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## ENGAGE MORE CLOSELY: NAVAL DIPLOMACY IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

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In its publication entitled *Leadmark: The Navy's Strategy for 2020*, the Canadian Navy characterizes Canada's foreign policy as one of "engaged internationalism". From this premise, it concludes that the navy "must have the potential to play a significant role on the global stage in crisis management and naval diplomacy".<sup>1</sup> In the government's formal statement of foreign policy, however, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) itself rarely speaks of "engagement". Instead, it favours words like "cooperation", "involvement" and "influence". One of the rare exceptions is in the context of the rise of regional security organizations, and even then the word engagement appears only in the title and in reference to Europe.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, although it is usually left undefined, engagement is mentioned often enough in the literature on foreign policy and maritime strategy to warrant some consideration of what it actually means, and how it relates to discussions of intervention.

### **Defining Engagement**

It is instructive to consider the linguistic roots of the two words. The word 'intervene' comes from the Latin for 'coming between', thus modern dictionary definitions include such descriptions as "come in as something extraneous" and "come between so as to prevent or modify". In contrast, the word 'engage' comes from the medieval word 'gage', meaning a pledge or bond. It could also be used to describe the throwing down of a gauntlet as a challenge to a duel—a pledge to put one's life on the line the

following morning. Based upon that root sense of intense commitment, modern meanings of engagement can range from agreeing to enter into marriage, to coming to blows with an enemy.<sup>3</sup>

Engagement, unlike intervention, has nothing to do with imposition, interposition or intrusion. It has everything to do with entering into a relationship of the willing, even in the context of warfare. After all, the Nelsonian era of naval history that gave us the signal 'engage the enemy more closely' also gave us the concept of 'a willing foe'. Engagement also implies entering into a relationship for the long run. Ideally there should be no 'exit strategy' for engagement other than success (pre-nuptial agreements notwithstanding). Unlike intervention which, as the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) describes, is in most cases, coercive, reactive and non-consensual, engagement implies a willing, proactive and, at least in some sense, agreed relationship.<sup>4</sup> If Canada's navy is to be engaged internationally, therefore, it will be helpful to be clear about what effective engagement might involve, why it is worthwhile, what resources are available and how the concept could be translated into effective action.

### **The Nature of Engagement**

Since dictionary definitions of engagement describe a wide range of relationships stretching from love to war, a useful starting point for analysing what it means in a maritime strategic context might be to imagine a spectrum of relationships, ranging from the intimately friendly to the outright adversarial. Without creating an overly rigid or pedantic typology, it can be illustrated by the following examples:

- integral and interoperable (the Canadian and US Navies);
- allied or coalition (NATO, the Afghanistan coalition militarily and the European Union (EU) politically);
- congenial association (the Association of South East Asian States (ASEAN));
- moves toward congenial association (the new NATO-Russia Council);

- noncommittal (the United States and China);
- overt dislike (the United States and Iraq);
- antagonism (India and Pakistan); and
- downright enmity (choose any war).

The equipment, doctrine and training of the Canadian Navy is clearly geared to operations on either end of this spectrum. Integral and interoperable engagement with friends is the navy's daily work in peace, as it prepares for engaging an enemy in war. Engagement in the middle of the spectrum, however, often involves third-party relationships, and is usually in the realm of naval (or maritime) diplomacy. This the navy defines as "the use of maritime forces in support of diplomacy to support, persuade, deter or compel".<sup>5</sup> Mid-spectrum engagement may be relevant to military defence of the country, such as participation in the Western Pacific Naval Symposium. Alternatively, it may simply support government policy toward states with which Canada has no immediate military strategic interests, but where the government wants to cultivate relationships or respond to requests for good offices or expertise. For example, Canada's current foreign policy states that it will "continue to offer the broad range of expertise upon which the UN and other international organizations have learned that they can rely".<sup>6</sup> Canada has a considerable body of confidence-building and Track Two diplomacy expertise—two activities which the navy identifies as part of its diplomatic role.<sup>7</sup> That could translate into government commitment to such activities in maritime areas which are not traditional Canadian Navy areas of interest. The government's current focus on Africa could, for example, translate into future Africa-related engagements for the navy.

### **The Utility of Engagement**

There are a number of benefits which the state can derive from a clear-headed policy of engagement, and an equal number of dangers inherent in ignoring it. The first and foremost benefit is prevention. There can be little quarrel with the truism that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, especially in international relations. Focussing on prevention is

important to the navy because it is possible that in future, as Jason Plotz has predicted, “the foreign policy of a post-modern state will tend to become more reactive in nature and less forward looking”.<sup>8</sup> The significance to the Canadian Navy, as Plotz argues and *Leadmark* quotes, is that governments “will be reluctant to send in ground troops. Instead it will be the Navy that has to carry the burden of the commitment.”<sup>9</sup> The Gulf War against Iraq is one good example which supports that argument. If true, Plotz’s prediction implies a future with more reactive naval intervention arising from less proactive engagement.

Michael Ignatieff has argued that:

the chief threat to international security in the post-Cold War world is the collapse of states, and the resulting collapse of the capacity of the civilian populations to feed and protect themselves, either against famine or interethnic warfare.<sup>10</sup>

To this he might have added protection against disease. The International Crisis Group has pointed out that “AIDS is taking a toll as profound as any military confrontation around the globe, and it is a security threat to countries it assaults as well as their neighbours, partners and allies”.<sup>11</sup>

What these societies need, continues Ignatieff, is:

internal peace followed by the construction of institutions in which the rule of law rather than the rule of the gun prevails. This is work that is totally ill suited to the post-Cold War style of instant intervention and quick exit. What is needed is long-term, unspectacular commitment to the rebuilding of society itself.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, what is needed is engagement. Indeed, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict has highlighted the importance of “early engagement to help create conditions in which responsible authorities can resolve tensions before they lead to violence”.<sup>13</sup>

Another potential advantage is permanence. When prevention has failed and intervention takes place, then follow-on engagement becomes

essential if the results are to be consolidated and preserved. The converse danger of failing to remain engaged is being illustrated vividly now, in mid-2002. Canada willingly assumed the burden of sending a significant portion of its armed forces to war in South Asia, and has already endured the death of four mothers' sons. Undoubtedly there is an exit strategy for this intervention, but the coalition appears oblivious to Ignatieff's case for continuing engagement. To date only 30% of the aid pledged has reached a vulnerable and fragile Afghanistan. Six months after the Tokyo donors conference in January 2002, the World Food Program is announcing that it is running short of supplies for the nine million people it is feeding, and the International Organization of Migration, which has repatriated more than 250,000 Afghans so far, is halting its operations indefinitely for lack of funds.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, there is a real danger that when the navy comes home, it may watch its outstanding intervention work squandered away for a lack of engagement. A conscious national commitment to engagement is crucial, therefore, not only to minimizing the number of interventions required, but also to consolidating the enduring success of those that are undertaken.

### **Resources: The Network of Maritime Engagement**

Obviously it is difficult for the Canadian Navy to be engaged somewhere without a supporting government commitment and policy. There are, however, many activities which fall within its existing and ongoing mandate and capability. The navy recognizes clearly its role as "a critical element in the national imperatives of ... engaged internationalism"<sup>15</sup> and is routinely engaged in examples ranging from participation in international maritime activities to such things as exchanges between Staff and War Colleges. Nonetheless, while its concept and capabilities for working at the two extremes of the 'spectrum of engagement' are clear—with friends in peace and with enemies in war—its doctrine for third-party engagement in the middle of the spectrum may be less so. What may not be well recognized, for example, and therefore perhaps not adequately exploited, is that other Canadians are also engaged in maritime issues related to international maritime peace and security. There is a significant

national network of other maritime engagement already in place.

The Canadian Coast Guard, for example, has worldwide contacts and is internationally respected. Former Commissioners of the Canadian Coast Guard head both the International Maritime Organization and the International Association of Lighthouse Authorities. In Latin America the Canadian Coast Guard represents Canada at the predominantly naval network of maritime safety and security authorities (La Red Operativa de Cooperacion Regional de Autoridades Maritimas, commonly known by its acronym "ROCRAM"). It also plays the lead role in an annual Maritime Safety Colloquium for Middle East and North African maritime authorities. It has even 'showed the flag', a diplomatic role traditionally assigned to the navy. It was not a warship which represented Canada in Lisbon throughout EXPO '98, but the coast guard's largest icebreaker *Louis St Laurent*. The Canadian Coast Guard has been doing capacity-building work around the world for many years, ranging from providing search and rescue training to the Palestinian Coastal Police, to rebuilding the Haitian Coast Guard after the navy's contribution to peacekeeping around the island concluded in 1994. The Canadian Coast Guard's international contacts, relationships and experience are a little known national resource for 'engaged internationalism' complementing the contribution of the navy.

The commercial sector should not be overlooked as an engaged part of the Canadian maritime community either. From time immemorial, trade has found ways of crossing political front-lines. In today's globalized economy, Canadian businessmen may well be very familiar with areas in which the government may have more interest than it does expertise. It should not be difficult to make use of that resource because the responsible department is not just of 'Foreign Affairs' but also 'International Trade'. Indeed, present Canadian foreign policy objectives place "the promotion of prosperity and employment" ahead of peace and security in the order of priorities.<sup>16</sup>

Canadians in the not-for-profit and academic sectors are also very much engaged in maritime peace and security issues around the world. Through the International Oceans Institute, Canada has extensive links to the world maritime community. The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre conducted a seminar on "Maritime Forces in Peacekeeping Operations" in

Aqaba, Jordan, in August 2001, where Arab and Israeli maritime experts participated together despite the political tensions of the time. Dalhousie University's Centre for Foreign Policy Studies (CFPS) has been conducting an active program of facilitating dialogue on maritime safety and security in regions of tension. For the past two years it has been engaged with influential retired senior officers of the Indian and Pakistan Navies, addressing such issues as the lack of established and robust communication and incident-avoidance mechanisms between the two nuclear powers, and potential solutions to the problem of the disputed maritime boundary between them. As a direct result of the first meeting in 2001, several hundred imprisoned fishermen were released. At a second symposium in April 2002, the team was joined by maritime boundary experts from the Dalhousie Law School who conducted an intensive seminar on possible means of improving trans-boundary cooperation. Research Fellows from the CFPS have travelled to Pakistan to conduct a public seminar and lecture at the university in Islamabad on issues of maritime confidence and cooperation. Senior serving officers from India and Pakistan have also come to Halifax to participate in the 2001 workshop on regional maritime security in the Indian Ocean. In Southeast Asia, the CFPS has been instrumental in a project by the Maritime Institute of Malaysia fostering an ongoing dialogue among regional navies and, in January 2001, two of its Research Fellows were privileged to attend the signing of a resulting agreement between the navies of Malaysia and Indonesia. These initiatives are all examples of the confidence-building and Track Two diplomacy elements of naval diplomacy that the navy has undertaken to support.

Track Two diplomacy has been referred to as "private peace making" since it is, by definition, non-governmental (although often sponsored by research grants from governments). It is, as *Leadmark* defines,

interaction among people from adversarial groups or nations, intended to explore issues and solutions on an informal and unofficial basis. Typically this takes the form of academic conferences in which, for example, military officers, government officials and academics participate as private individuals rather than as official representatives.<sup>17</sup>

To have any use, however, Track Two initiatives must complement the official diplomatic track and meet the needs of the participants. They cannot succeed in isolation. Indeed, engagement by enthusiastic amateurs can be counterproductive if their work is not professionally done and consistent with a cohesive national vision. Conducted wisely, however, with thorough preparation by experienced facilitators, Track Two diplomacy can generate innovative new ideas and permit proposals to be discussed that could not be raised in an official forum.<sup>18</sup>

### **From Concept to Practice: Network-Centric Engagement**

In his analysis of *The Navy and the Post-Modern State*, Plotz discusses how popular domestic sentiment, which may not be particularly well informed, can push democratic governments to intervene in places where the country may have little or no strategic interest. He cites Canada's mission to Somalia and near-mission to Zaire as examples. He also points out that public support can vanish quickly if the mission becomes prolonged, difficult or bloody.<sup>19</sup> The problem with commitments made as a result of domestic political pressures is that they may not consider or understand the best interests or wishes of the recipients. This may or may not be important in the case of intervention, since it is usually non-consensual anyway. It is vital in the business of constructive engagement, however, since by definition it implies establishing a consensual relationship. An informed public comes from education. Regrettably, public education by the Department of National Defence and DFAIT in the face of a looming crisis may look like propaganda. That is where engaged academia can be helpful.

Engagement means a relationship, and relationships require mutual understanding. For some parts of the world, government capability and expertise may not be as profound as a budding relationship warrants. That is another reason why Canada's maritime engagement network must attempt to better communicate and share information. In wealthy democracies we sometimes assume that we know what is best for those with whom we are engaging. Writing some years ago, Salvador de

Madariaga suggested that:

Anglo-Saxon leaders of the West ... react towards the world as if it were a pack of foreigners who will never have the sense or the power to be English or American as the case may be. These foreigners must, of course, be given advice, money, technical assistance; they must be helped to their feet, encouraged and talked to nicely; everything but admitted to an equal status in a truly co-operative organization of the world.<sup>20</sup>

De Madariaga might have added mention of Canada to this statement if he had heard the frequent self-righteous pronouncements of our stated foreign policy objective of “projection of Canadian values abroad”. Engagement implies an assumption of some level of equality between the parties, therefore mutual knowledge and understanding is essential. It is to that end that the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies has an active Regional Maritime Security Project that engages Canadian scholars and maritime professionals with their counterparts elsewhere. Workshops in Halifax have brought in naval and other maritime security professionals from the Americas, the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East and South Asia. The next area of study will be sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to the Track Two work mentioned earlier, this project is a resource upon which members of the entire Canadian maritime community can draw to gain a deeper understanding of the regions in which they are, or may become engaged. Hopefully it also allows the non-Canadians with whom we engage to see us as something more than an “ethnically diverse nation of unassuming donut-eaters”.<sup>21</sup>

The navy’s strategy published in *Leadmark* refers to the concept of “network-centric warfare”, in which a well informed but geographically dispersed force exploits a common network of information to enhance its capabilities. This is an approach that would be equally useful in mid-spectrum engagement. There is, after all, a well informed but geographically dispersed body of Canadian agencies and individuals engaged in maritime activities worldwide which would benefit from sharing information and coordinating effort. A philosophy of network-

centric engagement need not, and should not, involve a highly structured or elaborate process. It is enough that engaged people can keep track of who is doing what with whom, and be able to talk to each other.

## Conclusion

When considering the implications of translating the idea of engagement into concrete and practical action, especially when intervention is being discussed at the same time, it is important to keep in mind what the word really implies. Engagement means entering willingly into a commitment based on mutual respect and knowledge. Canada has a considerable network of people engaged in matters related to maritime security around the globe. They include civilian and military government personnel, business people, members of not-for-profit organizations and academics. All could benefit from taking a 'network-centric' approach to communication and cooperation. That should not be a difficult thing to accomplish and, like network-centric warfare, could be well worth the effort.

## Notes

1. Government of Canada, Department of National Defence (DND), *Leadmark: The Navy's Strategy for 2020* (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, Directorate of Maritime Strategy, 2001), p. 96. The term "engaged internationalism" is first used on page 11, but is repeated frequently throughout.
2. Government of Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), *Canada in the World* (Ottawa, ON: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1995), p. 29. Also available on-line at [http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreign\\_policy/cnd-world/menu-en.asp](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreign_policy/cnd-world/menu-en.asp).
3. *The Oxford Universal Dictionary* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955).
4. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa, ON: International Development Research Centre, 2001), p. 8.
5. DND, *Leadmark*, p. 37.

6. DFAIT, *Canada in the World*, p. 28.
7. DND, *Leadmark*, p. 96.
8. Jason Plotz, *The Navy and the Post-Modern State*, Maritime Security Occasional Paper No. 9 (Halifax, NS: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, 2000), p. 45.
9. *Ibid.*, p. v. Quoted in DND, *Leadmark*, p. 106.
10. Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (Toronto, ON: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 104.
11. International Crisis Group, *HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue*, Report dated 19 June 2001. Available on-line at [http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/show\\_report.cfm?reportid=321](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/show_report.cfm?reportid=321).
12. Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honour*, p. 105.
13. Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict - Final Report* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997), pp. 40 and 69.
14. *Globe and Mail* editorial, 4 June 2002.
15. DND, *Leadmark*, p. 100.
16. DFAIT, *Canada in the World*, p. 10.
17. DND, *Leadmark*, p. 40.
18. For a good analysis of lessons learned from Track Two, see David Smock (ed.), *Private Peacemaking: USIP-Assisted Peacemaking Projects of Nonprofit Organizations* (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, 1998).
19. Plotz, *The Navy and the Post-Modern State*, pp. 40-41.
20. Salvador de Madariaga, *The Blowing Up of the Parthenon: or How to Lose the Cold War* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1960), p. 17.
21. Jan Wong, *Red China Blues* (Toronto, ON: Doubleday/Anchor Books, 1996), p. 390.



# INTERVENTION AND ENGAGEMENT: A MARITIME PERSPECTIVE

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Cover Image: A Canadian Naval Task Group led by flagship HMCS Algonquin, followed by HMCS Saint John's and HMCS Protecteur, patrol as part of Canada's contribution to *Operation Apollo* and the "campaign against terrorism".  
Photo by MCpl Michel Durand, Formation Imaging Services, Halifax.

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