

While the commitment of the Canadian contingent to Europe has long been a cornerstone of Canada's security and defence policy, based on collective defence, there are several additional key imperatives, each of which is also subject to tremendous pressures and change. Although the government tried for some months after the Budget to maintain that the White Paper framework was still intact, it attempted to produce a basic "update" of this framework, and the Prime Minister in November conceded that the 1987 policy was an outdated one.

The extraordinary challenge now, in a period of tremendous political fluidity in the world, and scarce budgetary resources, is to arrive at some decisions that will provide Canada's defence planners, and the personnel of the Canadian Armed Forces, with reasonably clear and stable directions and credible assurance that they will be equipped to carry out the tasks assigned to them. For this challenge to be met, there is now no alternative to an in-depth public debate of policy needs and options – a rarity in the defence field. The 1987 White Paper and its subsequent history shows that citizens and taxpayers are no longer prepared to take on faith the simplified picture of threats, responses and Canadian responsibilities that sufficed at the height of the Cold War. This Institute's own public opinion studies, however, demonstrate that Canadians are still supportive of prudent defence and responsible cooperation with allies. On this basis we, and others, are committed to providing a forum and well-prepared input for serious public debate on defence policy over the crucial months ahead.

Issues for Informed Debate

Since informed public debate will now provide the best defence for Defence, it is essential for a much wider group of Canadians to begin to understand a number of the basic factors, principles and issues surrounding Canadian security and defence policy so that they can begin to think through the implications.

■ As the defence White Paper acknowledged, the country's security is comprised of three inter-related components: defence policy and programmes; arms control and disarmament possibilities; and conflict resolution activities including peacekeeping. Much more than was recognized in the White Paper, a positive environment for the latter two sets of activities can ultimately reduce the need for defence and/or result in different sets of demands and operations.

■ While Canadians are accustomed to thinking of our military expenditure as very modest (and it certainly takes a lower share of our GNP