



A CH-148 *Cyclone* helicopter prepares to land on board Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Montréal* during Exercise *Spartan Warrior 16* in the Atlantic Ocean, 31 October 2016.

Military Planning, Canada's Strategic Interests and the Maritime Domain

by Ben Lombardi and Bill Ansell

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Introduction

In her book, subtitled *Strategy in the Fog of Peace*, Emily Goldman writes with regard to contemporary global affairs that:

...there is no dominant threat, no single strategic challenger, no clear enemy. Relative to the Cold War context that forged and honed our strategic constructs, we now confront a greater number of threats, greater diversity in the types of security actors that can threaten our interests, and a more interdependent world in which rapidly emerging technologies quickly diffuse and are exploited by others in unanticipated ways.¹

According to *The Future Security Environment 2013-2040* prepared by the Department of National Defence, "...we are therefore presented with a dichotomy: 'the future cannot be predicted with certainty yet analysis must occur if the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is to be adequately prepared.'"² Under these conditions, strategic military planning is rendered very difficult.

At its core, strategic military planning attempts to impose some control over uncertainty. But there are inescapable constraints, not the least of which is that the strategic environment is incredibly dynamic. Other countries with their own perceptions and interests, some adversarial, are similarly engaged – and their actions as well, are influencing global politics and are, in many cases, influencing our own assessments. Moreover, amid the modern era's tendency to focus upon war as a technical problem inviting empirically-based solutions, we often forget that what the British/American strategic thinker Colin Gray calls the, "...sovereignty of political will over war (and peace)," also introduces uncertainty regarding the frequency and character of war. That, too, has to be confronted by any planning process.³ As former US Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig observes, "...the number and diversity of variables" that have to be taken into account, and that these variables "evolve in a complex and non-linear fashion," confounds multi-decade predictability.⁴

Given ubiquitous uncertainty, therefore, what can military planners in Canada or, indeed, in any country do? What process can be devised to mitigate that problem? This is necessary given the stakes involved because no country can afford to be so wrong that inevitable errors cannot be corrected in time. One approach is to ground strategic planning in a deep appreciation of a country's interests. There is nothing particularly insightful in emphasising interests because the international behaviour of states strongly indicates that they often adhere to a sense of individual purpose. Citing one example, British military historian Hew Strachan notes, "...the infrequency of intervention despite the atrocities and humanitarian disasters in sub-Saharan Africa provides counter-factual evidence to support the point. Without perceived self-interest, the Western powers are reluctant to use military force."⁵

Perhaps even more important, there is a long tradition of statesmen citing interests as the basis of their own policies. British Prime Minister of the day Lord Palmerston's maxim from 1848 that Britain had no eternal friends and no perpetual enemies, but only eternal and perpetual interests, and "those interests it is our duty to follow" is a well-known example.⁶ In our own time, some political leaders have grounded foreign policy perspectives on what they believed their country's interests are, or have made reference to interests determining strategic priorities. The national security strategy released by Barack Obama in early-2015 outlined what it described as "...priorities based on a realistic assessment of the risks to our *enduring national interests* [emphasis added] and the opportunities for advancing them."⁷

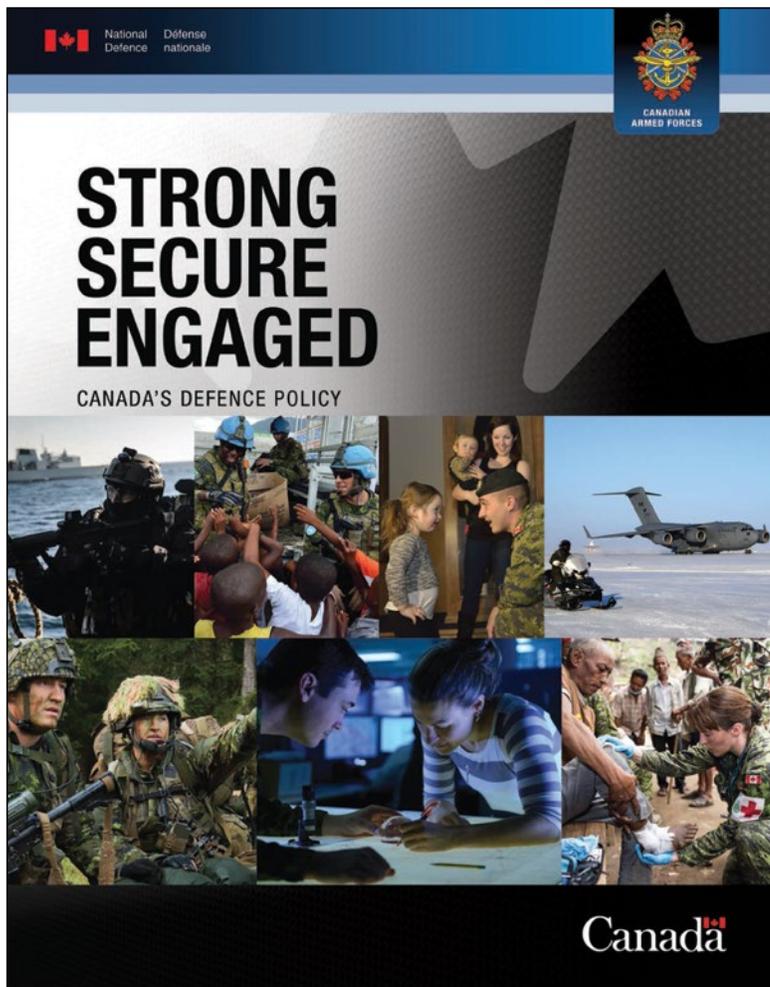
For Canada, emphasising interests presents a particular challenge because we have never tended to define exactly what our interests are. For much of the Cold War, strategic planning was dominated by existing military commitments. Given that the threat posed by the Soviet Union occupied a commanding position, the commitments outlined in the late-1950s remained largely consistent until the end of the Cold War. And, although these defence objectives might suggest an awareness of strategic interests, the latter were never explicitly identified. Speaking to this before a special parliamentary committee on defence (i.e., the Sauvé Committee) in 1963, the distinguished Czech/Canadian author and journalist John Gellner urged greater attention to a national perspective of defence requirements in his testimony: "Instead of starting off with the military requirements set by our principals [i.e., allies], and then devising the means of fulfilling it in terms of manpower and materiel, we should begin with the definition of a Canadian national objective that requires a backing of force, and thus produce the force that can best do the job."⁸ When a list of objectives was eventually declassified in the 1980s, a parliamentary committee assessed that the lack of prioritisation and the absence of any linkage with military capabilities "...makes it difficult to judge

whether or not the [National Defence] department can, in fact, carry out its assigned tasks."⁹

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That lack of specificity is hardly surprising. Don Macnamara, a well-known Canadian specialist in national and international security affairs and strategic analysis, has written that while Canadian government references to national interest are "...often used in a noble or stirring way to support some government action or policy," the explanation for that interest being mentioned is not always obvious.¹⁰ The general lack of such official declarations means that the three core missions – defence of Canada, defence of North America, and contributions to international

stability – found in defence white papers are probably as close to a comprehensive statement of strategic interests as most governments care to make. To its credit, the Trudeau government's *Strong, Secure, Engaged* does assert that interests are a key element underwriting Canadian defence policy, but it does not provide much detail beyond an acknowledgement of the primacy of "Canadian security and prosperity." Other strategic interests are also identified – "global stability, the primacy of the rules-based international order, and the principle of collective defence" – but the content of these categories is neither unpacked nor is their relative importance explored. Nevertheless, what is especially noteworthy is that this reticence is consistent with previous defence policies.



Interests and Strategic Triage

National interests are all about perceived self-interest. They can be defined as “the perceived needs and desires of one sovereign state in relationship to other sovereign states comprising the external environment.”¹¹ There is, nonetheless, a distinction to be drawn between those interests that might involve the use of military power and those that do not. Preserving a capacity for independent decision-making with respect to trade policy on a continent in which the US exercises a dominant influence is an example of a core Canadian national interest. National environmental standards might be another. While the use of armed force can never be excluded in the relations between sovereign states, it is difficult to conceive how a resort to force by Canada would advance these national interests.

Strategic interests, on the other hand, are a subset of national interests that, should they be threatened, the use of armed force can reasonably be expected.¹² They provide the principal rationale for maintaining capable armed forces. Furthermore, they provide decision-makers with a means of distinguishing between the many demands made upon limited military resources. After all, strategic interests are not all of equal importance. “A sense of priorities rooted in an established hierarchy of interests and values,” a US study asserts, “is central to an interest-based approach to foreign policy.”¹³ Author, academic and politician Michael Ignatieff has argued similarly: “...we need interests because we have to do triage, and triage is the essence of policy: making hard choices between what is desirable and what is fundamental.”¹⁴ Triage informs the prioritisation of military tasks that underpin the development of sound military strategy and, because implicitly not all risks are equal, it provides the criteria for any assessment of capability gaps.

Emphasising interests creates an easily accessible framework that ties planning to policy outcomes. Military capabilities, defence procurement, strategies (necessarily incorporating threat assessments), and operational plans can be measured against a clearly defined requirement to protect, defend, or advance those interests. Furthermore, the same framework can be used to illustrate the strategic risk, and other consequences, of failing to do so. A first step is, obviously, to establish what those interests are. What is it that a country views as so important that it is willing to use armed force to protect, defend, or advance?

What are Canada’s Maritime Strategic Interests?

For purposes of discussion, we can group Canada’s strategic interests into three broad categories, presented in decreasing order

of importance – vital, critical, and substantial. Within each category, we can derive maritime components and thus arrive at Canadian maritime strategic interests, namely, those *focused upon, or influenced by* factors in the global maritime domain (see Figure 1). These factors include threats and likely sources of political frictions, current and future capabilities of allies and adversaries, the impact of climate change (i.e., the opening of the Arctic), as well as relevant technological developments (see Figure 2). Arguably, it is the ability to make this correlation so easily that validates the claim that Canada is a maritime country.



Figure 1: Ranking of Canada’s maritime strategic interests.

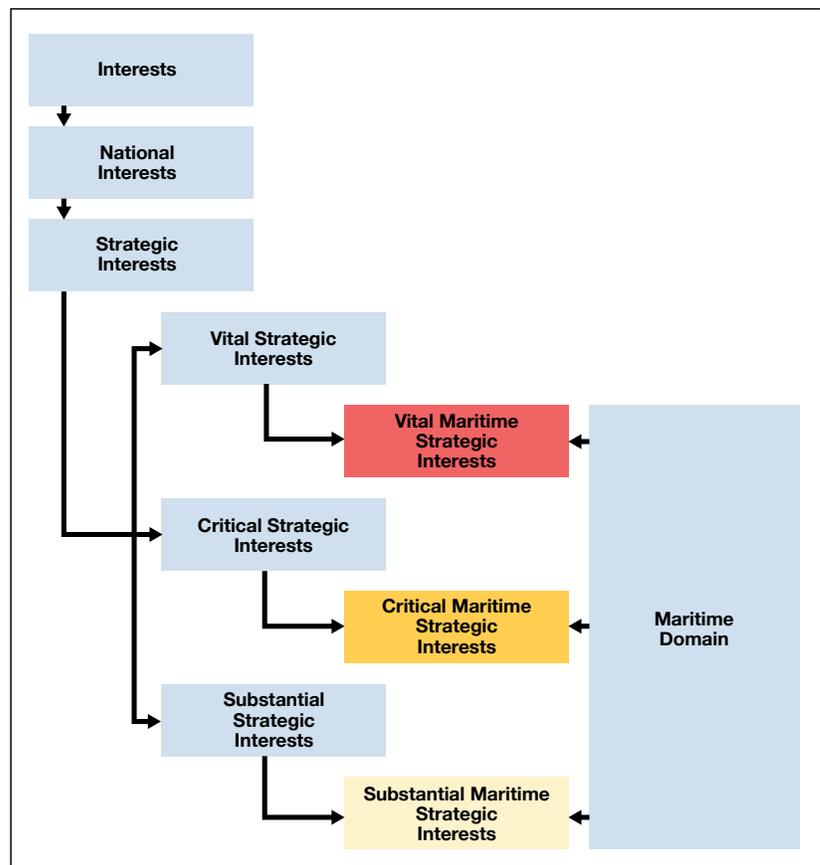


Figure 2: The formation of maritime strategic interests.

Authors

Authors

1. Vital strategic interests

In any ranking of a state's strategic interests, those that are deemed to be vital are the most important. *Vital strategic interests* describe those things that a state and society need to exist as independent within recognisable borders, and as free from foreign control. Were an adversary to substantively damage these interests, the characteristics of a state and society, including possibly their continued viability, would be fundamentally harmed. Given their nature, the vital strategic interests of most advanced countries are remarkably similar; and include territorial integrity, respect for government's authority within recognised borders, a population that is protected from foreign attack, stable social and political institutions, and a standard of living compatible with national understandings of human dignity.

For Canada, *vital strategic interests* reflect its advanced state of socio-economic development, its geography, and its demographics. They include protecting the territorial integrity of the country, defending its population from mass casualty attacks, countering any threat to its core institutions, and ensuring Canadian sovereignty

by preventing, deterring, and responding to external threats. And, again like many other countries, Canada's vital interests are often intertwined, and are therefore collectively captured by the notion of "national integrity." In *Strong, Secure and Engaged*, these interests are found in "Canadian security and prosperity."¹⁵

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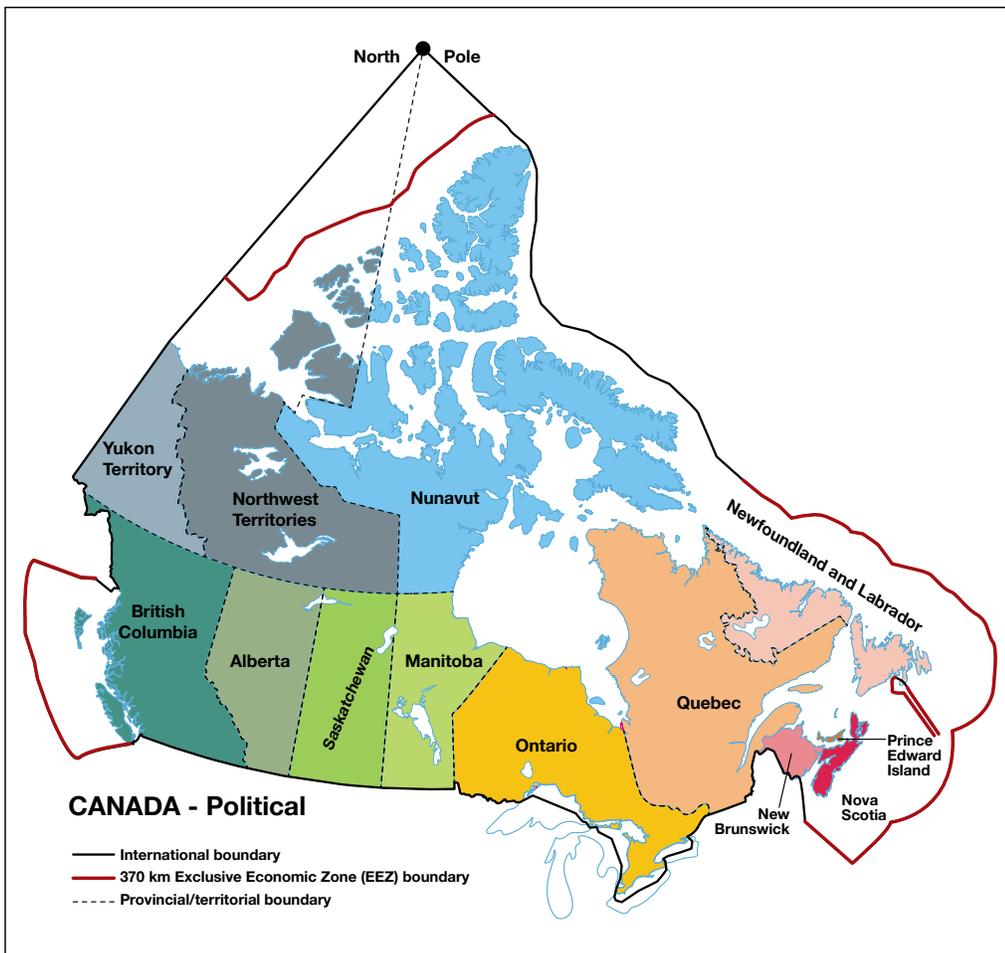
Geography dictates that there is an irrevocable maritime component to Canada's vital strategic interests. Ensuring Canadian sovereignty, for example, includes upholding the Government of Canada's authority within the country's maritime boundaries. Generally speaking, a list of Canada's vital maritime strategic interests must include:

- a. Sovereignty over Canada's ocean estate;
- b. Protection from attacks originating from the sea;
- c. Prevention of the use of Canadian ocean estate for an attack against the US; and,
- d. The maritime foundations of national prosperity.

The rationale for the first two interests is straightforward. Canada has the longest coastline in the world (over 244,000 kilometres), and has approximately 7.1 million square kilometres

of ocean estate (an area roughly equal to 70 percent of its land mass).¹⁶ Canada's most important maritime strategic interest is, therefore, to preserve and defend its sovereignty in an enormous ocean estate, including territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone (see Figure 3).

There is also the fact that Canada occupies the northern half of a continent shared with the United States, a more populous, wealthier, more powerful, and yet like-minded country. Security and prosperity, the foundations of Canada's existence as a stable, independent and affluent liberal democracy, depend upon cooperative and continuing amicable relations with a strong United States. There is nothing original in this assertion. It was voiced nearly 60 years ago by one of Canada's leading strategic thinkers, Robert J. Sutherland, who observed that: "...we should reflect that it is largely owing to our geography and our uniquely



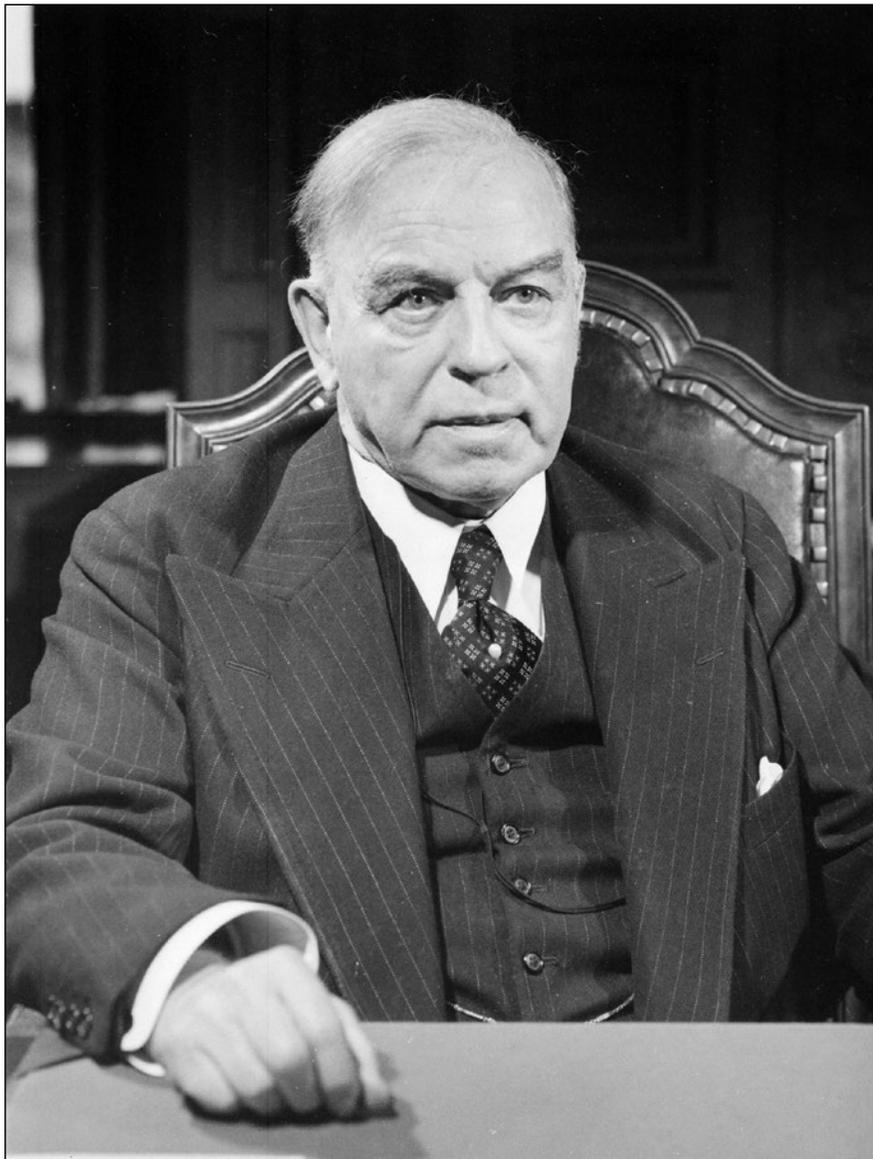
Ship-source Oil Pollution Fund [http://sopf.gc.ca/?page_id=563]

Figure 3: Canada's ocean estate.

close relationship with the United States that a nation of eighteen millions has been able to achieve so large a share of wealth, power and constructive influence.”¹⁷

From a defence planning perspective, that relationship nevertheless comes at a cost in the form of strategic-level obligations. In 1938, Prime Minister Mackenzie King spoke directly to this:

We too, as a good and friendly neighbour, have our responsibilities. One of them is to see their country is made immune from possible invasion as we can reasonably be expected to make it, and, that should the occasion ever arise, enemy forces should not be able to make their way, either by land, sea or air, to the United States across Canadian territory.¹⁸



Library and Archives Canada/C-027645

Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King.

Twenty-five years later, Sutherland echoed this assessment: “...the price of Canadian national survival is a willingness to respect the security interests of the United States.”¹⁹ By implication, therefore, Canada can never be perceived by Washington as either presenting or harbouring a danger to the US. Most often, it means aiding the US in continental defence, but Washington might also expect support and/or assistance overseas in dealing with national security challenges and threats. Regardless of what level of commitment is required, the imperative to respect “the security interests of the US” has not changed in the five decades since Sutherland. Indeed, it is increasingly salient in our time as Washington’s sense of its own insecurity has grown in the wake of 9/11 and the revival of Great Power competition.

This strategic requirement has a maritime dimension in Canada’s home waters, namely that it is essential to prevent Canada’s ocean estate from being used to conduct an attack upon the US. An inescapable geography dictates that “defence against help” – that is, obviating the need for the US to intervene unilaterally in our territory and/or waters – has been a maxim in Canadian strategic thinking. Indeed, it is hard to imagine when it will ever lose its relevance.²⁰ Therefore, controlling Canada’s ocean estate has to be seen as a vital maritime strategic interest. By doing so and thereby making an *effective* contribution to continental defence and security, Canadian sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the United States is reinforced.

Lastly, it is vitally important that the country’s prosperity and standard of living be protected as much as possible. Canadian exports of bulk commodities (i.e., oil, timber, ore, and agricultural goods) are overwhelmingly shipped by sea and, therefore, Ottawa has a strong interest in ensuring the security of international sea lanes for that trade to continue. There is, however, also a continental aspect that cannot be safely ignored. The economies of Canada and the US are tightly intertwined, as represented in trade, infrastructure, and transportation. Canadian prosperity requires continued access to the immense US economy. Nearly 45 percent of Canada’s GDP is derived from international trade, but more significant is that most of that is generated by cross-border trade with the US.²¹ “Roughly three-quarters of [Canada’s] exports of goods and services” go to the US, while only about eight percent go to the European Union and four percent to China (see Figure 4).²²

It is because of this level of connectedness that over the past three decades, a strong US economy has been a harbinger of prosperity and economic growth in Canada.²³

Country	Exports	Imports
\$ billions		
USA	395,458	362,716
European Union	39,444	52,942
Japan	10,107	10,894
China	21,452	38,898
India	4,498	2,929
Mexico	7,911	18,344
South Korea	4,219	6,153
Rest of World	40,542	54,401

Figure 4: Canada's trade (2015).

There is a crucial, if often overlooked, maritime dimension to the Canada-US trading relationship. An important foundation for national prosperity is the assurance that global commerce is able to access the world's oceans. Approximately 30 percent of US GDP is derived from international trade and, as a consequence of its economic ties to the US, Canada is indirectly dependent upon the global trading system.²⁴ It stands to reason that Canada's prosperity would be imperilled if the US faltered due to a disruption to the free movement of seaborne trade upon which American economic viability depends. And, as economic strength is a core component of national power, a less prosperous and confident US would increase the dangers facing this country.

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2. Critical Strategic Interests

Immediately below those strategic interests that are considered vital are *critical strategic interests*. They are lower ranked because, while the existence of the state and/or society is not immediately endangered by their loss, the damage is so substantive as to often be considered incalculable. These interests are less universal than vital strategic interests and are, instead, more specific to individual countries. The defence of critical strategic interests naturally demands greater assessments by policy-makers as to whether and what scale of military force is appropriate to their protection, defence or advancement. Nevertheless, the nature of critical strategic interests means that failing to act when they are threatened could still be unacceptable to policy-makers, and probably the public-at-large. We can distill from a larger list of critical strategic interests those for which a maritime component is relatively easy to identify:

- a. Alliance commitments;
- b. Order and stability in regions of strategic importance to Canada;
- c. A rules-based international order; and,
- d. The protection and preservation of natural resources inside Canada's ocean estate.

Canada has used military power on a number of occasions in recent years to advance critical strategic interests. Recent examples of this include contributing to the NATO-led interventions in Kosovo (1999) and Libya (2013), participating in the stability operation in Afghanistan (2001-2011), supporting the multinational counter-terrorism operation in the Indian Ocean (2001-present), and reassuring NATO allies in the wake of Russia's seizure of Crimea and interference in eastern Ukraine (post-2014). Given the volume of these activities, it might seem that they are the most significant in defining the CAF's purpose. However, the ability during the past quarter century to devote so much attention to such operations has been possible only because vital strategic interests have not been threatened.

The fulfilment of alliance commitments that contribute directly to Canada's security and that of its allies is a critical strategic interest and has been so since at least the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (1949). There are two reasons for this. The first and the most obvious is that alliances are generally constructed to augment national security through formal military agreements with like-minded countries. Membership in an alliance does, however, include a potential wrinkle in that those obligations might increase the range of dangers to which a country is exposed. Or it might require the acquisition of capabilities beyond what is needed for self-protection.²⁵ For example, in a highly institutionalised alliance such as NATO, force planning targets are allocated on the basis of threat/risk assessments that take a much broader perspective than that of any one member of the alliance. Throughout the Cold War, however, Canada's NATO obligations obviously also supported the country's vital interests. It is due to this overlap that *Strong, Secure, Engaged* identifies collective defence as a strategic interest.²⁶

An additional reason for meeting alliance commitments is more intangible, but speaks to the significance of a country's reputation – a significant asset, particularly in times of strategic uncertainty. Canada's membership in NATO not only provides formal structures for the integration of a national military contribution both in peace and war. It also acts a force multiplier by facilitating Canada's ability to project power and influence – an important consideration for a country with relatively small armed forces. And, so long as the US remains a member of NATO, membership is a pillar of Canada's international reputation, not least in Washington. Membership also gives Canada access to various Alliance agencies and capabilities developed jointly at NATO (i.e., the Alliance Ground Surveillance, and the Maritime Multi-Mission Aircraft, programmes), as well as to other international forums (i.e., the OSCE) to which it might not otherwise have, and thereby helps bolster the nation's global influence.

Data adapted from Global Affairs Canada, *Canada's State of Trade – Trade and Investment Update 2016* (Ottawa, 2016), pp. 45 & 47.

NATO's collective defence obligations have always included an important maritime element, and this has had considerable influence upon Canadian defence policy. For example, early planning targets assigned to Canada by NATO were, in part, responsible for the RCN's development as a specialist anti-submarine warfare force.²⁷ That contribution to the Alliance deterrent during the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union complemented the need for North American (Canadian and US) land power to be safely transported in time of war across the North Atlantic. Following the demise of the USSR, the collective defence obligation has led to contributions to the Standing NATO Maritime Groups, support for NATO missions ashore, and, more recently, for the reassurance of allies and partners.

A second critical strategic interest rests in the promotion of stability in regions of strategic importance to Canada. By implication, this acknowledges that not all regions and countries are of equal strategic importance due, perhaps, to a combination of historical, economic or political considerations. It is, in part, for this reason that the Government of Canada has not deployed the CAF into every conflict environment, nor is there any expectation that it would do so. Emphasising areas of strategic importance does not preclude acting on principle, but it does force policy-makers to distinguish between values and tangible interests.

There is a maritime element in an assessment of what regions of the globe are most important to Canada even if, as is most often the case, international crises and conflicts play out on land. This is because the movement of military assets and the prevention of similar activity by an adversary can take place at sea. Therefore, it is frequently the case that land-based intervention to promote or impose regional stability requires seaborne support. This helps explain the RCN contribution to the international coalition in the Persian Gulf during the first Gulf War. Challenges to a region's stability often also have a maritime dimension. For example, disorder within the global maritime commons can restrict seaborne trade (and drive up marine shipping insurance rates) or might cause significant damage to undersea cables, both of which would generally endanger the global trading system. Instability, political tensions, and state fragility, including threats to key Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) and maritime chokepoints, can threaten the interests of key allies and partners.

Third, Canada directly benefits from the international status quo. This interest has been upheld by successive defence policies and, as *Strong, Secure, Engaged* acknowledges, it continues to be critically important that the current rules-based order be maintained.²⁸ This order is defined by a wide variety of international institutions (i.e., the United Nations), as well as international treaties, laws, and agreements. Taken together, they are designed

to foster stability and/or inject predictability into global affairs by constraining state behaviour, to offer mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and to mitigate the consequences of resort to armed force. Asserting this interest often also means having to confront those countries that do not agree with the current order.

A former Chief of the Maritime Staff, Vice-Admiral Dean McFadden, has argued that, "...among the most essential public goods of this globalized era is a regulated ocean commons."²⁹ The international maritime order is particularly important to a status quo power such as Canada because the world's oceans require rules that define exactly what all states are *permitted to do* and what they are *prohibited from doing*. Without those rules, or with an alternate set of rules possibly based upon traditions distant to our own, the vast benefits accruing from the exploitation of the oceans might be distributed very differently. For Canada, the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) is a pillar of the status quo in the maritime domain forming the normative/legal framework within which many maritime issues are addressed by states. In effect since 1994, UNCLOS seeks to reconcile the traditional emphasis on the freedom of the seas to which all have

access with more recent claims made by countries to control or expand their ocean estates.³⁰

The order represented by that Convention provides an international legal framework that reinforces Canadian sovereignty in its ocean estate, including the Arctic, and it institutionalises Canadian authority for management of maritime resource exploitation within its EEZ. More generally, it contributes to predictability on the world's oceans. Ultimately, this helps to secure the commercial interests of those states, such as Canada and its leading trading

partners, heavily engaged in the globalised economy – including the United States, that has not yet ratified UNCLOS.

Finally, the protection of Canada's natural resources is critically important, both to the national economy, but also for the development of the country by future generations. There is a maritime dimension to this strategic interest off-shore in Canadian waters or on/beneath the seabed. Illegal exploitation of those resources (i.e., fish stocks, fossil fuels, and seabed minerals) would represent an infringement of the country's sovereignty. As ocean politics intensify in the coming decades, the exploitation of ocean resources will likely lead to an increase in confrontations at sea – and the possibility exists that intrusions might be backed by foreign governments.³¹ The so-called 1995 Turbot War, a fishing dispute between Canada and Spain about over-fishing on the Grand Banks just outside Canada's EEZ, is a case in point. This is of particular concern in the Arctic, where unexplored and untapped resources combine with increasing accessibility due to climate change against a backdrop of competing maritime claims. In such circumstances, it is conceivable that a resort to force to protect Canadian resources might one day be necessary.

“A second critical strategic interest rests in the promotion of stability in regions of strategic importance to Canada.”



DND photo by Leading Seaman Dan Bard

HMCS *Montréal* sails past an iceberg in Arctic waters during Operation *Nanook* in the summer of 2017.



The Canadian Press/Fred Chartrand/photo 608508

The Spanish fishing vessel *Estai* in St. John's harbour, Newfoundland, 12 March 1995. The vessel was seized by Canadian officials and brought into the harbour during the so-called Turbot War.



HMCS *Halifax* sails in the Caribbean Sea just outside Jacmel, Haiti for participation in Operation *Hestia*, 18 February 2010.

3. Substantial Strategic Interests

The third category of strategic interests can be referred to as *Substantial Strategic Interests*. Defending them might very well involve the use of armed force, but these interests are not vital or even critical to national survival or international stability. This does not mean that they are not important, only that their lower ranking affords greater flexibility to government decision-making. As a result, when looked at over many decades, one sees that substantial strategic interests rise and fall in the attention and resources allotted to them. Given limited resources and in times of great demand for military capabilities, these interests will likely be subordinated to more important vital and critical strategic interests. Conversely, in times of relative peace and security, countries may opt to employ military capabilities, and sometimes even deadly force, to protect, defend, or advance substantial interests. These sorts of missions might also appear to be more normative or value-laden. The number of this type of strategic interest is, therefore, potentially large and depends, in part, upon a variety of influences, including the outlook of the government of the day, public opinion and international developments. From among such a lengthy potential list, the most important of Canada's substantial strategic interests with a clear maritime component would likely include:

- a. The security of Canadians abroad;
- b. The alleviation of human suffering;
- c. International partnerships that are not part of a formal alliance; and,
- d. A viable maritime environment in which intentional damage is proscribed.

In the discussion of Canadian strategic interests, humanitarian concerns cannot be ignored. Human security has emerged as a substantial strategic interest for Canada, and this has become especially important as Canadians increasingly travel, work, and reside abroad. A rise in terrorist attacks and political unrest in different regions of the world would threaten the security and safety of Canadians abroad. Given the actions of other countries in rescuing their citizens abroad, as well as Canada's own recent behaviour (i.e., Operation *Lion* in Lebanon in 2006), it is conceivable that there would be an expectation by the Canadian government and/or the public that Ottawa would do likewise.

Second, there is often a strong demand by Canadians, foreign governments, and world opinion, for advanced countries with the necessary capabilities to contribute to missions that alleviate human suffering in the face of humanitarian or natural disasters. In doing so, there is no question that there could very well be a maritime dimension to Canada's response. Due to limited and/

or damaged infrastructures, maritime access may be the only and/or safest, and most timely way to deliver assistance (i.e., Operation *Hestia* in Haiti in 2010). For Canada, responding to humanitarian concerns is frequently an obvious example where interests and values often overlap. And yet, the decision to act is not only informed by normative considerations. A by-product of humanitarian relief is that the country's international prestige might be greatly enhanced. Even if not explicitly factored into mission planning, growing Canada's soft power can advance other national interests.

Third, maintaining defence partnerships has always been a component of the Canadian strategic outlook. Although not as important as a formal alliance, these partnerships nonetheless increase Canada's international influence. They help build defence relationships that might prove useful in the future, frequently facilitate power projection (i.e., offsetting a lack of capabilities, or supporting the creation of overseas operational and support hubs) and foster greater situational awareness of global dynamics. In recent years, for example, the RCN has forged a strong partnership with the Chilean Navy through naval talks, training, and exercises. This paid a valuable dividend when, in 2015, a *Mutual Logistic Support Arrangement* (MLSA) between the two countries allowed the RCN to use a Chilean resupply ship to support its Pacific Fleet in the absence of a Canadian AOR capability.

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Lastly, Canada has declared a strategic interest in protecting the global environment, and, at sea, the maritime environment. Since 1993, DND provided annual aerial surveillance to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada in support of international agreements aimed at deterring illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing in the global maritime commons, including, for example, the UN moratorium on high seas driftnet fishing.

It is conceivable that the current understanding of this strategic interest could become more expansive. World opinion has already begun to see the oceans as a common global heritage. This has been captured in the 1992 *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, to which Canada is a signatory. Unilateral decisions (including legislation) by individual states have given further expression to this perspective. The Turbot War is an example of this since Canada acted beyond the boundaries of its ocean estate to protect migratory fish stocks. Over time, as unsustainable exploitation of the oceans increases, it is possible that demands will arise for military power to protect the maritime environment beyond national boundaries. For Canada, it is possible that a more interventionist approach to ecological defence could one day assume greater importance.³²



DND photo ET2016-0468-03 by Corporal Carbe Orellana

HMCS *Chicoutimi* escorts Peoples Liberation Army (Navy) ships visiting Victoria on behalf of the Chinese military, 13 December 2016.

Conclusion

Strategic military planning is a difficult task, particularly when the international security environment is characterised, as it is now, by enormous uncertainty. In such a context, determining what will be needed in terms of military capability, as well as explaining those future requirements, and doing so in a way that is both convincing and easily accessible to policy-makers, only compounds the difficulty. Focussing upon strategic interests could, however, have a positive effect in addressing that challenge. Strategic interests highlight the purposes for which a country raises and maintains a military establishment – and draws attention to the range of missions that a country might reasonably expect its armed forces to be able to undertake. Moreover, the focus upon strategic

interests provides a means of assessing risk, both in terms of what adversaries might do, and as a result of one's own force planning decisions.

Arguably, therefore, strategic interests ought to be a core element in strategic military planning. Employing a triage approach, and ranking strategic interests so that they fall into one of three broad categories – *vital, critical and substantial* – allows an assessment of the relative importance of each interest, and, in some instances, their interconnectedness and contradictions. An awareness of the differences ought to be an important input for the prioritised assignment of defence resources and should inform decisions about future capabilities.



NOTES

- 1 Emily O. Goldman, *Power in Uncertain Times; Strategy in the Fog of Peace* (Bloomington, IN: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 1.
- 2 Chief of Force Development, *The Future Security Environment 2013-2040* (Ottawa: 2014), p. xv.
- 3 Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 117.
- 4 Richard Danzig, *Dancing in the Dark – Ten Propositions about Prediction and National Security* (Washington: Center for New American Security, 2011), p. 15.
- 5 Hew Strachan, "The Lost Meaning of Strategy," in *Survival*, Vol. 47, No. 3, Autumn 2005, p. 49.
- 6 Viscount Palmerston: "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow." Great Britain, *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, 1 March 1848, Vol. 97, cc. 66-123.
- 7 President of the United States, *National Security Strategy* (Washington: February 2015), p. 5.
- 8 John Gellner in 26th Parliament of Canada, House of Commons, Special Committee on Defence, *Minutes and Proceedings No. 16*, 24 October 1963, p. 561.
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