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CANADA'S CONTEMPORARY SECURITY CHALLENGE

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I must study politics and war, that my sons may have the liberty to study mathematics and philosophy…in order to give their children the right to study painting, poetry, and music.

– John Adams

War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.

– John Stuart Mills

INTRODUCTION

The application of violence by organised armed forces is a characteristic that has existed since humans have gathered in tribes and colonies. Over the span of history, armies have been used to protect rulers and despots, conquer new territories, threaten and deter adversaries, subdue rebellions, impose religious or political will and even to annihilate peoples whose ideologies differ.

The application of violent means to achieve broad and specific political objectives has evolved significantly through the ages, to include the subjugation of organized armed forces to some form of higher political order, civilian oversight (elected civilian oversight in democracies), and subjected to the rigours of international conventions and law of armed conflict.[1] Despite these evolving steps to control the waging of organized violence

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[1] Ruth Wedgewood, 'War and Law - The Dilemmas of International Law and Coercive Enforcement', in *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*, ed. A. Crocker, Chester, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, Fourth Edition (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2013), 584.

by legitimately state-sponsored armed forces, war has been and remains a violent, complex and distinctly human activity. And with the ever-evolving concept of national and international security and the broadening instruments of power, the application of military force is also evolving and, arguably, becoming even more complex.[2] In order to remain relevant and continue to have the effective ability to influence on the international stage, Canada needs to stay abreast of these changes and to tailor its instruments of power and influence accordingly.

This essay argues that Canada's future security lies in its ability to embrace the broader dimensions of security and, concurrently, to evolve and sustain its instruments of national power – including renewed focus on many aspects of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). This is important to Canada in order to retain credible control over its sovereignty, deter affronts to its value-based national and international interests, and to remain relevant to current and future like-minded allies. However, understanding, navigating and embracing the broadening aspects of security, the changing instruments of power and influence in the contemporary global environment is a tall order requiring persistent political and strategic vision.

Emphasis must be placed on instruments of power that allow for speed of application and focus of effort. CAF recruiting and retention, structure and training, as well as faster integration of advanced technologies are all areas requiring significant attention and investment in order to ensure Canada remains a relevant smart power in the

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[2] The clash of force on force combat has been eclipsed by a more frequent use of highly specialised capabilities such as cyber or proxy methodologies. One must only look to Russian activities in Crimea and during the last US election to see how disruptive these types of methodologies can be. Allan Collins, ed., *Contemporary Security Studies*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

face of a complex security environment, and the effective use of new and emerging power tools and configurations. If unable to do so, Canada's ability to use its influence (and power, in all its forms) would be seriously degraded and, arguably, ineffectual both at home and abroad.[3]

SECURITY

Despite local and regional instabilities and the rise of non-state violence, the relative peace and stability among the main power blocks that emerged from the Cold War stand-off was followed by a mostly unipolar environment with the USA as the world's superpower.[4] However, a decline of this same American power and influence is creating pressures for a restructuring of the international system - characterized by intense globalization - while at the same time giving rise to regional actors and the resurgence of nationalism and isolationism.[5] And this occurring at a time when several challenges to national and global security cannot be effectively managed unilaterally and/or through the nation-state construct.[6]

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[3] If Canada is unable to adjust to the evolving security and power climates such national interests as Arctic Sovereignty and the management of natural resources in remote locations will be threatened with increasing frequency and severity. In addition, continued and more meaningful contributions to alliances such as NORAD, which is critical to northern and continental defence, are required to ensure that Canada is seen as a credible (if not equal) contributor providing it both influence and leverage as and when required.

[4] Joseph S. Nye, 'Smart Power', in *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 208, https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379x.2011.560012.

[5] The last 10 years have seen a rise in the regional influence of such states as China and Russia as well as the European Union. Michalski, Anna, and Zhongqi Pan. *Unlikely Partners?: China, the European Union and the Forging of a Strategic Partnership*. Springer, 2017.

[6] Security challenges such as climate change, mass migration, supply chain and cyber security as well as emerging health threats cannot be solved unilaterally. In addition, they are, in general, threats that are not easily addressed through the concept of the nation-states traditional security apparatus.

International Security

The current international security landscape is transforming. The threat of interstate conflict remains but it is no longer the existential threat it once posed. Indeed, it is far more complex and intertwined with the phenomena of globalization, to include 5G/6G, artificial/assisted intelligence and cyber technologies, and the management of other strategic global resources.[7]

The latter half of the 20th and early 21st centuries have witnessed a move away from bi-polar geopolitics to increased globalization.[8] Globalization, is not solely a trade and economic phenomenon; it spans the political, cultural, social, technological, military and environmental domains as well. Networks of interdependence across all domains allow for quicker and in general, more desirable results among cooperators.[9] While globalization may not be the universal model with its attendant moral principles that some had hoped would bind human resolve globally, it has had the effect of rapidly benefitting some and constraining or marginalizing others.[10] Thus, not everyone seems to emerge as benefactors of the globalization phenomenon.

Below the mantle of globalization, persistent alliances such as NATO and NORAD, which have proven to be mainstay pillars for the western world, remain

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[7] Clashes of large armed forces although unlikely is still a threat. This can be evidenced from the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. While the force on force component was relatively small, the cyber and information campaign operations that were associated with this incursion are still in evidence today. There is some evidence that the continual bombardment of misinformation and disinformation through 'fake news' and social media has become the new normal of perpetual conflict.

[8] Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, 'The Globalization of Politics: American Foreign Policy for a New Century.', *Brookings Review* 21, no. 1 (2003): 12.

[9] *Ibid*.

[10] Tim Dunne and Brian C. Schmidt, 'Realism', in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens, 5th Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86.

important. However, evolution is required in order for them to remain effective and

relevant in the broader context of security (human, economic, sustainable environment,

health, digital connectivity, supply chain).[11] As many nations have recognized –

including Canada – an over-reliance on the USA for their broader security needs may not

be a panacea, both in terms of their national interests and those of their other allies.[12]

Consequently, new and less likely partnerships are emerging that just a few decades ago

were seemingly unacceptable. The forging of these new and emerging constructs will

undoubtedly carry inherent risks. They are occurring nonetheless and, arguably, may be

born of necessity.[13]

National Security

The major threat to Canada is no longer a violent confrontation between the USA

and Russia, which once included the possibility of a nuclear exchange between these two.

During the Cold War, Canada made significant contributions to alliance security, while at

the same time it relied on its contiguous proximity to the USA for its own national

security and defence. Since the end of the Cold War, Canada has equally benefitted from

its reliance on the USA and has made marginal investments in its own national security.[14]

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[11] Jamie Shea, 'Keeping NATO Relevant', *Policy Outlook*, 2012, 10.
[12] *Ibid*., 7.
[13] The EU-Chinese partnership is an example of what was once an antithesis and thought of as an impossible partnership to one that is now becoming more regularized, institutionalized and mutually beneficial across a wide spectrum.
[14] Canada has benefitted from its proximity to the US in terms of defence matters. This can be evidenced from its relatively low percentage of GDP in defence spending when compared to other NATO and 5 eyes allies. In addition, Canada has contributed very little other than staff power to continental missile defence. Graeme Gordon, "U.S. calls out Canada's lack of military spending," *The Post Millennial*, 25 November 2019.

Ironically, while relying extensively on the US security mantle, Canada has also been internationalist in many ways: through its attempts at renewing participation in UN peacekeeping missions, promoting gender equality in less advanced countries, and its contributions and dedication to international human rights and democratic institutions, to list a few. This Canadian brand and outlook, has provided Canada with a sense of international legitimacy.[15] In the future, however, over reliance on the US for its broader security, may place Canada and its citizens in jeopardy, particularly when it comes to national identity, sovereignty, and Canada's ability to be a credible influencer on the global scene.[16]

The projection of Canadian values and the protection of Canadian interests abroad have been central to our global security strategies. Geography and history have been powerful determinants and played well into this - oceans apart, northern frontier and strong ally and neighbour to the south - allowing Canada to thrust itself onto the international scene, while staying very close to the US for its traditional security needs. However, geography no longer provides the broader desired protection, as we witness rapid advancements in digital technology (artificial intelligence, cyber, robotics, and telecommunications, and their impact on warfare), international trade and finances, as

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[15] Canada, Government of Canada, "Canada's Efforts to Address Global Issues," last modified 1 October 2020, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/index.aspx?lang=eng.

[16] In order for Canada to achieve credible influence in the global context, such as a much desired permanent seat at the UN Security Council, it must be able to demarcate from reliance on the USA for broader security issues such as coastal and Arctic defence. Evan Dyer, "Canada's UN Security Council bid overlooks the pitfalls of influence," *CBC News*, 12 February 2020.

well as the rapid dislocation and relocation of populations, with all of their attendant issues (cultural, religious, social, financial, and health).

I argue that an internationalist approach is still needed for Canada. But in order to ensure it has a reasonable amount of influence on the global stage, Canada must also possess the ability to protect its sovereignty and value-based agenda. This entails more than just borders, policing and a traditional military, largely task-organized independently. Canada must embrace all the dimensions of security and harness its instruments of influence and power in a more coordinated and inter-connected way.[17]

POWER

As the realm of security continues to transform so must our understanding of power, in all its forms, and its effective applications. In the context of Foreign Policy and International Relations, power is defined as the state's ability to achieve favourable outcomes across multiple domains.[18] Power can been divided into two main components: soft and hard. Soft power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes through persuasion, influence and attraction; while hard power is the ability to use coercion by means of force or payment.[19] There are multiple aspects that determine a state's ability to employ either soft or hard power; however, in general, soft power is determined by culture, values and policies, while hard power is determined by economic and military strength.[20]

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[17] Maurice Baril, 'Future Roles for the Canadian Forces', *International Journal*, 2011.
[18] Joseph S. Nye, 'Power and Foreign Policy', *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (2011): 13, https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2011.555960.
[19] Joseph S. Nye, 'Get Smart', *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): 160.
[20] *Ibid*.

These two components of power are not mutually exclusive. However, the use of soft power is not suitable when a swift resolution is required as it takes time to come to fruition and therefore cannot be forced to achieve a desired outcome quickly, unlike the application of hard power.[21] While some countries do indeed have the assets of hard power to force others to acquiesce to their will, they are not likely to do so unilaterally without some form of unacceptable risk or unintended consequences. Hence, cooperation and a certain degree of acceptance from others is required for the use of hard power to be deemed acceptable.[22] Likewise, soft power, without the means to back it up smartly, can prove futile.

Instruments of Power

In an environment where multiple instruments of power can be mobilized quickly and leveraged simultaneously, military power may matter less – but still matters. As figure 1 demonstrates, power exists across a spectrum and understanding how and when various instruments of power ought to be applied is critical to being able to exert influence effectively.

Hard   Soft

Command > Coerce-Threat-Pay-Sanction-Frame-Persuade-Attract < Co-opt

Figure 1 – Power Continuum
Source: Nye, Power and Foreign Policy, 19

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[21] *Ibid*., 161.
[22] The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 is an example of how the unilateral use of force to obtain territory a country believes it is entitled to is divisive amongst the internationally community.

As previously stated, hard and soft power are not mutually exclusive and can be combined in order to achieve 'smart power'.[23] This is, however, not only a matter of applying effects in both the hard and soft power domains. Rather, a consolidated and successful combination of the two at the correct time; hence, a smart power strategy, is what promises to yield the desired results.[24] Implied in this concept, as described by Joseph Nye, is that all states, big or small, have potential to exert smart power if thoughtful and appropriate consideration is given to how it ought to be applied appropriately and proportionally to the circumstances.

Standing militaries, for many countries, have been a prevalent way in which hard power has been wielded; however, as instruments of power and concepts of security change, perhaps the way militaries are structured does not adequately address emerging threats.[25] Climate change and its unpredictability, management of global strategic resources, food and water scarcity, the mass migration of people, pandemics, the myriad applications (use and misuse) of modern technologies pose increased security concerns that require a review of the types of power and influence appropriate to protect against these evolving threats.

While armed confrontation between and among nation-states has abated, intra-state conflict between armed groups (or non-state actors) and regional violence

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[23] Nye, "Get Smart." … 161.
[24] Nye, "Power and Foreign Policy." … 20.
[25] A. J. Lyle, 'The Decreasing Utility of the Armed Forces: Society, State and War in the Post-Modern World', *Defence Studies* 12, no. 3 (2012): 376, https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2012.703844.

remain.[26] To this end, a certain measure of ability to project the use of force (hard power) needs to be retained. As Barack Obama identified in his 2009 Nobel Peace prize acceptance speech,

> We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth that we will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations -- acting individually or in concert -- will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified.[27]

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

So, what does this shifting sand in the security and power spheres mean for Canada and the CAF. The application of legitimate state violence for a clear, but limited objective, remains likely, but not necessarily useful when considering unintended consequences. This can be evidenced in the West's presence in Afghanistan and its' unclear strategic objectives. Anything beyond limited objectives, the human and economic costs of war remain high.

This means that Canada must continue to evolve its security policies, along with its tools in all their forms - including its military, to reflect its value-based way of life, while not neglecting the requirement to protect those same values and its sovereignty as part of the broader international system. It must remain focused on structures that are not necessarily threat based, but value-based and realistic. Anything less will erode Canada's

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[26] John Mueller, 'War Has Almost Ceased to Exist: An Assessment', *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 2 (2009): 299–301, https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1538-165X.2009.tb00650.x.

[27] Barrack Obama, "A Just and Lasting Peace", Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Oslo, Norway, 10 December 2009.

ability to protect itself from internal and external pressures and be less relevant in the broader global context. Hence, the CAF needs to leverage the strengths and values of Canadian society in a manner that reinforces Canada as a 'smart power'.

Recruiting and Retention

Canada's current Defence Policy, 'Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)', states that people are at "at the core of everything the Canadian Armed Forces does to deliver on its mandate."[28] Yet, it is not readily evident that the CAF conducts Human Resource (HR) management significantly different than it did two or three decades ago. There continues to be a struggle between the requirement to maintain the ethos of the CAF and the 'profession of arms', while at the same time to modernize CAF approaches to recruiting and retention. Central to this issue is the requirement for the members of the CAF to be indoctrinated into the military culture and live by the military ethos; consequently, to do so, the CAF has adopted a bottom up entry scheme.[29] This provides very few opportunities for lateral transfer into and out of the organization as well as very little novel or *hors* expertise employment. Members are locked into an HR system that values traditional upward movement vice broad employment. Additionally, this model places major strains on the middle level experience on which it is reliant to function. As experience can only be gained through upward movement in the organization, there is inevitably loss of specialized personnel whose skills and experience take both time and investment to achieve. The bottom up approach model has both significant influence and

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[28] Canada, Department of National Defence, 'Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy' (Ottawa, 2017), 19.
[29] Erik Rozema-Seaton, 'RELINQUANT REDITUT – An Alternate Approach to RCAF Retention and Recruiting' (Canadian Forces College, 2018), 10.

constraints on the organization's ability to recruit and retain and, hence, to cater to the well-being and relevance of the CAF.

Orienting the CAF for success in a changing environment requires fundamental changes in the way the activities of recruiting and retention are conducted. The current model of recruiting unskilled applicants and training them through the organization ought to be modified in order to fill critical gaps in specialized and technical fields. In addition, less rigid terms of service as well as policies that allow members to transition between military and civilian employment and back again need to be put in place. It may be argued that changing the bottom up approach jeopardizes the CAF culture and profession of arms, but perhaps given the changing nature of security and conflict, it is time to revisit the very meaning of 'the profession of arms' and how it is applied.

Structuring and Training for Success

Canada is not and, arguably should not strive to be a military juggernaut. Rather, more realistically and relevant, Canada should possess a small, integrated, agile military, structured for short duration medium intensity conflict, particularly leveraging success in capacity building, humanitarian assistance, non-combatant evacuation and precision use of force, while maintaining an ability to protect sovereignty autonomously and in conjunction with our continental commitments.[30] Structuring the CAF in this manner compliments Canadian values and reinforces an emphasis on the tools required to leverage smart power.

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[30] Michael K. Jeffrey, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation: Institutional Leadership as a Catalyst for Change* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009).

To yield smart power more effectively, it is necessary to leverage cross-departmental education, training and integration abilities in a more deliberate way. Currently, much inter-departmental cooperation is *ad hoc* and done out of necessity rather than as a matter of policy and deliberate strategy.[31]

While Canada has made modest advancements in its 'Whole of Government' approach as a result of its intervention in Afghanistan, more efforts - backed by a deliberate policy - need to be exerted to expand this to a "Whole of Society" approach.[32] The ability for the CAF to call up and leverage subject matter experts beyond the military, development and diplomatic areas of government for peace support, stability and capacity building operations has the potential to be a force multiplier and can bolster Canada's international status. Areas such as medicine, engineering, construction, architecture, judicial and law enforcement are examples of niche areas that could be leveraged in a low-intensity conflict, where combat operations are not the focus.

For such an endeavour to be successful it is imperative that integration is fostered at all levels of training and education for CAF members. Of note is the gap between theoretical education and practical training in this realm. For instance, the CAF Officer Corps has the theoretical education during the early stages of their careers to comprehend the appropriateness of integration, yet this is not reinforced through practical training until much later in their careers.[33] The CAF's over-reliance on conventional combat

[31] Howard G. Coombs, 'Soldiers First: Preparing the Canadian Army for Twenty-First Century Peace Operations', *International Journal* 73, no. 2 (2018): 217, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702018785981.

[32] Darren Brunk, '"whole-of-Society" Peacebuilding: A New Approach for Forgotten Stakeholders', *International Journal* 71, no. 1 (2016): 63, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702015617785.

[33] Coombs notes that junior officers are taught the theoretical benefits of integration early in their careers, but the Military Training and Education system lacks robustness in ensuring this is backed by practical

training creates a disaccord between perceptions, mandate and mission objectives.[34]

Further advancements in training and education of CAF members at all stages, reinforced

with practical exercises will be required in order to maintain relevancy in addressing

future security issues.

Investing in the future – Rapid integration of advanced technologies

While the likelihood for mass mobilizations of troops with tremendous amounts

of firepower capable of inflicting large casualties on the enemy is generally low, the

emergence of augmented (artificial) intelligence, cyber threats, and other advanced

technologies in the conflict arena are increasing, thus having the potential to cause

enormous damage with or without 'physical' confrontations across another state's

border.[35] State versus state conflict will more likely be characterized by an increasing

reliance on cyber and virtual incursions; so, the CAF must be prepared to protect Canada

and Canadians against this threat. It is not in Canada's interest to develop purely

offensive cyber capabilities, but it must ensure that its cyber defenses and abilities to

target threats when required are continuously available and technologically superior.

For the CAF to contribute effectively in the cyber domain, the procurement of

these capabilities and their continuous upgrading in a timely fashion is crucial. This

requires working closely with key allies and, equally important, collaborative

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training. There exists a large gap between formative education at the junior officer level and the first real integrated training opportunities at the Senior Officer level. This has been evidenced by the authors personal experiences. CAF integration with other agencies was a large component of both undergraduate and OPME (now CAFJOD) education, however, it was not until the Canadian Security Studies Programme at the LCol level the integration was ever exercised. Coombs, 'Soldiers First: Preparing the Canadian Army for Twenty-First Century Peace Operations' 216.

[34] Coombs, 'Soldiers First: …', 213.

[35] Nye, 'Get Smart', 163.

partnerships with industry innovators willing to invest in Canada. The defence procurement process must be sufficiently agile to allow for the rapid purchase, insertion and continuous upgrading of the best technologies available to a small, integrated, agile Canadian military, structured for short duration medium intensity conflict, an ability to protect Canadian sovereignty autonomously and in conjunction with our continental commitments. Initiatives such as the recently announced *Defence Procurement Agency* by the current Canadian Government, and the soon to be approved pan-government *Cyber Security Procurement Vehicle* need to be established with urgency, structured and enabled to work hand in hand with the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure that the right capabilities are brought to bear when and where required.[36]

CONCLUSION

The current international system is generally bound by a rules-based system, one in which Canada can continue to thrive and contribute its own value-based aspirations. However, the international security system is evolving, while retaining its nation-state competitive nature. Therefore, Canada must continue to evolve and sustain its instruments of national power in order to deter affronts to its value-based, national and international interests, while navigating and embracing the broadening aspects of security, power and influence in the contemporary global environment.

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[36] Currently there is no timeline set for the establishment of the Defence Procurement Agency, despite it being a promise made by the current government in the last election. Further neglect of the procurement process for DND puts both national security and the lives of the men and women that serve in peril. Charlie Pinkerton, "No timeline set for development of promised defence procurement agency," *iPolitics*, 2 January 2020.

As part of the multi-faceted cluster of instruments of national power and international influence, the CAF must continue to evolve in order to remain relevant. Particular attention is needed in the areas of recruiting and retention, force structure and training, and rapid integration of advanced technologies. If one is to agree that the world needs more of Canada, then Canada must step up by remaining relevant and credible on the world stage as a smart power.

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