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THE POLITICAL OFFICER
IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

WORKING PAPER

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Prepared for
Assistant Deputy Minister
(Global and Security Policy)

Paul H. Chapin
Performance Systems Canada Inc.
and
Evaluation Division
Office of the Inspector General
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The process of globalization is creating a new reality, a "globality" which is requiring governments to re-think how they perform their functions. Foreign ministries, rather than being an anachronism, may be the state's best instrument for designing the future it wants. Located at the intersect of domestic and foreign policy, the role of a foreign ministry is to manage the state's progress through international issues which engage domestic interests, negotiating solutions within rule-bound systems and helping to develop rules where none exist. To be effective 21st century institutions, foreign ministries need a combination of resources not found elsewhere in government: a worldwide infrastructure to generate the information, contacts and methods for successfully pursuing national interests abroad; a global communications system; a capacity for developing national policy to deal with globalization; and "globalist" foreign service officers.
2. "Globalists" are a new breed, neither generalists nor specialists, but masters of the global scene with a unique mix of knowledge, skills and personal attributes. They have a command of the many dimensions of global affairs and how these interact -- politics, culture, technology, finance, national security, and ecology. They are skilled in "working the global system". And they have the mental toughness to operate in alien environments. Diplomacy is only one of the professions in which globalists are beginning to appear.
3. Political officers are the foundation of the globalist foreign service officers of the future. It is their job to understand the "big picture", to identify the major interests at stake, to craft the strategies for protecting and promoting those interests. Their core functions are collecting and analyzing information on developments which could affect Canadian interests; providing policy and operational advice to Canadian decision-makers; coordinating national positions; building networks in Canada and abroad; lobbying and advocating on behalf of Canadian government positions; negotiating agreements and conventions; and managing foreign policy operations.
4. But political officers represent a "thin red line". Apart from EX-level officers, there are only 482 FSs in the political/economic stream which supplies the bulk of political officers. The 316 at headquarters are spread among some 35 functional divisions and 20 geographic divisions. Abroad, there are only 166, spread across 160 missions. Both in Ottawa and in the field, political officers are able to spend only a portion of their time on core functions. Multi-tasked by their own department, they also support the operations of other government departments. And many are required to handle much of the administrative work associated with visits and conferences.

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5. Political officers face a number of obstacles to their work. Some of these are department-wide issues affecting all groups. The department has yet to articulate a mission for the age of globalization, notwithstanding the substantial efforts it has made to change with the times. This affects political officers more than any other group. Policy development is being accorded new weight, but it has struggled in the past, in large part because of a shortage of officers and over-tasking. As a senior official outside DFAIT observed, "They're not short of talent, just overextended". Business planning is improving, but it is still not delivering all the benefits it could. And information management is chaotic despite drawing down 7.4% of the overall DFAIT budget.
6. Issues particular to political officers include vacancies in the ranks of those supposed to be available to do political work and the policy of trying to fill the gaps by hiring term employees to do political work, which has created other problems. There are continued difficulties in clarifying the respective roles of functional and geographic bureaux, and progress has been slow in developing standard operating procedures for some key functions such as political reporting, managing crises, organizing visits and conferences, and preparing briefing books.
7. Addressing these problems would substantially improve the productivity of political resources, help the department deliver better service to government and Canadians, and position Canada to deal more effectively with globalization. For the most part, solutions have already been identified. They can be found in the practices of other foreign ministries and other government departments, and in some cases are already being implemented successfully in particular units of the department itself. Many of the proposals raised in the study can be implemented within three to six months, and all within a year or two at most. Little new money would be required.

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INTRODUCTION

The following is an internal analysis of the role and work activities of political officers in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, in particular those involved in the department's International Security and Cooperation (ISC) business line.

Political officers, of course, are part of the political/economic stream and of the foreign service (FS) group more generally, all of whom operate in the same distinctive environment and share many similarities in their work. So while the focus of the study has been political officers doing ISC work at headquarters and abroad, some of the analysis and findings of this report might also apply to economic or trade officers. The subject of the study, however, is the political officer.

The study was launched by the Assistant Deputy Minister (Global and Security Policy), Paul Heinbecker, and was managed on his behalf by David Lee (LGX). The Evaluation Division of the Office of the Inspector General commissioned the consultants retained to do the study, covered the costs, and provided methodological and administrative support.

Paul Chapin, Managing Partner of Performance Systems Canada Inc., conducted background research, interviewed some 30 individuals, and wrote the final report. Daniel Dubé, President of Synerma Inc., assisted by Michael O'Leary, facilitated four workshops at the Canadian Foreign Service Institute and prepared a report on the results.

Objectives

The study has four specific objectives:

- To articulate a rationale for the political resources of the department in an age of globalization, thereby to position the department to explain and defend its need for such resources now and in the future;
- To prepare a profile of how political resources are currently being used in four work settings (functional bureaux, geographic bureaux, multilateral missions, and bilateral missions);
- To identify obstacles to effective use of the department's political resources, and to draw up a list of proposals to make political work more efficient and effective;
- To propose a framework for managing and evaluating the use of political resources which focuses on the contribution such resources make to the achievement of desired outcomes, to assist in the development of the right kind of performance measures for political work.

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Final Report

The final report consists of four chapters and a series of annexes:

- Chapter One (*Globalization, foreign ministries, and all that*) sets the context for the study, through a brief discussion of the impact which globalization has been having on governments and foreign ministries and the emerging need for “globalist” foreign service officers.
- Chapter Two (*Profile of Political Officers*) presents some basic data on the Foreign Service (FS) officer group, the political/economic stream, and political officers, discusses the core functions of political work, and describes some of the distinctive features of the political “workplace”.
- Chapter Three (*Obstacles to getting the job done*) reports on the most important obstacles standing in the way of optimal use of the department’s political resources. Issues are divided into two groups: *department-wide issues* which affect all groups but have a particular impact on political officers, and *issues particular to political officers*.
- Chapter Four (*Best Practices*) explores how many of these same issues are already being addressed in other foreign ministries, in other government departments and agencies, and sometimes even in particular units of the department. Discussion of each issue closes with one or more proposals for action the department could take to ameliorate or resolve the matter.
- The *Conclusions* section recapitulates the proposals, and includes a chart suggesting the time-frame within which proposals should be actioned, along with an indication of whether additional funding might be required to implement individual proposals.
- Annex 1 (*A Performance Framework for Foreign Policy*) elaborates on Proposal #10 recommending a performance measurement initiative for the department’s political resources.
- Annex 2 (*Budgetary Realities*) and Annex 3 (*Program and Administrative Staff Abroad*) provide basic financial and personnel data relevant to the study.

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Methodology

A variety of means was used to generate the information on which the report is based:

- (A) Research on the changing global context, in particular recent work by such notable authors on global issues as Daniel Yergin, William Greider, Thomas Friedman, William Watson, Thomas Homer-Dixon, and Economist writers John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge.
- (B) Review of past studies and current departmental improvement initiatives with particluar relevance to political officers, including:
 - the Ken Merklinger study in 1971 on The Role of the Diplomat,
 - the Alan McGill study in 1976 on The Role of the Department of External Affairs in the Government of Canada,
 - the Review of the Organization Structure and Management Process at Headquarters, External Affairs and International Trade, by Ron Capelle and Associates in 1990,
 - the Back to Basics final report of the 1990 Corporate Review,
 - the 1991 Hunter/Halstead audit of The Political and Economic Relations Program,
 - two 1992 US studies: The Foreign Service in 2001 by the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy and State 2000 by the US State Department,
 - the Operational Review of 1992,
 - the report of the 1993 La Sapinière meetings on "The Foreign Service of the Future",
 - the results of Program Review in 1994/95,
 - Political and Economic Studies by the Office of the Inspector General in 1996,
 - the Departmental Reorganization reports of 1996,
 - Global Challenges and Opportunities, a Canada 2005 study prepared for the Privy Council Office in 1997,
 - The New Instruments of Foreign Policy study prepared for the Policy Planning Secretariat in 1998
 - the department's Comprehensive Human Resources Strategy consultation papers of 1997 and 1998,
 - the June 1999 Champions Recommendations and Responses from the Deputy Ministers,
 - the final report of the Reference Level Review of DFAIT in 1999,
 - the Workforce for the Future Champion's Report of February 2000, and
 - assorted articles from journals and periodicals such as *Bout de papier*.

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- (C) A general invitation to political officers throughout the department to contribute their analysis and suggestions.
- (D) The convening of four workshops to develop "storyboards" describing political work in four work settings. Workshop participants were chosen for their experience in having worked recently in a functional bureau, geographic bureau, multilateral mission, or bilateral mission. Selection was largely random, depending on individual availability. In all, 25 individuals spent a day at CFSI contributing their knowledge and experience to the study.
- (E) Interviews with DFAIT staff at headquarters and at missions, with senior officials in other government departments and agencies, and with members of foreign missions in Ottawa. Some 25-30 individuals were interviewed for about an hour each, almost all one-on-one. Interviews were conducted under journalist rules of non-attribution.

These several sources provided a rich resource on which to draw in preparing the final report, certainly the most comprehensive review of the department's political resources since the Hunter/Halstead study in 1991. Moreover, the analysis and recommendations are largely those of political officers themselves. While no survey of officers was conducted to supply "quantitative" data on issues, the individuals who contributed their personal time to the study likely represented the views of the total population better than most surveys could aspire to do. First, the individuals who attended the workshops or agreed to be interviewed included officers at every level of the department (ADMs, DGs, directors, deputy directors, and desk officers at headquarters, and ambassadors and political counsellors abroad). Second, they contributed collectively more than 200 hours of sustained high-quality input. Without exception, individuals took a fair and balanced approach, drew on their personal experience or those of colleagues to ensure "hard facts" informed the discussion, and worked conscientiously to find consensus when opinions differed and positions needed to be probed.

Nonetheless, the study's limitations should be recognized. Time constraints and summer leave prevented a number of officers who expressed interest in the study from being able to make a contribution. The scope of the study allowed issues to be raised but not always to be explored in any great detail. And the inventory of "best practices" in Chapter 4 results more from individual officers' own knowledge and experience than from a broad review of performance across the public sector in Canada and abroad.

1. GLOBALIZATION, FOREIGN MINISTRIES AND ALL THAT

Globalization and its effects

The process of globalization -- i.e. the worldwide sharing of space and time -- has been under way for a long time. Advances in transportation and communications have been breaking down barriers between people for centuries, expanding travel and trade, and transforming how states conduct themselves internationally. Throughout, globalization has been surprising people with its effects. A hundred years ago, the interdependence of European nations was widely believed to preclude their ever going to war. In 1910, a best selling book, *The Great Illusion*, argued that the disruption of international credit caused by war would deter it or bring it to a speedy conclusion.

What is new about globalization today is that it has dramatically compressed space and time as factors in global affairs. Information technology has produced a single international agenda, created a 24-hour market, transcended national frontiers, and hugely complicated the task of using policy instruments to regulate national affairs. It has also transformed the nature of power. Power derived from traditional sources is not easily transferable to many of the issues that confront states today. Globalization has so intruded on domestic decision-making that few issues can any longer be safely classified as "domestic" or "international". Daniel Yergin argues that the term "globalization" itself has been overtaken by events. "A new reality is emerging. This is not a process but a condition -- a globality, a world economy in which the traditional and familiar boundaries are being surmounted or made irrelevant." (1)

What is not new about globalization is that it continues to confound prediction. The wisdom of the 90s, for instance, was that globalization meant the end of the nation-state. Governments, it was believed, would be compelled to surrender core functions to global institutions, "market forces", or "civil society". But the nation-state remains intact. States have not ceded sovereignty to international organizations, though they have surrendered some functions voluntarily. Borders still exist, even if they are more porous than before. People's first loyalty is still to their home and native land. And the size of government has not declined appreciably. Public spending in industrial countries today accounts for one half of national income, about what it was ten years ago (2).

¹ *The Commanding Heights: The Battle Between Government and the Marketplace That Is Remaking the Modern World*, Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, Simon & Schuster, 1998, p. 14

² *A Future Perfect: The Challenge and Hidden Promise of Globalization*, Chapter 8 (The Strange Survival of the Nation-State), John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, The Economist, Crown Business, 2000 pp. 143-163

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Globalization has, however, required governments to re-think how they perform their functions. The stakes are high for failing to understand and deal with the effects of globalization, but it is a perilous task nonetheless. For states determined to design their own future, the single best instrument at their disposal may be the foreign ministry.

Foreign ministries

Only a few years ago, foreign ministries were being dismissed as an anachronism, institutions whose vocation seemed to be to tend the dikes of national sovereignty as the tides of history washed over them. In fact, they are often among the most advanced of state institutions in adapting to global changes and fashioning instruments of power and leverage to protect and promote national interests in a global context.

The reason is that foreign ministries are at the intersect of domestic and foreign policy. Domestic policy now must take account of the impact decisions have on international partners and regimes. Foreign policy, in turn, is the management of international issues which engage domestic interests -- through the negotiation of solutions within rule-bound systems and the promotion of acceptable norms and rules for dealing with issues when international regimes are deficient or non-existent⁽³⁾. Foreign ministries bring international realities to bear on national decision-making, help to develop strategies for achieving national objectives abroad, ensure coherence in the state's international operations, and negotiate for national governments with sovereign states and international organizations. In addition, foreign ministries deliver programs abroad to meet specific constituency needs, such as business development services and consular assistance.

To perform these functions effectively, a foreign ministry needs a combination of resources not found elsewhere in government:

- a worldwide infrastructure to generate the information, contacts and methods for successfully pursuing national interests abroad, i.e. missions in major decision-making centres, at the seat of international organizations whose deliberations affect national interests, and in locations where national interests are particularly exposed;
- a global communications system to link missions with decision-makers at home;
- a capacity for developing national policy to deal with globalization; and
- "globalist" foreign service officers.

³ We acknowledge with thanks Gary Soroka's contribution to this analysis.

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Diplomacy and diplomats

Diplomacy is the management of relations with the outside world, and it is as old as time. Since the first clan made contact with the second, there have been individuals whose appointed function has been to mediate between people. The first diplomats were heralds assigned to plead a group's cause to others. The main qualification for the job was a loud voice. Later, the realization appears to have set in that effective advocacy also required an ability to observe foreign conditions and understand their impact on one's own plans.

But diplomacy as a profession is of quite recent origin. It was only in the Middle Ages, among the Italian city states, that the first permanent representatives were appointed; and it was only at the Congress of Vienna (the Règlement of March 19, 1815) that rules of diplomatic procedure began to be agreed upon. These rules, later codified in various international conventions, were a pragmatic response to the need for some generally accepted procedures for how states should conduct business with each other. They provided for such things as not shooting the messenger, i.e. the protection and immunity from local jurisdiction of foreign representatives doing their state's business on the territory of another (⁴). As Churchill observed: "The reason for having diplomatic relations is not to confer a compliment, but to secure a convenience."

Since the Middle Ages, the classic subject matter of diplomats has been the security of the state - protecting borders and deterring threats from neighbours. After the Reformation, Europe retreated from the idea of a universal state (Christendom, the Holy Roman Empire), accepted "raison d'état" as sufficient cause for a state to take action, and embarked on the long hunt for security through a "balance of power" among states. Only in the 20th century was there a return to the concept of common international interests, embodied in assorted conventions and institutions endeavoring to establish universal standards of behaviour and the means to enforce them (⁵).

By that time, the diplomatic agenda also included a second set of issues, as the growth of international trade, investment and financial flows began to have a significant impact on the economies of individual states. For much of the 20th century, the management of these issues was largely confined to negotiating bilateral arrangements with trading partners. But as the scope for autonomous action narrowed and the locus of economic decision-making shifted increasingly to multilateral institutions, governments had to become much more engaged internationally to protect national economic interests.

⁴ The term "diplomat" evolved from the "diploma" or pass (*laissez-passer*) which attested to the individual's right to proceed unmolested to and from the receiving state.

⁵ *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger, Simon & Schuster, 1994

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Then, in the latter part of the 20th century, diplomats were confronted with a third set of issues, *global* issues which borders cannot contain: mass population movements, transcontinental threats to the environment, transnational health pandemics, human rights, international terrorism, and international crime such as drug trafficking, illicit arms sales and money-laundering.

Diplomats as “globalists”

As the global agenda has expanded, the role of diplomats has changed commensurately. Diplomats have always been more than just “internationalists” versed in the affairs of other countries. Throughout the 20th century, they were at the very centre of government decision-making, advising on national policy to protect and promote security and other interests affected by developments abroad. But as distinctions between foreign and domestic policy have disappeared, diplomats have begun to play a role in “domestic” decision-making as well. Today, their roles include helping to articulate national positions which reconcile various domestic and international interests, crafting coherent strategies to pursue national interests abroad, and managing the implementation of those strategies. These are challenging roles, placing diplomats in the often unenviable position of searching for common ground among stakeholders, injecting unwanted “external considerations” into domestic policy deliberations, promoting “the national interest” over more parochial concerns -- and running the risk of alienating all parties in the process.

Along with the challenges and complexities of coordinating national positions, globalization has also confronted diplomats with new and unprecedented demands on their knowledge and skills. Diplomats now have to be as versed in domestic as in international affairs, and able to operate effectively in both policy environments. One consequence has been the aggravation of an age-old problem: determining whether diplomats should be mostly “generalists” or “specialists”. There seems little doubt that foreign ministries will always need individuals with broad perspective and competencies to manage the bulk of day-to-day issues, as well as individuals with specialized knowledge and skills to handle emerging or technically complex issues. The latter group might include full-time employees, individuals on contract, and officers seconded from other government departments or from the private sector. In some cases, a foreign ministry might also second employees out to acquire a measure of expertise which could later be brought back to the organization.

But while debate over the proper mix continues, there are powerful arguments being presented for the development of a new corps of “globalists”. Globalists are neither generalists with only superficial understanding of particular disciplines, nor specialists with limited knowledge beyond their area of expertise. They constitute, in fact, a new breed -- masters of the global scene with in-depth knowledge of all of its dimensions.

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At Yale, international relations historians Paul Kennedy and John Lewis Gaddis are training a new generation of strategists who can think "as globalists and not just particularists":

"(Particularists) are perfectly competent at taking in parts of the picture, but they have difficulty seeing the entire thing. They pigeonhole priorities, pursuing them separately and simultaneously, with little thought to how each might undercut the other. They proceed confidently enough from tree to tree, but seem astonished to find themselves lost in the forest. The great strategists of the past kept forests as well as the trees in view. They were generalists, and they operated from an ecological perspective. They understood that the world is a web, in which adjustments made here are bound to have effects over there -- that everything is interconnected. Where, though, might one find generalists today? ... The dominant trend within universities and the think tanks is toward ever-narrower specialization: a higher premium is placed on functioning deeply within a single field than broadly across several. And yet without some awareness of the whole -- without some sense of how means converge to accomplish or frustrate ends -- there can be no strategy. And without strategy, there is only drift." (6)

In *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman of the New York Times notes:

"Today, more than ever, the traditional boundaries between politics, culture, technology, finance, national security and ecology are disappearing. You often cannot explain one without referring to the others, and you cannot explain the whole without reference to them all. Therefore, to be an effective foreign affairs analyst or reporter, you have to learn how to arbitrage information from these disparate perspectives and then weave it all together to produce a picture of the world that you would never have if you looked at it from only one perspective ..."

"I believe that this new system of globalization -- in which walls between countries, markets and disciplines are increasingly being blown away -- constitutes a fundamentally new state of affairs. And the only way to see it, understand it and explain it is by arbitraging all six dimensions laid out above -- assigning different weights to different perspectives at different times in different situations, but always understanding that it is the interaction of all of them together that is really the defining feature of international relations today." (7)

⁶ *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, Thomas Friedman, New York Times, Anchor Books, 2000 pp. 25-26

⁷ Friedman, ibid p. 20, p. 24

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In future, then, foreign service officers will have to be not just "internationalists" but "globalists", with knowledge, skills and personal attributes suited to the new times:

- They will have to have a command of the many dimensions of global affairs and how these interact with each other, i.e. the ability to *put it all together*;
 - They will have to be skilled in gathering intelligence, building productive networks, and lobbying effectively whatever the linguistic, cultural or other obstacles may be, i.e. the ability to *work the global system*; and
 - They will have to have sufficient self-confidence, entrepreneurship and resilience to be able to function largely on their own or in small groups in alien, hostile, and sometimes dangerous environments, i.e. possess *mental toughness*.
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2. PROFILE OF POLITICAL OFFICERS

The Foreign Service (FS) officer group

The foreign service officer complement at DFAIT consists of some 320 EX-level officers and about 860 FS officers. EX-level officers form an integrated group, in recognition of the common leadership abilities and breadth of knowledge expected of managers. FS officers, however, are divided into two distinct groups: the “political/economic” stream and the “trade” stream (Table 1). There is also a separate stream for administrative and consular officers, who do not form part of the FS group but many of whom are also “rotational”, i.e. they rotate regularly between assignments at headquarters and abroad. Members of one group frequently perform the work of another, either for the duration of an assignment or on a temporary basis.

**TABLE 1
FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS (FS)**

	Political/Economic	Trade	TOTAL
At Headquarters	316	254	570
At Missions	166	127	293
TOTAL	482	381	863

Source: HPF

Within the FS group as a whole, the ratio of men to women is about 70/30, while the ratio of Anglophones to Francophones is about 75/25 (Table 2). Among more junior officers (i.e. at the FS-1 level), the ratios are much closer.

**TABLE 2
FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS (FS)
GENDER AND LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION**

	FS 1	FS 2	TOTAL
Men	161	448	609
Women	136	118	254
Anglophones	212	428	640
Francophones	85	138	223

Source: DFAIT's Demographic Profile

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The FS group is neither young nor old. While about a quarter of its members (23%) have five or less years of service behind them, the same proportion (23%) have 21 or more years of service to their credit. In the middle are about 100 FS-1s, 80% of whom have 6-10 years of service, and about 360 FS-2s, 75% of whom have 11-20 years of service (Table 3).

TABLE 3
FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS (FS)
YEARS OF SERVICE

Level	0-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	31-35	35+	TOTAL
FS 1	63% (187)	28% (83)	7% (21)	2% (6)	0%	0%	297
FS 2	3% (17)	17% (96)	47% (266)	28% (158)	5% (28)	0%	566
TOTAL	23% (198)	21% (181)	33% (285)	19% (164)	4% (35)	0%	863

Source: DFAIT's Demographic Profile

At issue is the large number of FS-2 officers with 11 or more years of service (approximately 450) for whom there is limited scope for advancement due to the existence of only two FS levels below the EX level and the absence of any non-management professional levels beyond FS-2. This group represents almost 80% of FS-2s and in excess of 50% of all FSs. More than 30% of FS-2s have 21 or more years of service. Less than 3% of eligible FS-2s are promoted per year. At current rates, less than 25% of FSs can aspire to a promotion.

Nor is attrition likely to provide a solution. Only 6% of FS-2s are now eligible to retire and only another 19% within the next five years (Table 4). Not all can be expected to do so. Even if they did, some 335 of today's FS-2s would still face long odds for any advancement at all -- despite records of accomplishment in work environments which would defeat most other public servants.

TABLE 4
FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS (FS)
RETIREMENT POTENTIAL

Assumes people retire at 55 years of age and 30 years of service, or at 65 years of age

Level	Not Eligible	At present	Within 5 years	5-10 Years	Total
FS 1	96%	0%	2%	2%	297
FS 2	57%	6%	19%	18%	566
TOTAL	71%	4%	13%	12%	863

Source: DFAIT's Demographic Profile

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But attrition of another kind is a problem. Many officers with 5-10 years of experience are leaving after the department has invested in their professional development and sometimes in intensive language training and after their first posting has gained them the experience to become fully effective FSs. On average, 20-30% of recruits resign five years after joining. For instance, the 1991 recruitment year lost 33% of its intake by 1997. Departing officers cite non-competitive salaries, poor promotion prospects, and spousal employment as the main causes⁸. The department believes it is still the attracting "the best and the brightest" to its ranks⁹. But officials in other departments do not share this belief. In the words of one ADM, "We compete with DFAIT for the same talent pool. In general, people are less interested in public service these days than in other pursuits, though that can be overstated. But even within the Public Service, DFAIT is not getting the best and the brightest. Prospects seem better elsewhere."

The political/economic stream and "political" officers

Within the FS group, the largest component is the "political/economic stream" totaling 482 officers in FY2000. Another 95 officers from the stream are in EX-1 or EX-2 positions. FS-1s and FS-2s are usually "desk officers" or deputy directors at headquarters, and serve at the First Secretary or Counsellor level at missions abroad. EX-1s and Ex-2s are directors in Ottawa, ambassadors at small missions, and deputy heads of large missions.

Among officers in the political/economic stream, the ratio of men to women is about 2:1, better than in the FS group as a whole. At the FS-1 level, the numbers of men and women are approximately equal (Table 5). By and large, members of the political/economic stream are a well educated group. Almost half of them have postgraduate degrees, including 23 doctorates (5%).

⁸ In the mid 1990s the department required recruits to have a master's degree, which tended to raise the age of entrants to 26-28. In some cases, recruits were much older. The effect was to heighten the mismatch between career expectations and what DFAIT could offer. Individuals beginning to hit their stride professionally could not long be expected to settle for an FS-1 level salary when the market was sometimes paying their peers twice as much.

⁹ In the last three years, the numbers interviewed have ranged between 5500 and 6500 per year.

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The political/economic stream provides the bulk of “political officers”, a term derived from a time when international relations were called “high politics”. Political officers are those individuals whose assignments focus mainly on matters with a heavy political or security component, typically the subject matter of the International Security and Cooperation business line. In recent years, the department has also hired substantial numbers of non-FS contract personnel to do political work. At headquarters, many do “desk officer” jobs which in the past would have been performed only by FSs. At least 40 missions also have locally-engaged staff doing a variety of political work.

TABLE 5
FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS
Political/Economic Stream (*)

	Men	Women	TOTAL
FS-1	65	67	132
FS-2	260	84	344
TOTAL	325	151	476*
Diplomas			
BA	219	84	303
BL	44	17	61
MA	133	45	178
MBA	7	4	11
PhD	17	6	23

(*) Data is incomplete

Source: HPF

Political work

Political officers are the foundation of the globalist foreign service officers of the future. It is their job to understand the “big picture”, to identify the major interests at stake, to craft the strategies for protecting and promoting those interests, and to execute the international dimensions of strategies using the networks, lobbying and negotiating methods at their disposal. The functions of political officers can be classified as “core” if they reflect officers’ “globalist” national policy coordination role and require them to draw on their “globalist” knowledge and skills. But political officers perform an enormous range of work, a great deal of which is ancillary to their role. Sometimes this work is substantive in nature, but often it is not.

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Core functions are usually considered to include the following:

1. *Collecting and analyzing information on developments which could affect Canadian interests.* At headquarters, information is of an "all-source" character, i.e. drawn not only from publicly available sources, but also from privileged sources such as Canadian missions abroad, foreign governments, and intelligence agencies. Managing such a breadth of information, some of which needs special handling, and synthesizing the findings requires analytical skill of a high order. At missions, information has to be distilled from local media (often in foreign languages), from sources inside local government, and from contacts which have been cultivated in the local community.
2. *Providing policy and operational advice to Canadian decision-makers.* DFAIT is a "policy" department whose main function is to advise government on managing international issues and the international dimensions of domestic issues. Political officers, therefore, have to be versed in global affairs, in domestic affairs, and in how they intersect -- and they have to be ready with both strategic and tactical advice when required. More often than not, international events provide little lead-time and the advice has to be proffered in circumstances of crisis when timeliness and accuracy compete.
3. *Coordinating national positions.* In the age of globalization, national positions almost always have to take account of both domestic and international factors. At headquarters, the task of officers is to synthesize information and views from many sources, craft policy options which reflect broad national interests, forge consensus around particular positions, and adjust policy to reflect changing circumstances. At missions, the task is to ensure that agreed national policy informs the activities of all government operations abroad, to provide feedback on its application, and to propose alternative courses as conditions change.
4. *Building networks in Canada and abroad.* At headquarters, the global agenda requires officers to develop relationships with other government departments who share in the horizontal management of issues, and with business interests, NGOs and NGIs who influence policy-making and whose support is often required for the implementation of policy. At missions, officers rely on networks to gather information on the interests and intentions of foreign governments, to develop insight into their decision-making processes and how to influence them, and to establish personal connections with those who make or influence policy. Networking abroad can be painstaking work. Language, culture, and suspicion of foreigners all present obstacles, and the rotation of staff regularly interrupts the process.

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5. *Lobbying and advocating on behalf of Canadian government positions.* Once advice has been delivered and national positions adopted, the function of political officers is to secure the acceptance of others. In the past, this meant dealing mainly with the executive branch of other governments. But in countries where the legislative branch wields significant independent powers (the US Congress, the Japanese diet), mission political officers perform lobbyist functions indistinguishable from those of government relations firms, law firms, and trade associations. In addition, it is becoming accepted practice in Western countries for foreign diplomats to seek to influence government policy by advancing national positions in public forums and forging alliances with local NGOs.
6. *Negotiating agreements and conventions.* A frequent goal of political work is agreement among countries on how to deal with a matter. At times, agreement takes the form of a joint communique issued by two governments after a bilateral meeting, or a political declaration or resolution adopted at the end of a multilateral meeting (North Atlantic Council, UN General Assembly etc.) At other times, agreement can take legal form. In both circumstances, political officers negotiate the terms. The process can be rapid when governments are developing a common position in response to a crisis, or complex and time-consuming when the task is codifying international rules of behaviour or establishing new international institutions.
7. *Managing foreign policy operations.* Headquarters and missions share responsibility for the effective execution of policy abroad, which can take a variety of forms such as high-level discussions with other governments, initiatives at multilateral conferences, cooperative ventures, and financial and administrative support for local programs.

Non-core functions are anything else that political officers do, and the list can be a long one. In some cases, there is substantive content to the work: research and documentation, public relations and communications, and the substantive dimensions of visits and conferences. But often, there is not: visits logistics, information management, resources management (human, financial, property, materiel), and mission administration.

The functions performed by any one political officer depend a good deal on the location of the work unit, its size and composition, its leadership, and the individual competencies of officers.

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The political workplace

Until the mid-20th century, political work was performed mainly in two settings: at the "country desks" in foreign ministries with their expertise on countries and regions of the world, and at embassies located in national capitals. But as the international agenda became more complex and international transactions took new forms, foreign ministries created "functional" bureaux with expertise on global issues and established permanent missions at the headquarters of international organizations.

Work can vary a great deal between a functional bureau, a geographic bureau, a multilateral mission, and a bilateral mission. Workshops conducted in support of this study served to develop pictures of political officer activity in each of these four settings, and helped to draw attention to some important differences between them. (The findings from these workshops are covered in detail in Political Officer Study: Results of Workshops on Work Activities, Synerma, September 2000).

There are common features to the work of political officers in each of the four settings: collection and analysis of information, providing advice, coordinating national positions, building networks, lobbying, negotiating, and managing foreign policy operations. But the differences are distinctive:

- Each of the functional bureaux deals with a discrete set of issues, while geographic bureaux must be concerned about every issue with a potential bearing on Canada's interests and objectives in a particular set of countries.
- At headquarters, networking tends to focus on Canadians (other government departments, business interests, NGOs etc.) and encounters no special obstacles. At missions, networking targets foreigners, must surmount cultural, linguistic and other obstacles, and can often be a sensitive business.
- In Ottawa, staff are at the centre of the policy-making process; abroad, staff are constantly challenged to provide advice which is timely and relevant to Ottawa's needs.
- Within Canada, the public advocacy of Canadian foreign policy positions is accepted practice; conducted in other countries, it can be viewed as unwarranted interference.
- Among Canadians, negotiating styles are quite uniform; in the world at large, they can take byzantine forms.

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Utilization of political resources

While the data is sketchy on the proportion of time political officers actually spend on core functions, it is clear such work accounts for significantly less than the officer complement would suggest. As a rule, particularly in geographic bureaux and at bilateral missions, officers have responsibilities in "non-political" areas such as business development, consular affairs, and administration. At many missions, they also perform functions on behalf of other government departments, notably CIC and CIDA. In addition, officers spend considerable time on non-core functions ranging from managing the logistics of visits to mission administration (¹⁰).

Some of the "mix" may be unavoidable, even desirable for professional development reasons, but the multi-tasking of political officers constitutes a conspicuously inefficient use of resources which are not only in short supply but also hard to come by.

In 1992, John Halstead observed that "What should be a core program has become a residual program, which receives only what is left after other more precisely defined requirements have been met, and which on the other hand has to carry any remaining responsibilities which have not already been clearly assigned to other programs ... In the process, political-economic officers, particularly those in missions, are left with the impression that their core work is of discretionary importance" (¹¹).

The situation is not cost free. Canadian interests suffer, one workshop participant observed, when resources are reduced to below the point where the department is able adequately to prepare for international meetings at which deals are to be struck, rules established, or approaches to particular global problems agreed upon. Nor is the department in a position fully to exploit Canada's international standing and its memberships in key international organizations in order to direct the process of globalization in the most desirable directions for Canada. As one individual pointed out, "In the UN, if you know what you want and go after it in a coordinated way, you can probably get it. But if you spread your resources too thinly, nothing works."

¹⁰ One workshop participant lamented the fact that "it always seems to be the political officer who has to organize the Terry Fox run".

¹¹ Report on a Comprehensive Audit of the Political and Economic Relations Program, J.G.H. Halstead and W.A. Hunter, Audit and Evaluation Division, December 1991.

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3. OBSTACLES TO GETTING THE JOB DONE

The four workshops held at the Canadian Foreign Service Institute, along with interviews conducted for this study, suggest that optimal use of the department's political resources confronts two sets of issues.

The first are department-wide issues, which affect all groups but have a particular impact on political officers. These relate to the department's mission in the era of globalization, the department's policy development capacity, business planning, and information management.

The second are issues particular to political officers. These relate to staff reductions and personnel policies, relationships between geographic and functional bureaux and between the department and other government departments, political reporting, how the department manages certain operations such as crises and visits, and procedures for generating briefing materials.

DEPARTMENT-WIDE ISSUES

The department's mission in the era of globalization

During the 1990s, Canada along with most other Western countries reviewed the operations of its foreign ministry and introduced changes to ensure its capacity to deal with new global realities. These included the 1995 reorganization to enhance the leadership role of ADMs and devolve increased responsibility onto DGs, the establishment of a Global Issues Bureau in 1996, and a huge investment in communications technology. These changes, however, did not come to grips with the role the department should play in government, or address the question of whether the department has any role at all to play.

For at least 20 years, the department has found it difficult to define a role for itself which resonates not only with its employees but also with other government departments and with Parliament and the public. Some of the difficulty dates back to the early 1980s when foreign policy and trade were combined in a single department. The problem was not the merger of old "External" and old "IT&C", but the failure to complete the process of integration and create a distinctive new entity. As workshop participants and others observed during the course of this study, trade remains "a department within a department", with its own structure, systems, "stream", and mandate. While the smaller party, it has been more successful in defining a role for itself over the years which has protected not only its identity but its resources. A measure of its success is that the department lists trade and economic issues as its top priorities -- though it is the political and security dimensions of global issues which dominate policy-making and take up most of the time of every foreign minister in the Western world including Canada's.

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But the problem runs even deeper, for questions continue to arise whether Canada even needs a foreign ministry. In an age when distinctions between domestic and foreign policy no longer mean much and most departments of government are developing their own international expertise, Canada it has been argued no longer needs a department for "relations with other countries". This is a particularly Canadian phenomenon. In the view of one of those interviewed for this study, other countries might debate the direction of their foreign policy and how it should be pursued, but only in Canada do "people question the need to have intelligent policy-savvy people abroad to defend and advance the state's interests". The pity for Canada is that a foreign ministry is a quintessential instrument of national unity, an area of government in which few dispute the federal government's role.

One central agency official summed up the situation as follows: "The department takes others' interests and reflects them abroad, or others' interests in Canada. But it's not seen as having any interests of its own. DFAIT's interests don't seem to be as highly valued as those of other government departments. The department doesn't seem to have much of an answer to what it does other than 'I make peace and sell wheat'".

Other senior officials outside of DFAIT were explicit as to the role the department should play in government. In the words of one official, "The department needs to give us a sense of where the world is going and help us sort out where Canada should be going". Another commented: "What we need from DFAIT is strategic thinking, the big picture and the major prescriptions". In the view of a third, one of DFAIT's key functions should be to provide policy coherence on international issues. "In Ottawa, there are all kinds of people running their own foreign policy". "DFAIT needs to provide the broader long-term policy framework", another commented, "so that we can come in in support of foreign policy with specific programs and activities".

Uncertainty about the department's mission affects political officers more than any other group. When the mission is unclear, there is more confusion and dissension over the purpose and rationale for "political" officers than for trade, consular, administration, immigration or aid officers. And failing clear goals of their own, political officers become a resource pool for others with more focused objectives.

Policy development capacity

DFAIT is a "policy" rather than a "program" department. Most bureaux are "policy shops" and most missions are intimately involved in policy making. Yet there is a strong sense emerging from the workshops and interviews that the department's policy development capacity has been in decline for some time. Exaggerating to make a point, one workshop participant commented that "policy development is what political officers do when they are not otherwise engaged".

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Over the years, the department has placed considerable emphasis on policy development to ensure it had the capacity not only to conduct major foreign and trade policy reviews (in 1968/70, 1979, 1984/85, and 1994/95) but also to help set priorities for government policy across portfolios. Since the merger of External Affairs and International Trade, the central planning staff has played a prominent role in forging an integrated approach to the pursuit of international objectives. Recent initiatives such as the creation of a Policy Board attest to the weight the department continues to accord policy development. But the 1990s were problematic for several reasons:

- Part of the problem has been volume. The international agenda has become so complex that the resources available for dealing with any one issue are very limited and the scope for actively managing issues very narrow.
- Part of the problem has been the important ceding place to the urgent. Crises have so dominated the international agenda that officers have been able to spare little time for forward planning.
- Part of the problem has been the substantive ceding place to the administrative. Officers have become so burdened with low value-added "chores" that policy work has assumed a second order of priority.
- And part of the problem has been a scarcity of political resources. The department has many fewer FS officers than FS positions and has tried to fill the gap with term employees who often lack the depth of knowledge and experience necessary to do policy work.

In other government departments and agencies, the decline in DFAIT's policy development capacity is becoming a source of concern among senior officials. "The decline in policy development is getting worse not better", one remarked. Another believed the department had experienced "a loss of intellectual foundations". Stated strategy was so broad that it could not be used to drive policy. The result was "a revealed policy, kind of arbitrary, ad hoc".

But the issue is not the department's intellectual capacity. As one central agency official noted, "I'm struck by how highly regarded individual officers are by ministers who meet them, at headquarters and at missions in particular. But somehow the department ends up being less than the sum of its parts". In the view of another, "There are lots of smart people in DFAIT, but they have gigantic workloads, they're over-traveled, underpaid, and have no time to worry about underlying issues". "They're not short of talent", one said, "just overextended; they need more resources devoted to policy. DFAIT's inadequately resourced relative to its mandate".

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A further explanation offered was that the department appeared not to fully value its own abilities. In the view of one individual, DFAIT consulted too much. There was "a presumption of consultation which goes beyond being creative and productive". Policy development involved "far more people in judgement and decision" than was the case in other countries. Another individual believed policy-making was being distorted by too much consulting with the wrong people. DFAIT was in the habit of "consulting with specialist groups and not the public". "It's almost a version of the Stockholm syndrome, so much talking to like-minded people, pretty soon you convince yourself no one thinks any differently".

Business planning

All organizations struggle with the fact that they cannot control the environment in which they operate and must live with a measure of unpredictability. This is especially true of a foreign ministry. International developments, their *raison d'être*, represent a constant source of new obligations and opportunities to which they must respond. John Coles, the former Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, has written that, "With the best will in the world much foreign policy has to be reactive, a matter of responding to events happening outside ... in most foreign ministries, the ad hoc and pragmatic nature of most decision-making has militated against the development of long range and predictive planning".⁽¹²⁾

Henry Mintzberg at McGill has noted that: "No amount of elaboration will ever enable formal procedures to forecast discontinuities, to inform managers who are detached from operations, to create novel strategies".⁽¹³⁾ But if plans designed to "predict" the future are fraught with danger, plans which set a direction for the organization play important roles in its eventual success. Mintzberg believes such plans serve at least three roles: (a) as a medium for communicating strategic intentions and identifying the action required "to ensure that everyone in the organization pulls in the same direction", (b) to provide a method of control, specifying the behaviours expected of particular units and individuals and allowing tracking of progress, and (c) as an instrument of learning, providing data against which assumptions can be tested, performance evaluated, and new directions identified. In a foreign ministry struggling with numerous and complex issues and staff dispersed throughout the world, business plans represent one of the few really effective means for generating a sense of common purpose and direction within the organization.

¹² *Making Foreign Policy: A Certain Idea of Britain*, John Coles, John Murray London, 2000, p. 11

¹³ *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, Henry Mintzberg, McGill University, The Free Press, 1994

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Until relatively recently, departmental planning at DFAIT was largely a matter of preparing the Main Estimates. Planning was not part of the culture and many officers considered it either a Treasury Board obligation or a resources exercise. Bureaux tended to approach planning as damage limitation, the typical strategy for protecting existing resources being to ask for more. This contributed to what one former DG of corporate resources called a "culture of initiatives" which encouraged new ventures, disdained how they would be paid for, and every year burdened senior management with the laborious task of sorting through piles of spending proposals. The introduction of a new headquarters business planning process in 1996, along with some innovative mission planning, began the transformation to a more directive form of planning whose benefits are already becoming evident. But in the view of workshop participants and others interviewed for this study, there is still progress to be made: many in the department remain unconvinced of the value of planning, the current planning process strikes many as overly complex, and there are still too many priorities and not enough strategies.

The value of planning

Workshop participants reported that officers remain ambivalent about the current business planning process. In some cases, this was simply a refusal to accept that it is possible to plan foreign policy. As one participant observed, "Only 50 percent of activities are plannable in any one year, but that is still a lot. You can predict many large negotiations, when they'll start and about how long they'll take; you can predict things like annual and semi-annual events." A more legitimate complaint, participants believed, was that the current approach to business planning produced plans which were "irrelevant", "not connected to anything". "We never consult the plan during the year". In the view of one participant, the problem was that planning was "a two-month exercise, not a 12-month cycle". Others argued that plans were "useful up to a point", that they were "sometimes relevant in resource considerations, for example the re-balancing exercise". They were also useful "as a means of dialogue with missions".

Complexity of the process

A common complaint was that the department required the preparation of bureaux business plans which were "overly complex". The requirement to produce them came at one of the busiest times of the year and involved the expenditure of hundreds of hours in each bureau to collect data, prepare and review drafts some of which approached a hundred pages in length, and consult with all the relevant parties. The plans were especially complicated for geographic bureaux, required as they were to produce plans which reflect a complex matrix. The consultative burden on them was immense. A simpler version was needed.

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Priorities and strategies

It was universally agreed that the department continues to struggle with setting priorities, in large part because the departmental planning process was not "prioritizing a sense of purpose or direction". As one workshop participant remarked, "It is crucial that we prioritize what we want to do. We talk about our international role, but if we were more strategic and focused we could accomplish a great deal more. We're too generalized, we haven't translated our intentions into specific objectives." Many noted that the department has too many priorities. For FY 2000/01, participants pointed out, the department had identified 29 "main" priorities and 144 "secondary" priorities. The lack of focus was matched by a lack of follow-up. As one participant explained, "Canadian initiatives often lack adequate follow-up because the resources to back them up and to build constituencies and to deliver on our positions aren't part of the strategy". In a host of areas, the department needed to develop strategies "to explain why things are being done".

Information Management

Information technology has been transforming diplomacy. Not since the advent of the telegraph and telephone has anything so profoundly affected how foreign ministries operate. The communications revolution has dramatically accelerated the flow of information, generated vast new stores of data, created new ways of processing knowledge, involved interest groups and individuals directly in policy-making, and changed how governments communicate.

In response, DFAIT has invested heavily in information technology (¹⁴). The department currently spends in excess of \$100 million dollars a year on informatics, twice what it did five years ago. In FY 99/00, informatics accounted for 7.4% of the total budget -- more than personnel costs (6.9%); more than the annual costs combined of all the department's foreign policy, trade and economic policy, international business development, and public diplomacy operations (4.1%); more than real property costs (4.1%), and more than assistance to Canadians (3.4%). (*Annex 2: Budgetary Realities*)

For the money, the department reckons it operates the most advanced communications system of any foreign ministry in the world. Its political officers agree. SIGNET and MITNET allow them to work with each across the globe "almost as if people were down the hall".

¹⁴ *The Information Management and Technology Bureau (SXD) is the largest bureau in the department with an official complement of 425 FTEs and another 100 "consultants" on site. The bureau is large enough to have its own human resources and training units. It takes 18 pages in the DFAIT directory to list SXD staff. In addition, 150 individuals in other bureaux have full-time informatics responsibilities. In contrast, there are 482 political/economic FSs and 381 trade FSs.*

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But there is also profound unhappiness with the system, for several reasons:

- There has been an “explosion” of communications traffic with no accompanying effort to impose disciplines on how the traffic is generated or managed. The problem is not illusionary. Departmental e-mail traffic, essentially zero in the mid-1990s, exceeded 30 million messages in 1998. The result is a situation many describe as “chaotic”. Officers complain that their daily e-mail traffic is enormous, ranging from 40 to 100 messages per day. Managers are so overwhelmed by the volume that some who expect to be away from their offices for even a few days instruct staff to delete all messages and advise them on return of any that require action. The alternative is a time-consuming and mind-numbing exercise of scrolling through several hundred e-mail messages.
- Nor is any distinction being made between formal and informal communications. Any officer at any level can generate a message on virtually any subject and, if so inclined, copy it to the most senior levels of the department. Recipients themselves must discern how much authority attaches to a message, whether or not it constitutes policy or instructions. As one individual observed, “This might look like democracy, but it’s not. It’s anarchy”.
- Compounding the problem is the absence of department-wide disciplines for numbering and recording messages, no small deficiency for an organization whose stock in trade is information. In the words of one participant, “A filing system no longer exists. Copies of all messages used to go to a central filing system. You knew everything would be there, classified or unclassified, so there was no need for your own filing system. Now, classified and unclassified are totally separate, they don’t talk to each other. To file a classified message electronically, you have to proactively instruct it to go to CATS, but people forget or they shut it down because of unclassified traffic.”
- Corporate memory is a victim. One workshop participant claimed that, “We can’t find files more than three weeks old”. In the words of another individual, “Theoretically, everything’s available, but we’re swamped by such huge directories it’s easier to rely on word of mouth”. In response, many officers had resorted to setting up their own files. “The attitude is that information is for yourself, not for others”. But when an individual is out of the office, the information is almost impossible to access since it is protected by a personal access code; and when the individual changes jobs, the personal files are deleted.

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In the view of workshop participants, the explanation is that "informatics are not being channeled to meet our purposes". As one individual observed, "Technology is seen as the solution, but the system is designed for the majority of employees who work in administration not foreign policy, for example the choice of a word processing program based on its functionality for the majority of admin users, not based on what we need to communicate with people outside the department". Another commented that "Uncontrolled proliferation of technology is not a labour-saving device. What they are doing now is not going to solve the problem."

ISSUES PARTICULAR TO POLITICAL OFFICERS

Staff reductions and personnel policies

During the 1990s, the department reduced the size of its personnel complement by 13% (980 positions), with the major reductions taking place abroad. The number of Canada-based staff declined by 30% and locally-engaged by 6%. But the decade also saw the department create two large new bureaux, to deal with "global and human issues" and with "international environmental affairs". In addition, the total number of missions increased by 11%. Despite closing 14 missions and satellite offices during the 1990s, the department was compelled to establish embassies in many of the 29 new states resulting from the collapse of the Soviet empire and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and to set up small offices in support of Canadian peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations (in such places as Phnom Penh and Sarajevo). Canada now has 160 offices abroad, half of which (82) are in the "small or micro" category, operated by no more than one or Canada-based staff.

As a result, political officers today represent a "thin red line" of Canadian diplomatic resources, never amounting to more than a handful of individuals in most places. Apart from EX-level officers, there are only 482 FSs in the political/economic stream which supplies most of the political officers. The 316 at headquarters are spread among some 35 functional divisions and 20 geographic divisions. Abroad, there are only 166 officers for 160 missions. The political/economic stream now accounts for only 25% of DFAIT Canada-based program staff abroad, and only 13% of the total of all departments' CBS program staff abroad. At some missions, the only "political" officer is the ambassador.

Even in larger missions, the Canadian numbers pale in comparison to those with whom Canada is competing to influence outcomes. At UN headquarters in New York, for example, Canada has 14 diplomatic and military officers at its mission, the UK and France each have 27, Germany 31, Japan 34 -- but the Canadian contingent must staff the same number of committee meetings.

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More generally, where Canada has 160 missions around the world, Germany has 230, Italy 256, the United States 289, France 290, Britain 342, and Japan 395. Austria, Switzerland, Spain and Turkey all have more offices abroad than Canada.

The “thinning out” of the department affected all employee groups: trade (¹⁵), consular (¹⁶), administration, support, and locally-engaged staff. But the cumulative impact appears to have been greatest on political officers:

- As the department’s political agenda expanded and increased in complexity, it had to be managed by a smaller number of political officers.
- As other departmental programs required attention but had fewer resources to deal with them, increased responsibilities devolved on political officers to take up the slack (the traditional “default” source of personnel resources).
- As other government departments needed more assistance abroad, political officers accumulated additional tasks.
- And as support resources were withdrawn, political officers were required to perform an increasing number of administrative tasks. Twenty years ago, the mission in Moscow, a classic “political” post, had seven secretaries; today, with a larger officer complement, it has one.

In the meantime, the department is short about 140 FSs (political/economic and trade), away on extended leave, secondments, interchanges etc. Government staffing rules allow these positions to be filled temporarily by contract employees, and managers have been diligent in trying to do so. But the results have been mixed. While many good people have been hired and have performed admirably, managers at the workshops agreed they were not a substitute for FS officers. As a rule, they had fewer of the procedural and communications skills of FS officers, little knowledge of the department and its processes, and no experience of the work of missions.

¹⁵ During the 1990s, the trade commissioner complement was reduced by 20%. As a result, the average number of trade commissioners per trade office declined from 2.2 to 1.5.

¹⁶ In FY 2000/01, Canada had only seven (7) full-time Canada-based consular officers abroad and only 56 Canada-based FTEs in total (almost all of it part-time work spread among more than 150 individuals) to perform consular work at 137 missions. Between 1994 and 1998, the number of consular cases increased by 50% (to 114,000). In 1998, Canadians made 4.2 million trips to countries other than the United States.

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From an operational perspective, therefore, they did not fully compensate for the missing FSs. Their presence can also be disruptive:

- Lacking some of the abilities of FS officers, contract employees tend to be assigned some of the more intellectually challenging and innovative work, while FS officers who "know the ropes" handle less substantive assignments only individuals with their experience can perform effectively e.g. visits arrangements. As a result, some FS officers are not acquiring the skills required for "top-end" work such as the development of complex strategies for emerging issues like human security.
- Whereas FS officers have a "virtual contract" to remain in a position for two to three years, contract employees can and often do leave much sooner, interrupting the flow of work, burdening others until replacements can be found (often not for several months), and undermining corporate memory. Managers who participated in the workshops assessed the attrition rate of contract employees to be about 50% per year.
- Because of their precarious hold on the positions they fill, contract employees are seen to be constantly on the alert for other employment possibilities, leaving their FS colleagues to entertain doubts about their "loyalty and commitment".
- Finally, contract employees tend to be paid more than their FS colleagues, often for doing less work because of their limited capabilities. One director at the workshops said there were seven contract employees in his division whose salaries were higher than his own.

Notwithstanding these "less than satisfactory" results, the staffing actions required to retain non-FS political officers have proven to be complex and time-consuming. They involve managers in the most minute dimensions of preparing job descriptions and classifications, advertising openings, interviewing candidates, and indoctrinating new employees. A single staffing action typically takes three to four months to complete, and the whole process may have to be repeated 6-18 months later as a contract terminates or an incumbent decides to move on to another position -- often elsewhere in the department. At certain times of the year, staffing actions, counselling and training of non-FS employees, and the juggling of work among employees to compensate for vacancies, routinely consumes 15 hours a week of a manager's time (30%).

Managers were aggrieved at the amount of time they had to spend on staffing actions, but their major concern was the obstacles they confronted. Faced with real workload problems, managers said they could not count on the department either to provide them with the resources they need or to facilitate their own efforts to find them. One manager claimed that "The good people always result from our own recruitment efforts". Another summed up the view of her colleagues as follows: "Either the department fixes the situation or it liberates managers to do it".

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In 1998, a departmental audit found that term employees had grown to 20% of the non-rotational workforce at headquarters (some 600 individuals), that this workforce involved a high volume of staffing activity, that there were "no useful client service standards" for the classification function, and that personnel operations had become primarily transactional rather than advisory in nature.

Key Relationships

Relations between functional and geographic bureaux

A major objective of the departmental reorganization of 1995 was to enhance collective leadership and ensure that the functional and geographic elements of the department worked better together. Most workshop participants shared the view that Executive Committee had been functioning more effectively in recent years, but they did not believe the department had yet found the key to making the matrix structure work smoothly. Participants did not question the need for both functional and geographic bureaux, or doubt that the matrix could be made to work. But it was clear from the workshops that personnel in the two sets of bureaux see their relationship in very different ways.

Functional bureau representatives tended to portray an international environment in which they are the dominant actors and the geographic bureaux play a subordinate role. Conversely, geographic bureau representatives tended to see their role as the critical one, reflecting the realities of "the here and now".

From the functional bureau perspective, the universe is comprised of global issues, an increasingly formal supranational architecture to deal with them, lots of multilateral diplomacy and international meetings, and horizontal management of issues in Canada involving other government departments and non-state actors (business, NGOs). Bureau personnel have their own contacts in other foreign ministries, deal with them directly, and "seldom go through the geographics or the missions". Given the rise of global issues, functional bureaux are "the link between domestic policy and laws and the international world" and they are the ones who deal with domestic departments, "not the geographics to the same degree." On most issues, one participant remarked, "the functionals take the lead and the geographics follow". In the view of another, "The application of policy to a given region or country is where the geographics come in, helping to ensure it's applied given local realities. We fashion policy in light of geographic input on local conditions, their advice on local approach."

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In an ideal world, one participant remarked, the geographics could play a larger role but they lacked the resources to do so. "They are too involved in events management and geographic desk officers have too many countries to coordinate, so they cannot do it." Some regional desks did take a very "hands-on" approach, but in the final analysis "about a dozen countries affect about 95% of what we do, which by-passes a lot of geographic relationships".

Geographic bureaux see themselves as being responsible for "the management of the whole". From their perspective, the world is comprised of countries and the issues that unite or divide them, some of which are bilateral and some international. International conferences are where countries meet to talk, but national capitals are where they make their decisions. The country focus, therefore, is the one that is "rooted in the realities of the world". It encompasses all the issues and all the stakeholders, and it is "real time". Geographic bureau participants argued that their functional counterparts tended to deal with fewer issues, a more limited set of stakeholders, and longer time-frames.

Geographic bureau participants shared the view that there is "real scope for flying in the geographics, even interns can launch policy". But a number argued that the shortage of resources in the geographic bureaux meant they were "incapable of allowing people fully to take on the core mandate". The work was "theoretically very exciting, but the capacity to do it is not there". Moreover, "the functionals are seen as dealing with what really matters". One individual commented that "the word on the street is that functional desk jobs can be very focused, involve fewer crises, deal with less crap, and offer better travel."

It is to be expected that functional and geographic bureaux should see their roles as different, but not that they should reflect so little sense of common purpose and complementarity. One of the disturbing consequences, workshop participants noted, was that some of the functional bureaux were beginning to devote resources to the development of in-house geographic expertise and geographic bureaux were responding by developing functional expertise. In the words of one individual, "They're replicating rather than dividing or sharing responsibility, and with replication you get competition".

Relations between the two groups have not been helped by a departmental planning and management system which has placed the geographic bureaux in a distinctly subordinate position, for example:

- A departmental Planning, Reporting and Accountability Structure (PRAS) organized along functional lines, and

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- An annual business planning process which to date has served to encourage functional bureaux to see their role as setting priorities and geographic bureaux to see their role as implementing them.

In an age of globalization, it is sometimes argued, foreign ministries should spare few resources for their geographic bureaux and concentrate instead on strengthening their capacity to deal with functional issues. It is well to recall, however, that the rationale for foreign ministries does not lie in their functional expertise alone. In 1992, a study by the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University noted:

“The State Department is the only cabinet department created for a geographic, rather than a functional, responsibility. This horizontal mandate cuts across the vertically integrated functions of Defense, Treasury, Commerce, and others. The role of the State Department is to coordinate the competing viewpoints of the functional departments in the context of the US government’s overall foreign policy goals ... Looking at the world geographically rather than just functionally continues to make sense. As noted in our assumptions, nations remain the principal players, even on functional issues.

“Over time, however, State has tended to blur its geographic identity by duplicating the functional expertise of other government agencies with its own functional bureaus ... Foreign Service officers must possess both area and functional skills. Their value in the policy process is maximal when they can provide insight into the situation and thinking of the foreign party that no other part of the US government possesses while simultaneously understanding and contributing to the specific functional issue under consideration ...

They should accept and benefit from the comparative advantage of issue-specific expertise in other agencies without trying to duplicate it completely .. As the policy agency, the Foreign Service is the only group in government with wide-ranging expertise in both regional affairs and functional issues. It is its ability to combine the two that allows it to shape policy on a broad basis.”⁽¹⁷⁾

Relations with other government departments

As globalization has proceeded, DFAIT’s relations with other government departments (OGDs) have grown in importance and complexity. In general, workshop participants believed relations had become more cooperative and productive over the years, but work was still required.

¹⁷ The Foreign Service in 2001, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Washington, D.C. 1992, pp. 28-29

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Recognizing their statutory responsibilities, departments have been devoting increased shares of their budgets to foreign policy concerns, building up international directorates and staffing a growing number of international meetings. By one estimate, there are now as many people working on international issues in other government departments as there are in DFAIT. And more than half of all program personnel at Canadian missions abroad now work for other government departments (see Annex 3). But in many cases departments have been inclined to pursue objectives which conflict with those of other departments or with broader national interests. Moreover, some have been reluctant to acknowledge DFAIT's responsibility for ensuring the overall coherence of policy abroad and have resented its efforts to play a facilitative role. As one participant observed, "In security policy, DND have historically recognized that defence policy operates in a foreign policy context, but OGDs have not".⁽¹⁸⁾

Workshop participants believed three kinds of action were necessary. The department needed to (a) do more work in clarifying its role in areas where it shares responsibility with other government departments, (b) assume more leadership in the development of overall Canadian strategies on particular international issues where OGD interests are engaged, and (c) enhance its ability to keep track of OGD programs and objectives.

Political reporting

Political reporting can be one of the most important instruments of international leverage available to a country. As Joseph Nye and William Owens have written, "Just as nuclear dominance was the key to coalition leadership in the old era, information dominance will be the key in the information age"⁽¹⁹⁾.

On many issues, the United States exercises leadership because of its ability to apply "dominant situational knowledge" to the management of an issue, i.e. it is better able than others to shed light on what is happening and thereby frame the discussion on how to respond to events. In 1992, a State Department task force reported that "Foreign Service reporting provides more than 70 percent of the foreign political, economic, social, and cultural information used in intelligence

¹⁸ A curiosity is that DFAIT has negotiated detailed MOUs with other departments governing its provision of support services abroad (office space, support staff, administration etc.), while there are few formal agreements governing cooperation on substantive issues. At missions, DFAIT tends to be regarded as a landlord rather than the lead department for Canadian policy and operations abroad.

¹⁹ "America's Information Edge", Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and William A. Owens, Foreign Affairs, March/April 1996

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analysis in Washington. (²⁰)

John Coles argues that “political work, the business of collecting and analyzing information about overseas countries and issues, and incorporating the results in policy advice to ministers (constitutes) the essential foundation of foreign policy-making ... There is a sense in which political work underlies practically all of the Foreign Office’s activity”. High quality political information, he has written, is the key to managing the international agenda; it provides industry leaders with assessments of countries they propose to do business in; it underpins the handling of consular issues; and it provides the foundation for effective public diplomacy (²¹).

Notwithstanding its potential, political reporting continues to be controversial. Some of those interviewed believed DFAIT political reports were not generally highly regarded in other departments. The main arguments heard against political reporting are that (a) diplomats cannot hope to compete with the media to be the first to report developments, (b) the analytical “value-added” of most reporting is low because missions are too remote from headquarters’ concerns to provide advice which is timely and relevant to Canadian objectives, and (c) reports tend to be overly long and cautious in expressing judgements.

In general, neither workshop participants nor most of those interviewed found these arguments persuasive, for the following reasons:

- The purpose of mission reporting is not to be “first” with the news, but to explain and interpret events in light of the national interests at stake. Nonetheless, political reports can be “first” when they are able to anticipate developments or when they convey confidential information about host government intentions. Moreover, political reports often deal with issues which the media judges to be insufficiently “newsworthy” to report on.
- With advances in communications technology, never before have missions been so “wired in” to headquarters, so able to discern how they can contribute most effectively to policy deliberations, and so equipped to do so.
- The relevance of mission reporting is entirely a function of how well missions are tasked.

²⁰ State 2000: A New Model for Managing Foreign Affairs, Report of the US Department of State Management Task Force, December 1992

²¹ Coles, *ibid.* pp. 142-145

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But people did believe that political reporting as now practiced required improvement:

- Officials in other government departments hoped the level of political reporting could be “elevated” to provide a better sense of the “big picture”. In the words of one official, the need was for missions “to be able to interpret what is happening in a country in the broadest sense, not just the government or the power networks, but society as a whole”.
- DFAIT officials were concerned about the ad hoc character of reporting. Some missions produce “regular reporting of great value”, others do not, and smaller missions “can get consumed by a visit and go silent for weeks”. In the experience of one individual, political reports carried “good analytical work from a Canadian perspective, but there are no coherent analytical pieces on a regular basis, just bits of info once in a while”.

Managing crises

The department prides itself on being able to rise to the occasion, to respond energetically and creatively to a crisis, marshaling resources from throughout the organization and working cooperatively with other government departments to see a matter through to a successful conclusion. Political officers invariably constitute the core of such operations.

Among political officers, however, there is concern that the number of crises engaging Canadian interests has been growing faster than the department’s capacity to manage them effectively, and that the time has come for more selective engagement and a “less ad hoc and more systematic” approach to crisis management. The fear is that Canada risks losing its capacity to lead international efforts.

The principal concerns appear to be the following:

- First, the “thin red line” is showing signs of strain from repeatedly being called on to deal with recurring crises. The pool of political officers is not large to begin with, and those with the relevant knowledge and experience further limit the numbers available for any particular crisis. The problem is particularly acute in the geographic bureaux which manage the bulk of crises (most crises have a geographic locus).

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- Second, the department faces significant obstacles in supplementing the resources of a bureau or mission struggling to manage a crisis. The department is too stretched to afford redundancy or to carry a reserve capacity. At DND, officers are more interchangeable and call spell off each other in shifts. At DFAIT, there is never more than a small pool of officers versed in the subject at hand who can take over when the A team tires. In a crisis, about the only supplementary resources immediately available is the small but able contingent of watch officers in the department's Operations Centre. Otherwise, resources have to be borrowed from other work units, which naturally resist encroachments on their own scarce resources, or they have to be hired "off the street". One workshop participant noted that the team handling Kosovo did not receive additional resources until the fourth month of the crisis.
- Third, the department has few standard operating procedures for managing a crisis. As one workshop participant observed, "there is too much gifted amateur can-do". Officers at the workshops shared the view that "the department has to reinvent itself for every crisis". It was important that it develop a "generic crisis response system which identifies responsibilities and defines functions".

Visits and conferences

No single issue appears to cause more grief for political officers than managing visits and conferences. Part of the problem is the sheer volume:

- In the 1980s, there was an average of two prime ministerial trips abroad per year; since the mid-1990s, the annual average has been seven PM trips abroad involving travel to some 17 cities -- about one trip and three foreign capitals every two months.
- Foreign travel by DFAIT ministers (there are five of them) has doubled since 1995 and now averages about 50 per year -- about one a week. Most of these are bilateral visits, but about 20% are to attend multilateral conferences -- each of which can spawn any number of "bilaterals" on the margins of a conference.
- The number of visits to Canada by foreign heads of state/government averages about 15 per year, by foreign ministers about 15, by trade ministers about 5, and by others about 13, for a cumulative total of 48 -- about one a week.
- Every year, Canada also hosts a number of international conferences. In FY95/96, there were nine of these; in FY98/99, there were 23 -- about one every two weeks.

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In sum, the department averages 8.5 high-level visits and two international conferences per month.

Not included in these numbers are official travel by the Governor General, by Members of Parliament (to serve on mixed Canadian delegations or to attend parliamentary association meetings), and by senior officials in DFAIT and in other government departments, along with reciprocal visits to Canada by their counterparts.

Another part of the problem, according to some workshop participants and interviewees, is that the value to Canadian interests of some of this activity can be quite marginal. There are few visits or conferences which lack any substance at all, but political officers doubt that the time and effort devoted to visits and conferences always generate commensurate payoff.

Compounding the problem is what one workshop participant described as "a management culture that senior officials want political staff to handle visits". In the words of another participant, "they know this is what can hurt them, so they want the people they can rely on". As a result, political officers often are involved not only in the substantive dimensions of visits but also in direct supervision of the logistical details, "down to the order of the cars at the hotel and the program for the spouse". Perversely, one individual pointed out, "At multilateral missions, the delegations do mostly visits, while the quality comes from the personnel from headquarters who attend the meetings". In the view of one of the DGs who participated in the workshops, "this is soul-destroying work for junior officers and one of the reasons they eventually leave".

The Canadian mission to the UN in New York offers a graphic example of the problem. There, according to one workshop participant, the average officer works 12 hours a day for six months on official visits. A quick scan of the mission's 10-page "Guidelines for Ministerial Visits" illustrates the magnitude of work associated with a single ministerial visit to the UN. The lead-off sentence reads: "One officer, selected by mission management, is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the visit; the Coordinator selected is relieved of all his/her other duties at an appropriate time before the visit. The Coordinator, while remaining responsible for all aspects of the visit, is assisted by the Mission Administrative Officer."

The guidelines are accompanied by an 18-page checklist of information to be compiled preparatory to the visit, covering accommodation, conferencing facilities, transport, accompanying visitors, document distribution, press and photos, speaking arrangements, hospitality, finances, communications, security, medical, site arrangements, and "ladies programme".

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Briefing books

High-level meetings with foreign governments represent important opportunities to advance national interests. Meetings between decision-makers are the occasion for cutting deals, removing obstacles to agreement, re-energizing negotiations, delivering messages, and so on. Often, the difference between success and failure is the quality of preparation, the key component of which is usually the briefing materials.

If visits cause the most grief for political officers, no aspect of the issue is more vexatious than how the department prepares briefing books for visits. For decades, the department has understood that preparing briefing books imposes an enormous workload on staff and that the final product is often uneven. In 1996, an internal study divided problems into two categories, quantitative and qualitative.

The quantitative problems were as follows:

- *Demand*: Too many briefing books were being commissioned. Often, the client was not the Prime Minister or ministers but senior officials.
- *Scope*: Too many briefs were being commissioned for each book. Books tended to cover vastly more subjects than could conceivably arise during a meeting.⁽²²⁾
- *Volume*: Too many copies of each book were being printed. This made a difficult job under pressure even more time-consuming and expensive.
- *Timeliness*: Too many briefs were being delivered late or at the last moment, often because briefs had to be “cleared” through many layers. This allowed little time for quality control or for raising questions about the substantive contents of the briefs.
- *Format*: Briefs were being submitted in different formats despite requests to submit texts in a prescribed format, compounding the pressure and frustration of assembling books.

²² *The study noted that “An ‘outsider’ could reasonably assume from a look at a standard briefing book that there was no agenda; the two (or more) sets of interlocutors had never met before and had no idea what the other participants wanted to discuss; the Canadian representatives had joined the Government the evening before and this was their first foray into international affairs; the meeting would last for three days; the Canadian side has to recite the history of every subject since Adam and Eve because the other side(s) has never heard of the issue and could not be counted on to say anything on the subject”.*

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Qualitative problems included:

- *Focus*: Briefs often rambled, hiding the essential information among the verbal chaff. As a result, ministers and officials occasionally missed key points in a presentation.
- *Literacy*: Briefs were often poorly written. Sometimes, it was simply a matter of poor drafting, at other times an attempt to avoid making a judgement for which the author could be held accountable.
- *Anodyne talking points*: Briefs often had nothing to say but pretended that they did. This left the reader “dazed or confused”.
- *“Unpolitical”*: Briefs often gave little indication of the “politics” of interlocutors positions, failing to explain how and why the other side saw the issue as it did, what pressures it was under, what it expected to achieve, and why.
- *Bureaucratic*: Briefs often ignored important differences between ministers and officials.

The study recommended a host of measures to address these problems, the essentials of which were to prepare one-page strategic overviews for meetings identifying what is at stake and the objectives to be pursued; to restrict briefs to the items on the agenda of a meeting; to prepare copies only for those participating in the meeting; and to make managers accountable for the substance, quality and deadlines for submissions of briefs.

Discussion at the workshops indicated that all the problems identified in the 1996 study persist to the present day. The 1996 model was tried briefly that year, but thereafter fell into disuse. More promising, however, is that a version of the model was employed in 2000 in one of the geographic divisions (PSE), received favourable reviews, and is expected to be used again.

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4. BEST PRACTICES

Every foreign ministry is unique, a product of its place and time. But foreign ministries everywhere share a common purpose, perform similar functions, and have characteristics which separate them from all other public institutions. As a group, therefore, they provide a rich field in which to explore for "best practices". Lessons can also be learned from the experience of other departments of government, and from one's own history.

The following is an inventory of suggestions, drawn from current practice, for how the role of political officers in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade can be made more efficient and effective. Sources include discussion at the four workshops held at CFSI, interviews with individuals inside and outside the department, and research conducted in the course of the study.

The suggestions are divided into two groups, the first dealing with department-wide issues, the second with issues particular to political officers.

DEPARTMENT-WIDE ISSUES

The mission of the department

A point of view about corporate purpose and direction is essential if an organization expects to be able to mobilize its resources in pursuit of worthwhile objectives. When "strategic intent" is unclear, individual and unit initiative are circumscribed by bureaucratic orthodoxies which are generally agnostic with respect to ends and blind to the possibilities of change.

Globalization has changed the context in which foreign ministries operate and has compelled them to assume difficult and complex new responsibilities. It has, however, also obscured what their core functions should be and what kind of "political" resources they will need. DFAIT has responded to the challenge with important structural adjustments and a heavy investment in communications and information technology. But it has yet to articulate a vision for the future which clarifies the department's mission, the kind of resources it needs, and its strategy for developing and sustaining these resources.

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Current formulations of the department's mission, as they appear in such documents as the annual Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) and the Departmental Performance Report (DPR), offer few hints that the department represents Canada's frontline in an historic contest to manage the revolutionary changes wrought by globalization, or that its success or failure can profoundly affect the future security and prosperity of Canadians. Nor do the RPP and DPR provide a succinct articulation of what the department is trying to achieve and how. Rather, they rely on traditional language: "On behalf of the Government of Canada, the Department conducts all diplomatic and consular relations with foreign governments, and represents Canada in international organizations. It participates in relevant international negotiations ..." One could also conclude that the department's "objectives" have not changed since 1995.

In certain other Western foreign ministries, conscious efforts have been made to articulate and communicate a mission which reflects the times and resonates with employees and the public alike:

- In Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) publishes a Corporate Plan every two years which sets out both general departmental objectives and quite specific objectives for the period ahead.
- In New Zealand, legislation requires governments to declare what they intend to accomplish over a three to five year time horizon, in particular to identify specific outcomes in the form of Strategic Result Areas (SRAs). The foreign policy SRA provides a succinct one-sentence formulation of the mission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and identifies the two main strategies to be pursued.
- In the UK, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has articulated a mission statement which specifies two objectives, identifies the four benefits to be secured, and lists five strategies for securing these benefits.

PROPOSAL: The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade should prepare an annual report separate from the RPP and DPR designed to serve as guidance for employees on the department's mission and priority objectives for the year ahead. Such a report could discuss the challenges and opportunities facing Canadian foreign policy and trade policy, establish an agenda of priority activity, and help to position "political" work in both a global and departmental context.

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PROPOSAL: The department should formulate a mission statement which more graphically captures its role and character as a 21st century institution, along the lines of the following:

"The Department is the instrument by which Canada seeks to understand and influence the world it inhabits. It is responsible for advising government on the most effective means for advancing Canada's interests in the age of globalization, for conducting the government's international negotiations, and for promoting acceptable international norms and rules for dealing with global problems. To fulfill these responsibilities, the department maintains a worldwide infrastructure of missions and foreign service personnel with the information, contacts and skills required to serve Canadian needs."

Policy development

An uncertain mandate, heavy workload, and staff reductions have all contributed to a weakening of the department's intellectual foundations and hence its policy development capabilities. The result has been a decline in the department's "substantive capacity to lead" on many issues, notably those requiring horizontal management across government. Restoring the department's primacy on global issues is critical to the effective pursuit of Canada's interests abroad.

In recent weeks, the department has taken steps to strengthen policy planning and development, including creating a senior-level Policy Board and enhancing the role of the Policy Planning Secretariat. These are important measures, but practice elsewhere suggests additional measures can be contemplated.

- In the UK, the former permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office has advocated putting the policy advice function "back on its proper pedestal". Policy-making is hard, John Coles has written: "It needs intellectual rigour, a capacity for innovation, a grasp of political reality, a sense of the future, and quite often a certain courage ... The key ethic of the public service -- fearless advice resting on top-class analysis, itself fashioned by evidence and reason -- is not a marginal good, an optional extra. It is *the* crucial element in advanced and rational government."
- In the United States, the policy planning staff of the State department wields enormous influence by virtue of its positioning at the centre of decision-making, its wideranging mandate, and its propensity to recruit from the outside. In the late 1980s, for example, the staff included Jon Stremlau of the Carnegie Foundation and Francis Fukuyama, author of The End of History.
- A number of foreign ministries (USA, UK, Germany) have taken measures to ensure that policy is informed by the best advice available, providing for policy recommendations to go forward along with dissenting opinion.

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- In 1991, the Japanese minister of foreign affairs established an Advisory Group on the Enhancement of Diplomatic Function whose recommendations included the creation of a Foreign Policy Bureau "to strengthen planning and coordination of comprehensive medium and long-term foreign policies", the creation of an Intelligence and Analysis Bureau "to improve functions related to information which is essential to executing foreign policy", and expanding research and "promoting exchanges between domestic sectors". The Foreign Policy Bureau currently consists of six divisions: policy coordination, policy planning, national security policy, UN policy, arms control and disarmament policy, and science and nuclear energy policy.
- At both the Department of National Defence and CIDA, there are assistant deputy ministers for policy with direct policy leadership responsibilities.
- DND has a central policy staff of about 60 members. Under new management, CIDA has been aggressively building up its policy development resources.
- At DFAIT, trade and economic officers hold "brown bag lunch" meetings most Tuesdays during 9 to 10 months of the year to discuss issues of current concern.

PROPOSAL: The Department should reinforce both the mandate and resources of the Policy Planning Secretariat, and recruit "the best and brightest" from universities, think tanks, industry and NGOs to serve terms in the Secretariat.

PROPOSAL: The department should provide for brain-storming sessions and virtual discussion groups on policy issues under development, and explore the creation of avenues for "loyal dissent".

PROPOSAL: The department should organize a regular schedule of in-house lectures and seminars, not limited to economic and trade issues, at which managers and subject specialists can brief staff at large on issues of current concern to the department.

Business Planning

Every foreign ministry in the Western world shares the problem of having to manage a relentlessly expanding international agenda with fewer resources than were available to it a decade ago. But the problem is particularly acute in Canada which has long been trying to pursue a global foreign policy with the resources of a middle power. No group has argued more strenuously than political officers for the department to set priorities and to align priorities with resources -- while also resisting the introduction of the business planning processes necessary to achieve these objectives.

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This year, the department is introducing important changes in the business planning process with a view to making business plans more strategic and having them better reflect how the department operates. The practices of other institutions suggest further evolution is possible:

- At CIDA, the departmental Planning, Reporting and Accountability Structure (PRAS) provides for both functional and geographic business lines, with vice presidents in charge of business planning for each major geographic region (Africa/Mideast, Asia, Americas).
- In the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Senior Executive Service (senior management group) establishes biennial priority objectives for the department, and approves the objectives proposed by the divisions (bureaux) and by the missions. Managers and staff at all levels are accountable for the achievement of objectives, through individual performance contracts on which are based their annual appraisals and performance bonuses.
- While all DFAT missions are “whole-of-government tasked”, missions are to be categorized according to size and resource complement. Smaller missions are being mandated to provide a more limited range of services and thereby afforded a measure of protection from tasking which would compromise the pursuit of their objectives.
- Within DFAIT, some branches have been developing “country plans” in the form of brief two-page documents identifying priorities to guide headquarters and mission activities.
- In Germany, the foreign ministry has launched an initiative to develop a better appreciation of the overall workload of the ministry, how it is distributed among various tasks and activities, and how it relates to established priorities. The initiative involves determining the costs of performing certain services in order to identify potential economies, to explore the scope for alternative delivery systems (OGD or private sector), and to ensure reimbursement of the costs of services to other government departments.
- In the UK, Foreign Office annual reports are beginning to quantify outputs.

PROPOSAL: The department should revise its Planning, Reporting and Accountability Structure (PRAS) to better reflect the reality of a department with both functional and geographic bureaux and a significant proportion of its resources at missions abroad. The PRAS should allow for the presentation of a more rounded picture of how the department is serving Canadian interests in various regions of the world.

PROPOSAL: All missions should be required to prepare annual plans.

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PROPOSAL: Bureau and mission objectives should dovetail with managers' annual performance contracts; such contracts should be developed for all employees; and personnel appraisals should reflect individual successes in fulfilling contracts.

PROPOSAL: The department should enhance training for all officers in the government's expenditure management system, program development and evaluation, and performance management.

PROPOSAL: The department should launch a "performance management" initiative aimed at achieving operational improvements in foreign policy work, the focus to be on identifying core functions, ensuring program resources are managed accordingly, establishing program delivery standards, and creating program support positions where warranted. (See Annex 1)

Information management

The department's substantial investment in informatics has bought some remarkable benefits, not least a fast and reliable means for worldwide communications between headquarters and missions, an asset of fundamental importance in an age of globalization. But there has not been sufficient dialogue and synergy between the technical community and program personnel to deliver similar benefits in another critically important area, the management of the information produced by the department. In fact, informatics appears to have made the situation worse. Others do not have this problem. They have found a way of maintaining control over the introduction of new communications technology so as to extract the benefits to be had without compromising or defeating operational disciplines essential to productivity and performance.

- At the State Department, user needs drive the informatics program. The objective is "the establishment of a technological framework for the conduct of international affairs in the new millennium, that is e-Diplomacy". The first principle guiding IT modernization at State is "priority on mission-critical activities". The second is "a shift in focus to substantive foreign policy applications and databases". The DFAIT IT strategy suggests technology should be in the driver's seat: "The department must plan, manage and operate in a way that maximizes the benefits from information management and technology infrastructure".

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- In Australia, DFAT maintains a separate cabling system for official communications, with pre-programmed distribution of messages to addressees in Canberra and elsewhere based on prior discussion among stakeholders. Messages are numbered and tagged to ensure effective distribution and filing. "All tasking, policy guidance and reporting transmitted between Canberra and posts should be strictly by cable". E-mail is to be used "for the transmission of documents and drafts, for forwarding official correspondence between individuals (for example on personnel matters), and for more informal work-related communication between officers as might have hitherto been carried out by telephone". These disciplines are designed to enhance visibility and accountability. "Too often managers at either end are not aware of tasking and advice that has been transmitted between their subordinates. Also officers in other Branches and Divisions with an operational need to know are often left out of the loop."
- The German foreign ministry requires that a senior officer at headquarters or an ambassador at post sign all messages of instruction, which are marked as "instruction".
- CIDA uses an intranet facility called "Entre Nous" to post agency-wide messages, reducing the clutter of the regular e-mail system. Only very important messages are broadcast, but these are generally short and refer back to the intranet site which employees are responsible for reviewing regularly. The site is structured so that individuals can select the features and messages most relevant to their own concerns e.g. non-rotational employees can ignore messages intended for rotational staff.
- In the Foreign Policy and Defence secretariat at PCO, a simple but effective electronic file management system ensures that a complete record is kept of all documentation related to foreign or defence policy which engages the Prime Minister or the Cabinet. Records are organized to permit rapid retrieval of data in the form required, and are accessible by all those who might be tasked to work with them -- whether the officer responsible or an associate substituting in the individual's absence. The system was developed in collaboration with the officers involved, an administrative assistant goes into the system every quarter to archive inactive materials, and divisional secretaries understand that information management is an important dimension of their responsibilities.

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- Since 1993, the consular bureau has operated the Consular Management and Operations System, an IT infrastructure which meets the specific needs of the consular program. Accessed through SIGNET, COSMOS allows headquarters and missions to create, store, retrieve, and communicate all the information required to provide prompt consular service 24-hours a day anywhere in the world. COSMOS includes modules on case management, passport issuance, travel, contingency planning, registration of Canadians, database searches, and messaging worldwide. It facilitates the collection of case management data and stores extensive documentary material such as treaties, laws, regulations, manuals, policy guidance, form letters and telephone directories. Compared to the cost of other IT systems, COSMOS has performed with admirable economy and efficiency, requiring only four people to operate at a total annual cost of just \$7 million.

PROPOSAL: Executive Committee should review the department's strategic plan for information technology to ensure top priority is accorded "mission-critical activities", in particular foreign policy applications. The plan should be revised to draw on the experience of other foreign ministries, the Privy Council Office, and successful departmental programs notably COSMOS.

PROPOSAL: The department should establish an electronic document management system which provides officers with "one-stop shopping" access to a departmental website with subject pages containing both classified and unclassified information and links to other directories⁽²³⁾.

PROPOSAL: As soon as possible, the department should enunciate disciplines for the numbering, tagging and distribution of official communications and rules for the use of e-mail.

ISSUES PARTICULAR TO THE POLITICAL OFFICER

The "globalist" foreign service officer

If globalization requires a new breed of "globalist" foreign service officers, it is unlikely that traditional personnel policies and systems will produce the desired results. If globalists must be well versed in several fields simultaneously in order to "make sense of the whole", assigning individuals to "sub-global" compartments (political/economic, trade, etc.) is unlikely to be helpful conceptually or administratively. If globalists must have a rare combination of professional skills and personal attributes to "work the global system" effectively, allowing globalist professionals to be employed in sub-professional occupations or in support of other professional groups is to squander a precious and irreplaceable resource. Developing and sustaining the new "breed" will require distinctive recruitment systems, career management and training, and remuneration.

²³ We acknowledge with thanks David Lee's authorship of this proposal.

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The “globalist” is already beginning to emerge in various forms and guises:

- In a number of professions, “command of the world” is becoming recognized as the key to individual and corporate success. Among these are hedge fund managers, commercial bankers, international investors, management consultants, and foreign correspondents.
- In the Public Service of Canada, all executives are members of a single classification group or “stream” on the grounds that effective management requires a common base of knowledge and core competencies whatever the department or agency. Within DFAIT, EX-level officers are no longer divided into “streams”.
- In Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has erased the distinction between “streams”, combining foreign policy and trade policy (trade promotion remains separate). The department employs generic job descriptions for all positions, allowing lateral entry into the foreign service from other government departments and from the private sector. All positions are “rotational”. In addition, the Secretary (deputy minister) has wide latitude to set salaries at competitive levels and pay for expertise.
- In Australia and New Zealand, the competition for senior positions in the foreign ministry is open to anyone with the necessary “globalist” credentials. In 1999, New Zealand advertised in *The Economist* for a successor to the Secretary, not restricting candidates to either New Zealand government officials or even to New Zealanders.
- In 1993, at a meeting at La Sapinière, a group of officers commissioned by the two DFAIT deputies to explore the future of the foreign service, concluded that there was continued need for “an FS/rotational group because of the value of the combination of experience and expertise which can’t be replicated in a non-career service”. But the group believed that “the existence of separate streams for trade and political officers was divisive and counter-productive”. One participant argued for the removal of distinctions between categories of employees (permanent/temporary, rotational/nonrotational) and the creation of a “consolidated agency consisting of employees who may accept assignments abroad depending on requirements and in which all employees will have equal career opportunities and benefit”.

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- The *Workforce for the Future* study recommends that the FS streams be merged to create a “consolidated FS group that draws on the best of the culture and skillsets we have developed”. In the study, George Haynal argues that, “In the new global environment, the basic tasks for both political and trade officers are close enough that the same kinds of people should deliver them (and) we should ... let the internal ‘market’ sort out which particular jobs line officers do at different stages of their careers.” Streams also limit careers and mobility, and “compartmentalize our talent pool dysfunctionally”.

PROPOSAL: In future, the core of the department should be “globalist” foreign service officers, with a basic grounding in the several dimensions of global affairs (politics, culture, technology, finance, national security and ecology), superior policy development capabilities, and the ability to function effectively almost anywhere in the world.

PROPOSAL: In support of the “globalist” concept, the department should eliminate barriers to mobility and acquisition of experience by:

- combining all officers (political/economic, trade, consular and administrative) in a single rotational “stream”,
- letting “the internal ‘market’ sort out which particular jobs line officers do at different stages of their careers”, and
- restricting non-rotational and/or contract employees to specializations in emerging or technically complex issues and to headquarters-specific tasks.

PROPOSAL: The department should reorient its hiring practices towards recruiting individuals with the potential to become “globalists”, accentuating intelligence and flexibility rather than specific knowledge or experience.

PROPOSAL: The department should accelerate the development of “second generation” training programs at CFSI to enhance “globalist” skills such as the management of complex issues.

Personnel Management

The department is implementing a human resources strategy to address issues which have long been a source of concern: leadership, career management, learning, human resources services, locally-engaged staff, and workplace issues. It is also tackling the problem of the shortage of foreign service officers and the proliferation of contract employees doing FS work, in addition to preparing for the introduction of the government-wide Universal Classification System. These are difficult issues made more difficult still by the impact which globalization is having on the work of the department and its personnel.

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Turbulent weather requires strong crews. In well-managed organizations, a common strategy in times of rapid change is to return to fundamentals, in particular to ensure respect for the principles and practices which best define the organization. The strategy can take many forms, but a focus on people is invariably a central element. Organizations don't produce results; people do.

Best practices in personnel management can be categorized under a variety of headings: valuing the person, developing the individual, enhancing professionalism.

Valuing the person

- Within the federal government, many departments and agencies including Industry Canada, Health and HRDC are running programs to assist employees to strike a better balance between work and private life.
- In Australia, the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has launched a *Working Smarter* program to establish “a new paradigm for the successful DFAT officer who ... organises his/her own time and that of subordinates cleverly and strategically, demonstrates good judgement and discrimination in setting work priorities, and maintains a sense of balance between work and private life”. Because of the bad example they can set, senior officers are “actively discouraged from working late except in genuine emergencies ... working in the office at weekends should be kept to an absolute minimum”. Full utilization of annual leave is considered “a key indicator of good management”.
- In many Canadian public sector institutions, “upward feedback” is no longer an occasional training tool for managers but a permanent feature of employee engagement in managing the workplace. Both the Australian and New Zealand foreign ministries have instituted upward appraisal systems whereby subordinates annually provide their supervisor’s supervisor with a confidential collective appraisal of the individual’s performance. Staff appraisals are an integral element of managers’ annual performance assessments.
- Industry Canada utilizes the provisions of a Treasury Board directive to provide financial bonuses to employees for especially meritorious performance.
- In the UK, the Foreign Office publishes an annual “Diplomatic Service List” which not only includes a listing of all officers in the organization but also biographical sketches on each member. Canada used to do something similar until the early 1970s.

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PROPOSAL: The department should launch its own Working Smarter campaign, articulating a departmental code of conduct for managing time and workloads at headquarters and missions, establishing incentives for adhering to the code, tracking performance, and taking action when corporate systems are found to be dysfunctional.

PROPOSAL: The department should institute an upward appraisal system for managers at all levels.

PROPOSAL: The department should return to the practice of preparing annual staff directories, arrange for the directories to list officers both at headquarters and in the field, include biographical sketches, and ensure that directories are ready for distribution by October 1 of each year.

Developing the individual

- In 1992, a State Department task force studying the future of the US foreign service lamented the absence of “a strategy that explicitly links the Department’s mission with the personnel charged with accomplishing it”. It recommended the development of “a strategic personnel planning mechanism that provides a coordinated mix of top level management oversight, centralized guidance, and decentralized planning and execution” including a personnel “early warning system” to identify emerging needs for particular knowledge and competencies.
- In the mid 1990s, the Foreign Office prepared career profiles on every officer in the organization. Individuals were interviewed to determine their career aspirations and counseled on the assignment tracks which would open up possibilities for advancement and the achievement of their goals.
- The German foreign ministry brings in new recruits at either the Third or Second Secretary level depending on their academic credentials and performance in a weeklong series of examinations. While most officers are “mainstreamed”, some are identified for more rapid advancement. Officers particularly suited to policy work, for example, would have career plans structured around assignments at headquarters in policy planning or international security affairs and postings to key capitals, the UN, etc.

PROPOSAL: In addition to the work it is already doing on career management and development, the department should prepare career plans for each officer, based on interviews with officers to determine their career aspirations; assessments of individuals’ current knowledge, skills and experience; and professional advice on career paths.

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PROPOSAL: *Each career plan should incorporate a career development program providing for assignments in a variety of fields and secondments to other government departments.*

Enhancing professionalism

- CIDA, DND, RCMP, CSIS, and other departments with representatives abroad typically arrange for an overlap at post between the incumbent and the successor to ensure the reliable handover of files and facilitate a “fast start” on the part of the new arrival. In many cases, officers also make orientation visits to the mission in advance of taking up their new assignment.
- The Trade and Economic Policy branch, the International Business Development branch, and the Consular Bureau have all maintained the practice of having their staff abroad meet regularly at regional conferences or travel to Canada for discussions with headquarters staff and with important contacts in and out of government. The Human Rights Division (AGH) allocates resources in the divisional budget for regular visits to Ottawa of its officers in New York and Geneva.
- The Foreign Office operates Wilton Park to assist in maintaining high standards of intellectual inquiry and policy analysis, bringing together foreign policy practitioners, academics and other specialists from the UK and throughout the world for conferences, seminars and research on international developments and trends.
- In France, every two months Politique étrangère de la France publishes a compendium of press releases, speech texts, press interviews, parliamentary replies and other documents related to French foreign policy. Materials are organized chronologically, with a subject index and a country index. In addition, Notes et études documentaires provides relatively brief high quality analyses of current events authored by experts of all nationalities.

PROPOSAL: *The department should institute the practice of having officers going on posting prepare for their assignment through a familiarization visit or a period of overlap with the incumbent. Such practice should be the rule not the exception, and budgets should protect funds for this purpose.*

PROPOSAL: *Mission political officers should be meeting at regional conferences or traveling to Ottawa every year for discussions with headquarters contacts and other stakeholders.*

PROPOSAL: *The department should launch a feasibility study for the creation of a Canadian Wilton Park. Options could include joint ventures with other government departments and/or with private sector interests.*

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PROPOSAL: The department should begin publication of Politique étrangère du Canada, perhaps as a joint venture with a university or NGO which specializes in Canadian foreign policy.

Standard operating procedures

When it first came into the language, "bureaucracy" used to connote a rationale and efficient method of organization. With its hierarchical authority and functional specialization, it was designed to bring the same logic to government work which "management" and the assembly line had brought to manufacturing. Bureaucracy has since lost much of its luster, but it remains indispensable to the effective functioning of large organizations both public and private. Bureaucracy provides the structure and internal systems which an organization needs to make rational decisions, to mobilize resources effectively, and to operationalize experience in the pursuit of predetermined objectives. Success is more often the result of systematic execution of "bread-and-butter" tasks than splendid improvisation.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has well developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) -- for every program other than foreign policy. Trade promotion, consular assistance, protocol, mission management, personnel postings, financial administration and other operations are all governed by established procedures, often consolidated in an operations manual. Similarly, other government departments and agencies involved in foreign operations (immigration processing, development assistance programming, police and security liaison etc.) have special systems and procedures to ensure that the discretionary dimension of operations is restricted to issues and circumstances where judgement is required. But there are few SOPs governing the main operations in which political officers are engaged. Inspiration can be found in many places.

Political reporting

- The State Department requires all missions to develop a Post Reporting Plan to ensure mission reporting is driven by demand rather than supply, "to focus mission attention on correlation of policy goals with reporting targets". Guidance and feedback from Washington is expected to be provided daily, weekly or biweekly depending on the size of the mission. Even small missions are required to report, on the grounds that "today's backwater can be tomorrow's headlines". Some US ambassadors have formed working groups across section lines to prepare specific analyses.
- The State Department routinely employs foreign nationals and local firms to perform some collection and analysis work.

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- The Canadian high commission in Canberra has used local staff to do some reporting.
- In Australia, the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has issued instructions that all cables to and from posts should be limited to three pages, with summaries no longer than ten lines. Only ministerial records of conversation, transcripts and non-DFAT documents which cannot easily be sent by fax or e-mail are exempt. "The fact that an issue has high priority would not be grounds for exceeding the page limit -- on the contrary, reports on the most important issues need to be especially concise and accessible to senior readers in Canberra". Heads of mission must personally approve messages longer than three pages. Messages must also indicate what follow-up action is required.

PROPOSAL: The department should issue a directive on mission reporting, affirming that political and economic reports are an obligation not a discretionary activity, and establishing minimum requirements for all missions.

PROPOSAL: Missions should be instructed to prepare annual reporting plans in conjunction with geographic bureaux and other stakeholders, which specify the nature and frequency of the reports to be prepared commensurate with the size and composition of mission staff.

PROPOSAL: The department should adopt Australian rules in respect of the length of reports.

PROPOSAL: Missions should be instructed to explore the feasibility and cost of employing foreign nationals to assist in meeting mission reporting obligations.

Networking and lobbying

- In the early 1980s, the Canadian embassy in Washington established a Congressional liaison office within the mission to begin systematic tracking of legislative initiatives with the potential to affect Canadian economic and commercial interests. The data generated served to develop strategy for lobbying Senators and Congressmen, their policy and legislative assistants, and committee staff on issues of importance to Canada -- notably the Free Trade Agreement.

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- In the mid-1990s, in answer to the question "Who's running the country", the Canadian embassy in Tokyo developed a *Political Influence Map* as a guide to the playing field on any given issue. Using the map to identify where issues were being played out, who the key decision-makers were, and how outcomes were being influenced by bureaucratic, private sector and media interests, the mission was able to develop a "practical contact matrix" to inform its lobbying and advocacy efforts. In addition, mission staff developed a *Political Influence Strategy* template to define Canadian objectives, list appropriate courses of action, and record actions and results. "By filling in this matrix, and saving it in a numerical series as new information is added ... in time, it becomes the definitive track record on the advocacy of any given Canadian interest in the host country. It tells you what works and what does not."
- Contact management software of the sort available from any computer store has been a staple of sales professionals for over a decade.
- DFAT officers have been instructed to exercise "greater discretion and discipline" in deciding whether to attend representational events of marginal relevance. "For example, attendance at national day functions should be restricted to the twenty or so countries with which Australia has important relationships."

PROPOSAL: The department should draw on existing examples of successful contact management practices to develop a template for systematic mission tracking of issues of importance to Canada and the development of strategies to achieve mission objectives.

PROPOSAL: Once the template has been developed, missions should be instructed to prepare operational plans for political work, to be reflected in missions' annual business plans and staffing proposals.

PROPOSAL: Mission operational plans should identify priorities for representational activities, and mission officers instructed to exercise "greater discretion and discipline" in attending or hosting representational events of marginal relevance to mission plans.

Managing crises

- Many departments and agencies of the federal government have established procedures for responding to crises designed to ensure timely commitment of resources, tasking appropriate to the circumstances, and effective decision-making. Among these are the PCO, Ministry of the Solicitor General, RCMP, DND, Environment Canada, Health Canada, and Emergency Preparedness Canada.

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- At DFAIT, the Consular Bureau has broad contingency plans for the management of crises affecting large numbers of Canadians abroad, such as natural disasters, civil unrest, and airline crashes. Included in these plans are cooperative arrangements with the United States, the UK, Australia and New Zealand to coordinate emergency evacuations. In addition, the bureau has drawn up individual contingency plans for 176 missions, which missions are required to update annually. These plans identify emergency response triggers; provide complete data on mission personnel and assets; assess the local Canadian community; inventory support, transportation and communications facilities; and outline policies and procedures for managing a crisis.

PROPOSAL: The department should establish a small team of officers and support staff experienced in the management of crises to review lessons learned and propose standard operating procedures for future handling of crises. The team should look in particular at the recent experience of geographic bureaux and missions and recommend ways of supplementing their resources during a crisis stretching beyond a few days.

Visits and conferences

- At UN headquarters, the British delegation employs a professional visits coordinator to handle most visits to New York.
- The US delegation in New York has full-time speech-writers to prepare the texts of major interventions at UN meetings.
- The Canadian embassy in Washington has a locally-engaged “events manager”.
- Canada’s mission to the UN has developed detailed “Guidelines for Ministerial Visits” and an 18-page checklist to assist officers in the preparation and management of visits.
- In Australia, efforts are being made to limit the workload associated with visits to posts by Australian ministers, parliamentarians and other senior figures, through developing standards for visits and categorizing posts according to size and level of service to be offered. In the meantime, posts have been advised to “exercise judgement” about the level of assistance to be provided certain groups of visitors e.g. state (provincial) ministers. The Parliamentary and Media Branch at DFAT has prepared a booklet advising MPs on the services they can and cannot expect from the department while traveling abroad.

PROPOSAL: The department should take immediate steps to relieve the burden on political officers of managing logistical arrangements for visits. Missions should be instructed to review current procedures with a view to divesting political officers of administrative functions.

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PROPOSAL: Missions with heavy visits workloads should be invited to submit proposals on the feasibility and cost of hiring professional visits coordinators.

PROPOSAL: A Visits Management manual should be developed to provide advice to missions on preparing and executing visits plans. The manual should include guidelines for missions on the level of service to be offered various categories of visitors, and should stipulate the circumstances under which missions should request supplementary resources from Ottawa to deal with situations beyond the mission's capabilities.

PROPOSAL: The department should prepare and distribute a booklet, approved by the Minister, advising Members of Parliament and provincial leaders of the level of services they can expect to receive from Canadian missions abroad.

Briefing books

- The 1996 departmental study on briefing books proposed that every book begin with a strategic overview for the meeting, not normally to exceed one page, intended to "guide the reader to what is at stake and what we can expect to achieve". If the reader is thoroughly familiar with the issues, the overview may be all that is required. The key was to take care in selecting issues for the agenda and to ensure that the other side abided by the agenda. Directors should personally approve the strategic overview.
- PSE has adopted a briefing system for ministerial discussions which limits the documentation to (a) one or two pages of bullets on issues to raise, (b) a two-page background brief, and (c) a biographical sketch of the interlocutor.

PROPOSAL: Deputies should issue instructions on the preparation of briefs which satisfy the criteria of the 1996 study i.e. a negotiated agenda, clarity of objectives, a scenario brief containing the essentials, and supporting briefs limited to items on the agenda. Deputies should hold directors accountable for the quality and timeliness of briefs.

PROPOSAL: The department should prepare briefs according to a standard format. Briefs should be prepared in electronic form only, with hard copy production left to administrative assistants in the offices of ministers, deputy ministers, and ADMs.

CONCLUSIONS

The following recapitulates the proposals discussed in Section 4.

DEPARTMENT-WIDE ISSUES

The mission of the department

1. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade should prepare an annual report separate from the RPP and DPR designed to serve as guidance for employees on the department's mission and priority objectives for the year ahead. Such a report could discuss the challenges and opportunities facing Canadian foreign policy and trade policy, establish an agenda of priority activity, and help to position "political" work in both a global and departmental context.
2. The department should formulate a mission statement which more graphically captures its role and character as a 21st century institution, along the lines of the following:

"The Department is the instrument by which Canada seeks to understand and influence the world it inhabits. It is responsible for advising government on the most effective means for advancing Canada's interests in the age of globalization, for conducting the government's international negotiations, and for promoting acceptable international norms and rules for dealing with global problems. To fulfill these responsibilities, the department maintains a worldwide infrastructure of missions and foreign service personnel with the information, contacts and skills required to serve Canadian needs."

Policy development

3. The Department should reinforce both the mandate and resources of the Policy Planning Secretariat, and recruit "the best and brightest" from universities, think tanks, industry and NGOs to serve terms in the Secretariat.
4. The department should provide for brain-storming sessions and virtual discussion groups on policy issues under development, and explore the creation of avenues for "loyal dissent".
5. The department should organize a regular schedule of in-house lectures and seminars, not limited to economic and trade issues, at which managers and subject specialists can brief staff at large on issues of current concern to the department.

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Business planning

6. The department should revise its Planning, Reporting and Accountability Structure (PRAS) to better reflect the reality of a department with both functional and geographic bureaux and a significant proportion of its resources at missions abroad. The PRAS should allow for the presentation of a more rounded picture of how the department is serving Canadian interests in various regions of the world.
7. All missions should be required to prepare annual plans.
8. Bureau and mission objectives should dovetail with managers' annual performance contracts; such contracts should be developed for all employees; and personnel appraisals should reflect individual successes in fulfilling contracts.
9. The department should enhance training for all officers in the government's expenditure management system, program development and evaluation, and performance management.
10. The department should launch a "performance management" initiative aimed at achieving operational improvements in foreign policy work, the focus to be on identifying core functions, ensuring program resources are managed accordingly, establishing program delivery standards, and creating program support positions where warranted. See Annex 1

Information management

11. Executive Committee should review the department's strategic plan for information technology to ensure that top priority is accorded "mission-critical activities", in particular foreign policy applications. The plan should be revised to draw on the experience of other foreign ministries, the Privy Council Office, and successful departmental programs notably COSMOS.
12. The department should establish an electronic document management system which provides officers with "one-stop shopping" access to a departmental website with subject pages containing both classified and unclassified information and links to other directories.
13. As soon as possible, the department should enunciate disciplines for the numbering, tagging and distribution of official communications and rules for the use of e-mail.

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ISSUES PARTICULAR TO POLITICAL OFFICERS

The “globalist” foreign service officer

14. In future, the core of the department should be “globalist” foreign service officers, with a basic grounding in the several dimensions of global affairs (politics, culture, technology, finance, national security and ecology), superior policy development capabilities, and the ability to function effectively almost anywhere in the world.
15. In support of the “globalist” concept, the department should eliminate barriers to mobility and acquisition of experience by:
 - combining all officers (political/economic, trade, consular and administrative) in a single rotational “stream”,
 - letting “the internal ‘market’ sort out which particular jobs line officers do at different stages of their careers”, and
 - restricting non-rotational and/or contract employees to specializations in emerging or technically complex issues and to headquarters-specific tasks.
16. The department should reorient its hiring practices towards recruiting individuals with the potential to become “globalists”, accentuating intelligence and flexibility rather than specific knowledge or experience.
17. The department should accelerate the development of “second generation” training programs at CFSI to enhance “globalist” skills such as the management of complex issues.

Personnel management

Valuing the person

18. The department should launch its own Working Smarter campaign, articulating a departmental code of conduct for managing time and workloads at headquarters and missions, establishing incentives for adhering to the code, tracking performance, and taking action when corporate systems are found to be dysfunctional.
19. The department should institute an upward appraisal system for managers at all levels.
20. The department should return to the practice of preparing annual staff directories, arrange for the directories to list officers both at headquarters and in the field, include biographical sketches, and ensure that directories are ready for distribution by October 1 of each year.

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Developing the individual

21. In addition to the work it is already doing on career management and development, the department should prepare career plans for each officer, based on interviews with officers to determine their career aspirations; assessments of individuals' current knowledge, skills and experience; and professional advice on career paths.
22. Each career plan should incorporate a career development program providing for assignments in a variety of fields and secondments to other government departments.

Enhancing professionalism

23. The department should institute the practice of having officers going on posting prepare for their assignment through a familiarization visit or a period of overlap with the incumbent. Such practice should be the rule not the exception, and budgets should protect funds for this purpose.
24. Mission political officers should be meeting at regional conferences or traveling to Ottawa every year for discussions with headquarters contacts and other stakeholders.
25. The department should launch a feasibility study for the creation of a Canadian Wilton Park. Options could include joint ventures with other government departments and/or with private sector interests.
26. The department should begin publication of Politique étrangère du Canada, perhaps as a joint venture with a university or NGO which specializes in Canadian foreign policy.

Standard operating procedures

Political reporting

27. The department should issue a directive on mission reporting, affirming that political and economic reports are an obligation not a discretionary activity, and establishing minimum requirements for all missions.
28. Missions should be instructed to prepare annual reporting plans in conjunction with geographic bureaux and other stakeholders, which specify the nature and frequency of the reports to be prepared commensurate with the size and composition of mission staff.

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29. The department should adopt Australian rules in respect of the length of reports.
30. Missions should be instructed to explore the feasibility and cost of employing foreign nationals to assist in meeting mission reporting obligations.

Networking and lobbying

31. The department should draw on existing examples of successful contact management practices to develop a template for systematic mission tracking of issues of importance to Canada and the development of strategies to achieve mission objectives.
32. Once the template has been developed, missions should be instructed to prepare operational plans for political work, to be reflected in missions' annual business plans and staffing proposals.
33. Mission operational plans should identify priorities for representational activities, and mission officers instructed to exercise "greater discretion and discipline" in attending or hosting representational events of marginal relevance to mission plans.

Managing crises

34. The department should establish a small team of officers and support staff experienced in the management of crises to review lessons learned and propose standard operating procedures for future handling of crises. The team should look in particular at the recent experience of geographic bureaux and missions and recommend ways of supplementing their resources during a crisis stretching beyond a few days.

Visits and conferences

35. The department should take immediate steps to relieve the burden on political officers of managing logistical arrangements for visits. Missions should be instructed to review current procedures with a view to divesting political officers of administrative functions.
36. Missions with heavy visits workloads should be invited to submit proposals on the feasibility and cost of hiring professional visits coordinators.
37. A Visits Management manual should be developed to provide advice to missions on preparing and executing visits plans. The manual should include guidelines for missions on the level of service to be offered various categories of visitors, and should stipulate the circumstances under which missions should request supplementary resources from Ottawa to deal with situations beyond the mission's capabilities.

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38. The department should prepare and distribute a booklet, approved by the Minister, advising Members of Parliament and provincial leaders of the level of services they can expect to receive from Canadian missions abroad.

Briefing books

39. Deputies should issue instructions on the preparation of briefs which satisfy the criteria of the 1996 study i.e. a negotiated agenda, clarity of objectives, a scenario brief containing the essentials, and supporting briefs limited to items on the agenda. Deputies should hold directors accountable for the quality and timeliness of briefs.
40. The department should prepare briefs according to a standard format. Briefs should be prepared in electronic form only, with hard copy production left to administrative assistants in the offices of ministers, deputy ministers, and ADMs.

PRIORITY/FUNDING OF PROPOSALS

DEPARTMENT-WIDE ISSUES	3-6 months	6-18 months	New funding
The mission of the department			
1. An annual report on mission and priority objectives	✓		no
2. A departmental mission statement for 21st century	✓		no
Policy development			
3. Reinforce mandate and resources of CPD		✓	yes
4. Brainstorming sessions, virtual discussion groups, avenues for loyal dissent	✓		no
5. Regular in-house lectures and seminars on current issues	✓		no
Business planning			
6. Revision of PRAS		✓	no
7. Annual mission plans		✓	no
8. Annual performance contracts for all employees		✓	no
9. Enhanced training in expenditure management, program development, performance management		✓	yes
10. A performance management framework for foreign policy work		✓	yes
Information management			
11. Review IT strategic plan to ensure priority for mission-critical activities	✓		no
12. An electronic document management system with "one-stop shopping" access		✓	
13. Disciplines for official communications and e-mail	✓		no

PRIORITY/FUNDING OF PROPOSALS

ISSUES PARTICULAR TO POLITICAL OFFICERS	3-6 months	6-18 months	New funding
The “globalist” foreign service officer			
14. The core of the department should be “globalist” foreign service officers		✓	no
15. Elimination of barriers to mobility (single stream, internal market, restricting contract employees)		✓	no
16. Hiring practices to accentuate “globalist” attributes		✓	no
17. Accelerate development of “globalist” skills training			
Personnel management			
<i>Valuing the person</i>			
18. A DFAIT Working Smarter campaign	✓		no
19. Upward appraisal for all managers		✓	no
20. Annual staff directories		✓	no
<i>Developing the individual</i>			
21. Career plans for each officer		✓	no
22. Career development programs for each officer		✓	no
<i>Enhancing professionalism</i>			
23. Familiarization visits and periods of overlap for new postings		✓	yes
24. Regional conferences or visits to Ottawa every year		✓	yes
25. Feasibility study on the creation of a Canadian Wilton Park		✓	yes
26. Publication of <u>Politique étrangère du Canada</u>		✓	yes

PRIORITY/FUNDING OF PROPOSALS

Standard operating procedures	3-6 months	6-18 months	New funding
<i>Political reporting</i>			
27. A departmental directive on mission reporting	✓		no
28. Mission annual reporting plans		✓	no
29. Australian rules on length of reports	✓		no
30. Missions to explore feasibility/cost of employing local nationals to assist with political reporting	✓		yes
<i>Networking and lobbying</i>			
31. A template for mission tracking of issues/development of strategies to achieve mission objectives	✓		no
32. Mission operational plans for political work		✓	no
33. Mission plans to identify priorities for representational activities		✓	no
<i>Managing crises</i>			
34. Establishment of team to propose SOPs for future handling of crises	✓		no
<i>Visits and conferences/Briefs</i>			
35. Political officers to be divested of administrative functions on visits		✓	yes
36. Missions to submit proposals on feasibility/cost of hiring professional visits coordinators	✓		yes
37. Development of visits manual including guidelines to missions on levels of service		✓	no
38. Preparation of booklet for MPs and provincial leaders on levels of service		✓	no
39. Deputies' instructions on preparation of briefs	✓		no
40. Briefs in standard format, e-version only	✓		no

ANNEX 1

A PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR FOREIGN POLICY

Introduction

Among the main findings of the *Political Officer Study* are that:

- (a) the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is critical to Canada's success in dealing with the challenges and opportunities of globalization, and
- (b) the department is making sub-optimal use of the officer group best equipped to manage the process.

In the opinion of those who participated in the study, both inside and outside the department, DFAIT has not been able to exercise the leadership role it could because political officers in the FS stream who should be providing the strategic and policy advice required are too few and too heavily tasked to do so.

If the department believes it has too few political officers and is tasking them too heavily, it has both a resources problem and a management problem. But the case for more resources is difficult to make unless the department has first demonstrated that it has taken all reasonable steps to make best use of the resources it already has. This the department has not done, as other findings of the study confirm. Lacking a clearly articulated mission and priority objectives, political officers spend too little time on core functions and too much time serving other interests. And when they do focus on core functions, there is too little discipline to guide their work and too much improvisation.

Managing the trade commissioner service

Five years ago, the department faced similar concerns with respect to its trade officers. Both the department and client groups were dissatisfied with the levels of service being offered, in large part because there were not enough trade commissioners in the field and because those at post were expected to be "all things to all people everywhere". In response, in 1997 the department launched the *Performance Measurement Initiative (PMI)* to make the Trade Commissioner Service more client-driven and more effective, and to develop means for demonstrating the service's value.

PMI improvements included:

- identifying the activities that, from the perspective of Canadian exporters, were most likely to provide added value and results (provision of market information and intelligence, troubleshooting, and face-to-face counselling);

- helping trade officers spend more time and effort on these activities;
- developing service delivery guidelines; and
- creating a support unit at headquarters to help missions to interpret the guidelines and resolve service delivery problems.

Two and half years later, the Auditor General found *inter alia* that “services are more clearly defined” and that “implementing more uniform practices can produce operational improvements”.

It is time for the department to consider a similar initiative in respect of political officers.

Managing political resources

Managing political resources presents many challenges. The operating environment is constantly in flux, objectives can change from one day to the next, the tasks to be performed vary over time and from place to place, and the contributions made to achieving certain outcomes can be difficult to estimate. But managing any professional group presents similar challenges. All operate in conditions of uncertainty, precisely the reason for having professionals with the judgement and competencies to respond effectively to the changing times.

A framework for the effective utilization of political resources consists of several elements.

1. Purpose and rationale

The first element is clarity in respect of the purpose and rationale for the work being done. The department is a dynamic organization, continually reorganizing and redistributing resources to reflect changes in the operating environment and in policy orientation. Every year, bureaux are being created, restructured or downsized; missions are being established, expanded, or closed. Their reason for being -- and for being as they are -- needs to be clear to those who work there.

2. Objectives

The second element is planning, in particular the articulation of strategic intent “to ensure that everyone in the organization pulls in the same direction” (Mintzberg). If the department successfully communicates the “big picture”, it can be assured that most of the hard work and ingenuity of which political officers are capable will be channeled in the right direction -- with or without senior management instruction. When objectives are clear, the department can determine with much greater precision the strategies it needs to pursue to achieve those objectives and, therefore, the tasks which would support the strategies. Conversely, when objectives are unclear effort is diffused and results tend to be disappointing.

3. Strategy

The third element is strategy. An objective remains a wish or a hope until there is a plan of action to achieve it. The design of the plan is important, particularly in circumstances where contingent factors play a role in determining whether the objective is achieved. Throughout the public sector, but perhaps more in international affairs than in other subject areas, the most that a program can aspire to do is contribute to a desired outcome. Hence, the importance of ensuring a logical connection between the objective and the strategy developed to achieve it.

4. Activities

The fourth element is clarity in respect of high payoff activities. In the pursuit of predetermined objectives, not all activities are of equal value -- some make a more direct contribution than others. As circumstances change and new objectives arise, organizations are constantly challenged to ensure that what they are doing corresponds to what they want to achieve. PMI is instructive in this respect. Having determined that international business development goals could best be achieved if the Trade Commissioner Service focused more on some kinds of activity than on others, the department negotiated a new division of labour with Industry Canada to allow trade officers abroad to perform a narrower range of services with a higher aggregate payoff.

In addition, it is important that the right amount of time be devoted to high payoff activities. This is always a challenge, but especially so when a change of direction requires acceptance of new attitudes and behaviours. Every organization has a "genetic code" of values, assumptions and beliefs which conditions the nature and range of its responses to particular situations -- and tends to resist change. Only determined leadership will see a transformation through to a successful conclusion.

5. Focus on results

The fifth element is a focus on results, the ultimate test of effectiveness. Results can be divided into two groups: (a) *outputs* which are the immediate product of effort and lie within the control of those involved in the activity, and (b) *outcomes* which are the consequences flowing from the outputs and can only be influenced by those involved. Given the context in which most political work is conducted, one in which many extraneous factors have an impact on results, focusing on the kinds of outputs most likely to have a beneficial effect on the outcomes desired is critical to the success of political work.

6. Performance measurement

A final element is how performance is to be measured. One option is to track inputs, but inputs are a measure of effort and a notoriously poor indicator of future success. Indeed, such measures may not only present a distorted version of reality, but mislead and misdirect future activity. The phenomenon of redoubling effort in a lost cause is not unknown. In political work, there is zero value in counting memos, phone calls, meetings, interventions, representations and the like in assessing performance. The true measure of performance in political work lies in assessing:

- (a) the logic of the design of the strategy to achieve predetermined outcomes, i.e. the reasoning behind the course of action chosen and the connection between the outputs selected and the outcomes expected to flow from them, and
- (b) the degree of success in executing the strategy and generating the planned outputs.

Evaluating political resources

With clarity of purpose, priority objectives, well designed strategies, and a focus on high payoff activities, the task of evaluating the performance of political officers hinges on the answer to four questions:

- Was there a logical connection between the objectives which were established and the strategies and activities selected to achieve them?
- Were objectives clear and did they drive the strategies and activities of political officers?
- Were political officers engaged in the kinds of activities which contributed most directly to implementing the strategies?
- Did they devote the right amount of time and effort to these activities?

Following is a draft performance framework for managing and evaluating political work.

PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FOR BUREAU/MISSION POLITICAL WORK

PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

The issues to be dealt with, the benefits to be secured

Why does the bureau/mission exist? What is its purpose?
What are the principal issues it is meant to deal with?
Why these issues?
In general, what is the bureau/mission trying to do about them?
What is the ultimate impact of its work intended to be?
Who will benefit and how?

OBJECTIVES

The goals to be achieved, their order of priority

What is the bureau/mission trying to achieve?
What specific and measurable objectives does it hope to accomplish over the next one/two/three years?
What is the order of priority among objectives, and why?
How do bureau/mission objectives relate to the overall objectives of the department?

STRATEGY

The approach to be taken, the plan of action

STRATEGY

What strategy is the bureau/mission following to achieve its objectives? What is its general approach, its line of attack?
What is the logic of this strategy i.e. why is it reasonable to believe that the approach taken will produce the results desired?

What are the most important *external factors* the bureau/mission has to contend with in pursuing its objectives? How are these factors likely to impact on bureau/mission operations? How will they be addressed?

What are the *risks*? How will these be managed?

What are the *critical success factors*, i.e. the types of things the bureau/mission must do particularly well to be successful?

Are the objectives and the strategy to achieve them realistic given the time and effort required? Are they manageable in light of the resources available?

PLAN OF ACTION

ACTIVITIES
*Key functions,
focus
on high payoff
activities*

KEY FUNCTIONS

What key functions do political officers have to concentrate on and perform particularly well if the bureau/mission is to execute its strategy effectively and achieve its objectives?

What is the relative importance of activities such as:

- collecting/analyzing information on developments affecting Cdn interests?
- providing policy and operational advice to Cdn decision-makers?
- coordinating national positions?
- building networks in Canada and/or abroad?
- lobbying and advocating on behalf of Cdn government positions?
- negotiating agreements and conventions?
- managing foreign policy operations?

PRODUCTIVITY

On average, how much time and effort should political officers be spending weekly/monthly on key functions and activities?

How much time and effort are they actually spending?

How are these being tracked?

What are the obstacles to improving bureau/mission productivity (i.e. ensuring the right amount of time is spent on high payoff activities)?

What strategy is being adopted to correct any imbalances?

**OUTPUTS AND
OUTCOMES**
*Immediate results
and long-term
consequences*

OUTPUTS (Within the area of control of the bureau/mission)

What will be the immediate results of bureau/mission activity?
What is expected to happen as a direct consequence?

OUTCOMES (Within the area of influence of the bureau/mission)

What is expected to happen over the longer term?
How will people or situations be affected?
What will be the broader implications and impacts?

EVALUATION
*Logic and
implementation*

Was there a logical connection between objectives and strategies/activities?
Were objectives clear and did they drive the work of the bureau/mission?
Were officers engaged in the right kind of activities for the results desired?
Did officers devote an appropriate amount of time to these activities?

ANNEX 2

BUDGETARY REALITIES FY 99/00 FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE		
	\$million	%
SUPPORT FOR OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS	\$211.1	15.6
ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS	\$259.6	19.2
Contributions to International Organizations	\$211.4	15.6
UN Peacekeeping Assessments	\$ 48.2	3.6
OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS	\$881.3	65.2
<u>Non-discretionary expenditures</u>	<u>\$747.8</u>	<u>55.3</u>
Mission operations	\$368.2	27.2
Personnel costs	\$ 93.6	6.9
Executive offices	\$ 9.5	0.7
Finance, audit and personnel services	\$ 33.0	2.4
Real property	\$ 55.2	4.1
Informatics	\$ 99.8	7.4
Assistance to Canadians	\$ 45.3	3.4
Export/Import Controls	\$ 11.7	0.9
High-level visits and conferences	\$ 8.4	0.6
Statutory grants	\$ 5.7	0.4
ICAO	\$ 17.4	1.3
<u>Discretionary expenditures</u>	<u>\$133.5</u>	<u>9.9</u>
Headquarters operating costs	\$ 55.8	4.1
<i>Foreign policy</i>	\$ 25.0	1.8
<i>Trade and Economic Policy</i>	\$ 6.6	0.5
<i>International Business Development</i>	\$ 17.7	1.3
<i>Public Diplomacy</i>	\$ 6.5	0.5
Discretionary grants and contributions	\$ 47.4	3.5
Training and development	\$ 5.3	0.4
Departmental reserve	\$ 25.0	1.8
TOTAL	\$1,352	100

ANNEX 3

**PROGRAM/ADMINISTRATION STAFF ABROAD FY 98/99
DFAIT AND OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

		Canada-based staff	Local staff	Total	Percent
	PROGRAM DELIVERY				
1.	DFAIT programs	640	1055	1695	48.7%
2.	OGD programs	566	1217	1783	51.3%
3.	-- <i>Immigration</i>			1199	34.5%
4.	-- <i>CIDA</i>			266	7.6%
5.	-- <i>DND</i>			145	4.2%
6.	-- <i>Other departments</i>			173	5.0%
7.	Sub total	1206	2272	3478	100%
	ADMINISTRATION				
8.	DFAIT	287	1999	2286	
9.	Sub total	287	1999	2286	
10.	TOTAL	1493	4271	5764	

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