Military off-the-shelf:

A discussion on combat ship acquisition

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Prepared For:
Directorate of Naval Strategy

Defence Research and Development Canada

Scientific Report
DRDC-RDDC-2014-R40
August 2014

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to examine the theoretical and practical dimensions of military off-the-shelf (MOTS) as an element of the procurement strategy for the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) next generation of surface combatants. The research was undertaken to inform the discussion of whether a MOTS solution is the most advantageous route to naval re-capitalization. The concept of MOTS is defined, followed by a non-exhaustive list of advantages and disadvantages of this approach to acquiring complex naval vessels. A series of illustrative examples from allied and partner countries is provided. The research found that despite the many advantages offered by the MOTS approach, it is not clear that these are so decisive as to preclude other procurement options. Indeed, gaining an understanding of MOTS is not a straightforward matter, and senior decision-makers should be aware of the many internal and external factors that will affect their choice of procurement option.

Significance to defence and security

With the Government of Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces aiming to advance the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) project, stakeholders should be aware of the merits and demerits of the various procurement options – specifically MOTS and 'clean sheet' approaches – as this may affect the size and shape of the RCN for decades to come, as well as the conduct of Canada's defence and foreign policies.

Résumé

Le présent document vise à examiner les dimensions théoriques et pratiques des articles militaires sur étagère en tant qu'élément de la stratégie d'approvisionnement de la Marine royale canadienne (MRC) pour ce qui est de la prochaine génération de navires de combat de surface. Une recherche a été entamée afin d'orienter la discussion, à savoir si les articles militaires sur étagères sont la solution la plus avantageuse en ce qui concerne la réfection navale. Le concept de l'article militaire sur étagère est défini et est suivi d'une liste non exhaustive des avantages et des inconvénients de cette approche dans le cadre de l'acquisition de navires complexes. Une série d'exemples concrets provenant de pays alliés et de partenaires est fournie. La recherche indique qu'en dépit des nombreux avantages qu'offrent les articles militaires sur étagères, on ne peut dire clairement qu'il s'agisse d'avantages assez décisifs pour exclure d'autres options d'approvisionnement. Effectivement, comprendre le concept d'articles militaires sur étagères n'est pas facile, et les principaux décideurs devraient connaître les nombreux facteurs internes et externes susceptibles d'influer sur leurs choix quant à l'approvisionnement.

Importance pour la défense et la sécurité

Le gouvernement du Canada et les Forces armées canadiennes souhaitent faire avancer le projet du bâtiment de combat de surface du Canada. Par conséquent, les intervenants devraient connaître les avantages et les inconvénients des diverses options d'approvisionnement, plus particulièrement ceux des articles militaires sur étagère, et les approches « totalement repensées », car ceux-ci pourraient avoir une incidence sur la taille et la forme de la MRC pour des décennies à venir et influer sur la conduite des politiques étrangères et de défense du Canada

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1 Introduction

The procurement of naval vessels is an immensely complex undertaking. The multi-year process involves the exploration of capability requirements, the assessment of new and emerging technologies, and the application of these and other considerations to an evolving strategic maritime landscape. The process is often characterized by fixed funding envelopes and pressure to preserve indigenous industrial capability, thereby maximizing value for domestic suppliers.

The costs associated with building a new generation of naval vessels is a matter of deep concern for the Government of Canada (GoC) and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). While the 2008 Canadian First Defence Strategy (CFDS) calls for the renewal of the RCN's surface fleet, concerns have been recently raised about the feasibility of these plans given expected resources.[1] In the case of the $26.2-billion Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) – a program intended to replace the current fleet of destroyers and frigates – a once-in-a-generation procurement will put tremendous pressure on stakeholders to agree on an achievable list of operational requirements and deliver them on time and within strict budgetary parameters. The process is further complicated by the particular competitive environment created by the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy (NSPS), the need for re-industrialization of Canada's shipbuilding sector, and by the desire of government officials to avoid negative publicity of another defence mega-project that fails to deliver.[2]

The CSC program demands a rigorous analysis of procurement options to determine how the RCN can best fulfil its requirements. Although this is not the decisive factor in how a ship should be procured (electoral politics and industrial policy are other drivers) it raises the question of whether an optimum balance between cost, capability and risk is best achieved by purchasing existing ship designs – perhaps with some modifications – or pursuing a design customized to the RCN's particular requirements. 'Clean-sheet' designs have dominated RCN ship procurement until present day and have resulted in several successful designs. Nevertheless, pressure to reduce the design-to-build timeline may spur planners to explore whether allied nations have articulated similar requirements and initiated build programs which satisfied them. Indeed, many allied and non-allied nations have opted for existing designs in the past and continue to do so today.

This paper will contribute to a broader understanding of naval procurement by defining and discussing military off-the-shelf (MOTS) as a procurement option for a major naval platform. A non-exhaustive list of advantages and disadvantages, as well as illustrative examples of attempts to arrive at off-the-shelf solutions, will be explored with a view to enhancing the ability of decision-makers to assess the suitability of this option for the CSC program. It is not within the scope of this study to quantify all the elements of program risk. However, it will be shown that despite the many attractions of extant designs for budget-minded navies, understanding MOTS is not a straightforward matter, and pursuing it is far from risk-free.

[1] Office of the Auditor-General of Canada, *Report of the Auditor General of Canada*, Chapter 3 – National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy, Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services, Fall 2013, 19-21.
[2] The first attempt to implement the RCN's Joint Support Ship (JSS) project foundered in 2010 as bidders were unable to deliver the desired capability within the prescribed budget. The second attempt has seen the elimination of the JSS's vehicle-carrying requirement in favour of a more traditional replenishment vessel.

2 MOTS: Definition and discussion

An 'off-the-shelf' solution refers to the implementation of readily available and mature technologies/systems for applications which have traditionally been handled by customer-unique or customized systems. This is most common in the realm of computer systems and software, where high-volume buyers (i.e., government departments) are increasingly turning to commercial-grade systems to take advantage of lower acquisition costs (stemming from economies of scale), shortened delivery times, and the presumed ability to more easily upgrade their systems as software matures.[3] 'Off-the-shelf' can be viewed as part of the greater phenomenon of globalization, as buyers seek the most cost-effective solution even if it means out-sourcing product development to those who may have competitive advantage in terms of design and/or build capability.

A concise definition of the military variant of off-the-shelf – or MOTS – is somewhat elusive, although general characteristics of MOTS equipment include that which:

- is already established in-service with the armed forces of another country or [the buyer's]; it is not a new design;[4]
- is sourced from an established production facility;
- has minor modifications to deliver interoperability with existing [buyers'] and/or allied assets.[5]

And yet this definition may be too restrictive. In the world of naval platforms, MOTS can arguably encompass 'modular' designs whereby the on-board systems vary according to customer requirements but the ship's size, shape and displacement are broadly similar to the vessel of origin. The German '*Merhzweck-Kombination*' (MEKO) 200 series of general-purpose frigates were originally built for Turkey as the *Yavuz* class, but were subsequently ordered by other allied navies with slightly different weapons/sensor packages. At the time of writing 25 of these units were in service. This attests to the soundness and longevity of the design, and speaks well to its affordability over the 15-year span of the build programs.[6]

An even more expansive understanding of the MOTS approach can be found in the practice of acquiring vessels second-hand rather than through new-build programs. Royal Navy Type 22 frigates, as well as ex-Royal Netherlands Navy M-class frigates have found second homes in the navies of Chile, Romania, and Belgium, to name but a few. These ships are delivered largely 'as-is' and are ideal for countries looking for proven capability without the need for extensive

[3] Diane Suchan, "Navigating the COTS Sea", *CrossTalk* – Journal of Defense Software Engineering, Vol. 20, No. 6, June 2007, 3.

[4] For the purposes of this study, 'design' will refer to the complete ship encompassing the platform (hull and machinery) as well as the combat system.

[5] David Mortimer, *Going to the Next Level: The report of the Defence Procurement and Sustainment Review*, Commonwealth of Australia (Defence Materiel Organization), 2008, 17.

[6] The 3,000-tonne-class MEKO 200 design has been marketed to Portugal (*Vasco da Gama* class), Greece (*Hydra* class), Australia and New Zealand (*Anzac* class), and again to Turkey (*Barbaros* class). See Stephen Saunders, ed., Jane's Fighting Ships 2013-2014, Coulsdon, UK: IHS Jane's, 2013.

modifications, albeit at the possible cost of long-term supportability and earlier capability obsolescence.[7]

MOTS does not encompass projects where a number of off-the-shelf components are integrated together for the first time. Thus the Canadian Patrol Frigate program of the 1980s/90s, employing an otherwise proven suite of sensors and effectors, would not have qualified as MOTS under even this expansive definition.[8]

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have undertaken many new acquisition projects in recent years. Some of these are off-the-shelf purchases – C-17 and C-130J transport aircraft, Leopard 2 tanks, wheeled logistics vehicles, and Heron unmanned air vehicles. Others, such as the CH-147 medium/heavy-left helicopter and the LAV 6.0 armoured personnel carrier, are slightly modified variants of original designs. Still others – the Cyclone maritime helicopter, for example – are more developmental in nature. Canada has not, however, launched a major warship replacement project for almost two decades. It would therefore be premature to conclude that the ease with which any of the projects listed above were bought into service is indicative of the manner in which complex naval vessels are delivered.

2.1 Are ships different?

As noted by a RAND Corporation study, the acquisition of naval vessels is fundamentally different from land or air systems – particularly if the former are constructed for/by the buyer rather than acquired second-hand.[9] Systems such as armoured vehicles or fighter aircraft may be built in their hundreds. By contrast, naval vessels are typically built at low production rates ranging from a handful to a few dozen. Land and air systems are developed differently; both go through prototype phases. For navies, there are no pre-production or prototype ships; each hull is expected to enter service, and so pressure to ensure that the lead vessel is perfect (or near-perfect) is particularly intense.

Military aircraft tend not to be offered à la carte, or in the modular format of some naval vessels such as the MEKO frigate design; they come with a more fixed architecture – a given size, a given powerplant, and a given sensor suite (if applicable). Beyond communications gear and minor alterations to satisfy national air worthiness requirements (known as ‘non-discretionary modifications’), there may be rather little for a buyer to customize. Thus there is less chance of a buyer attempting to take the design in directions that may result in technical failure. (The speed and success of C-17, C-130J acquisition programs attest to this.) Similarly, most land systems are also purchased largely as-is. Even the most complex systems such as armoured vehicles may offer choice of armament or defensive aids, but little else. Ships, on the other hand, are more complex. With a much greater number of systems (and therefore system inter-dependency) they will typically take longer to design and to build.

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[7] Recognizing this risk, the Belgian navy has joined its Dutch counterpart in a program to modernize their M-class frigate’s radars and electro-optical systems, as well as the helicopter decks.

[8] Saunders, ed., 17. The *Halifax*-class is an amalgam of many proven systems including the Bofors 57-mm main gun (Sweden), AN/SPS-49 air search radar (US), SPG-503 fire control radars (Netherlands), Mark 46 torpedoes and Harpoon anti-ship missiles (US), and MASS off-board decoys (Germany).

[9] Jeffrey Drezner, et al., *Are Ships Different? Policies and Procedures for the Acquisition of Ship Programs*, RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2011, xi, xiii.

This latter point – the degree of design complexity – is relevant in that a combatant ship is a true 'system of systems'; it boasts the widest variety of sensors, effectors, and command/platform management systems of any single military platform, sourced from a potentially wide variety of manufacturers.[10] Moreover, the complexity of any given design is not necessarily fixed; while a buyer may settle on a foreign design, he may also want certain modifications or system substitutions to satisfy his particular operational, regulatory, and industrial requirements.[11] The MOTS approach to naval construction thus represents an approximate, or 'best fit' solution to a naval capability deficiency. The approach yields, according to one study, "capabilities that are close to what is desired…they inevitably leave some desired requirements unfulfilled. To close this gap there is a need to modify the technology."[12]

In view of this, it is clear that the acquisition of a combatant vessel presents unique challenges. It is not a question of choosing either an off-the-shelf solution or an original design. Indeed, MOTS may be a matter of degree; a design may fall along a continuum in which it is tailored to customer needs, with the buyer requiring (due to operational, industrial, or environmental directives) certain systems in lieu of those on the original design. Depending on the degree of customization, the result may be a 'MOTS+' or 'MOTS++' design that is easily identified as a cousin of the original but may in fact incorporate significant internal or external design changes (the '+' or '++' referring to the degree of deviation from the parent design.) To illustrate this, a conceptual design continuum is found in Annex A.

The main challenge posed by customization is to *program risk* – defined as the likelihood of failing to achieve design functionality and manufacturability within given budgetary and time limits. Theoretically, adherence to an original design will minimize program risk, while introducing modifications will, again theoretically, heighten the chances that delays and/or cost-overruns will occur. Having said this, Annex A may not accurately illustrate the progression of risk in all cases. While the 'clean sheet' option is situated to the right of the continuum, seemingly to present the highest degree of risk by virtue of the originality of the design and the desire to push the technological threshold, it is possible that the MOTS++ option may in fact pose greater risk to budgets and schedule because an otherwise functional design is being significantly altered and the additional requirements may not be served by the original design.[13] If a cost/capability trade-off is improperly performed, if a buyer fixates on an established design but calculates that it can (and must) be changed to suit the particular requirements, the result may be a hybrid design

[10] Commander David Peer, "Estimating the Cost of Naval Ships", *Canadian Naval Review*, Vol. 8 No. 2 (Summer 2012), 4-5.

[11] Regulatory requirements may not enhance combat capability but, in keeping with national or international laws, must be adhered to nevertheless. They might include improvements to environmental standards (i.e., on-board waste management), safety standards (i.e., reinforced fuel tanks) and habitability standards (i.e., crew accommodations).

[12] Leo Hogan, "Good Enough? Off the Shelf Procurement in Defence" Raytheon Australia Occasional Paper, Undated, 5. Accessed 15 November 2013 at http://www.raytheon.com.au/rtnwcm/groups/rau/documents/content/rau_ots_procurement_occ_paper.pdf.

[13] For example, a study by the US Government Accountability Office concluded that the addition of a remote mine-hunting system to the 40th *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer (DDG-91) would necessitate alteration of nearly 30% of the ship's design zones. See Government Accountability Office, *Defense Acquisitions – Improved Management Practices Could Help Minimize Cost Growth and Navy Shipbuilding Programs*, February 2005, 40. Accessed 28 November 2013 at http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05183.pdf.

that is more costly and/or complex than one that is developed from scratch.[14] Thus potential buyers should not automatically conclude that an original design is the least palatable route to naval re-capitalization. It may depend on the project at hand.

How far can a design be modified to accommodate buyer's capability requirements without exceeding cost/risk limits? This is a key question, as 'discretionary modifications' will increase tension between the need to deliver on time and the desire to squeeze the last drop of performance out of an existing solution. An illustrative example may be drawn from the world of maritime aviation. The adaptation of the EA-18 Growler electronic attack aircraft from the F/A-18 Super Hornet is, according to one analyst, "a contemporary example of the ever more aggressive use of MOTS in the defense industry." Although outwardly similar, the aircraft are markedly different, with "the software and hardware interfaces [that] multiply exponentially." This creates numerous technical and operational challenges such as manufacturability, system performance, testing, operator workload, and mission accomplishment.[15] It is not hard to envision the same considerations cropping up in a ship-design/build program where a financially-constrained buyer concludes, perhaps too hastily, that an otherwise attractive extant design can be easily (and significantly) adapted for his own use. The implications of even a 'slightly' modified design are illustrated by a conceptual diagram developed by the Australian Defence Management Organization. Figure 1 shows how even a small amount of customization ('Australianisation') can push the cost and schedule of an acquisition to unexpected levels.

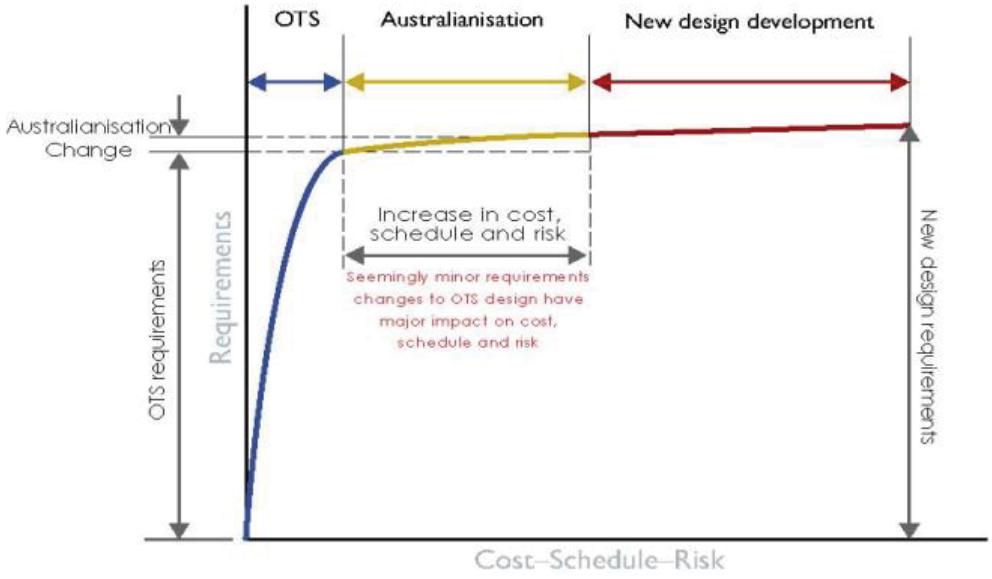

Figure 1: *Impact on cost, schedule, and risk of volume requirements.*[16]

[14] Of the three options to satisfy the RCN's Joint Support Ship (vers. 2) requirement – MOTS, MOTS+ and a new design – MOTS+ was considered to be the most risky. Interview with Directorate of Naval Program Support, Gatineau, 3 December 2013.

[15] Lieutenant-Commander Hunter Ware, "Military Off-the-Shelf has Promise & Pitfalls", *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 130, No. 9 (September 2004), 33.

[16] Warren King, General Manager Programs, Defence Management Organization. See Mortimer, 18.

Thus, notwithstanding the point made earlier that *heavily* modified designs may exceed the complexity of 'clean sheet' designs, it is evident that modifications of whatever degree have the capacity to increase program risk.

To illustrate the point further, an analysis of the Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) future surface combatant requirements postulated that the *Hobart*-class air warfare destroyer (AWD) could act as the basis for an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) frigate. But according to Andrew Davies of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, such a MOTS-based plan, while feasible, is fraught with difficulties:

> At the very least, the [*Hobart*'s] Aegis air defence system will be replaced, meaning that the ships will need a new radar and combat system. As well, they would greatly benefit from a second helicopter, requiring some redesign in their superstructure. The sonar systems fitted to the AWDs should be quite capable, but mightn't be the best solution for a dedicated ASW ship. All these changes are doable, but experience should teach us not to take any redesign and integration work for granted. There are also some engineering questions to be asked about the suitability of the AWD hull and propulsion systems for the ASW task, for which reduced radiated noise from heavy machinery and flow around the hull is required to reduce the detection range of the vessel by a hostile submarine. It might be the case that a modified AWD isn't as effective in the role as a different design and the level of compromise would have to be looked at carefully.[17]

Davies goes on to point out that the UK Royal Navy (RN) also considered a MOTS-based solution for a successor to the Type 23 general-purpose frigate. Looking to adapt Type 45 *Daring*-class AWD to achieve economies of scale and reduced fleet running costs, the concept of an ASW variant of the *Daring* class was subsequently shelved as the costs and risks of the modifications required were found to outweigh the benefits.[18] The RN has now opted for a new general-purpose design – the Type 26 Global Combat Ship.

Both the Australian and British experiences may inform RCN attempts to reconcile AAW with ASW into an identical (or near-identical) class of surface combatant. This is not to say that the task is impossible. The Royal Danish Navy's *Iver Huitfeldt*-class air-defence frigates may be viewed as a MOTS+/++ derivative of the less costly *Absalon*-class patrol/command frigate (although the latter does not have a particularly strong ASW capability). The main differences include a more powerful radar suite, propulsion system, main gun and missile armament, and the deletion of the flexible deck in the air defence variant.[19] However, the rarity of this approach to naval re-capitalization suggests that allied navies are wary of attempts to derive a 'family' of ships from a parent design. Were Canada to select an existing design as the basis for CSC, it would do so knowing that the design was meant for only either AAW or ASW – not both. It is noteworthy that the Danish program achieved the success that it did – measured by the transformation of that country's navy from a coastal force to one with five ocean-going combatants – by opting for an original design solution.

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[17] Andrew Davies, "Trouble at the docks? Part II" Accessed 31 October 2013 at http://www.aspistrategist.org.au/trouble-at-the-docks-part-ii/.

[18] Navy Matters, "Medium sized Vessel Derivate (MVD)". Accessed 31 October 2013 at http://navy-matters.beedall.com/mvd.htm.

[19] Saunders, 190, 196.

2.2 MOTS advantages and disadvantages

A number of considerations need to be weighed before choosing whether to build to a new or established design, or a variation of the latter. These include initial development costs, the satisfaction of operational requirements, the ease of manufacture,[20] in-service date, and long-term sustainment/capability enhancement. Seen through this lens, buying a naval vessel off-the-shelf holds a number of potential benefits, including:

- more timely delivery resulting from a generally shorter acquisition schedule;[21]
- reduced development risk – all MOTS ships were once clean-sheet designs for the parent navy, so a high degree of (technical) risk mitigation has already taken place and the complex 'system of systems' has reached a level of maturity/functionality that should leave few surprises to potential buyers;
- if built concurrently or in tandem with parent navy, larger production quantity may result in savings;
- large user base may uncover design defects early and more readily identify upgrade opportunities;
- existing design may help the buyer gain a better understanding of initial project costs.[22]

On the surface, and excluding considerations relating to industrial development, MOTS potentially represents the most attractive procurement option for budget-conscious navies. The issue of timely delivery is perennial concern and has caused many in Canada's naval community to argue for selecting an extant design and building it before the current fleet obsolesces.[23] Further, should a MOTS solution turn out to be less costly, there may be more room in future years for greater investments in training, tactical development, expensive 'consumables' such as ammunition, and other inputs to overall naval capability.[24]

MOTS may also be attractive for political decision-makers eager to avoid procurement 'debacles' characterized by slow delivery and/or cost overruns. Indeed, where there is low risk-tolerance, where the political ground is infertile for even the perception of mismanagement, choosing an extant design may provide a degree of psychological reassurance to stakeholders that an unproven design cannot. As MOTS does not exclude the possibility of domestic production, the government of the day may see it as the best of both worlds – a way to manage complexity, schedule and cost while generating significant employment.

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[20] This refers to the ability of the shipyard and combat systems integrator to perform their respective duties, but also to link their processes at the point where the combat systems are mated to the hull.

[21] Andrew Davies and Peter Layton, "We'll have six of them and four of those – Off-the-shelf procurement and its strategic implications", ASPI Special Report, November 2009 (Issue 25), 4. The authors refer to a 2008 report by the Australian National Audit Office which found that the acquisition cycle could be considerably accelerated when the major defence articles are procured off the shelf. This 'general rule'; may need to be re-considered if a shipyard builds an existing design with which it is unfamiliar.

[22] Peer, 5. By contrast, initial cost estimates for purpose-design are harder to determine, varying at least 40% either way.

[23] Peter Haydon, "Choosing the Right Fleet Mix: Lessons From the Canadian Patrol Frigate Selection Process", *Canadian Naval Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 68.

[24] Hogan, 5.

These considerations must be balanced by the many short- and long-term drawbacks of buying a mature design. The following represents non-exhaustive list of concerns:

- overall project cost may be difficult to discern due to differences in labour rates/efficiency between the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and domestic builder;
- if a build program is not large enough, the buyer may not have sufficient market power to negotiate the most favourable terms with the OEM – more so if the design is idiosyncratically tailored to local needs (i.e., buyer's maritime geography, habitability/environmental/safety standards, or crewing concepts);[25]
- the buyer might have to pay a significant premium to secure the intellectual property required for in-service support and mid-life upgrades;
- even with an existing or modified design, the manufacturing process may need to be altered to suit local industrial capability, thereby adding time and cost;[26]
- possible incompatibility with other MOTS systems that are acquired concurrently;
- the MOTS design may not be backward-compatible with in-service equipment or supporting infrastructure, necessitating (costly) changes to the latter to ensure compatibility;
- the OEM might insist on retaining sole right to export to other nations, even if modifications resulted in a new sub-class of ship;[27]
- (premature) retirement of MOTS ship by the parent navy may result in loss of economies of scale stemming from a narrower supply chain;
- if the buyer's defence industrial policy seeks technology or skills transfer, older MOTS solutions may have less to contribute than a new design;[28]
- mature designs may bring forward the date of class obsolescence unless a clear margin for technological growth is evident.

Taken separately, none of these potential disadvantages are significant enough to exclude MOTS as an acquisition option. Since the majority of a ship's cost is not in its design and construction but in the following decades of operations and maintenance, initial industrial/manufacturing challenges may be of less importance to the buyer.[29] Indeed, they may be viewed as acceptable costs of moving the project along. And neither established nor custom designs are decisively advantageous in preventing change or disruption to a purchaser's training syllabus – particularly

[25] Stefan Markowski, et al, "Australian Naval Procurement Cycles: Lessons for Other Small Navies", Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Acquisition Research Symposium, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterrey, CA, 14-15 May 2008, 359.
[26] Interview with Directorate of Naval Program Support, Gatineau, QC, 3 December 2013. The choice of the *Berlin*-class support ship for the JSS requirement will require a revised set of blueprints and a different build schedule because the designated builder, Vancouver Shipyards, does not have the same construction capability as the OEM, Thyssen-Krupp Marine Systems.
[27] Even if the domestically-built MOTS (+) design cannot be sold elsewhere, a long production run might see the buyer become part of the OEM's global supply chain.
[28] The Government of Canada's evolving defence industrial strategy favours the development of Canadian defence industrial capabilities (CDICs).
[29] Markowski et al, 382.

when the program seeks new-generation technologies.[30] Whether a buyer chooses MOTS or an original design, he will need to adopt new tactics that will allow him to exploit more capable onboard systems. (Indeed, the new systems *must* be substantially more advanced else they will not provide the customer with a generation's worth of capability.) In some cases these changes may happen for reasons that have little to do with the ship itself. For example, the advent of ship-based unmanned air systems for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance has opened up opportunities for virtually all fleets, regardless of the provenance of their designs.

The point here is that whichever route Canada takes to the re-capitalization of the RCN surface combatant fleet, it will have to confront a host of potential pitfalls – some technical, some operational, some industrial, others political. Many of these will befall DND/RCN even if allegedly 'safer' existing designs are considered. But the challenges may deepen depending on the degree to which the RCN insists on altering a MOTS design to suit its particular operational, regulatory and industrial requirements (see Figure 1). Thus the choice of which procurement route to take is not as clear as some might suspect.

This situation is not without precedent. Peter Haydon has noted that the operational and technical communities within the navy of the 1970s disagreed on which acquisition approach would best see it transition from the age of steam: "The operators tended to look to previous designs that met their immediate needs, whereas the engineers and naval architects were, arguably, more concerned with…actual construction and matching designs to future operational requirements."[31] It may be worth exploring if opinions are similarly divided today, and how the loss of in-house naval architectural capability since the 1980s may have tilted the consensus in favour of MOTS and away from uniquely Canadian solutions.

For the CSC project, the mitigation of this dilemma may depend on the stage at which the successful design/integration team is chosen. (The builder is known, but it will have to liaise with competing teams in a manner that does not reveal details of rival bids.) One option could be the insertion of an 'interim' phase between project definition and implementation.[32] In this phase, the customer would grant a team *exclusive rights* to negotiate with the customer on the final design, schedule, and cost. This is distinct from a contract award in that there may be circumstances in which discussions do not result in terms acceptable to the customer and supplier(s). Should these talks fail to achieve the desired outcome, negotiations with another team could commence, albeit at a potentially significant risk to schedule.[33]

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[30] The transition from the RCN's steam-driven destroyer escorts to the *Halifax* class demanded a significant effort at re-training ships' companies.

[31] Haydon, 68.

[32] 'Definition' refers to the work leading to a final statement of operational requirement, and the search for a solution on the open market. 'Implementation' refers to contract signing and delivery.

[33] This practice was adopted by India in its search for a medium combat aircraft. French aerospace firm Dassault was chosen among several American and European rivals to enter into negotiations on the co-manufacture of the Rafale multi-role fighter, as well as offsets and technology transfer. These negotiations began in 2012 and are still in progress; a formal contract had not yet been signed. See Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India, Dassault Rafale Deal Appears Stalled', *Defense News*, 4 February 2014. Accessed 6 February 2014 at http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140204/DEFREG03/302040016/India-Dassault-Rafale-Deal-Appears-Stalled.

3 Why choose MOTS: Foreign experiences

As noted above, the RAN and RN have recently explored and rejected adapting extant (air defence) designs to suit general purpose/ASW requirements. But given the success of the MOTS-based MEKO 200 frigate design, it might be instructive to explore why countries do choose off-the-shelf solutions, with or without modifications.

At the higher political level there may be strategic reasons such as the desire to solidify defence partnership with the country of origin. States with close security ties to a larger partner may look to the latter for solutions that maximize inter-operability between their militaries. While the Japanese, South Korean, and Australian navies have pursued dissimilar platform designs, the popularity of the US Navy's Aegis air defence system and Standard Missile among them attests not only to the efficacy of the system, but the potential to exploit future spiral development.[34] It may also reflect desire of the buyers to ensure inter-operability with the USN, and bind their American counterpart to bilateral security pacts in the Pacific Rim. Similarly, the recent purchase of a single FREMM/*Aquitaine*-class frigate by the Kingdom of Morocco signals the value that country places on its long-standing defence ties with France.

For countries with nascent ship-building capability but little in the way of design/architectural capability, MOTS may be a less risky option. It may also be parlayed into longer-term advantages if the contract requires the seller to transfer technology and managerial know-how to the buyer. As a country ascends the industrial learning curve and as its navy shows greater comfort with advanced technology, the MOTS+ (or MOTS++) option becomes more tempting. A modular design tuned to local requirements will be increasingly seen as a way of balancing capability, cost and risk. Such has been the case with the MEKO 200, as well as the French *La Fayette*-class 'light frigate', variants of which have been sold to Taiwan, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia.[35] It may be surmised that these latter projects, undertaken with major US allies, also reflected the buyers' intent on diversifying their base of supply.[36] This is important strategic consideration for states located in potentially unstable parts of the globe where the reliability of the traditional security provider may be in some doubt.

As noted above, the UK has expressed its intent to develop a clean-sheet design for its next class of general-purpose frigate. However, the Type 26 is intended to be a modular concept whereby design 'excursions' are possible from the outset to allow cost-effective upgrades throughout the

[34] The AN/SPY-1-series of radars at the heart of the Aegis system are in use in the Japanese *Kongo*-class and South Korean *Sejong the Great*-class destroyers, as well as the soon-to-be introduced *Hobart* class in Australia.

[35] While Saudi (*Al Riyadh* class) and Taiwanese (*Kang Ding* class) vessels were built in France, each was modified in terms of size and capability to suite the purchaser's requirements. Singapore, with a more highly-advanced defence-industrial base, constructed its *Formidable* class locally but with the most advanced sensor/weapons suite in the *La Fayette* 'family'. See entries in naval-technology.com: http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/al_riyadh/, http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/formidable/, http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/fayette/. All accessed 10 November 2013.

[36] Taiwan's navy also employs new-build and second-hand *Perry*-class frigates and *Kidd*-class destroyers.

ship's life, as well as the satisfaction of foreign naval requirements.[37] From the point of view of non-RN users, the ship will be MOTS(+) solution, with most of the design risk already assumed by the parent navy. Given the success of the UK in exporting second-hand vessels to allied and partner navies, the Type 26 may be a theoretical option for medium-sized navies looking to collaborate with an experienced ship-designer/builder.[38]

[37] Richard Scott, "Architecture and modularity underpin Type 26 GCS design", *International Defence Review*, September 2013, 50-51.

[38] Ibid. Australia, Brazil, Turkey, Malaysia, and India are among the nations who had expressed interest in the project. See also navy-technology.com, *Type 26 Global Combat Ship (GCS) Program, United Kingdom*. Accessed 25 November 2013 at http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/global-combat-ship-gcs-programme/.

4 MOTS for Canada?

Do these same considerations apply to Canada, or are there other factors inherent in the shipbuilding policy in general and the CSC program in particular that will affect the procurement strategy? At the strategic level, inter-operability with the US Navy is considered to be a key driver, but this does not mandate an American ship design with American systems. Indeed, it is unlikely that the RCN will opt for an extant US design, despite the obvious capability advantages afforded by the current 'general-purpose' vessel in US service: the DDG-51 *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer.[39] With a unit cost nearing (US) $2-billion and a complement of 320 sailors, the ship would likely overstress the CSC budget as well as the RCN establishment if it were purchased in quantity.[40]

4.1 Non-operational considerations

Section 2 listed considerations for and against MOTS relating to cost, design longevity, marketability, etc. Other high-level considerations stem from Canada's particular defence-industrial landscape, and are summarized in Table 1. The GoC's National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy has designated a builder for the CSC program. If a foreign design is chosen, who will be the all-important single point of accountability answerable to the Crown – the OEM or the designated builder? If a new design is chosen (presumably from an experienced design house), one may assume that the client-server arrangement that characterized the *Halifax*-class build will prevail – i.e., the builder will also be the prime contractor. This may be a more attractive model than one involving a foreign OEM offering a MOTS or MOTS+/++ design through its Canadian build partner.[41]

As the GoC will be looking to maximize the benefits of such a large procurement project for the Canadian economy,[42] is there any advantage to choosing one procurement option over another? Most sensors and effectors will be sourced externally, regardless of which path is chosen. The combat management and certain platform management systems may likewise be sourced from foreign manufacturers, although the integration may be entrusted to a domestic firm. These transactions would likewise take place if either a MOTS (+/++) or designed-in-Canada solution

[39] The term 'general-purpose' applies in that the *Arleigh Burke* class is built in large numbers and possesses a broad range of sub-surface, surface, and anti-air warfare capability. The DDG-51 may be viewed as an 'enhanced' general-purpose vessel by virtue of its ability to provide command-and-contol and area air defence for a small task group. See navy-technology.com, "Arleigh Burke Class (Aegis) Destroyer, United States of America, Accessed 7 November 2013 at http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/burke/.

[40] This reflects the average costs of DDGs 114-116 as well as crew compliment of the helicopter-capable Flight IIA version. See Ronald O'Rourke, *Navy DDG-51 and DDG-1000 Destroyer Programs: Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, 19 April 2011, Accessed 23 February 2014.

[41] The Joint Support Ship project is several years ahead of the CSC program and may reveal whether there are any disputes (such as those relating to intellectual property) arising from the partnership between Vancouver Shipyards and Thyssen Krupp Marine Systems.

[42] See Government of Canada, "Leveraging Defence Procurement to Create Jobs and Benefit the Economy", News Release, 2 February 2014. Accessed 13 February 2014 at http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=1&nid=813789&crtr.tp1D=1.

was chosen. Steel and most fittings would be sourced locally to the greatest degree possible. Again, this would be the case irrespective of the final choice. If MOTS(+/++) is the preferred route, but policy demands that certain systems on the parent design may be replaced by Canadian-made products wherever possible, planners will have to determine what premium (if any) will be paid for import substitution.[43]

If Canada's defence-industrial policy ever envisions the export of complete systems, it will likely have to negotiate terms with those who retain intellectual property rights over the original design (in the case of MOTS variations) or the various individual systems that go into a ship's hull (in the case of an indigenous design). There is no clear advantage here; either procurement option could result in a marketable product. However, if a MOTS-based approach is taken, the export laws in the country of origin could be a significant factor in whether the complete ship could be sold to third parties.[44]

If, on the other hand, a unique design is pursued, there will need to be at least one experienced private-sector design house in Canada or abroad.[45] It would require time to come up with a new design, although it would not automatically cost more than an established one, which Canada would have to pay for anyway. With a custom design, Canada might also have more latitude over the choice of on-board systems and the method of their integration. Critically, the customer would own the intellectual property so critical to in-service support, mid-life upgrades, and possible foreign sales.

Canada could re-constitute the RCN's naval architectural capability which was lost toward the end of the 1980s, although this might add years and significant cost to what is essentially a fixed-budget project, and schedule slippage might affect the ability of the RCN to carry out Canada's foreign and defence policies. How much value the government or the RCN places on reviving an in-house design capability is unclear, but it may be surmised that the atrophy of that capability will be cited as one reason why a country with a once-in-a-generation requirement for new surface combatants should allow others to supply a 'best fit' design. It has been noted that allied navies have witnessed a coalescing of operational requirement such that there are potentially numerous designs that could adhere to Canadian requirements.[46] The OEM can provide management and/or technical assistance to its Canadian partner, advising on the feasibility of any design changes and coaching it through the initial and subsequent stages of the build.

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[43] These calculations will have to factor in the relative cost of the foreign and locally-made systems, as well as the cost of integrating the Canadian system into the final ship design. For Australian examples, see Markowski, 362, 363, 382.

[44] The *Halifax*-class modernization is to be undertaken using non-US systems wherever possible to minimize the effects of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITARS) - a set of US government regulations which has imposed restrictions on the purchase and transfer of American defence equipment and manufacturing techniques.

[45] A foreign design firm, operating under contract, may be fully qualified but will not be considered part of the defence industrial base, as it will not create significant employment for domestic naval architects.

[46] Interview with senior RCN officer (retired), Ottawa, 4 November 2013. The interviewee suggested that the RCN's in-house design capability was at least partially responsible for a bout of 'requirements creep' which pushed up the price of ship replacement in the 1970s, and that this contributed to its demise in subsequent budget cuts. For this reason, he suggested that it would be imprudent and not cost-effective to re-invest in the capability.

The other key part of the industrial base – the shipyard workforce – will have to ascend a steep learning curve regardless of which acquisition route is taken. Whether the ship design is indigenous or contracted from a foreign party, the challenge facing the yard will be to overcome initial unfamiliarity with the design and gradually increase the efficiency with which it assembles the new class. As there is no clear advantage, it might be premature to conclude that MOTS provides the path of least resistance.

Table 1: *Summary of non-operational considerations.*

GoC Consideration	'Basic' MOTS	MOTS+/++	'Clean Sheet'
Defence-Industrial			
• Single point of accountability	less desirable	less desirable	optimal
• Benefits to Canadian designers	less desirable	desirable	optimal
• Benefits to Canadian suppliers	neutral	neutral	neutral
• Export Potential	less desirable	desirable[47]	optimal
Schedule			
• Design completion	optimal	less desirable	less desirable
• Workforce familiarity	neutral	neutral	neutral

Note: The summary is for illustrative purposes only. Degrees of desirability should be treated with caution in that a finding of 'less desirable' does not necessarily denote an unacceptable degree of risk to defence-industrial priorities and schedule, while 'optimal' does not equate to nil risk.

4.2 Operational considerations

Without the benefit of a definitive statement of operational requirement (SOR) it is difficult to speculate what extant MOTS designs the RCN might choose for the CSC program. What is known is the CSC program must adhere to two broad parameters. First, the CSC will replace not one vessel but two within a single program – an anti-air warfare/task group command-and-control (AAW/TG C2) variant and a general-purpose (GP)[48] variant. Second, the RCN will attempt to maximize commonality between the variants to achieve economies of scale during the build phase as well as operations/maintenance savings over the longer term.[49] If consistent with the SOR, similar hulls and hull systems (i.e., propulsion, shipboard management) will be acquired while

[47] Theoretically, if Canada were to request (and pay for) more design changes, the intellectual property for the final design is more likely to accrue to Canada. Nevertheless, many on-board systems may still require re-export permission from the foreign supplier if the design is to be sold to third parties.

[48] For the purposes of this study, 'general-purpose frigate' refers to a combatant ship with the ability to, at minimum, self-defend against surface, sub-surface, and short-range air threats and to prosecute targets in all three domains within short to medium distances from the ship. It does not have the ability to act as task group command ship or to assume responsibility for the air defence of such a group.

[49] Government of Canada, *Defence Acquisition Guide 2014* - Naval Systems, Canadian Surface Combatant. Accessed 17 June 2014 at http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/business-defence-acquisition-guide/naval-systems.page?

procuring somewhat different combat systems, sensors, and effectors.[50] Are there extant designs which can possibly fulfil these requirements?

With the exception of the aforementioned DDG-51, most of Canada's allies separate AAW/TG C2 and GP functions into different ship classes. If Canada forges ahead with a MOTS (+/++) approach to the hull/system commonality challenge it will have a narrow field from which to choose. The only allied build program which has taken 'family' approach in recent years is the aforementioned *Absalon-/Iver Huitfledt*-class from Denmark. Taken together, the original design (*Absalon*) and the AAW/TG C2 sub-class may possess much of the capability sought by the CSC program – when deployed in a notional task group, they can prosecute targets in the air/surface/sub-surface domains and provide limited support to forces ashore.[51] The commissioning of *Iver Huitfeldt* in 2012 suggest that the family has a 'low-obsolescence' potential stemming from recent entry into service and the likelihood that the Danes will retain the class over the long term (with upgrades) rather than seek early replacement.

It is unclear whether the lack of extant candidates is a statement against a MOTS 'family' as a solution for the CSC program. On the one hand it may reflect the engineering challenges associated with adapting a parent design for other roles[52] – a challenge which Canada nevertheless took up successfully in the 1990s when it married ASW with AAW/TG C2 in the heavily modified *Iroquois*-class destroyer.[53] On the other, the dearth of candidates may be a simple matter of timing in that many allies have not yet come around to the Canadian (or Danish) way of thinking (re: commonality). For most navies, the replacement of ship classes is an incremental process in which different classes are retired at different times; countries with several classes of surface combatant do not typically replace their *entire* fleets in one large program. Those that have done so recently (i.e., Norway) tend to have only one type of major combatant to begin with, and invariably choose a similar type of ship[54] to replace it rather than expand their capabilities by acquiring a 'family' of vessels. Thus the decision to combine the replacement of the RCN's two classes of surface combatant into a single program, while not unique, is certainly unusual.

If two types of vessels are to be replaced within a single program that emphasizes commonality, adopting a MOTS design is arguably more problematic. In order to achieve commonality, a family approach is theoretically desirable. But since the only MOTS example currently in allied service has been built to satisfy The Royal Danish Navy's requirements, adopting both designs (AAW/TG C2 *and* GP) means the CSC program would be twice disadvantaged from a requirements standpoint. The RCN would either have to adapt its requirements to suit the vessels on offer, or would have to pursue two sets of design changes to bring the parent designs in line with its requirements. While the latter option may be technically possible, it raises serious

[50] Discussions with senior RCN officers, 16 January 2014.
[51] Saunders, ed, 190, 196. While the *Absalon* class is listed in *Jane's Fighting Ships* as an 'auxiliary' by virtue of its logistics support capabilities (900m^2 multi-purpose deck, space for 20 TEU containers and hospital facilities) it has the weapons and sensor package of a general-purpose frigate. Additional ASW capability in the form of a variable-depth sonar is being considered.
[52] See footnote 19.
[53] Admittedly, the modified *Iroquois*-class did not mount an anti-ship weapon. The latter was carried by the *Halifax*-class patrol frigate and would have been available in a task group setting.
[54] In Norway's case, the five ageing *Olso*-class frigates were replaced with an equal number of *Fridtjof Nansen*-class general-purpose frigates beginning in 2006.

questions as to whether the resulting MOTS+/++ solution is more operationally suitable than one designed from scratch. Indeed, if an original design can take advantage of the latest advances in scalable, flexible, and space/weight-saving technologies available mid-decade, this may confer a degree of commonality and ‘future-proofing’ on the CSC that may not be available from extant designs.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to probe the greater concept of military off-the-shelf as a procurement option, and to inquire whether it should be the clear preference among senior decision-makers looking to realize the RCN's next great shipbuilding project. Through graphical means and an exploration of allied experiences, it has attempted to demonstrate that there is a range/continuum along which a buyer may fashion a response to his capability needs, and that each holds its own risks and rewards. Finally, a brief analysis of various strategic-level considerations relating to the CSC program was included to highlight the fact that the implications of the procurement option go far beyond the mere satisfaction of the operational requirement.

There is a theoretical and practical argument to be made for adopting off-the-shelf solutions to defence procurement in general and to naval re-capitalization in particular. Defence planners may favour MOTS to meet immediate needs in a timely fashion. They may also favour MOTS on the assumption that it provides greater cost predictability in fiscally-challenging times, as well as 'total force capability' whereby eschewing discretionary modifications may yield future savings in the overall defence budget that may be re-invested in other aspects of capability development (i.e., training).

But while MOTS might seem to be the wave of the future – both for budget-conscious navies and those with less defence-industrial capability – it is not always be the best solution. Over the course of a ship's lifespan the user will demand an expanded capability range – something that the MOTS design may or may not be able to deliver. Those expecting an established design to address the full range of specific user requirements will likely be disappointed. If the prospective buyer feels tempted to seek more customized (MOTS+/MOTS++) designs he may inadvertently create engineering and construction challenges that are difficult to surmount. Such is the high level of system inter-dependency in modern warships that even a small change to a design built to another navy's specifications can have a ripple effect throughout that design, causing a degree of program risk out of all proportion to the change being sought. Australian and UK experience suggests that a rigorous cost-capability trade-off should be performed before a decision is made on whether to adapt an existing design or not. This may be undertaken prior to and during an 'interim' phase in the procurement process, whereby a preferred design/integration consortium is selected for exclusive negotiations with the GoC with a view to arriving at an optimal performance/schedule/cost solution.

It should be remembered that the construction of the next-generation fleet is not solely a matter of defence policy. Governments are expected to take a wider view – one encompassing industrial, technological, and skills development. Big projects seen through the lens of the broader national interest will often demand that decision-makers be willing to pay some sort of premium to meet these objectives. This does not make for a decisive case against MOTS. Rather, it implies that truncating the design-to-build process and handing a large portion of the (initial) work to a foreign OEM may yield fewer commercial opportunities for domestic players – assuming of course those firms exist and are keen on military contracts. For a government intent on maximizing Canadian content in its broadest sense, there may be virtue in allowing for more time to contract for an original design and taking it through the build stage. For a navy aware that it has but one chance in a generation to more fully meet all its requirements, the in-house route may offer certain advantages over MOTS.

The scope of this study precludes a comparative quantification of the MOTS versus the 'clean sheet' approach – namely the premium or opportunity costs (if any) that one might be expected to pay by choosing one fork in the procurement road over another. Further research employing a defence economics approach could be useful in helping decision-makers arrive at more sophisticated understanding of the issue; the variables inherent in the various procurement options could be compared so that the degree of change in each set could indicate which option outperforms the other.

Suffice to say that despite the many arguments in favour of MOTS there may be fewer clear advantages to it than one might suspect. Accordingly, stakeholders in the GoC and the RCN will have to carefully weigh the pros and cons of sourcing the Canadian Surface Combatant off-the-shelf, knowing that the choice will have consequences far beyond the performance of the finished product.

Annex A General categories of surface combatant designs

'Basic' MOTS	**MOTS+**	**MOTS++**	**'Clean Sheet'**
Interior/exterior design identical to lead ship[a]	Near-identical design / minor mods to external structure, internal systems, sensors and effectors[b]	Similarity in design but with significant structural and/or systems changes for enhanced capability[c]	Unique design and systems lay-out; next-generation technologies incorporated[d]
High fidelity to parent navy's SOR	Overlap with parent navy's SOR	Minor fidelity to parent navy's SOR; different/expanded roles envisioned	Uniquely tailored to buyer's SOR
Likely built by OEM	Built by OEM or buyer, or co-operative build with some local content	Built by buyer, or co-operative build with significant local content	Built by OEM
Low program risk	Low/Medium program risk	Higher program risk	Higher program risk
[a]Examples: Moroccan *Mohammed VI* (copy of French *Aquitaine* class); Portuguese *Bartolomeu Dias* class (acquired 2nd-hand from Netherlands)	[b]Examples: RAN *Adelaide* class (derivative of US *Perry* class); Saudi *Al Riyadh* class (derivative of French *La Fayette* class); MEKO 200 series	[c]Examples: Singapore *Formidable* class (derivative of French *La Fayette* class); Danish *Iver Huitfeldt* class (derivative of *Absalon* class)	[d]Examples: *Halifax* class; UK *Daring* class

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List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms

AAW	anti-air warfare
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
AWD	air warfare destroyer
C2	command and control
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CSC	Canadian Surface Combatant
DND	Department of National Defence
GP	general purpose (frigate)
GoC	Government of Canada
MEKO	*Merhzweck-Kombination*
MOTS	military off-the-shelf
NSPS	National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy
OEM	original equipment manufacturer
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
RN	Royal Navy
UK	United Kingdom

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DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA

(Security markings for the title, abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the document is Classified or Designated)

1. ORIGINATOR (The name and address of the organization preparing the document. Organizations for whom the document was prepared, e.g., Centre sponsoring a contractor's report, or tasking agency, are entered in Section 8.)

Defence Research and Development Canada – CORA
101 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2

2a. SECURITY MARKING (Overall security marking of the document including special supplemental markings if applicable.)

UNCLASSIFIED

2b. CONTROLLED GOODS

(NON-CONTROLLED GOODS)
DMC A
REVIEW: GCEC APRIL 2011

3. TITLE (The complete document title as indicated on the title page. Its classification should be indicated by the appropriate abbreviation (S, C or U) in parentheses after the title.)

Military off-the-shelf: A discussion on combat ship acquisition

4. AUTHORS (last name, followed by initials – ranks, titles, etc., not to be used)

Rudd, D.

5. DATE OF PUBLICATION (Month and year of publication of document.)	6a. NO. OF PAGES (Total containing information, including Annexes, Appendices, etc.)	6b. NO. OF REFS (Total cited in document.)
August 2014	30	0

7. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (The category of the document, e.g., technical report, technical note or memorandum. If appropriate, enter the type of report, e.g., interim, progress, summary, annual or final. Give the inclusive dates when a specific reporting period is covered.)

Scientific Report

8. SPONSORING ACTIVITY (The name of the department project office or laboratory sponsoring the research and development – include address.)

Defence Research and Development Canada – CORA
101 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2

9a. PROJECT OR GRANT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable research and development project or grant number under which the document was written. Please specify whether project or grant.)	9b. CONTRACT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable number under which the document was written.)

10a. ORIGINATOR'S DOCUMENT NUMBER (The official document number by which the document is identified by the originating activity. This number must be unique to this document.)	10b. OTHER DOCUMENT NO(s). (Any other numbers which may be assigned this document either by the originator or by the sponsor.)
DRDC-RDDC-2014-R40	

11. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY (Any limitations on further dissemination of the document, other than those imposed by security classification.)

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12. DOCUMENT ANNOUNCEMENT (Any limitation to the bibliographic announcement of this document. This will normally correspond to the Document Availability (11). However, where further distribution (beyond the audience specified in (11) is possible, a wider announcement audience may be selected.))

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The objective of this paper is to examine the theoretical and practical dimensions of military off-the-shelf (MOTS) as an element of the procurement strategy for the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) next generation of surface combatants. The research was undertaken to inform the discussion of whether a MOTS solution is the most advantageous route to naval re-capitalization. The concept of MOTS is defined, followed by a non-exhaustive list of advantages and disadvantages of this approach to acquiring complex naval vessels. A series of illustrative examples from allied and partner countries is provided. The research found that despite the many advantages offered by the MOTS approach, it is not clear that these are so decisive as to preclude other procurement options. Indeed, gaining an understanding of MOTS is not a straightforward matter, and senior decision-makers should be aware of the many internal and external factors that will affect their choice of procurement option.

Le présent document vise à examiner les dimensions théoriques et pratiques des articles militaires sur étagère en tant qu'élément de la stratégie d'approvisionnement de la Marine royale canadienne (MRC) pour ce qui est de la prochaine génération de navires de combat de surface. Une recherche a été entamée afin d'orienter la discussion, à savoir si les articles militaires sur étagères sont la solution la plus avantageuse en ce qui concerne la réfection navale. Le concept de l'article militaire sur étagère est défini et est suivi d'une liste non exhaustive des avantages et des inconvénients de cette approche dans le cadre de l'acquisition de navires complexes. Une série d'exemples concrets provenant de pays alliés et de partenaires est fournie. La recherche indique qu'en dépit des nombreux avantages qu'offrent les articles militaires sur étagères, on ne peut dire clairement qu'il s'agisse d'avantages assez décisifs pour exclure d'autres options d'approvisionnement. Effectivement, comprendre le concept d'articles militaires sur étagères n'est pas facile, et les principaux décideurs devraient connaître les nombreux facteurs internes et externes susceptibles d'influer sur leurs choix quant à l'approvisionnement.

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off-the-shelf; procurement; RCN; ship; surface combatant;