

Design **over** Default:

| Inclusive Global Leadership Backed by | Focused Defence Capabilities

Executive summary of the
Network for Strategic Analysis' recommendations:

- We recommend increasing the level of transparency about DND activities through better information sharing, improvements in communication capabilities and digital agility. As the military's legitimacy rests on the public's trust, transparency is key to justifying defence policy priorities and future investments in the CAF.
- We recommend implementing cyclical defence policy reviews modeled on the consultation process refined through the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. These five-year reviews would contribute to more dynamic interactions between DND and Canadians.
- We recommend implementing a framework that distinctly outlines the authority and roles of relevant civilian and military institutions for domestic operations. In addition to providing a straightforward delineation of what activities do and do not fall under the purview of domestic operations, this framework would also contribute to rethinking the relationship between the regular forces and the reserves.
- This report identifies North American defence as a pillar of transatlantic security, and views NORAD and NATO as the most important area of focus for DND/CAF. We recommend that in other regions, Canada pursue efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people in conflict-affected areas, but that these efforts be primarily focused on providing international assistance, and maintaining a solid diplomatic presence in the region, rather than a military presence.
- To cope with unpredictability in the United States, we recommend that an interagency task force, which includes DND, work with external stakeholders to understand the scope and scale of mis- and disinformation operations that pose potential threats to Canadian missions and their respective objectives, Canadians at home and abroad, Canadian elections, and other critical information infrastructure.

Introduction

The Network for Strategic Analysis (NSA), in the context of the defence policy update, organized a series of consultations with its researchers to propose some straightforward recommendations to the Department of National Defence (DND), recognizing that the year 2022 is a watershed moment in international politics. Over the past two years, NSA experts have lamented the fact that Canada lacks a clear articulation of its strategic priorities. They have criticized Canadian foreign and defence policy for being preachy, self-satisfied, and not backed up by appropriate capabilities to meet the security challenges of the next decade and beyond. Concurrently, the global pandemic, which started in 2020, and a renewed sexual misconduct crisis in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in 2021, impacted the state of national defence. In 2022, great power competition intensified dramatically with the return of conventional war in continental Europe following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24. China's increasingly aggressive behaviour in East Asia and greater alignment with Russia are further eroding the liberal international order that forms the basis of Western security and prosperity. With the compounding impact of these events, Canada can no longer afford to be complacent. Followership, the idea that Canada can adopt a wait-and-see approach and then adjust its posture based on what its key partners are doing, is not feasible either, especially in a context where its closest ally, the United States, is encountering domestic political turmoil. This report is the culmination of the NSA's consultations in Montreal, Ottawa, and Calgary, and, while it is not meant to be comprehensive, it offers clear guidance on how Canada should renew its strategic priorities¹.

A clearer articulation of Canadian military commitments can inform a better allocation of resources and support government in communicating why and where defence investments are needed.

I. Where to start: greater collaboration, inclusivity and transparency for both foreign and defence policy.

Canada should 1) establish closer consultation and collaboration between GAC and DND 2) enhance inclusivity and transparency in both defence and foreign policy to foster greater trust in Canadian institutions and 3) invest in consultative processes aimed at deepening Canadians' understanding of policies to enhance their legitimacy, while decreasing the threat of disinformation

The fact that Canada revised its defence policy in 2017 without undergoing a simultaneous review of its foreign policy was a lost opportunity. In 2022, as DND conducts its defence policy update, a review of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is also underway, and the release of an Indo-Pacific Policy is said to be imminent. While we believe there should be closer dialogue between the two departments, along with coordination and integration of policy reflection processes emerging from DND and GAC, it is encouraging that those reviews are happening simultaneously. To date, the one overarching theme that is meant to provide coherence to Canada's international policy is its feminist orientation. With the adoption of a feminist foreign policy, the Trudeau government decided that gender equality considerations would be at the centre of its domestic and international programs. Yet a gap still exists between the rhetoric and practice. Still, there have been uneven efforts on this front when comparing Canada's defence, diplomatic and development priorities, as highlighted in one [NSA Research Report](#).

A foreign and defence policy that is inclusive in terms of gender equality, bilingualism, and engagement with every segment of the Canadian population should be prioritized. An inclusive foreign and defence

1. Special thanks to the Canadian Network on Information and Security (CANIS), le Centre d'études et de recherches internationales de l'Université de Montréal (Cérium), as well as the University of Ottawa's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.

policy would enhance transparency and foster greater coherence and efficiency. Indeed, the process of policymaking is as important as its substance. From providing access to completed investigations to being forthright about information operations, DND must be transparent about its work. The military's legitimacy rests on the public's trust, and transparency will be key to justifying defence priorities and future investments in the CAF, especially. This point on transparency and information disclosure was raised by former Supreme Court Justice Louise Arbour in her [Independent External Comprehensive Review](#) in the context of the CAF's sexual misconduct crisis, but it certainly applies more broadly in terms of DND/CAF practices. Better information sharing goes hand in hand with the important overarching goal of improving the communication capabilities and digital agility of the entire foreign and defence policy establishment.

Increasing Canadians' awareness of what is being done in defence is necessary to improve public trust in institutions like the military. The Canadian population is an important stakeholder in the realization of foreign and defence policy goals, from early consultation efforts to the execution of specific objectives. For example, as our elections are targeted by foreign interference, amplified by online disinformation networks, the preparedness and resilience of Canadians are required to counter such threats. It is therefore time to rethink this fundamental relationship with the Canadian population for more dynamic interactions between DND and domestic publics. A minimum requirement to set this in place, in our view, are cyclical defense policy reviews. We propose to model these five-year reviews on the consultation process refined through the [National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](#). This consultative model is already cyclical, is designed to consult widely by engaging with different segments of Canadian society (other government agencies, civil society, indigenous communities, academics, etc.), and produces actionable and measurable policies and objectives. Tailoring this model for defence policy is feasible.

II. Strategic priorities: domestic operations and transatlantic security

Canada's defence policy should prioritize domestic operations and continue to invest in NORAD and NATO. In the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East, Canada should expand its diplomatic footprint, economic partnerships and humanitarian assistance. Canada should also create an interagency task force, to include DND, which would work with external stakeholders to understand the scope and scale of mis- and disinformation operations that pose potential threats to Canadian missions and their respective objectives, as well as to Canadians at home and abroad.

Achieving an inclusive model of global leadership would enable Canada to optimally respond and adapt to great power competition and regional instability. The two logics work hand in hand: countries that fail their people also fail to achieve sustainable security outcomes, and this trend holds across regions. Canada's meaningful impact will necessitate narrowing the scope of its military action.

To date, Canadian foreign and defence policy has been risk-averse and Ottawa has often needed to hedge its bets in an increasingly tumultuous global environment. The lesson from the 2020-22 period, from the pandemic to Russia's large-scale war in Ukraine, is that too much hesitancy can leave a country unprepared for that moment when national interests trump principles of international cooperation. Greater trust between China and the United States would have helped facilitate a global pandemic response, but Canada was in no position to influence that bilateral relationship. Whether supply chains are disrupted by viruses or wars, Canada must now be more explicit in choosing its partners, which necessarily entails some costly adaptation in the short term, prioritizing the reliability of such partnerships over affordability. This is a different logic of international engagement, one which has traditionally been more obvious in the world of defence, compared to trade. Deeper engagement with trusted partners and allies is needed to preserve the West's freedom of action.

In this context, Canada's defence policy should prioritize domestic operations, North American continental defence (with a strong Arctic focus), as well as transatlantic security. Strategic engagement

in other regions should be primarily pursued through a strong diplomatic presence and international assistance. Special attention must also be given to political developments happening south of the border.

Domestic operations: prioritizing design over default

The CAF should build on the lessons of the pandemic, and its continued involvement in natural disaster response, to strengthen its capacity for domestic operations. A likely uptick in national emergencies entails more demands on the CAF to help. There is a need for a clear framework that distinctly outlines the division of tasks, authority, and roles of relevant civilian and military institutions for domestic operations. The framework should provide a straightforward delineation of what activities fall under the purview of domestic operations so that this expansion of domestic operations happens by design rather than default. In discussing security threats that Canada faces during our consultations, we noted several activities related to domestic operations: deploying forces for search and rescue missions, including transport aviation for evacuation; engaging in detection and monitoring functions across all domains; and serving local communities that lack capacity to deal with natural disasters, pandemics, and other emergencies. On this last point, however, it must be recognized that the CAF cannot do it all; it is in no one's interest for the CAF to be used as a replacement for proper investments in the capacity of health care systems, for example. One of the purposes of the clear framework that we recommend is to clearly limit the circumstances in which governments should call upon the CAF.

This recommendation also offers an opportunity to rethink the relationship between the regular forces and the reserves, understanding that reservists are best suited to respond to emergencies within their own communities. And in so doing, domestic operations increase the proximity and visibility of servicemembers in the lives of Canadians, improving the connection between the military and society in the process. Indeed, public support for domestic operations is high and this has implications for how the armed forces are perceived and their overall legitimacy. It is time for DND to acknowledge that domestic operations are here to stay and that CAF members need to be better prepared for them. The CAF, in turn, stands to benefit from this opportunity in terms of regaining the trust of Canadians.

North American defence as a pillar of transatlantic security

Western unity in the face of Ukraine's invasion is an important illustration of how long-term investments in allied cooperation can be quickly mobilized in times of crisis. Canada's investments in transatlantic security, from its command role in leading NATO battlegroups to its training efforts in Ukraine, have had a tangible impact. We recommend that Canada strengthen its diplomatic activism and participation in NATO, which is bolstering its deterrence and defence efforts to protect its member states, in Europe, in the Arctic, and at sea.

The [recent announcement](#) of an additional \$8 billion in defence spending over the next five years and \$40 billion for NORAD modernization over the next two decades add to the promised increases under Strong, Secure, Engaged. Yet it remains unlikely that Canada will meet its 2% NATO defence pledge by the stated deadline of 2024. While the invasion of Ukraine and an increased NATO presence in Eastern Europe might lead to further defence budget increases, this shortfall is symptomatic of a long trend of military budget obsolescence. The CAF lacks the equipment to carry out its mandate, as illustrated by its incapacity to provide Ukraine with the weapons it needs to resist Russia's latest land grab. Canada's lagging defence budgets also contribute to a deepening technological gap with allies and foes alike. The defence policy update, in better defining Canada's strategic priorities, should lead to more targeted reinvestments to achieve clearly defined objectives that serve Canadian national interests. This also implies a procurement strategy focused on near-term needs, which should be re-evaluated as part of the five-year defence policy review, as previously suggested.

We believe it is important to stay the course on projected defence budget increases to reduce technological gaps, and to facilitate DND/CAF's active participation in NORAD modernization and NATO enhanced deterrence efforts. While continued involvement and investment in NORAD and NATO are relatively straightforward, disengagement in other areas is thornier to navigate, but essential to keep a focus on Canadian priorities and to maximize the impact of limited defence capabilities.

Indo-Pacific engagement: Expanding diplomatic footprint and economic partnerships

With the gradual disengagement from the Middle East, the United States has made effective the possibility of actualizing its pivot to Asia as a cornerstone of its new foreign policy. As its most important ally shifts its attention from one region to the next based on short or long term priorities, Canada should not attempt to follow suit in the military sphere. While Canada seeks to be involved in the Indo-Pacific, a lack of ambition and strategic lag have resulted in an ambivalent stance that is irrelevant to both its traditional allies and potential partners in Asia. To become a more credible player in Asia, Canada must end the fragmentation of its diplomatic efforts by prioritizing certain platforms of regional engagement to forge a new network of partnerships, but this will not require an increased military presence. Instead, Canada must adapt its tools and methods in a way that is distinct but complementary from the American strategy. Expanding its diplomatic footprint and economic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific will contribute to a better understanding of the actors in the region, the coherence of Canada's engagement in the region, and the preservation of its interest in maintaining the international status quo in East Asia. For now, Canada can neither be a credible mediator in the Beijing-Washington rivalry nor a serious military player in the Indo-Pacific region. Though limited, a Canadian military role can still be entertained for disaster assistance, participation in joint military exercises, and more importantly, by developing industrial and military capabilities that may be redirected to threatened partners in the region in case of war. Canada should explicitly support Taiwan's right of self-determination, the freedom of strategic sea lines of communication, and foster regional cooperation to enhance these objectives.

Middle East: prioritizing diplomatic presence in the region and international assistance

In parallel, the trend toward military disengagement from the Middle East must continue. The Canadian military footprint in Iraq has been steadily shrinking in recent years, from a CAF presence of 800 down to 300. However, the Minister of Defence has announced an extension of Operation Impact in the Middle East, which creates some ambiguity over what Canada's short-term objectives are in the region. Many experts believe that the Islamic State and terrorist metastases are no longer a primary threat and that renewing the mission was not a priority, while others argue that the growing influence of Iran legitimizes such a decision. We argue that Canada's role in the Middle East cannot go beyond the fairly limited parameters established by NATO, through the NATO Mission in Iraq. Beyond this focus on training, advising and capacity building in Iraq (with complementary activities in Jordan and Lebanon), we see no need to sustain military involvement at a time when its allies are withdrawing. Our recommendation, therefore, is that Canada double down on efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people in conflict-affected areas, but that these efforts be primarily focused on maintaining a solid diplomatic presence in the region and providing international assistance rather than a military presence.

Africa: focusing on niches and targeted countries

Similarly, it is high time for Canada to stop pretending it is or wants to be a major peacekeeper in Africa. Canada has disengaged from UN peace operations from one government to another since the late 1990s, reflecting a deep aversion towards a considerable troop presence in Africa. Instead of surfing on a myth, Canada should prioritize the provision of niche assets to peace operations, such as transport and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, as these must be enhanced for the Arctic and European theaters anyway. When engaging in Africa, Canada should focus its energy on the diplomatic, trade, and humanitarian fronts towards a limited set of countries that are key to Canada's future, whether for economic, immigration, or strategic reasons. Militarily, Canada's role should be niched, multilateral and aimed at countering the rising influence of Russia and China.

To sum up, instead of boosting defence engagement in the Middle East or Asia, based on America's short-term preferences, Canada must think for itself and focus where it must. The above considerations are especially relevant given the political will to increase Canadian defence capabilities in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. There is a window of opportunity to clearly articulate Canada's priorities and justify why bridging the gap in Canadian defence capabilities is essential

Coping with unpredictability in the US: increasing strategic independence while developing offensive capabilities in the cyber and information domains

The election of Donald Trump in 2016 was an unwelcome foreign policy distraction for Canada. Not only did it disrupt the ideological amity between Washington and Ottawa, but it imposed time-consuming negotiations around North American free trade. Biden's presidency offers only temporary reprieve as Trump Republicans continue to hold sway with the American public, leading to a worrying scenario for the 2024 election, from a Canadian perspective. The Capitol riots on January 6 of 2021 have demonstrated the extent to which far-right extremism is edging closer and closer to the mainstream. A second term for Trump, or a like-minded disrupter, would force Ottawa to revisit its relationship with the US, certainly in terms of intelligence sharing and continental defence. This could have a considerable impact on our foreign and defence policy.

By refusing to take a wait-and-see attitude, different strategic orientations can be developed in relation to the next American administration. Depending on which scenario prevails (a Trump-leaning White House and Congress, vs. a more stable political configuration), the Canadian government will have to consider the question of increasing its strategic independence from the United States. While leaving the American sphere of influence seems unrealistic because of Canada's geographic reality and economic dependence to bilateral trade, the contours of the special relationship with Washington need to be re-evaluated in the realm of security. American political instability, disinformation and populism represent very serious risks to Canada's economy and security. The trucker convoy illustrates the extent to which Canadian actors can be influenced and financed by transnational extremist networks. It is therefore essential to develop the appropriate means to counter these networks that pose a risk to democratic institutions.

As a domestic priority, with obvious implications for foreign and defence policy, Canada must recalibrate its posture to be a dominant player in the information and cyber domains. Prevention and resilience must therefore be anchored in a whole-of-Canada logic, from national institutions, down to the community level. Right now, disinformation and daily incursions into the information space orchestrated by opposing powers undermine trust in public institutions. Alongside its allies, it will be essential for Canada to increase offensive capabilities in the cyber and information domains to address the growing influence of China and Russia in this new unconventional conflict space. At the same time, and as mentioned above, American disinformation is the more present and acute challenge for Canadian audiences.

We recommend that an interagency task force, which includes DND, be tasked with engaging external stakeholders to understand the scope and scale of mis- and disinformation operations that pose potential threats to Canadian missions and their respective objectives, Canadian individuals at home and abroad, Canadian elections, and other critical information infrastructure. Subsequent actions to mitigate identified risks and build resilience will be required and should be based on what this taskforce learns by monitoring threats, whole-of-government information sharing and early experiences with this taskforce in terms of policy coordination. At the same time, caution and transparency are advised in this space. In the United States, the recent rollout of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Disinformation Governance Board was [met](#) with fierce criticism and skepticism, partially due to the lack of transparency from DHS about the board.

DND must be transparent about this work from the beginning, making absolutely clear the parameters of any group working on disinformation and commit to releasing quarterly public reports about such work. Yet DND should be a player in interagency efforts to identify disinformation campaigns that target Canadian institutions and threaten Canadian national security and to develop best practices for government agencies handling disinformation. It should also take on a proactive role in considering CAF members' potential to be targeted by disinformation operations. For example, regular force members and reservists should be required to undergo military training to keep the force up to date on the latest threats, strategies, and tactics in the information domain. Moreover, there should be a Canadian Forces Information Operations Manual that outlines a professional code of ethics and clear rules of engagement for field operators working on information campaigns. It is recommended that

Canadian forces not replicate the tactics of authoritarian regimes, meaning Canadian information operations should work to inform and not create false stories perpetuated by troll farms. Such a manual should also apply to civilian contractors working for DND on information operations. Moreover, for the CAF to best defend the information domain specifically, there should be an effort to articulate the cyber dimension of Canada's foreign policy that defines Canadian interests and values in cyberspace.

Conclusion

It seems commonsensical to emphasize the need to clearly identify priorities for Canadian defence, at home and abroad, but it bears repeating as the alternative leads to dispersion of effort and investment. This is especially costly in the realm of defence where platforms are vulnerable to escalating costs, due to political dithering and procurement inefficiencies. The bottom line is that Canada should increase its defence contributions to NATO and NORAD, while boosting its diplomatic and international assistance efforts in other regions where Canada can, at best, hope to be a peripheral but welcome player. Canada must also be alert to the growing instability in the United States and be prepared to distance itself from Washington if necessary.

What we have proposed in this report are some avenues by which Canada could clarify its strategic positions. This approach entails hard choices as Canada cannot hope to do it all. Decisionmakers can be deliberate in articulating those choices moving forward to make foreign and defence policy more accessible, transparent and inclusive. We think 2022 is an ideal time to tend to the political disconnect between policymakers and the public on foreign and defence policy. With the DND MINDS program as an anchor point, we recognize the broader security and defence policy community has a role to play in this exercise too, which is why we launched the consultations and this report.

We are aware that this report was written in the context of a fairly narrow defence policy review. Still, we sincerely believe that Canada now requires a mandated periodic defence review, to be held every five years. This will lead to regular updates on the threats Canada is facing, which will provide DND/CAF with strategic clarity while fostering greater public understanding of the resources required to defend the country and its interests abroad. The complexity and opacity of foreign and defence policy make it inaccessible to Canadians, who are going to be more focused on bread-and-butter issues. The war in Ukraine, alongside the food and energy crises it triggered, serve as important reminders that foreign and defence policy can affect Canadians directly, even if they benefit from a relatively secure position in North America.