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AN EXAMINATION OF ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF CANADA AS A RELEVANT DEGREE GRANTING INSTITUTION

Maj S.T. Gagnon

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Exercise Solo Flight

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Maj S.T. Gagnon

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Military service academies have a long rich history of training and educating military officers from even before the Napoleonic era. However, the requirement for an educated officer corps in the military represents only a fraction of the time that militaries have existed, and since the abandonment of commissions based on social class, the depth and form of this education has varied by nation-state. By the late 19th century however, the establishment of military service academies in the Western world to educate future officers was standard practice. In Canada, that tradition has been carried on with the Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC) in Kingston, Ontario. On these historic grounds, approximately one thousand officer cadets are being prepared annually for a life of service to their country in one of the oldest and most noble professions in existence – the profession of arms.¹

Changes as a consequence of the Somalia Inquiry and the follow-on recommendations from the Minister of National Defence, Douglas Young, have guaranteed the future production of university-educated officers. In fact, degreed officers are the norm within militaries around the world and up until the Minister Young's report and the implementation of his recommendations, the education of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) officer corps was woefully behind. At the time of the report's publication in 1997, only half of the officer corps had an undergraduate degree, but by 2002 nearly 88% were in possession of one.² Much of this degree-granting backlog of still-serving officers was on the back of RMCC, which did

¹ Canada, "Royal Military College of Canada," last modified [or accessed] 10 May 2015, <http://www.rmc.ca/en>

² Canada, Department of National Defence, "Report to the Prime Minister on the Leadership and Management of the Canadian Forces" by The Honorable M. Douglas Young, PC, MP, Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, 25 March 1997. Jungwee Park, "A Profile of the Canadian Forces," last modified [or accessed] 10 May 2015, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2008107/article/10657-eng.htm#Conclusion>;

tremendous work helping to achieve the Young report's objectives. Today, however, RMCC's undergraduate program is focused on Regular Officer Training Plan cadets, who by virtue of their chosen profession must attain a degree as a minimum requirement for commissioning.

As a military university, RMCC is funded by taxpayer dollars. In this era of budget restraint and accountability, the question needs to be asked: Does RMCC better prepare its graduates for a life in the profession of arms, or is this "university with a difference"³ superfluous to national requirements? This paper will examine this question and demonstrate that RMCC's role *as a degree-granting service academy* is redundant, and should be replaced by the myriad of other methods of attaining degreed leaders for its officer corps.

To begin, this paper will begin by examining the origins of officer education and the initial justification for military service academies. The next section will discuss the modern day requirements for an educated officer corps, followed by an examination of the various programs used to recruit officers for service. The last sections will conclude with a critical analysis of the efficacy and relevance of degree-granting military academies as institutes of higher learning for its cadets.

This first section will describe the revolution in military affairs that led to formal officer education, the eventual development of military academies and the general professionalization of militaries and their leaders.

The revolution in military affairs is widely argued to have begun with Sir Francis Bacon's trio of gunpowder, ocean navigation and the printing press that

³ Canada, "Royal Military College of Canada," last modified [or accessed] 10 May 2015, <http://www.rmc.ca/en>

eventually caused an increase in both the size and complexity of military forces.⁴ What were once ad hoc hordes of only a few thousand infantrymen and cavalry facing off in the early 16th century would soon become armies in the hundreds of thousands – the French army alone peaked at 400,000 towards the end of the 17th century.⁵ This exponential increase in the size of military forces resulted in both greater specialization of trades within militaries and the quality of leadership required to run armies.

Specialization, or the requirement to be a subject matter expert in a given military domain, is attributed to both the increased size of the military forces, but also due to the technological advances of the day. Gunpowder, as alluded to before, caused revolutionary changes on the battlefield. The introduction of the cannon, and the musket for that matter, re-wrote battlefield tactics. The specialization required to employ ballistics were so highly revered that this unique skill-set was a “jealously guarded trade secret”⁶ protected by the artillerymen of the day.

This spurred advances in other arms as well. Engineering developed into a science of its own, largely to mitigate the advantage brought forth by the advances in gunpowder and artillery. The design and development of new fortifications to withstand this new battlefield firepower practically saw an end to the tall iron curtains in favour of lower, but thicker ramparts so as to act as a “smaller target for [an] attacker’s gun.”⁷ Moreover, engineering expertise developed completely

⁴ Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2008), 504.

⁵ Martin Van Crefeld, *Supplying War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 5.

⁶ Albert C. Manucy, *Artillery Through the Ages* (Washington D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1985), 4.

⁷ Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2008), 461.

redesigned defenses such as the bastion, as well as earth works to provide better defense and slow the enemy assault.⁸

As advances in artillery and engineering squared off, a technological plateau was soon met, causing a subsequent lengthening in sieges combined with extended lines of communication facilitated by ocean navigation causing an increased reliance on well thought out logistics support plans, in lieu of the hitherto used method of resupply by means of plunder. The advent of field artillery alone demanded intense coordination to move the pieces forward on the battlefield, not to mention keeping them resupplied with their ordnance.

All of this specialization in artillery, engineering and administration demanded a professional officer, schooled in the specifics of their functions in order to effectively employ them on the battlefield. It would not be long before technical schools would emerge to address the training gap – the most famous of which being Napoleon’s *Ecole Polytechnique* (established in 1794).⁹ This polytechnic school trained officers in very narrow and specific domains, such as artillery, engineering and naval architecture. Other specialist schools were also established such as *Fontainebleau* and *Brest* shortly thereafter for infantry, cavalry and naval officers.¹⁰ While no formal school emerged in the field of logistics, its importance as a military domain was apparent in the development of the *General Staff* in the Prussian army.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., 461.

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 42.

¹⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹¹ Ibid., 52.

The aforementioned schools were developed primarily to address technical deficiencies amongst military officers, but another deficiency existed – general leadership and the art of military command. Until the 19th century, professional officers did not exist - armies were led for the most part by mercenary officers and aristocracy.¹² Prior to national monarchs taking control of their military, aspiring entrepreneurs would raise armies on an ad hoc basis and sell the service to the highest bidder. These entrepreneurs of course would command their mercenary company of men, but the level of vocational competence as a military leader was never assured.¹³

With the increased requirement for a standing army, the respective monarchs deemed it necessary to take control of the military by placing their nobles in charge. “By 1789, except in artillery and engineering, the aristocracy had a virtual monopoly of officers’ positions in the European armies,”¹⁴ however, this did not bode any better for the leadership of the military – and in some cases left them worse off. This is because the aristocracy took little ownership of their command responsibilities, seeing it as merely a source of prestige and yet another way to heighten their social status. The weakness of simply anointing aristocrats as officers and commanders without any specific training with respect to the intricacies of the new battlefield was no more telling than Prussia’s humiliating defeat to Napoleon. Prussia’s reaction would be the first major step in formalizing a system of officer education most resembling today’s military academies with the establishment of the

¹² Ibid., 21-22.

¹³ Ibid., 21.

¹⁴ Ibid., 22.

famous *Kriegsakademie*, or War Academy, in Berlin.¹⁵ Although admittance was not until after some five years of service, its syllabus contained a broad range of topics befitting a general service officer.¹⁶

The discussion thus far has demonstrated that early officer education was the result of a necessity due to a revolution in military affairs attributable to advances in technology and the complexities of employment of forces due to their increase in size. Academies were developed to address what was initially a technical training gap, but evolved to address a wider educational gap in the study of war – where no alternatives existed. The reasons behind the establishment of North American service academies are no different. Not dissimilar to its European service academy counterparts, RMCC was founded initially to address a similar technical training gap that existed at the time amongst its technical officer trades and public servants. In fact, all sources examined suggest that the sole reason for the development of service academies at the time was to address this technical deficiency. As former Principle of RMCC, Dr. John Scott Cowan notes, after four years of predominately technical training cadets would graduate oriented toward military or public service.¹⁷ RMCC, like West Point and other European military service academies grew out of the necessity to have a homegrown solution to the technical domains so necessary to the defence of its nation.

Though RMCC exists today as Canada's lone degree-granting military academy, for nearly half a century it was joined by Royal Rhodes Military College

¹⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

¹⁷ John Scott Cowan, "RMC and the Profession of Arms: Looking Ahead at Canada's Military University," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 2, No 3, (Autumn 2001): 5.

(RRMC) in British Columbia and Collège Militaire Royale de Saint Jean (CMR) in Quebec. Initially established in the 1940s to help with training naval officers for the war effort, RRMC did not formally start granting degrees until the 1975. CMR was established in 1952 in order to provide a more equitable representation of cadets in the Canadian Forces and through affiliation with a local university, was initially able to grant degrees. RRMC was closed in 1994, while CMR was reduced to a non-degree granting institution designed to transition Quebec cadets from high school to university intended to be completed at RMCC in Kingston. Throughout this paper, any reference to RMCC will imply the degree-granting institution in Kingston.

With the proliferation of civilian universities and technical institutes in the modern era, the initial rationale for military service academies is called into question. What remains clear, however, is the continued requirement of an educated officer corps. The following section aims to address this requirement for officer education, how it has been influenced in recent years and what that education looks like today.

The environment in which officers are expected to work today has increased in scope and complexity exponentially from the early beginnings of the profession of arms due in part to another revolution in military affairs. As Dr John Scott Cowan, the former Principal of the Royal Military College of Canada put it, “the remarkable acceleration of technological change and the growth of knowledge have the potential to be a vast multiplier of the effectiveness of numerically small forces. This

is part of... the Revolution in Military Affairs.”¹⁸ No longer is it sufficient for an officer to exhibit command over skilled artillerymen, to demonstrate valour leading his men during a frontal assault over muddy plains, or merely to possess the tactical prowess in developing a cunning military plan. Today’s officers must be all of this and more. To meet the demanding challenges of today’s world, officers must be able to demonstrate their professional acumen in a variety of security environments spanning the full spectrum of conflict. They need to demonstrate tolerance and acceptance in their leadership of the growing diversity in recruits. And, they need to demonstrate infallible judgment in decision and action in this increasingly global and network-connected world.

In 1969, in the midst of the turmoil of unification, the Chair of the Officer Development Board, Major-General Roger Rowley conducted an extensive review of Canadian Forces officer education. The product of which, to be known as the Rowley Report, was the recommended rationalization of all of the officer educational and professional study programs under one unified chain of command acting as a university presiding over multiple colleges of study. While the recommendations from his seminal work were never fully implemented, his research and analysis into both Canadian and foreign officer education provided the foundation for future developments in Canadian Forces’ officer education for decades to come. At the heart of his report was the importance of professional

¹⁸ John Scott Cowan, “RMC and the Profession of Arms: Looking Ahead at Canada’s Military University,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 2, No 3, (Autumn 2001): 6.

education for the officer corps, something that he found was the theme in western militaries.¹⁹

Despite this observation, the Canadian Forces did not hoist this aboard to the same extent as did many of its ally nations. One of the first reports to be critical of Canadian officer commissioning requirements was Lieutenant-General Robert W. Morton who conducted a major study of officer education and professional development which was published in 1995. One of his key recommendations was to “raise entry level education standards to assist officer candidates in meeting [the aforementioned] future demands”²⁰ of the officer corps. While much of his report focused on developing a more robust professional development system for the officer corps, the Canadian Forces educational program’s lack of intellectual development was obvious.²¹ With just over 50% of Canadian officers possessing undergraduate degrees compared to 90% of American officers, he was right.²² This dramatic discrepancy between the education of Canadian officers and one of Canada’s closest military partners was resolved with the dramatic recommendations from the Minister of National Defence in 1997 following the Somalia Inquiry.

For Canadian Forces officers’ education, the Young Report was a game changer. It went well beyond the Morton Report’s recommendation that officers should have a

¹⁹ Howard Coombs and Randall Wakelan, *The Report of the Officer Development Board: Maj-Gen Roger Rowley and the Education of the Canadian Forces*, LCMSDS (Press of Wilfrid Laurier University: Waterloo, Ontario, 2010): xiv.

²⁰ Canada, Department of National Defence, “Report of the Officer Development Review Board.” Authored by Robert E. Morton, LGen (Retired), (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1995), Vol 1, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

²² Albert Legault, “Bringing the Canadian Armed Forces Into the Twenty-First Century.” A Paper Prepared for the Minister of National Defence, (Quebec: Laval University, 1997), 41.

college diploma, and that a bachelor's degree would be desirable.²³ Rather, Minister Young made it a requirement that officers hold a bachelor's degree (with the exception of those commissioned from the ranks). The subsequent Report by the RMC Board of Governor's chaired by General (Retired) Ramsey Withers and John Cowan called for a revamping to the RMC core curriculum that would see "a compulsory and significant dose of arts, humanities, and social sciences education for all officer cadets, including those studying science and engineering".²⁴

Officer education within the Canadian Forces has come a long way since the creation of RMCC in 1876. However, RMCC has never been the sole means for Canadian Force officers to acquire their degrees. Currently the three main degreed enrolment schemes are Regular Force Training Plan (ROTP), University Training Plan Non-Commissioned Member (UTPNCM), and Direct Entry Officer (DEO). UTPNCM is a program that selects future officers from amongst the rank and file, and subsidizes their university education at RMCC or an alternative civilian university. The DEO program recruits officer candidates already in possession of a degree, either from directly off the street, or as a component transfer from the Reserve Force. It is the ROTP where the bulk of RMCC cadets are drawn from, however, this program provisions for cadets to attend civilian university for specific programs, or where RMCC capacity has been exceeded. Programs do exist for commissioning non-degreed officers, but these commissioning from the ranks

²³ Canada, Department of National Defence, "Report of the Officer Development Review Board." Authored by Robert E. Morton, LGen (Retired), (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1995), Vol 1, 8.

²⁴ David Bercuson, "Up from the Ashes: The Re-Professionalization of the Canadian Forces after the Somalia Affair", *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (2009): 37.

programs are the exception to the rule and are not deemed relevant to this discussion.

According to the Canadian Forces Regular Force Officer strategic intake planning (SIP) figures for fiscal year 2014/2015 which calls for 1306 new officers, only about a third (454) will fall under the ROTP, and a third of those cadets will attend civilian university under subsidy.²⁵ According to according to this same SIP data, the Canadian Forces anticipates recruiting 439 degreed officers for the Regular Force from the DEO program, a figure equivalent to the entire ROTP combined (both RMCC attendees and those attending civilian university under subsidy). The remainder of new officers is the result of occupational transfers, and the aforementioned non-degreed programs. So, with RMCC cadets drawn from the ROTP, which accounts for approximately half of degreed-officers, it would appear that RMCC is responsible for educating only a minority of new officers annually. However, it is worth noting, that upon closer examination, we see that this proportionality does not apply to the technical trades, particularly in the engineering domain, which sees a much higher proportion of their cohort attending RMCC. Whether by design or coincidence, RMCC continues to be key to the technical education of officers, just as it was upon its inception.

As would be expected, other nations use different programs to recruit their officer corps. The United States, for example, has three main programs for recruiting officers, two of which result in degrees: Reserve Officer Training Corps,

²⁵ Canada, Department of National Defence, "Strategic Intake Plan Fiscal Year 2014/2015." Last modified [or accessed] 9 May 2015. http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/assets/CMP_Intranet/docs/en/support/military-personnel/

military service academies (Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard) and the Officer Candidate School.²⁶ The latter is a commissioning from the ranks program whose prerequisite for entry into the program demands a degree, or evidence of work towards one. The take away is that, like in Canada, The United States service academies see a similar trend whereby they are responsible for producing a minority of officers – according to one report, as low as 20 percent.²⁷

Worthy of mention is the British officer training model as it presents a fundamentally different approach to acquiring university educated officers. For the British Army, officer cadets are trained at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) in Surrey, England. But, different from both the Canadian and United States models of officer production, the British Army recruits predominately university graduates (80% of attending cadets have degrees) and uses RMAS as a leadership training institution. This has the benefit of placing the burden of responsibility – and cost – on the prospective members. Similar institutes exist for the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Royal Marines.²⁸

From the recommended reforms of the Rowley Report, to the crisis-induced revamp of officer professionalism following the Somalia Inquiry, the requirement for a university educated officer corps in the Canadian Forces has evolved to meet the changing needs of society and the operating environment. RMCC is but one of

²⁶ United States, “US Army Careers and Jobs,” Last modified [or accessed] 10 May 2015. <http://www.goarmy.com/ocs.html>.

²⁷ Bruce Fleming, “Let’s Abolish West Point: Military Academies Serve No One, Squander Millions of Tax Dollars,” *Salon*, (5 January 2015). http://www.salon.com/2015/01/05/lets_abolish_west_point_military_academies_serve_no_one_squander_millions_of_tax_dollars/

²⁸ United Kingdom, “Army Training and Education,” Last modified [or accessed] 10 May 2015. http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/24475.aspx

several recruiting tools used to meet these changes. The United States shares this trend and response to it. A majority of the officer ranks within both nations are filled from officers educated at civilian universities, either through a subsidized program, or self-funded. This has had the effect of reducing the overall proportion of degree granting service academy graduates from filling the ranks, and more importantly, senior positions. In 2010 only six of the United States' 12 four-star generals had been service academy graduates.²⁹ Even in Canada, no longer is graduating from RMCC a condition for future success; one of Canada's most influential generals in recent years, General Rick Hillier, did not graduate from RMCC.³⁰

Having established the initial requirement for military service academies, today's requirement for a university educated officer corps and the means by which this corps is recruited, the question remains whether or not today's degree-granting service academies meet the mark. The following section will analyze the role that military academies purport to perform to determine their value as institutions in the formation of young officers.

As Canada's only state-run university, RMCC is in a unique position in Canada. It is the only university whose mandate is found in the Queen's Regulations and Orders where it clearly states that the objective of RMCC is "to prepare officer cadets for effective service as commissioned officers in the Canadian Forces".³¹ Due to its one-of-a-kind status in Canada, it is no surprise that RMCC would come under

²⁹ "Pricey Education," *Army Times* (Garnett Co., Inc, Washington, USA: 22 November, 2010): 1.

³⁰ General Rick Hillier. Last modified [or accessed] on 10 May 2015. <http://www.generahillier.com>

³¹ Canada, *Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Military Colleges* (Ottawa: Treasury Board, 8 August 2001, updated 17 January 2007), Appendix 6.1, para 2.02.

scrutiny, a ritual it has endured throughout its history. In 1975 the Minister of National Defence noted that the “military colleges were subject to constant and increasing critical review.”³² Acknowledging the colleges were unique, he directed the Colleges’ Advisory Board Executive Committee to determine “to what extent was it necessary to duplicate the activities of civilian universities.”³³ More importantly he stressed the “necessity of being able to show a direct relationship and relevance between [military colleges] and Canadian Forces requirements.”³⁴

The ensuing study chaired by Major-General J.J. Paradis echoed what many military college critics have found: a simple clear-cut cost-benefit analysis is not possible. In researching this paper, the same conclusion is evident. For obvious reasons governments are reticent to release detailed financial information on the cost of their military academies for fear of critical examination. The information that is available is difficult to compare to other like institutions for risk of comparing apples to oranges. However, an examination as to the viability of service academies would not be complete without at least a cursory review of financial figures to determine the rough order of magnitude that this academies cost the taxpayer.

According to one investigative piece the total cost realized to graduate one cadet from the United States Naval Academy is \$378,697 (US dollars), which includes all costs from tuition, books, stipend, food, etc.³⁵ At 1000 graduates annually, that equates to over one third of a billion dollars for that one academy

³² Canada, Department of National Defence, “CPD Study: Rationalization of the Canadian Military College System”, Chaired by MGen J.J. Paradis, (October 1976), Part 1, 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁵ David Ausiello, “Fleming or the Supe: Whose Numbers Add Up?” *Navy Scout*, (25 June 2010), <http://navy.scout.com/story/979984-fleming-or-the-supe-whose-numbers-add-up>

alone.³⁶ The US Army, Air force and Coast Guard run similar institutions which can reasonably be expected to cost about the same.

In Canada, the cost per student attending RMCC is not as clear. According to the 2012 Chief of Review Services *Audit of Financial Stewardship of Royal Military College of Canada* total available funding for 2009/2010 for RMCC was \$76,146,000, eighteen million dollars of which is earmarked for research.³⁷ The detailed allocation of the remaining funds is difficult to determine, as is the cost of allowances for books and other associated fees. Furthermore, this figure does not factor in cadet pay of approximately \$19,000 annual per graduate. However, a conservative estimate per graduate should see the cost to the taxpayer at over \$300,000³⁸ for a four-year degree, which does not even consider the future cost of pensions.

The take-away from this brief discussion on expenses is that the cost to the taxpayer of attending military academies is exorbitant. For comparison purposes, the current cost to attend Harvard University, one of the United States' most prestigious Ivey league colleges is just over \$60,659 or \$78,856 (US dollars) after factoring in a 30% adjustment for taxpayer or endowment subsidies.³⁹ After four years this amounts to \$315,000 (US dollars) – approximately the cost of attending RMCC. In Canada, with the lower costs of universities, the discrepancy between the

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Canada, Department of National Defence, "Audit of Financial Stewardship of Royal Military College of Canada." Chief of Review Services, (November 2012), 4.

³⁸ This figure was roughly calculated by dividing RMCC annual operating budget less the research funding by an average of 1000 students per year. Added to the resulting cost per student is the average officer cadet salary of \$19,000. This expense is duplicated over four years of education. $((\$76,146,000 - \$18,000,000)/1000 \text{ cadets}) + \$19,000 = \$77,146 \times 4 \text{ years} = \$308,584 \text{ cost to graduate.}$

³⁹ Harvard University. "Harvard at a Glance." Last modified [or accessed] 10 May 2015. <http://www.harvard.edu/harvard-glance>.

cost of a civilian university degree and that of attending RMCC would be even greater.

One of the major arguments for the retention of degree-granting military service academies is the socialization aspect. MGen Paradis noted in his study that military society is unique and has its own set of values. Later, the *Leadership in the Canadian Forces* doctrine would echo this sentiment, “that self-regulation of behaviour depends on the acquisition, through a variety of learning experiences, of societal and organizational norms and standards of behaviour.”⁴⁰ Moreover, “a general goal of training, [and] *education* [italics added]... is to develop individual judgment and a capacity for self-regulation so that reliance on external discipline is minimized.” According to MGen Paradis, duty, respect for authority, discipline, loyalty and honour are not acquired haphazardly, but rather are “acquired from living a lengthy period in the society where they form the basic element.”⁴¹ He was referring to the military society as socialized through the military colleges. These same values, the study claims, cannot be assured from outside a military academy or at a civilian institution.

However, what the study failed to recognize was that cadets attending military academies are self-selected to be there. In a 1994 study examining value change from cadets attending military academies, they found that while there was “clear evidence... of value change after almost four years... [but] it is not clear if the changes can be attributed solely to the deliberate socialization procedures at the

⁴⁰ Canada, Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-004 *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2005),17-18.

⁴¹ Canada, Department of National Defence, “CPD Study: Rationalization of the Canadian Military College System”, Chaired by MGen J.J. Paradis, (October 1976), Part 1, 9.

[academy].”⁴² Specifically the study suggests that the military academy socialization process “may not ‘create’ a new value set... as much as it clarifies and solidifies those values that the new cadet brings to the academy and for which the academy has selected.”⁴³ The aforementioned changes in attitude can be attributed to the maturation process and life experience gained from four years in college.⁴⁴ These findings were corroborated by comparing the values of cadets entering military academies to students entering civilian universities – the result “entering... cadets are notably different from... college students in ‘interpersonal values’”.⁴⁵ Essentially, military academies enroll those best suited for a life as military leaders, and the socialization process merely *enhances values already possessed at entrance*. This by no means discounts the very important role that socialization plays in developing young officers as future military leaders, however, other avenues exist to impart this culture. In the Canadian Forces, Direct Entry Officers for example are completely socialized without the benefit of a four-year military university degree. Months, if not years of formal trade courses, training and mentorship in the early developmental period of one’s career ensures that military values are sufficiently inculcated.

One of the biggest advocates for the demise of military universities is in fact a professor at one. Dr. Bruce Fleming teaches at the US Naval Military Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and amongst his arguments for reform of service academies, if not the complete abolishment of them, is what he describes as the incompatible goals of

⁴² Gwendolyn Stevens, Fred M. Rosa Jr, and Sheldon Gardner, “Military Academies as Instruments of Value Change”, *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Spring 1994): 478.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 480.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 478.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,480-482.

military universities: “the requirement for military obedience [juxtaposed against] the freedom to question by knowledge.”⁴⁶ The argument having already been made for university educated officers, that is, to provide the officer corps with the capability to “analyze, critically think, reflect and have vision in the larger geo-political and societal context”⁴⁷ is limited by the military university environment. This environment is characterized by military values previous discussed, but worthy of re-emphasizing here: duty, respect for authority, discipline, loyalty and honour. On the school grounds, cadets at service academies are expected to march around in lockstep with their colleagues, defer to the unquestionable wisdom of their chain of command and bow obediently to every order, meanwhile in class, they are expected to open their minds and question thoughts and beliefs to arrive at their own conclusions. In a perverse twist, many of the professors at military service academies are uniformed senior officers, further confounding the line between military obedience and the benefits of a liberal education. And, where civilian academics are at the lectern, many of them are retired senior officers.⁴⁸ So while the military service faculty’s academic freedom is protected, can the same be said for the students?

As a government institution, military universities are faced with objectivity challenges, whether real or perceived, that civilian universities do not have to contend with. *The 2013 Report of the Commission on Governance of the Royal Military College of Canada* commissioned by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)

⁴⁶ Bruce Fleming, “Let’s Abolish West Point: Military Academies Serve No One, Squander Millions of Tax Dollars,” *Salon*, (5 January 2015).
http://www.salon.com/2015/01/05/lets_abolish_west_point_military_academies_serve_no_one_squander_millions_of_tax_dollars/

⁴⁷ David Bercuson, “Up from the Ashes: The Re-Professionalization of the Canadian Forces after the Somalia Affair”, *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (2009): 33.

⁴⁸ Pam Zubek, “Degrees of Separation,” *Colorado Springs Independent*, 16 December 2010.

suggests, governance at RMCC is plagued with challenges.⁴⁹ While not particularly noted in that report, but worthy of discussion is the employment of military officers as academic faculty at the institution from which they sought their PhD. As a former Registrar at RMCC, Lieutenant-Colonel David Last notes, “universities that hire their own graduates are frowned upon because of the incestuous recycling of ideas that this implies.”⁵⁰ Despite the obvious bias and the chance of undermining academic rigour in these institutions, service academies continue to do it, mostly as a repayment for PhD sponsorship in the first place. The potential for regurgitation of academic thought and ideas leaves the institution susceptible for critique.

This discussion on the purposefulness of degree-granting academies would not be fully served without examining the corollary benefits they provide. Although RMCC and other military academies did not become degree-granting institutions until some time after their establishment, their symbol and significance to service of nation was no less important. Today, most Western nations have a service academy giving legitimacy to their militaries. As LCol Last put it, “RMCC has been a nation-building institution”⁵¹ and has been critical in the professionalization of the Canadian Forces’ officer corps. Others have described RMCC as the “very *heart and soul* of the officer corps of the Canadian Forces.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Elinor Sloan, Robin Broadway and LCol (Retired) Steve Nash, “Report of the Commission on Governance of the Royal Military College of Canada.” Commissioned by the Canadian Association of University Teachers, (April 2013), 2.

⁵⁰ David Last, LCol, “Military Degrees: How high is the Bar and Where’s the Beef?” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (Summer 2004): 35.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵² Ramsey Withers and John Scott Cowan, “Balanced Excellence: Leading Canada’s Armed Forces at RMC,” Report of the RMC Board of Governor’s Study Group: Review of the Undergraduate Program at RMC, (Kingston: Royal Military College of Canada, 1998), i.

Moreover, as with any university, the research conducted at service academies are relied upon in the defence community both here in Canada and abroad. Academic freedom allows faculty to examine areas of interest to them, but as a federal institution, the government can suggest topics pertinent to national defence. Along with research, as a repository of subject matter experts in defence, military universities can contribute to security and defence forums of relevance to their host nation as well as provide expert advice to officials, ministers, etc.⁵³

In addition to research and acting in an advisory capacity, one of the critical capabilities service academies provide is graduate level studies tailored to meet the changing needs of the defence environment and senior military leaders. In Canada, RMCC's contribution to the National Security Program and Joint Command and Staff Program are testament to this, as are the associated Masters degrees.

While commendable and relied upon by government and the Canadian Forces, RMCC's contribution to defence research, advisory roles and the development of senior officer education programs is not its *raison d'être*, but roles that have developed over time. These roles contribute to its legitimacy and justification for continued existence – but they are removed from RMCC's prime objective: “to prepare *officer cadets* (italics added) for effective service as commissioned officers in the Canadian Forces.”⁵⁴

This paper has attempted to determine the relevance of military academies today and in particular, that of RMCC. RMCC's initial impetus as a technical institute to meet deficiencies in military sciences has evolved over the years, to that of an institution of

⁵³ David Last, LCol, “Military Degrees: How high is the Bar and Where's the Beef?” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (Summer 2004): 12.

⁵⁴ Canada, *Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Military Colleges* (Ottawa: Treasury Board, 8 August 2001, updated 17 January 2007), Appendix 6.1, para 2.02.

higher learning, covering the full gamut of curricula. Over the last half-century, sporadic periods of economic restraint and public complacency – if not public disapproval due to poor military performance, have called into question the very existence of RMCC.

Though it has survived, it is not without impact.

Despite its continued existence, the influence of RMCC is decreasing, with fewer and fewer officers, proportionately speaking, being produced out of it, in favour of less expensive officer recruiting programs aimed at reducing the subsidy, or eliminating it altogether by simply recruiting officers with degrees already in hand. This has had the effect of reducing the influence of patronage towards *ring-knockers*, as they are occupying fewer of the senior positions in the upper echelons of the military.⁵⁵

With ostensibly less support in the form of graduates holding senior appointments, the case for a degree-granting military university in Canada will weaken. The service academy's position is further exacerbated by the suggestion that one of its key supporting arguments, its role in socializing cadets for a career selflessly devoted to duty, is debunked. Moreover, objectivity biases such as the dichotomy between students' freedom to question and their legal obligation to obedience further confounds the current role of military academies.

Unfortunately the scope of this paper has only allowed the wave tops of this topic to be examined, but it suggests that further independent study is required. With most Western nations continuing to plunge into a period of austerity, cost saving measures will continue to be examined. In light of the costs to graduate an officer from a degree-granting service academy with little more than what would have been achieved through

⁵⁵ "Pricey Education." Army Times (Garnett Co., Inc, Washington, USA: 22 November, 2010).

other programs, it begs the question as to whether service academies are sustainable now and into the future in their current role. DND would be wise to get ahead of the curve, and find a new niche for RMCC, perhaps one focusing on their current strength in graduate studies, before one is imposed.

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