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IS INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE CAF FAILING?

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JCSP 43 DL

Exercise Solo Flight

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Introduction

“The process of directly or indirectly shaping the reputation and effectiveness of the CF by means of formal authority or personal influence.” This is the definition of institutional leadership found in the Leadership in the Canadian Forces Leading the Institution manual.¹ It goes on to state that institutional leaders are “responsible for creating the overall conditions for the success of the CF.”² Institutional leaders are the stewards of the profession of military arms. As stewards they are responsible for ensuring effective self-regulation of the institution in order to ensure the continued “trust and confidence” of both internal and external audiences of the CAF.³ There is clear evidence that the institutional leadership has been failing in this duty for the past thirty years. In the 1990’s the Somalia Inquiry saw the creation of a CF Ombudsman, external to both CAF and DND and reporting directly to the Minister of Defence. Its purpose is to assist members who feel they have been treated improperly or unfairly by CAF or DND.⁴ In 2000 the Military Grievances External Review Committee (Formerly the Canadian Forces Grievance Board) was stood up. Its mandate to independently uphold the values of “equity, transparency and fairness.”⁵ It also reports outside of the CAF to Parliament through the Minister of National Defence. Finally in 2017 the Sexual Misconduct Response Center was stood up as a direct result of the Dechamps report. It also operates outside of the chain of command of the

¹ Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-006, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces Leading the Institution*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2007). 155.

² Ibid., viii

³ Department of National Defence. A-PA-005/AP-004, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces Conceptual Foundations*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2004) 41,42

⁴ www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca About Us visited 20 May 2018

⁵ www.cmfmag.ca/events/new-appointments-announced-for-the-military-grievances-external-review-committee/ Visited 20 May 2018

CAF reporting directly to the Deputy Minister of Defence.⁶ These three very public examples demonstrate that the institutional leadership of the CAF is failing in its job as stewards of the institution. The question to be asked is why? Why is institutional leadership failing? There are likely several contributing factors to the problem many of them external to the CAF and deserving of examination, however the scope of this paper will only focus on three internal issues to the CAF. First the paper will argue that the CAF has lost its Why. It is no secret that since unification the CAF has been under going significant changes and this paper will posit that this has lead to a loss of vision or belief. Next this paper will look at the institution and its leaders from the perspective of game theory. The finite verses the infinite game and which one our institutional leaders are playing. Finally the paper will look at the CAF institutional leadership culture and how it contributes to the failure rather than the success of the institution.

Lost our Why

In his book, *Start With Why* Simon Sinek discusses the importance to an organization in discovering its Why. He indicates that knowing the Why of an organization is pivotal to its success.⁷ Sinek indicates that Why is a belief, not an outcome.⁸ That Why is founded in biology not opinion.⁹ Sinek states that the human brain has many parts but for this discussion the focus is on the neocortex and the limbic brain. The neocortex, our new homosapien brain, is where language and rational, analytical thought reside.¹⁰ The limbic brain, or our older caveman brain,

⁶ www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-supported-services/about-smrc.page#smrc-caf Visited 20 May 2018

⁷ Simon Sinek, *Start with Why How Great leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Penguin Group, 2009) 45.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

is where our feelings, behavior and decision making reside but it has no capacity for language.¹¹ This is why people often have trouble explaining a decision that just feels right, why Why is a belief, why Why matters. Although it makes no reference to science this approach is borne out in CAF leadership doctrine. Institutional leaders are responsible for “creating and articulating vision as well as the necessary strategies...to achieve its achievement.”¹² “...the vision must touch the heart as well as the mind.”¹³ It is clear that CAF doctrine recognizes that a strategy is not a vision and that a vision must speak to belief. A vision must be the why.

If both doctrine and science agree regarding the importance of a vision or a Why, how did the institutional leadership lose the Why? It likely started at Unification, where the very identity of the three services were lost to functional authorities and subsumed into one colour and style of uniform.¹⁴ Since then the CAF has struggled through the Somalia Inquiry, the Decade of Darkness,¹⁵ Hillier’s transformation and numerous defence policies and papers. Each of these has had an impact on the CAF and many of them, such as the “death of a million cuts” from the 90’s¹⁶ challenged the leadership to develop a vision for the CAF of the future.¹⁷ This is unfortunate because, as noted in CAF doctrine, a clear vision “provides the ultimate sense of purpose, direction and motivation for everyone within an organization, particularly during periods of ambiguity, change and uncertainty.”¹⁸ In other words Why “provides the context for everything else.”¹⁹ Having and understanding the Why is the starting place for all subsequent

¹¹ Ibid., 55, 56.

¹² Department of National Defence...*Leadership in the Canadian Forces Leading the Institution*. ix.

¹³ Ibid., 84.

¹⁴ Paul Hellyer, *Damn The Torpedoes*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc, 1990) xi

¹⁵ G.E. Sharpe BGen (Ret’d) OMM, CD and Dr. Allan English “The Decade of Darkness.” (CFLI Project Paper Date: Unknown)

¹⁶ Ibid., 4

¹⁷ Ibid., 2

¹⁸ Department of National Defence...*Leadership in the Canadian Forces Leading the Institution*. 84.

¹⁹ Simon Sinek, *Start with Why...*, 70.

decisions and actions.²⁰ Making decisions and taking actions that move you closer to your Why or vision gives confidence to decision makers that they are moving forward in the right direction.

One of the main reasons for unification was to realize “greater administrative efficiency” within defence.²¹ The ramifications from this efficiency strategy had not yet settled when a new defence white paper entitled *Defence in the 70’s* brought about the amalgamation of CHFQ and DND into NDHQ.²² It led to “increased civilianization and bureaucratization at defence, and to an excessive reliance upon management and business methods.”²³ It was also perceived as contributing to “an erosion of military ethos.”²⁴ Once again the focus was on efficiency rather than values or vision.²⁵ This tension between bureaucracy and military professionals has also been noted in CAF doctrine, it recognizes the duality of a military that is both professional and bureaucratic, it also notes that “measure of efficiency rank behind effectiveness as measure of success...”²⁶ This approach leaves little room for values based leadership in an organization that is rules based in order to be efficient.²⁷ Continuing to look at the doctrine and in particular the CF effectiveness framework, we see that it is based on essential outcomes and conduct values.²⁸ The doctrine emphasizes the role that leadership plays in the creation of values it clearly states, “it is the responsibility of leadership to create values.”²⁹ In constantly being driven to be more efficient efficiency outcomes replace military professionalism and ethos. When the leaders

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Daniel Gosselin, Brigadier-General and Dr. Craig Stone “From Minister Hellyer To General Hillier: Understanding The Fundamental Difference Between the Unification of the Canadian Forces and Its Present Transformation.” *Canadian Military Journal* (Winter 2005-2006): 8

²² Daniel Gosselin, “Unelected, Unarmed Servants of the State: The Changing Role of Senior Civil Servants inside Canada’s national Defence.” *Canadian Military Journal* 14, no.3 (Summer 2014): 43.

²³ Ibid., 44.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Allan English, “Corruption in the Canadian Military? Destroying Trust in the Chain of Command.” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* DOI:10.1080/11926422.2016.1250654 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2016.1250654> 4.

²⁶ Department of National Defence...*Leadership in the Canadian Forces Leading the Institution*. 5.

²⁷ Allan English, “Corruption in the Canadian Military?... 4.

²⁸ Department of National Defence...*Leadership in the Canadian Forces Conceptual Foundations*. 19.

²⁹ Ibid., 23.

become focused on efficiency, measurement and metrics, the Why is no longer a belief but an outcome.³⁰ Thirty years of chasing efficiencies changes a culture. It ceases to be about stewardship of the institution and its people and becomes about cost, process and the bottom line. Efficiency is not a value nor is it a vision but it has become a cornerstone of CAF culture.

Game Theory - The Infinite Institution, the Finite Leader

In a talk that Simon Sinek gave to Google he discusses game theory as a way to describe business.³¹ His focus is on the difference between the finite and infinite game and the importance of knowing which game leaders are playing. Finite games have “known players, fixed rules and an agreed upon objective.”³² He gives the example of baseball. The infinite game on the other hand is comprised of “known and unknown players, rules are changeable and the objective is to keep the game going.”³³ The example given for this is the Cold War, where the Soviet Union and the US maintained a stable game, and Sinek notes that the US didn’t win the cold war, the Soviets ran out of resources so they stopped playing.³⁴ He next states that when a finite player is playing a finite game, everything is good; the same applies for an infinite player in an infinite game both games are stable. The real issues happen when you have finite players, playing an infinite game. Sinek gives the example of the Vietnam War, America fought to win, a clear objective while the Vietnamese were fighting for their lives, an ongoing requirement. Finite player; infinite game the situation is unstable.³⁵ Transferring Sinek’s theory into the CAF where

³⁰ Simon Sinek, *Start with Why...*, 80.

³¹ “The Finite and Infinite Games of Leadership: Leadership, Business and Finding Purpose in the Workplace.” Hosted by Talks at Google 14 April 2017 http://youtu.be/_osKgFwKoDQ Viewed 28 April 2018

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

the institution represents the infinite game and the institutional leaders represent the finite players we have a situation that is inherently unstable.

Recall that doctrine indicates that institutional leaders are the stewards of the CAF. Doctrine also states that these leaders “must have “future focus” spending much of their time looking forwards to the future and positioning the organization for long term success.”³⁶ This supports the theory of infinite game, infinite players. Players will come and go but it is their job to keep the institution going. In other words the leadership is to play an infinite game.

In order to become an institution leader in the CAF, an individual must be successioned planned. Succession planning ensures that the identified individuals are posted into key positions in order to make them ready to assume higher command and institutional leadership positions.³⁷ The individuals in question are aware that they are being successioned planned. In order to make it into the higher institutional positions postings and promotions must happen at a fairly rapid pace.³⁸ One will often drive the other, a posting will lead to a promotion and a promotion will trigger a posting thus the cycle feeds itself. The “tyranny of the posting cycle”³⁹ will often see an individual posted out of a position before they have had time to grasp the complexities of the position. The rapid cycling through from position to position can also impact on the ability of the individual to produce the required output of the position or make any effective change.⁴⁰ One significant issue with this is that the individual in question is never held responsible for work that was never completed.⁴¹ They are not held accountable for how the decisions they made, for good or ill, affected the institution. Another drawback is that because the individual knows they

³⁶ Department of National Defence...*Leadership in the Canadian Forces Leading the Institution*. 125.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 124

³⁸ Allan English. “Corruption in the Canadian Military?... 55.

³⁹ Allan English, “Enabling Innovation in Canada’s Army: Culture Transformations and Military Effectiveness.” Canadian Army Historical Workshop, Kingston, 13-14 June 2011. 11

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

are being succession planned the focus can shift from one of responsibility for the job; to responsibility for ensuring their career proceeds a pace.⁴² The current method of succession planning does not promote institutional stewardship, the early identification of who will move through the system sets up the perception that these chosen few are not required to sacrifice time and energy to make the institution better⁴³ it promotes the perception that all they must do is get the check in the box. It does not matter that this might not be the intension of succession planning, it is the perception and that matters more.⁴⁴ This system promotes a finite player.

The Culture We Create

So far the discussion has focused on the loss of Why in the CAF and how the institutional leadership system is unstable due to the mixing of finite players in to the infinite institutional game. The final piece will look at the culture that has been created and contributes to the failure of institutional leadership.

Since the Somalia inquiry, culture has gained more and more focus in the CAF. Somalia was about “airborne” culture, the Croatia BOI was about “mental health” culture and the Deshamps report was about “sexualized” culture. Each of these “cultures” was made the scapegoat for the unacceptable standard of conduct that was uncovered.⁴⁵ Culture did play a major role in each of these events however what seems to have been down played is who is responsible for the creation of culture in the first place. In her article *Culture* Karen Davis writes,

⁴² Allan English. “Corruption in the Canadian Military?...” 5.

⁴³ Simon Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't* (New York: Penguin Group, 2014) 59.

⁴⁴ Allan English. “Corruption in the Canadian Military?...” 2.

⁴⁵ Karen Davis, “Culture,” in *The Military Leadership Handbook*, ed. Colonel Bernd Horn and Dr. Robert W. Walker (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy, 2008) 200.

“Leaders play a critical role in setting the stage for cultural reinforcement and cultural change.”⁴⁶

This view is supported by CAF doctrine that states, “In ensuring professional effectiveness, institutional leaders exert direct influence on professional standards, norms and values.”⁴⁷

Conceptual Leadership Foundations notes,

To the degree that leaders consciously serve, exemplify, and uphold values, they affirm through their use the validity and credibility of espoused values, and provide CF members with general guidance as to how they should orient and regulate their own behaviour.⁴⁸

It is clear that CAF doctrine acknowledges the central role that leaders play in the formation of culture. Yet the tendency is to hold accountable a few bad apples that behaved badly without any examination of the “bad barrel” in which they were stored.⁴⁹ This tendency of leaders to deflect to culture as the problem in order to protect themselves was noted both in the Deschamps report⁵⁰ as well as in the criticism of the Nordick⁵¹ BOI.⁵² This behaviour is inconsistent with the values based leadership expected in the CAF. It however is not surprising given the tendency of leaders to overestimate the health of the institution the higher their position in the organizational chart.⁵³ In other words, people who obtain success in the existing system are far less likely to see the flaws in that system.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 208.

⁴⁷ Department of National Defence...*Leadership in the Canadian Forces Leading the Institution*. ix.

⁴⁸ Department of National Defence...*Leadership in the Canadian Forces Conceptual Leadership Foundations*. 23.

⁴⁹ Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2007) Preface.

⁵⁰ Allan English, “Sexual harassment and Sexual Assault In the Canadian Armed Forces: Systemic Obstacles to Comprehensive Culture Change.” (IUS Canada Conference, Ottawa, 10 October 2016) 11

⁵¹ The Nordick BOI was convened to investigate the report and alleged lack of action regarding the sexual assault of afghan boys by the Afghan coalition partners.

⁵² Allan English. “Corruption in the Canadian Military?...” 11.

⁵³ Ibid.,2

So how did institutional leadership culture develop? According to Jocelyn Goldfein culture is the behaviour you reward and punish.⁵⁴ She notes that culture is often thought of as being shaped by mission and value statements not the day-to-day running of an organization.⁵⁵ She goes on to note that the behaviour of the successful people in an organization set the standard, other people see the success and them emulate the behaviour.⁵⁶ When the behaviour of successful people does not match the stated values, the tendency is to disregard the values not the behaviour.⁵⁷ Her observations are equally applicable to the CAF. Take for example the recent incident involving sexual assault allegations against former NHL player Tiger Williams. Media reports noted that both the VCDS and the CAF CWO were on board the plane where numerous infractions took place and yet the CDS took no actions against those two most senior leaders.⁵⁸ Compare this to the most recent media report regarding the release of three officer cadets for improper behaviour⁵⁹ and the question must be asked why are some held to a higher standard while others are not? It seems odd that the standard of behaviour is higher for the most junior members of the CAF while the most senior leadership is not held to account for the conduct of those on a VIP flight.

⁵⁴ Jocelyn Goldfein, "Culture is the Behavior You Reward and Punish", Jocelyn Blog 23 February 2017, <https://jocelyngoldfein.com/culture-is-the-behavior-you-reward-and-punish>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ David Pugliese, "Canada's top Soldier 'deeply concerned' about raucous party planned by his staff on military plane." *Ottawa Citizen* 23 February 2018

⁵⁹ David Pugliese, "Three officer cadets kicked out of Forces after desecrating Qur'an with bacon and bodily fluid." *Ottawa Citizen* 25 May 2018

Conclusion

This paper set out to argue that institutional leadership in the CAF is failing. In order to support this statement the focus was placed on three areas. The first of these was that the CAF has lost its Why. The argument was put forth that the numerous changes faced by the CAF caused the Why to shift from one of values and belief to that of efficiency. Next, using game theory the argument was made that the institutional leadership, through succession planning, are finite players operating in an infinite institution game. As a result the institution is unstable and stewardship is lacking. Finally the argument touched upon institutional leadership culture. It was demonstrated that culture has been made the scapegoat of the significant issues encountered in the CAF and that somehow leadership responsibility for the shaping of culture has been overlooked. It is important to not overlook the importance of how culture is shaped through rewarding and punishing of behaviour.

It is the responsibility of institutional leadership to safeguard the profession of arms, the institution, its values and beliefs. In order for the institution to be successful it will be necessary for the leadership to shift the why from one of efficiency or output to one of belief. Institutional leaders will need to examine succession planning and determine how well it builds leaders who lead the institution and finally institutional leaders will have to take ownership of the CAF culture and their shared role in shaping it. Without taking action the ability of the CAF to remain a self-regulating profession will continue to come under fire. Institutional leadership will continue to fail.

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