

## WHITE PAPER BLUES

Although meaningful debate on Canadian security and defence policy continues to be handicapped by an appalling dearth of up-to-date books — publishing houses, please take note — this quintessentially Canadian condition has been partially offset by a deluge of reports, both pre- and post-11 September 2001, from Parliamentary committees, non-governmental organizations, and other relevant actors. A partial tally includes *To Secure a Nation: The Case for a New Defence White Paper* (Council for Canadian Security in the 21st Century), *Caught in the Middle: An Assessment of the Operational Readiness of the Canadian Forces* (Conference of Defence Associations Institute), *A Wake-Up Call for Canada: The Need for a New Military* (Royal Canadian Military Institute), and multiple offerings from the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (e.g., *State of Readiness of the Canadian Forces: Response to the Terrorist Threat*).

Defence also figured prominently in the December 2001 Report of the Auditor General of Canada (which contained a particularly troubling chapter on the management and maintenance of in-service equipment), and in *Securing our Future*, a November 2001 report from the Standing Committee on Finance.

Given the rather battered state of the Canadian Forces these reports do not make for pleasant reading. However, some intriguing differences are apparent in their approaches to rescuing, or replacing, the 1994 White Paper on defence. The CDAI study, for example, urged Ottawa to “provide the funds necessary to implement the policy” outlined in the 1994 White Paper. In a carefully nuanced, but somewhat similar vein, the Standing Committee on Finance urged a “review of the 1994 Defence White Paper to determine its continued relevance, an acceleration of the replacement of out-of-date equipment, and additional funds to DND.” A more aggressive stance was adopted by SCNDVA’s November 2001 report on operational readiness. It acknowledged that “many of the underlying assumptions” of the 1994 document remained valid, but stressed the altered “international situation” and urged Ottawa to “immediately initiate a major review of our foreign and defence policies.” The committee recommended a broad-based review incorporating both public and Parliamentary participation, and warned that “this is not the time for ‘in-house’ reviews.”

The case for a comprehensive review of Canadian security and defence policy — and a new White Paper — was most passionately articulated by *To Secure a Nation*. Prepared by the University of Calgary’s Centre for Military and Strategic Studies on behalf of the Council for Canadian Security in the 21st Century, the report argues that global and domestic developments since 1994 have rendered the existing White Paper “increasingly irrelevant in its specifics, even if argument can be sustained that its overall strategic view remains valid.” In the Council’s view, there are sufficient “holes” in the current White Paper (i.e., “significant fresh issues not discussed and new questions not answered” and “highly

important, long-standing matters such as force structure and the structure of National Defence Headquarters” that were “ignored” by the 1994 document) to warrant a thoroughgoing review. The Council added that it was “somewhat incredulous of recent statements by senior military leaders that the Canadian Forces are more combat capable today than they were a decade ago.”

Failure to conduct such a review, warned the Council, would have “profound implications” for Canada, including a loss of control (and sovereignty) over our own foreign and security policy agenda and priorities; a diminishing capacity to maintain flexibility with respect to our policy options; a loss of status and respect within the international community; a crisis of marginalization within NATO and NORAD as the EU looks inward for security and the US develops a ballistic missile defence; and a diminishing capacity to afford and sustain the military and alliance commitments that will be thrust upon us in the future.

A comprehensive review of Canadian security and defence policy — and, concurrently, of Canadian foreign policy — has, of course, been a disquieting prospect for a number of years. The palpable fear in some military and defence academic circles, particularly during the (sometimes misinterpreted?) soft power and human security heyday of the Axworthy era, was that a comprehensive review could lead to a white paper on defence that jettisoned the “multi-purpose, combat-capable” mantra of its 1994 predecessor in favour of an unabashedly “constabulary” defence establishment. From this perspective, an aging and chronically underfunded — but at least combat-capable-espousing — 1994 White Paper appeared infinitely preferable to a review process which might bring forth a defence policy and a force structure more akin to New Zealand’s essentially constabulary 2001 defence statement, than to Australia’s decidedly unconstabulary 2000 Defence White Paper.

A key question for Canada is whether the events of 11 September 2001 have effectively foreclosed the constabulary option — thus making a comprehensive review something to be welcomed rather than feared — or merely rearranged the degree or type of risk. Even if there is no longer the risk of a 1994-style constabulary, is there now a risk that a post-review Canadian Forces could be so oriented to homeland defence that credible expeditionary capabilities (e.g., those required for peace support operations) would be foregone? Do we really wish to foreclose the expeditionary option? To confuse the issue still further, some homeland defence models could justify significant combat-capable forces, but other homeland defence models — on the lower end of the homeland defence food chain — could look uncomfortably constabulary in nature. The intensely frustrating frugality of the 10 December 2001 budget on issues relating to military modernization and renewal makes a comprehensive review even more necessary. Even the Minister now seems to agree.

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