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The Importance of Intelligence Culture Within the CAF

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The Importance of Intelligence Culture Within the CAF

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THE NEED TO KNOW: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTELLIGENCE CULTURE WITHIN THE CAF

AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to summarize the historical and present challenges of fostering an intelligence culture within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), and to offer supplementary recommendations to ongoing initiatives tasked with reforming the Defence Intelligence Enterprise.

INTRODUCTION

2. “If you know the enemy and you know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles”.¹ So what happens when as a military institution, we do not prioritize the basic principle of understanding ourselves, especially at a time when knowing the enemy is increasingly difficult and the operating environment more complex?

3. The fact of the matter is there that is currently a disconnect between a preponderance of doctrine and strategic guidance within the CAF that emphasizes the importance of intelligence, against the values, views and experiences of CAF members struggling to achieve operational remits with the deck stacked against them. Certainly, capstone publications within the CAF imply a highly developed understanding of the role of intelligence. The reality on the ground is drastically different. The most recent CDS directive, *CDS Planning for Canadian Armed Forces Reconstitution*, expresses significant concerns over our own understanding of ongoing adversarial action, and their investment in security infrastructure and aggressive acquisition of emergent technologies.² In such an obfuscated, complex environment, sophisticated intelligence support is especially critical to both knowing the enemy and knowing oneself. The importance placed on intelligence across doctrine would indicate that the CAF has an observable intelligence culture that understands, integrates, and appropriately values the intelligence function in all that it does. Unfortunately, the CAF’s challenges are manifest in the incongruence between this doctrine and its practical implementation. For instance, intelligence professionals often describe threat considerations being incorporated by the wider operational CAF community as an afterthought, rather than a foundational consideration. Exploring these challenges with a view to shaping cultural change will enable us to better “know ourselves” and provide recommendations to foster an intelligence culture within the CAF.

DISCUSSION

4. According to a study published in the Harvard Business Journal, Culture is a tacit social order of an organization. It shapes behaviors and defines norms.³ It expresses goals and orients

¹ Sun Tzu (author) Ralph Sawyer (Translator). “The Art of War”. Basic Books; illustrated edition. 11 Feb 1994.

² “CDS Planning Directive for Canadian Armed Forces Reconstitution”. Chief of Defence Staff, National Defence Headquarters. 9 July 2021.

³ Boris Groysberg, Jeremiah Lee, Jesse Price, and J. Yo-Jud Cheng. “The Leader’s Guide to Corporate Culture”. *Harvard Business Review*. January-February 2018. Pg 44-52.

people around them. The result of this focus is a shared purpose and capacity to thrive as an organization. In a military context, and in particular, an intelligence context, culture is important to understand. According to Allan English, it is “the bedrock of military effectiveness” and assists in explaining “motivations, aspirations, norms, and rules of conduct” of the Canadian Military.⁴ Understanding a military’s culture may therefore be intrinsic to understanding how they fight than doctrine or even their capabilities.⁵ In other words, while doctrine forms a portion of a military organizations character, that culture is equally influenced by the experiences, preferences, views and values of its senior and key leaders; its culture.

5. Necessity is the driving force behind innovation, and unfortunately, in the Canadian context, our national security frameworks and historical military operations did not necessarily demand a well-developed and cohesive intelligence culture. As former director of the Queen’s School of Policy Studies Kim Nossal summarized our strategic situation, since the end of the Cold War “Canadians [did] not have to take defence seriously, and unsurprisingly, we do not take defence seriously”.⁶ After the Cold War, Allies such as the USA or Britain revitalized mandates and renewed emphasis on respective intelligence communities. Conversely as Stuart Farson writes, “unlike [these] principal intelligence partners, where intelligence has long been taken seriously and is firmly embedded in the political culture, Canada [seemed] bent on entering the twenty-first century without a fundamental analysis of its intelligence capacity...”.⁷ From a CAF perspective, David Charters of the Gregg Center for the Study of War and Society described the state of the CAF-intelligence relationship into the 1990’s and early 2000’s as a ‘Doctrinal Orphan’.⁸ He argued that without operational necessity driving an impetus for maturing intelligence culture, the CAF was able to generally function without one.

6. While the CAF was certainly engaged in a litany of operations in the 1990s, the nature of engagements did arguably not necessitate the primacy of intelligence.⁹ In coalition operations, allies (namely, the United States) who had a more sophisticated relationship with their intelligence function ended up covering off gaps for those who, such as Canada, had a less mature and developed framework. The sheer cost of evolving information technologies (IT) to necessary levels commensurate of Allied systems, especially at a time when Canada was slashing military budgets, made the cost of keeping up prohibitively high.¹⁰ In peacekeeping operations,

⁴ Allan D. English. “Understanding Military Culture – A Canadian Perspective”. McGill-Queen’s University Press. 2004. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cfvlibraryebooks/reader.action?docID=3330644&query=understanding+military+culture>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kim Nossal. “Canada Needs to Change its Attitude Towards Defence in the 21st Century”. CDA Institute. 26 Jul 2021. <https://cdainstitute.ca/kim-nossal-canada-needs-to-change-its-attitude-towards-defence-in-the-21st-century/>

⁷ Stuart Farson. “Is Canadian intelligence being reinvented”? *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, 6:2, 49-86. 14 March 2011. <https://www-tandfonline-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1080/11926422.1999.9673174?needAccess=true>

⁸ David Charters. “Canadian Military Intelligence in Afghanistan”. *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 25:3, 470-507. 13 Jun 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2012.652533>

⁹ David Charters. “The Future of Military Intelligence Within the Canadian Forces”. *Canadian Military Journal*, Winter 2001-2002.

¹⁰ David Charters. “Canadian Military Intelligence in Afghanistan”. *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 25:3, 470-507. 13 Jun 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2012.652533>

though the Intelligence professionals and CAF garnered some lasting Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), these did not necessarily lead to a robust build-up of an enduring intelligence culture across the CAF. In 2004, the Defence Intelligence Review (DIR) published findings that concluded the state of CAF Intelligence was so eroded that the “associated risk [was] barely acceptable] and yielded unreliable and uncorroborated intelligence products that could leave operational commanders and their political masters poorly informed”.¹¹ Internally, there was little operational drive to inculcate an intelligence culture when the CAF was simply able to leverage other sources or else make do with its own minimum. These findings encapsulate the opposite of a history of a functional intelligence culture being historically fostered in the CAF.

7. The advent of CAF operations in Afghanistan demanded developed intelligence on adversary actors and networks, as well as building an understanding of the local considerations, or “white situational awareness (SA)” to enable a spectrum of CAF activity. In other words, it demanded a robust culture of intelligence. The experience in Afghanistan appeared to evolve not only the CAF Intelligence community, but also the CAF’s relationship to intelligence. CAF intelligence developed new capabilities and structures to support CAF operations and adopted new technologies.¹² Some of these evolutionary changes have lasted. The high stakes nature of the environment also necessitated Commanders and staff integrate intelligence support at all opportunities across operations and planning. Exposure to intelligence professionals and experience with a cross section of valuable intelligence support had the corollary effect of building the connective tissue – the culture - between operations and intelligence. Unfortunately, apart from the Canadian Special Operations Community, which inculcated its lessons learned and went on to foster a lasting intelligence culture, the inroads made in this environment do not appear to ultimately have been instilled in a lasting broader-CAF intelligence culture.

8. Yet, there exists a current strategic emphasis on Intelligence in CAF operations as evident in the Government of Canada’s defence policy Strong, Secure, Engaged, (SSE).¹³ With Canadian interests increasingly being targeted by indirect or non-military means such economic coercion, political interference, information operations and cyber-attacks against its private and public sectors, national security stakeholders are increasingly taking note.¹⁴ Emergent strategic pressure has generated two reviews aimed to examine the CAF Defence Intelligence enterprise; the *Evaluation of Defence Intelligence* (EDI) (completed in Nov 2020) and the *Defence Intelligence Enterprise Review* (DIER) (ongoing). Results of the EDI and initial reporting from the DIER indicate a number of pressure points in Personnel Generation and Force Development.¹⁵ Challenges are attributed to chronic underinvestment in CAF intelligence capabilities and intelligence staffing. While some of the same challenges were mirrored in DIR

¹¹ David Charters. “Canadian Military Intelligence in Afghanistan”. *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 25:3, 470-507. 13 Jun 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2012.652533>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “Strong Secure Engaged – Canada’s Defence Policy”. Department of National Defence. 2017. [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/canada-defence-policy-report%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/canada-defence-policy-report%20(1).pdf)

¹⁴ Ross Fetterly. “The World has Changed - Canada’s Defence Strategy Hasn’t Changed with it”. McDonald-Laurier Institute. 8 October 2019. <https://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/canada-confronts-complex-threat-environment-ross-fetterly-inside-policy/>

¹⁵ “Evaluation of Defence Intelligence”. 1258-3-032. National Defence. November 2020.

findings almost 20 years ago, the fact that this time, strategic and capstone documents are additionally messaging the importance of intelligence is encouraging. Drivers for addressing challenges inherent in physical capabilities and organizational structures thus appear to have highest-level strategic support. While these are indeed key considerations to evolving CAF functional intelligence support, equally important are steps in addressing the deficient intelligence culture of the organization; factors such as education and training deltas, staffing shortages and miss-employment of both intelligence officers and their cells in the training environment. Addressing these pressing challenges will palpably influence the experiences, preferences, views and values of CAF leaders in their formative years, and work towards maturing an intelligence culture from the tactical and operational levels.

9. Such changes must begin with training and education of intelligence professionals. In her dissertation analyzing expectations on intelligence function performance in the Canadian Army, Major Amelie Clot reports Commanders voiced disappointment in the fact that trade specific training for their intelligence staff had not matured to enable their ability to deliver functional support to tactical formations.¹⁶ A report from Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) observed similarly that on Operation REASSURANCE “...overtime, young Intelligence Officers were not arriving [to Latvia] prepared to do a wide analysis of conventional threats.”¹⁷ The focus on targeting over the past many years has left a gap in knowledge and training.”¹⁸ Such observations were likewise noted by 1 CMBG during its Road to High Readiness (RtHR) in 2018-2019 when some of its Intelligence Officers were posted in directly off their Basic Intelligence Officer Course (BIOC) into battalions, or were tasked to fill key positions outside the scope of their experiences due to staffing pressures. There are so many such examples in fact, that some commanders and senior staff anticipate and personally look to supplement intelligence personnel training deltas with their own informal professional development. Such unfortunate experiences are solidified in the minds of Commanders and leaders who question the overall utility of intelligence in support of their aim. The bottom line is that intelligence professionals are not being set up for success through their formal military education. Sweeping changes to the individual training system are required to ensure that individual skill sets and requisite exposure to operational planning and operational integration align with the wider remit of the branch. Continued misalignment of training erodes trust in the branch and undermines understanding of intelligence processes during their formative years, serving to negatively impact foundational aspects of broader CAF intelligence culture.

10. While change must come from within, it is also critical to ensure a wider understanding by the CAF community of the primacy of intelligence in the conduct of operation in order to foster a functional intelligence culture. In the quest to “know ourselves” in the CAF, it is also necessary to interrogate issues inhibiting an effectual CAF intelligence external to the

¹⁶ Amelie Clot. “What do you want from me: An analysis of the impact of expectations on the intelligence function performance in the Canadian Army”. Final Dissertation MSc Risk, Crisis, and Disaster Management. University of Leicester, UK. 31 August 2021.

¹⁷ “G2 Road to High Readiness Intelligence Support Team Doctrine and Lesson Learned”. 1 CMBG G2, CA. 6 June 2019.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Intelligence community. While these considerations do not yet appear to be captured in formal CAF reviews, academic works suggest there is broad lack of understanding pertaining to intelligence capabilities and limitations. Clot highlights insufficient exposures between decision makers and intelligence staffs outside of deployments, further exacerbated by misrepresentation of the Sense function that serves to undermine understanding.¹⁹ Brigadier-General (Ret'd) James Cox argues that talk of Intelligence Education is conspicuously absent from current reform efforts; “there is no serious intelligence training at senior levels, and there is no intelligence programs at any level”.²⁰ Between inadequate training for intelligence officers and operators, and inadequate education for CAF customers and leadership, he bleakly opines that the result is “an inadequately prepared intelligence workforce, led by mediocre journeymen, and directed by less than intelligence savvy operational leaders”.²¹

11. By contrast, CAF Capstone doctrine unequivocally suggests how vital intelligence is to the successful outcome of military engagements. The CAF Pan-Domain Force employment concept stresses that “intelligence is central to contemporary operations... This is why detect is a core mission for the CAF in SSE. The current environment demands that we simultaneously broaden and deepen our approach to intelligence.”²² Land Operations states bluntly, “Intelligence and targeting processes should guide all tactical level operations.”²³ The incongruence between doctrine and execution at these levels suggests another critical fissure impeding a mature culture of intelligence within the CAF. To date, DIER has not yet published documentation indicating it was exploring this as a deficiency.²⁴ Where the DIE can assist in bridging these gaps, the wider CAF leadership, as well as training and education systems must in turn acknowledge their part in fostering a CAF-wide intelligence culture.

CONCLUSION

12. The operating environment is growing ever-more complex across domains and knowing the enemy is increasingly difficult. The truism of Sun Tzu’s 2,500-year-old quote is unchanged. Focus on knowing the enemy is insufficient if not matched by an honest understanding of self. The current global security context has driven intelligence to the forefront in strategic guidance and capstone documentation. Doctrine in isolation however offers an incomplete understanding of a military’s effectiveness – factors such shared experiences, values and views of leadership must all be considered as part of an overall culture that best reflects this. In its currently dysfunctional and deficient intelligence culture, the CAF (within and without the DIE) has a

¹⁹ Amelie Clot. “What do you want from me: An analysis of the impact of expectations on the intelligence function performance in the Canadian Army”. Final Dissertation MSc Risk, Crisis, and Disaster Management. University of Leicester, UK. 31 August 2021.

²⁰ James Cox. “The Need for Intelligence Education”. *Canadian Military Journal*, vol 20, No. 3, Summer 2020. <file:///C:/Users/User/Desktop/Service%20Paper/Int%20Education.pdf>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Department of National Defence, “Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept, Prevailing in an Uncertain World”. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2020

²³ “Land Operations”. B-GL-300-001/FP-001. Director of Army Doctrine. 1 Jan 2008. <https://info.publicintelligence.net/CanadaLandOps.pdf>

²⁴ “Defence Intelligence Enterprise Problem Statement Definitions”. 23 Oct 2019. Note, the author consulted the author also consulted the DIER website, as well as accessible focus group reports.

significant challenge to overcome. Both the Intelligence and non-intelligence stakeholders have vital roles to play in these reform efforts. Addressing them in isolation without a mind to mature the intelligence culture as a whole jeopardizes not only the longevity of reforms, but ultimately of the CAF's operational capacity.

RECOMMENDATION

13. Where capabilities and structures are paramount to CAF DIE reform, considerations of building a functional CAF intelligence culture are just as vital. Within the DIE, focus should be on immediately reforming training for intelligence officers and operators for truly arming them with the skill sets they require for the range of employment they fill. In the broader CAF, tactical and operational formations should be presented with realistic training scenarios, empowered with education to understand intelligence employment, and if necessary, held to account for sidelining the intelligence function counter to doctrine. Finally, given the realities of the operating environment, the CAF needs to move towards adopting more threat-based rather than capabilities-based processes in all military and corporate activities.

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