



CENTRE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

DEFENCE WHITE PAPER PROJECT

STRONG, SECURED AND ENGAGED

ANALYSIS OF 2017 CANADA DEFENCE
POLICY

ADITI NAHATA

EDITED BY: AKSHATA SATLURI

DIVYASHREE JHA

About the author

Aditi Nahata was an undergraduate student at the Jindal School of International Affairs.

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Introduction

In 2017, the Canadian Department of Defense launched its ten-year defence policy called the “Strong, Secured and Engaged”.¹ The policy contains various aspects of the Canadian defence domain in a liberalistic and feministic light. The title of the document “Strong, Secured, and Engaged” stands for Canada's defence goals on three different levels.

Here, strong means remaining “strong at home”², i.e., Canada. The security of Canada and its people is of topmost priority for the government, while also allowing the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to assist on various missions on the national level, like disaster response, search and rescue operations and working with private Canadian organizations to advance the capabilities of the CAF.

Secure stands for being “Secure in North America”.³ This stands for Canada's goals on an international level. This mainly concerns US-Canada defence relations. Canada considers the United States to be the most important defence partner, which is reflected through their work on North American Aerospace Command (NORAD). The document reflects Canada’s efforts to be working on being on the same footing as the United States to prepare to defend North America as a continent from evolving threats.

Engaged stands for being “Engaged in the world”, which represents Canada's defence goals on a global level. Canada has an active and strong interest in maintaining global stability and worked towards it through various military engagements (UN peacekeeping operations, war in Afghanistan) as well as other forms of engagement (disaster response on an international level).

The defence document begins with policies that heavily focus on the members of the military as well as their families and how their lives can be improved through the various policies that are implemented for

¹ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

² The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

³ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

their betterment. This includes making vital investments in the field of healthcare and wellness for the military personnel and their families. The policy also argues for diversity and a change in the recruitment system, as the department believes that it is slow and does not represent Canada's diverse population and the department also believes that diversity allows for strengths to be drawn as well as multiple perspectives on new and rapidly evolving situations facing the country. When it comes to defence funding, the goal of the investments is to "modernize, renew and restore", while also providing personnel of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) with the equipment and necessary preparation they need to defend and protect Canada, its security and its interests. The policy report also highlights the key trends in security challenges facing Canada as well as Canada's defence relations with multilateral and international organizations, which are later elaborated on in the paper.

Alliance and Partnerships

One of the core themes of Canada's defence policy has been collective action to defeat threats. The report, states that Canada cannot be strong at home without being engaged in the world. This can be done by fostering new partnerships and renewing old alliances.⁴

United States

Canada considers the United States to be the most important defence partner.⁵ This is mainly because of shared geography and the fact that the United States and Canada share the longest undefended border in the world, and they have also been close allies in repeated military interventions overseas, beginning with the First World War.⁶ The importance of their relationship can be reflected through their work on North

⁴ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

⁵ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

⁶ Holland, Kenneth. 2014. "The Canada–United States Defence Relationship: A Partnership For The Twenty-First Century". *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 20 (3): 241-246. doi:10.1080/11926422.2014.995686.

American Aerospace Command (NORAD), which **conducts aerospace warning, aerospace control and maritime warning in the defence of North America. Additionally**, Canada and the U.S. are committed to increasing border security by working cooperatively on various actions like addressing threats early, integrating cross border law enforcement, and boosting critical infrastructure and cybersecurity.⁷ During the release of this paper, Donald Trump had been sworn in as president. Under Trump, US- Canada relations had come under strain due to diplomatic disputes across a range of issues, including a multilateral trade war, contentious free trade negotiations, US-China competition, numerous policy disagreements, and even personal attacks by the President against Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. These incidents not only deteriorated the US- Canadian relations but also underpinned North American security and defence since the 1930s.⁸

NATO and the European Union

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has been the central pillar of the Euro-Atlantic defence and remains a vital aspect of Canadian national security. Canada and NATO have a mutually beneficial relationship: ever since NATO was founded in 1949. An example of this is the Russian aggression on Ukraine in 2014 and NATO's response, with NATO adopting a series of assurance and deterrence measures meant to reinforce NATO's principle of collective defence, and Canada immediately responding by contributing army, navy and air force assets and personnel through Operation REASSURANCE.⁹ In addition to that, NATO also has a presence in the Arctic Region, Operations like these highlight the importance of Canada-NATO relations, not only for European Security but also for Canadian national security.

⁷ "Canada-United States Relations". 2022. *GAC*. Accessed May 4. <https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/us-eu/relations.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁸ Greaves, Wilfrid. 2020. "Democracy, Donald Trump And The Canada-US Security Community". *Canadian Journal Of Political Science* 53 (4): 800-820. doi:10.1017/s0008423920000542.

⁹ House of Commons, Canada. 2018. "CANADA AND NATO: AN ALLIANCE FORGED IN STRENGTH AND RELIABILITY."

United Nations

The United Nations has a critical role to play in shaping the rules-based international order and makes important contributions to global stability, conflict prevention and the protection of civilians.¹⁰ Canada is one of the founding nations of the United Nations. Since its inception, Canada has contributed to the UN peacekeeping operations, not only on a military level but also on a tactical and logistical level. When it comes to its commitment to the United Nations, Canada focuses on four main elements: strengthening Canadian support for different aspects of conflict resolution like prevention and mediation; advancing the role of women and youth in UN peacekeeping operations and supporting United Nations reform efforts to make peace operations more effective.¹¹ Canada plans to enforce these elements through the support of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence through various actions like training foreign militaries to be prepared for UN peacekeeping operations.

Five Eyes Network

The Five Eyes Network is an alliance that consists of Canada, New Zealand, The United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, with the main goal of intelligence sharing. Canada has greatly benefitted from this alliance as it provides a larger platform for Canadian policymakers and decision-makers to understand the global security environment and make decisions in the interest of Canada accordingly. And with the Department of National Defence heavily focusing on the role of information and intelligence dissemination under its plan for implementation of the defence policy called “Anticipate, Adapt and Act”.¹² Under this policy, the DND believes that intelligence is Canada’s first line of defence, and therefore it is vital to rebuild and renew alliances like this, in part, to receive timely and accurate information which is relevant to the success of the operations conducted by the Canadian Armed Forces, domestically and internationally.

¹⁰ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

¹¹ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

¹² The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

New Developments in the Canadian Armed Forces

The Canadian Armed Forces consist of three branches: The Royal Canadian Navy, The Royal Canadian Air Force, and the Canadian Army.

Royal Canadian Navy (RCN)- Canada has the world's longest coastline (151109 miles), which makes it vulnerable to various threats in the maritime domain and this is where the Royal Canadian Navy comes in. The goal of the RCN is to respond to a large range of maritime challenges, this includes the protection of the Arctic region. As mentioned in the report, RCN acquired fifteen Canadian Surface Combatants Ships under Canada's shipbuilding strategy.¹³ The Canadian Surface Combatants Ship is a modern combat ship that is equipped with next-generation technology, with the main goal to allow RCN personnel to assist in international military operations,¹⁴ that ranges from humanitarian assistance to various conflicts like the one previously mentioned (2014 Russian aggression on Ukraine).

The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)- The goal of the RCAF is to defend and protect Canadian and North American airspace from any imminent threats, in partnership with the United States. However, RCAF also plans on taking an increasing role in its defence space program, by making contributions in the domain of continental defence and renewing its capabilities to detect, deter and defend against threats on a continental level, as well as to NATO and UN peacekeeping missions.¹⁵ The RCAF acquired 88 advanced fighter jets and CP-140 Auroras to meet the requirements of NORAD. The CP-140 Auroras are long-range maritime patrol aircraft (LRPA) used in the Canadian Armed Forces for antisubmarine warfare (ASW) and

¹³ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

¹⁴ "Canadian Surface Combatant". 2022. *Lockheed Martin*. Accessed May 4. <https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-ca/csc.html>.

¹⁵ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

maritime surveillance. This weapons system can also play a vital role in search and rescue operations by allowing for the use of air-droppable survival pods.¹⁶

Security Challenges facing Canada

On a domestic level, one of the most pressing challenges faced by Canada is the security of the Arctic Region. The Arctic Region, mainly the Canadian Arctic, covers 40% of Canada's territory and is home to more than 200,000 inhabitants, more than half of whom are Indigenous. Therefore, many of the functions performed by the CAF and DND are based around the Arctic. Other than the Canadian population, the Arctic region is also home to various natural resources and could be soon used for commercial purposes like tourism, by other Arctic states like the United States, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Iceland means growing problems when it comes to its security, which could aggravate problems within the Arctic like climate change.

Section 83.01 of the Canadian *Criminal Code* defines terrorism can be defined as an act committed "in whole or in part for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause" with the intention of intimidating the public with regard to its security, including its economic security, or compelling a person, a government or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act."¹⁷ In the last 20 years, Canada has faced nearly 20 terrorist attacks, with terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and Daesha making Canada one of its targets.¹⁸ This can be directly tied to cyber capabilities. The Cyber domain has increasing evolved, with terrorist organizations using the internet for various functions like recruitment of suicide bombers, fundraising for attacks and propaganda-based functions like promoting violence online.¹⁹

¹⁶ "CP-140 Aurora Maritime Surveillance Aircraft". 2022. *Airforce Technology*. Accessed May 4. <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/cp-140-aurora-maritime-surveillance-aircraft/>.

¹⁷ "Definitions Of Terrorism And The Canadian Context - Memorializing The Victims Of Terrorism". 2022. *Justice.Gc.Ca*. Accessed May 4. https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/tr09_6/p3.html.

¹⁸ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

¹⁹ The Department of National Defense, Canada. 2017. "Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defense Policy."

Conclusion

The 21st century has witnessed major events that shape the nature of the global security environment and with the world rapidly evolving, it is important to recognize the challenges that Canada will face, on a domestic as well as international level. Through this policy, the Canadian Department of Defense has not only recognized the problems but also made plans for effective implementation of the policy within the government.