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ALL IN: THE NORTH-WEST REBELLION AND THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO OPERATIONS

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Master of Defence Studies

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**ALL IN: THE NORTH-WEST REBELLION AND THE COMPREHENSIVE
APPROACH TO OPERATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The last twenty years have seen a drastic increase in the participation of the Canadian Forces in limited operations in failed and failing states. Concurrently, the need to conduct these operations using a so-called comprehensive approach, inclusive and alongside other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, has increased dramatically. Employing a comprehensive approach to operations offers a number of benefits and challenges that must be understood by strategic and operational leaders in order to conduct operations successfully in the contemporary operating environment.

The suppression of the North-West Rebellion by the Dominion of Canada in 1885 is an example of the successful employment of the comprehensive approach to operations. Although it was not articulated as such at the time, the Dominion Government employed a military force, inter-governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations to achieve the strategic goal of re-establishing federal authority over the North-West Territory and creating a safe and secure environment for further settlement and exploitation of the Canadian West. The analysis of the use of the comprehensive approach during the North-West Rebellion provides a number of valuable lessons for modern strategic and operational leaders.

1885 heard the last war drum sound in Canada. It was the last, desperate chance for Indians and Métis to impose their own terms on the settlement of the West. It was also, in a dozen practical ways, our 'first war.' Apart from the valued services of a few British officers, the 1885 campaign was the first military undertaking in which Canadians were virtually on their own.

-Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum*

INTRODUCTION

For most of the twentieth century, military doctrine focussed on large scale conventional operations. In such an atmosphere, little attention was given to anything other than the military arm during the pursuit of national strategic aims. During the Cold War, any attempt to employ a comprehensive approach to operations was eclipsed due to the predominance of nuclear and conventional military threats as well as intense parochialism amongst bureaucracies.¹ The end of the Cold War brought a dramatically different security environment where the comprehensive approach became significantly more appropriate.

After the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War, the military focus of western nations centered on limited military engagements in failed and failing states. Western leaders realized that an approach to operations that was solely focussed on the military aspect was incompatible with the changing nature of the operations themselves. Consequently, a greater emphasis was placed on the collaboration between defence forces and other organizations to achieve strategic goals. This so-called comprehensive approach to operations became an effective means of achieving national

¹ Peter Gizewski, "Discovering the comprehensive approach" in *Security Operations in the 21st Century: Canadian Perspectives on the comprehensive approach*. (Kingston: School of Policy Studies and McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 17.

strategic aims in an era of limited engagements. In modern operations, no single agency will be able to achieve strategic goals alone.²

What is the comprehensive approach?

The concept of the comprehensive approach goes by many names. The term comprehensive approach is used broadly in NATO, but only obliquely in Canadian Forces doctrine where the terms Whole-of-Government (WOG) and 3D (Defence, Diplomacy and Development) are more prominent. One can be excused some confusion due to the sheer number of acronyms associated with the concept including DIME (Diplomacy, Information, Military and Economic) and PMESII (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure) to name but two. While terminology might vary, the common essence of the comprehensive approach is collaboration.

Two definitions will serve to illustrate the common theme. Canadian Forces Joint Publication 01 *Canadian Military Doctrine* defines the parameters of the whole-of-government approach as follows:

A WoG approach needs to be incorporated into the emerging thought on the comprehensive approach to operations which includes actors beyond government, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations (IOs), local populations, and others who conduct activities and pursue objectives that have a bearing on the overall outcome.³

This definition illustrates that the focus of Canadian doctrine, as it pertains to the Whole of Government approach, is on interaction between actors, in particular the engagement of organizations outside of the Canadian government. Likewise, British theorists Julian

² *Ibid*, 13.

³ Department of National Defence, B-GJ-005-000/FP-001, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 01 Canadian Military Doctrine*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2011), 2-11.

Lindley-French, Paul Cornish and Andrew Rathmell of the Royal Institute of International Affairs' Chatham House described the comprehensive approach as:

the cross-governmental generation and application of security, governance and development services, expertise, structures and resources over time and distance in partnership with host nations, host regions, allied and partner governments and partner institutions, both governmental and non-governmental.⁴

These two definitions illustrate how differing terms – Whole of Government and comprehensive approach – have a universal foundation. The common theme that defines the essence of the comprehensive approach is one of collaboration, partnership, and a unified approach to national strategic goals that incorporates military, other-governmental departments, public and private institutions to overcome security challenges.⁵

A Guidebook for Success?

If the comprehensive approach is to be the predominant framework for future operations during low-intensity security engagements, are there examples from the past that will guide modern leaders in its pursuit? Lamentably, due to the relatively recent articulation of the concept, conventional wisdom is that the comprehensive approach is a new concept.⁶ It was only in 2004 that the concept began to be expressed amongst North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations under the original title of *Concerted Planning and Action*.⁷ Likewise, the actual incorporation of the term “comprehensive approach” into NATO doctrine did not occur until the Lisbon Summit Declaration of 20

⁴ Julian Lindley-French, Paul Cornish and Andrew Rathmell. *Operationalizing the comprehensive approach*. (London: Chatham House, 2010), 2.

⁵ Gizewski, “Discovering the Comprehensive Approach”..., 14.

⁶ Kim Richard Nossal. “Introduction: Security Operations and the comprehensive approach” in *Security Operations in the 21st Century: Canadian Perspectives on the comprehensive approach*. (Kingston: School of Policy Studies and McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 2.

⁷ Friis Arne Petersen and Hans Binnendijk, “The Comprehensive Approach Initiative: Future Options for NATO.” In *Defense Horizons*, no. 58, September 2007, 1.

November, 2010.⁸ The recent articulation of the term, coupled with the dramatically increased importance of the comprehensive approach since the end of the Cold War, produced the erroneous conclusion that it is a new concept. Even in a recent publication from the Queens University School of Policy Studies, *Security Operations in the 21st Century: Canadian Perspectives on the Comprehensive Approach*, strategic analyst Peter Gizewski goes only as far back as the 1940s in a historical review of comprehensive approach operations, although he does suggest that the principles could be centuries old.⁹ While the concept may seem recent, the use of a comprehensive approach to operations has a precedent over a century old.

Western Canada in 1885 was a vast swath of millions of acres of arable land, ripe for settling, and immense reserves of natural resources primed for exploitation. Scattered amongst this bonanza were tens of thousands of Métis and aboriginal inhabitants who, over a number of years, were maligned, mistreated and marginalized by the government. In 1885, the Métis and several aboriginal bands rose up in rebellion against the Dominion Government. The North-West Rebellion blocked Canadian expansion westward and jeopardized the Dominion of Canada's exploitation of the region's vast resources.

The military forces at the government's disposal were insufficient to address the situation alone. So insignificant were the Canadian military forces, they had no organic means of moving or sustaining any substantially-sized force capable of suppressing the

⁸ *Lisbon Summit Declaration*, NATO Webpage located at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm?selectedLocale=en last accessed. 30 Jan 13.

⁹ Gizewski, "Discovering the Comprehensive Approach"..., 14.

rebellion.¹⁰ It would take more than men in uniforms to solve this dilemma; success in the North-West required a comprehensive approach to operations that incorporated military, inter-agency and private resources to achieve the Dominion Government's strategic goal.

The question of how the Dominion Government employed a comprehensive approach during the North-West Rebellion is one of some detail. From a purely theoretical standpoint, there are a number of doctrine manuals that assist in understanding the nuances of the comprehensive approach, including the aforementioned *CFJP 01 Canadian Military Doctrine* and the United Kingdom's Joint Doctrine Note 4/05: *The Comprehensive Approach*. For a non-official and more academic approach, the Queen's Centre for International Relations has produced the aforementioned *Security Operations in the 21st Century: Canadian Perspectives on the comprehensive approach* which provides a number of valuable chapters that offer insight into the benefits and challenges associated with security forces, government agencies and private organizations in the contemporary operating environment.

The North-West campaign has been well-covered by historians and is rich in primary sources, published and unpublished. The *Report on the Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories, and Matters in Connection Therewith* produced by the Department of Militia and Defence in 1886 is a necessary starting point. It includes numerous primary source accounts of combat, sustainment and operational manoeuvre, providing illustrative examples of the benefits derived from the inter-agency collaboration pursued by the Dominion Government, and the challenges that went along

¹⁰ Bob Beal and Rod Macleod. *Prairie Fire: The 1885 North-West Rebellion* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1984), 171.

with it. Firsthand accounts of the campaign are extant as well. The memoirs of the commanding general, Major-General Frederick Middleton found in *Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories of Canada 1885* gives an eyewitness account of the operation from the man who conducted it. Additionally, one of Middleton's subordinates who raised a local militia column of scouts, Major Charles Boulton, produced *I fought Riel: a military memoir* which provides another firsthand account of the military action. Furthermore, R.C. Macleod has edited a collection of three firsthand accounts of the rebellion in *Reminisces of a Bungle by One of the Bunglers, and Two Other Northwest Rebellion Diaries* that illustrate the conduct of the campaign from the point of view of military participants. Supplementing these eyewitness memoirs, Desmond Morton and Reginald H. Roy have compiled an impressive collection of telegrams exchanged during the rebellion in *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885* that are particularly useful to understanding the interaction between the strategic leadership in Ottawa, and the operational leadership of General Middleton in the North-West Territories.

Secondary sources are numerous. George F.G. Stanley's masterful *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions*, although somewhat dated, is strikingly well researched and provides a profound survey of the conflict. Desmond Morton's *The Last War Drum: The North-West Campaign of 1885* provides an excellent tactical review of the campaign while Bob Beal and Rod Macleod's *Prairie Fire: The 1885 North-West Rebellion* surveys of the conflict and its societal and cultural dimensions.

Collaboration was the key to success for the federal government in 1885. During the North-West Rebellion the Dominion Government employed a comprehensive

approach to achieve the national strategic goal of re-establishing sovereignty over the North-West Territories. This comprehensive approach consisted of three elements – military, other-governmental agencies and private institutions. The military line of operations was the critical element of the strategy and the Department of the Militia served as the primary agency within the overall comprehensive approach. The military element consisted of the North-West Field Force under the command of British Major-General Frederick Middleton, reinforced with elements the North-West Mounted Police. The North-West Field Force was used to physically attack the insurgents' operational center of gravity which was the insurgent forces themselves. In support of the military line of operations, inter-agency and other-governmental actors were employed as supporting agencies and were leveraged to isolate and help defeat the rebellion. Additionally, non-governmental organizations, in particular the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway, provided critical logistical and sustainment support to the North-West Field Force, while religious leaders in the North-West pre-empted the garnering of popular support by the Métis rebels by convincing their Métis and Indian parishioners to refrain from joining the rebellion. Through the employment of a military force, critically enabled by public and private agencies, the Dominion Government successfully employed a comprehensive approach to operations during the North-West Rebellion in order to achieve its strategic goal of re-establishing sovereignty over the North-West Territories.

CHAPTER 1 – THE STRATEGIC SITUATION

In order to appreciate how the Dominion Government successfully employed a comprehensive approach to operations during the rebellion, it is critical to understand the strategic situation at the time. Specifically, how was the strategic goal defined?¹¹ A number of grievances caused disenchanted Métis and several of the aboriginal tribes of the North-West Territories, to rise up in arms against the Dominion Government. The negative impact on western settlement and resource extraction caused by the uprising resulted in the national strategic goal of re-establishing federal sovereignty over the North-West Territories. Before determining the source of the strategic end-state, however, one must understand the underlying cause of the rebellion. The roots of the North-West Rebellion started at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers fifteen years previous.

Beginnings: Métis Discontent.

The fundamental grievance against the government of Canada was the delay in recognizing the rights which the half-breeds possessed as squatters on unoccupied lands.

-H.H. Langton, *The Commission of 1885 to the North-West Territories*

During the early hours of 24 August, 1870 the rain soaked British regulars of Colonel Garnet Wolseley's Red River Expedition disembarked their canoes, formed up in line of battle and marched on Fort Garry, in present-day Winnipeg, where Louis Riel had headquartered his Provisional Government during the Red River Resistance. Expecting a fight, Wolseley and his men were discouraged to find Riel and his compatriots had fled. A

¹¹ Jack Kem, *Campaign Planning: Tools of the Trade*. (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2006), 14.

participant in the expedition, Captain G.L. Huyshe observed: “the troops marched in... and took possession of Fort Garry after a bloodless victory. The Union Jack was hoisted, a royal salute fired, and three cheers given for the Queen.”¹² In as much as the arrival of Wolessely’s expedition symbolized the end of the Red River Rebellion, it also represented the first in a chain of events that would eventually lead to a far more bloody confrontation in the North-West fifteen years later.

The Manitoba Act, which created the Province of Manitoba, received royal assent on 12 May 1870. It was ratified by Louis Riel and the Provisional Government in Fort Garry shortly after, and so Manitoba entered confederation upon the annexation of the North-West Territories in July 1870. The absorption of the vast lands of the North-West by the Dominion of Canada, and the improvement in railway transportation both in the United States and Canada resulted in a dramatic increase in settlers arriving in Western Canada.¹³ For example, in 1870 the population of Winnipeg stood at 250. It grew to 1,467 in 1872 and to 5,000 in 1875.¹⁴ The influx of settlers from the East created pressure on the Métis as land and the supply of buffalo for the hunt decreased proportionately. This pressure eventually pushed the Métis further west into the North-West Territories (present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta) where they re-established themselves,

¹² G.L. Huyshe, *The Red River Expedition*. (Woolwich: The Naval & Military Press, 1871), 186.

¹³ The Canadian transcontinental railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway, was not completed until 1885, although sections were continuously upgraded throughout the 1870s and early 1880s. Railway came much faster in the United States due to a larger population and terrain that was much more accommodating than the Precambrian Shield north of the Great Lakes. Consequently, immigration to the Canadian prairies came via the Dawson road from Lake of the Woods and via Minnesota.

¹⁴ Frank Howard Schofield, *The Story of Manitoba Volume 1*. (Winnipeg: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913), 318.

predominantly along the North Saskatchewan River.¹⁵ Shortly thereafter, settlers from the East also arrived in the North-West in search of farmland and a new beginning.

As in 1870, the confluence of cultures produced tension. Repeating the acts that sparked the Red River Rebellion, Dominion surveyors arrived in the West to stake out settlements in the familiar square lots, in many cases disregarding the long, narrow, river-fronting lots of the Métis.¹⁶ The new Dominion surveys meant that many of the Métis of the North-West, who had arrived as early as 1872, found that the homesteads they possessed were illegitimate. Metis settlers were expected to adopt the township plots as laid out by the Dominion Surveyors.¹⁷

Even though there was a Legislative Council that acted as the *de jure* government of the North-West Territories, it was essentially powerless and the *de facto* political authority emanated from Ottawa rather than Battleford, the original capital of the North-West Territories. This weak regional authority throughout the North-West Territory gave rise to the acceptance amongst the Métis that the North-West was their patrimony. To the Metis, the establishment of the eastern scheme upon them was simply another example of Canadian subjugation.¹⁸ Consequently, the rebellion was focussed against the distant, absentee authority of Ottawa rather than the powerless local government.¹⁹

Ottawa ignored the appeals of the Métis in the North-West. Several letters of complaint were sent to Ottawa from the Métis including, in March 1883, a list of fourteen

¹⁵ George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1936), 181.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 188.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 251.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 251.

¹⁹ Morris Zaslow. *The Opening of the Canadian North*. (Toronto: McClelland and Steward Limited, 1971), 52.

demands focusing on an increase in French representation in government, a land grant to the Métis settlers, allowance of the Métis river-lot system and support of local schools.²⁰

The Dominion Government turned a deaf ear to their requests. Frustrated, the Métis turned to Louis Riel, at the time in exile in Montana, to help them in their struggle against the Dominion Government.²¹

Although initially reticent to return, Riel eventually acquiesced and returned to the North-West where he took up the cause of the Métis. He followed a similar strategy as that which he pursued in Fort Garry fifteen years previous, pleading with Ottawa on behalf of the Métis and eventually resorting to the creation of a Provisional Government and the issuance of a Bill of Rights. The Revolutionary Bill of Rights, passed on 8 March 1885 in St. Laurent, in present-day Saskatchewan, clearly articulated the grievances of the Métis. The key demands focused on equality of land grants, the creation of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan with functioning legislatures for each, and improved provisions for aboriginals.²²

Despite the veracity of their claims, Ottawa continued to disregard the grievances of the Métis. As their grievances were ignored, the Métis rose once again to fight for their cultural and economic survival. Violence erupted on 26 March 1885 when a patrol of North-West Mounted Police encountered a group of Métis outside Duck Lake. By the end of the confrontation, eleven North-West Mounted Police members and two Métis were

²⁰ Thomas Flanagan. *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 10.

²¹ Charles Pelham Mulvaney, *The North-West Rebellion of 1885 Including a History of the Indian Tribes of North-Western Canada*. (Toronto: A.H. Hovey & Co., 1885), 24.

²² Inter.Canada: The Canadian Constitution and Unity Group. "The Métis List of Rights," last accessed 4 March 2013, <http://www3.sympatico.ca/rd.fournier/inter.canada/doc/metis1.htm>. The Metis List of Rights can be found at Annex A.

dead. The defeat of the North-West Mounted Police crystallized the Métis into action, and served as an impetus to spur several aboriginal tribes into open revolt.

Aboriginal Discontent

The Métis were not the only faction in the North-West Territory with grievances towards the Dominion Government. The various tribes of the Plains Indians had many causes for redress with the government in Ottawa that held the potential to fuel rebellion. Like the Métis, aboriginals in the North-West were slowly pushed out of the land they had come to identify as their own, and thence on to reservations. Once on the reservations, their problems were exacerbated by the arrival of drought and a general economic down-turn that resulted in a reduction of government issued rations.²³ The natives found themselves confined, surrounded and starving. They were forced to adopt a sedentary, reservation-based lifestyle that was wholly at odds with their culture of a carefree, migratory existence. Like the Métis, their supplications to Ottawa fell on deaf ears. This was a time when the aboriginals were in desperate need of assistance but the government's policy of financial retrenchment only worsened the situation.²⁴ A key element of this problem lay in the Superintendent of Indian Affairs whose parsimonious approach forced the Indian bands to choose between starvation and violence.²⁵ The perceived injustice of their suffering, coupled with the desperation that grew out of several years of drought, starvation and budgetary constraints, combined to form a

²³ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 285.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 269.

²⁵ J.E. Rea, "The Hudson's Bay Company and the North-West Rebellion" in *The Beaver*. Summer 1982, 43.

combustible combination of potential violence that was of immense concern to the federal authorities.

While a Métis uprising was of obvious concern to the federal government, the true threat to Ottawa was in the potential for a broad Indian uprising. Riel recognized that the Métis were unable to carry the day on their own, and desperately sought Indian support through propaganda spread by Métis envoys amongst the native bands. His strategy was sound and was reinforced by sheer numbers. The eventual number of Métis insurgents in the North-West numbered only about 1,000 souls,²⁶ while the Indian population of the North-West numbered 26,000 in 1884.²⁷ The violent potential housed within that large number was the key threat to Canadian sovereignty in the North-West, the pre-emption of which was one of the critical objectives of the comprehensive approach pursued by the Dominion Government.

Despite Riel's efforts and Ottawa's fears, only a small number of natives actually took arms against the federal government. While the violence of Duck Lake served as a focal point for the natives that did turn to violence, the majority of Indian bands opted not to join the rebellion, despite urgings from the Métis.²⁸ Only Cree belonging to the bands led by Big Bear and Poundmaker were spurred to action by the eruption of violence.²⁹ Despite this significant contribution to the Métis numbers, Riel was unable to capitalize on the development.

²⁶ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 353.

²⁷ Desmond Morton. *The Last War Drum: The North-West Campaign of 1885*. (Toronto: A.M Hakkert, Ltd, 1972), 16.

²⁸ Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser. *Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion*. (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 1997), 240.

²⁹ Richard Gwyn. *Nation Maker, Sir John A. Macdonald: His Life, Our Times Volume Two: 1867-1891*. (Toronto: Random House of Canada Limited, 2011), 450.

The bands of Big Bear and Poundmaker were not a decisive element in the rebellion. Rather than producing a broad, coordinated rebellion against the central authority, what resulted was a disparate, uncoordinated and thus ineffective effort to resolve native and Métis grievances. The Indian bands were independent and non-cohesive. Consequently, they were unable to coordinate amongst themselves or even maintain a sustained military effort against a disciplined, modern military force.³⁰ Despite the emotion that launched the two bands into violence, the practicalities of the situation caused them to be unsuccessful. At the time, however, this situation was unknown to the leaders in Ottawa. What truly concerned the political leaders in Ottawa was not the numbers that the rebels could muster but the potential for a general Indian uprising.³¹ Removal of this threat became among the government's operational goals.

The National Strategic Aim.

Both Dominion Governments of the era [Conservative and Liberal] were immovably committed to the same objective: the older civilization of Indian and half breed, with its hunting, fur-trading and freighting economy, should be thrust aside, the Northwest should be settled as quickly as possible and stamped with the social, cultural, and political institutions of Canada.

-Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North*

The political goal, and hence strategic end-state, of the Dominion Government was re-establishment of federal authority in the North-West Territories. Achievement of this goal would allow creation of a safe and secure environment to facilitate continued settlement and economic development of the region. Interest in acquiring the West was a

³⁰ Stanely, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 348.

³¹ *Ibid*, 353.

central political goal since Confederation.³² The North-West territories represented possible economic opportunities that the young Dominion was eager to exploit. It would not be going too far to say that the West was seen as critical to the successful growth of Canada as a nation.³³ From the moment that Rupert's Land came under the authority of the Canadian government in 1870, the focus of westward expansion was to ensure that the vast lands therein were available for settlement and exploitation.³⁴ The Métis uprising, along with the danger of a general aboriginal uprising in concert with it, became threats to continued settlement and further economic development of the region. For this reason, the strategic end-state during the uprising was to re-establish federal authority and remove the menace to continued development of the region. It was to these ends that the Dominion Government employed the comprehensive approach of which the primary element was the North-West Field Force.

³² Morton, *The Last War Drum...*, 5.

³³ Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 111.

³⁴ Zaslow, *The Opening...*, 14. Rupert's Land was the name given to the vast territories of what are now Northern Ontario, Western Canada and the North-West Territories.

CHAPTER 2 – THE MILITARY LINE OF OPERATIONS

Military power is applied as appropriate to achieve national objectives. Military power is normally used only as a means of last resort when other instruments of national power have failed, or are at risk of failing, to protect national interests.

- Canadian Forces Joint Publication 01

Within the comprehensive approach, the role of the military is extremely important. Of course its importance relative to other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations is dependent on each unique situation. In the case of insurrection, the military has a very important security role within the comprehensive approach framework. During the North-West Rebellion, the military element of the government's comprehensive approach was the critical factor in attacking Riel's operational center of gravity – identified as the rebel force. All other lines of operation served to facilitate the military force's ability to do so. As the critical element of the comprehensive approach, the North-West Field Force achieved several operational objectives: it removed the military threat; it deterred Indian bands from joining the rebellion; and it demonstrated Canadian resolve and sovereignty. In order to understand how the military force was able to achieve these operational goals, and more importantly the need for support from public and private agencies, it is imperative to understand the nature and composition of the Canadian military at the outbreak of hostilities.

The Canadian Military in 1885

The last regular British garrisons left Canada in 1871. Coincidentally, the last army elements to leave Canada were those who participated in the Wolseley Expedition against Riel in 1870. Soon after they arrived in Fort Garry, they were shipped back to

Ontario and thence to the United Kingdom. The departure of the British regulars left Canada with control over its own defence matters and a voluntary militia system.

In 1885, the Canadian Permanent Militia was small by most standards of the day. It consisted of only three units of Permanent Militia – two artillery batteries and an infantry school. These regular elements of Permanent Militia formed the nucleus of what was a large Non-permanent Militia that made up the bulk of the Canadian military.³⁵ The vast majority of these forces were centered in Southern Ontario and Quebec. The only military forces close to the area of operations were two militia units in Winnipeg: the Winnipeg Field Battery and the 90th Battalion of Infantry (later to become the Royal Winnipeg Rifles). Even more worrisome was the state of the headquarters of the Canadian military. Anyone familiar with the robust manning of the present-day National Defence Headquarters would likely be shocked to learn that in 1885 the headquarters' predecessor consisted of only four regular officers, one of whom was an aide-de-camp!³⁶ There was no commissariat, no medical service and no transport to support the expedition; the Chief Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was responsible to coordinate the materiel support of the force, observed that "all military supply organization seems to be miserably defective."³⁷ Being in such a state, the military required robust support from other agencies to be effective in the field. Despite these challenges, the government was eventually able to assemble an 8,000 man military expedition to meet the uprising.

³⁵ Walter Hildebrandt, "Ending the Resistance: The Northwest Campaign of 1885 and the Fall of Batoche" in *Journal of the West*. October 1993, 39.

³⁶ J.E. Rea, "The Hudson's Bay Company...", 45.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 49-50.

The North-West Field Force

The task force assigned to suppress the rebellion was named the North-West Field Force. It was a motley assortment of permanent force militia, non-Permanent Militia, local militias raised by retired officers, and scout organizations. Indicative of the patchwork nature of the force, one of the elements was even formed by the Dominion Land Surveyors who were unable to complete their assigned surveys due to the uprising! Middleton's force was divided into three flying columns, and a base for transport and supplies was established on the Canadian Pacific Railway line.³⁸ The three flying columns consisted of the Middleton Column under Major-General Middleton based out of Fort Qu'appelle; the Otter Column under Lieutenant-Colonel Otter based out of Swift Current; and the Strange Column under retired Major-General Thomas Bland Strange which marched out of Calgary. In addition, a collection of detachments were scattered about the North-West to secure lines of communication.³⁹ It was with this conglomeration that Middleton was to exercise the military arm of the comprehensive approach.

The Campaign – Operational Design

In 1885 clear strategic direction from the government to the operational commander was far from clear-cut. No precise statement of a strategic end-state was forthcoming from either the Prime Minister or the Minister of Militia and Defence. In his memoirs, Major-General Frederick Middleton recalled that:

³⁸ *Report on the Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories, and Matters in Connection Therewith.* (Ottawa: Department of Militia and Defence, 1886), overleaf.

³⁹ *Ibid*, overleaf. A complete list of the units of the North-West Field Force and their locations during the rebellion can be found at Annex B.

I was informed by the Minister of Militia and Defence... that the French half breeds under Riel... were causing such trouble in the North-West Territories as would probably necessitate military action, and that the Premier, Sir J. Macdonald, wished me to start as soon as possible for Winnipeg. Mr. Caron gave me *no specific directions*, but I understood that on arrival in Manitoba I was to be governed by circumstances, and if necessary take the field against the insurgents in the North-West [emphasis added].⁴⁰

Middleton's recollection indicates that his strategic guidance was broad, flexible and left to his own interpretation. On 26 March 1885, Caron telegraphed Middleton: "let me know your opinion of what should be composition of force for present emergency."⁴¹ Middleton thus had incredible latitude from which to develop his operational plan. He identified the insurgents' fighting force as Riel's operational center of gravity which protected the strategic center of gravity – Riel's legitimacy. Without a capable armed force, Riel and the Provisional Government could not seriously contest Canadian sovereignty over the Territories. Middleton's campaign plan was designed to make the destruction of that force the key operational objective of his military effort.

In order to attack Riel's identified center of gravity, Middleton used his three flying columns as independent corps' to move against the Métis and aboriginal rebels. Middleton described his initial concept of operations in his memoirs of the rebellion (see figure 1.1 for a campaign map):

To move the principal column under my own command direct to Clarke's Crossing.... A second column under Lieutenant-Colonel Otter, ...to meet me there from Swift Current ... the two columns would then move, one on each side of the river, and attack Batoche... After the capture, one column, if necessary, might march on to Prince Albert, the other pushing

⁴⁰ Frederick Middleton, *Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories of Canada, 1885 by General Sir Fred Middleton*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), 3-4.

⁴¹ Telegram from A. P. Caron to Major-General Middleton sent 26 March 1885, *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885*. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1972), 10.

on to Battleford, whither I proposed sending at once a reinforcement of mounted police under Lieutenant-Colonel Herchmer, from Regina, the mounted police having been put under my command. A third column I proposed forming at Calgary, giving the command to Major-General Strange, late R.A., and commanding the Canadian Militia, who had placed his services at the disposal of the Government. This column after over-awing the Indians in the district, would move on to Edmonton, and proceed down the North Saskatchewan to Fort Pitt, where I hoped to meet them after having disposed of Poundmaker and his band. We should then together follow up, and dispose of Big Bear, which would pretty well break the neck of the rebellion.⁴²

Middleton's concept of

operations reveals two key

points. Firstly, that he

identified the rebellion's centre

of gravity as the Métis forces

holed up at Riel's headquarters

in Batoche; and that he

intended to use the deterrent

force of the military to over-awe

the aboriginals in order to pre-

empt a general uprising. Despite some changes to the plan, the execution of the campaign

was remarkably faithful to the original intent.

The Campaign - Execution

The campaign illustrates the diligence to which the North-West Field Force was committed to engaging and defeating the insurgent forces. The constant theme that

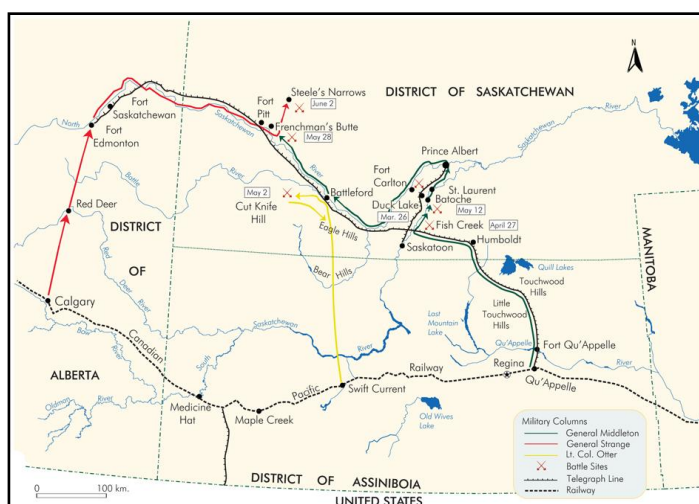


Figure 1.1 - Map of North-West Field Force Movements.

Source: The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan "The North-West Resistance."

⁴² Middleton, *Suppression...*, 8.

pervaded all levels of command was one of unswerving focus on destruction of the Metis or Indian forces.

Middleton arrived in the town of Qu'appelle via the Canadian Pacific Railway on 27 March, where a vanguard company of the 90th Battalion from Winnipeg had been waiting for several days. Middleton moved north to Fort Qu'appelle, about twenty miles north of the town, while forces from eastern Canada continued to trickle in to the area of operations. These forces would either follow Middleton and link up with him later, or proceed to Swift Current or Calgary to join one of the other columns. Middleton moved north out of Fort Qu'appelle on 6 April and on 8 April, Otter arrived in Swift Current. Rather than proceed along the left bank of the South Saskatchewan River as was the original plan, however, continuous appeals for relief from the besieged Battleford, where 500 civilians had taken refuge from Poundmaker's Crees in a fort measuring ninety by one-hundred feet, compelled Middleton to re-task the Otter column, on 11 April, to proceed directly to Battleford. Without a force for the left bank of the South Saskatchewan, Middleton split his column on either side of the river and continued to move northward. Three days later, Middleton's column made its first contact with the Métis at the Battle of Fish Creek. The same day, Otter and his column arrived in Battleford, where they found that Poundmaker and his Crees had disappeared. Otter then took some latitude in interpreting Middleton's order to remain in Battleford and moved out to try to bring Poundmaker to battle. On 3 May, Otter marched about half of his force out to Cut Knife Hill where he encountered a large native force which surrounded him and sent him ignominiously back to Battleford. Otter tried to justify his poor showing by

arguing it was a reconnaissance in force, but few failed to see it for the debacle that it was.⁴³

After Fish Creek, Middleton concentrated his forces on the east bank of the South Saskatchewan, and with the support of an auxiliary gunship in the form of the river steamboat *Northcote*, he continued north towards Batoche where the Métis, with virtually no ammunition, had dug in to a prepared defensive position. Between 9 and 12 May the Middleton Column fought through the Métis headquarters and eventually forced the Métis to disperse. Several days later, on 15 May, some of Middleton's scouts stumbled upon, and subsequently captured, Louis Riel. After capturing Batoche, Middleton moved North-West, and linked-up with Otter's force at Battleford.

While in many ways Middleton and Otter were moving as two complementary forces, the third flying column under General Thomas Strange was far more independent in nature. A mixture of permanent and non-Permanent Militia, North-West Mounted Police, hired scouts, and even native guides, the Strange Column – or the Alberta Field Force – formed the extreme left of the North-West Field Force and conducted its operations in an area that was relatively heavily populated with aboriginals. The Alberta Field Force left Calgary in three waves between 20 and 28 April, 1885, with the whole arriving in Edmonton by 10 May. Strange then moved east and on 25 May came across Fort Pitt where he found evidence of the massacre that had occurred there in early April.

While Strange manoeuvred to the west, Middleton moved towards Battleford where he and Otter rejoined forces. The surrender of Louis Riel and the defeat of the main body of the Metis insurgents at Batoche eliminated the Metis' source of strength.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 109.

Without the ability to coalesce the Metis and Indian rebels in coordinated fashion, the insurgency was essentially defeated. On 25 May, Middleton accepted Poundmaker's surrender in Battleford.

Middleton and Otter moved west. Strange continued operations and eventually managed to bring Big Bear to battle on 28 May at Frenchman's Butte. Although a tenuous victory for Strange, Big Bear was able to escape. Strange then dispatched a small force of North-West Mounted Police northward, under the indefatigable Sam Steele, where they encountered Big Bear and his Crees near Loon Lake on 3 June. Steele's troops were victorious in the engagement, but Big Bear himself managed to escape, again. Middleton and Otter were now in the same general vicinity, and the remainder of June was spent in pursuit of Big Bear. Finally, on 26 June Big Bear's band broke up, and preparations began for the North-West Field Force to begin to redeploy to the East. The task of mopping up was relegated to the North-West Mounted Police. On 2 July Big Bear surrendered to the North-West Mounted Police in Fort Carlton, and on 3 July the last of the North-West Field Force elements boarded river steamers to begin the long voyage home.

The Strategic Effect of the North-West Field Force

The North-West Field Force was a strategic tool that achieved three operational objectives during the North-West Rebellion. It was the decisive tool to attack the rebel's operational center of gravity, it deterred the spread of rebellion amongst the Indian bands of the region, and it expressed Canadian capabilities and sovereignty. Each of these operational goals contributed to achieving the government's strategic end-state.

The most blatant way in which the North-West Field Force was used to achieve the strategic end-state was to eliminate the insurgents' fighting force. In very basic terms, upon the outbreak of violence in spring 1885 the security situation was altered to the point in which the pursuit of economic exploitation of the West was no longer feasible. The emergence of an armed insurgency pre-empted the continued settlement of the West and jeopardized further use of the natural resources for the economic benefit of Canada. Consequently, the physical removal of this threat through military force would re-establish federal authority in the region. Middleton's concept of operations, in particular for the Middleton and Otter columns, aimed to strike directly at the Métis headquarters, followed by a move against Big Bear which, Middleton reckoned, would "pretty well break the neck of the rebellion."⁴⁴

The execution of the campaign demonstrated that Middleton's entire plan was designed around the concept of eliminating the insurgent forces. Whether it was directing his column against the Métis headquarters, ordering Otter to relieve Battleford or tasking Strange to move against the Indians in Alberta, he used the military tool to remove the cause of the dispute. Once the rebel forces were eliminated, the insurgents had no operational base to coalesce and orient the rebellion. The successful achievement of this operational goal was a key element in achieving the Dominion's strategic end-state. Furthermore, the military force had two other supporting operational objectives: to deter Indian bands, and to express Canadian resolve and capabilities.

In addition to being used as a definitive force to remove the insurgents' fighting element, the North-West Field Force was used to deter Indian bands from joining the

⁴⁴ Middleton, *Suppression...*, 8.

rebellion. The greatest fear in Ottawa was that the Métis uprising would act as a focal point to spur an even wider uprising amongst the native bands of the North-West. The Métis achieved limited success in this regard by spurring several bands under Big Bear and Poundmaker to rise up in rebellion against the Dominion Government. To prevent an even larger uprising, the North-West Field Force was employed to dissuade the native bands from joining the fray. The government had attempted to achieve this effect early on, around mid- March, when Commissioner Irvine and all the North-West Mounted Police in Regina were ordered to march direct to Prince Albert in an attempt to deter the anticipated Indian uprising.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the arrival of the North-West Mounted Police reinforcements was too late to stop the clash at Duck Lake, and as the fires of rebellion spread over the North-West, a greater deterrent force was required.

This requirement was addressed to a certain degree by the very rapid deployment of military units to the North-West. The first elements, drawn from the 90th Battalion in Winnipeg, arrived at Qu'Appelle even before the fight between the Métis and North-West Mounted Police at Duck Lake. Prompt arrival of the vanguard of the North-West Field Force served to deter the Indian bands of the Qu'appelle valley from joining the rebellion.⁴⁶ While the arrival of the military in Qu'Appelle served to douse the rebellious flame in the Qu'Appelle valley, trouble brewed further west.

The need for a deterrent effect was most apparent in Alberta where the greatest concentration of native reserves was located. In this region, the native population

⁴⁵ Donald J. Klancher, *The North-West Mounted Police and the North-West Rebellion*. (Kamloops: Goss Publishing, 1999), 18

⁴⁶ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 353.

numbered over 5,000.⁴⁷ While this number may not seem like a large population in modern terms, contemporarily the natives outnumbered the white settlers in the region who only numbered a little over 1,000 settlers. Given this disparity, and the sparse number of security force elements in Southern Alberta, it is easy to see where the concern originated. Nobody knew what the intent of the aboriginal population was. The potential of a general uprising forced a number of settlers to abandon their farmsteads and take refuge in larger towns where local militias and home guards were organized.⁴⁸ Action was needed to convince the native bands that joining the rebellion would be folly.

That demonstration of resolve was the Alberta Field Force. Middleton's campaign plan envisioned using Strange's column to "[overawe] the Indians in the District."⁴⁹ Strange accomplished his task in a number of ways. He dispatched an advance party of a respected Methodist minister, John MacDougall, and four Stoney Indians who preceded the force and "conferred with the Indians, informing them that a large number of armed white men would soon enter the country to punish those who were creating disturbances."⁵⁰ Additionally, Strange realized that the red uniform of the North-West Mounted Police left an impression on the Indians. When the rifle green uniform of the Montreal soldiers of the 65th Battalion failed to impress the Crees of the Battle River area, he ensured that the red-coated members of the Winnipeg Light Infantry marched through the reserve "with bayonets fixed and rifles at the slope, with band playing and

⁴⁷ Jack Dunn, *The Alberta Field Force of 1885*. (Calgary: Jack Dunn, 1994), 21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 24.

⁴⁹ Middleton, *Suppression...*, 8.

⁵⁰ Dunn, *The Alberta Field Force*, 80.

every weapon exposed to view...while the Indians gathered in the woods by the roadside and gazed wonderingly at the spectacle.”⁵¹

The North-West Field Force deterred the Indian bands of the North-West from rising up in unison with the Métis. In fact, deployment of the North-West Field Force deterrent effect was so convincing, it settled the rebellion before it even had a chance of really beginning.⁵² The presence of the force removed the possibility of the natives joining the Métis rebellion and, consequently, removed the possibility of a Métis victory. While the force was used to deter the natives, it was likewise used to placate the great fear of an Indian uprising, and to demonstrate to both a domestic and foreign audience the Canadian government’s ability to handle its own affairs.

One cannot underestimate the fear that gripped settlers from Winnipeg to the Rockies upon the commencement of the North-West Rebellion. It had been, after all, only nine years since Custer’s disaster at Little Big Horn at the hands of natives.⁵³ The military prowess of the Indians was vastly over-estimated. The Indians generally fought individually, followed orders as it suited them, and lacked the robust command and control structure necessary to combat a disciplined military force.⁵⁴ These weaknesses were unknown to the Western settler who maintained an abiding fear of the Indian warriors. Consequently a great clamour went up from the West for military support. The arrival of the North-West Field Force demonstrated to settlers of the North-West the

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 92.

⁵² Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 353-354.

⁵³ Morton, *The Last War Drum...*, 24.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 24.

sovereignty of the federal government over the region, and the government's capability to exert that authority.

In addition to reassuring western settlers, the North-West Field Force also demonstrated to domestic and international audiences that Canada had come of age. Canada was not yet twenty years old when the rebellion broke out, and the last British soldiers had returned to Britain in 1871. Canada was a young country coming into its own and looking to establish itself. The North-West Field Force became a means to accomplish this road to nationhood. It was one of a number of symbolic elements that served to demonstrate Canada's maturity. The force was used in conjunction with another critical symbol of nationhood, namely the Canadian Pacific Railway. The strategic transport of troops from Eastern Canada to the area of operations was accomplished by rail over the almost completed Canadian Pacific Railway transcontinental line. Knowing that gaps existed in the line and hoping to help expedite the force to the west, the general manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Will Van Horne suggested that horses and guns should be transported via the United States. Caron flatly refused. His response was that he "Wished [the North-West Field Force] to travel day and night... I want to show what the Canadian Militia can do."⁵⁵ Certainly, it achieved this aim. While the use of the Canadian Pacific Railway demonstrated Canadian commitment to bringing the West into the country, the use of the North-West Field Force represented the federal government's ability to exercise sovereignty throughout the length and breadth of the dominion.⁵⁶ The North-West Field Force confirmed to Canadians and the world that the Dominion was

⁵⁵ Morton, *The Last War Drum...*, 44.

⁵⁶ Dunn, *The Alberta Field Force...*, 123.

serious about bringing the West into Canada, and it had the power to exercise sovereignty over it.

Conclusion

The North-West Field Force was the critical element of the government's comprehensive approach. It was the only component that had the capability to strike the insurgents' base of power. Removing the military threat in the region was one of the force's operational goals. Additionally, it deterred a general Indian uprising which would have made attaining the strategic end-state nearly impossible, and it demonstrated Canadian resolve to terrified western settlers, and Canadian sovereignty to the rest of the world. As important as it was to achieving the strategic end-state, the North-West Field Force lacked the resources to do so alone. Other-governmental agencies played a critical supporting role that enabled the force to achieve its operational goals by providing crucial logistical and sustainment support to keep the force marching and fighting.

CHAPTER 3 – OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

Inclusion of other governmental agencies in the comprehensive approach is critical to producing the most efficient response to a security crisis.⁵⁷ This integrated approach can include a variety of government partners such as defence, police, foreign affairs, and international development, to name but a few. In fact, it is this very type of integration amongst various elements of the government that initially defined the emerging concept of the comprehensive approach.⁵⁸ The North-West Rebellion was no different. The military force was the critical element of the government's comprehensive approach, but it was unable to achieve the strategic goal alone. The Dominion Government employed a number of other-governmental agencies in support of the military line of operations, in order to achieve its strategic goal. The departments and agencies employed included the North-West Mounted Police, the Indian Department and diplomatic efforts by the Governor General.

The North-West Mounted Police.

The North-West Mounted Police were a critical component of the national strategy to defeat the North-West uprising. During the latter half of the 19th century, the vast swaths of the North-West Territories were an ideal environment for lawlessness, cross-border trading in contraband, and murderous raids by natives and American whiskey traders. Two agents sent to reconnoitre the North-West for the government in the 1870s, Lieutenant W.F. Butler and Colonel Robertson Ross, both strongly advocated for creation of some sort of armed body to enforce federal authority throughout the North-

⁵⁷ Megan Thompson, Angela Febbraro, and Anne-Renee Blais, "Interagency Training for the Canadian Comprehensive Mission in Afghanistan" in *Security Operations...*, 203.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 203.

West. This suggestion was echoed by the North-West Council in 1873 and led to the creation of a corps of mounted riflemen known as the North-West Mounted Police.⁵⁹

Creation of the North-West Mounted Police represented Canada's commitment to bring the West fully into Confederation, legally and peacefully. With time, the familiar red serge of the North-West Mounted Police became the symbol of Canadian authority in the North-West.⁶⁰

The role of the North-West Mounted Police in the North-West Rebellion was one of singular importance. Being the guardians of peace, order and good government in the Canadian West, they were the first on the scene, and possessed a critical understanding of the operational environment, including the terrain and the mindsets of the settlers, Indians and the Métis. As they lived and worked amongst the peoples of the frontier, the North-West Mounted Police were the first to raise the spectre of a possible uprising emerging from the growing dissatisfaction amongst by the Métis and the Indians toward their treatment by the government. In July 1884, eight months before the beginning of the rebellion, North-West Mounted Police Superintendent L.N.F. Crozier reported the following prescient observation to Ottawa:

nothing but seeing a large force in the country will prevent very serious trouble before long. If matters are allowed to drift, or if it is felt that no greater, or only a slight increase to the force at present here is made, I am strongly of the opinion we shall have the Manitoba difficulties of 1869 re-enacted with the addition of the Indian population as allies to the half-breeds.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 191.

⁶⁰ Morton, *The Last War Drum...*, 3.

⁶¹ Klancher, *The North-West Mounted Police ...*, 16.

Unfortunately, reinforcements in any great number would not arrive until the appearance of the North-West Field Force and well after the tragedy of Duck Lake.

Although in retrospect, the signs of the foreboding rebellion were apparent for some time, evidenced by Crozier's report. It was the clash at Duck Lake that truly galvanized the federal government into action. The North-West Mounted Police felt the brunt of the initial onslaught – defeated at Duck Lake – as well as the ignominy of being forced to retreat into their forts due to lack of adequate forces to quell the rebellion themselves. It was the North-West Mounted Police, under Inspector Crozier, who had to make the agonizing decision to abandon indefensible Fort Carlton and withdraw to Prince Albert.⁶² Likewise, Inspector Dickens had to suffer the humiliation of surrendering Fort Pitt to Big Bear when his civilian charges decided against enduring a prolonged siege and preferred to withdraw to Battleford.⁶³ When government action was underway to suppress the rebellion, the North-West Mounted Police would be folded into the military force.

Although a police force, albeit with a far more paramilitary role than today's police forces, the North-West Mounted Police were put under the command and control of General Middleton and became an integral element of the military line of operations. In a telegraph to the Minister of Militia on 23 March 1885, the Prime Minister stated: "I have instructed the Commissioner of Mounted Police, that in all military operations, when acting in concert with the Militia he is to take orders from General Middleton."⁶⁴

⁶² Beal, *et al*, *Prairie Fire...*, 160.

⁶³ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 343.

⁶⁴ Telegraph from John A. Macdonald to Adolphe Caron, 23 March 1885, *Telegrams...*, 3.

Additionally, Macdonald prompted Caron to remind Middleton about the niche capabilities he foresaw the North-West Mounted Police providing:

remind General Middleton that the Commissioner and officers are magistrates and well acquainted with the character of the Half-breeds and Indians and must understand the best mode of dealing with them and inducing them to lay down their arms and submit to legal authority. I have no doubt that the two forces will act satisfactorily together.⁶⁵

Thus, the North-West Mounted Police were placed under the operational command of General Middleton, essentially as an adjunct of the military force. The Mounted Police provided badly needed familiarity with the operational environment and the adversary. In due course, the North-West Mounted Police would play an important role in the suppression of the rebellion, although their inclusion into the ranks of the North-West Field Force was by no means smooth. Differences in organizational culture created friction between the Mounted Police and General Middleton. Despite Macdonald's confidence that the two forces would work together seamlessly, the relationship was less than ideal.

The partnership of differing governmental agencies may have the potential to produce very useful collaborations, but it is not without its challenges. A number of obstacles to efficient interaction between government departments exist, including conflicting political agendas, different objectives, contradictory hierarchical structures and dissimilar communication systems.⁶⁶ Inclusion of the North-West Mounted Police into the North-West Field Force suffered similar difficulties. Although the Mounted Police were under the operational command of General Middleton, they frequently

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁶ Thomspson *et al.*, "Interagency Training...", 204.

ignored his orders. For example, Commissioner Irvine, who was trapped in Prince Albert, flatly refused to leave the fort and link up with the advancing Middleton column for fear of ambush.⁶⁷ After receiving this message, Middleton decided to leave the Mounted Police forces at Prince Albert out of his planning for the attack on Batoche, thus limiting the size of his available force by ignoring what might have been a very useful resource for the final battle.⁶⁸ Additionally, upon receiving numerous reports that Battleford was besieged and likely to be attacked, Middleton, feeling the threat greatly overestimated, referred to the North-West Mounted Police commander at the fort as a “pessimist” and only reluctantly dispatched Colonel Herchmer of the North-West Mounted Police from Regina to relieve Battleford on 1 April.⁶⁹ It took another eleven days, and much prompting from his political superiors, to compel Middleton to order Otter and his column to proceed to Battleford.

Despite admonishments from the Prime Minister, via the Minister of Defence, Middleton held the North-West Mounted Police in low regard. While there was certainly wisdom in the decision to place the North-West Mounted Police under the operational command of Middleton to achieve unity of action, Middleton consistently demonstrated a lack of understanding as to the nature and best way to employ the Mounted Police, and occasionally displayed outright antipathy towards them.⁷⁰ Irvine’s refusal to comply with Middleton’s order, coupled with the panic he perceived in the Mounted Police in Battleford, produced in Middleton a disdain for the North-West Mounted Police’s

⁶⁷ Middleton, *Suppression...*, 29.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 29.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 15.

⁷⁰ Needler, *Suppression...*, xiv.

leadership. This contempt was evident in a telegraph he sent to the Minister of Militia concerning recommendations for a permanent military force for the North-West after the rebellion, wherein he recommended that the force should be organized with great care so that “men like [North-West Mounted Police Inspector] Morris and other could not find a place in it.”⁷¹ Middleton even went so far as to recommend that members of the North-West Mounted Police should be excluded from receiving the campaign medal as they were only doing their job!⁷² Unfortunately, Middleton’s low regard for the Mounted Police meant that an opportunity to leverage their strengths – familiarity with the region and its inhabitants – went begging in the Middleton column. Fortunately, Middleton’s opinion of the Mounted Police was not universal. General Strange held the Mounted Police in quite high regard and included two troops of them in his column.⁷³ Also amongst Strange’s force was Major Samuel Steele, seconded to the Militia from the North-West Mounted Police to command Strange’s scout force.⁷⁴ Strange used his Mounted Police extensively. They provided a valuable scout element that exploited their knowledge of the region to allow Strange to focus his force where it could best deter the Indian bands and rapidly pursue the fleeing members of Big Bear’s war party. Consequently, the Mounted Police proved to be a valuable force multiplier for the Alberta Field Force.

Employment of the North-West Mounted Police as part of the North-West Field Force illustrates both the benefits and hazards of interagency integration as part of a

⁷¹ Telegraph from General Middleton to Minister Caron dated 2 May 1885, *Telegrams...*, 230.

⁷² Klancher, *The North-West Mounted Police...*, 78.

⁷³ Dunn, *The Alberta Field Force...*, 62.

⁷⁴ Wayne F. Brown, *Steele’s Scouts: Samuel Benfield Steele and the North-West Rebellion*. (Surrey: Heritage House Publishing Company Ltd, 2001), 34.

comprehensive approach. The strengths of the North-West Mounted Police were exploited in a number of ways, in particular employment as scouts with a strong understanding of the operational environment. Conversely, the differences in nature between the North-West Mounted Police and the military gave rise to tension, conflict and in the case of General Middleton, outright contempt. Despite problems, the North-West Mounted Police represented a valuable strategic tool of the government.

The Indian Department and Local Government

Grievances remain the driving force behind any insurgency. It is grievances that provide the political objective of an insurgency which acts as a strategic guide for the insurgents. Mao Tse-tung noted the importance of a political goal when he observed that: “without a political goal, guerilla warfare must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation, and assistance cannot be gained.”⁷⁵ It is absolutely critical for any insurgent organization to anchor their insurgency on an ideological cause which will serve to elicit support from the population.⁷⁶ The cause, or grievance, is inherently political in nature and cannot be addressed by military power alone. The cause then becomes, paradoxically, both a critical capability - that is a primary ability – and a critical vulnerability – that is to say a critical capability that is vulnerable to attack.⁷⁷ In the case of the North-West Rebellion, the critical capability was the ability to motivate the Métis and Indians to rebel. If, however, the grievances were removed, the rebels could not hope to draw support from the

⁷⁵ Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerilla Warfare*, ed. And trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Minola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), 43.

⁷⁶ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. (Westport: Praeger Security International, 1964), 4, 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

population and thus removal of grievances became a critical vulnerability for the rebellious Métis and Indians. The Dominion Government recognized two key elements: firstly, that a military force would be required to defeat the insurgent's military force and secondly, that the intangible motivating force behind the rebellion could only be addressed through political means. To this end, the political grievance was addressed by the Indian Department and local government, both conveniently embodied in one man - Edgar Dewdney.

It was the local government of the North-West Territories that was the initial agency to try to subdue the insurrection before higher authority from Ottawa could intercede. The governance of the North-West Territories fell under the Department of the Interior, and in 1875 the North-West Territories Act created the North-West Council which separated the governance of the North-West Territories from the authority of the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba who, until that point, had represented Crown authority throughout the North-West.⁷⁸ The North-West Council, a council of six appointed and eight elected members, met infrequently. The council's lack of any meaningful authority formed an element of the grievances put forward by the Métis.⁷⁹ Infrequent meetings of the North-West Council actually allowed for more proactive engagement by the Lieutenant-Governor, Edgar Dewdney. Since the Council was not scheduled to meet until the next fall, Dewdney had much greater leeway to act unilaterally, and as such he could focus on isolating the spread of the rebellion by attempting to address some of the

⁷⁸ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada*, 191.

⁷⁹ Gordon E. Tolton, *Prairie Warships: River Navigation in the Northwest Rebellion*. (Vancouver: Heritage House, 2007), 70.

grievances of the aboriginals and Métis.⁸⁰ To do so, Dewdney offered a variety jobs to unemployed Métis and aboriginals such as Indian agents, and farm instructors.⁸¹

Additionally, Dewdney engaged well-respected former Indian Agent Cecil Denny. Denny subsequently negotiated with the Blood tribe and convinced them to resist the temptation to join the rebellion. His efforts were aided no doubt by doubling their food rations.⁸² Although his own intransigence over relentless adherence to ration allowances contributed to the Indian grievances, Dewdney tried to mitigate the political cause of the insurgency before it could lead to a general Indian uprising.

Dewdney could only do so much with the limited authority and resources he had in the region. In order to wrest the legitimacy of the insurgency from Riel and his adherents, even greater steps were needed to address the grievances espoused by the rebellion. Only far-away Ottawa possessed the authority to address the problems to any meaningful degree, and Prime Minister Macdonald was instrumental in this regard. Macdonald immediately contacted Dewdney, who, while Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories was also the Indian Commissioner of the Territories, and ordered him to adjust hastily the land claims of the Métis and establish a Commission to investigate those claims.⁸³ Having ignored most of the Métis' pleas for ten years, Macdonald's actions practically admitted his government's guilt by settling so hastily the Métis land claims.⁸⁴ Of course, the Métis were only one part of the problem. Once the rebellion had started, the government concluded that land claim adjustments to the Métis

⁸⁰ Dunn, *The Alberta Field Force...*, 59.

⁸¹ Tolton, *Prairie Warships...*, 70.

⁸² Dunn, *The Alberta Field Force...*, 24.

⁸³ Gwyn, *Nation Maker...*, 445.

⁸⁴ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 354.

were insufficient to prevent a wide spread Indian uprising. In addition to the hastily appointed land claims commission, the government also provided considerable largesse towards the Indian bands.

Despite the frugality that characterized Ottawa's pre-rebellion Indian policy, once the threat of a general uprising became timely, the coffers and ration storehouses opened rapidly. Extra rations were made available to the Blackfoot and several Cree bands.⁸⁵ As well, two train-car loads of flour and 15,000 pounds of bacon were ordered to Indian Head, near the present-day Manitoba/Saskatchewan border. Likewise, tea and tobacco were distributed, and any requests for cattle or oxen were agreed to. Such generosity was expensive, but well worth the cost to avoid a general Indian uprising.⁸⁶ The settling of claims and the increase in rations directly contributed to the removal of the grievances held by the Indian bands, and thus pre-empted the majority of them from joining the rebellion.

The Governor General and Diplomacy

The whole point of these efforts was to isolate the rebellion within the operating environment.⁸⁷ Surmounting the rebellion itself, two very unnerving possibilities could potentially interfere with attainment of the national strategic end-state: the spread of a general rising to Indian bands in the United States who would then be drawn north into participation in the rebellion; and possible exploitation of the situation by Fenians or

⁸⁵ Gwyn, *Nation Maker...*, 445.

⁸⁶ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 354.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 353.

other such anti-British, or even expansionist elements in the United States.⁸⁸

Consequently, international diplomacy played a role in the successful suppression of the uprising by avoiding the spread of the rebellion beyond the Territories and preventing any potential exploitation of the weakened state of Canadian authority in the West.

The border between Lake of the Woods and the Rockies is, even now, porous. In 1885 the border was ill-defined and unsettled, with little to no control over cross-border movement. In 1871, after the first Riel Rebellion in Winnipeg, a small Fenian gang attempted to take advantage of the situation and invaded southern Manitoba. Although the Governor of Manitoba at the time assembled a small force of volunteers to deal with the incursion, the invasion was short-lived and ended when a US Cavalry squadron arrested the army as it pillaged the Hudson Bay Company post north of the border, and then dragged it ingloriously back to the US for prosecution.⁸⁹ Additionally, during the 1870 Red River Rebellion, the attitude of the US towards Great Britain and Canada was frosty. Consequently, no Canadian military element was allowed to travel through the US, necessitating the laborious route undertaken by Wolesely.⁹⁰ At least in 1870 a vestige of British regular personnel were left in Canada to deter cross-border incursions. In 1885, Canada stood on its own. As a result, at the outbreak of the rebellion, diplomacy was entered into almost immediately in order to politically, and physically, isolate the rebellion in the North-West.

⁸⁸ The Fenians were a political movement in the United States advocating the independence of Ireland from Great Britain and who saw the Dominion of Canada as a convenient target upon which to release their republican vengeance. Several attempts at invasion met with little success in the 1860s and 70s.

⁸⁹ George F.G. Stanley, *Toil and Trouble: Military Expeditions to Red River*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989), 208-210.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 100.

Early on in the rebellion, the Governor-General contacted the British Minister to the US in order to take steps to shore up the southern flank. Fortunately, relations had improved substantially during the intervening years since the last Riel Rebellion and the US proved quite cooperative. To the Governor-General's request, the US Secretary of State replied:

I shall use every endeavour to obtain the earliest knowledge in relation to the revolt in Winnipeg (sic) and this Government will take all available precautions to prevent the dispatch of hostile expeditions, or of arms and munitions of war, from within the jurisdiction of the United State to aid the insurgents in the North-West provinces.⁹¹

In addition to this correspondence, the Secretary of State also informed the Canadian government, through the British Minister at Washington, that the Commanding General in Dakota had warned his troops manning the posts along the border to be particularly vigilant not to permit the movement of any Indians, munitions or weapons across the border.⁹² Diplomatically, the young Dominion was able to isolate the rebellion to a workable area of terrain, cut off from external reinforcement by pre-empting any attempt to take advantage of the situation by Indians, Fenians, or other, anti-British elements.

Conclusion

Inclusion of other-governmental agencies into the comprehensive approach was a crucial enabling element of the Dominion Government's strategy to re-establish sovereignty over the North-West. Ottawa pursued a collaborative, whole-of-government approach incorporating the North-West Mounted Police, the Indian Department, local government and even the Governor General to support the military force. The efforts of

⁹¹ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 353.

⁹² *Ibid*, 353.

each of these agencies increased the operational efficiency of the North-West Field Force. In the case of the Mounted Police, the force was provided a valuable tactical resource that was familiar with the operational environment. The spread of the rebellion to unmanageable levels was pre-empted by the removal of grievances amongst the Indians by the local government and Indian Department, while the Governor General's diplomacy ensured the rebellion could not be reinforced, or exploited, from the United States. The unified effort of the military force and other-governmental agencies towards a single goal illustrated the successful employment of the comprehensive approach. This collaborative approach was further augmented by private enterprise that provided a critical supporting role to the military force.

CHAPTER 4 – NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Non-governmental actors are critical to successful operations in modern conflict, particularly during counter-insurgency, stabilization and nation-building operations as they provide services which government agencies are unable to provide. Non-governmental agencies working in the operational environment are often motivated more by their own interests than purely patriotic reasons. The situation during the North-West Rebellion was no different. During the North-West Rebellion, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway provided critical logistical support to the military force, without which the North-West Field Force would not have been able to achieve its operational goals. Additionally, clergy in the North-West Territories helped to isolate the rebellion by both opposing Louis Riel and thus depriving the rebellion of recruits, and providing important tactical knowledge of the operational environment to the military force.

The Hudson's Bay Company

Our transport and stores, etc., were nearly all supplied through the Hudson Bay Company; Mr. Wrigley, their chief commissioner, being most indefatigable and successful in his endeavours to make things go smoothly.

-Major-General Frederick Middleton, *Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories*

As the commanding general himself attested, the role that the Hudson's Bay Company played in successful attainment of the national strategic goal cannot be overstated. Like the North-West Mounted Police, the Hudson's Bay Company had a footprint on the ground of the operational environment, and a wide network of established trading forts that would prove invaluable to supplying the military element.

Likewise, through its connection to the local steamship business, the Hudson's Bay Company was able to provide important operational-level transportation support to the North-West Field Force. Of course, all this support came with a price tag. Regardless of the profit made by the Hudson's Bay Company, the services it provided were critical to success and in many cases provided at nearly *pro bono* terms.

The Hudson's Bay Company had a long history in the North-West. For over two centuries, it exercised *de facto* government and administrative authority over Rupert's Land and what would become the North-West Territories until the that territory was transferred to the Dominion of Canada in 1870. Despite this transferral of lands, the Hudson's Bay Company remained active. At the time of the North-West Rebellion, it still controlled one-twentieth of all the land south of the North Saskatchewan River.⁹³

Its robust presence in the North-West meant that the company was a foundational element of the regional structure. The first Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, Adams George Archibald, was responsible for governing the North-West Territories and tried to establish a council for its governance representing "the three great interests of the West, the English, the French and the Hudson's Bay [Company]."⁹⁴ That Archibald saw these three elements as the pillars of Western society highlights the importance the Hudson's Bay Company had in both the social and political fabric of the region.

This involvement meant that the Hudson's Bay Company shared some degree of culpability in setting the conditions that led to eruption of the rebellion in the first place. The lack of an effective central authority in the North-West Territories was a key element

⁹³ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 189.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 191.

in the beginning of the rebellion. The diminishment of the Hudson's Bay Company's role as the legal government in the region since the transferral of the preponderance of its lands to Canada in 1870 left the North-West with no other established body to exercise authority.⁹⁵ The political vacuum created by waning of the Hudson's Bay Company's governing authority directly contributed to rising animosity that fuelled rebellion by failing to provide a responsible, legitimate government to represent the will and needs of the Métis and settlers of the North-West.

In addition to the social and political presence that the Hudson's Bay Company maintained in the North-West, it also exercised a substantial trade in the region and thus, for purely selfish reasons, had a vested economic interest in seeing the rebellion suppressed as quickly as possible to avoid having its commercial interests suffer.⁹⁶ The Hudson's Bay Company posts that remained scattered about the region were tempting targets for the Métis and rebellious natives. Hudson's Bay Company officials knew it was in their best interest to induce the military and police forces in the region to use their posts as staging areas and thus provide some degree of security for the company's assets.⁹⁷ An assessment conducted during the rebellion concluded that if the uprising managed to break the transportation network in the North-West, the fur trade upon which the Hudson's Bay Company so depended for its profits, could be interrupted for up to eighteen months resulting in the loss of revenue and profits.⁹⁸ Thus the impetus for the

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 190.

⁹⁶ J.E. Rea, "The Hudson's Bay Company and the North-West Rebellion" in *The Beaver*. Summer 1982, 44.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 46.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 46.

Hudson's Bay Company's faithful support to the Dominion Government lay more in its ledgers than in its patriotism.

Knowing the negative impact a rebellion in the North-West would have on its profits the Hudson's Bay Company put all of its resources at the disposal of the Dominion Government immediately after the Métis attack on Major Crozier's force at Duck Lake.⁹⁹ The proffered services were accepted readily by Minister Caron who knew that the military lacked sufficient sustainment and logistical capacity.¹⁰⁰ Upon his arrival in Winnipeg, Lieutenant Colonel Jackson, who was tasked to create a commissariat corps to support the North-West Field Force, found that the only resource he had at his disposal were the Hudson's Bay Company facilities. The company's possession of an unrivalled number of posts and forts throughout the region, as well as its robust transportation network, meant the Hudson's Bay Company had just the logistical capabilities required to support the military force – available at a price.¹⁰¹ The Hudson's Bay Company became the *de facto* Quarter Master Service for the North-West Field Force.

Although the Hudson's Bay Company certainly had its bottom-line in mind throughout the rebellion, excessive price gouging was not routine. Wrigley and his charges approached the supply of the North-West Field Force in a businesslike manner, but they recognized the need to expedite the suppression of the rebellion for their own interests, as a war zone would not be hospitable to commerce, and therefore set prices

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 44.

¹⁰⁰ Gordon E. Tolton, *Prairie Warships: River Navigation in the Northwest Rebellion*. (Vancouver: Heritage House, 2007), 78.

¹⁰¹ Morton, *The Last War Drum...*, 45.

accordingly.¹⁰² Certainly, a degree of self-preservation motivated Wrigley and his colleagues.

Despite the mutual interests and excellent support provided to the military by the Hudson's Bay Company, the relationship experienced some friction. Confusion arose during the rebellion as to where the proper delineation of responsibility between the military and company sustainment efforts should lie. Minister Caron's charge to the Hudson's Bay Company to supply the North-West Field Force, as well as the creation of a commissariat under Lieutenant-Colonel Jackson created two parallel, and in some cases overlapping, organizations that caused confusion. Where did one party's responsibility begin and the other's end? The situation was exacerbated when the question broadened from one of responsibility to one of liability. It was hard enough to determine who was responsible for the provision and movement of supply when faced with overlapping organizations, but even more problematic when consideration of liability arose for supplies such as food that may spoil if not properly cared for. An adequate structure was never arrived at.¹⁰³

As a civilian, and with clout as Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, Wrigley used his position to circumvent the chain of command when he saw fit. He did not allow mere staff officers interfere with the execution of his duties. When Jackson arrived in Winnipeg, he informed Wrigley that he expected all requisitions to come through him, and he refused to authorize some of Wrigley's purchases since he had not received direction from Ottawa. Wrigley went over his head directly to Caron to secure

¹⁰² Tolton, *Prairie Warships...*, 78.

¹⁰³ Rea, "The Hudson's Bay Company...", 47.

the authorization.¹⁰⁴ Of course such activity flew in the face of military protocol and subverted the chain of command that is so necessary for the efficient execution of military operations. Such challenges are frequent in the comprehensive approach paradigm when two organizations – one rigidly hierarchical, the other less so – have to work together.

Support by the Hudson's Bay Company went beyond what might be considered normal for the company. If Wrigley and his employees looked forward to some degree of profit from their network of posts throughout the North-West, they certainly were not going to limit themselves to this alone. The operational environment faced by the North-West Field Force was geographically immense, with only the most rudimentary means of transportation available to the force. Besides the railroad, the only means of operational movement was by foot, horseback or cart over prairie trails. Middleton's movement from Fort Qu'appelle took eighteen days, while Otter's comparatively rapid movement from Swift Current to Battleford (accomplished through the use of carts as opposed to marching) took thirteen days. Hauling men, munitions and other supplies was a herculean task over primitive highways and paths. Fortunately, the Hudson's Bay Company, or more precisely its subsidiary, and other private enterprises in the West, were in a position to assist with this operational manoeuvre.

In addition to the railways and the prairie cart trails, the rivers of the North-West formed a valuable means of travel and communication in the North-West. Fur traders and explorers had exploited these waterways for centuries. The settlement of the North-West Territory followed the course of the great western rivers. Settlement in the West

¹⁰⁴ Morton, *The Last War Drum* ..., 46.

increased, entrepreneurs realized that the success enjoyed by steamships along the great American waterways, such as the Mississippi, might be reproduced further north. In the second half of the nineteenth century, steamships came to Western Canada and played an important, if inconsistent, role in opening up the West.¹⁰⁵

Steamship travel was not a panacea, however. The western rivers were not as deep or as broad as the Mississippi. They were unreliable, shallow in some parts, swift in others, and prone to change with the weather.¹⁰⁶ The steamship trade in Western Canada enjoyed boom and suffered bust at the whim of Mother Nature. As a result, at the outbreak of the rebellion most western steamships were laying unused on river banks.

Upon receipt of his orders, and during his initial appreciation of the situation, Middleton realized that the rivers provided a key transportation network that he could exploit. Not only would he be able to more efficiently move men and equipment about the operational environment, he could save the government the cost of hundreds of teamsters and wagons.¹⁰⁷ Coincidentally, the leaders of the two primary steamship companies in the West were proactively engaging Minister Caron with similar ideas. The North-West Coal and Navigation Company, who normally transported coal throughout the West for the Canadian Pacific Railway, had a number of steamships laid up on the banks of the South Saskatchewan at Medicine Hat. With the outbreak of hostilities, its chief executive officer, Sir Alexander Galt, was excited about the potential his steamships held for creating war revenue.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, the Winnipeg and Western Transportation

¹⁰⁵ Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada...*, 185.

¹⁰⁶ Tolton, *Prairie Warships...*, 288.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

Company, a subsidiary of the Hudson's Bay Company's whose *de facto* chief executive was none other than Joseph Wrigley, had a number of laid up steamships whose services the entrepreneurial commissioner kindly offered to the Dominion Government.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the towns of Swift Current and Medicine Hat became the bases for the North-West Rebellion's naval efforts.

Despite the optimistic outlook for their employment, the steamships played only an ancillary role in the North-West campaign. A Hudson's Bay Company ship, the *Northcote* was fitted out with armour plates to withstand Métis bullets, and mounted a number of North-West Field Force personnel on its deck with rifles, but its role in the campaign was extremely limited. Eventually, it served more profitably as a means of evacuating and transporting the wounded, while other steamships were used to ferry troops across wide rivers.¹¹⁰ Of some note, however, the *Northcote* did become anecdotally important for being the ship that transported Louis Riel from Batoche to Regina for his trial.¹¹¹ Elsewhere, steamships were employed to ferry equipment where they could, and while they did not necessarily share the glory of the campaign, they did provide some valuable sustainment services for the North-West Field Force. In the end, however, the steamship's operational role in the campaign, like their role in the general economy of the West, was eclipsed by the role played by the railways.

The Canadian Pacific Railway

The Canadian Pacific Railway was a critical component of the Dominion Government's plan to secure the North-West Territories. Although nominally a civilian

¹⁰⁹ Rea, "The Hudson's Bay Company...", 51.

¹¹⁰ Middleton, *Suppression...*, 55-56.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 58.

corporation, it was nonetheless intrinsically wrapped up in the federal government to the point that it was considered the government's "sleeping partner" and often referred to as the "Conservative party on wheels."¹¹² Despite the close ties between it and the federal government, it was still a civilian organization, albeit one that was slightly less than arm's length from political power. It was, however a critical enabler in the successful attainment of the national strategic goal.

During the first Riel rebellion, in 1870, there was no transcontinental transportation in Canada other than the river highways that fur traders and explorers had used for centuries. The United States' refusal to allow British or Canadian military forces to travel over American soil meant that Wolesely and his force had to travel by canoe once they had arrived in Port Arthur, taking the laborious route along the Winnipeg River system and the Red River to Fort Garry. By 1885, a railway was available, albeit with some large gaps, to transport the men and supplies from the population concentrated in Southern Ontario to the West.

The president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, William Van Horne, did everything possible to move the bulk of the military forces to the West. This effort was not just a matter of expediency, but a demonstration of the maturity and capability of Canada to settle its own affairs. Van Horne and his subordinates were not faced with an easy task. The railway was still months from completion. Although the vast majority of it had been finished, the stretch of track along the north shore of Lake Superior still had a number of gaps. From the westernmost point of the eastern branch, the gaps around Lake Superior went as follows: "a gap of 45 miles, rail for 100 miles, a gap of 23 miles, rail for

¹¹² Gwynn, *Nation Maker...*, 399.

45 miles, a gap of 27 miles, rail for 52 miles, a gap of 11 miles.”¹¹³ These gaps were crossed by a variety of means, including sleigh carts (it was still late in winter) and even marching, sometimes with snow shoes across the lake. That the militia soldiers, whose normal careers did not accustom them to such privations, actually made the journey is something of a miracle in itself. Almost all the militiamen who travelled this route found this part to be the most challenging of the campaign.¹¹⁴ In the end, some 3,400 men were transported from the East to the theatre of operations in a relatively short period of time. The dispatch with which the force was assembled served to dissuade a number of the native bands in the West from joining the rebellion. The existence of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the herculean efforts of its officers to get the men across the gaps that still existed, had an immense strategic effect on the outcome of the campaign. It is this kind of collaborative public/private partnerships that proved critical to the successful attainment of national strategic goals within a comprehensive approach.

Both the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway were critical private partners of the Dominion Government. However, the nature of both organizations meant that both were almost public, rather than private, organizations themselves. That was not the case with the last non-governmental organization with which the Dominion Government engaged. If the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway already had a foot on the ground in the North-West, so too did the clergy who were scattered about the region, both Protestant and Catholic. Unlike the Hudson’s Bay

¹¹³ Needler, *Suppression...*, x.

¹¹⁴ Morton, *The Last War Drum...*, 41.

Company or the Canadian Pacific Railway, however, their cooperation was by no means assured, but was just as important to the success of the mission.

Religious Leaders

The importance of religious leaders to a military commander who intends to operate in a particular region cannot be underestimated. In any conflict, the religious component of the social factor must be taken into account if the operational commander wishes to accomplish his mission.¹¹⁵ The presence of the church in the North-West during the late 19th century, and the ability of the religious leaders to exert influence over their Métis and Indian charges, meant partnerships with the religious leaders of the region were critical to the successful attainment of the government's strategic goal.

The role of the church in the settlement of Western Canada was profound. Despite its conservative outlook, and hence preference for established authority, one could not assume that the clergy would naturally align with the Dominion Government during the rebellion. During the first Riel rebellion in 1870, the clergy played a prominent role both in support of the federal government in Ottawa, and the provisional government in Fort Garry. At that time, Ottawa leaned heavily on Bishop Tache of St. Boniface to calm the martial fervor in Fort Garry. Although Tache was notionally neutral, and had as his first concern a peaceful conclusion to the rebellion, Riel did not trust him and saw him as an agent of the government.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, Father Noel-Joseph Ritchot of the Parish of Saint-Norbert was among Riel's approved delegates to represent the Provisional

¹¹⁵ Steve Moore, "Religious Leader Engagement and the comprehensive approach: An Enhanced Capability for Operational Chaplains as Whole of Government Partners" in *Security Operations in the 21st Century: Canadian Perspectives*, 179.

¹¹⁶ Stanley, *Toil and Trouble...*, 180.

Government in its negotiations with Ottawa.¹¹⁷ The clergy held a profound amount of influence over the population of Fort Garry-Métis, white or native; and both sides employed this influence to their benefit. It is likely for this reason, then, that as the situation in 1885 seemed to be deteriorating, Macdonald telegraphed Farther Albert Lacombe, who held a tremendous amount of influence with the Blackfoot and urged him to intercede with Chief Crowfoot to forestall any native uprising amongst his charges. Lacombe did so, and convinced the Blackfoot to remain quiet throughout the rebellion.¹¹⁸ This effectively pre-empted the spread of the rebellion to the Blackfoot and thus deprived the Métis rebels of a valuable source of potential manpower.

Fortunately for the Dominion Government, Riel had no similar access to clerical support. Riel's religious beliefs created a rift between him and Christian religious leaders that prevented him from taking advantage of their support. Riel believed himself to be a divinely-inspired prophet and often argued with Oblate missionaries over points of faith and doctrine.¹¹⁹ He believed that Western Canada was the New Jerusalem and that he was a messenger of God sent to pave the way. Riel even began his first major speech to the Métis with the words "Rome has fallen."¹²⁰ These views bordered on blasphemy and were considered by the Métis' priests as heretical.¹²¹ As a result, the Catholic priests amongst the Métis were unwilling to support Riel's actions and therefore delegitimized his movement in the eyes of potential supporters. State forces were able to leverage

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 180.

¹¹⁸ Gwynn, *Nation Maker...*, 445.

¹¹⁹ Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion...*, 86.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 86.

¹²¹ Gwynn, *Nation Maker...*, 439.

support from the clergy to their advantage, while Riel and his odd religious beliefs only managed to isolate him and his supporters from that valuable source of moral strength.

Operationally, the military leaders of the North-West Field Force took advantage of this situation. General Strange brought four clergymen into his Alberta Field Force, including the Methodist John McDougall, the Oblate priest Father Albert Lacombe, and Anglicans George McKay and W.P. MacKenzie.¹²² The leverage they brought to the force was immeasurable, not only for the spiritual influence they had with both the Métis and the aboriginal population, but for their more temporal skills as well. As missionaries, these men knew the region, could speak the language and through years of interaction, understood the Indian psyche, all of which, when compounded by the social influence their clerical collars produced, made them extremely valuable operational tools.¹²³ The early engagement of religious leaders coupled, fortuitously, with Riel's spurning of the same, was a critical strategic and operational coup, exploited by the Dominion Government. Clerical support for the government pre-empted the valuable popular support any rebellion requires for success. Without popular support to both psychologically motivate the rebels, and physically support the rebellion with recruits, there was no hope of a successful outcome against the overwhelming military force of the Dominion Government.

Conclusion

The operational environment cannot be considered without taking into consideration the role of non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental

¹²² Dunn, *The Alberta Field Force...*, 62.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 62.

organizations are present in every conflict, with their own goals and ideologies to guide their actions. Today's operational commanders and strategists must be not only aware of their presence, but willing to work with them within the operational environment. There are times when non-governmental organizations must be placated, or simply acknowledged and avoided. There are other times when they provide a valuable resource that can be employed towards the achievement of a strategic goal. The North-West Rebellion was no different.

It is tempting to dismiss the role of non-governmental agencies in the North-West Rebellion as not truly representing a comprehensive approach. One may argue that the Canadian Pacific Railway was non-governmental in name only and was far too politically involved in the Dominion government to be considered a private entity. Likewise, one may conclude that the Hudson's Bay Company was essentially an extended arm of government. Both assertions are false. While it was true that the Canadian Pacific Railway had very close ties to the Canadian government, it would be wrong to be dismissive as they were most definitely a private corporation. The fact that it was in their best interests to showcase the railway's capability and contribute to the speedy suppression of the rebellion does not eliminate the coordination that had to occur between the government and the company. Additionally, the Hudson's Bay Company had as its primary importance its own profit, the maximization of which, happily for Ottawa, coincided with the Dominion's strategic plans.

The logistical support provided by the Hudson's Bay Company was a critical enabler of the military force which did not have the organic sustainment facilities or resources to achieve its mission. Likewise the strategic and operational flexibility

provided by the Canadian Pacific Railway set the conditions for the military force to deploy quickly to the area of operations and pre-empt the spread of the rebellion to Indian bands. Without the support of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway, the North-West Field Force would not have been able to achieve its operational goals and the strategic end-state would not have been attained. It is important to remember, though, that both organizations were governed by self-interest rather than patriotic fervour. It was fortunate for the Dominion Government that it was in the best interests of both organizations to see the rebellion quickly suppressed. Likewise, the Dominion Government was able to leverage the support of influential religious leaders to rob the rebellion of critical popular support.

CONCLUSION

In order to achieve its strategic goal of re-establishing sovereignty over the North-West Territories during the North-West Rebellion, the Dominion Government successfully employed a comprehensive approach to operations composed of a military force that was critically enabled by public and private agencies,. The imposition of an eastern survey system upon Métis settlers in the West, coupled with increasing white settlement, disappearing buffalo herds and years of government mistreatment and mismanagement of Indian bands caused the Métis under Louis Riel, and several Indian bands, to rise in revolt against the Dominion Government. The rebellion directly threatened Canadian sovereignty over the North-West Territories and jeopardized the continued settlement and exploitation of the vast lands therein. In order to achieve the strategic goal of re-establishing Canadian authority over the region, the Dominion Government employed a military force to defeat the insurgents, enabled by other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations.

The North West Field Force was used to attack the insurgents' operational center of gravity, their fighting force, while also accomplishing two supporting operational goals: the deterrence of Indian bands from joining the rebellion, and the expression of Canadian sovereignty and commitment to domestic and international audiences. Although the military force was the critical element of the government's comprehensive approach to operations, it was unable to achieve the strategic end-state on its own. The North-West Field Force was critically enabled by other governmental agencies.

The North-West Mounted Police, the local government, the Indian Department and the Governor General provided valuable enabling support to the North West Field

Force. The North-West Mounted Police reinforced the military column and supplied General Middleton and his subordinate commanders with an in-depth knowledge of the operational environment due to their familiarity with the terrain and the inhabitants, be they Indian, Métis or white. Although immensely valuable in this regard, there was nonetheless significant friction, in particular between General Middleton and the Mounted Police. Differences in organizational culture strained mutual understanding and in the case of the Middleton column, meant that the niche capabilities of the Mounted Police could not be exploited. On a happier note, the local government and Indian Department, both embodied in Edgar Dewdney, helped to isolate the rebellion by removing many of the grievances experienced by the Métis and the Indians through increased ration allocation, the settlement of Métis land claims and the creation of jobs for unemployed Métis. This isolation effectively robbed the Métis and Indian insurgents of much needed recruits and popular support. Additionally, the Governor General immediately entered into diplomatic exchanges with the United States in order to isolate the rebellion externally by shoring up the porous Canada/US border from Indian and anti-British elements who may have joined, or exploited, the rebellion. These efforts critically enabled the military force to focus on its primary role of attacking the insurgents' center of gravity.

The assistance of other governmental agencies was insufficient on its own to set the conditions for Canadian success. Despite the valuable support given by these organizations, neither the federal nor territorial governments possessed resources to provide logistical support to the deployed force. Likewise, the government lacked strategic transportation necessary to move the force from Southern Ontario and Quebec to

the area of operations. Consequently, the North-West Field Force would not have been able to achieve its primary and supporting operational objectives without the logistical support of the Hudson's Bay Company or the strategic transportation provided by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Both of these services filled a capability gap of the federal government and were absolutely necessary for the Dominion Government to achieve its strategic goal. Likewise, subsidiaries of both organizations provided valuable operational transportation to the force aboard their river steamboats whilst it was deployed in the operational theatre. Although their services mitigated the critical capability gap of the Dominion Government, their motivations were more financial than patriotic. It was in the best interest of both companies to ensure that the rebellion ended quickly. To that end, while services were provided for a profit, they were provided at very reasonable prices in order to expedite the suppression of the rebellion.

While the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway looked to exploit the situation to their mutual benefit, the clergy of the North-West Territories became important allies in the isolation of the insurgents from popular support. Louis Riel's blasphemous religious beliefs and outlandish religious claims ensured that the local Christian clergy did not support him, and even preached against him. Consequently, both the devout Métis and dependent Indians adhered to the clergy's direction and did not provide the popular support and recruits the rebellion so desperately needed. Being firmly in support of the government, the clergy also went so far as to provide useful operational intelligence on both the terrain, and the sentiments of the population, to the commanders of the flying columns. Like the governmental agencies, the non-governmental actors

provided crucial enabling support that allowed the military force to decisively engage the insurgent forces.

It may be tempting to disregard the lessons of the North-West campaign as anachronistic, with little to no value to modern operational leaders. Some may cite the immense change in technology, the political landscape of post-colonialism and the threat of modern religious fundamentalism as completely incongruent with the unique circumstances involved in the North-West Rebellion. This is an erroneous conclusion. While it is true that the exact parameters of the North-West rebellion will likely not be repeated in the future, the foundational concepts of the comprehensive approach as employed in during the North-West Campaign are enduring.

The use of the comprehensive approach to operations by the Dominion Government during the North-West Rebellion provides ready lessons for the modern practitioner. Today's operational commanders will find much familiar in the North-West campaign. In so doing, they would observe that incorporation of other-governmental agencies is a crucial force multiplier. These agencies provide capabilities and services that military forces are either unable, or in many cases less capable, of providing. In order to leverage these capabilities, however, a commander must be aware that differences in organizational culture exist. Consequently, the commander must ensure that these differences are respected and compensated for. This means understanding that when other agencies do things differently than the military, it does not equate to doing them wrong. As Middleton demonstrated with his ignorance of the Mounted Police's organizational culture, when these differences are not respected, the benefits of partnership go begging.

Additionally, modern strategic leadership would be wise to heed the lesson of public-private partnership towards strategic goals. Modern operations have been enabled by a number of non-governmental agencies providing niche capabilities that are either not resident in the military, or can be provided at less operational impact to the military force. Such partnerships are valuable tools, but they also carry substantial risk. One must not forget that a private enterprises' involvement, regardless of any rhetoric they may offer, is governed by its bottom line. In as much as the national strategic goal and the supporting company's financial interests align and are profitable, the strategic leader can be relatively assured of excellent support. Where the company's financial interests diverge from national strategic aims, support will cease being as forthcoming.

The last war drum heard in Canada represented a watershed event in Canadian history. Faced with an armed threat to the political goal of settling and exploiting the West, the Dominion Government deployed a military force, critically enabled by public and private agencies, as part of an overall comprehensive approach to operations in order to achieve its strategic end-state of re-establishing sovereignty over the North-West Territories. The successful employment of this comprehensive approach ensured the West remained in confederation, and directly contributed to the evolution of Canada to the great nation it is today.

ANNEX A – THE MÉTIS BILL OF RIGHTS (1885)**The List of Rights as Drawn by the Executive of the Provisional Government**

- I. That the Territories heretofore known as Rupert's Land and North-West, shall not enter into the Confederation of the Dominion of Canada, except as a Province; to be styled and known as the Province of Assiniboia, and with all the rights and privileges common to the different Provinces of the Dominion.
- II. That we have two Representatives in the Senate, and four in the House of Commons of Canada, until such time as an increase of population entitle the Province to a greater Representation.
- III. That the Province of Assiniboia shall not be held liable at any time for any portion of the Public debt of the Dominion contracted before the date the said Province shall have entered the Confederation, unless the said Province shall have first received from the Dominion the full amount for which the said Province is to be held liable.
- IV. That the sum of Eighty Thousand (\$80,000) dollars be paid annually by the Dominion Government to the local Legislature of this Province.
- V. That all properties, rights and privileges engaged [sic: enjoyed] by the people of this Province, up to the date of our entering into the Confederation, be respected; and that the arrangement and confirmation of all customs, usages and privileges be left exclusively to the local Legislature.
- VI. That during the term of five years, the Province of Assiniboia shall not be subjected to any direct taxation, except such as may be imposed by local Legislature, for municipal or local purposes.

- VII. That a sum of money equal to eighty cents per head of the population of this Province, be paid annually by the Canadian Government to the local Legislature of the said Province; until such time as the said population shall have reached six hundred thousand.
- VIII. That the local Legislature shall have the right to determine the qualification of members to represent this Province in the Parliament of Canada and in the local Legislature.
- IX. That in this Province, with the exception of uncivilized and unsettled Indians, every male native citizen who has attained the age of twenty-one years, and every foreigner, other than a British subject, who has resided here during the same period, being a householder and having taken the oath of allegiance, shall be entitled to vote at the election of members for the local Legislature and for the Canadian Parliament. It being understood that this article be subject to amendment exclusively by the local Legislature.
- X. That the bargain of the Hudson's Bay Company with respect to the transfer of the Government of this country to the Dominion of Canada, be annulled; so far as it interferes with the rights of the people of Assiniboia, and so far as it would affect our future relations with Canada.
- XI. That the local Legislature of the Province of Assiniboia shall have full control over all the public lands of the Province and the right to annul all acts or arrangements made, or entered into, with reference to the public lands of Rupert's Land, and the North-West now called the Province of Assiniboia.

- XII. That the Government of Canada appoint a Commission of Engineers to explore the various districts of the Province of Assiniboia, and to lay before the local Legislature a report of the mineral wealth of the Province, within five years from the date of our entering into Confederation.
- XIII. That treaties be concluded between Canada and the different Indian tribes of the Province of Assiniboia, by and with the advice and cooperation of the local Legislature of this Province.
- XIV. That an uninterrupted steam communication from Lake Superior to Fort Garry be guaranteed, to be completed within the space of five years.
- XV. That all public buildings, bridges, roads and other public works, be at the cost of the Dominion Treasury.
- XVI. That the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and in the Courts, and that all public documents, as well as acts of the Legislature be published in both languages.
- XVII. That whereas the French and English speaking people of Assiniboia are so equally divided as to number, yet so united in their interests and so connected by commerce, family connections and other political and social relations, that it has, happily, been found impossible to bring them into hostile collision- although repeated attempts have been made by designing strangers, for reasons known to themselves, to bring about so ruinous and disastrous an event-and whereas after all the troubles and apparent dissensions of the past-the result of misunderstanding among themselves; they have as soon as the evil agencies referred to above were removed-become as united and

- friendly as ever-therefore, as a means to strengthen this union and friendly feeling among all classes, we deem it expedient and advisable-that the Lieutenant-Governor, who may be appointed for the Province of Assiniboia, should be familiar with both the French and English languages.
- XVIII. That the Judge of the Supreme Court speak the English and French languages.
- XIX. That all debts contracted by the Provisional Government of the Territory of the Northwest, now called Assiniboia, in consequence of the illegal and inconsiderate measure adopted by Canadian officials to bring about a civil war in our midst, be paid out of the Dominion Treasury; and that none of the members of the Provisional Government, or any of those acting under them, be in any way held liable or responsible with regard to the movement, or any of the actions which led to the present negotiations.
- XX. That in view of the present exceptional position of Assiniboia, duties upon goods imported into the province, shall, except in the case of spirituous liquors, continue as at present for at least three years from the date of our entering the Confederation and for such further time as may elapse until there be uninterrupted railroad communication between Winnipeg and St. Paul and also steam communication between Winnipeg and Lake Superior.

ANNEX B – COMPOSITION OF THE NORTH-WEST FIELD FORCE

Manoeuvre Columns.

Middleton Column:

A Battery (Quebec).
 90th Battalion (Winnipeg).
 Infantry School Corps (-)
 Boulton's Scouts.
 10th Battalion, Royal Grenadiers.
 Capt. French's Scouts.
 Winnipeg Field Battery (-)
 Dennis' Surveyor's Scouts.
 Midland Battalion.

Otter Column:

B Battery (Kingston).
 Queen's Own Rifles.
 Infantry School Corps (-).
 Todd's Sharpshooters.
 Winnipeg Field Battery (-)

Strange Column:

65th Battalion.
 Winnipeg Provisional Battalion (32nd).
 Strange's Rangers.
 Mounted Police.

Line of Communication Security.

Clarke's Crossing:

7th Battalion.
 Elms Midland Battalion.

Touchwood:

2 Company, 35th Battalion.
 Quebec Cavalry School.
 Winnipeg Troop Cavalry.

Fort Qu'Appelle :

91st Battalion.

Moose Jaw:

66th Battalion (-) (Halifax).

Medicine Hat:

66th Battalion (-)

Gleichen-Calgary-Ft. Mcleod:

9th (Quebec) Battalion.

Old Wives' Lake:

White's Scouts.

Cypress Hills:

Stewart's Rangers.

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