

# Principles of Peacetime Survival

By P. Richard Moller

When a country is at war the purpose of its defence forces is generally self evident to the civilian population. During times of peace, especially if the country is lucky enough to have protracted periods of peace, the role of defence forces becomes less evident to those who are not directly involved in defence matters. Of all the federal government departments National Defence is the only just-in-case department. That is, the Department of National Defence exists just in case there appears a substantial threat to our sovereignty or vital national interests.

Democracies as a whole have a tendency to put short-term achievements ahead of long-term accomplishments or planning. This strategy provides difficulties for organizations that generally exist for the long-term benefit of the country. Some argue that there are ongoing threats to Canadian sovereignty and vital national interests, and they may be correct, but until the Canadian public in general recognise these threats, in their minds the Department of National Defence remains a just-in-case department. It should come as no surprise that the immediate needs and desires of the Canadian public therefore take priority in spending over possible future needs. To start having an effect on Canadian's thinking about defence and security issues the CF, the Department of National Defence and defence lobby groups must craft a new strategy.

## What Do Canadians Think Of the Department of National Defence (DND)

There have been three general and positive trends in public opinion about defence over the last five years. First, there has been a consistently high level of support for the members of the Canadian Forces (CF). Second, there has been a growing concern about emerging threats to Canada and global security in general since the events of 11 September 2001. Third, a growing interest in Canadian defence capabilities.[1] Prima facie things appear positive, but a closer analysis reveals some emerging problems.

Ninety-four percent of Canadians believe the CF is an important national institution. Ninety-three percent believe it is important that Canada maintain a modern military force — an increase of twelve percentage points since 1998. Ninety-two percent have a positive impression of the people who serve in the CF.[2] The numbers, however, don't look so rosy when one asks about the CF as an organization, rather than the people who serve in it. Only 58% of Canadians have a favourable or better impression of the CF as an organization [3] this number declined to 53% the following year.[4]

Canadians are concerned about the future of their defence capabilities. Ninety-one percent believe the CF will be asked to do more over the next decade—fifty percent believe they will be

asked to do *much* more—an increase of 21 points since 1998. Eighty percent do not believe that the CF has the equipment it needs to carry out either domestic or international operations. Sixty-seven percent think the most critical issues facing the CF are lack of funding, equipment and personnel. While these feelings bode well for future budget increases, they are hardly the image an organization wants when trying to attract new employees as an employer of choice.

With respect to budget there is some good news. Eighty-three percent of Canadians believe the defence budget should be increased over the next decade, and that number is on the rise. The problem is 53% said don't take it from immigration, the same number said don't take it from social programs, 55% said don't take it from agriculture, 59% said don't take it from environmental protection, and a probably not surprising 89% said don't take it from health care. In fact, there was only one area where a majority of Canadians were willing to cut in order to increase defence spending. Fifty-one percent said the government could take the money from multiculturalism. [5] An independent poll taken by the Centre for Research and Information on Canada indicated that only 29% of Canadians listed spending more money on the military as a high priority for the government—down from 30% the previous year. [6] Why this cognitive dissonance? The answer may lie in the impression Canadians have about how their defence force, and hence their money, is being managed.

Only 41% of Canadians believe that the DND is managing its current budget wisely. Unfortunately, only 49% believe the DND is changing for the better, and the trend is declining—the number is down eight points from the year before. The only positive news is that 58% of Canadians believe the CF is changing for the better, but this number too is in decline—down six points from the previous year. [7] Lets now look at Canadians' views of the security environment.

Seventy-four percent of Canadians think the world is less safe now than it was a decade ago—an increase of 14 percentage points since 1998. The top three security issues for Canadians are: terrorism (71% express significant concern, an increase of 20 points since 2000); the spread of biological and chemical weapons (68%); and the spread of nuclear weapons (65%). [8] The problem for the CF and the Department of National Defence (DND) is that they don't play a leading role—at least in the minds of Canadians—in Canada's response to the spread of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, and share responsibility for responding to the terrorist threat with several other departments, and indeed levels of government. This disconnect is even more obvious when one compares Canadians security concerns with what they think the CF should be doing. Canadians think that the top three priorities for the CF should be defending the country (39%), providing humanitarian aid in response to domestic emergencies (18%), and peacekeeping (16%). [9] While there is some parallel that can be drawn between the terrorist threat and the defence of the country, there is little connection between what their security concerns are, and what they think the CF should be doing.

The divergence between security issues and the role of the CF and the DND is troublesome when one is considering the long-term viability of Canada's defence forces. Indeed the DND public affairs team recognized this when in their 2003-2004 Annual Report they stated that their overriding communications goal was, "to improve understanding of the new security environment by raising public awareness of the vital role the CF plays in the protection of

Canadians both at home and abroad. [10] Objective measures seem to indicate suboptimal performance towards achieving this goal. What was the response from the public affairs team? In their annual report they stated that, “the accomplishments of the past year were outstanding.” [11] The question remains then what was the strategy used to achieve this goal, and how should it be changed?

According to the 2003 – 2004 Strategic Communications Plan six messages were used to accomplish their communications goals:

- National Defence is as important today as ever.
- The world, however, is changing, and Canada is facing significant defence and security challenges.
- Defence is in a strong position to move forward, to address the challenges we face.
- We must accelerate our efforts to modernize and transform Canada’s defence and security capabilities.
- Transformation will take time and will require tough choices.
- We continue to emphasize our people, because motivated committed and skilled people are essential to operational effectiveness.

These messages hardly seem designed to capture Canadians attention, let alone imagination, and the DND’s own polling indicates that this is true. People don’t buy a product or service simply because they know about it. They buy because they think it will solve a problem for them, no matter how artificial that problem may be. With all the real problems facing Canada and the world today it should not be difficult to convince Canadians that they should be paying for defence forces. It was not that long ago that government and industry looked to defence forces for leadership. Today less than half of Canadians think the department is being run well. It is becoming obvious to even the casual observer that a new strategy is required.

In the Assistant Deputy Minister (Public Affairs’) (ADM (PA)) Annual Report there was an inclination that there was a desire to change. The ADM (PA) stated the section would try to improve the way it did business, “by enhancing our relationships, encouraging professional development and training, and listening to our internal and external audiences.” [12] It would be unfair to lay the blame for the department’s poor performance in the public forum solely on the shoulders of ADM (PA). While they are responsible for shaping the public face of defence, it is other leaders in the department and CF who must lead and manage in such a way that Canadians have confidence in them. So the question is, “how should the DND and the CF plot their strategy for the future?”

Over the generations, military officers have developed theories about what is required to successfully prosecute war. These theories have become known as the principles of war. *The Art of War* was “the first known attempt to formulate a rational basis for the planning and conduct of military operations.” [13] Since that time, many others have either refined his work or independently developed their own concepts. Today, the principles of war have become standard fare at staff colleges around the globe. Different countries award importance to different numbers and different aspects of principles; however, there is some overlap among almost all of them. What is common among countries is a feeling that there is a requirement for an aide mémoire for

planning to fight a campaign or battle. Canada has chosen eleven principles of war. In this respect we tie with China for the most principles. Canada's principles are: Selection and Maintenance of the Aim, Offensive Action, Concentration of Force, Economy of Force, Flexibility, Cooperation, Security, Surprise, Economy of Effort, Maintenance of Morale, and Administration.

In plotting operational strategies the defence community generally turns to guidance provided by the Principles of War, but there are few guiding principles for peacetime militaries that can act in a corollary capacity. This paper proposes four *Principles of Peacetime Survival* that can be used when planning strategies to support the defence structure during periods of extended peace when its role is not self evident to many civilians. The principles are: Compelling Vision, Problem Definition, Education, and Agility.

## The Principles of Peacetime Survival

### Compelling Vision

An optimist is a person who sees only the light in the picture, whereas a pessimist sees only the shadows. An idealist, however, is one who sees the light and the shadows, but in addition sees something else: the possibilities of changing the picture, of making the light prevail over the shadows.

Felix Adler

The culture of an organization or a country is determined by the context people create for it. A compelling vision of the future is what creates that context. Without a compelling vision, organizations, and individual's interactions with each other, and the world will be disjointed rather than interconnected. The choices made by each individual can turn interconnectedness into a force that can move the world. Change can be created in the larger system through individuals operating in their own spheres of influence—whether it's inside companies, inside communities, or inside industries, but only if they share a common vision.

Most organizations have a mission statement, or a vision statement, or both. They are usually carefully crafted by committee and make declarations that proclaim things like, "We will be the market leader," or "We will create a superior return for stakeholders," or some such uninspiring corporate-speak that means little or nothing to anyone in the real world. As an example, in *Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020* the defence vision is defined as follows:

The Defence Team will generate, employ and sustain high-quality, combat-capable, inter-operable and rapidly deployable task-tailored forces. We will exploit leading-edge doctrine and technologies to accomplish our domestic and international roles in the battlespace of the 21st century and be recognized, both at home and abroad, as an innovative, relevant knowledge-based institution. With transformational leadership and coherent management, we will build upon our proud heritage in pursuit of clear strategic objectives. [14]

The navy then came out with its vision statement:

The Naval Vision: The New Navy — professional, proud and always ready to make a difference for Canada. This vision is best characterised by the traditional motto, “Ready, Aye, Ready.” [15]

Then the Army:

The Army will generate, employ and sustain strategically relevant and tactically decisive medium-weight forces. Using progressive doctrine, realistic training and leading-edge technologies, the Army will be a knowledge-based and command-centric institution capable of continuous adaptation and task tailoring across the spectrum of conflict. The cohesion and morale of our soldiers will be preserved through sharing a collective covenant of trust and common understanding of explicit and implicit intent. With selfless leadership and coherent management, the Army will achieve unity of effort and resource equilibrium. The Army will synchronize force development to achieve joint integration and combined interoperability with the ground forces of the United States, other ABCA countries and selected NATO allies. As a broadly based representative national institution with a proud heritage, the Army will provide a disciplined force of last resort and contribute to national values and objectives at home and abroad. [16]

And finally the Air Force then presented its vision:

The Air Force will be transformed from a primarily static, platform-based organization into an expeditionary, network-enabled, capability-based and results-focused Aerospace Force that will effectively contribute to security at home and abroad well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We will continue to be a quality force based on teamwork, excellence and professionalism. [17]

The point of having a mission statement is to get to the guts of what the organization is all about, in a way that actually means something significant, personal and exciting to the people in the organization. Given the survey data examined above, it seems that none of these visions have been compelling enough to capture the attention of Canadians. A compelling vision for the DND and the CF must start with a compelling vision of Canada’s role in the world.

The vision must be clear and simple, defining the what, not the how. Some questions that can be answered to help define the vision are: Do we see Canada as an actor on the world stage, standing in the wings, or sitting in the audience? What should Canada’s regional role be? To maintain a strong image in the minds of Canadians requires focus and constant reinforcement with everyone in the organization, and associated lobby groups. In the long term one cannot predict the future, but by ridding the various defence organizations of traditional, bureaucratic thinking the defence community can get on with the task of creating the future.

## Problem Definition

Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped.

African Proverb

The problem definition principle focuses on discovering the required tasks and potential roadblocks that stand between today, and the compelling vision. The defence community must work together to define the things that must be done to match fact with vision, or to maintain the

envisioned defence role. The questions that must be asked include: why does the defence community exist? Why should people care about these problems? Why don't people care about the problems? This may take great introspection, and the ability to accept that one, or one's organization, is a part of the problem and requires fundamental changes in attitude and/or structure. The defence community must make what will be some tough decisions. The decision to tackle the problem in the first place will likely be the most difficult, but once that is done the community must commit to the vision, and then do what must be done to make it a reality.

This process should not be difficult for a relatively disciplined organization, with experience in setting and achieving goals in an operational setting. These same skills will provide the cornerstone to the process of defining missions, building strategies, and deciding on tactics for the achievement of the compelling vision.

One of the main problems to overcome may be the evolving role of the citizen in the definition of government policy. Where once most citizens were passive recipients of government decisions, they are now becoming active co-creators in the policy creation process. Increasingly, however, citizens seem to want power without accountability. They want to choose for themselves, but not be liable for the consequences of their choices. But no matter how the future unfolds in terms of the roles, rights and responsibilities of the defence community and citizens, the community will have to engage Canadians in co-creation of both the vision and the course to get there. It will, however, take an educated citizen to meaningfully engage in this co-creation process.

## Education

He that will write well in any tongue must follow this counsel of Aristotle:  
to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do.

Roger Aschan

The co-creation experience, not the final defence structure, may form the basis of value for each individual Canadian, and hence determine their support of the DND and the CF. Support for the defence community should begin to come from a forum organized around individuals and groups and their policy co-creation experiences rather than around passive pockets of demand for specific defence functions or initiatives. As this forum evolves, the defence community has a responsibility — in fact a vital interest — in building a dialogue that encourages not just knowledge sharing, but even more importantly, a qualitatively new level of understanding between the defence community and the citizens it serves.

Provision of timely, credible information must be central to any education initiative. Transparency of information is necessary to create trust between defence institutions and individual Canadians. For an organization historically prone to secrecy this may be the biggest challenge in the implementation of an educational campaign, or the building of non-traditional relationships.

To truly win the support of Canadians the defence community must build relationships with continuously increasing number of individuals and groups within our social fabric. These

relationships must be anchored on facts, but also include an emotional connection. To accomplish this twin strategy all avenues of information dissemination must be employed. While the DND and the CF are limited by government policy on the forums they may employ and the information they can comment on, defence lobby groups are not, and this provides the defence community with its major strategic advantage.

While non-defence lobby groups seeking to focus government action on their area of concern routinely use advertising campaigns to educate the public on their issues, defence lobby groups have been slow—indeed they appear reticent—to employ similar tactics. Holding conferences and seminars to develop detailed or advanced knowledge of defence issues is beneficial; but it generally only provides the “think as wise men do” aspect of the education equation. In order to “speak as the common people do” the defence community must develop their ability to breakdown complex issues into manageable chunks for those who are not educated or experienced in defence matters. Equally important is presenting them at times and in places where they are likely to be seen and heard by Canadians who would not usually be exposed to the message. Producing multi-page research papers is vital, but equally vital is communicating, in a compelling manner, the basic premises of those papers to ordinary Canadians in a thirty-second commercial, or a series of thirty-second commercials.

Simply informing Canadians of what the DND and the CF do is not enough. Again, people do not buy products or purchase services simply because they know they exist. The challenge for the defence community therefore is to educate Canadians about what problems defence forces solve for them. In all likelihood they will first need to be educated about what those problems are. As former speaker of the US House of Representatives Tip O’Neill is famous for saying, “All politics are local,” therefore talking to Canadians — who are preoccupied with health care, education, and crumbling municipal infrastructure—about amorphous global threats is not likely to capture their imagination, or interest.

The real challenge of an educational campaign is to continually build links between real, but distant threats, and Canadians’ day-to-day lives. Even products that don’t appear to wax and wane in cycles (soft drinks, for example) do, at least where marketing is concerned. The reasons people buy the product or service change, even if the product or service itself does not. Knowledge is power, but only if it is used. Continually evaluating the strategic environment, and rapidly adapting the education program requires a significant level of organizational agility.

## Agility

We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles.  
Jimmy Carter

In order to ensure Canadians view the defence organization as the right group to solve the problems that they have been educated about, it must have the ability act quickly to changing situations. It must continually work to improve the cycle time for organizational action. This type of agility depends above all on the readiness of mid-level leaders to respond quickly to changes, and senior leaders to allow them to do so. Only with a compelling vision will members of the defence team be able to ensure that their actions and decisions will work to the betterment of the community as a whole. Defence must learn to create its own sense of urgency without waiting

for crises or combat to shake it from organizational complacency.

Providing structure to this sense of urgency was the topic of a paper, titled Principles of Peacetime Readiness, presented at the *Canadian Defence Associations Institute Graduate Student Symposium*, and published in *Baltic Defence Review*, January 2004. The paper turns the attention of readers "to largely unexplored ground in the field of military thinking. While recognising importance of the principles of war in shaping the military profession and military institutions [the author] addresses the need to define and apply in practice principles of peacetime readiness, which are crucial if we seek to maintain vigour and dynamism of our military forces." [18] The development of these principles are, "instrumental in avoiding feeble, cumbersome and ineffective forces mired in peacetime bureaucratic wrangling—forces that lead to an initial military disaster once [they are] called to do their job in wartime. [19] Breaking out of bureaucratic ossification does not take a miracle; what it does take is a conscious decision to do it, and an unrelenting follow through on that decision.

## Conclusion

On the world stage Canada must decide if it will be a lead player, stand in the wings, or simply sit in the audience. This decision will be key to creating a compelling vision. Vision without action, however, is simply a dream. Action without vision just passes the time and spends taxpayers' money. Vision with action can change the world, but a leader must see an idea as opportunity, choose to act upon it, devise a plan for its achievement, educate people about the vision and the plan, and have an agile enough organization to execute the plan while adapting to changes along the way.

If our country and its defence are to be revitalized, Canadians must understand the links between the world economy and their local economy, and the impact Canada's defence forces, or lack thereof, have on both. The false dichotomy of asking if we should spend money on health care or defence must be eliminated and replaced with recognition that money must be spent on both. Short-term gains due to transient political situations can bring short-term relief, but long-term stability requires a long-term, strategic approach.

Clarity of communication about the defence community's growth strategy will have an affect on both Canadians' and the members of the defence force's confidence in their ability to successfully meet future challenges. The ability to describe a repeatable approach, constantly adapted to a range of new conditions, has a powerful influence on focusing people's abilities on creating the future that has been envisioned. If the DND and the CF are to win back the organizational support of the Canadian people it is more important to restore fallen leadership to its historic role of virtue, than it is to blanket them with advertising carrying messages they do not trust—however once the trust is restored advertising will be an important element in the strategy. Agility, therefore, should be seen as *primus inter pares* within the Principles of Peacetime Survival. Only by taking actions that consistently move towards the stated vision will Canada retake its place as a credible actor on the world stage.

Great thoughts speak only to thoughtful minds. Great actions speak to all mankind. Together through daily deeds the DND, the CF, and defence lobby groups must reinforce to Canadians the

importance of Canada's role in sustaining human dignity around the world, the importance of Canada's defence forces in that role, and in fortifying the defence community's pivotal role in achieving that vision; only this will allow the defence community to ensure the continued security of our nation.

[1] Department of National Defence, ADM (PA) Annual Report 2003-2004 (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 2004), 8.

[2] Department of National Defence, ADM (PA) Strategic Communications Plan 2003-2004 (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 2004) 1.

[3] Department of National Defence, DGPA, Public Opinion Research Overview – 2002 CROP 3SC (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 2002) 1.

[4] Department of National Defence, DGPA, Public Opinion Research Overview – 2003 CROP 3SC (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 2003) 1.

[5] Department of National Defence, DGPA Public Opinion Research Overview – Ipsos Trend Report 2002 (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 2002)

[6] Centre for Research and Information on Canada, Making the Country Work Better: 2003 – 2004 [online document] Accessed 5 January 2005. Available from [www.cric.ca/pwp/portraits/portraits\\_2004/eng\\_priorities\\_2004.ppt](http://www.cric.ca/pwp/portraits/portraits_2004/eng_priorities_2004.ppt).

[7] Department of National Defence, Strategic Communications Plan 2003-2004, 1-2.

[8] Ibid, 1.

[9] Department of National Defence, Ipsos Trend Report 2002, 1.

[10] Department of National Defence, ADM (PA) Annual Report 2003-2004, 3.

[11] Department of National Defence, ADM (PA) Annual Report 2003-2004, 8.

[12] Department of National Defence, ADM (PA) Annual Report 2003-2004, 2.

[13] Samuel B. Griffith, Translator, Sun Tzu The Art of War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) X.

[14] Department of National Defence, Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020 (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 1999) 7.

[15] Directorate of Maritime Strategy, Leadmark: The Navy's Strategy for 2020 (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 2001) 93.

[16] Chief of the Land Staff, Advancing With Purpose: The Army Strategy (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 2002) 13.

[17] Director General Air Force Development, Security Above All: Transforming Canada's Air Force, (Ottawa: HM The Queen, 2004) 33.

[18] Elizabeth Tromer, "Introduction," Baltic Defence Review No. 10, Volume 2/2003, (Tartu, Estonia: Baltic Security Society, 2003) 75.

[19] Ibid, 75.