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DEFENCE DIPLOMACY: A VELVET-GLOVE APPROACH IN A PLASTIC-GLOVE WORLD

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JCSP 45

Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 45 – PCEMI 45
2018 – 2020

SOLO FLIGHT

**DEFENCE DIPLOMACY: A VELVET-GLOVE APPROACH IN
A PLASTIC-GLOVE WORLD**

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Defence Diplomacy: A Velvet-Glove Approach in a Plastic-Glove World

INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic, in three short months, has revealed questions about global supply chains and international interdependence and has prompted new discussion on broader security issues. The slow shift away from globalism has been accelerated; demonstrated though overt nationalism, in some cases bordering on virulent. It has reaffirmed the central role and responsibility of national governments to manage the response to such crises; to maximize nationally focused response efforts and resources, while minimizing the economic impact.¹ The swift shift in global power politics has spurred Ottawa to engage in a review of foreign policy and the continued relevance of *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, (SSE) which relies on assumptions and multilateral institutions that have developed since the end of WW2, such as NATO, the UN and the Five Eyes community. Global confidence in the UN and the WHO are in question; China is swift to enact coercive sanctions on trade partners for suggesting China is to blame for the virus; and the United States had temporarily blocked aid to Canada based on exclusionary nationalism ideas regarding critical medical supplies, even though they would not be the only country to do so with a neighbouring country.²

With a defence policy based on a pillar of *engagement*, how can policy makers react in a proactive way to address the impact of growing global nationalism and leverage

¹ Hirouki Akita. "Coronavirus pandemic pushes US and China into new Cold War." Nikkei Asian Review. May 16, 2020. Accessed May 18, 2020. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Comment/Coronavirus-pandemic-pushes-US-and-China-into-new-Cold-War?fbclid=IwAR2XooCMDumAOAaA8jW6IyIr5wUYUQMjPsStgopmcnTs3p03y5uLzxfuGnc>.

² Vogel, Peter. "Nationalism: the even greater risk of the COVID-19 crisis?" IMD.org. March 2020. Accessed May 3, 2020. <https://www.imd.org/research-knowledge/articles/Nationalism-the-even-greater-risk-of-the-COVID-19-crisis/>

Canada's strengths in a rapidly changing multilateral environment? What resources will be available to execute? Recovery from the 2008 global financial crisis saw the hardest hit countries institute *austerity measure* budgets to recover from their respective, necessary stimulus spending packages. With Canadian government spending already high during the response phase, one can only speculate what funds will remain when the economic impact of the recovery phase becomes apparent. Any proposed update to how DND/CAF undertakes global engagement activities will need to consider how to efficiently advance Canada's national interest abroad, particularly in the sphere of international security, where increasing nationalism and its effect on multilateral institutions threatens to reshape the political landscape. Military cooperation, once the sole domain of the Defence Attaché, has evolved to include too many activities for these small staffs to accomplish, causing partners and allies within our global and regional alliances to update their definitions of defence diplomacy to incorporate modern theories, expanding the role of their respective Departments of Defence to engage in international relations. While Canada's defence policy was only released three years ago, it did not advance DND/CAF's role the same way our partners have, which has the potential to negatively impact Canada's ability to remain agile in a rapidly changing world. Updating Canada's understanding of defence diplomacy, supported by the resources to execute the associated tasks will provide the flexibility necessary to navigate an uncertain future.

DISCUSSION

IMPACT OF NATIONALISM

From Donald Trump's *America First* strategy and BREXIT before the pandemic, to China's *mask diplomacy* and Russian military convoys delivering medical supplies to Italy afterward, trends would indicate that global relationships are shifting. This is especially true of the USA, who normally provide international aid, currently too busy dealing with the world's largest rate of infection. Dr Florian Bieber, a noted expert on political science and who is the Chair for the *Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group*, says of the rise of nationalism, "This increased visibility is less attributable to a shift of global attitudes, but rather of the political and social articulation of these attitudes."³ He goes on to categorize nationalism on two axes, juxtaposing the level of inclusion and exclusion, and whether nationalism is endemic or virulent. (see figure 1)

	Level of Intensity	
Level of Exclusion	Inclusionary latent nationalism	Inclusionary virulent Nationalism
	Exclusionary latent nationalism	Exclusionary virulent nationalism

Figure 1 - Conceptualizing nationalism

Source: *Is Nationalism on the Rise? Assessing Global Trends*, 521

The distinction is important when determining if a form of nationalism has the potential to upset the status quo.⁴ Virulent nationalism does not manifest itself without a catalyst, as it is *a response to indigenous or exogenous shocks to an existing system* such

³ Florian Bieber. "Is Nationalism on the Rise? Assessing Global Trends." *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 17, No. 5. 2018. Pg. 521.

⁴ *Ibid*

as ideological, economic, institutional, or social events.⁵ COVID 19 represents such a shock on a global scale.

Up until this point, the growing tension between China and the United States was economic and military related, as opposed to ideological, as China is not trying to spread communism around the globe like Soviet Russia did during the Cold War.⁶ While the PRC is not emulating the USSR, it is certainly engaging in *economic imperialism*, with support for projects across Africa and some spots in the Caribbean through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, with the American death toll currently surpassing the total number of combat deaths since Vietnam started in 1966,⁷ US society is looking for someone to pin the blame on, and President Trump is pointing squarely at the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). There is a high risk that the pandemic could result in adding an ideological component to this tension and initiate another Cold War between the two. That would certainly upset the status quo.

As a middle-power nation with a foreign policy tied directly to the USA, it is easy to see the benefit in employing Canadian hard power assets to their coalition efforts or priorities, such as the NATO foreign presence mission OPERATION REASSURANCE or the US led Joint Task Force Unifier in Ukraine. How can DND/CAF position itself to contribute to existing bilateral and multilateral relationships with allies and partners,

⁵ *Ibid*, Pg.522.

⁶ Hirouki Akita. "Coronavirus pandemic pushes US and China into new Cold War." Nikkei Asian Review. May 16, 2020. Accessed May 18, 2020. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Comment/Coronavirus-pandemic-pushes-US-and-China-into-new-Cold-War?fbclid=IwAR2XooCMDumAOAaA8jW6IyIr5wUYUQMjPsStgopmcnTs3p03y5uLzxfuGnc>.

⁷ Lance Lambert. The coronavirus has now killed more Americans than the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Afghanistan War, and Iraq War combined. May 15, 2020. Accessed May 18, 2020. <https://fortune.com/2020/05/15/coronavirus-deaths-us-covid-19-death-rate-covid-19-more-than-korean-vietnam-gulf-afghanistan-iraq-wars-combined/>.

whose collective needs would be no less than they were before the pandemic, while bracing for the impact of a new bi-polar world?

ENTER DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

Defence Diplomacy is an oft misunderstood term, even by those who practice it. The term first originated in the UK, in response to the British Labour Party's Strategic Defence Review in 1998.⁸ The traditional Military Diplomacy activities undertaken by an accredited Military Attaché were no longer needed to contain the threat of the spread of communism, but their critical impact on foreign relations remained.⁹ The review would ultimately define Defence Diplomacy as the "peaceful use of defences in order to achieve positive results in the development of bilateral and multilateral relations."¹⁰ Defence diplomacy did not include military operations, rather it focused on cooperation, including: exchanges of personnel, ships and aircraft, high level visits, training, and exercises, etc. *Its main purpose is to build and maintain trust and help in the development of democratic armed forces.*¹¹ The complete list of defence diplomacy activities can be seen in figure 2.

⁸ Drab Lech, PhD. *Defence Diplomacy: An Important Tool for the Implementation of Foreign Policy and Security of the State*. Warsaw: War Studies University, Poland. 2004. Pg 59.

⁹ Juan Emilio Cheyre. "Defence Diplomacy." Oxford Handbooks Online. March 2013. Accessed Jan 22, 2020. Pg. 5.

¹⁰ Drab Lech, PhD. *Defence Diplomacy: An Important Tool for the Implementation of Foreign Policy and Security of the State*. Warsaw: War Studies University, Poland. 2004. Pg 60.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Pg. 61.

• Bilateral and multilateral contacts between senior military and civilian defense officials.
• Appointment of defense attaches to foreign countries.
• Bilateral defense cooperation agreements.
• Training of foreign military and civilian defense personnel
• Provision of expertise and advice on democratic control of armed forces, defense management and military technical areas.
• Contacts and exchanges between military personnel and units, and ship visits.
• Placement of military or civilian personnel in partner countries' defense ministries and armed forces (exchanges).
• Deployment of training teams.
• Provision of military equipment and other material aid.
• Bilateral or multilateral military exercises for training purposes.

Figure 2: Defence Diplomacy Activities

Source: Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster, “Adelphi Paper 365: Reshaping Defence Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Cooperation and Assistance” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Several researchers since have gone farther with their interpretations of what defence diplomacy involves. One key to this discussion involves Tan See Seng, and Bjubhindar Singh from Singapore, who defined defence diplomacy as “...joint and coordinated application of peaceful initiatives of cooperation between the defence and armed forces’ leadership to build trust, counteract crises and resolve conflict.”¹² What remained constant in this update was emphasis on building *trust*. This cannot be accomplished solely from a diplomatic office. In 2012, the Spanish Ministry of Defence published its *Defence Diplomacy Plan*, a 133-page document which opens with the following bold statement, “...the Defence Diplomacy Plan is the international relations handbook for all official organs involved in National Defence. This document describes the priorities [and] means for achieving our goals.”¹³ This demonstrates the policy’s effort to focus the whole of government effort across the entire spectrum of defence

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ Ministerio De Defensa. Defence Diplomacy Plan. 2012. Madrid: Ministerio De Defensa.

diplomacy roles and priorities, within and without the Ministry. The Spanish definition of defence diplomacy provided therein goes even further, “The various international activities based mainly on dialogue and cooperation, carried out bilaterally by the *Ministry* of Defence with our allies, partners and other friendly countries to promote the accomplishment of defence policy objectives in support of Spanish foreign policy.”¹⁴ This definition provides a comprehensive understanding of what, when, who, why and how.

From September to December 2017, Assistant Deputy Minister (Review Services) conducted a review of the Canadian Defence Attaché (CDA) activities and engagement with Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the effectiveness of these activities. It describes the program as follows:

The Military Diplomacy component of the Global Engagement Program falls under the authority of the VCDS. It represents the contribution of the CDAs reporting to the Director of Foreign Liaison (DFL) ...and the Permanent Resident Mission in New York (PRMNY) reporting to the Assistant Deputy Minister (Policy)¹⁵

What is interesting is that this review was conducted while SSE was published, evident in the seemingly interchangeable definitions of military diplomacy and defence diplomacy; the latter term being used in SSE for the first time. This could be considered an improvement, as the former defence policy did not include either term. Further, the current CAF/DND *Guidance on International Priorities for Global Engagements*, which, “...has been developed to facilitate a coherent and coordinated approach to these engagements, improving alignment with GoC policies and objectives, allowing more

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Pg. 18.

¹⁵ ADM(RS). 2018. Evaluation of Global Engagement/Military Diplomacy. Evaluation Study, Ottawa: Government of Canada. Pg. iv.

robust analysis of potential activities, and increasing the likelihood that the desired effects will be realized...”¹⁶ does not mention the word diplomacy in any context. This is important, as it suggests a cognitive disconnect between Canada and our partners in understanding what the full scope of Defence Diplomacy is, as opposed to its predecessor Military Diplomacy. It also suggests that the Department does not consider partner engagements as a function of Canadian statecraft. Indeed, the DND/CAF seems not to appreciate its own strengths beyond warfighting. One of the key findings of the ADM(RS) report on Global Engagements was evidence of ongoing need for military diplomacy activities, as (SSE) places substantial focus on military diplomacy.¹⁷ Evidence supports that DND/CAF has an effective network based on its global engagement through the CDAs, but highlights that “...challenges continue in maintaining staff capacity. Without these resources, CDAs have been limited to in some cases only addressing high-priority requests and pressing issues.”¹⁸ A lack of personnel and a network that includes allies and partners who do not have direct access to defence attachés, suggests that it would be difficult at best to maintain meaningful relationships without dedicating more resources to Canadian statecraft. The inevitable impact on national budgets in the wake of COVID response and recovery efforts, suggest that now is the time for policy makers to take stock of how to realign resources to meet the challenges ahead.

¹⁶ Government of Canada. 2019. "Guidance on International Priorities for Defence Engagement." Ottawa: Government of Canada.

¹⁷ ADM(RS). 2018. Evaluation of Global Engagement/Military Diplomacy. Evaluation Study, Ottawa: Government of Canada. Pg. v.

¹⁸ Ibid, Pg. 18..

SSE AND DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

SSE defines Defence Diplomacy within a policy context. It states, “The Canadian Armed Forces’ current defence diplomacy efforts are focused on three key streams:

- (1) exchanges and assignments with Canada’s closest allies, particularly the United States and our Five-eyes partners;
- (2) active and ongoing involvement in multilateral organizations, principally NATO and the United Nations; and
- (3) military representation in our diplomatic missions worldwide.

Additional commentary within SSE, under the heading of Defence diplomacy states, “...Deep and meaningful relationships with international partners allow the defence team to...enhance interoperability and operational effectiveness...reinforce the capacity of partners...exchange lessons learned and best practices...”¹⁹ While this is positive, the primary focus on DFL as Canada’s primary effort of Defence Diplomacy remains *defacto* Military Diplomacy and does not provide the Department the focus nor priority to ensure that it can sustain *deep and meaningful relationships* at the grass roots level, where true dialogue and cooperation happens through interaction and shared experience. After all, this is how service personnel bond with each other and develop life-long friendships and *trust*.

¹⁹ Government of Canada. *Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: Government of Canada. 2017. Pg. 93.

ITS ALL ABOUT POWER

As military diplomacy alone was deemed insufficient to deal with the rapid and unforeseen collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War, scholars formulated a new spectrum of power politics that looked beyond the simple military might paradigm that had dominated the Cold War. Professor Joseph S Nye raised the notion of *hard power* which is coercive in nature, and *soft power* that is co-optive. Of these he said, “the types of resources that are associated with hard power include tangibles like force and money, while the resources that are associated with soft power include intangibles like institutions, ideas, values, culture and perceived legitimacy of policies.”²⁰ In 2003, Nye updated his theory to include the term *smart power* which he defined as *strategies that combine hard and soft power resources in differing contexts*.²¹ The key component of smart power according to Nye is *power conversion* – getting from resources to behavioural outcome.²² He cites the example of China’s deliberate investment in soft power resources, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to obscure its hard power threat to the Region.²³ In 2010 Ernest Wilson would expand on smart power as “an actors’ ability to combine hard and soft power mutually reinforcing them, making the actor’s purpose more effective and efficient.” (Cheyre, 5) Linking soft power directly to defence diplomacy, Gregory Winger defined defence diplomacy as “...an exercise of soft power practiced by the defence establishment of one country upon the government of another...”²⁴ He concludes by suggesting that it is not “...cooperation for its own sake,

²⁰ Joseph S. Nye. "Power and Foreign Policy." *Journal of Political Power*. 2011. Pg. 19.

²¹ *Ibid*, Pg. 20.

²² *Ibid*

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ Winger, Gregory. "The Velvet Gauntlet: A Theory of Defence Diplomacy." IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, Vol. XXXIII. Vienna. 2014. Pg. 11.

but actually the method of bringing the strategic thinking of one country (the recipient) into harmony with another (the practitioner).”²⁵ If we accept that DFL requires additional resources, and that they alone cannot satisfy all of the requirements of modern defence diplomacy, then there is merit in policy makers reviewing and updating the focus of Canada’s global engagement efforts to capitalize on the full range of capabilities that DND/CAF bring to statecraft by focusing equal priority on nurturing the intangibles as previously mentioned. Partners and allies around the world who subscribe to this practice place great emphasis on military cooperation.

MILITARY COOPERATION

Canadian military cooperation efforts are coordinated by ADM(Pol) through the management of the Military Training and Cooperation Plan (MTCP) by the Directorate of Military Training and Cooperation (DMTC). DMTC is the intersection of diplomacy (through the military attaché network), defence (in cooperation with the L1’s) and policy (within ADM(Pol)) which links strategic direction with tactical resources. As the name implies, DMTC is responsible for the cooperation aspect of DND/CAFs defence diplomacy while DFL is responsible for military attachés. In stark contrast to the all-encompassing policy of Spain for instance, Canada’s defence policy does not include military cooperation as a priority. Despite ADM(RS) reviews that indicate demand for the services of both Directorates continues to increase, DFL and DMTC struggle to meet their program goals, citing lack of human resources.²⁶ While SSE states that, “Defence contributes to this broader diplomatic activity in close cooperation with whole-of-

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ ADM(RS). 2018. Evaluation of Global Engagement/Military Diplomacy. Evaluation Study, Ottawa: Government of Canada. Pg. 18.

government partners, including Global Affairs Canada...”²⁷ it falls short of assigning any priority to DND/CAF's role and function in Canadian statecraft. It relegates DND/CAF to its traditional hard power roles rather than elevating its soft power potential to be an equal and efficient tool of Canadian soft power projection. This is not to say that Canada has not seen success in this area, within the current policy framework. The MTCP has been in operation in Canada since 1965, providing English and French language instruction, access to Canadian PME institutions such as Canadian Forces College offerings and the Canadian Army Command and Staff College (CACSC).²⁸ The last CRS review completed in 2013 found that, “While the evaluation found that the review of federal legislation did not explicitly reference defence policy or diplomacy, these activities are seen to be an appropriate role for the GoC...”²⁹ While a key finding of this review stated that, “...activities under the MTCP were seen to lead to establishing and strengthening relationships and...significant evidence of building capacity of foreign military partners...attributed to the efforts of the MTCP personnel and training activities....”³⁰ the report did not equate this *significant evidence* of success with a need to prioritize MTCP's efforts with those of the other instruments of power projection that Canada has at its disposal. Correcting this by updating our current understanding of Defence Diplomacy would result in the following benefits:

- It would create the conditions for DND/CAF to prioritize personnel, funding, and other resources necessary to continue and evolve the delivery of military cooperation activities, capitalizing on their demonstrated effect on a regional

²⁷ Government of Canada. *Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: Government of Canada. 2017. Pg. 89.

²⁸ Chief of Review Services. Evaluation of Defence Policy and Diplomacy. Evaluation Study, Ottawa: Government of Canada. 2013. Pg. 5.

²⁹ *Ibid*, Pg. 6.

³⁰ *Ibid*, Pg. 8.

basis. Often, at the L1 level when funds need to be restrained, the first training activities to be cancelled occur OUTCAN, as these are deemed as *good goes*; assessed for their impact on the unit budget opposed to their impact on international relations. In addition, this prioritization could change the personnel priorities assigned to DND/CAF, ensuring that DFL and DMTC can fill all their human resource requirements;

- It would increase the focus of mutual support among the various governmental departments responsible to collaborate on global affairs initiatives, reducing both friction *in the field* and communications stove-piping between departments, through a common understanding of priorities, mandates and cooperation issues. In the past, GAC has been reticent to support certain MTCP activities, creating friction and causing extensive work arounds.³¹ Adopting a defence diplomacy policy as specific as Spain's would clearly align these efforts and positively impact interaction; and
- Just as one of the goals of MTCP is to improve interoperability, an updated defence diplomacy policy would make Canada's definition interoperable with those of our allies and partners, ensuring a shared understanding of its constituent parts in order to guide our efforts. Like the English language being the common working language of NATO to improve communication and understanding among non-native speakers, the language of diplomacy must be aligned to ensure mutual agreement and successful outcomes.

In black and white, the MTCP is characterised as a "...grants and contributions program..."³² and while correct, this benign description betrays its status as the solitary DND/CAF strategic program that focuses on military training and cooperation, which contains those intangible elements associated with *soft power*; the only form of diplomatic power that Canada can sustain in the long term.

³¹ This is my personal experience. On more than one occasion in 2019, GAC was required to pull support to DMTC activities due to competing priorities.

³² Chief of Review Services. Evaluation of Defence Policy and Diplomacy. Evaluation Study, Ottawa: Government of Canada. 2013. Pg. 1.

CONCLUSION

The world today is not the same as it was three short months ago. The politicization of the COVID 19 virus has rapidly revealed a greater shift towards nationalism as governments are forced to look internally to satisfy the needs of their population; while at the same time trying to navigate an international security domain that sees faith in existing institutions such as the UN and WHO declining and traditional partnerships being questioned. While not discussed in this paper, the global cyberwarfare threat remains omnipresent, requiring enhanced efforts on accurate information gathering, sharing and collective defence through shared understanding of the truth. It has been shown that the traditional defence attaché network is insufficient to keep up with the pre-pandemic demand, which is not expected to reduce post-pandemic. In countries such as Georgia, where Canada has no mission in-country, it has been proven that the MTCP program has been instrumental in creating issues for dialogue and improving that country's general overview and value in Canada as an international partner.³³ As the Canadian government assesses how it will implement its pending recovery phase, the public service budgets will be significantly impacted as the government attempts to recover stimulus money. The time is right to reevaluate priorities prior to reduced resources, to ensure they are adequately supported first, rather than having the more painful discussion of what capacities to cut in the face of smaller budgets.

While this paper does not attempt to propose a new definition of defence diplomacy, it has demonstrated that our current official understanding as defined in policy

³³ This is my personal experience. In meeting with the Georgian Ambassador to Canada in Ottawa, in the fall of 2019, he remarked that the cooperation initiatives between Canada and Georgia through the MTCP were highly regarded in his country.

is thirty years out of date compared to our partners and allies, as well as many of those we seek to engage with. By looking beyond the traditional role of the military to manage violence, and validating its expertise in building grass roots understanding and trust, future efforts in projecting national interests amid a changing international security environment can be *smart*, by leveraging all of the *soft power* resources we can. It is not a *hard* choice.

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