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ETHICS

The Military Ethos and Force Protection

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ABSTRACT

An effective military ethos is fundamental to the ability of an army to carry out its functions in peacetime and in war. This ethos is developed over time, and is sustained by the continual reinforcement of a shared set of values. Inherent in these values is notion of unlimited liability, the concept that a soldier ultimately must be prepared to risk his life for a higher purpose than his own self interest. This essay argues that the trend towards radical force protection, that is the identification of force protection as the most important mission essential task, has the potential of eroding the military ethos. The essay briefly explores examples of radical force protection, and then discusses the military ethos and how radical force protection may affect it. It discusses the tension between a commander's functional responsibility to accomplishing the mission, and the moral responsibility to protect soldiers. It concludes with a discussion of the role of commanders in protecting the ethos.

INTRODUCTION

"This overriding concern for the avoidance of casualties will have continuing implications for the employment of our armed forces in conflict resolution operations where contributing nations are not at risk and where they have no other self-interest. It will affect simple, routine tactical decisions, such as whether or not to escort a convoy, and it will inevitably raise difficult moral questions and operational dilemmas[1]"

For the majority of democratic nations, minimizing casualties has been a fundamental responsibility in the conduct of military operations, or at least this has been the case in the more recent past. Commanders recognize this obligation to soldiers, and have conducted operations in a manner designed to successfully achieve the assigned mission, while at the same time limiting the exposure of troops to needless hazard. Concurrently, most professional soldiers accept that in accomplishing their tasks, by necessity, they will at times be exposed to extreme risks. They also acknowledge and understand that in accepting such risks, they may have to pay the ultimate price. This is the unlimited liability aspect of the military profession.

The inherent tension between mission accomplishment and force protection has an ongoing impact on the military ethos. While there is precious little in current doctrine on the concept of a Canadian military ethos or the "characteristic spirit and beliefs of a community"[2], there have been numerous writings on the notion of a military ethic, understood to be the *moral* foundation of our ethos. For this reason, the two concepts will be looked at in conjunction. As will be demonstrated, a proper military ethos is critical to the effectiveness of an army during war, but it must be sustained during peacetime if it is to be effective when the need is most acute.

The author intends to demonstrate that recent decisions taken at the operational, strategic and even political levels are indicative of a trend of enhancing force protection at the expense of all other considerations. The concern is that the unintended consequences of such a trend, if

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[1] "Command Experiences in Rwanda", Lieutenant General R.A. Dallaire, The Human in Command, Edited by Carol McCann and Ross Pigeau, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York, 2000, p 38.

[2] Concise Oxford Dictionary, Seventh Edition, Edited by J.B. Sykes, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1982, p 330.

continued, may a significant and negative impact on the ability of armed forces in general, and the CF in particular, to sustain its current and appropriate military ethos.

This aim of this essay is to demonstrate that the adoption of radical force protection measures has the potential of eroding the military ethos to the point where the ethos becomes ineffective. The essay will begin with an explanation of what is meant by the term military ethos, and how the military profession's tolerance of risks to soldiers is a central element to this ethos. This will be followed by a review of examples of recent operations in which force protection has been allowed to take precedence over other considerations, including mission accomplishment, and at times higher moral obligations. It will then briefly review the nature of operations that Canada will most likely continue to be involved in, and outline why it is important that such operations not be viewed and treated of "secondary" importance. It will discuss some of the tensions caused by radical force protection, including the conflicting notions of mission accomplishment and protection of innocents and their potential impact on the or the military ethos. Finally, it will summarize the role of commanders as guardians of the military ethos, and the actions they should be taking to ensure that the ethos remains viable.

While this concern applies to warfighting operations, it is felt that it is equally or even more applicable to operations other than war particularly in the Canadian context. Future operations in which Canada will play a role will undoubtedly continue to offer the potential for adoption of such force protection measures and therefore it is argued that attention to this potential problem from the perspective of Peace Support Operations is appropriate.

RADICAL FORCE PROTECTION

"I tell my men every day that there is nothing there worth one of them dying for."[3]

Radical force protection does not refer to the recognized leadership responsibility of balancing the risk to soldiers against that of accomplishing the mission. This concept is inherent

[3] A quote by an unnamed officer to would be graduates at West Point. "Army Professionalism, The Military Ethic and Officeship in the 21st Century". Snider et al, p 4.

in the responsibilities of all leaders, and is fundamental to the Canadian military ethos. Radical force protection refers to decisions that are made and policies developed that identify the avoidance of casualties as the mission itself. Radical force protection will therefore be defined as actions taken with the aim of eliminating friendly casualties, with a resultant direct or indirect risk of loss of life to non-combatants.

There are numerous examples of such decisions in the recent past. These include:

- The adoption of high altitude bombing in Kosovo. The well known decision to limit allied bombers to a 15,000 foot ceiling to limit loss of aircrew demonstrated the allied willingness to risk collateral damage and civilian casualties. While the cost in terms of lives of non-combatants is not known, it can be assumed that such losses were incurred and that such losses could have been avoided had a lower profile been utilized.
- The reluctance to commit ground troops in Kosovo. For similar force protection purposes, allied forces did not commit ground forces to destroy Serb military capabilities. This decision kept allied soldiers out of harms way, but the consequence was an increased risk, and in fact one could argue increased slaughter of innocent civilians by the Serb forces.
- In both Rwanda and Somalia, the early withdrawal of Belgian and US forces, for the purposes of not risking these forces to further casualties, resulted in an increased number of civilian casualties.

In each of these instances, the decisions to adopt policies aimed at eliminating risk to own troops, resulted either directly or indirectly, in increased non-combatant casualties. As will be further discussed, this is incompatible with the present military ethos, in that the allied forces were morally obliged to take risks that they did not assume. Such decisions, if continued to guide the conduct of operations, have the very real potential of engendering doubt by soldiers as to the validity and acceptance of the concept of self sacrifice.

THE MILITARY ETHOS - THE ESSENCE OF AN ARMED FORCE

"I believe there has to be a simple reference point to start with, expanding that to service before self, requestioning possibly whether we believe wearing these uniforms is still a vocation or is it a profession? Or is it a job?[4]

The military performs a morally necessary function, in that it is responsible to society to safeguard the rights of the members of that society from external threats. In return for this loyal and principled service in safeguarding a way of life, the nation assumes certain obligations to the soldier, over and above that of payment. Most importantly are the respect and loyalty that the nation bestows upon its soldiers in various forms. Huntington points out that the discharge of this responsibility requires cooperation, organization and discipline.[5] These factors in turn demand that the soldier's individual will be subordinated to that of the group. To sustain the individual soldier's acceptance of the restrictions placed upon him, the notions of tradition, esprit, unity and community are reinforced as essential values.[6] The acceptance and internalization of such values that form the basis of the military ethos.

While the military is often stated to be a "mirror" of society, this is not necessarily the case when viewing the associated ethos' of the two. While the military ethos might well have been a reflection of what the majority of society valued in the past, more recently the two have begun to diverge. As pointed out by Snider et al, we have seen the rise of a "post modernism" type of ethos within society, where traditional moral standards are rejected.[7] Additionally, and more importantly is the emergence of "egoism", where what is "best for me" determines one's actions. Such value sets do not support the military ethos, which instead must be nurtured through various means such as the promotion of and adherence to, the traditional military values

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[4] Major General Romeo Dallaire. "Hey! We Are in a Revolution", The Many Faces of Ethics in Defence, Proceedings of the Conference of Ethics in Canadian Defence, 24-25 October 1996, p110.

[5] Samuel P. Huntington. The Military Mind: Conservative Realism of the Professional Military Ethic", War, Morality and the Military Profession, Second Edition, edited by Malham M. Wakin, Westview Press, Boulder Colaradao, 1986, p 39.

[6] Ibid, p 40.

[7] Professor Don Snider, Major John Nagel and Major Tony Pfaff. "Army Professionalism, The Military Ethic and Officership in the 21st Century", from a paper presented to JSCOPE 00. Found at http://www.usafa.af.mil/jscope/JSCOPE00/Snider/Snider00.htn, p 7.

such as duty, integrity, discipline and honor. The reinforcement of these values is fundamental to continued effective operational capability.

The terms ethic and ethos refer to related yet different concepts. As indicated by Wenek, an ethic refers to the "moral spirit or character of the military community", while the ethos is a "broader construct, referring to the characteristic spirit of a community (i.e. what might better be described as its culture, or its shared pattern of beliefs, values and assumptions)"[8]. It is important to note, however, that an ethic is a fundamental component of, and underpins, an effective military ethos.

Much has been written about the military ethic. Hartle has defined the concept of an ethic as follows:

> *"A professional ethic is a code which consists of a set of rules and standards governing the conduct of members of a professional group. The code may be a formally written published code, or it may be informal, consisting of standards of conduct perpetuated by training and example."* [9]

The most significant difference between the military ethic and that of other professional groups is that members of the military profession embrace the concept of "unlimited liability". Soldiers are legally and morally obliged to carry out their duties and tasks "without fear or danger, and ultimately to be willing to risk their lives if the situation requires".[10] The acceptance of this concept of unlimited liability within the military is sustained as previously stated by the shared set of beliefs and values; in other words the military ethos.

This ethos must not only be developed, but it also must be nurtured and sustained, as the values inherent in self-sacrifice are not necessarily resident within society as a whole, even though they may well be valued by society. It is essential that these values are not only entrenched in the outlook of the military as a whole, but are also internalized by individual

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[8] Officership and Ethics, Lieutenant Colonel K.W.J. Wenek, Department of Military Psychology and Leadership, Royal Military College of Canada, February, 1993, p 2.

[9] Hartle, A.E. Moral Issues in Military Decision Making, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KA, 1989, p24.

soldiers. Only when this is the case is the soldier capable of recognizing the importance of his contribution to society and at the same time accept the moral rationale of the necessity of unlimited liability. The risks he accepts are not based on his "worth" being any less than his civilian counterpart. Rather, it is that he has acknowledged and accepted the basis of the moral contract that requires a soldier to accept risks that the civilian does not have the same moral responsibility to share.

The acceptance of tolerance of risk is an essential moral obligation within the military ethos. A fundamental principle that underlies the notion of the Just War Tradition is that which recognizes that everyone has the right to life and liberty, regardless of the nation to which they belong. The Just War Tradition further affirms that under most conditions, soldiers are *obligated* to take risks to preserve the lives of non-combatants, since such non-combatants, unlike soldiers do not have the right to kill. Soldiers are only not obligated to take any and all such risks when by taking the risk the mission cannot be accomplished or one is no longer able to carry out the mission. The determination of when this is the case is the responsibility of the leader, and as will be discussed in a later next section, the dilemma posed by radical force protection as it relates to mission accomplishment.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE CF IN FOREIGN OPERATIONS

It has been quite rightly said that suffering, like light, knows no boundaries. No matter when or where it erupts, every new conflict is a setback for civilization itself, and it is usually the weakest who pay the price. Looking the other way serves no purpose, recourse to violence leaves us impoverished in the end, even if appearances suggest otherwise[11]

The basis for accepting the risks to Canadian soldiers remains one of the rationale for deploying these soldiers on missions of the nature deemed as necessary by political authorities. The question is thus one of whether such actions serve Canadian "national interests" If not, why should troops be expected to accept risks in such environments?

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[10] B-GL-300-000/FP-000, Canada's Army, 01/04/1998, p 33.

[11] Cornelio Sommaruaga, in "Foreword", to Hard Choices, Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention, Edited by Jonathan Moore, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, Lanman Maryland, 1998, p IX.

Traditionally, national interests of a country have been viewed as whatever society considered useful or good for itself. As maintained by Lord Palmerston in 1848:

> *"We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.[12]"*

Therefore, at the most basic level, one could argue that Canadian national interests are simply defined as those interests that assure the security and prosperity of Canada and its citizens. Based on this definition, it would be hard to argue that Canadian national interests were at stake, and the use of "hard power" (military or economic action) justified in East Timor, Rwanda and even Kosovo. Such an understanding of national interests, however, is superficial at best, and the interests of a nation must be viewed in some form of priority.

Donald Nuechterlein discusses the differences between a nation's *vital* and *major* national interests.[13] In essence, he argues that vital issues are

> *"...so fundamental to the political, social and economic well being of their country that it should not be compromised - even if this should result in the use of economic and military sanctions.[14]*

He goes on to outline several factors, of a value or cost/risk nature, that should be considered in determining if an interest should be considered vital. From the military ethos perspective, defence of a nation's vital interests can quite easily be seen as those where acceptance of the risk of unlimited liability is necessary. However, while an interesting argument, it is largely from the strategic point of view and related to decisions on when a country should consider using force (ie going to war). It does not discuss to any degree what the impact is on the nation when a major interest results in the commitment of a military force for other purposes, and as has become very common in the past decade.

It must be accepted that whether considered vital or a major national interest, Canadian soldiers will most likely continue to be committed to operations that do not differ significantly

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[12] Lord Palmerston. As quoted in "To Die For: National Interest and Strategic Uncertainties", Parameters, Vol XXX, No 2, Summer 2000, p46.

from those of the more recent past. Dr Ken Eyre recently discussed his vision of the future battleground for the Canadian military. He envisaged the continued commitment of CF personnel to what he refers to as stability operations, defined as:

> *"...impartial interventions by elements of the international community in a grave internal crisis with the object of assisting the state involved in avoiding, mitigating ending or recovering from violent conflict.*[15]

He went on to argue that such operations pose as much risk to the participating troops, as did the better known "high intensity" operations associated with conflict in the cold war era, the nature of which most soldiers recognize as the more traditional threat to Canadian security. Eyre predicts that it will be such operations that remain the main mission of the CF for the foreseeable future, and the area in which the CF must focus its efforts.

Romeo Dallaire largely concurs with this assessment and characterizes the nature of this conflict very clearly:

> *…we're going to be involved in the peace support operations, or operations short of war missions, where it is not necessarily high tech, but it will be facing drugged up, boozed up, ruthless threats from all sides. Belligerents who are quite prepared to use savagery, butchery of their own populations to achieve their aims. We will find ourselves facing horrors to the scale that are unimaginable to us in our society as isolated as we often want to be because we can always change the channel and we don't have to look at those bad things*[16]

In a recent article by P.H. Liotta, the author discussed the nature of US national interests in terms of the global village. As a first world country these same interests can arguably be equated in generic terms to those of Canada. At a very broad level, he argued these interests now include the security and prosperity of the global environment[17]. In other words, no longer can we

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[13] Nuechterlein, Donald Edwin. America Overcommitted: United States National Interests in the 1980s, The University Press of Kentucky, 1985, p1730.
[14] Ibid, p 18.
[15] Ken Eyre. "Serious Soldiering: A Preliminary Investigation into the Environment of War at the Dawn of the New Millenium", Contemporary Issues in Leadership: A Canadian Perspective The Canadian Institute if Strategic Studies, 2000, p 209.
[16] Major General Romeo Dallaire, "Hey! We Are In A Revolution", The Many Faces of Defence Ethics, Proceedings of the Conference on Ethics in Canadian Defence, Ottawa, 24-25 October, 1996.
[17] PH Liotta. "To Die For: National Interest and Strategic Uncertainties", Parameters, Vol XXX, No 2, Summer 2000, p49.

view our national interests in isolation from that which transpires in the rest of the world. British Prime Minister Tony Blair echoed this sentiment quite succinctly when he stated:

> *"We live in a world where isolationism has ceased to have a reason to exist….We are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not.*[18]*"*

Therefore, it is offered, that for a number of different reasons, national interests are beginning to encompass concepts that contribute to a "favorable world order". Without a stable world environment, those nations that benefited from the economic successes of the recent past, cannot expect to continue to reap this same economic benefit, with the resultant negative impact on the well being of its society. The need to continue to manage the balance between the "have" and "have not" nations will most definitely require the continued involvement of "first world" states, of which Canada must be seen as a member. These states will be required "to counter the elitism of Saddam Hussein, in the former Yugoslavia, and also to moderate unchecked egalitarianism in Somalia, Rwanda, and Haiti"[19].

Of more significant consequence, it is also becoming increasingly evident that the "promotion of values", such as advocacy for human rights and promoting democratic principles is assuming much greater importance as an interest of democratic nations. Liotta demonstrates that in many instances, such *values* are now considered a national interest, due to the importance placed on them by their respective societies. He cites Kosovo as a watershed event, and an example of human beings being seen as more important than the state. As he attributes to Czech president Vaclav Havel:

> *"This is probably the first war that has not been waged in the name of 'national interest', but rather in the name of principles and values. ….Kosovo (unnlike Kuwait) has no oil field to be coveted: no member nation in the Alliance has any territorial demands;…. This war places human rights above that of the state."*[20]

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[18] Tony Blair. "Doctrine of International Community", reprinted in Chicago Tribune, 22 Apr 1999.
[19] Willian Glover, "The Future Security Environment", Contemporary Issues in Leadership: A Canadian Perspective The Canadian Institute if Strategic Studies, 2000, p231.
[20] Victor Havel, "Kosovo and the End of the Nation State", An Address delivered to the Canadian senate and House of Commons in Ottawa on 29 April, 1999, and reprinted in the *New York Review of* Books 10 June 1999, p5 and quoted by Liotta p 51.

It is therefore fair to accept that Canadian interests as identified by the appropriate political authority and as more recently understood, are being served in those areas where on first glance this might not have appeared to be the case. Whether such interests are vital or major does nor nor should not have an impact on the subsequent actions taken by commanders and soldiers that. Lastly, one need bear in mind that ultimately it is not the soldier who is responsible for the decisions where our national interests are served. It is the politician, and fundamental to the military ethos is the obedience of lawful authority. Soldiers have a prima facie obligation to perform such missions as assigned by the political authority.

THE JUST WAR TRADITION AND MILITARY INTERVENTION

Accepting that it is in Canada's national interest, (and whether this is a vital or a mjaor interest is largely moot at the operational level) the question becomes one of the justifiability of such intervention. In other words, from the perspective of the soldier are such actions in accordance with the concept of the Just War (*Jus ad bellum)?* Without such justification, the legitimacy of the commitment of force is called into suspect, and the assumption of risk remains questionable, most notably to those with the authority and responsibility to place soldiers under such conditions.

Although it has become more common recently, intervention by external agencies within the borders of a sovereign state is not a new phenomenon. In the past, intervention was primarily that of a more powerful nation, acting in the name of political self-interest within the borders of a less powerful one (Vietnam being one example). The case at the present time is much different, with intervention more frequently based on a moral principle of the alleviation of suffering. As was the case in the past, however, both forms of intervention pose ethical and more importantly legal problems. The two major arguments are the conflicting values of state autonomy versus responsibility of society as a whole to alleviate human suffering. The dilemma is not a simple one. On one hand is the preservation of the autonomy of the state. This autonomy is the

foundation of inter-state relations. The UN Charter is quite clear on the domestic jurisdiction of states, and indeed the UN system is based on state sovereignty and non-intervention:

> *"Nothing contained in the present charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the jurisdiction of any state.*[21].

On the other hand, intervention is also seen as a means of protecting basic values and principles. Support has reached a point where the Secretary General of the United Nations has identified the need for intervention in certain instances and voiced a measure of support for it.[22] In his article "Military Intervention and National Sovereignty", Brian Heyir summarizes the pros and cons for intervention [23]. He initially provides solid argument to refute intervention as justifiable, including the fact that it does not reduce or prevent conflict among major states, that it tends to prevent self determination, and lastly that intervention tends to subordinate small states to major powers. He goes on however, and argues convincingly the case for military intervention on the basis of the Just War criteria of legitimate authority, proper right intention, last resort, and possibility of success. In each instance, and when viewed together, he effectively demonstrates the justifiability of military intervention when the test is applied.[24]

This last factor (possibility of success) is of particular note. The debate concerns whether or not it is "Just" to intervene when the likelihood of success is questionable at best (Rwanda being a good example). The counter to this question is whether it is "Just" not to attempt to alleviate such suffering, and equally to recognize that the solution must not be viewed in the short term, but assessed over the longer term.

This does not imply that intervention should necessarily be the norm in every instance. What it does imply is that such intervention, *when deemed appropriate* by legitimate political

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[21] Unnited Nations Charter, Article 2 (7).
[22] Koffi A Annan, "Peacekeeping and National Sovereignty", Hard Choices, Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention, edited by Jonathon Moore, Rowan and Littlefield Publishers Inc, Oxford England, 1998, p 55-68.
[23] J. Bryan Heyir. "Military Intervention and National Sovereignty", Hard Choices, Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention, edited by Jonathon Moore, Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, Oxford England, 1998, pp 40-44.
[24] Ibid, pp 44-46.

authorities, must be viewed as a moral enterprise with the resultant moral obligations by soldiers assigned this mission or task.

THE TENSIONS CAUSED BY RISK AVOIDANCE

...I had decided to protect the prime minister by sending in my best troops, the Belgian contingent. This decision was fraught with moral and ethical dilemmas. What justification did I have for risking soldier's lives to protect the prime minister in such a chaotic situation?[25]

In his article, "Two Kinds of Military Responsibility", Michael Walzer describes two very different obligations or responsibilities faced by commanders[26]. The first are hierarchical obligations, which include those of an upward through superiors ultimately to the society itself, and also includes obligations downwards in terms of the responsibility to protect soldiers. Hierarchical obligations often come in conflict, but in most cases such conflicts are resolvable, as there is only a single hierarchy, that being the chain of command, and leaders are trained and accept the singular concept of victory and the commitment up and down the chain to achieve victory.[27]

More difficult to resolve are those conflicts that arise when the additional obligation of avoidance of civilian casualties, either of a direct or indirect consequence, must be considered. As Walzer points out, this becomes a moral imperative, and soldiers have a responsibility *outwards* to those whom his activities may affect.[28] The tension becomes even more pronounced when a policy of radical force protection is introduced. The dilemma faced now becomes one of mission accomplishment (protection of soldiers) which has a moral imperative to it, and the conflicting moral imperative of service to humanity (protecting non combatants). However, what is often overlooked is the *responsibility* of soldiers to accept that it is their moral responsibility to accept such risk. This is not the case for non combatants.

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[25] Lieutanant General R.A. Dallaire. "Command Experiences in Rwanda", The Human in Command Exploring the Modern Military Experience, Edited by Carol McCann and Ross Pigeau, Kluwer Academic?Plenum PublishersNew York, New York, 2000, p36.
[26] Walzer, Michael. "Two Kinds of Military Responsibility", Parameters, Mar 1991, pp 42-46.
[27] Ibid, p 43.
[28] Ibid.

In his article "Divining the Message" Major Bob Near suggests that the cause of erosion of the ethos is the lack of an identified "purpose" for the Army, which can be translated to read the CF as a whole.[29] While I partly agree with this deduction, I also content that the military ethos has begun to be eroded by the emphasis placed on the avoidance of risk, most specifically in the conduct of peace support operations. The reluctance to accept that risks are inherent in military service is contrary to the values fundamental to the military, in particular that of unlimited liability. The elevation of force protection over that of mission accomplishment sends a clear message to soldiers that the moral components of the military ethos are not immutable, that they are dependant upon the situation, and as a result are open to negotiation.

There are those who will claim that an unwillingness to risk either themselves, or soldiers under their command, is not motivated by a sense of self preservation, but rather more by an unwillingness to sacrifice in vain, particularly when the national interests do not appear to be served.. As was discussed earlier, the argument to the effect that political direction resulting in Canadian soldiers being placed in positions of such risk as being immoral (referring to intervention not being in the national interest), does not stand up to analysis.

The 1998 "Ethics and Peacekeeping Survey" which relates issues raised by soldiers from recent peace support operations highlights this concern. Of particular note, there appears to be no clear understanding of the "Just Cause" of the missions in which Canada has participated[30]. The sentiments expressed by many and related in this same document include the following quotes: "Everyone goes home", "People come first", and "The aim is no casualties. Canadian soldiers are

and force protection are in conflict, then we don't do the mission".[31] " All of these are indicative of a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the situation in which our leaders and soldiers are finding themselves and indicate an erosion of our military ethos.

PART V - THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER, FORCE PROTECTION AND THE MILITARY ETHOS

> ***The military profession is expert and limited. Its members have specialized competence within their field and lack competence outside their field. The relation of the profession to the state is based upon this natural division of labour."***[32]

The question then is why is this of concern? What does it matter if the ethos is allowed to erode? The answer is as is indicated in CFP 300 – The Army:

> *"Neglect of the Military Ethos further encourages soldiers to see military service as a job while focusing on self interests instead of obligations to the profession".*[33]

Without an environment of shared moral values, based on an understanding of the necessary role the military plays in society, and the resu28 21nLi qu de(m)Tj10.98 0 0 10.98.41.172592 407.4608 Tm(

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Commanders need to be prepared to accept that casualties may be an undesirable, yet a necessary consequence when the situation and potential benefit justify this risk.

What the commander need to balance, and be careful to avoid, is bestowing such importance upon risk aversion, that it results is a negative impact on the basis upon which military service is founded. As outlined in CFP 300, there is a good reason for this concern:

> *"Promoting and sustaining the military ethos in the Canadian army is one of the most important responsibilities of commanders at all levels. It begins by recognizing that moral factors are superior…."*[34]

Determining the state of an ethos is an imprecise activity at best. This is possibly an area that our social scientists can take the lead and look to provide an objective means of measuring this notion. In the meantime, it is possible to look for indicators as to the impact of an ethos that is under threat. The Somalia Inquiry identified erosion of the military ethos as the key reason for the breakdown in discipline and leadership of the Airborne Regiment both prior to and during its deployment.[35] The more recent Croatia Board of Inquiry did not identify factors that might have contributed to the breakdown in trust in the chain of command, however the actions might also indicate an ethos is under some threat. Again further study in this particular area is warranted. It would be interesting to determine the reason for the lack of confidence on the part of some soldiers in the chain of command.

This is not meant to suggest that the elevation of force protection must have a similar result. However, it is impossible to know or predict the impact on the military ethos, of instilling in soldiers a questioning of the essence of service – ie the obligation to risk one's life for others when necessary. Radical force protection creates this dilemma.

Undoubtedly there will be times when a commander will need to place subordinate welfare as the highest priority. This is the case when the risk is such that casualties taken will preclude current, or even future mission accomplishment. In such instances, a commander

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[34] Canada's Army, 1 April 1998, pp 36-37.
[35] Near in "Diving the Message", Contemporary Issues in Officership: A Canadian Perspective, p 77.

possesses the authority and responsibility to determine that the protection of the force will take priority. Given the circumstances of the moment, the operational or tactical commander on the ground, needs to determine this. But it is clear that such decisions must be based on the situation at the time, are not based on an interpretation of what are or are not national interests and cannot be based on a determination that the risk to a soldier should be less than that of a civilian.

The following specific responsibilities are considered the distinct domain of senior commanders, in particular operational level commanders. They represent areas where attention to radical force protection and its impact on the military ethos should be focused.

Firstly, and most importantly, commanders need to recognize the potential damage that can be inflicted on the military ethos by initiating or accepting a policy of radical force protection. They need to be prepared to exert their personal influence to both shape policies (doctrine) and operational orders when necessary. Equally importantly, they need to exert their personal influence over immediate subordinates, with a view to developing in them this same attitude. To do this they must know their subordinates intimately and be prepared to dismiss those subordinates who are unable or unwilling to accept such moral demands. Without such an approach, a cohesive and common approach to the maintenance of the ethos will not be possible.

Secondly, commanders should look to ensure that mission mandates and rules of engagement (ROE) are of the nature that they do not result in radical force protection becoming an issue. This is achieved by providing knowledgeable and effective advice to the political authorities (mandates) and by understanding the implications of the mandate as it relates to the requirements and potential tasks of the mission for the production of appropriate ROE.

Thirdly, commanders need to develop in subordinates the moral and ethical qualities that help sustain the military ethos. This is achieved through personal example, but also by education

and training. They need to strive to ensure CF members are aware of their military purpose, their relationship and importance to society, and the moral obligations that result. They must also understand the importance of the ethos, how it is sustained, and why it is important to continued military effectiveness.

Lastly, commanders need to recognize their intrinsic obligation to both the nation they serve, and the military profession in general. They possess a unique responsibility to sustain the military ethos. This is facilitated by accepting that while they are obligated to protect soldiers' welfare, it is also their obligation to the service as a whole to sustain the ethos, and not to contribute to the erosion of the moral values of the force. Accepting that risk is inherent in this profession is critical, as is the commander's responsibility to expose soldiers to risk when it is appropriate. Initiating or accepting a policy that runs contrary to such a concept is detrimental to the military ethos.

PART VII – CONCLUSION

"Maintaining the military ethos is critical to the army's effectiveness in war and its readiness and preparedness in peace. If this ethos is absent, poorly developed, or allowed to erode, the army is seriously harmed."[36]

A nation's army must be capable of effectively carrying out any mission that it is assigned. However, the primary function of any military is the defense of the way of the life of its' parent society. To achieve this ultimate purpose, an army must possess the appropriate organization, doctrine, equipment, training and personnel. Central to the effectiveness of any force is its' will and cohesion both of which are created and sustained by a compelling and principled ethos. I believe an ethos takes considerable time to establish, and as indicated by the high level of professionalism demonstrated by Canadian soldiers in the past, possesses a resiliency which renders it resistant to erosion. However, an ethos cannot be viewed as a static entity, and it can be altered, in both a positive or negative manner. Therefore the principles of

[36] Canada's Army, 1 April 1998, p 35.

such an ethos must be continually reinforced, in a manner that all members of the profession can observe and comprehend.

The Canadian military ethos, like any other ethos, comprises a shared set of values. The Canadian military ethos is based on the acceptance on the notions of service to the nation, and self sacrifice. Radical force protection, or the elevation of the importance of force protection above any other aspect of mission conduct, including mission accomplishment, sends a message that is incompatible with this concept. While soldiers must feel confident that commanders will at all times minimize the risks they must face, we cannot erode the moral basis of the ethos by instilling a sense of relativism in it. Radical force protection will achieve this.

Operational and all superior commanders, have unique responsibilities and a special duty to protect and foster this ethos. Included in this should be an awareness of the potential problem caused by adopting policies of radical force protection, and resisting this in the operational decisions they make. Most importantly they need to attempt to exercise influence over decision makers, including higher commanders and ultimately politicians, making them aware of the consequences of decisions that will have impact on the military's future ability to meet its obligations to the nation. Any decay of the military ethos and the moral values that comprise this ethos can result in a significant degrading of the warfighting effectiveness of the military, and must be guarded against.

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