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## **Canada's Evolving National Security Strategy**

### **A Perspective on a Shifting Border: Physical, Technological, and Intellectual**

**By Harvey Rishikof**

*Harvey Rishikof is Professor of National Security Law, Department of National Security Strategy, National War College. He is also Chair of the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Law and National Security. The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the National War College, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.*

Recently, I had the honor to be at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto and participate in the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual two-week National Security Studies Programme (NSSP). The NSSP, set at the strategic level, specifically includes the study of high-level command and institutional leadership, national policy formulation, military strategy development and defense resource management, and includes U.S. military, U.S. experts, and representatives from the Canadian private sector.

Canada has been at the forefront of a number of international and state based concepts – “the duty to protect” and the “whole of government” approach to policy. The duty to protect has engendered much discussion as the world community grapples with the principles of when to violate state sovereignty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for example, when minority and ethnic groups are targeted with genocide. The “whole of government” or “unity of effort” approach has captured the imagination of U.S. policy makers as they grapple with the challenges of Iraq and Afghanistan and the harnessing of the national security enterprise – challenges that the Canadian government itself has experienced while being a loyal and constant ally to the U.S. Per Canada’s agreement, however, it will be ending its mission in Afghanistan in 2011.

My section of 14 outstanding “students,” or “syndicate” in *Canadianese*, was composed of senior Canadian civilian and military officials, including one U.S. officer.<sup>1</sup> But this next generation of future leaders approached the issue of national security with a unique sense of the interconnection of the individual, the state, and the international system, blending tactics, operations and grand strategy.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) describes this relationship between doctrine, strategy, and tactics: "The levels of war are doctrinal perspectives that clarify the links between strategic objectives and tactical actions. Although there are no finite limits or boundaries between them, the three levels are strategic, operational, and tactical." That is, doctrine is applied at both the strategic level and at the tactical level. Doctrine is an abstract, general (and practical) statement. Doctrine is applied via strategy and tactics at the "strategic level" and at the "tactical level." A U.S. Marine Corps document on urban warfare suggests the distinction between doctrine and tactics: the document "provides doctrinal guidance and detailed information on tactics, techniques, and procedures to be employed in [Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain] within the operating forces."

This approach outlined above is quite standard at War Colleges. At times, though, it is hard to distinguish how countries pursue policies since strategy, tactics, and doctrine tend to be conflated in the heat of strategic surprise and policy drift. As we have seen recently, the confusion of a grand strategy with a tactical “surge” has at times in modern warfare created unfulfilled and elevated expectations for success. This notion of being able to neatly divide tactics, operations, and strategy may be a relic of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Moreover, the concept of neat borders and distinct realms of force—air, land and sea—are also being challenged by space and cyber realms of warfare.

In a recent pamphlet by the Institute for the Study of the Science of Society (“ISSS”), it is pointed out that the terms "strategy," "tactics" and "doctrine" express three related but distinct concepts. The distinctions are laid out as follows by the ISSS:<sup>2</sup>

*Strategy* describes a broad perspective on how resources are to be used to achieve some goal.

The Department of Defense definition is: "The art and science of developing and using political, economic, psychological, and military forces as necessary during peace and war, to afford the maximum support to policies, in order to increase the probabilities and favorable consequences of victory and to lessen the chances of defeat." (<http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>)

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) provides this historical definition for the term: "The art of

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<sup>1</sup> The syndicate: LCol Douglas Boot, Cdr King Wan, LCol Robert Bell, LCol Andrew Downes, Cdr Lorne Carruth, Ms. Susan Nutbrown (HR-CIV), Ms Loretta Colton (DOJ), Mr. George Green (Treasury Bd.), Supt. Grant St-Germaine, LTC John Michna, Mr. Cary Parsons (Bell Telephone), CWO Kent Griffiths, and Inspector Paul Bedard. I would like to give special thanks to the syndicate and NSSP for allowing me to use the graphics and insights.

<sup>2</sup> See "Doctrine" ISSS discussion paper, 2001, <http://www.scienceofsociety.org/discuss/doctrine.html> where the following section is drawn from.

a commander-in-chief; the art of projecting and directing the larger military movements and operations of a campaign. Usually distinguished from tactics, which is the art of handling forces in battle or in the immediate presence of the enemy."

As the OED definition indicates, "strategy" is usually opposed to "*tactics*," where *tactics* are the deployment of forces in some specific instance of applying strategy.

The Department of Defense defines tactics: "1. The employment of units in combat. 2. The ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other and/or to the enemy in order to use their full potentialities."

The American Heritage® Dictionary states: "1a. The military science that deals with securing objectives set by strategy, especially the technique of deploying and directing troops, ships, and aircraft in effective maneuvers against an enemy."

*Doctrine* is an overall statement of principles as to how forces are used at any stage.

The Department of Defense defines doctrine as: "Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application."

How does this relate to and differ from strategy and tactics? Doctrine describes *how* a force operates, or *how* an army fights. Strategy describes the overall approach to achieving the goal. Tactics describes the specifics, e.g., when an army is in contact with the enemy.

Doctrine describes in both cases the principles as to how the fight will be waged. A modern version of doctrine is the new and increasingly fashionable concept of Counterinsurgency or COIN – a doctrine that stipulates particular rules of engagement, number of troops per 100,000 of population, and the privileging of noncombatants. The goal is to integrate tactics with strategy so the troops can become strategic actors. This is reminiscent of the old Napoleon chestnut that every corporal carries a field marshal's baton in his rucksack.

Using Canada's previous national security strategy of April 2004 as a base line, *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy*, (Fig. 1), the NSSP group formulated the following approach to guide Canada's current national interests (Fig 2):

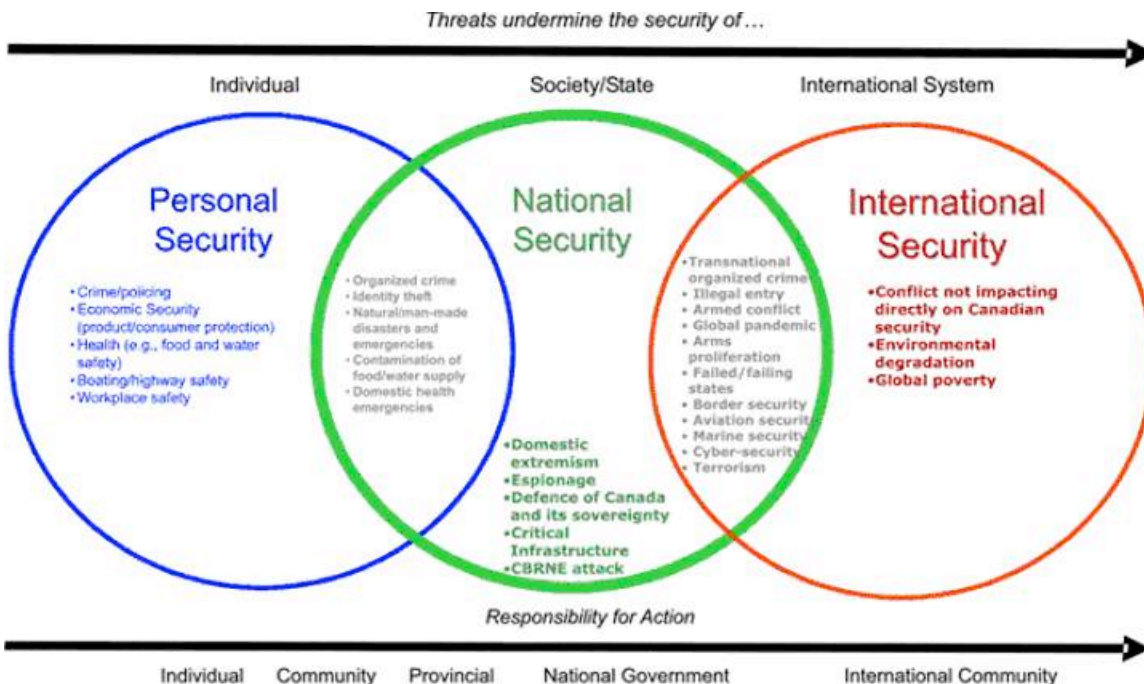
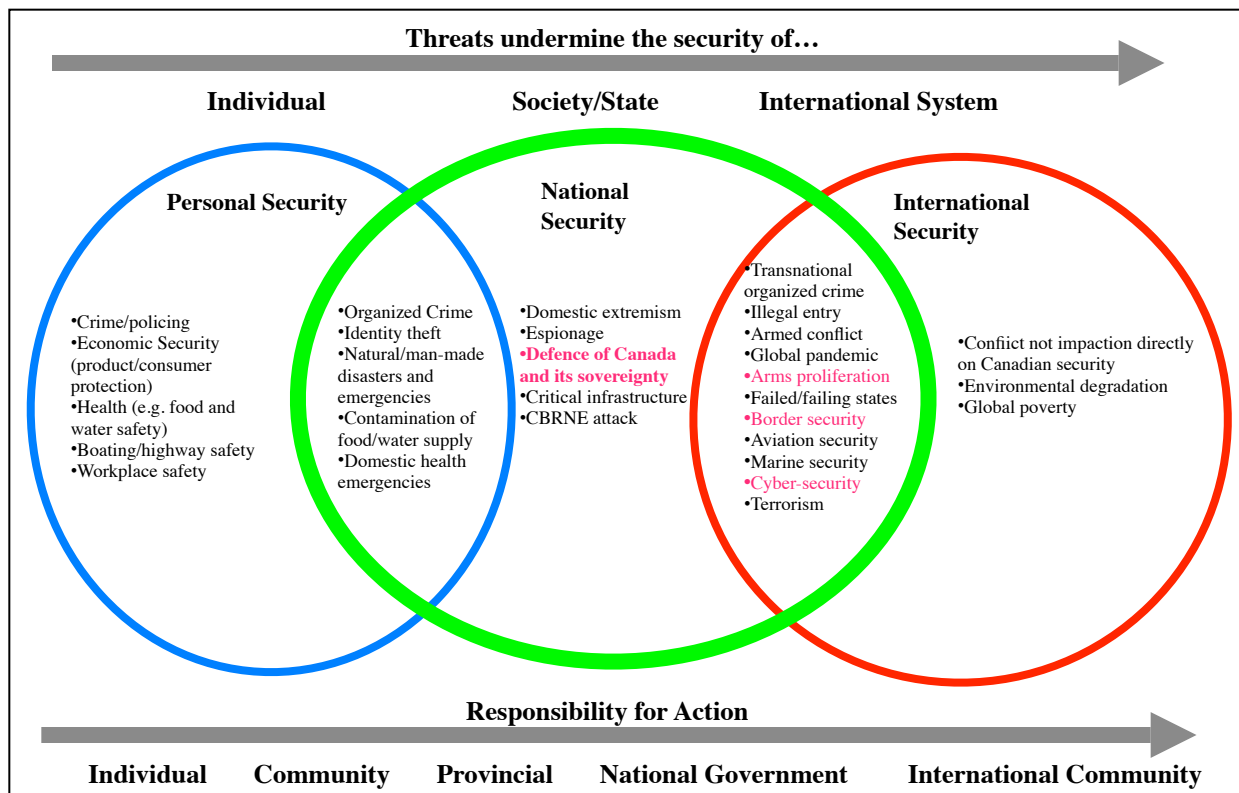


FIG 1



2010 Add: Arctic / Economic Vulnerability / WMDs and Non-State Actors / Climate Change

Increased Focus: Cyber Security / Arctic

FIG 2

<http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca>

Reflecting the effects of climate change, economic dislocation, technology, and terrorism, the group recommended a greater emphasis on the Arctic, the intersection of WMD and terrorist groups, and the recent threats of cyber. Significantly, all of these “issues of emphasis” in Fig. 2 raise new questions for the modern state. The concept of sovereignty—how political, physical and virtual “borders” will be defined and defended in the modern era—involves a particularly hard set of questions highlighted by the emerging issues.

To look at one example, the changing Arctic environment and melting polar cap has unleashed a scramble among the “Arctic Powers” to assert sovereignty for what may prove to be valuable natural resources and a new and real possibility of the once fabled *Northwest Passage*. The U.S., having not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), enters these Arctic discussions at a bit of a disadvantage. Canada, a member of UNCLOS, meanwhile is asserting its sovereignty in all forums and is waging an aggressive assertion of its rights and privileges over the Arctic.

On a more pragmatic plane, the modern democratic state is being forced to redefine security and the concept of “borders” on a number of levels. In the state’s quest to provide “security,” it is being asked to penetrate and re-scope the meaning of “privacy” for the individual due to the nature of the threats and developments (climate/cyber/economic). Ensuring the safe mobility of people between Canada and the U.S. is becoming a major focus of both countries. It is jokingly quipped that one of the greatest security challenges to Canada is a terrorist entering the U.S. from Canada, and the potential U.S. response.

Finally, the syndicate focused much discussion on cyber. This new domain is a growing challenge on a number of levels. All practitioners are struggling with the appropriate metaphor, or analogy, for this “thing” – it is not only a domain but also a domain that is held in private hands and can be used to “attack” or “spy” on allies and foes. This is very different than the more traditional domains – land, air, sea, or even space. A Canadian think tank, the Monk School of Global Affairs, in its study *GhostNet* on behalf of the Dalai Lama, documented a vast attack by a foreign entity that penetrated and compromised over 1,000 computers in 103 countries, including those belonging to embassies, foreign ministries, and other government offices, as well as the Dalai Lama’s Tibetan exile centers in India, Brussels, London, and New York.<sup>3</sup>

This formulation of the relationship of the personal, national, and international security harkens back to the old formulations of international relations and Kenneth Waltz, but now underscored, as noted by the syndicate, by technology, border control, the end of the Cold War, and the deteriorating environment.<sup>4</sup> These developments have put a new twist on grand strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for Canada. The notion that tactics, operations, doctrine, and strategy can be neatly separated, if that were ever true, is now under closer review and criticism due to technology and border control. Canada, being the international player that it is, and as reflected by the approach of the syndicate, is engaging the world on all levels of analysis – the personal, the societal/state,

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.munkschool.utoronto.ca/> and John Markoff, *Vast Spy System Loots Computers in 103 Countries*, NYT March 28, 2009 at [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/technology/29spy.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/technology/29spy.html?_r=1)

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, Columbia University Press. New York: 1959

and the international. As Canada grapples with its own “First People’s” rights, the proper role of the state vs. privacy, its role as a trusted ally with the U.S. in international enforcement operations, and asserting its privileges under international conventions, it is slowly forging a new strategy for modern engagement. Whether this will be a winning hand is still unclear, but Canada’s approach may hold some lessons for the U.S. and the world. Time will tell.