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CANADIAN FORCES TRANSFORMATION

BUCKING THE TREND – INTEROPERABILITY TRUMPS ‘JOINTNESS’

By

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ABSTRACT

The Canadian Forces have recently instituted a programme of transformation in response to a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) which has been in progress for some years now. At the strategic level, a good deal has been written about the principles and processes associated with the RMA and a transformation agenda, but few concrete plans have emerged. Individual services have advanced their own transformation agendas to varying degrees, but apparently without an over arching CF plan.

Other nations are similarly engaged on transformation agendas which are anchored in the concept of “jointness”. A review of Canadian domestic and international operations will reveal that the concept of jointness does not apply in Canada, as it does not possess the necessary elements to comprise a joint force. Further, Canada’s track record is one of contribution to multinational coalitions, whether under a UN mandate or as a member of a NATO force, and normally with the US as the lead nation.

As a result, a logical Canadian approach to transformation would be to align with reality and to maximize its interoperability with American forces. Interoperability includes technical aspects as well as the doctrinal and procedural . It is not enough to be interoperable, however, if the forces are not combat capable and salient. A possible approach to transformation would therefore call for Canadian Forces to closely align with the US Forces’ joint doctrine, procedures and interoperability, while ensuring our forces maintain a high degree of combat capability that will be a salient contribution to coalitions in peace and war, and that will serve to fulfill Canada’s Defence White Paper demands.

Introduction

Over the past decade the Canadian Forces(CF) has been drifting forward in an confusing set of circumstances. The terms Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), transformation, Joint Operations, Asymmetric Warfare and terrorism dominate the airwaves and the CF is left, like other Western Armies, trying to discern the way forward. Placed in the context of a very high operational tempo, decreasing (until recently) budgets and fewer soldiers, sailors and airmen with which to do the job, one has to ask how the CF will emerge from this confusion – are these circumstances opportunities or threats?

A RMA has purportedly been underway for a number of years in modern armies. This revolution is characterized partially by advances in modern technology, particularly in the field of information management and electronics. It is now possible to provide more information to commanders on friendly forces' dispositions and on most any other issue on which we care to collect information. In addition, it is possible to build precision weapons that can be directed to pinpoint targets from most weapons platforms.

The RMA has stimulated some Western armed forces to undertake programmes of “transformation”. This word means different things to different people, but generally it can be taken to mean a dramatic change in the way armed forces conduct operations and it typically embodies changes to technology, doctrine and the way individual forces approach war or military operations. Canada is no exception. The Canadian Forces are entering a period of declared transformation, the foundation for which is reasonably clear but for which the concrete output in terms of doctrine, capability or other products sought is not. The CDS Annual Report to parliament for 2002 - 2003 is entitled “A Time for

Transformation”. It articulated the intent to transform but provides little in the way of detail on how the transformation is to be achieved. Strategic documents prepared by the Army have also referred to the requirement to achieve a transformation, the Navy has issued “Leadmark” as its vision for the future and the Air Force has a similar document in preparation.

To date, CF strategic level documents contain mostly generalities on transformation. They tend to parrot the concepts articulated in US Forces documents, and do not appear to accommodate uniquely Canadian requirements to successfully effect transformation. For example, the vision statement from Strategy 2020 states in part

We will exploit leading-edge doctrine and technologies to accomplish our domestic and international roles in the battlespace of the 21st century and be recognized, both at home and abroad, as an innovative, relevant knowledge-based institution. With transformational leadership and coherent management, we will build upon our proud heritage in the pursuit of clear strategic objectives¹.

The vision seems more focused on process than outcome which, not surprisingly, makes it impossible to see the future.

The roles of the CF as identified in the 1994 White Paper include: Defence of Canada and Canadian Sovereignty; contributing to Canada – United States Defence Cooperation; and, contributing to International Peace and Security. Clearly, all three of these roles are likely to require multinational operations. Canada will require assistance in its own defence, as current capability allows little beyond sovereignty patrols and local actions. The CF cannot defend Canada. Indeed, this may be the basis for the second role, which provides a policy underpinning for US intervention in the defence of Canada

¹ Department of National Defence. “Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020.” June 1999. p. 7.

and cooperation in the defence of North America, particularly through the NORAD agreement. Finally, recent history is replete with examples of Canadian cooperation with the USA and other nations on International Peace and Security missions.

This paper will review the efforts of several Western nations in the area of transformation, including the Canadian Forces' approach. It will be asserted that, because Canada is so closely allied militarily with the United States, and because the CF virtually always conducts international operations as part of a coalition, the only way Canada can achieve meaningful and effective military transformation is by adapting to US joint doctrine and charting a clear course for developing future capabilities in this context.

The paper will first briefly describe the concept of the Revolution in Military Affairs, followed by a comparative analysis of the efforts underway in this area in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

The currently approach to transformation within the Canadian Forces, within the context of domestic and international operations will be examined, including the specific approaches for the Army, Navy and the Air Force.

The paper will conclude with some thoughts on the way ahead, including discussion of the military capabilities required, the critical importance of interoperability with US forces, and the necessity for a thorough understanding of US forces' joint doctrine.

The RMA in Brief

The RMA is defined in different ways by different nations, but is generally acknowledged to reflect a change in the way military operations will be conducted due primarily to the advent of new technologies. The Canadian Forces defines the RMA as

a major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of new technologies which, combined with dramatic changes in military doctrine and operational and organizational concepts fundamentally alters the character and conduct of military operations.²

The document goes on to divide the RMA into three elements: technological change, doctrinal innovation and organizational adaptation. *Canadian Defence Beyond 2010* also suggests a way ahead to exploit the RMA, including an eleven-point plan as a way ahead, which includes mainly process-oriented objectives such as evaluation of asymmetric threats and improving ties with defence industry, as opposed to development goals.³

Again, the reader is left with the impression of process-orientation instead a results focus.

In his annual report to parliament, the Minister of National Defence introduced the idea of transformation to a future Canadian Forces.

If we truly believe in collective security, if we believe we can and should make a difference in the world, and if we believe we must be prepared to back our values with action when required, then we must accelerate the transformation of our defence and security establishment and get out in front of the changes reshaping our security establishment.⁴

² Department of National Defence, *Canadian Defence Beyond 2010: An RMA Concept Paper*, RMA Operational Working Group, Ottawa. 31 May 1999. p.vi-ix.

³ The eleven points of the plan are: Establish a working group to ensure a coherent approach to the RMA, A systematic approach to interoperability within DND/CF and with allies, Evaluate asymmetric threats, establish a joint experimentation capability, maintain close contact and collaboration with JSACOM J9 and Joint Battlelab, establish a CA/US cooperative programme for technology, research and development, exploit and integrate space-based capabilities, improve Material Acquisition and Support (MA&S), tailor the size of the support footprint throughout the supply chain, improve ties between DND/CF and industry, optimize the role of the human and provide support on the battlefield, modernize HR practices, and take maximum advantage of Canadian expertise in industry, academia and other government departments.

⁴ Department of National Defence, 2003-2004 Report on Plans and Priorities. Date???

Curiously, however, the Canadian concept of transformation seems to have received little elaboration or definition since the report was issued.

Allies' Plans

USA. The concept of transformation originated with the US Forces. It is articulated in Joint Vision 2020 and centres around the idea of “Full Spectrum Dominance”. “The overall goal of the transformation described in this document is the creation of a force that is dominant across the full spectrum of military operations – persuasive in peace, decisive in war, preeminent in any form of conflict.”⁵ The document goes on to say that the concept of full spectrum dominance as

achieved through the interdependent application of dominant maneuver, precision engagement, focused logistics, and full dimensional protection. Attaining that goal requires the steady infusion of new technology and modernization and replacement of equipment. However, material superiority alone is not sufficient. Of greater importance is the development of doctrine, organizations, training and education, leaders and people that effectively take advantage of the technology.⁶

US Transformation is based upon the principles of information superiority, innovation, people, interoperability, multinational operations and interagency operations. The operational concepts of dominant maneuver, precision engagement, Joint Command and Control, focused logistics, full dimensional protection and information operations are derived from this approach.⁷

An all-encompassing military strategy such as this will be too rich for Canadian (and others’) blood unless a selective approach is taken. There are capabilities implied in the US approach that are not currently affordable in Canada, and, barring major budget

⁵ Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2020*, 2003, p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 8-33.

increases, will not be so in the future. For example, full dimensional protection and precision engagement are only achievable in selected areas in a CF context.

Vulnerabilities exist today and will continue to exist in the post-transformation era. The challenge for Canada, if it wishes to contribute effectively to a US-led coalition, will be to pursue adequate equipment modernization within the traditional environment of severe resource-constraints, while simultaneously advancing these “soft” aspects of the US concept for transformation such as “people” and “innovation”. Paul Mitchell has coined the term “Full Spectrum Influence” as a Canadian response to US “Full Spectrum Dominance” where Canada achieves influence on the world stage through relevant, salient and interoperable force contributions to international operations.⁸

United Kingdom. The UK has embarked upon an ambitious programme of modernization with an emphasis on joint force projection. These include formation of Joint Force 2000 commanded by a Rear Admiral, formation of Joint Helicopter Command of 400 aircraft, a joint Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Regiment, and bolstering the authority of the Chief of Joint Operations. In addition, a Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre has been formed. New equipment capabilities under development include: two new aircraft carriers, purchase of Tomahawk land attack missiles, the Apache Longbow helicopter, and improving strategic mobility with the acquisition of roll-on, roll-off container ships. Reorganizations of the force structure have created additional deployable formations within the same personnel envelope, as well as improving the ability to deploy Reserve Force (Territorial Army) members.⁹ As with the American

⁸ Mitchell, Paul T. “A Transformation Agenda for the CF: Full Spectrum Influence.” Unpublished. 2003. p. 1.

⁹ UK Ministry of Defence, *Strategic Defence Review*, London, 18 July 2002,

approach, the British seek to field the most advanced capabilities with the emphasis on force projection. While Canada also proposes to project force, and despite our British heritage, it is more naturally achieved through cooperation with American forces given our very close geographical, economic and continental defence relationships.

Australia. Due to similarities in population size, heritage, culture and military structures, comparisons between Canada and Australia are often useful in benchmarking the approach of one nation or another to a particular problem. Despite the many similarities between the two nations, a fundamental difference is Canada's close geographical, economic and cultural relationship with the USA. Australia has a demanding defence problem given the strategic context in which they operate. They recognize numerous threats to its security, including possible attacks on Australian territory and threats to its citizens overseas, whether by terrorist groups or by transnational criminals. In addition, Australia makes a commitment to contribute to international peace and security. In response to these threats Australia identifies a need to operate in coalition (primarily overseas in peace or war scenarios) and to maintain the ability to defend Australian territory "by Australians".¹⁰ Using a concept dubbed "Multidimensional Warfare", Australia foresees fielding a Joint Task Force for defence of Australia and acknowledges the possibility of augmentation from coalition partners. Multidimensional Warfare includes the use of an indirect approach to operations in order to defeat the enemy's will to fight. Effects- Based operations are key to the concept.¹¹

¹⁰ Department of Defence, Policy Guidance and Analysis Division, *Future Warfighting Concept*, Canberra, December 2002, p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 23 – 28.

The Australian approach represents a pragmatic approach to continental defence, which is reflective of their strategic situation, but which is not transferable to Canada.

Canadian Forces' Future Plans

A Strategy for 2020. In June 1999 DND/CF identified “jointness, interoperability, command and control and deployability” as critical attributes within its strategy for 2020. Others specified in the document are primarily departmental or bureaucratic in nature. From these attributes objectives for development are derived. A partial summary which is relevant to joint and combined operations includes the following two characteristics:

- Globally deployable. This objective requires conversion of the Joint Force HQ into a deployable joint HQ at the operational level of war. This is an ambitious objective since no intent to deploy a Canadian Joint Force is identified within the same document nor, indeed, anywhere else. Enhanced strategic sealift and airlift and readiness levels for the Army of 21 days for a vanguard and 90 days for a main force are also included.

- Interoperable. As part of this objective the CF is required to “manage” its interoperability with the US and other allies to permit seamless operational integration. A requirement to adopt new doctrine and equipment compatible with principal allies, and an expansion of the joint and combined exercise programme is also specified.

Unfortunately, from this compendium of objectives, attributes, targets and factors, no clear picture of how the CF should operate or what should be done in order to prepare for the future emerges.¹²

¹² A Strategy for 2020, p. 10.

A Time for Transformation. In his Annual Report to parliament for 2002 – 2003, the Chief of the Defence Staff sets out a transformation agenda for “the Canadian Forces and our national defence and security apparatus on three levels.” The first level is to transform the way we perceive and think by migrating away from hierarchical thinking and acting, and by adopting [or adapting to] a network-oriented approach. The challenge with this goal is to manage the increasing amount of information made available to commanders, and to establish whether digital information is useful at all levels of the force structure. This network consists of the security partners including the three environments, civilian members of DND, other government departments involved in security, and our allies.

Transforming management structures and decision-making is the second level and addresses the departmental requirement to decide and act more quickly in order to enhance defence, in addition to the need to use improved information systems to make timely and accurate decisions. The challenge with this goal is to manage the increasing amount of information made available to commanders, and to establish whether digital information is useful at all levels of the force structure.

Finally, the CDS asserts that transforming our force structure should allow the CF to replace mass with precision and lethality. Achieving this goal will allow smaller, quicker forces that are at least as lethal as their predecessors.

As a closing comment, the CDS says “we will not pursue a transformation agenda by “tinkering” at the margins in new capabilities without reducing or eliminating those that are no longer relevant”. The four priorities for the CF as directed by the CDS are: development of people, modernizing our force structure, enhancing relationships (with

civilian agencies, other government departments and the USA), and delivering on operations.¹³

A review of the section on modernizing the structure shows priorities as follows:

- Command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR).
- Joint combat capability and interoperability
- Rapid reaction and deployability
- Research, development and experimentation.

The elaboration on joint capability and interoperability is not instructive, however.

Unfortunately the strategic-level direction on this issue is replete with elementary definitions and contains nearly every known buzzword related to joint and combined operations. The section on joint operations begins with an elementary definition of “joint” and ends with the following:

Joint and combined thinking in a networked environment enables new warfighting behaviours. To fully exploit these capabilities in an information-rich, networked environment, however, we will need new capabilities and faster information, networking and decision-making processes that capitalize on new technologies to make tactical units more effective. If the defining feature of the industrial age was linear, sequential, vertical thinking, the defining feature of the information age is networked, longitudinal, horizontal thinking.¹⁴

The reader is left none the wiser as to the CF approach to joint and combined operations.

CF Concept of Operations for Expeditionary operations. A review of the record of discussion from a DCDS-led seminar in February 2003 shows that senior leadership has recognized the essential nature of the Canadian Forces relationship with US Forces.

¹³ Department of National Defence, *A Time For Transformation, Annual Report of the Chief of the Defence Staff 2002-2003*, Ottawa, p. II-IV.

¹⁴ *A Time For Transformation*, p. 22-23.

At the operational level the CF will not need a comprehensive ability – except for limited domestic situations – because the Canadian military will normally participate in international operations as a contributing part of a coalition. Internationally, the comparatively small size of the three Canadian services results in relatively few situations where they will operate together as an independent joint force and, as such, the emphasis will be on interoperability with US Forces.¹⁵

This document is exploratory rather than directive in nature, and generates a compendium of questions for future consideration. In summary, CF strategic documents to date have amounted to little more than regurgitations of RMA and transformation concepts drawn from other nations' work. They do not prescribe actions or concrete outcomes for the future. The time to stop asking questions about the future must surely be coming to an end, and the time for direction is long overdue. When will the CF begin to emerge from this uncertainty? In contrast, the environments of the CF, the Navy and, in particular the Army, have moved further down the transformation path in their thinking.

Canadian Army. “Our goal is a medium weight Army that is strategically relevant, tactically decisive, agile, lethal, survivable and operates from a base of knowledge” (CLS May 02).

The Army, in its work on preparing doctrine for the interim army, has situated its role with respect to joint and coalition operations. It is clear that there is no expectation of participation in a Canadian-led joint force, other than in domestic operations, and that the US is expected to lead a coalition operation:

The Army is designed to win tactical battles. It is not designed to lead campaigns or command a land component in other than domestic operations and possibly selected peace support of humanitarian operations. As such, the Army will most

¹⁵ Department of National Defence, CF Concept of Operations for Expeditionary operations – Issues and questions resulting from the DCDS Strategic retreat, 11-13 February 2003, p. 1.

likely contribute forces of either brigade or battle group size to the land component of a coalition – most likely led by the US, or perhaps NATO.¹⁶

This statement implies a requirement for Canadian Forces to be conversant with US Joint doctrine, rather than a need for Canadian joint doctrine. The Army appears to be clearer on the nature of joint and combined operations than the CF, as does the Navy.

Canadian Navy. The Navy recognizes the likelihood of its participation in coalition operations in its maritime strategy “Leadmark”:

Medium global force projection navies such as Canada...are unlikely ever to need to generate the mass of forces (short of total war) that would make procurement of these capabilities [*referring to sea-basing and amphibious operations*] practical. Rather, they should aim to ensure that their forces are able to integrate effectively in combined operations as part of a coalition.¹⁷

The undertaking of joint operations by Canada in international scenarios simply does not apply, as Canada does not possess the size and variety of combat capability at the operational level in order to conduct a joint operation.

Canadian Air Force. At the time of writing, the Air Force had not published its plan for transformation or for the future development of its force. A review of the draft plan, however, provides some insight into the issues under consideration. The Air Force vision for 2025 is “an Air Force of excellence and competent professionals, equipped, trained and ready to prevail in combat, with the reach and power to contribute to national and international security.”¹⁸ While not dwelling on an analysis of the future security environment and the implications for the Air Force, the document does recognize “From an Air Force perspective combined (and to a lesser degree joint) operations will remain a

¹⁶ Department of National Defence, *The Interim Army, A Force Employment Discussion Paper*, Directorate of Army Doctrine, 2 September 2003, p. 4.

¹⁷ Department of National Defence. “Leadmark: The Navy’s Strategy 2020” p. 105.

¹⁸ Department of National Defence, *Air Force Strategy 2025, The Air Force Implementation Strategy*, draft dated 22 January 2003: p. i

significant force employment consideration for operations offshore as part of a coalition operation.” The document does speak of transformation, but only in terms of rationalizing current activities, aircraft fleets and budgets without acknowledging the possibility of new ways of operating or different airframe-based capabilities.¹⁹

It can be concluded that the Canadian Forces, having announced the intent to transform, has yet to follow up with prescriptive direction that is results-oriented. Apparently not content to discuss principles and processes, the three environments are moving ahead with their own plans. The consequences of this dynamic may well be twofold: first an outcome that is not coherent and does not represent a logical balance between the three environments, and, second, it may well result in protectionism rather than transformation. Transformation can be seen as a threat to individual environments’ status quo, and the resultant tendency could well be toward protection of the existing, inadequate resource envelope. ECS plans reviewed above demonstrate no intent to abandon existing capabilities in favour of new ones: clear evidence of protecting the status quo.

The fundamental issue seems to be what should the CF be required to do, and what does it need to look like in order to carry out its tasks? The environments are moving to protect and develop their interests, yet the highest level of the CF is not openly engaged. An attempt to establish some of the environmental influences that will impact on the future of the CF follows including a review of the CF operating environment, and the deductions drawn will be drawn from that environment. A review of Canada’s conduct of international and domestic operations will be used as the lens through which the influences on transformation will be identified.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 6.

Domestic Operations. In the event of a need for a joint response to domestic disaster relief, assistance to civil authorities, or aid to civil power operations, current contingency plans call for the command and control element to be based on the Land Force Area (LFA) HQs, and for these HQ to be augmented with the necessary Air or Naval staff depending on the nature and scope of the operation. Providing there is a sufficient body of joint knowledge amongst CF officers, this is a valid approach given the frequency and limited complexity of these operations. An investment in any permanent joint C2 element as a contingency for domestic operations, would, under current conditions, be unwarranted.

Canada and the USA have recently established a joint planning group in order to help prevent terrorist attacks and improve contingency planning to respond to future attacks or natural disasters. Where these discussions will lead, and what will be required in terms of military plans and structures is unknown, but it would be reasonable to assume that a coalition or alliance arrangement will emerge. This will, in turn, call for either a permanent integrated C2 element or an ad-hoc contingency arrangement to be activated in the event of a crisis. Regardless, it is safe to say there will be a high degree of cooperation required between the two nations.

US plans on Ballistic Missile Defence are of vital interest to Canada. While the extent of Canada's participation is unknown as of yet, it is certain that the issue will receive the due consideration of the government, and that whether or not Canada participates, defence of our territory is a continental issue of equal importance to both nations.

International Operations. According to Allan English, a lack of serious study of the operational art has led to the creation of some serious myths within the CF. One of these is the fascination with the idea of “joint”. He says

One of those myths, that has become a mantra to some in the CF today, is that “everything is joint”. This expression is used by them to justify their belief that every activity of the CF does, from operations to planning to Professional Military Education (PME), must be considered in a joint context. For example, it has been argued that all doctrine needs to be joint or that all PME activities must be taught in a joint environment. This philosophy runs counter to the joint philosophy of the US forces... The American view of jointness is that each service brings its capabilities to the joint planning table and that the necessary capabilities are then selected and integrated into the joint plan. Therefore, only at the operational level and above does real jointness exist in the sense of integrating and synchronizing service (or environment in Canadian parlance) capabilities.²⁰

What is meant by “joint operations”? True joint operations are conducted by two or more services (environments in Canadian terminology) in cooperation with each other. Normally this would involve units or formations of at least two services working together under a single operational (versus administrative) headquarters to achieve a common military objective. Canadian maritime air, and tactical aviation work routinely with the Navy and the Army respectively. These are not joint operations, however, as these Air forces are considered operationally integral to the Navy and Army, and it is only by virtue of their administrative organizational structure (peculiar to Canada) that they belong to the Air Force. The integrated and unified Canadian Forces may be a joint formation, but it was not conceived with the intent of conducting joint operations. The purpose of integration was to achieve efficiencies by using centralized (or integrated) logistic and administrative support for the entire CF, as opposed to individual systems for each of the environments. The Army, Navy and Air Force, while all belonging to the

²⁰ English, Allan, *The Operational Art: Theory, Practice, and Implications for the future.* (Toronto, Canadian Forces College) 15 March 2003, p. 50.

same “service” in regulations, are distinct operational elements, just as they are in other nations. The integrated nature of the CF has nothing to do with operational capability; rather it is a structural, legal and administrative construct. The NDHQ joint staff does not conduct joint operations, rather it is the staff itself that is joint, and whose function it is to plan future CF operations, and to exercise control over ongoing operations through the National Commander, or Joint Task Force (JTF) Commander.

A Canadian JTF is not, in fact a joint task force. Canadian JTFs have always been forces made up several units of the CF, often from different environments, but do not work together under a single operational commander. Typically, they are seconded to a coalition commander under operational control (OPCON) for the execution of an operational mission. The Canadian JTF commander is there to oversee issues of national responsibility and to exercise national command. In cases where a Canadian has commanded an international formation in peace operations, once again these have not been Canadian Joint forces but rather coalitions with Canadian commanders. In these cases, the national command element has remained part of the Canadian force makeup, independent of the nationality of the Force Commander. As can be seen from this review, the CF uses the term “joint” fairly freely, but rarely meaning joint in its operational sense.

Canadian operations are typically “national” rather than joint. This involves the deployment of one or more environmental elements on an operation; these elements do not normally operate under a Canadian-led coalition to achieve the mission. This reality implies the requirement to be able to operate in a joint environment but not to command or to control joint operations. This subtle difference between the joint and national

approaches is a factor to take into account in transforming the CF. There is a continuing requirement to conduct national support activities such as logistics, medical, national command and intelligence. Logistic support is currently provided for through a national support element which provides supplies required from national or theatre sources. National command elements oversee Canadian operations from the national perspective but are not involved in the development or execution of the tactical plan.

These comments are consistent with the Army and the Navy approaches, as we have seen. Unless Canada is to conduct operations at the operational level, there is no real opportunity to conduct true joint operations. Participation at the operational level requires an ability to work “joint” according to the doctrine of the lead nation. What then, is the utility of writing Canadian Joint Doctrine, and maintaining such structures as the Joint Operations Group, mandated with “converting the Joint Force Headquarters to a deployable C4I organization capable of national command and logistic support at the operational level of war”?²¹ Since Canada’s track record on operations is one of a contributor to coalitions and alliances, it should focus its efforts on maintaining a high level of interoperability with the US Armed Forces instead of investing Force Development efforts in homogeneous Canadian joint capabilities.

Military Capabilities – The Imperatives

General. What therefore should be the Canadian approach to transformation in the context of coalition, joint operations and domestic operations? Given the strong likelihood of a US coalition lead, and Canada’s stated policy of interoperability with US Forces, it makes eminent sense for Canadian Forces to focus on the generation of forces

²¹ Department of National Defence. “Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020.” June 1999. p.10.

that can be “plugged in” to US and coalition formation, as opposed to fielding operational formations such as divisions, or joint task forces. Canada’s recent track record of deployment at or below the unit level calls into question the need for formations beyond this level in the forces structure. Further, since Canada has a record of contributing to both warfighting missions and peace support operations, it is important that capabilities be fielded that will be salient in war and peace support and humanitarian operations. This will provide the government with the widest range of options for the use of military force.

Robertson and Maloney caution against structuring the CF solely for operations in an alliance/coalition context, suggesting that it will lose the ability to operate across the spectrum of operations. Some critics of the RMA and latterly, transformation, suggest that efforts in this area concentrate exclusively on the high end of military operations to the detriment of low intensity conflict. To align with US forces is to ignore the low end of the spectrum, where, in fact, most of Canada’s operations have been conducted in recent years. Because Canada’s interest frequently lies in contributing to international peace and security, the capability to operate across the spectrum of conflict must be maintained.²² Further, to follow the trend in government spending, cashing in on a peace dividend and with the general sense in Canada of “a nation of peacekeepers”, it would be only too easy to take the path of “low intensity”. The point is, however, that both paths must be maintained in order to meet Canadian Defence policy. A close alignment with the US does not preclude Canada’s pursuit of international peace and security missions,

²² Robertson, Scot; Maloney, Sean M. “The Revolution in Military Affairs: Possible Implications for Canada.” International Journal. (v. 54 (3) Summer 1999). p. 451.

providing the ability to contribute to both high intensity operations as the most dangerous, and mid or low intensity operations as the most likely, is maintained.²³

Capt(N) Dewar supports this view but warns of added difficulties with interoperability with a transformed US Forces.

The solution for the CF will be in developing a force structure that reflects suitable capability for the most likely forms of employment, those that reflect the types operations in which the CF have been engaged since 1990, while retaining the ability to integrate in a meaningful way with the RMA forces of the United States in confronting the most dangerous contingencies.²⁴

...if the United States implements the technological and organizational changes envisaged by the RMA, that is, postures itself militarily to meet the most dangerous case, there will be a need to re-examine how interoperability should be maintained.²⁵

Some have proposed “niche” capabilities for the CF. The National Post quite rightly points out that “...even if we bring our defence spending up to an acceptable level, we cannot hope to have a military that is world-class in all areas...” It goes on to suggest niche capabilities as the solution. These could include specializing in certain aspects of air operations such as transport or naval interceptions in areas where coalitions are operating.²⁶ In response to this suggestion, MGen (ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie asserts

The credit earned and received on international military operations is directly proportional to the potential risk involved. As the only country in the world to have fought in three wars, Gulf One, Serbia/Kosovo, and Afghanistan with zero, yes zero casualties, let alone fatalities to enemy fire, one can understand why we were rarely mentioned as participants in the first two.

²³ Sloan, Elinor C. Chapter 8, “Canada and the RMA.” The Revolution in Military Affairs: Implications for Canada and NATO. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002. p. 140.

²⁴ Dewar, JS, Revolution in Military Affairs: the Divergence between the Most Dangerous and the Most Likely. p. 9.

²⁵ Dewar, p. 6.

²⁶ National Post, *A Role For our Military*, Editorial 24 September 2003.

He further suggests that adoption of niche roles would quickly lead decision makers to seek out the safest and cheapest of roles, that would eventually lead to the job being done by paramilitary forces or contractors with commercial grade equipment.²⁷ British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon reinforced this concept on a recent visit to Canada: “Canada has been a staunch ally on a number of operations...most recently losing two soldiers in Afghanistan. We recognize that Canada has put its people at risk. We admire Canada’s government for taking those decisions because they’re playing an important part in a number of operations around the world.”²⁸ If Canada wants international recognition for the military contribution it makes, it must be seen as accepting its share of the risk to the lives of its own citizens.

What then are the influences that will govern the transformation of the CF for the future? Clearly, interoperability with the US Forces, and preservation of a salient combat capability are central to the future.

Interoperability

Seamless integration with a parent US coalition HQ is the most essential element of capability to support transformation in the joint and combined arena. The ability to communicate effectively and quickly during operations is essential to the stated objectives of agility and speed. Command and Control is the conduit to agile employment of combat capability. Managing information in an information-rich environment is critical to allowing commanders to command and not to spend inordinate amounts of time deciphering the situational awareness or intelligence pictures. Worse, to

²⁷ National Post, Lewis MacKenzie, “No” to niche roles for our military, 2 October, 2003. The statement that Canada has not sustained casualties to enemy action ceased to be true on Oct 2003 when two Canadian soldiers deployed on Op Athena in Kabul, Afghanistan, were killed when their vehicle struck a mine which was thought to have been placed specifically to target Canadian troops.

not have access to this information due to incompatibility of equipments is to become a burden rather than an asset. Doctrinally, the Navy already enjoys a high level of interoperability with the US Navy as demonstrated on recent exercises and operations. Interoperability does not call up a requirement to “buy American” as some would suggest. Interoperability can be achieved through existing standardization programmes in ABCA and NATO, and through improved cooperation between Canadian and American equipment procurement staff.

Perhaps the most difficult to achieve, yet the most important element of interoperability is the ability of CF officers and NCMs to operate effectively as they interact with coalition command and staff. This is particularly critical for those in command positions and those integrated into coalition staff positions during operations. The skills they require include being conversant with US joint and service doctrine, procedures and tactics from the tactical to the operational level of war. These are skills that cannot be learned during the lead up to an operation – as predeployment training. They must be fostered over time, as part of the professional military education of Canadian officers in particular, and practised regularly with US forces on exercises, attendance at their staff colleges and through study of their doctrine at our staff colleges. The CF Operational Force Employment Concept calls for an expansion of the “human network” with exchange and liaison officers with US forces so as to provide “critical insights into how our national security partners and closest allies perceive and think about our common challenges and the complex environments in which we operate”.²⁹

²⁸ Ottawa Citizen, Canada a Staunch Ally: British official, October 9, 2003. p. A4.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 5.

ABCA and NATO have long sponsored programmes of standardization in areas ranging from equipment requirements to doctrine to procedures and tactics. This represents a substantial body of work, which fortunately, is common to Canada and the USA in both instances. This existing work should not be put aside; rather it should be mined aggressively for all the value it can offer.

Preserve Combat Capability

Simple interoperability, although essential, is not sufficient for participation in US-led coalitions. The forces themselves must be capable and able to operate at the same level as their US counterparts. “If Canada wants operational influence within a coalition/alliance and if it wants to derive the consequent political influence benefits that come from it, its forces must be capable of participating in a salient way. If Canada refuses to confront the RMA, it will be unable to protect Canadian forces deployed in a coalition/alliance situation from misuse. Those forces will not be a meaningful part of the effort to achieve Canadian national security objectives. Deploying minimal symbolic Canadian forces for “optics” is not enough: Canada’s allies see through this kind of behaviour.”³⁰ In addition to quality, Canada must make a contribution of sufficient quantity to be seen as “doing its share”.³¹ The Army is committed to providing a brigade; however unit – level commitments have been the norm and are considered to be more reasonable. Likewise an air squadron and commitments of individual ships, up to a task group are considered minimum necessary in quantitative terms. Anything below these levels is simply absorbed into other units and can become more of a burden than a benefit. When assessing equipment requirements the temptation is to draw up a shopping

³⁰ Ibid, p. 451.

list for systems in service with US Forces. Canada cannot afford to be drawn into this trap – we must take a disciplined approach to fielding equipments that: bring substantial capability to the battlefield, have utility in Peace Support operations and are interoperable with US systems. Close integration with the US does not imply dependency for all basic needs. A competent defence partner must be able to take care of itself rather than impose a burden. Areas such as logistic and medical support (at least at the first line) must accompany a Canadian contingent. Further, the Canadian contingent should be capable of deploying itself into theatre, and extracting itself when the time comes. Whether this ability is “owned and operated” by the Canadian Forces in the form of the Afloat Logistic Sealift Capability or Strategic Airlift is dependent on the degree of readiness required and the cost of a sufficient number of these platforms when weighed against other needs.

Several authors have introduced the idea of saliency as a theme for CF structuring and training.³² In some nations saliency is achieved through quantity of forces and capability, in addition to the innate abilities of the soldiers, sailors and airmen themselves.

“Because of Canada’s comparative size and traditional volunteer approach, Canada has eschewed numerical saliency. Consequently, during the early part of the cold war, Canada deployed forces with several attributes that provided saliency. These included a very high level of training and of professional competence, equipment that was equal to or better than other members of the alliances, and, most importantly, employment in highly visible operational situations.”³³

This approach should continue for the Canadian Forces. Certainly there is no intention to reduce the quality of the individual service members – indeed a concerted

³¹ Sloan, p. 142.

³² See for example: Robertson and Maloney, Mitchell

effort to improve Professional Military Education and training opportunities is underway and will no doubt keep Canada at the forefront of producing quality service members. Paradoxically, one of the most important areas of education must be in Joint operations. Because Canada does not conduct joint operations herself, a “joint literate” corps of officers is the price of admission for a salient contribution to a US Joint Force. Without it, Canada will be assured of marginal roles within a joint force.

Conclusion

Throughout the modern armed forces of the world, joint operations are seen as the model for modern warfare. Certainly lessons of the RMA teach us that technology and a new way of thinking will allow better conduct of joint operations, including higher lethality, greater agility and a heretofore unthinkable degree of information and intelligence available to commanders. As a middle power, with a highly educated population and economically strong, the challenge is how best to respond to the RMA and any subsequent transformation to a new type of force. For their own reasons, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States all maintain the capability to conduct joint operations unilaterally. Canada, on the other hand, has neither a history nor a requirement for the conduct of joint international operations. Instead, its recent history and future lies in the contribution of forces to coalitions, whether in peace or war in an international context. There is, therefore, no need for Canada to develop joint doctrine or to maintain units for Command and control of joint forces.

³³ Ibid, p. 449.

Instead, Canada's future force should be developed along the themes of interoperability and the preservation of combat capability. By supporting interoperability with US Forces, Canada will have the option of inserting elements of its modest but capable armed forces in US formations, thereby contributing to these missions in a joint context. An ability to operate in a joint environment is essential to this approach and this can be achieved through study of doctrine and interoperability of equipment as well as procedures. Combat capable armed forces are one of the keys to international influence. Despite Canada's recent track record of peace support operations, combat capability must be maintained, and Canada must do her share of the dangerous work in the world. Using this approach, she will be in a position to satisfy the demands of the White Paper: to defend Canada, to contribute to the defence of North America and to contribute to international peace and security. There is no shame in this approach: Canada is in a unique position in the world and has the opportunity to exert influence beyond its size by choosing to contribute, or not, to US-led operations.

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