

Notes from the Field

Canada's Defence Policy Consultations & Africa: What did the 'Experts' Say?

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In mid-2016, the Department of National Defence (DND) conducted a public consultation to support its efforts to review and update Canada's defence policy, the largest such effort in over 20 years. The review began on April 6th and ended on July 31st, 2016. It was designed to provide clarity regarding the Canadian government's balancing of priorities, response to emerging challenges, and appropriate military investments.¹ Three fundamental areas were addressed:

1. The main challenges to Canada's security;
2. The role of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in addressing current threats and challenges;

¹ Government of Canada, "Defence Policy Review," (online consultations, 2016), <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/index.asp>.

3. The resources and capabilities needed to carry out the CAF mandate.²

The public at large as well as expert stakeholders were consulted about what the future of Canada's defence policy might look like. DND received 20,200 submissions to the Defence Policy Review online consultation portal and over 4,700 participants contributed comments and votes using the online discussion forum. Over the coming months, DND will be compiling and reviewing the information received from online submissions, stakeholder roundtables, consultation town halls, and discussions with Parliamentarians and key international allies and partners. This will help to inform the current government as it intends to launch Canada's new defence policy in early 2017.³ However, of the 114 expert stakeholder submissions, only eight mentioned Africa in their submission. This short analysis will highlight how these invited experts assessed African security challenges relevant to Canada, and how they thought Canada ought to go about addressing them.⁴

The Honourable LGen Romeo Dallaire (ret'd) highlighted the fact that over the years, Canada has played an integral role in bridging the gap between civilian, government, and military actors vis-a-vis "re-conceptualising human security and development."⁵ Dr. Brian L. Job stressed specific areas of Canadian capabilities: "The Canadian Armed Forces excel at, and have an international comparative advantage in key areas: mission logistics, disaster relief, maritime surveillance and interdiction, training, and Special Forces operations, among others."⁶ According to Dallaire, much of

² "Defence Policy Review"

³ "Defence Policy Review"

⁴ *Editors' Note*: By definition anyone invited by those organizing the Roundtables were considered experts or stakeholders related in some sense to defence policy issues. However, given indications by the new government since late 2015 that re-engaging in UN peace operations will be a priority, and most UN peacekeepers are deployed in Africa, one could assume that experts with relevant Africanist credentials would be invited to the Roundtables. While only eight of 114 submissions mentioned Africa, this can hardly be a surprise when only one invited expert (Thomas Tiekou) out of 114 can be said to have any deep scholarly expertise related to Africa and security. It is unclear if the Roundtable organizers cast the net more widely among the many relevant African experts in Canada and they were just not available, but an informal poll suggests the net was not cast widely enough.

⁵ Hon. LGen Romeo Dallaire (ret'd), "Submission By L.Gen The Honourable Romeo Dallaire to the Department Of National Defence Forum Review Of 28 June 016," (Halifax, 28 June 2016: Defence Policy Review, 2016), <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/perspectives.asp>. p. 1.

⁶ Brian L. Job, "Notes Prepared For The Department Of National Defence Roundtable," (Vancouver, April 27, 2016), <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/perspectives.asp>. p. 2.

this success can be credited to the proper training of the CAF and it is therefore pivotal, in his estimation, that

we (the Canadian Gov't) develop a strong cadre of well-trained, experienced officers and NCOs to assist in training contingents from developing countries deploying to UN peace missions, providing them not only with sophisticated operational expertise, but also building their capacity and developing their ethos. Without this, it is my belief that our return to peace operations with either the UN or regional organizations will not achieve significant results.⁷

However, this recommendation requires a long-term, strategic plan to be put in place. As Dr. Stephen J. Toope put it in his submission, "Canada's relative position in the world has changed since the heyday of Pearsonian internationalism, and not for the better."⁸

Of the submissions which mentioned Africa, several mentioned Canada's lack of strategy with respect to the continent, peacekeeping, and the Canadian government's foreign policy as a whole. As Job noted, "lacking the guidelines of an established national security policy, as is presently the case, diminishes the prospects of critical review of current defence policy, promotes caution rather than innovation, and decreases the likelihood of consideration or reorientation of the Canadian military and its missions."⁹ Even if the new government is perhaps on the right track conducting this Defence Policy Review, according to Job, it "should be conducted with a forward horizon of fifteen to twenty years."¹⁰

Furthermore, Canada may have had its successes in the past yet it needs to redefine its direction for the future. This was stressed in Toope's submission: "Canada's military tradition, our experience in two world wars, in Korea, Afghanistan, and as peace-keepers or peace-makers in conflict zones such as Bosnia, East Timor, and Haiti is a major asset. However, there is a crying need to better define Canada's current

⁷ Dallaire, "Submission," p. 2.

⁸ Stephen J. Toope, "Canadian Sovereignty and the Defence Review," (Toronto, 20 May 2016), <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/perspectives.asp>. p. 1.

⁹ Job, "Notes," p. 1.

¹⁰ Job, "Notes," p. 1.

aspirations for the military.”¹¹ No longer can we rest on the coattails of our powerful neighbour, as “with all its remaining might, the US simply cannot dictate the terms of the global order.”¹²

A theme emerged that urged Canada to implement a forward looking strategy to be able to better utilize its comparative advantages, getting more ‘bang for its buck’ addressing security challenges, such as those in Africa. Canada could pack a more powerful punch by aiding those UN peacekeeping missions where our particular set of niche skills could be most impactful. As Dr. Walter Dorn noted in his submission,

Canada has so much to offer UN peacekeeping both at UN Headquarters and in the field. The country has real strengths, giving it a competitive advantage in potential deployments: a multicultural mosaic, a bilingual civil service, minority rights protection, the rule of law and long-standing (though diminished in the last decade) service to UN causes. [...] Canada has a modern military that, with some new training and updating, can provide excellent peacekeepers. It can particularly help in Francophone countries like Haiti, Mali, and the Central African Republic.¹³

Dallaire also echoed the utilization of Canada’s bilingual citizenry in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa:

I recommend a front running commitment of French language military and civilian personnel to the UN and to the African Union, on a significant basis, to assist in the development of the skills and knowledge of francophone countries to meet challenges of security and stability.¹⁴

This bilingual advantage may be particularly relevant when it comes to stabilizing Sub-Saharan Africa where many countries’ official language is French. Furthermore, Job asserts that Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to be a continuous centre of both Canadian and international focus due to humanitarian and environmental

¹¹ Toope, “Canadian Sovereignty,” p. 1.

¹² Toope, “Canadian Sovereignty,” p. 1.

¹³ Walter Dorn, “Back in the Game: Potential Canadian Contributions to UN Peace Operations Defence Policy Review,” (Toronto, 10 May 2016), <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/perspectives.asp>. p. 2.

¹⁴ Dallaire, “Submission,” p. 2.

challenges. Thanks to Canada's bilingual nature, we have the potential to ameliorate the humanitarian situation on the ground, perhaps more so than most as

Sub-Saharan Africa has become a region of security concerns for Canada—as the locale of extremist, transnational conflicts that threaten continental spill over, the source of pandemic disease, continuing humanitarian crises, and zones of failed governance. Canadian Forces have been engaged, and are likely to be increasingly so, in missions in Africa. Here Canadian comparative advantage on delivery of humanitarian and health services as well as logistical support and special operations are further enhanced by our bilingual capacities.¹⁵

By utilizing Canada's francophone assets, the government could establish a relationship with the African Union and its peace operations division, for of the 53 countries that make up the African Union (as Morocco still remains outside though it is in the process of rejoining), 20 list French as an official language.¹⁶

Furthermore, by utilising strengths it already has, and working with allies already situated in the region, Canada can deploy far more effective missions, capable of adapting more efficiently to unforeseen threats. As Toope notes in his submission, "foreign policy and especially defence policy must always be flexible enough to respond to events as security threats can arise unexpectedly."¹⁷ ISIS and the world's "fragmented and tentative" response is cited as an example of where Canada could have acted differently. According to Toope,

Canada could choose to build a much stronger capacity for rapid response, always working with allies, but capable of early action. Our position with allies in the fight against the Islamic State would be more comfortable if we had been able to announce an alternative to our air-combat deployment far faster. If we had been able to offer to work closely with France in North and West Africa, deploying special forces and anti-terrorist training personnel to aid the G5 Sahel countries (Mauritania,

¹⁵ Job, "Notes," p. 2.

¹⁶ *The African Union Handbook*, 2016, <http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/auhb-2016-english-pdf-final-january-2016.pdf>. Of course, the actual use of French throughout any country varies, and in some countries French remains the language of elites and not ordinary people.

¹⁷Toope, "Canadian Sovereignty," p. 2.

Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Chad), for example, the entire fracas over the Canadian role against Islamic State in Iraq could have been avoided.¹⁸

Similarly, Dr. Alexander Moens notes in his submission that Canada could be more efficient if it were to utilize its alliances across the globe, including those in Africa.¹⁹ Dr. Thomas Tiekou makes the point that solely aiding UN based peacekeeping missions can have a fragmented effect as

UN supported peace missions [...] are ad hoc and coalition of the willing type of missions however; many are anchored in regional institutions and are here to stay. [...] The review should put DND in such a position that it is able to work with these homegrown regional security arrangements. [...] It is essential that DND and the CAF develop a strong footprint in regional security institutions such as the African Union that are at the forefront of the new multicultural security innovations.²⁰

Dorn concurs. He recommends that Canada

re-instate standby bodies like the Standby High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG, 1996-2009), whose demise was caused mainly by the Western militaries' preoccupation with Afghanistan. But the need remains as great as ever, especially as Western countries, like Sweden and the Netherlands in Mali, re-engage in peacekeeping.²¹

Dallaire also wants Canada to improve structures internally, in terms of institutionalizing links across and within Canadian government departments concerned with various aspects of security. Thus,

other government departments within the whole of government security solution must establish a dedicated permanency within their structures. Then they will be able to constantly monitor the security situations evolving at home and abroad, and be in a position to produce contingency plans and even exercise them (as has been created by the US National

¹⁸ Toope, "Canadian Sovereignty," p. 2.

¹⁹ Alexander Moens, "Defence Policy Review Submission," (Simon Fraser University, 27 April, 2016), <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/perspectives.asp>. p. 3.

²⁰ Thomas K. Tiekou, "Canadian National Defence Policy Review Roundtable," (Toronto, 20 May, 2016), <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/perspectives.asp>. p. 2.

²¹ Dorn, "Back In The Game," p. 1.

Security Advisor in its preventive approach to responding to mass atrocities).²²

In the same vein and addressing the third fundamental area of the Defence Policy Review's purpose, "the resources and capabilities needed to carry out the CAF mandate", several expert stakeholders noted Canada's role in Afghanistan and the implications that has on future Canadian peacekeeping missions. Dr. Frédéric Mérand noted in his submission that

Over the past 20 years, Canada has not distinguished itself through its contribution to UN operations. If a strong commitment for a few years in Afghanistan could suggest the opposite, the same assessment applies to NATO, while agreements with the European Union regarding civil-military crises management remain largely untapped. While crises multiply, particularly in the French-speaking countries of sub-Saharan Africa, raising high expectations in relation to the Canadian effort within the international community, the question of our military contribution to peacekeeping deserves to be asked again.²³

Again, if Canada was to engage more closely with its allies, particularly those in Africa, it could help build stronger "capacity and professionalization of those forces."²⁴ In order to achieve this, it is Dallaire's recommendation that

the extensive employment of Reserves and veterans be the core of this body of instructional capability overseas. Furthermore, an MOU should be established between the expanded DMTC [Directorate – Military Training & Cooperation] capability and such institutions as the PSTC [Peace Support Training Centre] and the Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative at Dalhousie University to deliver at home and abroad the training envisaged in this new era of peace operations.²⁵

This highlights an important point, a linking or closer partnership between the CAF and academia. As Mérand noted

²² Dallaire, "Submission," p. 1.

²³ Frédéric Mérand, "Montreal Submission," (Montreal, 27 June 2016), <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/perspectives.asp>, p. 1.

²⁴ Dallaire, "Submission," p. 2.

²⁵ Dallaire, "Submission," p. 2.

Finally, I would mention that I had the pleasure, as a member and director of the Centre for International Peace and Security Studies (CIPSS) of Université de Montreal and McGill University, of being involved in the Department of National Defence Security and Defence Forum, from 2005 to 2012. Although this program had limitations, the dialogue between researchers and practitioners for the development of knowledge in security studies was the envy of many countries.²⁶

Bridging this gap between policy makers, soldiers, and academics falls into the category of planning for the future. This planning also requires further investment on the part of the Canadian Government for, as Dr. Ernie Regehr notes in his submission, it is important for Canada to focus on prevention rather than solely militaristic reactions:

Two inescapable realities point to the importance of increased spending on security measures beyond the focus on military capacity: increasing acknowledgement of the need to address and ameliorate the roots of armed conflict; and an almost universal acknowledgement that deeply rooted political conflicts like those now devastating Iraq and Syria and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa do not ultimately have military solutions. While there will inevitably continue to be military dimensions to confronting advanced political instability and the kind of extremism manifest in ISIS, the economic, social, and political drivers of conflict demand renewed emphasis on peacebuilding and war prevention.²⁷

Dorn would also be in agreement with Regehr as he notes that Canada should “support UN prevention missions, including preventive deployments of forces to potential conflict areas. The United Nations did that successfully in Macedonia (UNPREDEP) and could do so again in many cases.”²⁸

Another facet of Canada’s contribution to peacekeeping missions would be better and more use of our intelligence capabilities for as Dr. Dorn notes, Canada could

Offer advanced intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, especially squadrons equipped with the Coyote Reconnaissance Vehicle,

²⁶ Mérand, “Montreal Submission,” p. 1.

²⁷ Ernie Regehr, “Notes for the Yellowknife Roundtable on a New Defence Policy for Canada,” (Yellowknife, 24 May 2016), <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/perspectives.asp>. p. 2 .

²⁸ Dorn, “Back In The Game,” p. 1.

which proved so effective in the Ethiopia-Eritrea mission. Contribute to technological innovation in UN peace operations, through the UN's Partnership for Technology in Peacekeeping and by contributing experts. Contribute specialized enablers, like engineering and signals/comms units, traditional areas of excellence for Canada, well used in past operations. For mission support, Canada could offer medical units and, during an emergency, humanitarian relief personnel and units, including the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART).²⁹

Dallaire also agrees with Dr. Dorn as

stronger deployment of our intelligence capabilities abroad and a more intimate integration of its capabilities with our National Public Security organizations be initiated with the Public Security department in order to cover the full spectrum of potential threats at home and abroad and provide the CF with much broader access and knowledge of intelligence assets.³⁰

Therefore, in summary, Teiku notes:

A smart Canadian defence policy will have at least four key pillars. First, it is based on the principle of primacy of prevention. Second, it should provide the policy space for nuance interface between soft and hard Canadian defence infrastructures. Third, it creates visible global military identity that ensure healthy security environment for Canada. And finally, it sets the context for Canada to leverage existing and future international security institutions and arrangements to enhance and protect Canadians.³¹

A smart defence policy will also have to reflect Canadian values towards freedom, peace, and security, as according to Toope,

Poll after poll reveals that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is widely seen as a precious legacy, connected to our traditions of social inclusion and pluralism. These values mean that Canadians can and

²⁹ Dorn, "Back In The Game," p. 2.

³⁰ Dallaire, "Submission," p. 2.

³¹ Tiekku, "Canadian National Defence," p. 1.

should help where we can to promote the same rights and freedoms for people around the world.³²

However, Canada's spending on its military is "dead last amongst all G-7 countries, but also below obvious comparators such as Australia, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands – countries that share many values and cannot be accused of militarism."³³ One near consensus conclusion from this subset of expert contributions could be summarized this way: if the still relatively new government is serious about addressing the objectives of the Defence Review and increasing Canada's ability to affect the global security environment, it is going to have to spend more money, and wisely. There was also considerable consensus that more education (not just training) for military members, more cooperation with existing allies and partners (particularly those in the African Union), a closer dialogue between academics and DND, and more utilization of intelligence capabilities are foundational steps. These recommendations could have the potential to improve Canada's effectiveness in contributing to African security issues, which in a shrinking, globalized world, improves Canada's national security.

³² Toope, "Canadian Sovereignty," p. 2.

³³ Toope, "Canadian Sovereignty," p. 1.