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Centre for International  
Governance Innovation

Reimagining a Canadian National Security Strategy

No. 3

# Emerging Security Challenges for Canada in the Coming Decade

Hugh Segal and Ann Fitz-Gerald





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The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) is an independent, non-partisan think tank whose peer-reviewed research and trusted analysis influence policy makers to innovate. Our global network of multidisciplinary researchers and strategic partnerships provide policy solutions for the digital era with one goal: to improve people's lives everywhere. Headquartered in Waterloo, Canada, CIGI has received support from the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario and founder Jim Balsillie.

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## À propos du CIGI

Le Centre pour l'innovation dans la gouvernance internationale (CIGI) est un groupe de réflexion indépendant et non partisan dont les recherches évaluées par des pairs et les analyses fiables incitent les décideurs à innover. Grâce à son réseau mondial de chercheurs pluridisciplinaires et de partenariats stratégiques, le CIGI offre des solutions politiques adaptées à l'ère numérique dans le seul but d'améliorer la vie des gens du monde entier. Le CIGI, dont le siège se trouve à Waterloo, au Canada, bénéficie du soutien du gouvernement du Canada, du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de son fondateur, Jim Balsillie.

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## Table of Contents

vi	About the Project
vi	About the Authors
vii	Acronyms and Abbreviations
1	Executive Summary
1	Introduction
2	Canada Needs a New Approach to National Security
2	From a Stable to a Dynamic Risk Spectrum
4	Relevant Global Security Trends
6	The Modern Risk Spectrum Interpreted through Canada's Unique Attributes
6	Foundational Pillars for Reimagining National Security
7	Making National Security the Business of Canadian Society
9	The Benefits of an Inclusive, Society-Wide, National Security Narrative
9	Recommendations
11	Management of the National Security Mission
12	Conclusion
13	Works Cited
17	Acknowledgements

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## About the Project

Canada's approach to domestic and international security is at a profound moment of change. The shock wave of COVID-19 and its looming future effects highlight the urgent need for a new, coordinated and forward-looking Canadian national security strategy that identifies emerging and non-traditional threats and considers their interrelationships. Complex interactions between foreign policy, domestic innovation and intellectual property, data governance, cybersecurity and trade all have a significant impact on Canada's national security and intelligence activities.

Reimagining a Canadian National Security Strategy is an ambitious and unprecedented project undertaken by the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI). It aims to generate new thinking on Canada's national security, inspire updated and innovative national security and intelligence practices, and identify ways that Canada can influence global policy and rulemaking to better protect future prosperity and enhance domestic security.

CIGI convened interdisciplinary working groups, which totalled more than 250 experts from government, industry, academia and civil society, to examine 10 thematic areas reflecting a new and broad definition of national security. Each thematic area was supported by senior officials from the Government of Canada, designated as "senior government liaisons." They provided input and ideas to the discussions of the working group and the drafting of thematic reports. Project advisers provided support and advice through specific lenses such as gender and human rights. This was critical to strengthening the project's commitment to human rights, equity, diversity and inclusion.

The project will publish 10 reports, authored independently by theme leaders chosen by the project's co-directors. The reports represent the views of their authors, are not designed as consensual documents and do not represent any official Government of Canada policy or position. The project was designed to provide latitude to the theme leaders to freely express new thinking about Canada's national security needs.

A special report by the project's co-directors, Aaron Shull and Wesley Wark, will analyze Canada's new national security outlook and propose a security strategy for Canada.

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## About the Authors

**Hugh Segal** is the Matthews Distinguished Fellow in Global Public Policy in the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada, and senior advisor at Aird & Berlis LLP in Toronto, Canada.

Hugh served in the Canadian Senate from 2005 to 2014 and chaired the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Special Senate Committee on Anti-Terrorism.

Previously, Hugh was chief of staff to the Canadian prime minister and associate cabinet secretary in Ontario; president of the Institute for Research on Public Policy in Montreal, Canada; chair of the NATO Association of Canada; and former co-chair of the D-10 Strategy Forum, a track two round table (co-hosted by CIGI and the Atlantic Council). He is also principal emeritus of Massey College, the graduate residential college at the University of Toronto, and holds honorary doctorates from the Royal Military College of Canada, Queen's University and the University of Ottawa. A recipient of both the Vimy Award for service to democracy and national security from the Conference of Defence Associations Institute and the Award for Excellence from the Churchill Society for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy, Hugh has written several books on public, foreign and defence policy, conservative politics and income security. He is a former member of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, which focuses on modernization, human rights and the rule of law.

**Ann Fitz-Gerald** is director of the Balsillie School of International Affairs and a professor in Wilfrid Laurier University's Department of Political Science.

She has worked at both the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London, and at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Cranfield University, where she was the director, defence and security leadership. During her time at Cranfield, Ann led the UK-government-funded Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform and Cranfield's Centre for Defence Management and Leadership. She is a senior security and justice adviser to the UK government and a senior fellow at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies in London, England.

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>BRI</b>	Belt and Road Initiative
<b>CBSA</b>	Canada Border Services Agency
<b>COVID-19</b>	coronavirus disease 2019
<b>CSE</b>	Communications Security Establishment
<b>CSIS</b>	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
<b>FINTRAC</b>	Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada
<b>IP</b>	intellectual property
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NSIA</b>	national security and intelligence advisor
<b>RCMP</b>	Royal Canadian Mounted Police





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## Executive Summary

The range of national security threats, both new and traditional, now facing Canada changes the risk spectrum that Canada must address. This enhanced risk spectrum will require clear directions and priorities if Canada is to manage emergent risks, combined with traditional risks, in a way that mitigates their impact on Canada's residents and on its sovereignty as an independent and democratic country. The response to this new risk spectrum requires a "society-wide" commitment that considers the following recommendations.

- Canada needs a new and inclusive framework for strategic intelligence, one that broadens the national security resource base to include, beyond the existing federal agencies, a broad network of local police, academic and civil society players, and corporate and criminal intelligence partners to effectively mitigate increasing risks.
- The threat spectrum now includes a more complex dynamic than the postwar, bipolar Soviet Union versus the United States competition that also engaged the respective allies of both countries. The emergence of China with, lately, a more global, economic and strategic dominance aspiration, makes it vital that Canada's national security framework embraces everyone in our society who is threatened by these changes.
- Authoritarian countries abroad, often either client states or partners of China and Russia, pose threats to the national security and well-being of Canada. Iran, North Korea and Venezuela all have security interests inimical to those of Canada and its allies. These additional threat dynamics must be addressed.
- New insidious threats of ransomware, disinformation and cyberattacks on public, private, corporate and not-for-profit systems (hospitals, universities, governments), and unlawful electoral intervention from both state actors and criminal conspiracies, are themselves new national security threats that must now be addressed.
- National security is no longer only a discrete professional pursuit by mandated federal agencies with statutory missions. It is a society-

wide obligation that authorities must learn to enable on a society-wide horizon — an approach that should be mandated and encouraged by parliamentarians on a non-partisan basis.

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## Introduction

The era when our national security risks only embraced traditional threats of espionage, terrorism, illegal subversion of government institutions or the security of military plans and deployments has passed. So, too, have the days when national security could be managed, however competently, only by a select group of federal agencies with clearly defined statutory powers.

The nature of the global context now faced by Canadians is redefining the risk spectrum from external and internal sources, which a modern national security framework must address (Fitz-Gerald and Segal 2021). Such a modern national security framework must acknowledge important lessons to date, including the shortcomings of the "human security" doctrine (Krause 2004; Paris 2001) that proposed an unmanageably broad policy agenda (Chandler 2008), which national resources did not support. The lack of a clear set of articulated national security priorities that reflect the vital linkages between domestic concerns and global trends must now be addressed. The broad contemporary security context requires Canada to reimagine national security as a society-wide national enterprise.

This inflection point, generated specifically by an increase in authoritarian versus democratic trends worldwide, and the impact, economically and politically, of a global pandemic that caused death and economic strain in Canada (Statistics Canada 2021) and across the world demands structural investment in society-wide national security through awareness and resilience and the investment necessary to facilitate both. This will be critical, not only for protecting Canada's global and sovereign interests but also for keeping Canadians safe and secure at home.

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# Canada Needs a New Approach to National Security

Canada's approach to a national security strategy was last codified in a 2004 government policy statement, *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy* (Government of Canada 2004). The purpose of this report is to suggest fresh thinking around a more inclusive and transparent Canadian national security framework in the face of an altered threat landscape, a different geopolitical environment, and rapid changes in technologies used to threaten Canada's national security at the state and individual level.<sup>1</sup> The changes in the last 16 years have been substantial.

This report lays out the overall rationale for, and key requirements underlying, a reimagined national security framework that builds on the strength of Canada's existing national security agencies and proposes additional approaches to better address the changing nature of emerging security risks. These initiatives embrace more transparency, greater cross-government and cross-society collaboration, and a focused society-wide national security framework.

Transparency about Canada's national security interests and goals, both in the defensive and apprehensive sense of what that national security mission must now address, need not reveal those necessarily secret measures deployed by our security agencies, but clarity on interests and goals is necessary. Uncertainty about what national security is, or about what our security agencies do, dilutes public support and engagement. Websites are helpful, but specifically articulated goals and interests are of greater value. This pursuit must, of course, always be consistent with democratic principles of the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, a free press and judicial independence.

The core national security issues to be addressed in this report can be identified in four areas.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a plethora of discussion on this point, but for a brief overview of some of these changes and how they are perceived by security policy makers, see US National Intelligence Council (2017); Office of the Director of National Intelligence (2021); Kavanagh (2019); Department of National Defence (2014).

- Principles: defining Canadian national security, identifying Canada's national interests, and understanding the relationship between national security and democratic values.
- Threats and risks: specifying how we understand the mix of traditional, present and future threats to the national security of Canadians.
- Strategic and directional responses: identifying to what extent existing national security capability gaps require urgent address and whether government machinery changes are required.
- Protecting democracy: specifying how democratic legitimacy can be maintained in the face of either authoritarian threats from abroad or domestic threats from extremist actors and proponents at home.

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## From a Stable to a Dynamic Risk Spectrum

Undeterred by the scourge of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Canada's allies have already moved forward to reimagine their own national security directions.<sup>2</sup> Although the pandemic influenced Canada's 2020 threat update, allies undertook more elaborate review exercises, which produced a number of new policy priorities to enable more innovative

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<sup>2</sup> The United Kingdom engaged in an "integrated review" in 2020, culminating in the 2021 *Global Britain in a Competitive Age* strategic framework. This was driven, in part, by a need to delineate the United Kingdom's intended or anticipated global engagement following its exit from the European Union. The review combined what were previously separate reviews, including the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review, into a single document, and was also intended to outline new systems and structures required to achieve the government's goals. Although Australia's last overarching national security strategy was released in 2013, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation provided its 2019/2020 annual report to the Australian Parliament in October 2020. This report represented a comprehensive analysis of the threats that were facing Australia and the nature of the threat environment. It is also notable that Australia released a dedicated Cyber Security Strategy in 2020, highlighting a key area of security concern. The change of administration in the United States also saw a rethinking of US national security. Although this has not yet resulted in a new and comprehensive national security strategy, US President Joe Biden's administration nevertheless produced its *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* in March 2021, which stressed what the administration saw as an "inflection point" in global politics and reiterated the importance of democracy.

technology development and formal agreements to diversify international partnerships, in particular in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond the need for a similar in-depth review to serve as a “national” exercise for Canada — involving federal, provincial, local, civil society, academic and private sector engagement — it is also necessary to demonstrate clarity and precise priorities to our international security partners. They need to know not only about our national security priorities but also about the level of investment we are planning to make in their support. A large part of Canada’s strategic awareness of existing and potential threats to our security was, and is, generated through our intelligence-sharing alliance with other partners such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Five Eyes security alliance (consisting of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States), plus other partners in regional defence and stability areas of priority such as Israel, the Republic of Korea and the Commonwealth Caribbean.

The old national security context was about the threats inherent in the global divisions highlighted by the Cold War and the competing network of client states on both sides. Democratic capitalism versus authoritarian communism, and the implicit associations of freedom with the former and dictatorship with the latter (Thies 2013), were seen as drivers of national security preoccupations. This thinking would manifest itself through the convergence of foreign and global security priorities pursued by Canada and its allies,<sup>4</sup> with national security preoccupations pursued by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), albeit, despite the broadened agenda, with only a modest boost in resources (Hewitt 2018; Beeby 2000). Agencies focused on human intelligence, signals intelligence, and the clearance

function for prospective immigrants and senior officials were also created in the postwar and post-fall-of-the-Berlin-Wall time frame.<sup>5</sup>

The challenge, then, was to keep the agents or interests of hostile foreign state actors from unduly and unlawfully subverting Canada’s national interests, which, appropriately, embraced our allies’ security interests as well.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the replacement of a bipolar world was a key contributor to the enhanced complexity of our national security context. The advent of foreign-financed Sunni terrorism, resulting in deadly attacks in the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe, and the replacement of the Soviet Union, a monolithic authoritarian Marxist empire, with a reduced authoritarian Russia that employs military, diplomatic and state-sponsored violence at home and abroad, have been further dimensions of the change.<sup>6</sup>

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russia has been involved in military combat in Chechnya, Ossetia, Georgia, Crimea and Syria on an almost continuous basis. Under Chinese President Xi Jinping, democracy in Hong Kong has been legislated away, threats to Taiwan have proliferated and China has adopted a more aggressive stance on global domination than under previous administrations. This includes violation of international rulings on national boundaries within the South China Sea and border hostilities with neighbouring India, a Canadian Commonwealth partner and the largest democracy in the world.

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3 See, for example, Crabtree (2021). The United Kingdom is also likely to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as a “dialogue partner” (Savic 2021). In doing so, it will join Australia, Canada and the United States as a dialogue partner and will be the first new country to be afforded this status in 21 years. In a similar vein, the Australian Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth presented to the Australian Parliament, in February 2021, a report titled *Pivot: Diversifying Australia’s Trade and Investment Profile*, which stressed the need to shift away from Australia’s dependence on trade with China. Comment from the Biden administration in the United States about diversifying the supply chain hints at similar priorities. See the White House (2021a).

4 The creation of NATO is, of course, the most distinct and lasting symbol of this, at least within Europe and North America. For a succinct description of the alliance’s development, see Garamone (2019).

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5 For example, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) was established in 1984 and the Communications Security Establishment (CSE), a natural evolution of Canada’s signals intelligence capabilities into a single organization, was formally created in 1975. In addition, the “Security Panel,” comprised of civil servants and RCMP personnel, was created in 1946 to investigate and uncover government employees whose loyalty to Canada was thought to be questionable. For further information on Canada’s approach to security and immigration, see Troper (1993). For more information on the CSE, see Rudner (2001).

6 See, for example, Blank (2019); Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (2017).

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## Relevant Global Security Trends

China has transitioned from an economically dynamic country with a mostly peaceful billion-plus population, to one whose present government has deserted earlier regime commitments to economic opening and integration into the liberal economic order. It has opted for an aggressive, “wolf warrior diplomacy,” authoritarian model, with territorial and global intimidation postures aplenty (Cheng 2020; Sharp, Melissen and Zhang 2001; Khan 2021). The promotion of Chinese influence worldwide through the Belt and Road Initiative’s (BRI’s) mix (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2018; Cai 2017) of loans and investments in infrastructure<sup>7</sup> characterizes China’s engagement with both the developed North and the developing South. States across the latter group have become increasingly interested in China’s revolutionary, “developmental state,” authoritarian economic model (Knight 2014; Nee, Opper and Wong 2007; Baek 2005; Hutao 2018), despite the threats to their national sovereignty and diversity of interests (Mazarr, Heath and Cevallos 2018; Hung 2018).

This further dimension of change to our security context from China’s global “spread” also poses serious challenges to how best to manage the link between our global interests and domestic security priorities. China has a robust network of research relationships with Canadian universities and commercial relationships with Canadian market and agricultural entities, not only as a supplier but also as a customer and host to important Canadian private sector endeavours. Chinese university students at the undergraduate and graduate levels

are an important part of Canadian university enrollment and revenue streams, as are Chinese tourists an important part of the tourism industry. These are constructive relationships for both countries. The national security challenge requires parsing these relationships to ensure that Canadian security interests for our economy, residents and intellectual property (IP) are properly protected.

The disappearance of the old Cold War duopoly has also meant the emergence of state actors such as Iran, North Korea and their client states (Litwak 2008) and proxy state and non-state actor networks, as independent security risks. Sophisticated criminal supply chains, based in authoritarian countries and operating within the global drug trade, have now proliferated into warring groups such as the “yahoo gangs”<sup>8</sup> fighting over access to data. Through a combination of both human and cyber tactics, these gangs seek to hack the bank accounts and corporate wealth of democratic countries by manipulating the very algorithms that are meant to protect savings (Sela-Shayovitz 2012; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2009; Tropina 2012; Broadhurst et al. 2014). Evidence suggests that these groups and other criminalized gangs such as ransomware threat actors connect with other threat groups to create a more self-sustaining system of various forms of warfare. These threats have far-reaching implications for critical infrastructure, including hospitals, universities, electricity grids, vital utilities, pipelines, and large retail and wholesale supply chains. With the US government’s recent push on supply chain resilience (The White House 2021c; Prasad 2020) and on securing sustainable technology, metal and mineral bases to assist Group of Seven countries in “building back better” and reducing the pandemic debt (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2020; The White House 2021b; BBC News 2021), the process of developing robust supply chains for Canada must be underpinned by effective, fair and well-governed supply chain accountability as a critical dimension of our own national security framework (Momani 2020).

Canadian passengers on an aircraft, or Canadian visitors with approved visas in China, Iran or Russia, can no longer operate with a presumption

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7 China’s inclusion of African countries in its BRI has been one of the most comprehensively covered aspects of the initiative. Official Chinese figures in 2019 indicated that 37 African countries had signed up for the initiative, as well as the African Union. In some of the highest-profile projects, Ethiopia borrowed US\$1.3 billion to construct the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, which was built by Chinese state-owned companies; Kenya borrowed more than US\$2 billion for rail lines; and Cameroon borrowed US\$500 million for the Memve’ele hydropower project in 2012 (Dollar 2019). The BRI has now also reached Latin America (Panama’s 2017 endorsement of the BRI, as well as Argentinian, Brazilian, Colombian and Mexican interest in the project, are examples of Latin American involvement). In 2018, China became Latin America’s second-largest trading partner (Zhang 2019). Further projects associated with the BRI have been instituted in a diverse array of countries, including Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. For a full overview of countries’ engagements with the BRI, see Sacks (2021).

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8 In addition to the yahoo gangs, this niche area of crime targeting households has also now become strongly linked to romance scams, rather than “hacking” (technically) bank accounts and corporate wealth. See, for example, Longe, Chiemeke and Longe (n.d.); Tade (2013).

of safe passage (Brown 2020; Dehghan and Kassam 2016; Zimonjic 2018). In Canada, residents with roots or relations in China, Iran or Russia can no longer assume their lives will not be altered by threats from foreign actors or their agents in Canada (Public Safety Canada 2020; Government of Canada 2021; Chase 2020).

The advent of new technologies over the last decade and their hostile deployment, such as through cyber attacks, ransomware blackmail initiatives and online disinformation used by both state and non-state actors, housed in, and sometimes financed by, foreign powers, are a daily and emergent risk. As we have seen, these threats, while often aimed at government departments and data banks, have also been deployed against private, corporate, not-for-profit and community infrastructure at great risk and cost to Canadians.<sup>9</sup>

In simple terms, the nature, scope and dynamics of the national security risk spectrum have multiplied and become more complex, diffuse and easily launched. Cyber attacks, or attempted hacks, have proliferated in dimension, capacity and complexity, leaving no aspect of an internet- and online-driven government, corporate, social or institutional Canadian infrastructure beyond reach.

A Canadian citizen need not be formally involved in official national security agency activity at home or abroad to now be personally at risk. No aspect of how Canadians go about their daily lives, from family life to work, from shopping to education, from health care to transportation, is safe from new national security threats.

The current pandemic underlined the national security threat that biological risks, either passive or constructed by hostile parties, can pose to life, economic viability and social cohesion (Koblentz 2010; National Intelligence Council 2000; National Security Council 2009). The apparent winding down of an international Canadian bio-risk intelligence network some time ago eliminated

the prospect of rapid detection, assessment and analysis of the massive pandemic public health risk in a timely way. The subsequent decision of the federal government, in the second year of the pandemic, to start up a new bio-intelligence agency is encouraging. But this cycle begs the question of what other areas of intelligence detection and analysis are also missing from the requisite capacities vital to our national interest.

Evidence of hostile digital and disinformation initiatives at election time in allied countries such as France (Vilmer 2019), the United Kingdom (UK Government 2020) and the United States (Select Committee on Intelligence 2020) all add to the complexity of the threat spectrum faced by Canada. Digital disinformation and misinformation campaigns over social media associated with international and civil conflict also run the risk of virtual attacks that enable the export of a foreign conflict onto Canadian soil.

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## The Modern Risk Spectrum Interpreted through Canada's Unique Attributes

Canada's unique geography and demographic and social makeup create a national security risk spectrum that is equally unique:

- Canada's proximity and deep economic engagement with joint systems networks in the United States make Canada a prime target for hostile state and non-state actors who seek to harm the United States or undermine its economic security or political infrastructure for essentially subversive purposes.
- The vast size of Canada's geography, in which large tracts of the country are not easily patrolled or secured, provides unique opportunities for state or non-state actors with criminal or subversive intent to penetrate our territory.
- The proximity of Canada's underpopulated North to Arctic waterways and mineral resources (Government of Canada 2017; Shadian 2018),

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the theft of data from the US financial institution Capital One contained details of six million Canadians, and the theft of data from the Marriott hotel chain also included the personal information of Canadians. Furthermore, Nissan, which has a plant in Canada, had to halt production for safety reasons after being subjected to a ransomware attack, and in October 2019, a Canadian insurance company paid CDN\$1.3 million to "recover 20 servers and 1,000 workstations." Other organizations have had their data leaked after refusing to pay a ransom to cyber criminals. On a local level, the City of Burlington in Ontario mistakenly paid CDN\$503,000 to a cyber criminal posing as a trusted vendor. See Canadian Centre for Cyber Security (2020).

which are of strategic interest to Russian geopolitical aspirations (Trenin and Baev 2010; Klimenko 2016), constitutes a specific security threat to Canada, made more acute by serious Russian investment in resource-focused, military and intelligence infrastructure in their Arctic territory. China's recent substantial investment in ice-breaking vessels (Doshi, Dale-Huang and Zhang 2021) and its self-description as a "near-Arctic state" are also an indication of coming security and geopolitical challenges (Kopra 2020).

- The large percentage of Canadian residents who were not born in Canada, combined with the large percentage of residents in big cities who are recent arrivals from different parts of the world, may be targeted by hostile competitive countries that seek to intimidate, and unlawfully influence, Canadian public opinion and policy. These countries may seek to harass expatriate populations and threaten their families in their home countries, while hostile authoritarian powers seek to force expatriates to infiltrate academic, corporate or government agencies to rifle IP, proprietary data and critical systems infrastructure. Intimidating voters in local, provincial and federal elections and party nominations also constitutes direct threats to individual security, the economy and quality of life for thousands of Canadians. These threats are, to some extent, diluted by the rich cultural and racial diversity of the Canadian population — a diversity that is a distinct asset to the work and mission of our national security agencies, and the general economic and demographic diversity of Canada.

The challenge of a reimagined national security framework for Canada involves more than legislative tinkering with existing statutes of Canadian security agencies such as CSIS, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the CSE or the RCMP. The challenge is not one of distinguishing between foreign intelligence and security intelligence, as some former practitioners have suggested (Jones, Jones and Storsater 2021). The boundaries between foreign and domestic security threats have become very permeable.

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## Foundational Pillars for Reimagining National Security

The reimagining challenge embraces a national security framework based on the effective generation of, and investment in, strategic intelligence, which means developing an informed awareness of risks before they become acute. This strategic intelligence should be acquired through a diverse and society-wide mix of Canadian intelligence and security agencies; private sector, Canadian-based multinational corporations, both at home and abroad; and a central, high-level integrated and fusion-focused<sup>10</sup> analytical team. This team would analyze, warn and, where necessary, prescribe active measures to defend against hostile actions taken or planned against Canada's national security.

For that strategic intelligence to be both relevant and well-targeted, it must be driven by a clear and regularly updated statement of our national security interests that seek to protect the economic, social, democratic and pluralist frameworks that serve Canadians. Above all, protecting the discretion Canadians now have to deliberate democratically on a diverse set of choices regarding their government, the economy, and how key sectors such as public health, education, immigration, defence and justice should be positioned, must be protected from external and internal security threats.

Democratic and mixed-market frameworks for reaching decisions as an open society, replete with a free press; lawful and peaceful dissent; and differing political, economic and social interests around environmental, economic and social priorities, all protected by the rule of law, respect for human rights and judicial independence, are the foundation of Canadian society.<sup>11</sup> It is in Canada's national interest to protect these freedoms and values that, in some ways, are unique to Canada, but are also, in other ways,

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on the concept of fusion-focused approaches to national security, see UK Government (2018, 10–11).

<sup>11</sup> See [www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cp-pm/just/06.html](http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cp-pm/just/06.html).

shared with our democratic allies. This must be the first priority of our security agencies.

That these values and freedoms are anathema to authoritarian competitors, by their own admission, defines the core mission of our national security interests. A reimagined national security posture for Canada must explicitly reflect this clear and present national security mission.

In the absence of a meaningful, high-level and cross-government foreign policy (Mank 2019) or national security policy statement (Nossal 2018) over the last decade, it is critical to engage the Canadian public in such a debate and raise this discussion to the highest levels of political discourse.

A first step toward developing a new national security mission is to articulate national security interests. This, combined with a more pragmatic link between some of the global trends outlined above, and impacts at the household level for Canadians, calls for the need to define more specific national interests in a way that resonates with Canadians and the priorities they seek to protect in their own lives. Specific references to less universal and more uniquely Canadian national interests, which the Canadian public can better identify with, could also promote engagement on these issues.

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## Making National Security the Business of Canadian Society

An insightful and continuously iterated national security analysis (on an annual or semi-annual basis) that links global security issues with the realities of Canadian society would facilitate Canadians in both caring about national security and generating informed debate and the support that this policy agenda would require in Parliament.

These linkages between global and “Canadian local” issues may include the relevance of Canada’s dependence on international trade flows with

the United States and China.<sup>12</sup> Canada’s trade relationships with the United States overshadow those with China. In the context of national security aspirations and goals, China’s flows could be moderated by increasing constructive engagement and trade activity with countries such as Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam, hence ushering in more dependable and non-authoritarian partners in the region. Our insufficient attention to these other markets only increases the leverage of authoritarian regimes in Beijing. Economic security is a key underpinning of national security.

Security threats to Canadians have moved beyond physical, urban-based and infrastructure-focused to threats that can impact the most remote communities as much as they can urban centres. These threats, which are space-, data- and cyber-based, have the potential to impact the country in a similarly unpredicted and catastrophic way as the COVID-19 pandemic (Moens, Cushing and Dowd 2015). Anticipating strategic risk in these areas and adapting our knowledge base and infrastructure to be resilient against such threats requires not only close multilateral partnerships for early warning purposes but also appropriate levels of investment and expertise to navigate within this space. Current commitments to research and investment in these areas are low (Leuprecht and MacLellan 2018) relative to like-minded partners such as the United Kingdom (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts 2019), France (Agence Nationale de la Sécurité des Systèmes d’Information 2011) and Sweden (Government Offices of Sweden, Ministry of Justice 2017). This, when combined with low levels of multilateral engagement, is worrying and creates the potential for Canada to fall behind in protecting the security of Canadians.

Any lagging posture toward cyber and data threat preparedness will further impact the country’s ability to attract global expertise and thought leaders in this area and, subsequently, risks producing a future generation of industry and policy leaders insufficiently equipped to operate credibly in this domain. In parallel, any cyberspace deficit may further widen the ungoverned technological territory into which

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<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that, although the current geopolitical actions of the United States and China have significant implications for Canada’s trade, reports in 2019 and 2020 indicate that the European Union is wedged between both countries as a significant trading partner. See Global Affairs Canada (2020).

hostile actors can step. The creation of capacity dependencies in this area should be concerning, particularly based on the country's weak IP protection track record to date (Aciri 2017).

Municipalities across the country have become home to immigrants whose skills and numbers Canada highly depends on to support its economic resilience and job creation (Century Initiative, n.d.). The current aspirational goal of hosting a population of 100 million by 2100,<sup>13</sup> promoted by leading business and academic leaders (Corcoran 2019), will need to rely on international migration to make up for the national deficit — and a trend, in some provinces<sup>14</sup> — of a higher death rate versus birth rate. With data suggesting that immigration is not a “top of mind” issue (Environics Institute for Survey Research 2020)<sup>15</sup> for the majority of Canadians and ongoing concerns across the population regarding immigrants’ “job taking” and “lack of adoption of Canadian values,” this growth goal — key to a stable future economy — risks being undermined. The coherent management of our own population policy is a further national security priority.

Immigration strategies are also directly linked to the international students we attract. Despite evidence around the world that confirms how effective tertiary education can be as a tool of “soft power” (as practised, for years, by countries such as the United Kingdom) (Fisher 2021), education is not a function represented in the federal Cabinet. Working with the provinces on the national security dimension of this challenge is important.

Canada's ability to have reasonable influence in international circles is dependent on our will to both invest, and be seen to invest, in the instruments of international relevance. Recent decisions of allies and partners from Sweden (*The Economist* 2020) to the United Kingdom (*The Telegraph* 2020) to massively increase defence spending are instructive. Allies generally have a high opinion of Canada's well-trained and professional armed forces. They also wonder,

as should all Canadians, why Canada's armed forces are so limited in numbers and deployable capacity. Globally deployed Canadian forces in humanitarian, training, security alliance or, if necessary, combat-ready roles are an integral part of a domestic national security framework's global intelligence and assessment capacity. Successive Canadian governments of both major parties share responsibility for this diminished global capacity. Showing up where required for security, ally support, and humanitarian, combat or stability protection missions, and being seen as able and sufficiently resourced to do so, matters to national security at home. Military intelligence networks combine with diplomatic intelligence to strengthen our security capacities at home. Each of our armed forces pillars (navy, army, air force and special forces) are too small for a country of our size, geographic footprint and economy. These gaps are most apparent through our minimal population, investment and military presence in our own Arctic, and in the Asia-Pacific theatre (Dewitt et al. 2018), the Caribbean and the Mediterranean — all critical geopolitical intersections of our national alliances and defence and security priorities. It should surprise few that “big hat, no cattle” is an expression that even friendly partners, let alone potentially hostile competitors, may increasingly embrace when comparing Canada's robust foreign policy declarations to its limited deployable capacity.

Ultimately, robust national security at home depends on a well-articulated series of national interests, supported by a society-wide commitment. This commitment must engage academic, business, labour, civil society and cultural communities in a rational, coherent and lawful framework that seeks to promote resilience and protect our way of life, however imperfect, as a critical benefit to Canadians.

It is that kind of “reimagining of national security” that the mix of opportunities we seek to encourage and threats we seek to manage, will require.

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13 See [www.centuryinitiative.ca](http://www.centuryinitiative.ca).

14 See [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14240-eng.htm#a4](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14240-eng.htm#a4).

15 See also a June 2021 Angus Reid poll (<https://angusreid.org/canada-immigration-2021/>), which suggests that only two percent of people in Canada see immigration as “the most important issue to them personally,” and seven percent see it as one of the top three. This puts immigration at thirteenth in the list, above only “international/global issues.”



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## The Benefits of an Inclusive, Society-Wide, National Security Narrative

If a society-wide approach to a national collaboration on national security is to be created in Canada, there are some guiding principles and directions that will be central to the task.

Above all, political leadership, backed up by security agency chiefs, should be encouraged to be relatively open about the day-to-day risks to the Canadian way of life important to the freedom and economic well-being of Canada's people. Some initial links between the uniqueness of the Canadian way of life that accounts for the country's well-developed social and economic capital — much of which was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic — have been cited in sections above. The openness of this discussion need not violate secret or confidential operational planning or implementation based on secure mega analysis, strategic intelligence and privileged assessment by security officials. Signals intelligence and cyber defence necessarily require high-security arrangements in the face of hostile state and non-state actors who seek constantly to penetrate our data and analytical systems.

But those exigencies should not be allowed to undermine a broad and open public discussion of why national security matters, and how security threats have day-to-day impacts on the lives, safety, freedom and jobs of Canadians. Marshalling society-wide, multi-sector engagement on national security is not, as some security officials may fear, a risk to national security; rather, it enables a more engaged, well-informed and collaborative way ahead. Indeed, not marshalling such engagement presents an overwhelming opportunity cost for Canada. A country whose security interests, at all levels of society, are articulated and protected and seen as such by the population, generally is a country whose confidence and initiative in a range of scientific, business, social justice, democratic, artistic and community pursuits are deepened. A country whose population feels unprotected, or unduly vulnerable to a range of security risks, is less able to pursue the courageous aspirations

that a strong and free democracy has the right to embrace. A lack of open engagement about security within an open democracy allows hostile state or non-state actors to spread anxiety and promote distrust among Canadians and their public institutions, simply by alluding to their ability to compromise important areas of cybersecurity, biosecurity or human security, regardless of whether they have the capacity to do so.



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## Recommendations

Some recommendations that would help facilitate this broader national engagement beyond the narrow confines of the security agencies themselves should reflect the following points.

- For reimagining national security to proceed apace, in ways that produce effective results and sharpen nationwide focus, the national security and intelligence advisor (NSIA) to the prime minister should be central to the undertaking. The advisor's role in seeking nationwide collaboration on national security should be publicly endorsed by the prime minister and should be statutory and clearly proscribed through federal legislation.
- In order to be collaborative about desired outcomes and the deployment of joint and fusion-based strategic analysis (Lawson 2018), the federal government should convene, through the NSIA, a national working group of key partners who would be central to a society-wide undertaking. This working group should meet semi-annually and include national security agency<sup>16</sup> chiefs; senior public safety officials from the provinces; heads of criminal intelligence networks; academics focused on national security disciplines; officials from key federal departments, including national defence, health, immigration and Global Affairs Canada; and corporate leaders from Canadian-based multinational

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<sup>16</sup> Including, of course, CSIS, the CSE, the CBSA, the Department of National Defence, FINTRAC, the Criminal Intelligence Service Canada and the RCMP.

companies. This working group should meet both in public and in camera as required.

- Capacity building to support the above-mentioned working group necessitates effective and contemporary-relevant and mid-career development training in evidence-based analysis, forecasting and assessment. Such training must embrace data from all relevant science, business, academic and high-tech domains.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada's recently created Centre for Biosecurity (to replace the one peremptorily closed some time ago) should report to the NSIA and to the prime minister.
- To facilitate and expand existing academic and research capacities on national security challenges, the federal government should add Canada Research Chairs in National Security to the present mix of federally funded Canada Research Chairs in other disciplines. Broadening and deepening the national security academic community across Canada will allow the development of deep areas of expertise in the countries, issues, technologies and pathologies that constitute genuine security risks to Canada. All our national security agencies should have networks of security-cleared, deep-knowledge academics and researchers available for their diagnostic and analytical missions.
- Every three years, Canada's national security agency chiefs should be asked to produce an integrated joint risk analysis report to Parliament, signed by each of the agency heads and tabled annually by the minister of public safety and emergency preparedness for debate and discussion. This report would enumerate the national security threats facing our country, its residents and our vital national, provincial, private sector and local institutions. Following the enumeration of these threats, the report should articulate priorities, the rationale supporting them and the resources necessary to implement them.
- All national security agencies should be assessed regularly on their ability to identify threats, present coherent risk assessments, and provide the Cabinet with sufficient warning to deter, mitigate or take active measures against the perpetrator. Grading on any or all of these dimensions will vary by

context, but understanding the importance of these dimensions to effective and preventive strategic awareness is essential to enhancing the mission-specific focus of each of our national security agencies and the NSIA and Cabinet to whom they report.

- Special care must be taken, and substantial investment must be made, in deepening the linguistic skills, cultural affinities and country knowledge relative to hostile state actors and their international allies that now constitute a threat to Canada's national security. One need only reflect on how many Chinese, Russian or Iranian nationals, duly employed in their own national security infrastructure, speak fluent English or French, and how many employees of Canadian security agencies have similar levels of fluency in Mandarin, Russian or Farsi, and a cultural understanding of China, Russia, Iran or, for that matter, North Korea.
- A key function of a strategic intelligence-based national security framework is the clear allocation of tactical roles when threats must be countered and deterred or mitigated. Whether the active measures may include sanctions against aggressors, cyberattacks to weaken aggressors' capacities or resolve, or other diplomatic or kinetic responses will depend on the nature of the threat, the nature of the target and the desirability of strategic or tactical engagement. Whether any of these active measures, however now authorized by law, are used is within the purview of the security agency chiefs, the NSIA, and government and judicial approval.
- Canada, along with its NATO and North American Aerospace Defense Command partners, engages in various air-, sea- and land-based exercises to deter attacks wherever they may occur. So, too, should our national security agencies be mandated to exercise active measures of various kinds to demonstrate to potential cyber and disinformation aggressors that Canada has the capacity, acuity and will to act against those who would threaten Canada's national security. The best national security practices prevent bad things from happening.
- Building a society-wide approach to national security suggests a more engaging and informative public discourse about the national security threats we face from foreign powers

and from extremists and criminal networks at home and abroad. Public discussion is essential to maintaining appropriate levels of security for the design of active measures and related deployment plans. In fact, the more open and informative the discussion of the full range of threats faced by Canadians, the more likely there will be substantial levels of public support for the analysis, plans and countermeasures our national security agencies need to prepare.

- The critical priority of constructive public discussion centres, in part, on the statutory review of existing laws for the scope and mission of our respective national security agencies. These often take place at three- or five-year intervals and involve work, usually on a non-partisan basis, by parliamentarians in both the House of Commons and the Senate. These intervals are an opportunity not only to solicit broad parliamentary opinion but also to involve academic, business, civil society, union and cultural organizations, along with provincial security and cybersecurity officials, to contribute to the review process. Getting it right for the future should not be an Ottawa-only discrete discussion.

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## Management of the National Security Mission

It is natural that the federal agencies on the front line of national security threats, plans and intelligence analysis would have a proprietary view of their statutory mandate, predominant role and mission. Those who work for these agencies are owed a great deal of respect and ongoing gratitude. Their mission is particularly difficult because, heretofore, what they do, how they do it and the serious risks they prevent are rarely discussed or even allowed to be disclosed beyond the most limited chain of command.

The national security framework of Canada does not belong to the security agencies, or their officers, however remarkable their efforts to protect Canadians every hour of every day.

National security, as it relates to all aspects of our way of life, is the domain of all Canadians;

however, certain aspects must retain the highest of security arrangements. Transparency about national security interests and priorities is a sign of strength, not weakness.

In the same way that Canadians understand the purposes of our armed forces, our first responders, our public health officials and our local police, they have the right to understand the purposes and goals of our national security agencies and officials.

There is no case to be made, despite earlier practices, for excessive secrecy in areas where it is neither required nor legitimate, or for smothering open discussion among Canadians around our national security interests and the range of foreign and domestic risks to those interests. To do so is to weaken national security itself.

We have reached an inflection point where the broad dimensions of modern national security challenges and the division between what needs to be kept secret and what needs to be in the public domain must be substantially updated. That updating is vital to national security today.

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## Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the security agencies of Canada and our democratic allies are all deeply challenged by the mix of asymmetric, highly complex and newly invigorated challenges to national security frameworks at home and abroad.

Hostile authoritarian governments that operate without democratic opposition, a free and critical press, any pressure from public opinion or regard for legal, constitutional or human rights see their freedom from these constraints as tactical strengths.

Leaders of both China and Russia embrace this freedom as sustaining the strength of the authoritarian model, citing the constraints faced in the democracies as core weaknesses in the democratic model. They have made on-the-record declarations to this effect.

How democracies manage their national security in the face of cyber aggression from hostile nation-states and other non-state criminal actors, intimidation of local populations by foreign agents,

biological threats of indeterminate origin and rising levels of internal extremism will, in some measure, determine the resilience of the democratic model that celebrates freedom, diversity, dissent, the rule of law and the benefits of a free press.

The national security risk spectrum is broader and more complex than that occasioned by the global power mix at the time our security agencies were stood up and even since any serious comprehensive policy thinking on national security was last undertaken. The need for a broader national security spectrum of response and society-wide engagement reflecting more than official Ottawa headquarters is compelling. Embracing a society-wide national commitment in no way diminishes the immense work done every day by our security agencies to protect Canada. The need simply argues for a commitment that is larger and more reflective of all aspects of the country's diverse economic, analytical, academic and civil society strengths and capacity.

The true national security threats to Canadians where they live, work and gather are larger than what a few well-intentioned and competently led national security agencies can manage on their own. The requirement for a broader reimagined approach is unavoidable and essential.

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