such micro-level questions.

As a fallback, and to gain some sense of whether or not such micro-level relationships exist, we can analyze polls in the late 1980s for which the raw data are available. As noted above, the author's 1989 survey asked Canadians, among other questions, to rate the importance of a variety of potential threats. Although it did not focus broadly on possible roles or general missions for the Canadian Forces, the survey did include various questions relating to more specific defence policy options. Looking at these questions, we can find some micro-level linkages.²² Those Canadians who regarded a possible major war as an important threat also supported military readiness. Specifically, they tended to favour leaving Canadian troops in Europe as part of NATO, to regard Canadian participation in the alliance as very important, and to support the acquisition by Canada of new conventional submarines. (While the nature of 'major war' was not specified in the questionnaire, it would appear that the respondents interpreted this as arising out of an East-West conflict.) On the other hand, those respondents who regarded a set of unconventional threats as highly

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important tended to favour different options. These threats included the international spread of diseases, international crime, Third World hunger and poverty, global pollution and human rights abuses. (Respondents who rated one of these as important also tended to regard the others in similar fashion.) Individuals concerned about these sorts of threats tended to favour budget cuts to domestic programmes instead of cuts to either defence or foreign aid. They also believed Canada should push actively for a nuclear test ban treaty and that Canada should participate in NATO. While the security policy options in this 1989 survey represented a fairly limited set, it would appear, as a preliminary finding, that Canadians as individuals do in fact make simple strategic connections, and therefore they do have a logic of security. More analysis needs to be done in this vein.

CONCLUSION

Canadians at the turn of the millennium recognize and are concerned with a range of unconventional threats, more so than with those threats faced during the Cold War era. They nevertheless continue to support Canada's military as an institution, and have fairly clear ideas about the sorts of roles the CF should play. Overall, and on an aggregate basis, the public supports roles for the Forces consistent with the threats they perceive.

The Canadian public on defence issues may, from time to time, sound like a cacophony. Mass opinion, however, is certainly not completely incoherent. Nor is it preoccupied with peacekeeping at the cost of ignoring other roles. Nor does it neglect Canadian security interests. That's a 'Not Guilty' on all three common charges. Perhaps it has been defence analysts who have been 'getting it wrong', at least as far as the thinking of the Canadian public is concerned.

Canadians on the whole tend to think in broadly strategic terms. They do seem to link security threats and military roles. In this sense, they tend to think like conventional military strategists — primitive strategists perhaps, but strategists nevertheless. It is time to stop attacking and to begin defending the role of the public in defence policy.



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1. Dan Middlemiss, "Getting it Wrong: the Public and Canadian Defence Policy," Paper presented to the Military and Strategic Studies Programme Conference, Ottawa, April 1994.
2. Others have explored this question in the pages of this Journal, particularly: Pierre Martin and Michel Fortmann, "Support for International Involvement in Canadian Public Opinion after the Cold War", *Canadian Military Journal*, Autumn 2001, pp. 43-52.
3. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Knopf, 1949), p. 331.
4. See Munton, "NATO Up Against the Wall: Changing Security Attitudes in Germany, Britain, and Canada, 1960s to the 1980s" in Hans Rattinger and Don Munton (eds.) *Rethinking National Security: The Public Dimension* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1991), pp. 343-379; Munton, "Up (or Down) on Arms: American and Canadian Public Attitudes in the Mid-1980s" in David Dewitt and Hans Rattinger (eds.) *Arms Control into the 1990s* (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp. 212-239.
5. Pollara, *Canadians' Opinions on the Canadian Forces (CF) and Related Military Issues*, Reports prepared for the Department of National Defence, Ottawa, December 1998 and November 1999 [identical titles].
6. The United States government now officially defines the end of the Cold War as 26 December 1991, the day on which the old Soviet Union was officially dissolved.
7. Munton, *Peace and Security in the 1980s: The View of Canadians*, Ottawa, Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, January 1988; Michael Driedger and Don Munton, *Security, Arms Control and Defence: Public Attitudes in Canada*, Ottawa, Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, December 1988. These surveys were designed and coordinated by the author, funded by a grant from the Institute, and carried out by Longwoods Research.
8. These results are quite consistent with public opinion data for Germany and the UK. See Munton, "A New World Order? Western Public Perceptions in the Post-Cold War Period" in David Haglund, David Dewitt and John Kirton (eds.) *Building a New Global Order* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 378-400.
9. It would be interesting to cast these survey responses in the terms adopted in such analyses as that of James Finan and W. D. Macnamara, "An Illustrative Canadian Strategic Risk Assessment", *Canadian Military Journal*, 2:3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 29-34. Given the phrasing of the existing survey questions, however, it is not possible to do so.
10. Studies on survey methods suggest that the percentages of respondents who say they are 'concerned' about or 'interested' in issues, or who give them 'high priority', may be somewhat inflated by the nature of the questions and the context of the survey interviews (Arthur Sterngold, Rex Warland and Robert Hermann, "Do Surveys Overstate Public Concerns?" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 58 (1994), pp. 255-263). If this is the case, it would not affect the relative rankings analyzed here if it can be assumed that the degree of overstatement is a constant across questions.
11. Michael Driedger and Don Munton, *Security, Arms Control and Defence: Public Attitudes in Canada*, Ottawa, Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, December 1989.
12. Munton, "A New World Order? ...".
13. Longwoods Research Group, *Report to the Department of National Defence*, September 1990. Poll results are available from the author. When the question was repeated on another poll and the responses were elaborated to include 'a little' as well as 'not at all', those saying the Forces are needed a great deal or somewhat still amounted to 84 percent. (Insight Canada Research, *Canadian Opinion on Canadian Foreign Policy, Defence Policy, and International Development Assistance*, 1995).
14. Pollara, *Canadian Opinions* ..., p. 50.
15. Pierre Martin and Michel Fortmann, "Canadian Public Opinion and Peacekeeping in a Turbulent World" *International Journal*, 50:2 (Spring 1995), pp. 370-400.
16. A 1995 poll for the federal government by Insight Canada would seem to offer an exception (Insight Canada Research, *Canadian Opinion on Canadian Foreign Policy, Defence Policy, and International Development Assistance*, 1995). It found that 77 percent of the respondents identified peacekeeping as the major international role of the Canadian Forces. This result was only obtained, however, by categorizing 'defending Canada' (presumably from an external attack) as, oddly enough, a 'domestic' role of the Forces and not including it among the answers to the question about international roles.
17. CROP, Inc. *Armed Forces: CROP Omnibus*, Prepared for the Department of National Defence, Montreal, May 1980. Poll results are available from the author.
18. Decima Research, Survey #2316, [no title available], for the Department of National Defence, 1988. Poll results are available from the author.
19. Longwoods Research Group, *Report to the Department of National Defence*, September 1990. Poll results are available from the author.
20. The list of non-combat roles included 'monitoring peace agreements once the warring parties have stopped fighting' – a key aspect of peacekeeping. The relatively low ranking of this role would seem to suggest that Canadians are as much if not more attracted by the term 'peacekeeping' itself as by the tasks involved.
21. A problem in making these links is that the provided responses for the questions on the DND surveys are sometimes not designed with these sorts of strategic connections in mind. Thus, the phrasing of the questions and responses on roles do not always correspond to those dealing with threats.
22. This analysis was carried out using SPSS, Version 9.0. For descriptive information on the survey and the questionnaire, see Michael Driedger and Don Munton, *Security, Arms Control and Defence* ..., 1989.



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Photo: 101^e Régiment de parachutistes



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