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CAPABILITY GROWTH: THE NEED TO INNOVATE

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JCSP 46

Service Paper

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PCEMI 46

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 46 – PCEMI 46
2019 – 2020

SERVICE PAPER - ÉTUDE MILITAIRE

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Word Count: 2,297

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Nombre de mots : 2.297

CAPABILITY GROWTH : THE NEED TO INNOVATE

AIM

1. Given the ever changing global threat, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has needed to constantly assess its structure, capabilities, and how it allocates its resources. Over the course of recent years, this process has been undertaken through the procedural review of Force Posture and Readiness, which provides the Chief of Defense with an assessment of how the Canadian Forces are arrayed and whether or not changes are required to meet CAF operational remits. Currently this re-assessment, under the auspice of Force Posture and Readiness, is titled Force Mix Structure Design (FMSD) and it has the potential to change the force structure and size of the Canadian Army in order to meet the demands of emerging capabilities such as information operations and cyber warfare, amongst others. This may seem like a leap in logic but the Canadian Army is the largest branch and has been the target in the past when emerging capabilities or other growth requirements were identified. Although these new emerging capabilities, like information operations and cyber, are certainly important to the CAF and require addressing, this paper will suggest that the Canadian Army is no longer capable of further degradation without jeopardizing its own mandate within Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE). This paper will illustrate that the ice-cube need not be shaved further but suggest that the CAF adopt a more innovative view of how further enablers can be added without coming at the expense of the Army.

INTRODUCTION

2. The Canadian Army must generate agile, scalable and responsive land forces that are well-led, well-trained, and well-equipped in order to protect the interests of

Canadians, domestically and abroad, across the full spectrum of conflict.¹ If that is truly the SSE vision for the Canadian Army, then the current structure would be hard-pressed to withstand further reduction and still meet its mandate. It is not the position of this paper to refute the need for emerging enablers or capabilities but rather that one need not come at the expense of the other. The fact is that the Canadian Army has to be able to meet the demands articulated in SSE and further reductions to its force structure would jeopardize its ability to do so.

3. Throughout this paper the discussion will articulate that although the current force structure of the Canadian Army has been capable of meeting their SSE remits, it has not done so without struggles. It will discuss recent reductions to the Canadian Army, highlighting the Infantry as an example. This paper will argue that, as a result of these changes, the Canadian Army has struggled to deploy units to their full capacity. Additionally, the paper will argue the necessity of army unit structures to meet their needs articulated in SSE both domestically and abroad. Further, this paper will offer suggestions that future capabilities can be incorporated with more innovation rather than further force reduction. Overall, this paper will articulate that there is certainly a need to incorporate enablers across the operational functions but that doing so by reducing the Canadian Army would endanger its ability to meet the remits articulated in SSE.

DISCUSSION

4. History of reductions and their impacts. Over the course of the last few decades, there have been successive cuts to the strength of the Canadian Army to enable growth in

¹ Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, (2017).

other areas in order to meet emerging demands. As an example, infantry reductions from 1990 to 2013 have reduced integral capabilities and their ability to force generate for operations. Going from nearly a nine hundred person organization to a six hundred person organization with the loss of integral capabilities such as anti-armour, indirect fire, and mobility support, has forced a change in the way both the infantry unit and the brigade operates.² With the reductions in numbers and other institutional demands, infantry units have only been capable to deploy two out of three rifle companies over the course of the last three successive Ex MAPLE RESOLVEs, the principle exercise charged with validating units and the brigade for operational deployment. Degradation to the Canadian Army, as highlighted with the infantry, has forced the brigades to cobble together battalion and battle groups while scrapping together ad-hoc organizations for critical tasks like rear area security. In accordance with SSE, “The Army’s operational effectiveness relies on realistic, challenging and regular training up to the brigade group level. This ensures that deployed Army formations can succeed in any environment regardless of condition”.³ One could easily argue that further reductions to the Canadian Army would endanger the brigade’s effectiveness of it’s training efforts, given the example provided, calling into question the organization’s overall preparedness to meet the requirements outlined in SSE. The obvious counter argument would be that the Canadian Army has continuously met the operational demands of the CAF despite force reductions over the years. Although that argument is true, the stance of this paper is that further reductions through FMSD would be ill-advised and risk the army’s ability to meet

² 2 PPCLI, Mechanized Infantry Capability Brief for Ex PROMETHEAN RAM, November 2019.

³ Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 36.

the requirements of SSE, given the highlighted example of the Canadian Army's continuous struggle to field full units for operational validation.

5. SSE expectations and the utility of the unit structure. SSE clearly articulates that “in a global security environment defined by complexity and unpredictability, Canada requires an agile, well-educated, flexible, diverse, and combat-ready military capable of conducting a wide range of operations at home and internationally”.⁴ More specifically, “the Army is an adaptive and agile force, capable of being deployed by a variety of means, rapidly responding to domestic, continental and international threats in complex environments”⁵. It is the need to conduct diverse types of operations across the spectrum of conflict that requires a more robust army in order to meet the demands outlined in SSE. Domestically, army units form the backbone for disaster response, predicated on the Immediate Response Unit (IRU), which have been called upon more frequently over the course of the last several years. Understanding that climate change and more volatile weather patterns will remain prevalent in the years to come, the army unit based IRU is critical to the “Strong at Home” mantra articulated in SSE. A deployment on IRU can vary in size and scope, but the standing contingency plan requires three sub-units (vanguard, follow-on force and 2nd follow-on force) not including administration and headquarters. As indicated in the example outline above, units have already struggled to deploy similar sized elements for validation exercises. Therefore, further reduction to the Canadian Army could further hinder its ability to generate forces in order to be “Strong at Home”. Internationally, SSE remains clear that the CAF will “continue to invest in a

⁴ Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, 57.

⁵ Canada, *Advancing with Purpose: The Army Strategy*, (2014). 17.

multi-purpose, combat-ready force that is able to act decisively and deliver results across the full spectrum of operations.”⁶ Now, an argument could be made that given current smaller scale operational activities and the likelihood of peer-on-peer or near-peer conflict is minimal, that the army could be reduced. These arguments are similar to those given prior to 9/11 when decisions were made to eliminate tanks and long-range artillery from the army. It is clear that the post 9/11 operations against terrorism required the army to maintain both tanks and long-range artillery, illustrating the errors of those arguments. Further, given that the war on terrorism has not been won to date, there is a foreseeable need for larger-scale army deployments to conduct operations further right on the spectrum of conflict. Additionally, the army unit structure is the building block of scalable or modular operations. The brigade organizes units in order to have “a degree of agility that will permit the rapid projection of increasingly modular and mission-tailored forces capable of regrouping and re-tasking across the full spectrum of conflict”⁷. Therefore, given the requirement to conduct such an array of requirements both domestically and internationally, the Army must be safeguarded from further deterioration.

6. Emerging capabilities and innovation. Denying the requirement to recognize the changing dynamics of modern conflict and the need to inculcate emerging capabilities would be ignorant. There is obviously a need to adjust our approach to warfare and operations in order to maintain our relevance on the world stage. The argument of this

⁶ Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* 81.

⁷ Canada, *Land Operations 2021: The Force Employment Concept for Canada’s Army of Tomorrow* (2007). 32.

paper is not to disprove the need for that adaptation but to take another approach on how we adapt verses defaulting to the same adage of growth in one comes at the expense of another. In order to provide an example of how this might be done, this paper will look at one emerging threat that the CAF has not addressed with sufficient effort. As Lieutenant General Rouleau has articulated, our adversaries are operating in the grey zone below the threshold of conflict predominately in the informational space which is fast becoming the central theatre of future operations.⁸ Indeed “Russian leaders consider information operations a decisive tool of state power and engage in continuous international competition in the information domain executed by both state and non-state actors.”⁹ As such, other nations, like the United States, have made considerable effort to engage in information operations with the development of their Military Information Support Operations (MISO) force. They have placed a great deal of emphasis on operating in the human domain, the focus of their MISO forces, in order to combat the extensive propaganda efforts employed by both the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and the Russian Federation.¹⁰ Now, the CAF are not likely to adopt the structure and mandate of the MISO force but could greatly improve upon the way in which they have approached information operations. Public affairs approaches to the conduct of operations in the recent past have been overly restrictive and detrimental to the information operations campaign. Specifically, in certain cases, designated spokes person training has been limited to select few personnel within a unit task force, limiting media outreach opportunities and the potential to engage in positive information operations. This paper

⁸ LGen Rouleau, *How we Fight* – Commander CJOC Thoughts, (2019). 6.

⁹ Allen, T.S., Moore, A.J., “*Victory without Casualties: Russia’s Information Operations*” (2018). 1.

¹⁰ Haas, C., “*The MISO Force*” Portsmouth (2016). 2.

argues that one approach to integrating information operations into the Canadian Army could begin with increasing designated spokes person training to the lowest levels and pushing the information operations power to the edge. Whether the use of designated spokes person training is appropriate is beyond the purview of this paper. Whether it is existing training, re-designed training or new training is not the main point. The main point is that soldiers in the Canadian Army are versatile, intelligent and capable of adapting to the emerging capability if armed with the knowledge to do so. Today's soldiers are more connected, tech savvy, and better capable of spreading positive information operations than the limited public affairs contingents deployed on operations. Centralized coordination of appropriate messaging, enabled with on-time media relations or response lines training, and combined with decentralized execution would greatly increase our information operations capabilities. Operationalizing information operations within the Canadian Army, supported by the public affairs branch to enable appropriate training, is an innovative way to address the needs of this emerging capability over the antiquated approach of reducing forces in one area to grow them in another.

CONCLUSION

7. The reductions made to the Canadian Army over the last few decades have eroded its capabilities and its ability to force generate. Although the Canadian Army has continued to be successful in deploying task-tailored units for operations both domestically and internationally, additional force reduction would jeopardize its ability to continue to do so. Given the requirements outlined in SSE, the Canadian Army must be safeguarded from further force reduction in order to be successfully poised to conduct operations further to the right along the spectrum of conflict. Although the Canadian

Army has been successful in meeting the needs of the current smaller scale operational remits this does not, in and of itself, rationalize their ability to absorb further force reduction. As articulated above, the Canadian Army is currently struggling to deploy full units to be validated for operations and are therefore at risk of not meeting the demands outlined in SSE. The CAF must continue to adapt to the changing environment in which it operates but not at the expense of the Canadian Army. More innovation is required when discussing capability growth and force reduction should only be considered after considerable in-depth analysis of the first and second order effects of those potential cuts is completed.

RECOMMENDATION

8. In order to remain relevant in the quagmire that is today's operating environment, incorporating emerging capabilities will be required. SSE has articulated growth in certain areas such as cyber, amongst others, but more will be required. However, growth for emerging capabilities does not always need to come at the expense of the Canadian Army. The Canadian Army has been reduced significantly over the course of recent history, losing significant capabilities in the process. Further, additional reductions to the army in order to grow other capabilities will jeopardize its ability to meet SSE mandated objectives. The robbing Peter to pay Paul approach to adding capabilities just degrades those being robbed. Therefore, more innovation is needed in order to integrate these new capabilities to safeguard the requisite capabilities of other forces. In the case of information operations, empowering existing Canadian Army forces by using or modifying training, with central coordination and control, while pushing execution power

to the edge, is but one way to adopt a more innovative way to increase one capability without degrading another.

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