Staying Ahead of Trump on Security Requires a Holistic Review of Canadian National Security

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STAYING AHEAD OF TRUMP ON SECURITY REQUIRES A HOLISTIC REVIEW OF CANADIAN NATIONAL SECURITY

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Executive Summary

It is time for the Canadian government to conduct a holistic review of Canada’s national security complex. The Defence Policy Review is floundering as a consequence of an uncooperative world, Canada’s domestic security institutions require legislative empowerment, and the election of Donald Trump has placed increased pressure on Canadian security and defence.

Securing the U.S.’s northern border is a no-fail mission for Canada as peace and prosperity depend upon it. However, this must be done within Canadian security norms and values. Only a ground-up examination of the Canadian national security system will elicit a comprehensive understanding of the current deficiencies that will allow focused alignment of government objectives, policies and public funds.

Crisis management requires a strategic plan with clear objectives from which to conduct concurrent and coordinated activities. The Trudeau government has the team in place; now, it needs a new National Security Policy statement to assist in “lead turning” an unconventional U.S. administration steadfast in its stance over national security.
As unsettling as it was to realize that leadership of the free world hinged on the voting preferences of a small fraction of the American electorate in five swing states for an anti-establishment candidate, the fact remains that Donald Trump is president of the United States. Like it or not, volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity will be the new norm for Canada-U.S. relations as Trump has proven his unconventional attitude to politics will continue in his approach to governance. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s 2017 cabinet shuffle and the formation of a special cabinet committee on Canada-U.S. relations were prescient in strengthening Canada’s ability to manage the vicissitudes of this new relationship, as was the creation of a war room to quickly address critical decision-making in an unpredictable environment. However, in order to react to unforeseen events in a time-sensitive manner and get ahead of the game, much more needs to be done to be ready to “lead turn” emerging issues.

Faced with an earlier period of unexpected political upheaval in the U.S., the previous Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin prudently navigated the bilateral relationship both domestically and internationally. Although the tragic events of 9/11 were significantly different in specificity, the immediate effects of a Trump victory on Canadian interests and government concerns are very similar. Given the potential impact to Canada of Trump’s electioneering promises, Canada’s first priority was the maintenance of economic prosperity through open access to U.S. markets while the protectionist U.S. administration’s immediate focus has been on national security issues. In this environment, maintenance of bilateral economic prosperity cannot be accomplished without fully appreciating American angst over national security as it was post 9/11. Protection of the U.S.’s northern border from attacks originating in Canada is a no-fail scenario. As impossible a task as this may seem, the government can minimize the risk through strategic thought and deliberate planning by conducting a holistic review of national security from first principles and developing a new National Security Policy statement that updates or replaces Securing an Open Society: Canada’s National Security Policy, issued by then-prime minister Paul Martin in April 2004.

**UPHEAVAL SOUTH OF THE BORDER**

In the wake of the 9/11 attack on New York City, Chrétien’s government was in full crisis management mode as then-president George W. Bush precipitated the largest U.S. government reorganization since 1947 to address domestic security and defence deficiencies. Chrétien’s creation of an ad hoc cabinet committee on Public Security and Anti-terrorism, led by John Manley, was a wise and pragmatic move as it established one point of contact to address domestic repercussions multilaterally among Canadian stakeholders while providing focused resolution to bilateral concerns. Rather than dither over jurisdictional issues, Canada was able to quickly address matters of ‘complex sovereignty’ that met U.S. security concerns and kept commerce flowing without compromising national authority.

As well as dealing with urgent situations, the Privy Council Office working the Canada-U.S. file was also engaged in longer-term consequence management. The lack of a coherent “National
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Security Policy that would place defence policy, foreign policy and internal security in context”⁹ was immediately recognized at the political level. Decision-makers discovered they were constrained by a patchwork of governance policies and outdated legislation that prevented action and information sharing among more than 20 departments/agencies with security roles. With the support of various ad hoc deputy minister committees, the government began reorganizing the Canadian security complex to meet the challenges of the 21st century. One of the key pieces of policy to emerge that transcended both the domestic and international constituents was a unique strategic document — Canada’s National Security Policy statement.

Although initially developed under Chrétien, Martin chose to release Canada’s National Security Policy statement as the parent document to a holistic review of domestic security, defence and foreign policies.¹⁰ Globalization and economic interdependence have resulted in the interrelationship of domestic and international political spheres when issues originating in one affect political, moral or economic choices in the other. Martin intuitively understood this “intermestic” nature of the Canada-U.S. relationship where issues are “simultaneously, profoundly and inseparably both domestic and international”¹¹ as well as the culture of national security in Canada. Safe and secure in North America, Canada’s worldview has been constructed by its historic relationship with the only true existential threat to Canadian sovereignty and independence being assimilation into the U.S.¹²

As such, one of Canada’s most enduring foreign policy objectives must be to secure America’s northern border through development and reliance on a dependable, world-class national security complex. There can be no greater goal, as Canada’s peace and prosperity depend upon it. However, this must be done within Canadian security norms and values if a government wishes to survive. In releasing Canada’s National Security Policy statement, Martin expressed his government’s plan to keep Canadians safe and secure while publicly assuring America that “we’ve got your back”.

**Canada’s National Security Policy Statement**

The Spectrum of Security: In pragmatic and particularist fashion, the designers of Canada’s National Security Policy statement sought to make Canadian society and the state central to the security problématique. They defined “de minimus” security as the protection of life, infrastructure and territory and the “de maximus” dimensions as global strategic stability and world peace. The goal of the National Security Policy statement was to create a seamless security continuum through time and space (domestically, continentally and internationally) that operated vertically (municipally, provincially and federally), horizontally at each level, and inter-sectorally. In order to accomplish this, a division of labour and responsibilities needed to be fostered by the creation of an effective Canadian security community, a cross-government security culture, effective machinery and incentives with stakeholders, and a sense of urgency communicated from the very top of government.
The Chrétien government was aware that Canada lacked cross-government strategic coherence and co-ordination in planning and executing national security activities. The emerging requirements of the contemporary global security complex were simply highlighted by 9/11, not defined by it. It was the interconnection, the blurring of domestic and international jurisdictional seams, the advancement of technologies and time-sensitive information sharing that were the new developments. Canada’s National Security Policy statement addressed these themes and captured the spectrum of Canadian security in a Venn diagram that for the first time visually defined the government’s concept of national security. This was a very perceptive illustration of Canadian national security culture that placed state-sponsored protection of acquired values between the individual’s responsibilities for personal security and the state’s responsibility to promote and provide international security. When applying a Canada-U.S. template to this safety-security-defence continuum, it becomes evident that the intermestic nature of the bilateral relationship defies easy categorization into international/domestic policy silos. Social, economic and ideological values are often tied to security and defence through norms and domestic law.

The current populist fear over illegal immigrants in the U.S. is a prime example. Three out of five presidential executive orders that Trump issued in his first week in office referenced immigrants as a threat to U.S. national security and public safety. Although nominally domestic in nature, these executive orders had international consequences; no one felt the ramifications more than Canada where ease of cross-border travel is critical and immigration is not considered a national security issue. To address the immediate impact to economic trade, the government introduced Bill C-23, the Preclearance Act, at the same time as asylum seekers began appearing at the Canada-U.S. border. These repercussions created social and security concerns at all levels of government leading to political contestation over competing instrumental and acquired values.

American national security issues become Canadian national security issues due to the fact that local, provincial and federal institutions are so interconnected domestically and bilaterally that uncoordinated action over American concerns can have dramatic economic and diplomatic consequences. Although a renewed national security policy statement cannot in itself resolve each problem, it would provide the policy framework to guide bureaucratic institutions and assuage Canadian concerns over the potential loss of acquired values in future government responses to the U.S. Importantly in this instance, it would allow the prime minister to reaffirm the multicultural acquired values that underpin Canada’s immigration policies while setting the government agenda to tackle the true national security concerns that the Trump administration seeks to solve in a heavy-handed manner.

**WHY SHOULD THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT BOTHER?**

The essence of the original National Security Policy statement successfully lasted through 10 years of Conservative governments and portions were last amended by Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale in December 2015. It originally served as the foundational document from which
Martin’s *International Policy Statement* flowed. This was a logical approach as international security interests flow from domestic concerns for Canadians and the analytical process used in its production exposed the interconnectedness of the continental security complex. However, the political landscape has significantly changed since Trudeau took power. In order to stay ahead of Trump’s impulsive pronouncements, it would behoove the government to conduct a holistic review of national security to provide specificity to domestic policy statements contained in the current national security webpage and to ensure alignment with its international policy goals. Given the significant public consultation that has occurred during the Defence Policy Review and the ongoing National Security Green Paper 2016 process, the government is ideally situated to begin formulating a comprehensive policy statement on national security.

Trump is making good on most of his promises to tighten U.S. national security and a measure of this determination is in his unprecedented selection of three former military generals to fill the highest national security portfolios of a U.S. administration — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Secretary of Homeland Defense John Kelly, and National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster. This powerful troika shares a common goal-oriented, mission-focused culture that expects decisive leadership based on strategic thought and deliberate planning. By producing a contemporary game plan that clearly demonstrates Canada’s commitment to national security, Canadian political authorities will be able to quickly address Trump’s unpredictable edicts and present an integrated response to their U.S. counterparts.

There are still many outstanding issues within Canada’s whole-of-government, integrated security complex as well as emerging systemic failures that directly affect national security. Promised changes to Bill C-51 need to be completed to ensure security institutions are legally enabled and responsible, judicious governance structures are in place. The critical question of information sharing needs to be reviewed and adjusted in view of recent presidential directions that challenge some fundamental Canadian acquired values. As with information sharing, cyber security is critical to North America’s integrated economy. Although the government has published *Canada’s Cyber Security Strategy*, it needs to be updated and should be used to proactively negotiate a Canada-U.S. cyber-accord. RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson’s statement that “the failure of Shared Services Canada to meet basic RCMP IT security needs could have ‘catastrophic’ consequences for police and the public” is of grave concern to national security, and along with the Phoenix pay system debacle, produces public uncertainty over the government’s ability to deliver on large, integrated projects.

A holistic review will compel decision-makers to resolve variances in national security policies and will bring to light deficiencies that will require political resolution or highlight the need for potential consequence management. Limited funding can then be earmarked for the most critical aspects in strengthening the national security complex. The mere process of producing such a document will revive dormant bureaucratic networks that the war room will need to provide cogent, policy-driven solutions in a time-sensitive manner. By linking disparate government security policies within one document, the government will demonstrate leadership.
while informing the public upfront of its national security strategy that ultimately facilitates its communication strategy when having to make quick decisions.

Finally, it is unlikely that Trudeau’s defiant justification for spending a mere .9 percent of GDP on defence will hold much weight against Trump’s demand that NATO partners meet their two percent commitment. Nor will manipulating the defence spending criteria to demonstrate higher GDP spending resolve years of neglect in the recapitalization of ships and fighters that have allowed successive governments to ‘punch above our weight’. Not only is Canada a founding member of NATO, but the NORAD Agreement explicitly states that NORAD is an element of “the overall security of the NATO area”, making it next to impossible for Canada to avoid increases in defence spending. The U.S. will judge Canada, not on whether it can manipulate the accounting ledgers, but on the capabilities the Canadian defence dollar produces to assist the U.S. in defending common democratic values and interests.

This having been said, the integrated nature of continental national security may provide Canada avenues to meet the American demand while strengthening Canadian domestic security institutions. However, this can only be achieved through a ground-up examination of Canada's national security needs. In following such an approach, the government may choose to revisit the Defence Policy Review that appears to be floundering and combine it with a foreign policy review, given recent international developments that have undermined original assumptions made by the Liberal government. Peacekeeping as a model for Canadian Armed Forces employment is proving elusive, Russia is pushing the limits of acceptable international behavior and the U.S. is on the verge of precipitating a confrontation with North Korea. Turbulent times require a consistent, coherent approach to national security.

**STAYING AHEAD THROUGH PREPARATION AND PLANNING**

Crisis management requires a strategic plan with clear objectives from which to conduct concurrent and coordinated activities within approved government policies. No government was prepared for the surprise attacks of 9/11, but the consequences caused an unparalleled realignment of the North American security complex. The Martin government produced a one-off integrated strategy that provided a comprehensive national security policy, *Securing an Open Society: Canada’s National Security Policy*. It established a whole-of-government strategic framework and action plan that set the baseline for a strengthened integrated national security system and although not ideal, its true value was in articulating a national security continuum that protects Canadian acquired values. Given the uncertainty and unpredictability that Trump has introduced to domestic and international affairs, it is prudent for the Canadian government to now conduct an analysis of national security from first principles and renew the National Security Policy statement.

Leveraging the information gained from Secretary Kelly’s recent visit to Canada, Ottawa needs to pause to reassess the political landscape. The Liberal government should task the National Security Advisor to coordinate a holistic review of the current state of Canadian national...
security. Special attention should be paid to issues of importance to Canadians such as information sharing, cyber security and strengthening Canada’s national security infrastructure, as well as securing the northern border. Once completed, the results should be presented to cabinet and discussed in detail at the four key cabinet committees that are responsible for national security to address any cognitive dissonance in policy positions. Policy realignment should follow the safety-security-defence continuum to better align foreign and defence policy objectives with national security needs. This will allow for funding allocation to be made for broader national security purposes, of which defence would be considered a policy subset.

The demand for greater defence spending should be seen as an opportunity, not only to better position Canada in overall bilateral relations with the new administration, but to restructure the Canadian military to meet the government’s long-term vision of “a leaner, more agile, better equipped military.” Canada has a role to play in protecting international society, but its genesis should emerge from Canada’s national security needs. By delaying the Defence Policy Review and changing the current paradigm, dual-use equipment such as drones, icebreakers and cyber security infrastructure can be procured and employed at the security-defence interface. Recapitalization of the North Warning System could be leveraged to increase Canadian sovereignty through all domain awareness technology. To best position itself and achieve its stated national security goals, the Liberal government needs to produce a national security policy statement that is realistic and relevant to the existing circumstances.

Real or imagined, protection of the U.S.’s northern border is a no-fail proposition for Canada primarily because Trump has staked his reputation on protecting the U.S. from terrorists. The reality of the Canada-U.S. bilateral relationship means that coherent preparation and planning to meet national security contingencies require a comprehensive understanding of national security needs. Decision-makers need to be informed, policies need to be aligned and the security system needs to be ready. The Trudeau government has the team in place; now, it needs a strategic tool to assist in “lead turning” an unconventional U.S. administration steadfast in its concern over national security. With the core contemporary national security issues identified by Public Safety, a holistic review and critical analysis of government national security policies will result in a prepared Canadian security complex and will produce the necessary strategic tool for coherent government action — a new Canadian National Security Policy statement.
1 “This election was effectively decided by 107,000 people in these three states [Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania]. Trump won the popular vote there by that combined amount. That amounts to 0.09 percent of all votes cast in this election.” — Tim Meko, Denise Lu, and Lazaro Gamio, “How Trump won the presidency with razor-thin margins in swing states,” The Washington Post, Nov. 11, 2016; Paul Waldman, “If you voted for Trump because he’s ‘anti-establishment’, guess what: You got conned,” The Washington Post, Nov. 11, 2016.


3 Laura Ryckewaert, “PMO’s new Canada-U.S. relations ‘war room’ unit seen as ‘smart,’ considered unprecedented,” The Hill Times, Feb. 6, 2017, 1.

4 “Lead turn” is a term taken from the air force lexicon that means to “anticipate or get ahead of something to gain advantage” — to “get ahead of the game.”

5 The White House, Issues: America-First Foreign Policy, accessed Feb. 9, 2017, online at https://www.whitehouse.gov/america-first-foreign-policy. — “America First Foreign Policy: The Trump administration is committed to a foreign policy focused on American interests and American national security” is the first priority of the Trump foreign policy followed by “Trade Deals Working For All Americans.” Additionally, under “Presidential Actions”, three executive orders and four presidential memorandums directly relating to security and defence were issued within Trump’s first three weeks in office.

6 “During a joint news conference following [Trudeau / Trump’s] debut meeting ... Asked whether he believes the northern border of the U.S. is secure, Trump said, ‘You can never be totally confident.’ ...” — Kathleen Harris, “Trudeau, Trump find common ground on economy, security but remain at odds over immigration,” CBC News, Feb. 13, 2017.

7 Within days of the 9/11 attack, former president George W. Bush created the Homeland Security Council, appointed Tom Ridge as the first Homeland Security Advisor, drafted an early version of the USA PATRIOT Act, and initiated the creation of the Department of Homeland Defense and the United States Northern Command. See Alan Stephenson, Canadian National Security Culture: Explaining Post 9/11 National Security Policy Outcomes, Ottawa: Carleton University, PhD dissertation, May 2016, found online at https://curve.carleton.ca/71aa12ab-b289-4add-af70-7b2d6e0f5e91.

8 With the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, Canada enacted its own legislation to address deficiencies in Canadian jurisprudence six weeks later. Bill C-36, the Canadian ‘Anti-terrorism Act’, was similar in intent to the USA PATRIOT Act, but protected Canadian security norms and values. Additionally, in December 2001 John Manley and Tom Ridge signed the U.S.-Canada Smart Border Declaration and associated 30-point Action Plan in recognition of the economic importance of trade. See Stephenson, Chapter 4.


10 Canada’s National Security Policy statement was identified as the “overarching guidance” in the Canadian Strategic Planning System in the Bi-national Planning Group final report as well as the “blueprint for action” where the International Policy Statement will “build on [Canada’s National Security Policy] framework.” — Stephenson, 2016, Chapter 4, 189 and 197.


13 “Acquired” values are the aggregate of values that are embedded in societal norms and law that are generally the focus of political contestation within the polity as they range in strength. Intrinsic values (those values which define Canadian identity as an end in itself) are consistent over time while instrumental values (those values which are used as a means to the end of achieving intrinsic Canadian values) vary and are used by decision-makers to justify and validate their “moral judgment”. See Stephenson, 2016, Chapter 2, 71.
16 A measure of the true relevance of Canada’s National Security Policy statement and its basic articulation of Canadian National Security Culture is that, although the Harper government indicated in the 2007 Speech from the Throne that it would release a new statement on national security, Canada’s National Security Policy statement was still used by the government of Canada as its foundational national security document throughout Stephen Harper’s tenure as prime minister. Former minister of public safety Steven Blaney, online at the Department of Public Safety Canada website http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-sct/index-en.aspx , July 26, 2015.
19 Alison Crawford, “RCMP commissioner warns continued IT failures will have ‘catastrophic’ consequences: Public safety minister says he’s ‘deeply concerned’ about IT failures, asks to meet fellow minister,” CBC News, Feb. 27, 2017.
22 Secretary Kelly met with Canadian cabinet ministers to discuss priority matters pertaining to the shared northern border, as well as “aviation security, law enforcement collaboration, infrastructure, and immigration, refugee, and visa policy,” Homeland Security, “Secretary Kelly Visits Canada,” News blog, March 14, 2017, online at https://www.dhs.gov/blog/2017/03/14/secretary-kelly-visits-canada.
23 The four key committees are Cabinet Committee on Canada in the World and Public Security; Cabinet Committee on Canada–United States Relations; Cabinet Committee on Intelligence and Emergency Management; and Cabinet Committee on Defence Procurement. Although there are many common members in each committee, it is essential that the results be reviewed in the context of each committee’s mandate.
24 Liberal Party of Canada, Real Change: A New Plan For A Strong Middle Class, 2015, 69.
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