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Commander Task Group: A Defence Diplomacy Capability

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**COMMANDER TASK GROUP:
A DEFENCE DIPLOMACY CAPABILITY**

By Lieutenant-Commander R. Liakas

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	1
Abstract	2
Introduction	5
Chapter	
1. Defence Diplomacy - The Concept	12
2. A Canadian Context	20
3. The Royal Canadian Navy and Diplomacy	25
Routine Activities	26
The Commander Task Group Capability	28
History - Commander Task Group in Defence Diplomacy	30
4. A Commander Task Group Programme	35
RCN Warships - Selection, Readiness, Interoperability	35
Realpolitik Participants - Local and Regional Nuances	39
Relationships	44
Human Rights	47
Disaster Relief	50
Conclusion	54
Bibliography	56

ABSTRACT

The Royal Canadian Navy's Commander Task Group capability can leverage and contribute to defence diplomacy by serving as a credible channel for military-to-military engagements. Regular contact between national representatives is critical to meeting security and defence challenges and as an element of public diplomacy, the Navy offers a medium for cooperation not only between Canada and other states but also between foreign states themselves.

In formulating its interests, much of Canada's attention focuses on nations that constitute or interact with bodies such as the G7 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Emerging economies, however, present opportunities and challenges as they assume greater regional and international influence. Canada has a vested interest in supporting and leading efforts towards global stability through its many instruments of national power. The foreign service, the military, and economic development entities use persuasion, coercion, and financial means though each instrument is not correlated with any single method or inducement of any one effect. Rather, all instruments are interrelated whereby actions or inactions in one part of this system entail consequences that impact stakeholders in another. Accordingly, Canada's diplomatic concerns are best advanced when its instruments are applied in a complementary and mutually supportive manner.

The Canadian Armed Forces collaborates alongside Global Affairs Canada and other departments by bringing unique defence diplomacy experiences and distinct capabilities to bear. As perhaps the most internationally focussed component of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Navy deploys and sustains ships around the

globe while maintaining linkages to Canadian and allied partners. Naval involvement in defence diplomacy has proven helpful in bringing together foreign navies and other defence-related parties for purposes of engagement, training, and multilateral exercises. These have then yielded broader diplomatic, commercial, and societal benefits. Although much of Navy's and the Canadian Armed Forces' institutional and doctrinal literature underpin these activities, further correlation between the two is needed to increase intra-institution alignment so that service-specific particularities are recognized. While inter-departmental effectiveness must also be emphasized, better understanding the Navy's advantages creates opportunities to expand the scope of naval diplomacy's constructive efforts.

Navy warships are platforms within which multi-disciplinary and at times multinational teams with shared traditions of maritime military service gather to work together. A command and staff element can also embark within a flagship to lead a task group comprised of ships and aircraft from many nations in accomplishment of mutually defined exercise and operational objectives. When applying this model to a Government of Canada comprehensive approach towards any number of regions in the world, the naval flagship brings together foreign military representatives who would not otherwise readily partner with each other. Their collective activities foster transparency, reduce suspicions, and achieve technical and procedural interoperability. Over time, professional relationships develop and yield improved understanding between participants. In turn, they support sustaining respective nations' official relationships in good times and in moments of tension. Moreover, interactions with Canadian service members reflect the

strengths of Canadian diversity and values that both serve as a moderating effect and gradually influence mindsets, further adding to regional peace dividends.

Operationalization of such a contribution to diplomacy, one which stems from enabling foreign command and control of a multinational task group from a Royal Canadian Navy flagship, faces numerous hurdles to understand and overcome. These include security considerations tied to foreign access to Canadian warship resources in addition to information sharing, the intricacies associated with engaging prospective participants, the essentials of cultural awareness, and policy risks. Ultimately, a Commander Task Group defence diplomacy programme is an operation of choice. The degree, extent, and duration of interest expressed by each state involves many factors. Progress will occasionally appear slow and perhaps even transient. Nevertheless, diplomacy takes time which in turn must lead to trust. Thereafter, gradual and incremental successes from one joint venture to the next will equate to further cooperation and eventually collaboration within non-defence sectors.

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada pursues long-term, multi-departmental, multi-sector projects to cooperatively achieve national objectives with enduring results. Recent examples include the *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework* and the *National Shipbuilding Strategy* whereby Canadian economic, security, technological, and societal priorities are advanced through the coordinated effort of military and non-military actors. The Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) hold crucial roles within these partnerships. These range from the deployment of personnel and assets on domestic and international operations to being the beneficiaries of future assets, such as the Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS) and the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC).

Such a collaborative approach serves as a model to develop, shape, and ultimately further a variety of diplomatic interests. Pan-government departmental mandates can be networked towards connecting and addressing the diverse and previously unrelated elements of national importance within a given region of the world. The non-lethal employment of Canada's Profession of Arms within the diplomatic realm accepts direct linkages between cross-nation military cooperation and interoperability, relationship-building, social factors, prosperity, and the achievement of peace. While naval power remains useful in traditional ways that involve the use of force, it also serves constructive purposes in this defence diplomacy construct.

This proposition is centered on the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) core precepts of service-tailored global reach, multinational relationships, joint interdepartmental cooperation, and proven coalition leadership. As perhaps the most internationally

focussed component of the CAF, the RCN deploys and sustains ships around the globe. During operations, Canada's navy not only works alongside multiple allies and partners, especially the United States and European countries that form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but also assumes leadership roles. Just as important are the linkages that the RCN maintains with other departments and agencies within the Government of Canada on a routine basis. These aggregated experiences position the RCN to uniquely contribute towards joint multilateral diplomatic initiatives that encompass any number of public, private, and international entities.

To that end, inter-agency effectiveness must be emphasized while ensuring that the Navy remains capable of offering value-added contributions in a manner that does not detract, but in fact enriches, its performance across a range of mandates. Much of RCN and in broader terms CAF institutional and doctrinal literature furnish a foundation. However, expressly articulated connections with more progressive applications of defence diplomacy must be made. Doing so assures intra- and inter-institution alignment and accounts for service-specific considerations within a coordinated approach to diplomacy that is cognizant of military-related influences.

Three of the eight *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) core missions that the CAF, and by extension the RCN, prepare to undertake relate to defence diplomacy. These entail participation in international peace missions as part of multilateral partnerships, engaging in capacity building to support other nations, and providing assistance to civil authorities and non-governmental stakeholders amid disasters and emergencies.¹ Though certain other core missions are non-combat in nature, this factor does not in itself equate to

¹ Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged – Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2017), 17.

defence diplomacy and while generally descriptive, all these core missions envision a spectrum of possible military activities. The roles and extent of defence diplomacy initiatives thus vary and are applicable in tailored yet nuanced ways. Nevertheless, this broad expression of policy is both appropriate and to be expected in high-level institutional literature, permitting lower-level literature to expand as necessary.

A review of the *Royal Canadian Navy Strategic Plan 2017-2022*, however, reveals that while there is mention of defence diplomacy-related functions, these references are limited. The RCN's mission is, as expected, formally linked to the higher-order defence policy core missions, inclusive of those that reflect aspects of defence diplomacy. Thereafter, the complete term defence diplomacy appears in an annex that simply summarizes Canada's defence priorities as articulated within the overarching SSE. In another instance, the shortened term diplomacy is used within the Ready to Fight dimension. It is expressed in traditional sweeping terms whereby hard-power means are to be employed "in support of national objectives – from deterring adversaries to exercising sea control, from engaging in coercion to supporting diplomacy."² The Ready to Help dimension develops the notion somewhat by noting that the RCN is committed to "working with other government departments, to capacity building alongside like-minded nations, ... [and to] humanitarian assistance ... [by being] flexible, compassionate and dedicated to helping those in need ... as an extension of basic Canadian values."³ In essence, although RCN strategic literature includes references to diplomacy in a defence context, it does so in a narrow sense. It does not expand from the SSE baseline in a manner that establishes a naval doctrinal foundation as would be expected at that level. In

² Department of National Defence, *Royal Canadian Navy Strategic Plan 2017-2022* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2016), 12.

³ *Ibid.*, 12.

then proceeding one level below within the literature hierarchy, a measure of additional defence diplomacy context is found in the RCN's Readiness and Sustainment Policy (RSP).

The RSP stipulates that diplomacy represents one of the Navy's three doctrinal roles and articulates certain functions. Specifically, attention is drawn to "global engagement, interoperability, strategic partnerships and capacity building, operational engagement, naval diplomacy, presence and messaging, reassurance, stability operations, conflict prevention, deterrence, and coercion."⁴ Thereafter, any further links to diplomacy above and beyond what has been noted above, whether directly or indirectly, are limited. Instead, the approach taken is to connect a variety of missions, including those of a diplomatic nature, with requisite warship readiness levels. In effect, as an operational-level document, a functional methodology to the operationalization of defence diplomacy is rightfully taken. Even so, RCN literature, going from the institutional through the strategic down to the operational levels, has not kept pace with this domain's evolution and does not fully suggest more evolved applications.

RCN policy and doctrinal documents are perhaps more notable for what they omit. Notwithstanding that RCN literature links SSE's defence diplomacy segments, connections must also be drawn to the broader network of defence diplomacy stakeholders. A direct and unambiguous example is found in GAC wherein that department's applicable literature must be further referenced within the RCN's literature. In essence, "to be more than a series of ad hoc responses to changing events, [defence

⁴ Department of National Defence, *CFCD 129 Royal Canadian Navy Readiness and Sustainment Policy* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2018), 5.

diplomacy] must be incorporated into the ground floor of foreign policy,”⁵ then linked to higher-precedent DND literature – such as SSE – and ultimately reaffirmed in service-specific contexts, such as RCN institutional, strategic, and operational documentation. In absence of explicit linkages, Canadian history records instances when, in matters of pan-governmental efforts, “liaison occurred when deemed appropriate rather than as a matter of course ... [and] did not focus on civil – military joint planning processes or strategy development. ... Each department developed independent strategies ... [without] coordination at a higher level.”⁶ To begin to normalize unity of effort, literary works drawing on the CAF’s experiences offer sensible concepts for inclusion within naval diplomacy frameworks.

The notions of a comprehensive approach and a joint, interagency, multinational and public (JIMP)-enabled force have entered the CAF vernacular.⁷ Yet, the RCN has not doctrinally acknowledged these concepts. They are not reflected within any level of the RCN’s literature nor are associated Canadian Forces Joint Publications referenced, all despite the fact that, as introduced earlier, the RCN does have related experiences. As a result of this omission, the RCN has neither institutionalized these experiences nor formally affirmed that they are indeed conducted as a matter of course. By extension, the previously mentioned naval doctrinal foundation is found to be further lacking. To underpin development of a more nuanced understanding and ultimately a more sophisticated operationalization of defence diplomacy, the notions of a comprehensive

⁵ Christopher Ross, “Pillars of Public Diplomacy,” *Harvard International Review* 25, no. 2 (2003): 22.

⁶ Neil Chuka and Heather Hrychuk, “CAF Operations: A Comprehensive Approach to Enable Future Operations,” Chap. 18 in *Canadian Defence Policy in Theory and Practice*, edited by Thomas Junea, Philippe Legassé, and Srdjan Vucetic (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 318.

⁷ Department of National Defence, *CFJP 4.0, Support* (Ottawa: Canadian Forces Warfare Centre, October 2016), 2-1; Peter Gizewski and Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Rostek, “Towards a JIMP-Capable Land Force,” *Canadian Army Journal* 10, no. 1 (March 2007): 55.

approach and a JIMP-enabled force must be brought into a naval context. The RCN's experiences and resources can then be utilized towards more expansive naval diplomacy programmes that address Canada's place in the world.

Collaboration between militaries from various nations is an indicator of cross-border trust and represents a convergence of interests which in turn promotes inter-nation stability. As Canadian public diplomacy initiatives are crafted, Canada's interests are served by using its military channels to support existing collaborative efforts and to create new opportunities. The RCN has and will continue to offer substantive contributions in the areas of partnership, rapprochement, and reconciliation whereby one such channel resides within naval task groups. To assume command and control of numerous ships and aircraft, a commander assembles joint, multi-disciplinary, and at times multinational staff. Their teamwork in a flagship leverages vessel infrastructure and communication advantages, both in the technological sense as well as through direct inter-personal interactions. The currently underdeveloped diplomatic potential of the RCN's Commander Task Group (CTG) capability offers many possibilities to act as a catalyst towards increasing contacts between wary neighbours within a given region.

Military representatives from multiple nations can be integrated into a Canadian-sourced, CTG-capable warship to pursue mutually defined exercise objectives. Goals include inducement of cooperation, steps towards intra-region interoperability, and transparency. Moreover, as professional relationships form, mutual understanding can be further enhanced by the participants' firsthand exposure to Canadian values and principles. Canadian military members represent Canada's diversity and as multinational staff engage with them, the day-to-day virtues of pluralism will have an influencing

effect. As scepticism and suspicion diminish, resolution of differences is facilitated, the prospect of increased cooperation in real-world operations takes form, and greater collaboration in broader public sectors ensues. However, building momentum and achieving lasting progress entails complexity.

Notwithstanding the virtues of CTG defence diplomacy, positioning of this programme includes hurdles which find expression in nuanced forms. From those related to the intricacies of international cooperation to those which are organizational in nature both within the Government of Canada and the naval institution itself, various challenges need to be understood and overcome. Yet, the idea of Canadian CTG defence diplomacy has worked previously and thus a proposal to expand such a programme's scope and effects has merit.

CHAPTER 1 – DEFENCE DIPLOMACY – THE CONCEPT

Several ways and means are available to nations seeking to build mutual understanding, whether they share a common outlook or intend to advance common interests. Public diplomacy is a method for representatives at all levels to engage in multi-faceted dialogue that can be put into practice through the diplomatic corps, meetings, exchanges, cultural awareness programmes, and information campaigns. While militaries are traditionally perceived as instruments of national might towards defence, deterrence, coercion, and offense, this conventional perspective does not offer a comprehensive characterization of all functions that a military may assume. Indeed, Clausewitz's aphorism that 'war is the continuation of politics by other means' underscores that a state's armed forces have linkages to diplomacy.⁸ These linkages have evolved over time and become more nuanced.

The relationship between terms such as military or defence and diplomacy reflects, at least in a narrow historical sense, a dichotomy that typically saw the failure of one leading to the other. Diplomacy was also relied upon during a conflict to settle on strategy in addition to national contributions towards collective efforts and to assist in resolving the conflict in view of signing a peace agreement. Moreover, military attachés filled an invaluable role in times of peace and war. This activity evolved out of the intelligence function whereby "the military attaché was something of a hybrid in the world of international relations. He was part diplomat, part soldier, part scout, and perhaps, as Lord George Curzon [i.e. a former British politician] suggested, not entirely

⁸ Göran Swistek, "The Nexus between Public Diplomacy and Military Diplomacy in Foreign Affairs and Defense Policy," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 79-80.

welcome.”⁹ Over time, seemingly divergent notions of defence and diplomacy have been both reconciled in their historical context and subject to transformation.

Relations between states become more interconnected by virtue of mutual defence interests along with increasing commerce and trade. The military dimension has adapted to remain a relevant instrument in supporting conditions of peace. Extending beyond the original sphere of coordinating disposition of armed forces and exchange of military attachés, defence diplomacy assumed more proactive roles within expansive foreign policy and security domains.¹⁰ A focus on actions intended to stymie conflict entailed granting foreign military members greater visibility and awareness into a partner nation by means of personnel exchanges in addition to access to education and training institutions. National interpretations of global and regional socio-political realism however, occasionally drove the practical application of these measures in a manner that included schemes of dubiously morality.

For example, the primary strategic concern during the Cold War related to the Western policy of containment. Defence-related interests were thus entrenched in the perceived realism that granting military assistance to anti-communist authoritarian regimes was preferable to dealing with Soviet-aligned totalitarian regimes.¹¹ The contrasting consequences of those past decisions is that they very likely maintained peace on a global scale by staving off nuclear war while simultaneously creating adverse regional ramifications by arguably prompting a greater number of pre- and post-Cold War conventional conflicts. Moreover, since 9/11 and as part of counter-terrorism efforts,

⁹ Timothy C. Shea, “Transforming Military Diplomacy,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (2005): 50.

¹⁰ Swistek, 2012, 80-83.

¹¹ Steven W. Hook and John W. Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since World War II*, 18th ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 2010), 144.

defence diplomacy has followed a model comparable to that in effect during the Cold War whereby military cooperation to nations has increased with little to no consideration towards their – and their militaries’ – weak performances in the areas of democracy and human rights. Amid the moral predicaments of these situations, contemporary examples of defence diplomacy serving the purposes of rapprochement between long-time East-West adversaries stand in stark contrast to otherwise contentious policies. A duality in the United States’, Canada’s, and NATO’s defence diplomacy methods materialized as the East-West rivalry abated. The approach exposed not only former Soviet-aligned states but also developing states to Western attitudes, methodologies, and institutions via amiable military-to-military cooperative engagements and relationships. In so doing, the objective was to support restructuring the armed forces of nascent democracies which were experiencing difficult multi-sector transitions.¹² In essence, during this period, the focus on former adversaries was aimed at reconciliation and averting the possibility of future friction and confrontation. Beyond these developments, additional examples of a positive shift in defence diplomacy applications can also be found within the nuanced space of disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

Military assistance in the form of equipment and personnel continues to be helpful following natural disasters, post-war rebuilding, and various human-induced crises. These humanitarian efforts have also assumed proactive, constructive, and at times non-conflicted-related dimensions whereby militaries provide “a range of services, including hospital construction, health-care centers, the maintenance of public property such as

¹² Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster, *Reshaping Defence Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Cooperation and Assistance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6-15.

bridges, roads, and schools, and health and veterinarian monitoring programs.”¹³ In characterizing these examples of defence diplomacy, it is appropriate to distinguish between disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. These terms are used interchangeably despite entailing nuanced considerations that may be contentious to varying extents:

Humanitarian assistance missions are proactive and largely a reaction to artificial events, while disaster relief is reactive and mostly called upon after natural disasters. The latter require immediate reactions to events such as earthquakes, flooding, hurricanes, cyclones, tornadoes, tsunamis, fires, volcano eruptions, landslides, and storms. Even though warning systems are improving, natural disasters mostly strike with little to no forewarning; thus, these operations focus on emergency relief and immediate humanitarian help to alleviate the suffering with only minimal levels of preparedness. Also important is the environment in which the operations take place. Proactive humanitarian assistance missions are deployed in both permissive and nonpermissive environments, while disaster response largely occurs in a permissive environment – even when it was hostile prior to the event.¹⁴

While the distinctions are influenced by political decision-making, underlying national interests, and external factors, there is a corollary consequence to the military forces that render assistance. Requisite levels of operational readiness and in-theatre posture will differ when undertaking certain types of missions. Within this overall context, application of defence diplomacy envisions more direct linkages between peace, security, prosperity, and a plethora of social factors.

In contributing stability and when compared to historical interpretations, defence diplomacy developments represent a fundamental reversal in perspective. Where military collaboration between nations was once seen as a means to secure and maintain military alliances, modern non-combat employment of forces now serves constructive purposes

¹³ Haluk Karadag, “Forcing the Common Good: The Significance of Public Diplomacy in Military Affairs,” *Armed Forces & Society* 43, no. 1 (2017): 82-83.

¹⁴ Larissa Forster, “The Soft Power Currencies of US Navy Hospital Ship Missions,” *International Studies Perspectives* 16, no. 4 (2015): 370.

within fields that are not directly related to defence.¹⁵ Terms such as hard power, soft power, and smart power therefore frame discussions and assessments of any undertaking within a nation's defence diplomacy efforts. Hard power relates to a nation's ability to use force or to leverage its military and economic means for purposes of coercion. Soft power on the other hand substitutes coercion for attraction; a nation uses its military, economic, and other means to achieve its interests without explicit or implied use of force.¹⁶ Given that these forms of power are not mutually exclusive, a nation may also pursue an optimal balance of the two, a coordinated approach referred to as smart power.¹⁷ Ultimately, selective employment of these forms of power advances national objectives and constitutes an element of strategy within the realm of defence diplomacy to which naval forces serve multiple purposes.

The naval dimension of defence diplomacy follows a similar evolutionary pattern to that of defence diplomacy writ large. Given that naval forces were tied to economic activity over water, protection of that activity, and were symbols of national might, a linking of the terms navy and diplomacy arguably conjures historically-sourced sentiments of gunboat diplomacy. Although actual force was not necessarily always applied, the threat came from warships in the pursuance of commercial objectives, as a means of coercion, when blockading an adversary's ports to secure advantage or simply as part of a broader attempt to alter or at least influence a target nation's policies and

¹⁵ Thierry Balzacq, Frédéric Charillon, and Frédéric Ramel, *Global Diplomacy – An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, trans. William Snow (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 268.

¹⁶ Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (2004): 256.

¹⁷ Alan Chong, "Smart Power and Military Force: An Introduction," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 3 (2015): 233.

military strategies.¹⁸ However, the term diplomacy is a misnomer when used today to characterise these activities as they represent the antithesis of modern naval diplomacy.

Although naval forces are still used in traditional hard power ways, they constitute a constructive soft power instrument of national policy. Yet, this simplification belies the various methods by which naval means may be employed and the nuances of what a state may intend to achieve through its maritime power. International crises have become considerably more pronounced in the modern era, as have the corresponding approaches when responding to them.¹⁹ Moreover, given that naval diplomacy is inherently built into a variety of day-to-day warship activities, a spectrum of programmes may be defined. The modern realities of naval diplomacy are thus quite distinct from the historically coercive variants and, much like the broader notion of defence diplomacy, are not limited to reactive measures.

At the lower end of this spectrum, goodwill visits typically occur during scheduled port visits whereby sailors volunteer to build, refurbish, and maintain key community facilities such as schools, hospitals, and orphanages. Furthermore, foreign military and non-military officials are often invited onboard visiting warships. Activities include the relatively straightforward provision of guided tours to grant cultural, technological, and confidence-building insights, more involved formal hosting of dignitaries as part of ambassadorial functions, and lobbying to position future business

¹⁸ James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), 41.

¹⁹ Robert B. Watts, "The New Normalcy: Sea Power and Contingency Operations in the Twenty-First Century," *Naval War College Review* 65, no. 3 (2012): 48.

arrangements.²⁰ In effect, any number of diplomacy-related opportunities find expression as stand-alone initiatives or may be linked to broader national strategies.

The higher end of a military's diplomatic non-coercive spectrum entails more elaborate and comprehensive programmes. Such "peacetime activities center on cooperation and exercises, military-to-military contacts, officer training, and access agreements as means of demonstrating and building positive relationships,"²¹ improving understanding, favouring transparency, and focusing on interoperability. Furthermore, naval vessels serve as platforms to host an array of equipment, personnel, and services which are sourced from one or multiple nations, ranging from aircraft, landing craft, and specialists to medical facilities in addition to the storage and transportation of supplies. By virtue of these inherent and embarked capabilities, composite forces are mobile, flexible, and responsive hubs that leverage the maritime domain. Access to both convenient and remote coastal and in-land locations that may not always be easily reachable via ground-based means or direct air transportation is then enabled for follow-on provision of assistance during operations other than war. When combined with sophisticated command and control systems found in most warships, this force has the potential to also assume leadership and coordinating roles as part of a broader effort. Equally significant is the prospect of greater cross-nation and cross-discipline integration that is afforded by the vessels, further enriching cooperative engagements that leverage confidence-building and alignment of processes whereby benefits are attained by all parties involved.

²⁰ Swistek, 2012, 85.

²¹ Forster, 2015, 369.

In summary, the once-prevailing dichotomy between diplomacy and the use of force whereby the failure of one would lead to the other remains an option for states to pursue. However, new approaches towards employment of military forces within the diplomatic realm challenge historical perceptions surrounding professional military contributions. A nuanced distinction differentiates morally dubious military assistance that advances national aims with little regard for adverse second and third order effects from the more progressive focus on rapprochement, reconciliation, and humanitarianism. By extension, legacy hard power models now complement or give precedence to soft power models that entail more proactive, cooperative, and constructive engagements. These applications of defence diplomacy envision direct linkages between cooperation, interoperability, relationship-building, social factors, prosperity, governance, and the achievement of peace. Naval forces offer substantive contributions, providing supporting functions and leading naval diplomacy efforts by bringing unique capabilities to bear.

CAF and RCN institutional and doctrinal literature already captures defence diplomacy's positive aspects by including such activities as part of core missions and articulating how they matter to Canada's role within the international community. Whereas Canadian military operations abroad do at times include armed force, Canada's Profession of Arms has recognized the importance of evolving its mandate and aligning it with that of other departments to progress national interests in non-combat areas. Moving forward, expanding the use of military channels to position additional defence diplomacy programmes that focus on engagement between not only Canada and other states but also between foreign states themselves will further contribute to both stability at regional levels and global peace.

CHAPTER 2 – A CANADIAN CONTEXT

That the Profession of Arms may be required to employ disciplined use of force represents but one method for a nation to advance its interests via military channels. However, this is not a preferred choice so long as practicable alternatives can be conceived and pursued. The CAF's core missions articulated within the SSE Defence Policy are a spectrum that lends itself to options in addition to innovative thinking towards achieving peace and security. Amid this flexibility, the Canadian approach to defence diplomacy is in line with more modern and constructive interpretations, rooted in the notion of the military collaborating with other departments as an integral component of a Team Canada model.²² Together, this team takes a cooperative approach with other nations and builds long-term partnerships in the pursuance of common defence and security interests, at least in theory.

In formulating its interests, much of Canada's attention focuses on the evolving dynamics between nations that constitute or interact with bodies such as the G7 and NATO. Indeed, traditional and historically enduring partnerships remain crucial in the international domain. However, nations in Latin America, Africa, and Asia have progressively assumed greater roles and influence by virtue of their growing economies and have become regional powers in their own right.²³ Consequently, regional engagement strategies have at times been crafted towards these emerging markets whereby multiple Government of Canada departments collaborate in order to build and grow bilateral and multilateral relationships. In essence, pan-government departmental

²² Rick Hillier, *A Soldier First* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2009), 157.

²³ Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged*, 2017, 50.

mandates are networked towards connecting and addressing the diverse and previously unrelated elements of national importance within a given region of the world.

Within the Government of Canada, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is structured and mandated to assume a lead role in foreign affairs. Its efforts are intended to “advance Canada’s interests and values in a complex global environment ... [They] manage diplomatic relations, promote international trade, and ... lead international development [along with] humanitarian and peace and security assistance efforts.”²⁴ Yet, the challenges being faced within any given nation or region are rarely if ever isolated. Instead, convergence of geopolitical, economic, social and other issues will be a source of friction and at times even conflict. This introduces a military dimension that must also be managed.

As GAC positions its cross-border engagements, the CAF collaborates alongside this department and any other departments and entities based on each situation’s circumstances. In operationalizing the three SSE core missions that correlate to defence diplomacy, CAF doctrine recognizes the importance of military and non-military stakeholders working together to achieve not only positive but, more importantly, enduring outcomes. Based on the comprehensive approach methodology, the military is doctrinally established to partner with organizations and representatives from the public, private, and social sectors.²⁵ As a complement to this approach, JIMP thinking has synthesized the CAF’s experiences and distinct value to yield a force that can operate in conditions that see “diplomatic, defence, development and commercial resources aligned with those of ... other agencies, coordinated [via] an integrated campaign plan, and

²⁴ Global Affairs Canada, “Global Affairs Canada,” Last modified 9 October 2020, <https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

²⁵ Department of National Defence, *CFJP 4.0, Support*, 2016, 2-1.

applied in ... operations.”²⁶ Consequently, Canadian service personnel find themselves increasingly involved within joint activities that extend well past the purely military domain.

When considering inclusion of non-combat military means within the diplomatic realm of foreign affairs to achieve outcomes that are beneficial for all parties, a right fit must be assured. A fundamental and underlying principle is that “there are parts of a society who will reject cooperation with military bodies, and at the same time there are parts of a society that are easier to approach from the military point of view.”²⁷ Bearing in mind the multi-department, multi-sector, and multi-nation constructs that comprise such engagements and in considering the influence that the military can exert, the CAF offers a measure of legitimate influence towards making productive inroads within a region’s defence / security structure.²⁸ This influence in turn leads to increased likelihood of broader cooperation that may translate, albeit in a circuitous manner, to non-military domains and yield benefits in other sectors.

The CAF serves a helpful purpose to GAC and other departments, as outlined in SSE, by leveraging military equipment and personnel and by positioning military-to-military engagements as a means of bolstering foreign policy. The mobility, reach, and sustainment of Canadian departments can be enhanced with the use of military assets and a vast logistics system. These capabilities also serve a supporting role in the execution of these stakeholders’ tasks. Moreover, situational awareness is improved when there is sharing of intelligence between the CAF, allies, and the nation being engaged which may

²⁶ Gizewski and Rostek, 2007, 55.

²⁷ Swistek, 2012, 84.

²⁸ Department of National Defence, *A-PA-005-000/AP-004, Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2005), 59.

then be distributed to Canadian parties. This leveraging of relationships also yields results by growing the capacity of partners through training programmes, by organizing and participating in multinational exercises that enhance interoperability and effectiveness, and granting access to materiel which leads to business and export opportunities for Canadian industry.²⁹ Canada's achievement of trust in a military domain thus represents a key ingredient and milestone within a deliberate, long-term, comprehensive regional engagement philosophy.

Such engagements are equally applicable to like-minded nations as they are to regions that have been the subject of a historical or current Canadian presence. In keeping with concepts of soft power, cooperation, relationship-building, rapprochement, transparency, and interoperability, DND / CAF defence diplomacy tasks are also relevant to future dealings with countries that face regional instability and those whose outlook is not necessarily in full alignment with Canada's. Whether as a series of discrete events or as a mutually reinforcing and interweaved system, the overarching philosophy moving forward is that "active engagement with other armed forces and defence ministries provides opportunities to build mutual understanding, ... resolve differences, demonstrate leadership, and promote Canadian values."³⁰ Of particular significance is that mutual understanding and resolution of differences need not be limited to a bilateral relationship between Canada and another nation. By positioning programmes that are based on encouraging contact and cooperation between Canada and a grouping of states which would not otherwise readily partner with each other, a new platform is created. Mistrust inherent to compartmentalized military communities can be reversed when multinational

²⁹ Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged*, 2017, 89.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

defence professionals gather, get to know each other, and dialogue through exchanges and other confidence-building measures.³¹ This novel form of multi-stakeholder engagement applies Canadian values to serve as a moderating influence and ultimately builds requisite trust on the path towards peace in regions with intricately difficult cross-border dynamics.

In summary, Canadian defence roles and contributions complement other departments' efforts in the areas of international assistance, commerce, and foreign policy writ large. DND recognizes the importance of aligning its mandate with those of other departments towards pursuing coordinated programmes in regions that are not covered by traditional alliances while navigating the nuances of working with dissimilar nations and organizations. In so doing, Canada's military has the potential to leverage past and current experiences, lessons, and partnerships to evolve mainstream notions of defence diplomacy and position imaginative programmes that are conducive to peace while also building an awareness of Canadian perspectives. As an integral element of an evolving CAF that continues to serve as a relevant instrument of national influence, the RCN's strategic direction, capabilities, experiences, and its linkages to Canadian and allied partners alike add value to cooperative efforts of the nature described above. The RCN is thus ideally positioned to undertake and lead joint multilateral initiatives.

³¹ Balzacq et al, 2020, 274.

CHAPTER 3 – THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY AND DIPLOMACY

To achieve its mandate of providing Canada and the CAF with an instrument of national influence at sea and from the sea, domestically and internationally, the RCN includes supported elements – crews and ships at various readiness states – and supporting establishments – headquarters, maintenance facilities, and schools. Amid fiscal, schedule, material, and personnel constraints, the RCN’s force structure and force mix enable “flexibility, global reach, and staying power, allow[ing] it to succeed across a broad mission set: combat operations, rapid provision of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, ... defence diplomacy, and collaborat[ion] with other government departments and agencies on a daily basis.”³² As an internationally focussed component of the CAF, the RCN not only plans for and then conducts these missions but is also capable of transitioning from one assignment to the next with relative ease.

Sea-going skills are routinely exercised and are generally applicable to all the Navy’s tasks. Moreover, increasingly joint and combined workplaces both at sea and ashore have yielded a workforce that can quickly understand and successfully operate within nuanced perspectives, further enriching the contributions of sailors amid complex international settings. Accordingly, the RCN’s unique and sought-after capabilities, experiences, and relationships with Canadian and allied partners have proven invaluable on operations and defence diplomacy assignments alike. While some activities are well-advertised, frequently practiced, and reflective of the RCN’s proficiency and credibility, others are of limited precedent yet nonetheless notable for their significant diplomatic effects.

³² Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged*, 2017, 34.

Given alignment deficiencies between RCN and CAF institutional literature, the Navy's demonstrable ability to assume more expansive naval diplomacy programmes that address Canada's place in the world must first be established by referencing historical examples. An examination of certain RCN day-to-day activities will therefore serve to bring into naval context the Navy's proficiency as a JIMP-enabled force within the Comprehensive Approach model. This more evolved understanding of the RCN will thus create the necessary basis upon which to help shape future diplomatic contributions.

Routine Activities

In undertaking daily service requirements, both at sea and ashore, naval officers and non-commissioned members routinely perform their duties in joint and / or combined workplaces, ships, and task groups. These range from the traditional DND public servant – CAF military organizational structure, coalition operations, and civic engagements to the more novel imbedding of naval personnel within multi-disciplinary teams alongside other government departments' representatives, contractors, and strategic industry partners. Achievement of cultural, technical, and doctrinal interoperability has thus become more nuanced, labyrinthine, and complex, effectively necessitating a review of how the naval institution both approaches and influences multi-faceted relationships.³³ Consequently, diverse and at times conflicting interests which were once resolved by relying on the absoluteness of command and control are now often managed by consultation and compromise towards moving all parties in the direction of their needs.³⁴ The skillsets required to work harmoniously within such environments and to succeed are

³³ Department of National Defence, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*, 2005, xiv.

³⁴ Alan Okros, "Developing Institutional Leadership," In *Leadership in the Canadian Military Context* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2010), 35.

JIMP in nature if not in name and have proven both transferable and invaluable in pursuance of defence diplomacy activities.

Contemporary examples of naval involvement in defence diplomacy are evident, for example, in Operation *Projection* when RCN ships deploy with foreign navies and other defence-related parties for the purposes of engagement, training, multilateral exercises, and team building. The model centres on the premise that working and playing together find expression in various formal and informal relationship-enhancing activities which in time produce cohesion.³⁵ In addition to the military-centric focus on transparency and interoperability, naval presence and corresponding fleet manoeuvres invariably lead to port visits. These allow diplomatic receptions, sports competitions, as well as community outreach and volunteer work. Of particular significance, these visits are not planned and executed in isolation but rather, result from Canadian multi-department cooperation. GAC and the RCN liaise with each other to select ports that maximize the projection value inherent to a Canadian warship as it works with allies and partners, thus representing and advancing Canada's interests abroad.³⁶ While in-port initiatives may be interpreted as either the deliberate reasons for scheduling a port visit or simply reflect a desire to yield secondary effects, the opportunities brought on by Canada's comprehensive approach nonetheless equate to substantive defence diplomacy outcomes. Their constructive and benevolent nature promotes goodwill towards Canada within a given nation or region and diplomatic, strategic, and tactical efforts are advanced, all based on the RCN's JIMP proficiency amid multilateralism. In effect, the matter begins with deliberate and coordinated Government of Canada planning and

³⁵ Merrill McPeak, *Below the Zone* (Lake Oswego: Lost Wingman Press, 2013), 206.

³⁶ M.X. Dery, "Operation Projection – in a nutshell," *Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt Lookout News*, 29 May 2018, <https://www.lookoutnewspaper.com/operation-projection-nut-shell/>.

culminates in multinational involvement that yields beneficial military, relational, economic, social, and political outcomes for all parties involved.

Notwithstanding positive connotations, RCN contributions in operations such as *Projection* are typical types of defence diplomacy initiatives that navies routinely undertake. This foundation, however, may serve as impetus for further engagements and greater prospects since the RCN offers assorted capabilities. RCN CTG is one such capability which, while certainly well-established and well-practiced in the hard power domain, is underappreciated insofar as defence diplomacy potential is concerned.

The Commander Task Group Capability

The naval task group offers defence diplomacy contributions based on its construct of bringing together multi-disciplinary and multinational staff within an environment that requires communication and cooperation. In a purely doctrinal sense as framed in RCN literature, a Canadian naval task group currently consists of four surface combatants, one submarine, a support ship, and embarked helicopters. Conceptually however, this definition can be broadened in that, at its most basic, a task group is two or more ships working together. Its composition and structure are conducive to coordinated, flexible, tailored, and comprehensive military actions across the spectrum of maritime operations.³⁷ A key task group virtue is thus found in the flagship's ability to assume command and control of disparate assets, capabilities, and force enablers that are joint and combined in nature.

RCN strategic plans underscore that this service is to remain capable of assuming both national and international leadership responsibilities. These roles are validated by

³⁷ Department of National Defence, *Royal Canadian Navy Strategic Plan 2017-2022*, 2016, 13-15.

the RCN's practiced ability to lead complex task group operations.³⁸ Insofar as command arrangements are concerned, the function of Commander Task Group corresponds with the title given to the commander of such a force. Thereafter, CTG staff can be sourced from other services and nations and hosted aboard the flagship. This is conducive to a higher degree of integration and collaboration. Moreover, by leveraging onboard infrastructure and facilities along with an extensive and configurable communications suite, a flagship is capable of strategic-level and local tactical-level interactions within the CAF and RCN as well as with allies and partners. In aggregate, the advantages of communication which are afforded by a flagship, both technologically and through direct inter-personal interactions, provide value-added, respected, and sought-after capability.

The contemporary employment and credibility of Canada's CTG capability has led to allied confidence in the RCN assuming command of NATO forces. At a time when CAF officers held command of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group Latvia and the NATO Mission Iraq, RCN Commodore Josée Kurtz was also entrusted with command of Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) with HMCS *Halifax* as flagship.³⁹ Reinforcing Canada's leadership value within alliances, this distinction reaffirmed that multinational task group command from a Canadian-sourced warship represents a pertinent operational posture. Moreover, elements of defence diplomacy were certainly extant within SNMG2 by virtue of the alliance construct and international engagements. Nonetheless, the matter was predominantly focused on a historical

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5, 12.

³⁹ Marcello Sukhdeo, "CAF's Commodore Josée Kurtz takes over command of Standing NATO Maritime Group Two," *Vanguard Canada* (18 June 2019), <https://vanguardcanada.com/2019/06/18/caf-commodore-josee-kurtz-takes-over-command-of-standing-nato-maritime-group-two/>.

partnership of long-standing whose primary purpose was aimed at hard power aspects of presence and deterrence.

The situation outlined above is but one example of a relatively common CTG employment model. A less prevalent and less known defence diplomacy-specific CTG example can be found in Exercise *UNITAS* whereby provision of an RCN-sourced flagship entailed a unique opportunity within which to host and integrate multinational teams with relatively limited cooperative precedent.

History – Commander Task Group in Defence Diplomacy

In bridging the concepts of CTG and defence diplomacy, a precedent exists whereby the RCN deployed a flagship to leverage multilateral organizations and partnerships. Exercise *UNITAS* is a multi-nation maritime exercise which is conducted annually in Latin America and the Caribbean. It aims to improve security cooperation and coalition operations whereby Canada has at times participated.⁴⁰ In 2013, HMCS *Iroquois* took part in that year's exercise and assumed a CTG function.

During *UNITAS*, the RCN-sourced command platform embarked the task group commander, a Columbian rear admiral, along with a 25-member international staff consisting of military personnel from Canada, Columbia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and the United States. This multinational leadership team assumed command and control of a multinational fleet and aircraft that also included Belize, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, and the United Kingdom.⁴¹ Whereas *UNITAS 2013* objectives are found in the Final Planning Conference Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a summary highlights the uniquely deliberate emphasis which

⁴⁰ United States Department of Defense Southern Command, "UNITAS 2019," Last accessed 13 October 2020, <https://www.southcom.mil/Media/Special-Coverage/UNITAS-2019/>.

⁴¹ UNITAS 54-13, *Final Planning Conference* (Cartagena: UNITAS, 11-14 June 2013).

was placed on multilateral integration and interoperability as well as on relationship building, cooperation, and human rights:

1. Integrate participating nations and exercise the staffs to conduct joint operations by employing a Multinational Force in a realistic regional scenario.
2. Stand up a Multinational Task Force operating under a conventional and an asymmetric threat environment that provides a training environment for surface, submarine, and air defense; Military Operations Other Than War, Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief, Crisis Management, Rules of Engagement (ROE) Management, Littoral Warfare, Counter Piracy operations and Combating Transnational Organized Crime operations.
3. Enhance friendly relationships and mutual cooperation among participant navies.
4. Establish and use positive exercise procedures that facilitate real-time situational awareness, constructive feedback, and relevant lessons learned.
5. Enhance and promote human rights awareness.
6. Exercise multinational ROE Procedures.
7. Conduct exercises of classic naval warfare with advanced complexity grade to include live fire exercises.
8. Promote interoperability and develop coalition building and multi-lateral security cooperation.
9. Provide a venue to develop and exercise standardized Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures.
10. Employment of aircraft and helos in anti-submarine warfare.⁴²

Far from token activities and operating at a high level of complexity and coordination, realization of these objectives by a multinational team was due in large part to Canadian warship resources and facilities. Furthermore, in considering the exercise's international dimension and integration challenges inherent to achieving interoperability between largely incompatible information technology (IT) national systems that were not

⁴² *Ibid.*, 4-5.

familiar to all participants, these task group participants were enabled by the installation of the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange system (CENTRIX).⁴³ This technological solution has often served as a practical integration tool that permits a bridging of the communications gap between nations with dissimilar equipment.

Warships which are so equipped leverage a newly found systems commonality to establish a functional tactical-level dialogue which includes the exchange of information, pictures, and the monitoring of overall mission progress.⁴⁴ In time, the notion of commonality begins to extend well past the technical realm into the domain of interests.

The unique significance of a Canadian-hosted CTG during *UNITAS* is made clear when considering the intricacies of South American history. It is commonly accepted that “we live in a time when economic growth has lifted billions from poverty. But fragile and conflict-affected states have been excluded from many of these gains.”⁴⁵ South America has not been entirely spared and this situation is compounded by historically powerful colonial, political, and social factors. As such, presence of outside neutral parties had a moderating influence towards reducing wariness and polarity between antagonists, ultimately helping to forestall the onset of conflict, reconcile differences, and achieve peace.⁴⁶ For instance, following previous *UNITAS* exercises, a historically significant announcement was made by Argentina and Chile, two nations that nearly went to war a generation ago, that they would proceed with combined maritime operations.⁴⁷ In essence, the *Iroquois* commitment reflected a new chapter in a long line of programmes

⁴³ Watts, 2012, 58.

⁴⁴ United States Navy, “CENTRIXS Provides Vital Communication,” Last modified 16 July 2007, https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=30603.

⁴⁵ Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged*, 2017, 49.

⁴⁶ William J. Crowe Jr., *The Line of Fire* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 165.

⁴⁷ Scott Livezey and William Prillaman, “UNITAS Exercise Pays Dividends,” *Proceedings Magazine* (Vol. 129, March 2003), 2.

that have yielded incremental progress and success. However, this type of interpretation is not typically included in defence-centered or mainstream appraisals of the results produced by Canada.

The interpretation and messaging of Canada's involvement within *UNITAS* was predominantly focused on more common and broad terms. HMCS *Iroquois* assumed a "key leadership position during Exercise *UNITAS* by acting as the flagship for the multinational force, demonstrating once again the Royal Canadian Navy's ability to play a lead role in international coalition operations."⁴⁸ While it certainly remains relevant to reemphasize the importance of operating together with partners and to collaborate in managing mutual defence and security concerns, such statements do not convey the full nature of the RCN's commitment to defence diplomacy. The RCN offered a much more nuanced and invaluable contribution than what is widely publicized when considering that "the *UNITAS* commitment is a central element of confidence building in the Americas. It fosters transparency, reduces suspicions, and increases contacts among longtime rivals."⁴⁹ Deployment of *Iroquois* created a unique environment within which to embark and integrate a multinational collaborative command team. This Canadian flagship, with its joint-duty experienced officers and crew, were the foundation upon which a mosaic of loosely partnered military members moved beyond common points of outlook to fulfilling common points of interest in leading the achievement of mutually-defined exercise objectives. Trust, openness, and cooperation were both prerequisites for

⁴⁸ Naval Today, "Canadian Ships Take Up Leading Role in Exercise Unitas," Last modified 6 September 2013, <https://navaltoday.com/2013/09/06/canadian-ships-take-up-leading-role-in-exercise-unitas/>.

⁴⁹ Livezey and Prillaman, 2003, 2.

and an output of this defence diplomacy programme which effectively represented an evolution in multilateral exercises.

Hosting of international representatives with relatively narrow cooperative precedent in a Canadian-sourced flagship towards leading a multinational fleet in the achievement of deliberately positioned relationship building, cooperation, and human rights objectives has generally not been repeated following *UNITAS 2013*. Since *Iroquois*' involvement, there has been much change within the RCN and the CAF in terms of operational experiences and available capabilities. Nonetheless, the CTG's potential to advance comparable objectives in this and other regions of the world remains. When considering the nature of modern conflict and the approaches that may be taken towards its resolution, or at least its management at friction levels, the precedent of a Canadian CTG defence diplomacy programme has been successfully established despite not having been formally identified as such. It therefore merits consideration moving forward. An opportunity is thus presented to revisit the applicability of CTG to future defence diplomacy efforts and to potentially expand both this capability's scope and its effects.

CHAPTER 4 – A COMMANDER TASK GROUP PROGRAMME

A Canadian-hosted, foreign-led, CTG programme supports a Government of Canada comprehensive approach towards various regions of the world. In collaboration with GAC, the RCN is uniquely positioned to tailor this programme in a manner that will bring together international military representatives who would not otherwise readily partner with each other. Defence diplomacy goals include encouraging interoperability and transparency, developing understanding, building relationships, and promoting human rights. The cooperative achievement of mutually defined maritime exercise objectives reinforces such goals. By also positioning the partnership for disaster relief operations in the unfortunate event that such assistance may be required, a coordinated multinational regional response would be feasible, further lending credence to the virtues of continued intra-region cooperation. Yet, the programme's operationalization faces multi-faceted hurdles. A more nuanced understanding of the intricacies and subtleties surrounding security and information-sharing, prospective participant engagement, cultural awareness, and political risks is crucial.

RCN Warships – Selection, Readiness, Interoperability

A naval contribution to defence diplomacy requires periodic allocation of at least one RCN warship which in turn introduces questions of platform selection, readiness, and interoperability. In recent years, the RCN's fleet mix has evolved whereby the Iroquois-class destroyers, specifically fitted for fleet command, have been decommissioned. Consequently, the CTG capability and role now reside with the smaller Halifax-class patrol frigates. Given that the Halifax-class was not originally designed to assume such a function, four of twelve warships have been upgraded as part of the Halifax Class

Modernization / Frigate Life Extension (HCM / FELEX) programme in order to bridge certain capability gaps until construction of replacement CSCs. In addition to command and control as well as communication systems, embarkation of task group staff meant a requirement to provide accommodations beyond what is available for the crew itself.⁵⁰ Bearing in mind that all these factors are of paramount importance to the CTG defence diplomacy programme, the most – and perhaps only – immediately available Canadian vessels would be the four CTG-capable Halifax-class warships. Post-HCM / FELEX frigates have indeed proven capable of assuming multinational CTG functions. However, a key distinction in matters of readiness exists when comparing expeditionary operations such as NATO to a lower intensity commitment that is focused on defence diplomacy.

The RCN has specific definitions for readiness within a tiered construct that delineates mission profiles and associated task sets for several readiness levels. This approach serves a dual purpose, guiding force generators as they prioritize efforts and resources to enable the achievement of each vessel's prescribed readiness state and steering fleet schedulers as they assign ships to missions. Within this construct, support to other government departments, international operations in permissive environments, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief are typically assigned to warships at the Normal Readiness (NR) level, to potentially include mission-specific additions as well.⁵¹ In principle, this readiness level should be interpreted as a 'floor' rather than a 'ceiling' given that a warship at High Readiness (HR) would exceed programme requirements. In practice, a HR frigate entails allocation of a disproportionately high amount of time, resources, and money to deploy for this purpose and would distract from named

⁵⁰ Rob Waller, "Commander Task Group Habitability – Executing Innovation and Ingenuity in a Constrained Space," *Maritime Engineering Journal* no. 82 (March 2017): 27.

⁵¹ Department of National Defence, *CFCD 129*, 2018, 49.

operations unless the ship were assigned on an opportunity basis. As an appropriate balance continues to be struck between Force Employment and other operations, Force Development presents new considerations for the RCN to harmonize.

In matters of fleet recapitalization, 15 larger combatant warships of a final design still to be determined are intended to replace and assume the roles performed by the previous Iroquois-class and current Halifax-class. CSCs will be capable of independent deployments and include a CTG capability which will permit them to operate as an integral element of a Canadian or international task group.⁵² In preparing for CSC's introduction, the RCN has acknowledged that it must "understand how new competencies, such as ... expanded roles like capacity building and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, will affect the Future Fleet."⁵³ An opportunity to inform and shape the associated discourse towards evolving the RCN's defence diplomacy contributions in an enduring fashion thus arises.

Based on the scope, breadth, and depth of decision-making inherent to the task group command environment, partner access to Canadian warship facilities and systems is required. The notions of knowledge and technology sharing or even simple usage equate to an inevitable participating nation – security dilemma which needs to be resolved in preparation for and during embarkation of multinational staff. The nations in question, while deliberately chosen, would by design not exclusively be within the knowns of the NATO or Five Eyes security umbrella, thus presenting access challenges. Technological, process, and diplomatic arrangements represent paramount considerations towards maintaining the integrity of Canada's national security domain as well as that of

⁵² Department of National Defence, "Canadian Surface Combatant," Last accessed 10 December 2020, <http://www.navy-marine.forces.gc.ca/en/fleet-units/csc-home.page>.

⁵³ Department of National Defence, *Royal Canadian Navy Strategic Plan 2017-2022*, 2016, 11.

core allies. At the same time, these arrangements need to support cooperative and, more importantly, integrated operational performance.

A Canadian warship's Operations Room unquestionably represents a key facility for a task group commander and his or her staff while also containing amongst the most sensitive equipment interfaces. Historical precedent, specifically *Iroquois'* 2013 *UNITAS* commitment, suggests that multinational military representatives from outside NATO or Five Eyes partnerships can be successfully accommodated in a Canadian warship's Operations Room and integrated into RCN operations. However, post-HCM / FELEX frigates and CSCs include – and will include – capabilities and systems that were not resident within the Iroquois-class and which may entail added sensitivities. As such, risk assessments and mitigation measures represent crucial prerequisites. Moreover, innovative approaches may be possible, such as via the CSC mission bay with its Modular Mission Support Capacity.⁵⁴ In any case, it must be emphasized that granting access to Canadian command and control systems is only one factor. Interoperability of these systems across a multinational and notionally technologically incompatible fleet is another.

For illustrative purposes, the aforementioned CENTRIX system has been successfully used with South American navies as well as in the Asia-Pacific region. Its multi-purpose virtues can be summarized as:

The advantage of CENTRIX over other more traditional methods of secure communication is its versatility and ease of operation ... Global interoperability and interconnectivity in an easy-to-use format is what makes CENTRIX the dynamo it is. These are the ingredients that provide seamless communication channels to combatant commands, national agencies, foreign partner nations and the participants [of an exercise].⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Department of National Defence, "Canadian Surface Combatant," 2020.

⁵⁵ United States Navy, "CENTRIXS Provides Vital Communication," 2007.

Consequently, Canada benefits from having advanced and proved communication technologies that cater to multi-nation security requirements, enable interoperability with allies and partners, and substantively contribute to mission objectives. This expertise will also prove useful in supporting installation of CENTRIX or another comparable system into partner vessels.

Ultimately, despite favourable historical precedent in addition to the possibilities afforded by Canada's current and future warships, innovative thinking, and proven technological solutions, the security dimension cannot be forgotten. Each class of warship and each defence diplomacy engagement needs to be assessed on its own merits based on the participants which are to be embarked. Efforts inherent to participant engagement however, entail additional challenges that extend beyond security.

Realpolitik Participants – Local and Regional Nuances

To maximize the applicability and thus the likelihood of the CTG programme's success, the approach towards engaging prospective participants is crucial. It is thus appropriate to appreciate the nature of the relationships between prospective participants and also how they perceive Canada. In cases where inter-state friction or conflict originates from relatively similar uncertainties and ambiguities about each other's intentions, the capabilities and menacing potential of military forces or historically-rooted mistrust, military cooperation between states can be positioned to ease tensions. Such a paradigm represents, perhaps counter-intuitively, the most encouraging preamble as participants would hold a more favourable predisposition towards looking past misunderstandings and doubt, focusing instead on gaining new insights and perspectives. Conversely, if existing friction or confrontation between states stems from fundamental

and pronounced differences in political outlook and the norms underpinning international affairs or from territorial and border disagreements, the ability of military cooperation to improve relations and serve as a unifying confidence-building mechanism is reduced. In extending this line of reasoning, defence diplomacy of the type envisioned shall not dissuade foreign political and military leaders from armed conflict if desired.⁵⁶ Thus, existing partnerships and multilateral organizations serve as convenient entrees into the CTG defence diplomacy programme, requiring less overhead than establishing and growing new partnerships from scratch.

In seeking to reintroduce and then expand the CTG defence diplomacy programme, *UNITAS* represents an existing and, more importantly, familiar multilateral mechanism in the Americas. Considering this organization's firsthand experience with the initiative and its ongoing defence diplomacy activities, the invitation of former and even new regional participants provides a seamless Canadian reintroduction amid a notionally willing group. In noting that Canada has not repeated a CTG role that is comparable in nature to *Iroquois'* 2013 commitment, stakeholder familiarity is relevant while former lessons-learned are refreshed, new experiences gained, and updated operating procedures drafted. Ultimately, reintroduction of a CTG defence diplomacy programme into the Americas will establish a more recent foundation of vitally important institutional and experiential conditions with which to evolve and expand into other regions.

In contrast to the Americas, added credibility and buy-in would first need to be secured to make inroads with African nations. Western proposals, and in particular those of a military nature such as, for example, proposed establishment of an American Africa

⁵⁶ Cottey and Forster, 2004, 17-18.

Command headquarters, have historically been subject to significant expressions of concern and opposition by African representatives. This is due to their neither being consulted nor asked to participate in shaping notional programmes, antipathy thus ensuing along with perceptions of arrogance and ethnocentrism.⁵⁷ With military-related programmes being of varying scope and breadth, each is subject to distinct and nuanced views that are also informed by which nation is extending an offer. Nevertheless, the underlying premise and lesson to be embraced of consultation remains applicable to all circumstances.

SSE already acknowledges this consultative prerequisite in noting that the African Union (AU) represents a credible and established multilateral organization whose involvement is imperative given its regional leadership role.⁵⁸ Though the AU offers a forum for official dialogue, it is equally important to engage with, understand, and address the perspectives of numerous and diverse state and non-state stakeholders. In so doing, there can be no expectation that an initiative such as the CTG programme will be overly welcomed by all. In fact, mindful of Africa's historical context, elements of non-interventionism and anti-imperialism may be present to varying degrees. Speculation that ulterior motivations are driving the programme beyond what has been overtly stated or that the effort is rooted in self-interest may also exist.⁵⁹ Some naval familiarity and experience between Canada and certain African nations currently exists due to *Obangame Express* and *Phoenix Express* which are hosted by United States Naval Forces Africa and

⁵⁷ Oluwaseun Tella, "AFRICOM: hard or soft power initiative?" *African Security Review* 25, no. 4 (2016): 400.

⁵⁸ Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged*, 2017, 92.

⁵⁹ Aarie Glas, "African Union security culture in practice: African problems and African solutions," *International Affairs* 94, no. 5 (2018): 1121, 1131.

within which the RCN is a participant.⁶⁰ But experience with a CTG programme is absent. Instant interest in a proposal of this nature cannot be assumed and simply advocating for and articulating the benefits of a more expansive defence diplomacy programme shall be insufficient to garner appeal and support. Time, perseverance, persuasiveness, and perhaps even demonstrable accomplishments in other regions of the world will be necessary to build understanding and action by African nations and their militaries.

While the Americas and Africa stand in stark contrast to each other in terms of the potential to seamlessly position a CTG defence diplomacy programme, Asia offers, in addition to prospective participating nations, a partial and somewhat comparable model to build upon. Specifically, a measure of multi-nation integration and interoperability has been achieved within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). For instance, in order to counter piracy in the Malacca Straits, governments in the area have partnered to create Combined Maritime Patrol Teams (CMPT). Representatives from contributing nations' militaries embark in each other's aircraft which are in turn granted overflight rights across the waters of participating countries. Moreover, it is relevant to underscore the CMPT's evolutionary context. When the CMPT construct was first envisioned, each nation, though cooperative with other participants, initially limited their military involvement to their own respective territorial waters and within their own organizational structures.⁶¹ In due course and in keeping with the premise that operations progress and

⁶⁰ Department of National Defence, "Royal Canadian Navy deploys to the West Coast of Africa," Last modified 22 February 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2019/02/royal-canadian-navy-deploys-to-the-west-coast-of-africa.html>.

⁶¹ See Seng Tan, "Defence and Security Cooperation in East Asia: Whither ASEAN Centrality?" Chap. 3 in *International Security in the Asia-Pacific: Transcending ASEAN Towards Transitional Polycentrism*, edited by Alan Chong (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 67.

evolve at the speed of trust, a common point of interest was effectively expanded upon, reinforcing the notion that military endeavours between once unlikely partners are scalable and can indeed lead to greater cooperation.⁶² Furthermore, while the CMPT is a maritime example though not explicitly naval, there is precedent within this aircraft context that is applicable to warships. Warships offer a greater prospect of integration in terms of number of participants as well as in the scope and depth of decision-making that are inherent to the task group command environment. Notwithstanding these positive indicators, the possibility of conflicting and perhaps even contradictory interests cannot be discounted as nations consider the possibility of participating.

Reciprocity in terms of cooperative intentions and confidence-building actions is essential within the CTG programme. Given that defence diplomacy is a mutual process on the part of all participants, reciprocity is an important foundation despite the fact that its practice cannot be assumed or mandated but only urged.⁶³ Western experience with ASEAN offers insights into the perspectives and interests hurdles that may need to be overcome when considering a prospective participant's underlying motivations. Specifically, despite indications that ASEAN nations "favour security multilateralism, ... the ASEAN states have tended to prefer bilateral rather than multilateral military exercises and exchanges with the United States [and in broader terms the West] because of the perceptibly higher level of knowledge and technology transfers they stand to receive."⁶⁴ Such an arrangement would, if it were to be the primary motivation, represent the antithesis of the regional, cooperative, and confidence-building objectives that the CTG programme is intended to help achieve.

⁶² Jim Mattis, *Call Sign CHAOS – Learning to Lead* (New York: Random House, 2019), 65.

⁶³ Cottey and Forster, 2004, 18.

⁶⁴ Tan, 2017, 68.

Ultimately, the CTG programme is an operation of choice. The degree and extent of interest expressed by each state correlates to a great many factors, national interests being a primary driver that will inform each state's behaviour, among others. These interests shall not be abandoned by virtue of participation within a multinational activity, though they may be swayed through negotiation and compromise.⁶⁵ This nuanced space must be understood and managed, noting that circumstances and perspectives differ by region or by nation and more importantly by each stakeholder. Consequently, as individuals seek to make a connection with each other towards finding commonalities that may be expanded upon, two relationship dimensions are relevant – interactions between the hosted participants themselves and interactions between hosts and guests.

Relationships

In considering the time and effort required to position a CTG programme, it is appropriate to question whether desired benefits could be achieved by other means. Indeed, the diplomatic domain is saturated with groups, programmes, and any number of other initiatives intended to support relationship-building, cooperation, transparency, and promotion of certain values.⁶⁶ The CTG's virtue, however, is rooted in shared traditions of maritime military service whereby sea duty has the effect of building and growing personal and professional connections between service members. Although barriers derived from years of scepticism may be present to lesser or greater extents, military professionals share a wealth of common experiences and can easily relate to each other.⁶⁷ Over time and as a consequence of multiple engagements, otherwise dissimilar

⁶⁵ United States Department of Defense, US Joint Publication 3-16, *Multinational Operations* (Washington: US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 March 2019), II-3.

⁶⁶ David Bosco, "Assessing the UN Security Council: A Concert Perspective," *Global Governance* 20, no. 4 (2014): 558.

⁶⁷ Merrill McPeak, *Roles and Missions* (Lake Oswego: Lost Wingman Press, 2017), 103.

individuals discover that they have more in common than they originally believed. In essence, the objective herein is to support the programme's ability to enable resolution of inter-state challenges by focusing on this programme's impacts on inter-personal dimensions between participants.⁶⁸ In so doing, the opportunity is to allow "people to develop a human relationship that will help sustain an official relationship in good times and bad."⁶⁹ This process begins with the RCN's preparations for its sailors to assume a defence diplomacy role.

Service within a RCN flagship sailing on a defence diplomacy assignment both requires and induces higher proficiency in inter-personal skillsets by virtue of the requirement to interact and cooperate with representatives from other government departments and with foreign military personnel in a constructive manner. Linked to a comprehensive approach and JIMP-enabled force along with extensive naval personnel experience in those matters, the RCN is undeniably positioned to take on assignments of this nature. In so doing, a corollary requirement emerges for Canadian participants to develop a nuanced understanding of other nations towards assuring cross-cultural competence, thus enabling hosting parties to quickly and correctly comprehend where people from diverse backgrounds are coming from, how their cultural backgrounds inform their perspectives, and to then engage with them appropriately.⁷⁰ To do otherwise risks miscommunications and misunderstandings which are rooted in the pitfalls of ethnocentrism and would ultimately result in a cultural failure.⁷¹ With this foundation in

⁶⁸ Bosco, 2014, 546.

⁶⁹ Colin Powell, *It Worked for Me* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 270.

⁷⁰ Brian Selmeski, "Military Cross-Cultural Competence: Core Concepts and Individual Development." Centre for Security, Armed Forces and Society (May 2007), 12.

⁷¹ Peter G Northouse, "Culture and Leadership," In *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 428, 429; Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 39.

place, Canadian military personnel will be better positioned to build relationships with those with whom they are working.

Mindful that the CTG programme is intended to increase contacts between participants, this medium also grants Canadian and partner military personnel direct access to current and future military leaders along with policy-makers from other countries.⁷² While this defence diplomacy initiative must lead to a greater number and frequency of high level interactions in order to be relevant, a temporal consideration must not be neglected.⁷³ Assuming career advancement by the participants and the occasional transition away from military service to other fields, a long-term value will find expression in the emergence of a professional multi-sector network.⁷⁴ A key element of this value-proposition rests on each individual participant deciding to pursue the matter given that sustained personal effort is required to build, grow, and maintain long-term international relationships. Because such outcomes are not immediate, do not lend themselves to metrics, and are not subject to accurate measurements of effectiveness or efficiency, they represent a less-than-tangible benefit that may be difficult for all stakeholders to appreciate or even grasp. Nevertheless, relationships are conducive to diplomatic benefits whereby influence and progress can be achieved on issues that extend well beyond the purely military domain.

With the proposed CTG programme representing the naval component of a broader Government of Canada regional engagement strategy, this defence diplomacy initiative also entails pursuit of defence-related reforms that are transferable to non-

⁷² Bjorn Hagelin, "Military Dependency: Thailand and the Philippines," *Journal of Peace Research* 25, no. 4 (1988): 441.

⁷³ Bosco, 2014, 550.

⁷⁴ Swistek, 2012, 83.

military institutions. In particular, daily interactions with Canadian service personnel provides participants with firsthand awareness into and understanding of Canada's democratic principles and social norms that both complement and find expression in military values.⁷⁵ With the starting environment characterized, at least in part, by uncertainty, ambiguity, and scepticism on the part of participants, a Canadian-sourced warship offers a neutral platform conducive to a conciliatory and non-belligerent environment. In turn, this enables a key premise with historical precedent to take effect – “everyday contacts ... moderate parties' views.”⁷⁶ New perspectives on gender and cultural equality as well as human rights can thus begin to be heard. In aggregate, the convergence of all these factors within a hard power warship which is employed to achieve soft power objectives effectively represents a preeminent example of smart power in action.

Human Rights

The concept of human rights has many dimensions, including advancement of gender and cultural equality. Within this context, it should be emphasised that “military cooperation is also about changing the mind-sets of partner states' militaries.”⁷⁷ Therefore, inclusion of a CTG defence diplomacy programme mandate that addresses human rights is appropriate and of utmost importance.

In bridging a CTG defence diplomacy programme with promotion of social equalities via leadership by example, RCN warships offer a medium to demonstrate the virtues of pluralism, gender mainstreaming, and how respect along with the embracing of

⁷⁵ Karadag, 2017, 73, 79.

⁷⁶ Crowe Jr., 1993, 42.

⁷⁷ Cottey and Forster, 2004, 16.

diversity are sources of strength.⁷⁸ Canadian military members are representative of Canada's diversity who in turn fill every role within the Profession of Arms and produce meaningful value-added contributions daily as well as throughout the various stages of conflict resolution.⁷⁹ Accordingly, day-to-day multinational staff interaction with a Canadian warship's crew on this basis further contributes to firsthand exposure to Canada's social strengths. While the importance of influencing mindsets on human rights to underpin peace efforts is indisputable, it is also necessary to understand this topic's broader strategic-level ramifications in terms of participant selection.

A nation which could benefit from the type of exposure afforded by the CTG programme may be lacking in its human rights record. By extension, a question that will inevitably materialize is – “How far should defence diplomacy cooperation be conditional on partners' domestic behaviour with regard to human rights and democracy?”⁸⁰ Given certain dubious Cold War and post-9/11 defence diplomacy practices which tend to be more generally familiar, the CTG programme may be interpreted as being but the latest version of that form of military cooperation, an appraisal of the countries potentially involved further adding to this perspective. However, such an erroneous comparison is based on superficial similarities with clarification best achieved by a more nuanced understanding of this issue.

Motivations matter and the CTG programme is neither rooted in contentious socio-political contexts nor predicated on a quid pro quo with prospective participants.

⁷⁸ Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged*, 2017, 92.

⁷⁹ Jody Thomas, “Halifax Security Forum: Canada puts women at the forefront of defence,” *The Chronicle Herald*, 23 November 2019, <https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/opinion/national-perspectives/halifax-security-forum-canada-puts-women-at-forefront-of-defence-378501/>; Northouse, 2013, 427.

⁸⁰ Cottey and Forster, 2004, 19.

Instead, this programme is multilaterally cooperative in nature whereby the objective is to ease friction and prevent conflict between participants themselves. Nevertheless, careful consideration must be given to a prospective participating nation's starting conditions in terms of human rights record. Thereafter, continued participation should not be made contingent on instantaneous progress in this area or discontinued when occasional setbacks are perceived, depending of course on the nature of what is transpiring. By viewing this as a strategic long-term incremental process, more can be done for advancement of human rights in comparison to a quest for immediate change. Sustained engagement over time thus becomes crucial. Notwithstanding the virtues and flaws of this line of reasoning, it should be highlighted that Canadian deliberations associated with the issue rest in the political realm and would undoubtedly be polarizing. This lends further credence to the importance of defence diplomacy initiatives being coordinated with other Government of Canada departments while being tied to higher-order national policy. To further emphasize the significance of such a consideration, when Western nations and their armed forces work with less-than-democratic regimes, they risk being perceived as supporting those regimes' practices.⁸¹ It is therefore a political matter, with military advice, to weigh the potential benefits and risks of the CTG programme, to manage messaging, and to ensure that this defence diplomacy initiative remains consistent with an overarching governmental strategy.

Ultimately, it is not easy to assess whether successes will be lasting or are simply transient. However, an unplanned real-world contingency could spur meaningful cooperative actions that would serve as positive indicators of progress. Accordingly,

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

consideration must be given to positioning the partnership for increased compassion in a manner that can be operationalized, for example, as part of disaster relief operations.

Disaster Relief

Impromptu events can and do arise which entail a need to plan and execute real-world operations. Disaster relief is one such event whereby militaries are often best-positioned to support and undertake associated responses. As part of this, navies offer invaluable leadership and coordinating capabilities at a time when speed is crucial. These notions align with RCN mandates and, within the context of a CTG defence diplomacy programme, lend themselves to multinational staff and associated fleet efforts being validated.

SSE identifies that natural disasters and weather-related crisis are increasing in both severity and frequency, thus requiring CAF to remain prepared to provide disaster relief assistance, among other operations. Accordingly, the ability to leverage warships and their crews to render such help is a key RCN tenet and directly correlates with defence diplomacy.⁸² Moreover, RCN policy takes a flexible fleet readiness approach to these activities by positioning “an Operations Management strategy of Responsiveness whereby FEIms [Force Elements] will be able to transition quickly from one mission to another.”⁸³ Assigning of a warship to assist with disaster relief could be a Rapid-Response Operation or a Contingency Operation.⁸⁴ Though these doctrinal CAF terms and concepts are only marginally reflected and referenced within RCN literature, both types of operations are compatible with the CTG defence diplomacy programme. In

⁸² Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged*, 2017, 35.

⁸³ Department of National Defence, *CFCD 129*, 2018, 5.

⁸⁴ Department of National Defence, *CFJP 4.0, Support*, 2016, 3-3.

emphasizing CAF and RCN willingness to render assistance whenever possible, increased prevalence of natural disasters has led to challenges for Canada's military.

CAF leadership has expressed concern that increased prevalence of natural disasters challenges the military's ability to support civil authorities while simultaneously training for and deploying on other operational commitments.⁸⁵ The CTG programme, however, offers practical on-the-job training while concurrently achieving real-world objectives. This is premised on the fact that most sea-going skillsets are seamlessly transferable to any number of sea-going operations. By engaging in the proposed defence diplomacy programme and then transitioning to disaster relief if and when required, the RCN positions itself away from trade-offs by continuing to remain current in most matters of readiness prior to and while participating in relief efforts; both functions are complementary and mutually reinforcing. In addition, such expressions of interest in the well-being of partner nations are also advantageous in positively influencing inter-nation dynamics between participants themselves.

From a regional perspective, not only does multinational cooperation increase the RCN's ability to respond to contingencies but intra-regional benefits also materialize. Involvement within the CTG programme's "exercises enable[s] participants to identify – and work around – technological and tactical differences that could pose obstacles in contingency operations and emergencies."⁸⁶ Thereafter, should a disaster strike, participating nations' options would extend from continued participation within the already assembled CTG in view of coordinating relief efforts to any additional

⁸⁵ Matt Gurney, "Matt Gurney: The military is warning that home-front demands are stretching it thin. We need to listen," *The National Post*, 20 January 2020, <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/matt-gurney-the-military-is-warning-that-homefront-demands-are-stretching-it-thin-we-need-to-listen>.

⁸⁶ Livezey and Prillaman, 2003, 2.

involvement beyond that, as determined by their own lines of national authority. As such, a proactively negotiated clause within the multinational exercise's MOU enables the task group commander and supporting elements to seamlessly transition from exercise-related activities to disaster relief operations.

The CTG programme is meant to offer substantive intra-nation benefits. By extension and fundamentally, “only a real crisis can put improvements to the test.”⁸⁷ To position the partnership for success, a programme objective must entail the proactive consideration of each nation's presumably copious regulations and caveats related to the employment of their respective military forces. To assemble an effective force for crisis circumstances that are by their nature unpredictable, it is critical to understand the national red cards, i.e. the national policies, both official and unwritten, that prevent any particular military from undertaking certain functions.⁸⁸ The drafting of a practical MOU and securing endorsement by all participating nations, however, is not a task of insignificant effort. Moreover, in referring to the nuanced distinctions between disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, the CTG programme does not represent a panacea in the domain of relief efforts and is therefore not suited to achieve too much or solve too many problems. By focusing on disaster relief, the scope would be kept relatively bounded and thus within the realm of the reasonably possible, both materially and in terms of national appeal. Yet, a carefully crafted MOU would be sufficiently flexible to respond to a crisis should one materialize.

In summary, the RCN is uniquely positioned to continue supporting Government of Canada regional engagement efforts by offering a defence diplomacy capability that

⁸⁷ Forster, 2015, 380.

⁸⁸ Roger Lane, “The Command, Leadership and Management Challenges of Contemporary Multinational Command,” *The RUSI Journal* 151, no. 6 (2006): 32.

lends itself to mutually reinforcing layers of advantage, each layer standing in its own right while also forming part of a comprehensive whole. Although the extent of influence and change induced by soft power is in the receiver's control, the sender can maximize the likelihood of positive effects by understanding the nuanced perspectives and sensitivities of each participant.⁸⁹ Accordingly, the CTG programme serves as a mechanism to gather military representatives from multiple nations, including RCN members who are representative of Canada's diversity, in a manner that leverages the shared traditions of maritime military service. This moderating influence, when coupled with time and multiple engagements, fosters positive growth in relationships and leads to individuals who are more amenable to embracing the new perspectives that they have been exposed to. Influencing mindsets in matters of gender and cultural equality along with human rights will likely equate to engagement with countries that are challenged in these areas. While perceptions of tacit support for poor practices need to be avoided, this space can nonetheless be managed when considering that CAF and RCN involvement are intended to form part of a broader Government of Canada strategy. As participants return to their respective nations and engage with representatives in other institutions, diplomatic dividends slowly take root and ripple both within and well beyond the military domain. Furthermore, by positioning the partnership for disaster-relief operations in the unfortunate event that such assistance may be required, a coordinated multinational regional response is feasible. Doing so enhances both the virtuousness and substantive outcomes envisioned for the CTG programme based on a demonstrable commitment by all concerned to cooperation and improved relations.

⁸⁹ Forster, 2015, 383.

CONCLUSION

Defence diplomacy can be operationalized in diverse and nuanced ways. It may involve coordinating disposition of armed forces and exchange of military attachés to cooperatively engaging with partners, historical enemies, and potential competitors. Whether out of commitment to international peace and security or in the interest of fostering amity in the context of globalization, complexity inherent to these domains requires a comprehensive approach when seeking to advance a matter of national and regional significance. As key contributors to Government of Canada strategies and diplomatic efforts, the CAF and RCN offer unique capabilities to further military and non-military objectives amid a realpolitik paradigm.

A RCN-sourced CTG warship bolsters diplomatic efforts by bringing together multinational military staffs which would not otherwise readily partner with each other to lead a task group comprised of ships and aircraft from their respective nations. By integrating them within not only the RCN's but also their respective processes, mutually agreed upon exercise objectives will be achieved in a manner that portends the collaborative future envisioned between states. Transparency, cooperation, interoperability, understanding, and relationship-building are keystone concepts that define this smart power defence diplomacy programme, effectively employing hard power assets to achieve soft power objectives. Potentially mutually beneficial, the RCN, CAF, and Canada will also accrue benefits.

Service within a flagship sailing on a defence diplomacy assignment allows Canadian service personnel to develop greater proficiency and skillsets beyond conventional planning and high intensity warfare. Furthermore, reduced readiness

requirements associated with these contributions do not detract from RCN operational deployments and, optimistically, would reduce the likelihood of a named operation being stood up in a region of CTG engagement. In essence, the overarching intent seeks to ease tensions and, in the long term, assist participating nations in reaching a point of integration and reliance that minimizes probability of conflict given the significant adverse impacts that would be incurred by all sides. Yet, RCN leadership is not limited to allocation of physical assets. This institution is also suited to manage and develop the programme's inter-personal dimensions which are equally important.

The CTG programme increases contacts between participants whereby otherwise dissimilar individuals discover that they have more in common than they originally believed. By providing a neutral platform that is conducive to a conciliatory and non-belligerent environment, participants start to build relationships that then support official contacts in the future. Day-to-day interactions with Canadian service members who are representative of Canada's diversity also have a positive effect. Individual participants who are exposed, firsthand, to Canadian values begin to shift their mindsets and perspectives.

While any single aspect of the CTG programme is beneficial in its own right, all opportunities, when taken in whole as a system, will start to change meaningfully inter- and intra-state relationships. Diplomacy takes time which in turn can lead to trust. Thereafter, gradual and incremental successes from one joint venture to the next will ensue.

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