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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES COURSE 4/COURS DES ETUDES DE
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THE MARQUIS DE MONTCALM

UN PHARE DANS LES BRUMES DE L'INCERTITUDE

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MARQUIS DE MONTCALM: UN PHARE DANS LES BRUMES DE L'INCERTITUDE

And by the sword shalt thou live.

Genesis 27.x1

INTRODUCTION

The battle of the Plains of Abraham is among one of the most romanticized and redolent battles in the chronicles of both North American and British military history. For many military historians, the battle has come to epitomize the long and bitter struggle between the British and the French in Europe and other parts of the globe from 1756 to 1763 that came to be called the Seven Years War.¹ Central to the Anglo-French imperial rivalry in North America that began in 1756 were the commanders of the British and French ground forces who both died on the outskirts of Quebec City within minutes of each other in 1759. Not surprisingly, the names of General James Wolfe and Louis Joseph Marquis de Montcalm have become household names in Canada, given that the Seven Years War changed the face of New France and North America forever. Yet, although libraries are replete with all manners of works on General James Wolfe, military historians have paid little attention to the exploits of the Marquis de Montcalm. Indeed, as noted by some scholars, Montcalm is

¹ Alarmed by the growing power of Prussia, France, Austria, Russia, Sweden, and Saxony joined in a coalition to defeat the Prussians under Frederick the Great who was allied with England in the Seven Years War. The Seven Years War included seven principal land campaigns that were fought east of the Rhine and in North America, and included naval operations that spread over the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas. Although some scholars have termed the struggle in North America as the French and Indian Wars, this title obscures and fails to appreciate the inextricable link between the campaigns in Europe and North America. R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N.

"given only a speculative place in history as one of the most vital of many controversial characters that shaped the destiny of the Western world."²

It was, however, the Marquis de Montcalm, heavily outnumbered and with a composite force of French regulars, Canadian militia, and Indian warriors, and little logistic support, who fought the British to a standstill in North America for over two years at the beginning of the Seven Years War. Through a meticulous understanding and practice of the strategic art, Montcalm kept the British forces off-balance until the sheer mass and logistical power of Britain both on land and at sea were too much for the French in North America to withstand.³ As was the case in the outcome of most wars during the modern period of history, it was an effectively coordinated land-sea strategy, coupled with mass and logistics that would finally win the day for the British on the Plains of Abraham and that led to the turning point in the historical evolution of French North America, the British Empire, and Canada.⁴

Dupuy, *The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 730.

² Arnold Whitridge, "The Marquis de Montcalm" Part Two *History Today* (Vol 19, 1969), 184.

³ Strategic art is defined as the skilful formulation, coordination, and application of ends (objectives), ways (courses of action), and means (supporting resources) to promote and defend the national interests. Masters of the strategic art are those who can competently integrate and combine the three roles preformed by the complete strategist: the strategic leader, strategic practitioner, and strategic theorist. Richard A. Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for the 21st Century Leader* (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 1995), 4-5.

⁴ See Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1959).

Notwithstanding the final outcome on the Plains of Abraham, it was the Marquis de Montcalm who was the master of the strategic art during the final Anglo-French imperial struggle for North America. As a master of the strategic art, he was both a successful strategic leader and effective strategic practitioner who through a coordinated and integrated military strategy brought the British to a "strategic standstill" for almost a three-year period in North America. The paper will examine the background of Montcalm, noting the competencies or qualities that formed the foundation upon which he would become a successful strategic leader. His skills as a strategic leader during his time in North America will then be analyzed showing that he provided a sound vision and focus; was able to capitalize on command and peer leadership skills and to inspire others to act; was able to think holistically and conceptually, as well as in a normative manner. It was these strategic skills that would allow Montcalm to develop his military strategy with the limited resources that he had available to him. Finally, the paper will show that Montcalm effectively practiced and used the strategic art, to mate ends with means and ways as a strategic practitioner during his military campaigns from 1756 to 1759.

BACKGROUND

The competencies or qualities of a master of the strategic art are developed during the course of a lifetime through study and experience. As noted by Carl von Clausewitz, the theory of the conduct of war, or "theoretical truths" should educate the mind of the leader.⁵ On the other hand, these qualities cannot only be learned through book learning, but rather must be learned from other sources than the printed word that Clausewitz defined as "practical life."⁶ Accordingly, historical analysis has shown that education, service, and experience together play a pivotal role in forming and developing the competencies or qualities of the successful strategic leader.⁷ By examining the background of Montcalm and paying particular attention to the areas of education, service, and experience, one can gain an appreciation of the strategic competencies or qualities that were developed and formed as a result of these social forces.

Louis Joseph Marquis de Montcalm de Saint-Veran was well educated and schooled in the liberal and the military arts from an early age. He was born in 1712 into a distinguished and influential aristocratic French family with a long history of military service to the King and to France.⁸ Family wealth ensured that Montcalm had private

⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, rev ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 106.

⁶ Thomas Killon, "Clausewitz and Military Genius" *Military Review* (July-August, 1995), 99.

⁷ Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leader*, 4-5.

⁸ Merewether Lister Lewis, *Montcalm: The Marvelous Marquis* (New York: Vantage Press, 1961), 1.

tutoring throughout his childhood from M. Louis Dumas, an original genius.⁹ He made rapid progress in his studies due a good memory and a bright intelligence. Nevertheless, discontented with his schoolwork at an early age, he decided to leave his academic studies to follow in the footsteps of his forefathers to join the military. In writing to his father at the age of fourteen, he already noted the importance of education when he stated: "I want to read moderately, know as much Greek and Latin as other men, also arithmetic, history, geography, literature, and some art, and science. Finally, I want to handle a horse and sword well."¹⁰ In the end, Montcalm joined his father's regiment in 1727 beginning his full-time military career as an ensign in the French Army. He did, nonetheless, become a Latin scholar and a well-read man, and continued his studies throughout his military career, advancing his understanding of the classics and the ordinary branches of knowledge.¹¹ It would not be uncommon to find Montcalm deeply immersed in his studies once he had returned to camp following a military operation even during his struggle in North America as a strategic commander. Finally, his schooling and extensive education allowed Montcalm to sit as a member of the provincial assembly at Gevaudan in 1755.¹² The experience

⁹ H.R. Casgrain, *Wolfe and Montcalm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 4.

¹⁰ Whitridge, "The Marquis de Montcalm" Part One, 78.

¹¹ Francis Parkman, *The Seven Years War* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), 125.

¹² Lewis, *Montcalm: The Marvelous Marquis*, 16-18.

provided him with a broad perspective on the functioning of government and its influence on military activities.

Montcalm's military field experience began in 1733 when he was part of the capture of Philippsburg under Marshal Bergwick during the War of Polish Succession. This savage and brutal war would have a lasting effect on Montcalm's outlook on "how useless the valor of the best troops may prove against fortified lines, though held by a very inferior force, if the defenders are judiciously commanded."¹³ In 1736, Montcalm joined his Regiment to fight against the Austrians over Silesia in the War of Austrian Succession in Bohemia. It was here that he distinguished himself at the battle of Prague in 1742 and where he had to endure many personal hardships over an eight-year period. He would later write to his second-in-command in New France and recall the famine that he and his soldiers had to endure in the terrible campaign.¹⁴ It was also during the war that Montcalm learned of the importance of sound logistical preparations in order to be successful on the field of battle. As he would note later during his struggle in North America, "I never want the success of my military operations to be determined by logistical support."¹⁵ It would, however, be logistics that would finally prove to be the Achilles

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Casgrain, *Wolfe and Montcalm*, 6.

¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

Heel of the French in North America and prevent Montcalm from achieving his vision.

The War of the Austrian Succession was also important to Montcalm for another important reason. The war was the training ground for Montcalm and most of the French officers who came to Canada in 1756 with Montcalm.¹⁶ It was during the war that Montcalm and his officers were introduced to new forms of warfare involving the use of irregular troops - light infantry, with which Montcalm and his officers would later again fight in North America.¹⁷ The unique needs of frontier military operations, that being rugged terrain and harsh climate, coupled with a poor road network, made light infantry a useful capability for the French for over a century in their struggle in the New World. On the other hand, it was not until the close of the Seven Years War in North America that the British realized the utility of light infantry in the back woods of the frontier when they established the, then infamous, Roger's Rangers on a "war footing."¹⁸

The family trade led Montcalm across most of Europe fighting under the service of the French King for almost a twenty-year period. He finally commanded the Auxerrois

¹⁶ Whitridge, "The Marquis de Montcalm" Part Two, 150.

¹⁷ See Martin L. Nicolai, "A Different Kind of Courage: The French Military and the Canadian Irregular Soldier during the Seven Years War" *Canadian Historical Review* (LXX, 1989), 52-75.

¹⁸ Parkman, *The Seven Years War*, 238-241.

Regiment of infantry in 1743 on promotion to the rank of colonel and fought during the Italian campaign of 1746 where he twice rallied his regiment before it was wiped out. His military field experience came to a close in 1748 with the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle that ended the long and bitter dynastic struggle in Europe between the great powers. From 1748 to 1756, Montcalm traveled throughout much of the Army, inspecting troops. He was also called to Paris to discuss training and maneuvers on a number of occasions at the military academy as an inspector of cavalry in the French Army. Due to his exploits and heroism on the field of battle, he was promoted to the rank of brigadier at the age of thirty-four by King Louis XV and given command of a new regiment of cavalry to which his own name was given.¹⁹ Montcalm loved military life and all of its trappings. It is therefore not surprising that it consumed his life *in toto* as it did his forefathers. In France they had a saying: "war is the tomb of the Montcalms."²⁰

In sum, education, service, and experience played a vital role in forming and developing certain distinct personal qualities in Montcalm that, according to Robert A. Chilcoat, are essential for the successful military strategic leader.²¹ First, Montcalm was highly intelligent. His education in the liberal and military arts developed

¹⁹ Lewis, *Montcalm: The Marvelous Marquis*, 13-21.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

Montcalm' conceptual and normative intellectual powers. As noted by Chilcoat, conceptual thinking is the gateway to effective long-range planning. Next, his broad and extensive military experiences made him extremely flexible, able to accept, and exploit rapid and persistent change on the field of battle throughout the eighteenth century. In addition, Montcalm was a very professional and courageous officer, who demonstrated an astute grasp of the tactical and operational levels of war throughout his twenty years of military experience. Finally, he was a man of action who could always be found at the most opportune and the "hottest location" on the battlefield due to what Clausewitz called *coup d'oeil* or intuition - a highly developed perceptual ability to see what others cannot, and a vital quality of the successful strategic leader.²² Through *coup d'oeil*, Montcalm was able to discern the critical importance of issues long before they were recognized by others. At the end of the day, it was these personal qualities and competencies, coupled with his distinguished military experience on the fields of battle throughout Europe that made Montcalm both a highly respected and well-known officer throughout the French Army and a formidable adversary to the British who fondly called Montcalm the "wily old fox."²³ To be sure, as noted by Arnold

²¹ Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leader*, 22.

²² Lewis, *Montcalm: The Marvelous Marquis*, 24. Of note is that Clausewitz used the Seven Years War as part of his foundation of study when he developed his theories on war in his seminal work *On War*. See Clausewitz, *On War*.

²³ C.P. Stacey, *Quebec, 1759* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1959), 43.

Whitridge, "instead of picking a court favorite to command the military forces in North America, the Minister of War picked a man to become the *marechal de camp* whom had already proved himself in war."²⁴ Of greater import is that it was these qualities and experiences that would provide the foundation upon which Montcalm would become a successful strategic leader in his struggle in North America.

STRATEGIC SKILL-SET

Key to the successful strategic leader is the ability to provide vision and focus.²⁵ Vision allows the strategic leader to look beyond and over the barriers to find ends (objectives), ways (courses of action), and means (supporting resources). On the other hand, the strategic leader provides focus or a lens to ensure that there is a clear image of the strategic outcome or end-state of a vision by taking a wider and longer-term view of the situation.

Montcalm's vision for his task in New France guided his strategy and actions throughout his struggle in the New World. The King gave his grand strategic guidance personally to Montcalm when they met on 14 March 1756, just prior to his departure for New France. In short, Montcalm's task was to prevent the British from conquering New France. The

²⁴ George F.G Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 158.

French, however, had completed little if any analysis and strategic planning for the defense of North America. In fact, the French had hoped that war could be averted with the British in North America and elsewhere through diplomacy and not the use of military force, which is why the French expended only one tenth of the amount of money to defend New France than the British expended to conquer North America.²⁶ As a result, much of the strategic planning was left to Montcalm to complete on his arrival to the New World.²⁷

Even before Montcalm left for the colony, he was well aware that his task at hand would be easier said than done. On land, the British outnumbered the French in North America in most cases three to one. Indeed, some 42,000 British, more than the population of New France, were assembled in 1758 to conquer Canada as opposed to a combined regular and militia French force of approximately 15,000 who defended the colony. Adding to the strategic imbalance was the fact that the France no longer had parity on the high seas with the British. Under the leadership of the great statesman and war leader Prime Minister William Pitt, Britain had regained mastery of the oceans by the blockades of Brest and Toulon, making it extremely difficult for France to supply and

²⁵ Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leader*, 8.

²⁶ Lawrence Henry Gipson, "A French Project for Victory short of a declaration of War, 1755" *The Canadian Historical Review* (Dec, 1945), 361-371.

²⁷ It should be noted that correspondence from France came only once a year to the colony that left Louis in splendid isolation during

reinforce its colonies throughout the world by severing its lines of communication.²⁸ One quarter of the British navy was deployed in the northwestern Atlantic to strangle shipping into the St. Lawrence and to intercept goods that were enroute from North America to Europe. From all accounts, the blockade of North America had a devastating strategic effect on New France and its ability to fight a successful war.

Given that the strategic ends were critical, but the means minimal, Montcalm developed a simple vision - to delay the British for one year hoping that peace or reinforcements would arrive before the English defeated the French in North America. On the other hand, the ends were critical and the means were decisive for the British. Yet, if the British were to be successful in their endeavor to conquer North America, they would need a rapid victory to ensure that the French did not force costly stalemates that produced periods of attrition out of proportion to the issues at stake.²⁹ On balance, Montcalm developed and implemented a military strategy that centered upon piecemeal limited actions that combined direct and indirect pressures with controlled military force that forced costly stalemates for the British while simultaneously preserving his forces in being without

his struggle in North America. Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760*, 138-150.

²⁸ Noel St John Williams, *Redcoats Along the Hudson: The Struggle for North America, 1754-63* (London: Brassey, 1997), 49.

²⁹ For an overview of the different ways to match ends with means, see John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1973), 5-7.

significant attrition.³⁰ Understandably, Montcalm adopted a defensive-offensive military strategy that ensured that he was never placed in a situation where he would expose his strategic vulnerabilities of manpower and logistics. To support his efforts in North America, Montcalm had proposed to the King that the French navy make a potent diversion against Virginia and Carolina with a view to drawing forces away from the British offensive against Canada.³¹ France, however, had already lost the initiative on the high seas and could not mount any supporting attacks.

Strategically Montcalm's view of war had been shaped by the changing nature of war in Europe from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century that some scholars called a "military revolution," driven in part by the widely read works of the Austrian military theorist, Raimondo Montecuccoli.³² Montecuccoli's contribution to the development of strategic thought in the eighteenth century is that he was the first modern theorist to attempt a comprehensive analysis of war in all of its aspects during the seventeenth century.³³ Montecuccoli's strategic views on

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Julian S. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War* (London: Greenhill Books, 1907), 413.

³² Robert S. Quimby, *The Background to Napoleonic Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 34.

³³ The term military revolution in this sense means more than just the introduction of new equipment and tactical formations. As noted by Gunther E. Rothenburg, the revolution was founded on the principle of hierarchical subordination, discipline, and social obligation that have been retained to this day in most militaries. Peter Paret ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 32-63.

war were based on a conviction that victory in war depended on preparation, plans, and operations. Preparation included manpower, material, and finances. Planning depended on the strength ratios between opposing forces, the theatre of war, and the overall objectives. For Montecuccoli, operations were to be conducted only after all factors had been weighed carefully and then with rapidity.

In the end, Montcalm tailored his vision to meet the specialized needs of the situation in New France and the logistical reality at hand, a point that was never realized or understood by the governor-general of New France, Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil. As noted by George F.G. Stanley, even though the governor-general had limited military experience, he did design some effective campaign plans that have led some scholars to attribute some of the success of New France from 1756 to 1759 to the governor-general.³⁴ In short, Vaudreuil attempted to wish problems away with simple solutions, not matching economic realities in New France to the strategic objectives of war as Montcalm did in developing his vision and military strategy to support that vision. As Clausewitz reminds us, in strategy everything is simple, but not on that account very easy.³⁵

Having developed a strategic vision, the strategic leader must next capitalize on command and peer leadership

³⁴ Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760*, 78.

skills, and be able to inspire others to think and act.³⁶ In this regard, Montcalm was unparalleled in New France, a point that did not go unnoticed by the governor-general of the colony.³⁷ On his arrival to the New World in 1756, Montcalm quickly set-out to gain the trust and to develop strong relations and ties with his superiors, subordinates, and allies, and to craft relationships that would create effective teams. This ability was no small feat given that his teams were from different disciplines, had competing and conflicting demands, and were separated physically by geography.³⁸

From the onset, the governor-general disliked and mistrusted Montcalm. Vaudreuil, the last governor-general of New France, was born in Canada. He resented the fact that a French officer had been placed in command of Canadian troops. Of greater import, he had hoped to become the military commander of the forces in New France instead of Montcalm. Montcalm was aware of the treacherous actions of the governor-general on a number of occasions. Nevertheless he made every effort during his time in New France to put aside his personal differences for the welfare of the colony.³⁹ Indeed, he only began to scorn the governor general beginning in 1758 and then only after two years of repeated

³⁵ Clausewitz, *On War*, 85.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁷ Lewis, *Montcalm: The Marvelous Marquis*, 54.

³⁸ For an excellent overview of the complexities of the military forces in New France from 1753-1759, see Stacey, *Quebec, 1759*, 15.

interference by Vaudreuil in the conduct of military operations.⁴⁰ The governor-general, nonetheless, never allowed Montcalm into his confidence during their time together, a point that would severely hinder Montcalm's ability to achieve his strategic objectives given that good civilian-military relations are essential to the success at the strategic level of war. Even so, Montcalm's actions with the governor-general during his time in New France can only be viewed as extremely professional even when viewed with an unaided military eye.

On the other hand, Montcalm developed excellent relations with his Indian allies, traveling to all of the tribes on numerous occasions to build their trust and continued support through Indian councils. Even though the governor-general had predicted before the battle of Oswego in 1756 that the Indians would never follow a French general; the contrary proved to be the case.⁴¹ As the Indians noted, "we wish to see this famous man who, on putting foot on the ground, has destroyed the English ramparts."⁴² Montcalm's no nonsense and hands-on approach to leadership that he had learned during his campaigns in Europe and his strong abilities as an orator quickly made him a hero not only to the Indians, but also to the soldiers and citizens of New France with each passing victory. For even the casual

³⁹ Ibid., 82-84.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴¹ Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760*, 142-149.

observer in New France at the time, Montcalm's ability to travel 1,800 miles through woods, rapids and lakes and to restore Lake Ontario to French control only four months after his arrival with 8,000 men would have spoken volumes about his ability to inspire and to create effective teams in New France. By creating effective teams with his composite force, Montcalm was able to produce effectiveness on the field of battle that was greater than the sum total of the component parts as demonstrated in his successful military campaigns from 1756 to 1759.

The strategic leader must also understand well the disciplines outside of professional expertise and therefore be able to think holistically.⁴³ Montcalm knew all too well during his struggle in North America that political and economic constraints and restraints were having a negative impact on his ability to achieve his vision regardless of his abilities as an effective strategic leader. From a logistics point of view, even the most basic military provisions were always in short supply in the colony. As he would later find out, it was not uncommon for the government of New France to send agents to gather up supplies from door to door from its citizens in order to support military campaigns that left the colonists starving.⁴⁴ Indeed, when

⁴² Lewis, *Montcalm: the Marvelous Marquis*, 46-50.

⁴³ Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for the 21st Century Leader*, 4.

⁴⁴ Jean Elizabeth Lunn, "Agriculture and War in Canada, 1740-1760" *The Canadian Historical Review* (Jun, 1935), 123-136.

Montcalm proposed to the Governor to make a list of all of the provisions in Canada in preparation for his campaign at Carillon in 1758, the Governor stated, "take all we have if necessary to save Canada."⁴⁵

The colony's economic potential was limited and therefore, could not produce enough provisions to support the civilian population and the military at war at the same time. Provisions, therefore, had to come by sea from France. Since France no longer had control of the high seas, movement of stores and supplies from France to the colony by sea was as Wellington had noted "a near run thing" in each case. Moreover, even after a relatively large convoy of ships and supplies did make it past the British, supplies were still limited. When eight ships finally entered the harbor of Quebec in 1758, there were only enough supplies to support food for an army of 12,000 men for a campaign of 105 days. In contrast, the British marched on New France in 1758 with an army of 30,000 men and provisions for three hundred days.

As such, Montcalm repeatedly wrote to the French King and administrators in France in an attempt to increase his resources in men and supplies. In 1758, he convinced the governor-general to dispatch his aide and the war commissary to France to explain, in person, the grave situation in the

⁴⁵ Parkman, *The Seven Years War*, 207-210.

colony.⁴⁶ As noted by Arnold Whitridge, it was not long after while at Versailles that the messengers realized that the task was hopeless. The Seven Years War in Europe had already totally preoccupied the King and his court at Versailles. Accordingly, the French court was not prepared to provide the necessary support to the colony.⁴⁷ Without a doubt, Voltaire was echoing the general sentiment of the French of their colonial holdings in North America when he noted at the end of the Seven Years War that "France could live happily without Quebec, which was nothing more than a few meters of snow."⁴⁸

New France, nonetheless, could not go it alone. Approximately 80% of the colony's budget was used for military purposes during the war years. As noted by Stanislav Andreski, once a society has been militarized to a degree such as in the case of New France, it is not long after that the society will begin to atrophy and finally collapse.⁴⁹ Adding to the grave situation facing Montcalm was the fact that by 1758, William Pitt had developed a strategy for England whose sole object was the capture of New France. All other activities on the continent were subordinated to

⁴⁶ Whitridge, "The Marquis de Montcalm" Part Two, 185.

⁴⁷ Parkman, *The Seven Years War*, 3.

⁴⁸ Whitridge, "The Marquis de Montcalm" Part Two, 77.

⁴⁹ It was sociologist Stanislav Andreski who first advanced the idea of a Military Participation Ratio or MPR that allows one to measure the degree to which a society has been militarized. In short, a society that has a high MPR will have most of its citizens supporting the military complex. Such an arrangement cannot be sustained for long periods of time society begins to atrophy. In these cases, civilization

Pitt's primary objective with the intent of diverting French attention from North America and making New France the point of main effort of the British.⁵⁰

Following the receipt of the ominous news from the messengers that were sent to France in the early Spring 1759, Montcalm quickly put a number of measures into place in an attempt to mitigate these strategic limitations. First and foremost, he devised a plan to replenish the depleted regular battalions with militiamen of New France for the campaign to come in Summer 1759. Since he could not get additional regular soldiers from France, Montcalm intended to incorporate the militia in order to augment the deficiencies in manpower of the regular units. He did not, however, have sufficient time to implement his plan and in particular to train the militiamen in the art of European warfare. Wolfe arrived only three months after Montcalm had the opportunity to incorporate approximately 600 militia into the regular units and to realize his vision for a new army.⁵¹ The lack of discipline of the militia on the Plains of Abraham had a direct effect on the outcome of the battle. Moreover, it has been attributed by some scholars as one of the reasons for the defeat of the French on the Plains of

and war are one and the same. See Stanislav Andreski, *Military Organisation and Society* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1968), 116-118.

⁵⁰ Stacey, *Quebec, 1759*, 1.

⁵¹ In 1758, only 400 reinforcements in total were sent from France to the colony. Whitridge, "The Marquis de Montcalm" Part Two, 19.

Abraham.⁵² In the end, as noted by Lord Nelson, Montcalm lacked the most important asset for a strategic commander, that being time.

Finally, Montcalm had the ability to think conceptually as well as in a normative manner, a hallmark of an effective strategic leader. Herein lay Montcalm's greatest strength, as noted at the end of the battle of Fort Henry. After the successful capture of Fort Henry, Montcalm decided for good reason to return to Montreal.⁵³ The governor-general, on the other hand, had hoped that Montcalm would press on and capture Fort Edward, eighteen miles to the south of Fort William. Since then, scholars have debated the actions of Montcalm at the end of the battle of Fort Henry over a number of years.⁵⁴ On balance, and from a strategic vantagepoint, Montcalm's actions were sound. By returning to Montreal with his force composed of militia, Montcalm was sensitive to two strategic factors. First, the militia was needed to take-in the harvest. The supply of food was becoming increasingly low and a very serious problem in the colony. Agriculture yields from 1756 to 1759 were the lowest that New France had experienced in almost a decade. Harvests were becoming progressively worse, as famine was abroad in

⁵² John Knox was a captain in the 43rd Highland Regiment and fought at the Plains of Abraham. See John Knox, *The Siege of Quebec* (Toronto: The Pendragon House Group, 1980). Also Stacey, *Quebec, 1759*.

⁵³ Parkman, *The Seven Years War*, 164.

⁵⁴ Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760*, 175.

the land.⁵⁵ Without the militia to yield the harvest, there would be insufficient help to harvest the crops and not enough food to fight a campaign in the next year. Moreover, and more importantly, the militia was needed to fight any future battles that Montcalm knew would be more demanding. Given that the English outnumbered the French almost three to one and that their manpower was increasing over time, Montcalm knew that he needed every last man for any future campaigns. In the end, although Montcalm could have captured Fort Edward, the benefit of capturing and destroying the fort did not seem worth the risk and benefit to Montcalm and his vision of what the French military in New France needed to be capable of doing the following year to put his strategy into action, a hallmark of the master of the strategic art.

STRATEGY INTO ACTION

As noted by Keith Spacie, analysis suggests that successful strategic level leadership has two dimensions.⁵⁶ The first dimension is the ability to develop a strategy to fulfill a vision. In this respect, Montcalm developed a sound, effective, and realistic vision for the defense of New France. The second facet is concerned with the short term, or working with the strategy.⁵⁷ Put in another way, it

⁵⁵ See Lunn, "Agriculture and War in Canada, 1740-1760."

⁵⁶ Keith Spacie, *The Army and Leadership* (Camberley: Staff College Press, 1994), 4.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

is the ability of the strategic leader to take a strategy and to put it into action as a strategic practitioner.

Strategically, Canada was vulnerable over three avenues of approach: by sea down the St Lawrence from the Atlantic Ocean; by sea and land up the Lake Champlain corridor; and by sea and land across the Great Lakes. The geography was very rugged throughout each of the approaches and naturally divided the theatre of conflict into two main theatres of operation, the border between New England and New France and the disputed territory that lay west of the Appalachians in Louisiana. The harsh climate during the winter months coupled with a non-existent road network limited extensive and coordinated military operations to a six-month campaign season from May to October. Geography and climate also restricted communications between the colony and military operations on the frontier.

The French had realized as early as 1748 that even though the geography and climate of Canada could afford some protection to New France, the colony was, nevertheless, vulnerable to a well coordinated and supported military campaign at a number of points along the frontier.⁵⁸ A chain of forts was built by the French covering all likely avenues of approach at Fort Niagara on Lake Ontario and Fort Duquesne at the junction of the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers.

As noted by Merewether Liston Lewis, "Fort Chartres on the Mississippi, built of stone, was, however, worthy of the name fort."⁵⁹ The easiest and most likely avenue of approach was from the south through Lake George and Lake Champlain to Montreal and Quebec. Here the French had built a fortification at Ticonderoga named Carillon in order to prevent the English from capturing the capital of New France.

On his arrival to the colony, Montcalm quickly gained a situational awareness of the theatre of operations. Firstly, in the oral tradition of early history, he met with many of the officers who participated in the campaigns during the previous three years. Each explained and recounted their experiences during the struggle, providing Montcalm with an awareness of what had transpired tactically and operationally during the previous campaigns.⁶⁰ Next, Montcalm conducted a quick inspection of the frontier. He examined the strategic approaches and defenses of New France, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable approach from the Lake Champlain corridor.⁶¹ Montcalm had concluded that the strategic center of gravity of New France was the capital of the colony, Quebec, and that the most likely avenue of approach to the center of gravity for the British

⁵⁸ Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760*, 138-150. Also Parkman, *The Seven Years War*, 55.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁰ Lewis, *Montcalm: The Marvelous Marquis*, 35.

⁶¹ Whitridge, "The Marquis de Montcalm" Part One, 81.

was from the Lake Champlain corridor. It was here at Fort Carillon that Montcalm spent most of his initial efforts and energies, attempting to bolster the defenses through Lake Champlain and Fort Carillon towards Montreal and Quebec. He had hoped that his efforts would prevent the British from dividing New France into two, thereby forcing the French to fight on two fronts with an already outnumbered force.

Montcalm also concluded that the nature of war in North America had indeed changed." Formerly, he said, the Canadians thought that they were making war when they went on raids resembling hunting parties. Now we have formal operations; formerly the Indians were the basis of things, now they are auxiliaries. We now need other views, other principles if we are to be successful."⁶² Montcalm realized that if he were to achieve his vision, war in North America would now have to be based on campaign plans, armies, artillery, and siege battles. Indeed, the Seven Years War in North America marked the end of the days of small scale raiding and the beginning of professional armies on the continent. The first battalions to serve in the country since 1600 were sent to New France in 1755 at about the same time that the British began to send their regular battalions to the colonies.⁶³ In short, conventional war had arrived to the New World and Montcalm was at the center of this revolution in military affairs in North America.

⁶² Lewis, *Montcalm: The Marvelous Marquis*, 55.

Montcalm kept the British off-balance through sound strategic planning and in particular, extensive logistical preparations. He made maximum use of operating from interior lines, and used pinpoint military actions aimed at vital points of the British. In the meantime, he kept an eye on his most precious strategic commodity, that being time and the long term.⁶⁴

Firstly, Montcalm had no choice but to put Canada into a state of defense before he began the offensive aspect of his strategy. He positioned his most able commanders at Fort Ticonderoga, Fort Frontenac, and Fort Niagara, thereby covering the western and southern approaches to New France and securing the frontier as part of a point defence.⁶⁵ Secondly, he withdrew a large number of regular forces from the western theatre of operations in order to bolster his forces at his point of main effort in the east. In their place, Montcalm had the Indians conduct harassing raids throughout the area, in order to prevent the British from assuming the offense and advancing on New France from the west.⁶⁶ Once he had completed his defensive preparations, he then was in a position to assume the offensive.

⁶³ C.P. Stacey, *Quebec, 1759*, 13.

⁶⁴ Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760*, 138-200.

⁶⁵ Lewis, *The Marvelous Marquis*, 44.

⁶⁶ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 138-150.

His first task was to take control of Lake Ontario from the British. The British had established and developed a fort on Lake Ontario at Chouageun or as the British called it Oswego.⁶⁷ The intent of the British was to use the fort as a base of operations to harass the French. The British were building a powerful naval force at Oswego that would have allowed them to take control of Lake Ontario.⁶⁸ The fort, therefore, posed a significant strategic threat to the French. Realizing that the fort was only lightly defended, the decision to capture the fort before the end of the campaign season in 1757 was critical. By judging his capabilities, assessing his risks, and deciding how to make the most of his strengths, Montcalm caught the British off guard. The fort was captured with minimal loss of life and approximately 1,600 prisoners.⁶⁹

The British, however, still had the freedom of maneuver to advance through the Lake Champlain corridor. Accordingly, following his capture of Fort Oswego, Montcalm quickly moved to assume a defensive position at Ticonderoga with a view to blocking any advances of the British through the Lake Champlain corridor. The victory at Oswego and Montcalm's defensive posture at Ticonderoga forced the British to abandon their offensive action that they had planned against

⁶⁷ For an excellent account of the campaign against Oswego, see D. Peter MacLeod, "The Canadians against the French: The Struggle for Control of the Expedition to Oswego in 1756" *Ontario History* (Jun, 1988), 142-158. See also Parkman, *The Seven Years War*, 130-141.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

New France for 1757 and to move onto the defensive to keep the French in check. Lord Loudon, the most senior British official in the colonies, ordered that all offensive schemes be abandoned and that military forces in the Lake Champlain corridor entrench themselves to "check the French."⁷⁰ The news of Montcalm's victory at Oswego spread alarm throughout the northern and middle colonies and raised fears that Montcalm would next march on the colonies.⁷¹ In all, the capture of Oswego significantly strengthened the strategic position of the French in North America and raised Montcalm in the eyes of New France. Moreover, it achieved Montcalm's vision by delaying the British offensive for another year.

Next, Montcalm scored another important strategic victory with the capture and destruction in 1757 of Fort William Henry at the southern edge of Lake George. By capturing the fort, Montcalm was of the opinion that he could throw the British off balance. The British had decided to delay their capture of Louisburg until the end of the year, allowing Montcalm to take the offense on the southern approach without fear of being cut-off by a British force advancing down the St. Lawrence.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Casgrain, *Wolfe and Montcalm*, 36

⁷¹ Williams, *Redcoats Along the Hudson*, 17-125.

⁷² The French also regarded the St. Lawrence as impassable. Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, 174-175.

The British had built Fort Henry at the head of Lake George in 1749. From this position, the British could, with the aid of a fleet, threaten Montreal from Lake Champlain.⁷³ There was, however, not enough food in New France to support a military campaign. The country was on a verge of famine and it was thought that military operations would have to be delayed for another year. Yet, on 9 June 1757, provisions finally arrived from France that enabled Montcalm to put his plan into action. With a mixed force of approximately 8,000 men and Indian warriors from over forty different tribes, Montcalm captured the fort without a real fight. The British surrendered the fort to Montcalm and then withdrew back into the northern colonies for another year.

Montcalm' final and greatest strategic coup took place in 1758 at Carillon. Montcalm had been made aware that the British had organized a campaign for 1758 that included three simultaneous attacks on New France from the western, southern and eastern approaches. Food, however, was again in scarce supply until in May when provisions arrived from France that brought enough supplies to furnish food for an army of 12,000 for 105 days. For Montcalm, the provisions were enough to gain a quick victory and perhaps delay the British for another year.

⁷³ Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760, 176-190.*

By late June, Montcalm was en route to meet the British approaching the southern or most likely avenue of approach to New France. He occupied Fort Carillon in June and waited for the British whose objective was Montreal. With a force of 3,000, Montcalm routed a British force composed of some of the finest regular British regiments totaling approximately 16,000 men. As recounted by Captain John Knox a veteran of the War of Austrian Succession and Captain in the 43rd Highland Regiment of Foote attacking Carillon, the defensive victory of the French was a deception of the highest order. As he noted to a close friend in a letter after the battle, "I am happy to be alive."⁷⁴ In the end, the defensive victory at Carillon again delayed the advance of the British for another year from the southern approach to New France.

Louisbourg, the strongest fortress in French and British America was, however, lost in the same year to the British. General James Wolfe with 9,000 British regulars invested Louisbourg, while a British squadron shut-up the French navy in the harbor.⁷⁵ The twelve French sail of the line were simply insufficient to have prevented the British navy from approaching and landing on the coast and capturing Louisbourg. The French Admiralty were wedded to a doctrine of the "fleet in being" and were therefore not prepared to

⁷⁴ Knox, *The Siege of Quebec*, 72-81.

⁷⁵ Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase 1744-1760*, 166-167.

defend their lines of communications against the British.⁷⁶ If France had provided a naval force that could have challenged the British navy at Louisbourg, it is fair to conclude that the British navy may have been denied the use of external lines of operations and unrestricted access from the sea down the St. Lawrence to Quebec. On balance, this was probably a failure of grand strategy on the part of France in not realizing how vital the control of the sea-lanes to North America was to the British strategy.⁷⁷

It was during the next summer that Wolfe's fleet was to capitalize on the British victory at Louisbourg by allowing Wolfe to invest and finally capture Quebec City in 1759, bringing to a close Montcalm's hope to achieve his vision.⁷⁸ As Montcalm noted to his mother in the same year on realizing that France had abandoned her colony: "I will save this unfortunate colony or perish."⁷⁹ With mounting pressure from Britain on all three strategic approaches to New France, there was little hope from 1759 onwards that Montcalm could indeed save the colony. Three British armies were on the move to rendezvous at Montreal. Yet, the hopeless situation did not stop Montcalm from his work and his defense of Quebec in 1759 where he frustrated Wolfe for a very long time, have led some scholars to call the battle

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, 103-104.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 416.

⁷⁹ Lewis, *Montcalm: The Marvelous Marquis*, 110.

for the Plains of Abraham a "near run thing."⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the end was near, and nothing that Montcalm did at the Plains of Abraham could have averted the final outcome for New France. At the end of day, France was unable to bear the costs of military strategy as the ends (objectives) were finally overtaken by the means (supporting resources), allowing Britain to conquer North America.

CONCLUSION

As noted by Richard Chilcoat, strategic leadership is the effective practice of the strategic art.⁸¹ In this respect, Montcalm was a classic example of an effective strategic leader. Skillfully formulating, coordinating, and applying ends, ways, and means, he achieved his strategic military objectives and kept the British off balance in North America from 1756 to 1759. This was no small feat given the limitations under which he achieved this difficult and daunting task. Nevertheless, for over a two-year period, he aggressively and relentlessly translated words into deeds, ideas, and concepts into strategic action to pursue his vision for New France.

Yet, although Montcalm was a master of the strategic art, his leadership could not prevent New France from falling to the British in 1760. Indeed, as noted by Richard

⁸⁰ See Corbett, *England in the Seven Years' War*, 412-424. Also, Parkman, *The Seven Years War*, 229.

Chilcoat, the difficult reconciliation process between political or economic restraints on war and military objectives is vital to the formulation of effective military strategy if military force is to be the principal means for conflict termination.⁸² In this respect, the situation in which Montcalm found himself in New France from 1756-1759 should remind strategic leaders of today that being an effective strategic leader is no guarantee of success in war. In the end, Montcalm achieved all that he could, and more, with the resources that were made available. The onslaught of the British in North America could only have been checked with military force of equal or perhaps greater weight. France, however, was not prepared or unable to provide the ends to Montcalm. Nevertheless, in the end, Louis Joseph Marquis de Montcalm should be remembered by the bar of history as a master of the strategic art. A strategic leader who gave the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that the star of France remained bright over the northern sky.

⁸¹ Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for the 21st Century Leader*, 18.
⁸² Ibid. 15.

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