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THE CANADIAN ARMY WILL GET THE LEADERS IT DESERVES: THE EFFECTS OF TEMPO ON STRATEGIC LEADER DEVELOPMENT

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The ability to be a world-class warrior rests upon the foundation of technical and tactical competence formed early in an officer's career.

– Leonard Wong et al., *Strategic Leadership Competencies*

AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to investigate the impact of the negative effects of tempo in the Canadian Mechanised Brigade Groups (CMBG) on the Canadian Army's (CA) ability to produce strategic leaders. The operational importance of CA strategic leader generation will be stated, a review of current Canadian and American doctrine for strategic leader development will be conducted, the negative effects of tempo in the CMBGs will be reviewed through the lens of leader experience and knowledge, the impacts of tempo in the CMBGs on strategic leader production will be discussed and recommendations will be made.

INTRODUCTION

2. Presently, the effects of tempo in the CMBGs are well understood in terms of resources;¹ however, this service paper looks at the effects of tempo on leader experience and knowledge, and what that means for future strategic leader development. These deficiencies are less evident in the short term and more difficult to measure quantitatively. In *Leadership in the Canadian Forces (CF): Leading the Institution*, the objective of strategic leadership "is to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the CF, through the internal integration and management of organizational systems and by positioning the CF favourably in relation to its environment."² In the last 15 years, the number of Canadian generals and admirals has increased from 81 to 130 in an attempt to achieve this objective.³ In several public statements made by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in May 2018, the increases in the number of strategic leaders comes as a response to evolving operational threats, the current global security environment, the requirement for strategic liaison officers in American and foreign headquarters, emerging space and cyber threats and sensitive personnel issues.⁴ After being questioned about the increase, the CDS stated to the Canadian press that, "we don't grow generals because we want more generals,"⁵ emphasizing that the increase was done purposively to make meaningful strategic defence contributions. Increasing the number of generals and admirals by 60% over a time where the Canadian Armed

¹ Major Jesse van Eijk, "Doing Too Much with Too Little, All of the Time: The Effects of Tempo on Canadian Infantry Battalions" (Joint Command and Staff Programme directed research paper: Canadian Forces College, 2018), chap. 1-3.

² Canada. Department of National Defence, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Leading the Institution* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy, 2007), 22.

³ Lee Berthiaume, "Military's top brass has grown more quickly than the rank and file since 2003" (Ottawa: The Canadian Press, May 3, 2018).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Forces (CAF) grew by 2%⁶ is a clear quantitative indication of the importance of strategic leader generation to the CAF and the Department of National Defence (DND).

3. Since the 1980s, much has been written on strategic leadership to inform what is desirable in terms of leader experience and knowledge.⁷ *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Leading the Institution* describes effective succession and development of institutional leadership and recognizes the five leader elements – expertise, cognitive capacities, social capacities, change capacities, and professional ideology – that make effective strategic leadership possible.⁸ Canadian doctrine references *Strategic Leadership Competencies*, an American study conducted to determine the strategic leader skill set required for officers in a post 9/11 operating environment.⁹ This study identifies six metacompetencies – identity, mental agility, cross-cultural savvy, interpersonal maturity, world-class warrior, and professional astuteness – that describe strategic leadership and strategic leader development.¹⁰ There is much overlap between the Canadian elements and the American metacompetencies; however, American doctrine puts increased and overt emphasis on the requirement for strategic leaders to be world-class warriors, which is congruent with the *Strong Secure, Engaged* (SSE) vision for the CA to be combat-ready for global operations.¹¹ These models will frame the discussion of strategic leader development and will be used as the evaluative tool for experience and knowledge.

4. Considering the experience and knowledge models above, current tempo challenges at the CMBGs will be reviewed so the impacts on strategic leader development can be discussed. Previous directed research, focussed on infantry battalions, will be used to frame the challenges because it is current and quantitative. The combination of doctrine and current tempo challenges will inform the discussion of, and recommendations for, the mitigation of the negative effects of tempo in the CMBGs on the CA's ability to produce strategic level leaders in the future.

DISCUSSION

5. The following are discussed:
- a. Canadian and American doctrinal models for strategic leader development;
 - b. Elements of strategic leader development that result at the tactical level;
 - c. Current tempo in the CMBGs; and
 - d. The effects of tempo on strategic leader development.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Leonard Wong, Stephen Gerras, William Kidd, Robert Pricone, and Richard Swengros, *Strategic Leadership Competencies* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 2.

⁸ Canada. Department of National Defence, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Leading the Institution...*, 130.

⁹ Leonard Wong et al., *Strategic Leadership Competencies...*, iii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-10.

¹¹ Canada. Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017), 14 and 36-37.

6. Doctrinal Models for Strategic Leader Development. The generation of strategic leaders is a team effort. To be effective at the institutional/strategic level, NCOs and officers are developed throughout their careers. They master the tactical level of their occupation, are selected to lead at the operational level and, if successful, get the opportunity to lead at the strategic level. For most this process takes upwards of 20 years. This discussion will focus on the precursory development required at the tactical level. The following table compares summary points from the five leader elements and the metacompetencies of Canadian and American doctrine, respectively. Components of strategic leader development that are primarily accomplished at the tactical level are italicized.

Table 1 – Comparison of the Five Leader Elements and Strategic Metacompetencies

Five Leader Elements	Metacompetencies	Remarks
Expertise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical & specialist proficiencies</i> • Understanding & development of military & organizational environments • <i>Stewardship of the profession of arms</i> • Represent & transform at the strategic & institutional levels 	World-Class Warrior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Foundation of tactical & technical competence</i> Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness • <i>Understanding the profession of arms</i> • <i>Catalyst for success by subordinates</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactical, technical, & specialist proficiency & competence is developed at the tactical level • Stewardship of the profession of arms happens through meaningful interactions with soldiers
Cognitive Capacities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytic competence • Creative competence • <i>Problem solving</i> 	Mental Agility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in ambiguity & uncertainty • Scan the environment, process information, make good decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving skills in ambiguous & uncertain environments take a career to develop & begin at junior levels of leadership
Social Capacities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioural flexibility • <i>Authenticity</i> • Communication skills • Clarity & persuasiveness • <i>Team relationships that generate coordination, cohesion, trust & commitment</i> • Strategic relations building 	Cross-Cultural Savvy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand & interact with other cultures • <i>Empathize with other perspectives</i> • Coalition security strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships & attitudes are developed over a career & begin at junior levels of leadership • Trust & empathy are life-long skills
Change Capacities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Self-development</i> 	Interpersonal Maturity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders must learn early how to affect

Five Leader Elements	Metacompetencies	Remarks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit improvement & group transformation • <i>Learning organization philosophy</i> • Strategic knowledge management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consensus building</i> • Cultural transformation • Develop future strategic leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change in a team environment • Strategic leaders learn to be open to learning in tactical environments as junior leaders
Professional Ideology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Core professional knowledge</i> • <i>Internalized ethos</i> • Moral reasoning • Credibility & impact • <i>Displays character, openness, assertiveness & extroversion</i> 	Professional Astuteness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve the Nation • Take responsibility for the profession • <i>Professional ethics</i> • Officership • Social contract • <i>No careerism</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics begin immediately & all leaders must be exposed from their first day in uniform • A strong ethical base is developed by service in tactical units
Components of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise • Cognitive capabilities • Change capabilities 	World-Class Warrior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand entire spectrum of operations at all levels • <i>Foundation of tactical & technical competence</i> • Student of military history & military art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although there is overlap between the elements & World-Class Warrior, the language used in the American model is clear & direct & speaks to combat-readiness

Sources: Department of National Defence, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Leading the Institution...*, 130 and Wong et al., *Strategic Leadership Competencies...*, 5-10.

7. Elements of Strategic Leadership Developed at the Tactical Level. The Canadian model and America model referenced are similar. Conservatively, the following elements of strategic leader development take place at the tactical level:

- a. Tactical, technical, and specialist proficiency/competence;
- b. Foundations of problem-solving skills in ambiguous and uncertain environments;
- c. Trust, empathy and professional reputation;
- d. Consensus building and affecting change;
- e. Appreciation for life-long learning; and
- f. Ethical leadership foundations.

Framed by doctrine and an understanding of the training required at the tactical level to produce strategic leaders, this discussion will now turn to reviewing tempo in the CMBGs and understanding the impacts of tempo on strategic leader development at the tactical level.

8. Factors Contributing to Tempo. Excessive tempo, lack of materiel resources and lack of personnel at the MCpl, Sgt and WO levels in the CMBGs, and the infantry battalions in particular, was the subject of a Canadian Forces College directed research paper in 2018,¹² and is the subject of books,¹³ journal articles,¹⁴ and think-tank studies.¹⁵ The most current Canadian research identified the following conservative factors as contributing to tempo in the three regular force infantry regiments:¹⁶

a. Internal Tasks.

- i. Operational individual and collective training;
- ii. Required and discretionary primary combat function courses;
- iii. Currency maintenance training; and
- iv. Administration.

b. External Tasks.

- i. Operations are always supported; however, recently a disproportionate number of senior leaders have deployed leaving units without adequate leadership, supervision and mentorship;¹⁷
- ii. Miscellaneous non-operational discretionary tasks;
- iii. Support to individual training as training centres are not presently staffed to conduct required training without significant augmentation from the field force; and
- iv. Support to external collective training as the scope has increased significantly since the inception of the Canadian Manoeuvre Training

¹² Major Jesse van Eijk, “Doing Too Much with Too Little, All of the Time” ..., v-vii.

¹³ One example is *Tarnished: Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Military* by George Reed.

¹⁴ Although outside the scope of this service paper there are several peer-reviewed articles that speak to the effects of tempo on leadership, combat effectiveness, cohesion and mental health.

¹⁵ The team at the Strategic Studies Institute, led by Leonard Wong, has studied and published prolifically on this subject, *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Profession of Arms*, being an applicable example.

¹⁶ Major Jesse van Eijk, “Doing Too Much with Too Little, All of the Time” ..., chap. 3.

¹⁷ A review of the current military operations list at <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations/current-list.page#details-panel-1424977816603-5> shows that the only CA operation currently employing a formed sub-unit is Operation REASSURANCE. All other CA operations are leadership-heavy.

Centre in 2006. Currently staffed at 192, they require ~1000 augmentees annually to meet their mandate.¹⁸

c. Resources.

- i. Establishment reductions;
- ii. Routine equipment shortages;
- iii. Routine under-manning; and
- iv. Medical restrictions resulting in additional under-manning.

Units are significantly under-resourced and over-tasked; the resulting tempo renders them incapable of conducting effective and meaningful collective training.¹⁹

9. Summary of Negative Effect of Tempo on Collective Training. A conservative estimate of routine tempo across the infantry battalions was completed in 2018 and it revealed that a maximum of 20% of the task days in a year are available for collective training,²⁰ which equates to 40 training days per year. These days are not available in cohesive blocks and individual tempos are different, meaning that cohesive groups – sections, platoons, companies – are not all available at the same time to complete collective training and leadership is often tasked away, leaving those organizations leader-less or ad-hoc structures are created, only to dissolved at the completion of training.²¹ Recalling the elements of strategic leadership that must be developed at the tactical level, the negative impacts of tempo are examined in Table 2:

¹⁸ Sandy Cooper. “Canadian Army Redux: How to Achieve Better Outcomes Without Additional Resources.” (Joint Command and Staff Programme directed research paper: Canadian Forces College, 2018), 14.

¹⁹ Major Jesse van Eijk, “Doing Too Much with Too Little, All of the Time” ..., 59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

²¹ This was the author’s experience from 2008-2018 in 2 PPCLI, the CAAWC and 1 PPCLI. This was confirmed to be the wider case across 1 CMBG during a telephone call with Bde G3, Major J. van Eijk, on October 3, 2018.

Table 2 –Negative Impact of Tempo on Strategic Leader Development at the Tactical Level

Strategic Leader Development	Negative Impact of Tempo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactical, technical, & specialist proficiency & competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactical leaders get 1 or 2 years at each level of command and may do as little as one collective exercise which is insufficient to establish proficiency and competence given the complexities of today’s operating environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundations of problem-solving skills in ambiguous & uncertain environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to compressed timelines and a lack of resources, training events, especially live fire ranges, are simplistic and rushed • In many cases commanders are not tested in ambiguous and uncertain environments because those conducting the training are not resourced – time, personnel and equipment – properly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust, empathy & professional reputation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel at all levels are routinely moved around to meet collective training requirements due to a lack of cohesive blocks of training and lack of personnel in the units concurrently • Devastating effects on trust and empathy which are the prerequisites for primary group cohesion²² • Difficult to establish professional reputation and credibility due to a lack of collective training time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus building and affecting change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus takes time and units are continually operating in crisis-mode – they are rarely able to develop this approach to change • Effective, long term change is not possible in units where excessive tempo forces urgency over importance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation for life-long learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive tempo forces leaders to prioritize the urgent over the important • True learning and joy of learning are not developed because there is no time resulting a culture that does not prioritize life-long learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical leadership foundations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Box checking is acceptable²³ • Ethics training is reduced to an annual power point • Very little or no time is dedicated to ethical professional development and the profession of arms

²² Guy Siebold, "The Essence of Military Group Cohesion," *Armed Forces & Society* (33, no. 2, 2007), 288; Harry Garner, "Empathy: A true leader skill," *Military Review* (89, no. 6, 2009), 90.

²³ Leonard Wong and Stephen Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Profession of Arms* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, 2015), 17. Although an American study, the same general findings are true in the CA and should serve as a warning.

10. Negative Effects of Tempo on Strategic Leader Development. Although it might not be immediately obvious, the long-term effects of tempo on strategic leader development, by the standards established in the models in existing Canadian and American doctrine will be disastrous. Leaders will move on to the operational level without having established themselves foundationally as expert tactical warriors, tried and tested problem solvers, ethical professionals, and empathetic leaders who are trusted completely by the soldiers they lead.

11. Current and Future Operational Commitments. If the DND and CAF want to pursue a future of involvement at the operational and strategic levels, then it is imperative that effective leaders at the tactical level are produced as a prerequisite. Reducing tempo in units to prioritize the important over the urgent will require real change.

CONCLUSIONS

To lead successfully, a person must demonstrate two active, essential, interrelated traits: expertise and empathy. In my experience, both of these traits can be deliberately and systematically cultivated; this personal development is the first important building block of leadership.

— Lieutenant General William G. Pagonis, *Leadership in a Combat Zone*

12. Today the CA, and certainly the combat arms, is privileged with excellent strategic leaders because the organization invested heavily in developing their expertise, especially at the tactical level. Many of today's strategic CA leaders achieved tactical excellence fighting the war in Afghanistan. Leaders became tactical experts who developed meaningful relationships with their subordinates based on expertise in combat zone, empathy and trust.

13. If the CA wants to produce the future strategic leaders that Canadian doctrine calls for, then tempo needs to be managed to ensure that enough time and resources are available for effective and meaningful collective training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. Previous recommendations on tempo-reducing strategies are reviewed and two new recommendations, one practical and one philosophical, are proposed.

15. The tangible tempo-reducing strategies examined at the CFC last year should be reviewed and implemented to the extent possible.²⁴ Recommendations that impact the development of strategic leaders include:

- a. Tactical units and formations must do a better job of tracking and reporting tempo and readiness. Without clearly defined metrics that are easily communicated, it is difficult to communicate tempo concerns to higher headquarters in a useful and meaningful manner; and

²⁴ Major Jesse van Eijk, "Doing Too Much with Too Little, All of the Time" ..., chap. 4.

- b. Resourced tasks need to be accomplishable by the units to which they are assigned. If they are not, the best-case scenario is that collective training will suffer, and the worse case scenario is that units will lie or box-check the completion of important tasks.

16. Practical Recommendation. Determining and enforcing minimum manning thresholds in operational units would be an excellent first step. Units are often tasked to line-by-line their soldiers for availability when tasks need to be filled. The effect is that no meaningful collective training can happen even if there are soldiers available to participate.²⁵ Also, the act of line-by-lining unit members to strip the unit of every untasked leader has a deleterious effect on unit morale.

17. Philosophical Recommendation. Discerning the urgent from the important is critical for long-term strategic leader development. Defence Secretary Mattis has made this point clear in the creation of his Close Combat Lethality Task Force.²⁶ Leaders in the CA, need to evaluate every task that comes across their desk and ask, “Is this urgent or it is important?” Urgent tasks will win out, but philosophically, how often should they? The point at which commanders should be able to decline urgent requirements that degrade their ability to meet important long-term combat-readiness requirements should be explicitly stated.

18. Every leader in the tactical units and formations of the CA knows that Peter is being robbed to pay Paul; the CA discharges an urgent debt only to incur an important one.²⁷ Tempo must be reduced, or the high-quality strategic leaders present in the CA today will not be produced for the future. Every organization gets the leaders it deserves.

²⁵ Line-by-lining occurs when a higher headquarters ask a unit to justify what every member of a certain rank-level is doing. Units must show they do not have a single person available to turn down a task.

²⁶ Freedberg, Sydney. “Stop Wasting the Infantry’s Time: Mattis Task Force.” Breaking Defense, April 13, 2018.

²⁷ Personal communication with tactical commanders and staffs in since 2008. Every organization is struggling with excessive tempo-related concerns. The most pronounced shortages are at the MCpl, Sgt, WO, Lt and Capt levels. These levels are critically important for strategic leader development as they ensure that tactical foundations are established.

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