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Piping in the Oillipheist:
The Canadian Forces Lack a Culture of Strategic Thought

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ABSTRACT

Many inside and outside the Canadian military might think that strategic thinking is pervasive within the Canadian Forces. This paper argues that far from that being the case, that strategic thinking is rare, if ever present. The approach taken is to examine the culture of the Canadian Forces because culture, to be vibrant, or at least current, must be passed on within the organization, and as a result the manner in which it is taught is observable. Having first developed working definitions of "strategic thinking", and a "culture of strategic thinking", the paper examines elements of Canadian Forces culture for evidence of strategic thinking. Elements examined are the ethos of the Canadian Forces, the observed behaviour of the leadership, the selection and promotion of personnel, the organization, "strategic-level" documents, and senior education. The paper concludes that the Canadian Forces lacks a culture of strategic thinking.

PART I -- INTRODUCTION

In Irish oral folklore the Oillipheist is a dragon-like monster. In one story involving the Oillipheist, the monster swallows a drunken piper named O'Rourke, who, either unaware of his predicament or unperturbed by it, continues to play his pipe in the belly of the beast. The Oillipheist becomes so annoyed with the music it coughs up and spits out O'Rourke.[1]

The thesis of this paper is that the Canadian Forces, unaware or unperturbed, faces its future without the benefit of a culture of strategic thought.

Clearly this is an assertion – one that this paper intends to convert to a conclusion based on the facts and reasoned logic. But in this assertion there are numerous embedded elements. What exactly is meant by the Canadian Forces? What exactly is meant by culture, and is the suggestion that there is a single culture in the Canadian Forces? What exactly is strategic thought? How is it defined?

Beyond these first embedded elements there sits a broader question: why would it be important to link them together? Why would it matter if the Canadian Forces do not have a culture of strategic thought?

It matters because culture matters. And not just in terms of the art, customs and expression of the beliefs of a nation or community. It matters to organizations, even though organizational culture is to some a paradox; in one way it is everywhere, in another, it is invisible.[2] John Middleton defines organizational culture as being the unwritten rules that create expectations including acceptable risk, change orientation,

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[1] Encyclopedia Mythica. http://pantheon.org/articles/o/oillipheist.html; Internet; accessed 03 May 2006.
[2] Jac Fitz-enz, *The 8 Practices of Exceptional Companies* (New York: AMACON, 1997), 67.

creativity and more.[3] Edgar Schein, a noted author on the subject, notes that culture is a shared set of basic assumptions to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel.[4] The Canadian Forces, as do other militaries, recruit its own. Leaders are grown from within, and taught the things the Canadian military holds dear. The Canadian Forces do not import our leadership from other organizations.

Culture also matters because it helps us not only teach and understand the behaviour of an organization, but also is recognized as a powerful tool to shape and manage that behaviour. Moreover, culture is a powerful tool that must be managed itself. Edgar Schein believes that if organizations do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them.

> Culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organizational situations that derive from culture are powerful. If we don't understand the operations of these forces, we become victim to them.[5]

The Canadian Forces can be considered to be a federation of many organizations – each having one or a number of cultures. The Air Force, the Army, and the Navy pride themselves on the socialization and training they provide to their own – all within the common construct of service to Canada, yet very different at the same time. Moreover, every unit, every regiment, every warship, and every squadron has their individual and unique elements that are taught to new members. There are many, many cultures cohabitating within the Canadian Forces.

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[3] John Middleton, *Culture* (Oxford: Capstone, 2002), 6.
[4] Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004), 17.
[5] *Ibid*., 3.

If Edgar Schein is right, that cultures are to be understood or they will manage the organization, then the Canadian Forces must pay attention to the many, many cultures embedded in the organization.

The Canadian Forces have started to pay attention. In 2003, Director of Strategic Human Resources initiated a project to gain a better understanding of the Canadian Force culture and its subcultures. The results of the survey indicated some 179 documents on the subject published since 1960.[6]

Clearly, a comprehensive review of the cultures embedded in the Canadian Forces is well beyond the scope of this paper. All the same, the directed literature survey is relevant not just to reinforce the point that culture matters, but for a second reason: none of these documents specifically address "strategic thought" as an element of Canadian Forces culture.

Is this important? Should the culture of the Canadian Forces include strategic thought? The answer to this question hinges on the importance of strategy to the Canadian Forces.

Strategy is very important to the Canadian Forces, as it is to all militaries. First, in the classic military sense, strategy is the bridge between government policy and military plans.[7] The noted Canadian writer on strategy, Colin S. Gray, observes that, "In the absence of a strategic framework of instrumental thinking and planning, how can defence be governed rationally?"[8] So strategy allows for rational alignment of the Canadian Forces with Canadian government objectives. Second, the Canadian Forces must be

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[6] Shannen Murphy, *Annotated Bibliography: Culture in the Canadian Forces,* (Ottawa, February 2004).
[7] Richard K. Betts, "The Trouble with Strategy: Bridging Policy and Operations," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 29, (Autumn/Winter 2001-02): 23.
[8] Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 6.

prepared to respond to strategic imperatives with the intent of having strategic effect. A current example of an emerging strategic imperative is the Canadian Arctic, while Afghanistan stands as an example of a mission that has as its goal a strategic effect.

Given that strategy is very important to the Canadian Forces, it is reasonable to assert that strategic thought, for now defined as the thought that produces strategy, must also be very important to the Canadian Forces.

Strategic thought is very important to the Canadian Forces so that military plans can be aligned with government objectives. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the Canadian Forces would create expectations that personnel would engage in strategic thought. Also, it is reasonable to expect the Canadian Forces to teach its personnel to think strategically. Creating expectations and teaching personnel the correct way to think are classic elements of an organization's culture as explained earlier. Therefore, in order that the Canadian Forces develops plans that align with the Government of Canada's objectives, the culture of the Canadian Forces should include strategic thought.

Before launching into the discussion on whether the Canadian Forces exhibit a culture of strategic thought – an important element required so that military plans can be aligned with government objectives – it is important to understand what the "Canadian Forces" means for this discussion. The Canadian Forces, for the purposes of this discussion, means the level of the Canadian military found above the air, land, or maritime elements – that is above the Air Force, the Army and the Navy. Whether the Air Force, Army, or Navy have cultures of strategic thought is not considered. This scoping of this paper is both necessary in that there is only so much that can be addressed, and

reasonable based on the premise that strategic thought below the level of the Canadian Forces is irrelevant if there is no strategic thought at the level of the Canadian Forces.

Approach

There is a significant and unavoidable challenge embedded in a consideration of whether the Canadian Forces have a culture of strategic thought: there is no standard definition of what would constitute a culture of strategic thought for the Canadian Forces. Therefore, to explore this topic it is necessary to develop a reasonable definition of what would constitute a culture of strategic thinking. As this is a fundamental element of the arguments made in this paper, a foundation definition of a culture of strategic thought is developed in the first part of the body of this paper. Based on the foundation definition of a culture of strategic thought, discussion presented in this paper will address whether the behaviour of the Canadian Forces, as evidenced by both process and output, qualifies as indicative of a culture of strategic thought.

Foundation Definition: a *Culture of Strategic Thought*

The task of developing a reasonable definition of a culture of strategic thought is challenging. Recently the *International Journal* spoke directly to the challenge of defining what is meant by "a strategic culture" and noted that academics "unfailingly get entangled in constant wrangling over the definition"[9] David Haglund went on to note that

[9] David G. Haglund, "What Good is Strategic Culture?" *International Journal* LX, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 479.

it was possible to define each term, strategic and culture, in many ways, and that this was only compounded when the two were hooked together. Undaunted, Alistair Johnson defined strategic culture as, "an integrated system of symbols that act to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategy preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs."[10]

This definition introduces two important ideas: that as an element of culture the impacts are pervasive and that the impacts are long-lasting. However, it is clear the *International Journal* contributors approached the subject with the behaviour of nations in mind. A more focused and pragmatic definition is needed before the behaviour of a large organization, such as the Canadian Forces, can be considered. To focus it is helpful to turn to research that has been undertaken into the subject of organizational culture.

In this regard John Middleton believes that an organization's culture is fairly straightforward to assess because culture, by definition, must be taught. In order to teach a culture, the organization must express and transmit that culture. Expression and transmission are actions that can be observed and include the preparation and dissemination of formal statements of philosophy and values, the behaviour demonstrated by the leadership, the criteria used to select, reward, promote and terminate personnel, and the organizational design, structures and procedures.[11] The qualifier for these observables is that they are relevant to an assessment of the intended culture of an organization. John Middleton also writes of unintended cultures, those that do not originate with the leadership and are often expressed and transmitted much less formally than are intended cultures.

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[10] Alistair Johnson, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Ming China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 36-37.
[11] John Middleton, *Culture* (Oxford: Capstone, 2002), 60.

Having reviewed the four observables of culture noted above it seems that all of these should apply to the culture of the Canadian Forces. Having said that, there are two additional behaviours worthy of consideration. First, the Defence website identifies strategic documents, the most notable being *Shaping the Canadian Forces for the Future, a Strategy for 2020.* Such documents are intended for the external and internal audiences, and therefore may be considered as contributing to the expression of Canadian Forces culture for the purposes of this paper. Second, the Canadian Forces invest in specific education for its personnel. It is reasonable to consider such education and how it contributes to the culture of the Canadian Forces.

Applying these "culture" observables to the Canadian Forces, it would be reasonable to look for evidence of strategic thinking in our statements of philosophy and values, in the demonstrated behaviour of our leadership, in the criteria used to select, reward and promote personnel, in the organizational structures and procedures, in our strategic documents, and in our education.

Each of these "clues" that could reveal evidence of a culture of strategic thinking will be examined shortly. However, one final foundation argument must be made. To this point in this paper the working definition of strategic thinking has been the thinking that produces strategy. Unfortunately, this is too simple a definition. The problem, as noted earlier, is that strategy is widely used to mean a great many things to a great many people. Are we talking about the same concept when we refer to the strategy used by Team Canada at the World Curling Championship as when we refer to *Strategy 2020*? Clearly not. For this reason a more relevant, and bounded, definition of strategic thinking is required.

Strategic Thinking

The first concept in refining the working definition of strategic thinking is the concept of time. The United States Army War College breaks out two levels of military strategy: operational strategy and force development strategy. Strategies based on existing military capabilities are operational strategies, and are used to form specific plans of action for short-term effects, while longer range force development strategies consider estimates of future threats, objectives and requirements.[12] Of these, operational strategies are indistinguishable from operational plans, built through the use of the Operational Planning Process that begins with the Government's objectives. For this reason the operational level strategies will not be discussed, leaving what the US Army refers to as "force development strategies" to be more relevant to this paper. This is consistent with advice provided by Lieutenant-General K.R. Pennie who explained strategy as the "ends, ways and means of government, or at least those that have long-term significance for defence".[13] Therefore, one important element of strategic thinking is that it must consider the long-term as its timeframe of reference.

In that same paper, entitled "Strategic Thinking in Defence", Lieutenant-General Pennie noted that strategic referred to the highest level of defence planning.[14] However, strategic thinking and strategic planning are not one and the same, and it is important to differentiate between the two.

[12] Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., *US Army War College Guide to Strategy* (Feb 2001), 180.
[13] K.R. Pennie, "Strategic Thinking in Defence," *Canadian Military Journal* (Autumn, 2001): 21.
[14] *Ibid*, 22.

There has been a lot written on the subject of strategic planning and strategic thinking. One of the early advocates of recognizing the difference between the two, and now one of the leading thinkers on the subject, is Henry Mintzberg. His view is that strategic thinking is all about synthesis, while strategic planning is all about analysis.[15]

Henry Mintzberg argues that synthesis requires intuition and creativity, and is the responsibility of the hands-on leader as a fundamental requirement for synthesis is an awareness of the current environment, and learning.

> If the empirical data has taught us anything at all about strategy formation, it is that the process is a fundamentally dynamic one, corresponding to the dynamic conditions that drive it. It tends to occur irregularly and unexpectedly…because of discontinuities, whether these originate from threats in the external environment or opportunities in the managerial mind.[16]

Intuition and creativity in the managerial mind – this theme is echoed by G. Hamel and C.K. Prahalad, who refer to strategic thinking organizations as establishing a hierarchy of imagination.[17] Finally, Eton Lawrence notes that strategic thinking is fundamentally concerned with, and driven by, the continuous shaping and re-shaping of intent.[18]

The common feature of these writers is the dynamic and learning nature of strategic thinking. In their view strategic thinking responds to unpredicted events. It is the creative spark that occurs based on what the manager has learned. Eton Lawrence identifies five elements common to strategic thinkers:

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[15] Henry Mintzberg, *Mintzberg on Management* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 76.
[16] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 241.
[17] G. Hamel and C.K. Prahalad, "Strategy intent," *Harvard Business Review,* May-June, 1989, 67.
[18] Public Service Commission of Canada, "Strategic Thinking: A Discussion Paper," http:///www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/research/knowledge/strathink_e.htm; Internet; accessed 3 April 2006.

(1) they see linkages in the system from multiple perspectives;

(2) they are intent focused, and intent driven;

(3) they are open to new experience and emergent strategies;

(4) they think in time – that is they link the past and present to the future; and

(5) they are hypothesis driven, welcoming experimentation to test the hypotheses.[19]

Combining these ideas: *Strategic thinking is defined as the thinking that links different perspectives and information, and the past, present and the future to produce a long-term strategy that aligns the Canadian Forces resources with the goals of the Government of Canada. It is intuitive, creative, and reflects learning, and is often focused on shaping and refining intent.*

In contrast to strategic thinking, strategic planning is neither dynamic nor creative, but is driven by analysis. It is based on prediction and forecasting – and because forecasting amounts to extrapolation of known states, existing trends, or recurring patterns, planning works best under stable conditions.[20] Henry Mintzberg explains that analysis cannot substitute for synthesis, and that synthesis must be accomplished by leaders with current awareness of the organizational issues. "No amount of elaboration will ever enable formal procedures to forecast discontinuities, to inform managers who are detached from their operations, to create novel strategies."[21]

Clearly strategic thinking and strategic planning are not the same thing. However, both are important. James Morrison believes that an appropriate strategy-making

[19] *Ibid.,* 4.
[20] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning,* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 239.
[21] *Ibid.,* 321.

framework includes both the creative and the analysis inspired elements.[22] This is also the view of Henry Mintzberg. He sees that strategy making, or strategic thinking, exists as sort of a black box into which the strategic planners cannot penetrate. The strategic planners work outside the box, capturing the insight of the strategy makers who are hooked into the reality of operations, but do not have the time, and perhaps the training, to engage in the analysis required to drive strategic planning.[23]

Notwithstanding that research concludes that strategic thinking and strategic planning are distinct activities, it is equally clear that strategic thinking and planning are closely related. Each, or both, may reveal the degree to which an organization has a culture of strategic thinking. For the purposes of this paper, in addition to the analysis of strategic thinking in the Canadian Forces, there must be an assessment of strategic planning, as potential evidence of a culture of strategic thinking as well. For this reason strategic planning will be evaluated in this paper.

Foundation Definition Summary

To this stage in the paper a working definition of strategic thinking has been developed, and the distinction between strategic thinking and strategic planning has been identified. The definition and distinction can now be applied in a consideration of whether the culture of the Canadian Forces includes strategic thinking. As developed earlier, the Canadian Forces culture can be observed through a consideration of statements of philosophy and values, behaviour demonstrated by the leadership, the

[22] Horizon Site, "From Strategic Planning to Strategic Thinking," http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/OTH/2-3.asp; Internet; accessed 3 April 2006.
[23] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning,* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 241.

selection and advancement criteria, the organizational structures themselves, the documents published, and the education provided.

PART II – DISCUSSION

Canadian Forces Philosophy and Values

The primary Canadian Forces document that speaks to the Canadian Forces philosophy and values directly is *Duty with Honour*. It is primary because it was a first ever document on the ethos of the Canadian Forces, and primary because there has been no update or replacement since its publication.

Duty with Honour was written to re-establish a vibrant Canadian Forces ethos. Published in 2003, *Duty with Honour* was to define what it meant to be a Canadian military professional and to frame the attributes of the profession.[24] Those attributes are stated to be responsibility, expertise, identity and the military ethos.

Within the discussion of responsibility, *Duty with Honour* specifies accountability in compliance with the laws of Canada, the responsibility to take care of the well-being of subordinates, and notes that responsibility includes careful stewardship of resources.[25] However, the context for stewardship of resources is one of resources assigned at the time. There is no explicit mention of stewardship in the long-term, nor is such a timeframe implicit in the discussion.

[24] Department of National Defence, *Duty with Honour* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2003), 2.
[25] *Ibid.*, 14.

Within the discussion of expertise, *Duty with Honour* notes that as military professionals advance in rank, their knowledge of joint, combined and interagency operations must also advance. Moreover, officers must become expert in understanding national security issues and provide advice to civil authorities to ensure that military capabilities are integrated with other components of the national security apparatus.[26] Expertise includes critical judgment, essential in allocating the means for the application of force according to the principles of discrimination, proportionality, and military necessity.[27] Finally, there is also reference to the increasing requirement for the capacity for creative thinking in both officers and Non-Commissioned Members.

While there is no explicit mention of strategic thinking expertise, providing advice to civil authorities could be broadly interpreted to include provision of advice on future force structures. However, the lack of reference to a long term timeframe argues against such an interpretation. Also, and notwithstanding that creativity is a hallmark of strategic thinking, creative thinking rooted in the context of facing more complex challenges today, and lacking a connection to linking ends, ways and means, cannot be considered to be implicit references to the need for strategic thinking expertise.

Within the discussion of identity, *Duty with Honour* identifies three core concepts: voluntary military service, unlimited liability, and service before self.[28] The discussion describes acceptance of Canadian laws, the identities of the environments (land, air and sea), and that the military identity includes leadership and discipline. There is no mention of strategic thinking as a noteworthy element of the Canadian military identity.

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[26] *Ibid.,* 15.
[27] *Ibid.,* 17
[28] *Ibid.,* 20.

Within the discussion of military ethos, *Duty with Honour* defines ethos as comprising values, beliefs and expectations about military service.[29] Principal among the expectations is an acceptance of unlimited liability, understanding that the fighting spirit is the foundation of the profession, acceptance of the need for discipline, and the importance of teamwork.

Duty with Honour does not suggest the list of four principal expectations for military service is comprehensive. Nonetheless, from the perspective of elements of culture explained in the discussion of military ethos, strategic thinking is absent and therefore not taught.

To this point, *Duty with Honour*, a book published with the intent of establishing a vibrant military ethos, does not refer to strategic thinking, directly or indirectly, as an element of that ethos. While the remainder of the publication does not explicitly refer to strategic thinking, a late section on professional leadership notes that "professional judgment is necessary to address the issues surrounding resources for emerging requirements."[30] However, *Duty with Honour* goes on to focus on the issue of the need for different expertise in the future, and the need to be aware of the changing social and cultural realities. This focus does not prevent consideration of the other dimensions of emerging requirements, for example the need to identify the emerging requirements themselves, but it is clear the intent of this section of the publication refers to the human resource challenges and not the strategic thinking challenges.

The conclusion of this discussion of *Duty with Honour* is straightforward. Given there is no explicit reference to strategic thinking in the publication, given the four

[29] *Ibid.,* 25.
[30] *Ibid.*, 49.

attributes: responsibility, expertise, identity and military ethos, mention few or no elements of strategic thinking, given the principles of Canadian military ethos do not mention strategic thinking, and given the nearest approach to a description of concrete elements of strategic thinking is reference to emerging requirements without noting the need to identify such requirements, the conclusion is that Duty *with Honour* does not set nor teach expectations of strategic thinking. Given that *Duty with Honour* reflects intended Canadian Forces culture, an examination of *Duty with Honour* concludes that the intended culture of the Canadian Forces does not include strategic thinking.

Demonstration of Strategic Thinking by the Leadership

The second element of expressing culture is the demonstrated behaviour of the leadership: not just what does the leadership say, but what does it actually do.

In the Canadian Forces the leadership ultimately flows from the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS). So to assess whether the behaviour demonstrated by the leadership exhibits strategic thinking, the assessment should properly begin with consideration of the behaviour demonstrated by the CDS.

The CDS has spearheaded a significant transformation of the Canadian Forces based on his vision of the future world, Canada's place in that world, and the role of the Canadian military in support of Canada's place in the world. Equally importantly, the CDS has made a direct and personal commitment to communicating the vision to Government, Canadians, and as many members of the Canadian Forces as possible. Communicating the vision was a direct example of setting expectations and influencing

the Canadian Forces' culture. If the assessment of the vision concludes it reflects strategic thinking, then it would be reasonable to conclude that the leadership demonstrates strategic thinking.

The CDS' vision is available in the form of a package of briefing slides on the defence website.[31] In addition, it is more thoroughly explained in plain language in the Defence Policy Statement (DPS) released by the Minister of National Defence in 2005. This is not to say that the CDS established Defence Policy, but rather to note that General Hillier's selection as CDS coincided with the Government of Canada's desire to review defence policy. Clearly, the views held by General Hillier and the Minister of National Defence came together in the Defence Policy Statement. By design, the vision for the Canadian Forces, as communicated by the CDS, and the vision described in the DPS are the same.

The DPS identifies three elements of the "new vision for the Canadian Forces": more effect through integration of maritime, land, air and special operations forces; more relevance at home and abroad – with emphasis on having to deal with failed states abroad; and better response in times of crisis. The DPS elaborates to include Canada Command, fully integrated units, improved interaction with other government departments, and considerable detail on specific capabilities that will have to be developed. The DPS connects government goals with specified ways of achieving those goals, and therefore constitutes two of the three elements needed for a full strategy (the third being the means – normally allocated through government budgets).

[31] Defence Site, "Setting Our Course: The Way Ahead for Our Canadian Forces," http://www.cemd.forces.gc.ca/00native/pdf/cds-vision_e.pdf; Internet; accessed 20 April 2006.

Is the DPS evidence of strategic thinking by the CDS? Application of the definition of strategic thinking developed earlier permits an objective assessment. First, the DPS links the perspectives of past and present and looks to the future. It recognizes that a fundamental shift must occur away from developing capabilities that are designed for major combat, such as was possible during the Cold War, to developing capabilities designed to be effective in failed states and against non-state actors. Second, the DPS clearly takes a long term view in allocating priorities to counter-terrorism and strategic lift capabilities. Third, the DPS is both intuitive and creative in that it takes the assessment of the unstable world we have recognized as reality since the end of the Cold War, and then presents a vision of a transformed Canadian Forces that responds to the challenges. Fourth, the vision reflects learning – the hard lessons of Afghanistan foremost. Finally, the vision sets out government and commander's intents.[32] Linking perspectives and the past, present and future, taking a long term view in concert with the goals of the government, showing both intuition and creativity, reflecting learning, and focusing on intent qualifies the vision, as explained by the CDS and contained in the DPS, as clear evidence of demonstrated strategic thinking.

Selection and Advancement Criteria

Do the criteria used to select, reward and promote personnel include strategic thinking? It is possible to halve this question into its two parts.

[32] Department of National Defence, *A Role of Pride and Influence in the World DEFENCE* (Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 2005).

Before looking at selection and promotion separately it is important to understand that tools are available to assess the preference individual's have for strategic thinking. One such tool is the Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI), a self-assessment that has been developed over the last 30 years based on increasing knowledge of how the brain works.[33] HBDI results in the awarding of scores in four quadrants that result from the intersection of two continuums: the x-axis running from realistic to idealistic; the y-axis from visceral to cognitive. The HBDI research shows that a candidate's score in the top right quadrant – high scores in both cognitive and idealistic realms – indicates a preference for vision and synthesis. Such individuals read signs of coming change, see the big picture and synthesize unlike elements into a new whole.[34] In contrast, candidates scores in the top left quadrant indicate a preference for gathering facts, analyzing issues and arguing rationally.[35] These descriptions mirror closely the differences between strategic thinking and strategic planning identified by Henry Mintzberg and others earlier in this paper.

HBDI is not a flawless predictor, it is just one example of a profiling tool that is available to help individuals and organizations recognize preferences and match personnel to different challenges.

The Canadian Forces do not select personnel for recruitment or subsequent appointments based on an assessment of the candidate's ability or preference for strategic thinking. At the time of initial recruitment, potential candidates are assessed by testing,

[33] Hermann International. *Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument* (North Carolina) Contact information available at http://www.hdbi.com
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Ibid.*

background checks and formal interviews. There is no use of HBDI or other strategic preference profiler.

Once serving in the Canadian Forces an individual's capacity for strategic thinking is not formally evaluated. Consider evaluation of Canadian Forces' members as documented annually through the Canadian Forces Personnel Assessment System (CFPAS) that includes the Performance Evaluation Report (PER). The PER not only provides feedback to the individual, but also is used to select individuals for promotion and for career development opportunities.

The PER reports on the observed performance of the individual during the reporting period. Throughout the reporting period the individual is assessed in terms of both performance and potential. The areas that contribute to these assessments are somewhat different for senior appointments (Colonels and Captains (Navy) and above) as compared to lieutenant-colonels and below. Assuming that strategic thinking should be more important in the assessment of senior appointees, the analysis of whether this is so will focus on Colonel's PERs rather than those of the ranks below Colonel.

Categories evaluated within consideration of performance and potential of colonels include organizational, leadership and communication abilities. There is a focus on the development and care of subordinates, and assessment of intellect, dedication and courage. However, the elements of strategic thinking such as intuition, creativity, the ability to link different perspectives, and shaping and refining intent are not mentioned. The single attribute that connects to strategic thinking is an assessment of the individual's ability to establish a vision for his or her organization.

It is clear that in the evaluation of both the performance and potential of senior appointees that strategic thinking is not considered formally. Equally clear, the elements reported on lead to the conclusion that the Canadian Forces highly value cognitive and organizational abilities, elements that contribute to strategic planning more so than strategic thinking. Finally, the inclusion of "vision" as one of the elements assessed in PERs, lacking assessment of strategic thinking elements such as intuition, creativity etc., is not sufficient to conclude that the performance appraisal system includes implicit assessment of an individual's ability to think strategically.

In considering the selection and reward systems of the Canadian Forces it is clear that individuals are not evaluated for their preference for strategic thinking, nor are they promoted based, even in part, on explicit or implicit evaluation of their ability to think strategically. As such there is no evidence of a culture of strategic thinking in the selection and advancement of Canadian Forces personnel.

Canadian Forces Organization

First in the discussion of the organization of the Canadian Forces is consideration of National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa, the strategic headquarters. Some may consider that NDHQ, designated as the strategic headquarters, and working at the highest level is, by definition, strategic. The thinking that goes on in NDHQ, by extension, would be strategic thinking, so the organization of the Canadian Forces would reflect strategic thinking. The problem with this argument is that it is based on an unbounded definition of strategic thinking. More precision is necessary before

conclusions can be drawn about whether NDHQ in and of itself represents an organizational construct that fosters or is the product of strategic thinking.

Before that precision can be pursued it is useful to establish exactly what constitutes NDHQ. The Department of National Defence addressed this question in a briefing note prepared for the Minister in 2005 to inform discussion on whether NDHQ was top-heavy. The briefing note reported that of the 13, 291 military and civilians working in the Ottawa area, 4,231 worked performing NDHQ functions. The remainder provided nation-level service delivery or were employed in national capital region co-located organizations.[36]

The briefing note explained that NDHQ functions included providing advice to the Minister and cabinet on defence issues; ensuring that military tasks and defence activities were carried out effectively; providing a cost-effective organization for the acquisition of resources; ensuring that government policies were followed; and assisting the Minister in advancing Canada's defence relations and other interests.[37] Clearly some proportion of the staff at NDHQ are engaged in the last four of these five tasks – important tasks, but tasks that are focused on the immediate, and tasks that do not necessarily impact defence significantly in the long term. For the purposes of this discussion it is fair to conclude that simply working at the national level headquarters does not constitute evidence that the work itself is strategic in nature.

For the organization of NDHQ to provide evidence of a culture of strategic thinking, the organization must either facilitate strategic thinking or be able to convert the strategic thought into a strategic plan. These two elements correspond to the strategic

[36] Department of National Defence Briefing Note for the Minister, *Structure of National Defence Headquarters* . (Ottawa: Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, 4 Feb 2005), 2.
[37] *Ibid.,* 2.

formation and strategic planning as defined earlier by Henry Mintzberg.[38] Strategy formation is assessed above in the section on demonstrated strategic thinking by the leadership, leaving this section of the paper to consider how the Canadian Forces respond to strategic thinking. To provide evidence of a culture of strategic thinking, the Canadian Forces would have an organization that was adept at taking a strategic vision or thinking and turning it into a full strategic plan. There are two Canadian Forces organizations that include "strategic" in their official designation: the Director General Strategic Planning (DGSP) and the Strategic Joint Staff (SJS). Both will be assessed to determine their capacity to produce strategic plans.

Organizationally DGSP consists of three directorates: programs and plans, defence management, and defence analysis Plans and programs responsibilities include coordination of strategic direction, but this coordination is largely effected through the annual cycle of the departmental business plan. Defence management concerns itself with sound management tools.[39] These two directorates are not responsible to convert strategic thinking into a strategic plan.

Defence analysis is responsible to institutionalize capability based planning and to provide strategic force development advice. These two responsibilities are combined in the preparation of a Defence Capability Plan, a plan the DGSP website reports as a single integrated Canadian Forces capability strategy, and a 20-year investment plan to implement the strategic vision in the Defence Policy Statement. The website indicates the plan will soon be completed[40]

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[38] Henry Mintzberg, *Mintzberg on Management* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 76.
[39] Defence site, http://www.vcds.forces.gc.ca/dgsp ; Internet, accessed 12 March, 2006.
[40] See http://www.vcds.forces.gc.ca/dgsp

Whether the Defence Capability Plan (DCP) qualifies as an implementation strategy is a question that necessarily awaits the publication of the plan. However, the manner in which the DCP is being produced provides evidence that DDA is not sufficient as the organizational resource capable of taking a strategic vision and turning it into a strategic plan. First, the vision was not provided to DDA directly. Instead, the vision was provided to CDS Action Teams (CAT) so that it could be refined. Following this, the refined vision was provided to separate organizations to work out the implementation details. This work fell to both DGSP and the newly formed Chief of Transformation. An element of this work was the framing of what would become the DCP. Finally, a special purpose offsite meeting of senior representatives of the army, navy and air force was convened under DGSP direction to validate and refine the DCP.

These steps were followed to build the strategic investment plan – clearly there was not, nor is there now, the capacity in DDA to accomplish this task alone. Lacking the capacity in DDA to accomplish the task alone, or in any other organization, the process to refine and then develop a plan to implement the strategic vision had to be invented. This is evidence that the arrival of the strategic vision was an atypical event, and that it arrived in an institution that was not organized to capture and implement it. This evidence does not support a contention that the Canadian Forces have a culture of strategic thinking.

The second organization for consideration here is the strategic joint staff (SJS). It was not in place in the spring of 2005, at the time of the arrival of the vision, but has been put in place since. Could the SJS take on the responsibility for strategic planning?

By design the SJS is to provide timely and effective military analysis and decision support to the CDS in his role as the principal military advisor to the Government of

Canada. The SJS is also to enable the CDS to affect strategic command, allowing him to plan, initiate, direct, synchronize and control operations at the strategic level. These duties fall within the range of operational strategy as defined earlier in this paper. As such, the SJS seems to be an unlikely resource for the conversion of strategic thinking to plans.

Canadian Forces Documents

Assessing documents prepared at the highest levels in the Canadian Forces for evidence of strategic thought is again not as straightforward as it first appears. On the unbounded side of the continuum, every decision that has long-range consequences, and the documents that contain such decisions, could be considered strategic. Moreover, some argue that allocating capital to purchase a specific piece of equipment is strategic, as there are insufficient dollars available to meet all acquisition needs. Lieutenant-General Pennie makes this case in his paper noting that the Canadian Forces may well operate equipment for three or four decades, therefore the acquisition of such equipment is strategic as a result.[41] According to this view, acquisition documentation qualifies as strategic, and the decision to acquire a specific piece of equipment would be evidence of strategic thought.

It may seem that such decisions would also qualify for the second major element of strategy: the alignment of the military ways and means with government policies and objectives. Acquisitions, and especially capital projects, clearly must meet government

[41] K.R. Pennie, "Strategic Thinking in Defence," *Canadian Military Journal,* (Autumn, 2001): 22.

objectives as the process for the acquisition includes Public Works and Treasury Board review, and ultimately Cabinet approval.

So acquisitions, and especially major capital projects, have both long-term strategic effect and are aligned with the government objectives. However, clearly the long-term effect occurs whether or not it is intended, and government aligned acquisitions may be directed for a number of reasons that cannot reasonably be considered strategic. Examples might include the cancellation of the EF-101 Helicopter acquisition in the mid-1990s and the decision to buy new Challenger aircraft.

The arguments noted above are focused on acquisitions, but this is only provided as an example of decisions that are taken at the most senior levels, and appear to be both long lasting and aligned with government objectives, yet are seen to not be evidence of strategic thought once considered beyond the surface. There are other examples, the most obvious being the budget allocated to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces annually.

Given that having long-lasting effect and being aligned with government objectives are necessary elements, but evidently are not sufficient alone to bear evidence of strategic thought, what else could be required? The answer is that strategic thought is evidenced when the strategy is intended – the intent is to accomplish something that has long lasting effect. Given this refinement of what would constitute strategic, documents that began with government policy and then identified a strategy to accomplish these objectives must surely be evidence of strategic thought. As such, the principle document to be considered in this section of the paper is *Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020.*

But some argue that producing a strategy is not enough, the plan must be tied to outcomes, specifically an integrated system of decisions. Henry Mintzberg argues at length that a usable definition of strategic planning includes two readily observable phenomena: the use of a formalized procedure to produce the plan, and an integrated system of decisions that result from adoption of the plan.[42] Otherwise what is produced is sometimes called SOS: Strategy on the Shelf. Strategy on the shelf provides evidence of a lack of a culture of strategic thought as it reveals that the organization, although able to generate a strategy, is unable to put it to practical use.

Combining these ideas, *Strategy 2020* will be assessed for evidence of strategic thought, as will the implementation of *Strategy 2020*.

Strategy 2020

There can be no doubt that the preparation of *Strategy 2020* followed a very formal and inclusive process. It was based on a forward looking environmental scan and a thorough strategic assessment of the world. It sought the views of academics through formal papers and included interviews with the major stakeholders. It included a detailed analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). And all of these elements were discussed at the Defence Management Committee (DMC) many times, ensuring all involved within the Department had voice to the outcome. Indeed, it was

[42] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning,* (new York: The Free Press, 1994), 14.

DMC, chaired by the Deputy Minister and the Chief of the Defence Staff, that derived the five imperatives, created the vision, and then ultimately approved the document itself.[43]

Strategy 2020 intended to position the force structure of the Canadian Forces to provide Canada with modern, task-tailored, globally deployable and combat-capable forces. In the section entitled "From Strategy to Results", *Strategy 2020* establishes that Defence must set long-term strategic objectives, identify force structure goals, define accountabilities, prioritize activities and resources to achieve goals, and establish criteria to measure performance.

Strategy 2020 sets eight strategic objectives and provides five-year targets for each. These range from creating an innovative path to the future to resource stewardship. Three of the objectives speak directly to the need to "identify force structure goals", and they are discussed next as these are relatively easy to track to see if they were subsequently implemented.

The five year targets included the requirement to design a viable and affordable force structure, to develop new task-tailored capabilities to deal with asymmetric threats and weapons of mass destruction, to design land forces that are fully deployable within 90 days, to enhance both strategic airlift and sealift capability, and to complete the conversion of the Joint Force Headquarters to a deployable organization capable of national command and logistic support at the operational level of war.[44]

There is one major observation that is important with respect to *Strategy 2020* before consideration of its implementation. Although it identifies the need to identify

[43] K. R. Pennie, "Strategic Thinking in Defence," …22, 23. Lieutenant-General Pennie had played a leading role in the preparation of Strategy 2020 as he served as Director General Strategic Planning at the time.
[44] Department of National Defence, *Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020* (Ottawa: 1999), 7.

force structure goals, the short list of specific capabilities included in *Strategy 2020* does not, in itself, constitute such an identification. This was work to follow, work identified within the five-year target to "design a viable and affordable force structure."[45]

Was *Strategy 2020* a strategic plan? It was clearly aligned to policy, followed a very formal development process involving all of the major stakeholders, and set out objectives with the long-term in mind. As such, and notwithstanding that the design of a viable and affordable force structure was not included, *Strategy 2020* stands as a strategic document that provides evidence of strategic thought.

Implementation of Strategy 2020

For *Strategy 2020* to be a realized strategy, it was necessary to add in the means to implement it. In real terms, the determination of whether *Strategy 2020* provides evidence of a culture of strategic thought depends more on how *Strategy 2020* was used more so than how it was prepared.

Strategy 2020 itself notes that the strategy will be implemented through the Defence Management System.[46] While the Defence Management System is a broad term relating to the activities of the Defence Team in Ottawa, the means to implement *Strategy 2020* would have to have been provided in the budgets that followed.

Strategy 2020 was published in June 1999. As a result the first budget that could have reflected how well, and therefore how strategically, *Strategy 2020* connected the government objectives with the military ways and means was the budget in 2000. Budget

[45] *Ibid.,* 9.
[46] *Ibid.,* 12.

2000 provided an increase of $1.7B over three years to help pay for training and quality of life initiatives, reimburse the Canadian Forces for operations recently completed in Kosovo, and to help pay for new equipment such as Maritime helicopters. This new money was specifically linked to *Strategy 2020*.[47]

In 2001, the budget, although not making specific reference to *Strategy 2020*, included funding to help combat terrorism as it provided $119M for an expansion of Joint Task Force 2 (JTF 2), the Canadian Forces anti-terrorism unit. Also, Budget 2001 provided dollars for "infrastructure to respond to unconventional weapons, whether they be chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear."[48] These increases are consistent with *Strategy 2020*'s five-year targets of developing capabilities to counter asymmetric threats and the effects of weapons of mass destruction. So notwithstanding that *Strategy 2020* is not explicitly referenced in Budget 2001, it is reasonable to argue that the guidelines provided in *Strategy 2020* were being followed.

By Budget 2003,[49] the focus of new funding had changed significantly to setting priority on the sustainability of the Canadian Forces. New funding to the tune of $800M annually was to support ongoing recruiting, to re-stock spare parts, to support and enhance the reserves, to address pressing infrastructure maintenance, and to ease pressure on operating budgets.[50]

Finally, the Budget of 2004 effectively neutered *Strategy 2020*. Not only did it not refer to *Strategy 2020*, it specifically reflected the Government's commitment to defence

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[47] Defence site, "Defence Budgets 1999-2003," http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/reports/budget04/9903_e.asp ; Internet, accessed 11 May 2006.
[48] Defence site, "Budget 2001," http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/reports/budget01/index_e.asp ; Internet, accessed 11 May 2006.
[49] Budget 2002 is not reported on the DND site and not assessed in this paper.
[50] Defence site, "Budget 2003," http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/reports/budget03/highlights03_e.asp; Internet, accessed 11 May 2006.

and the Canadian Forces through ensuring that defence spending is aligned with the evolving priorities of Canadians.[51] This was both policy and strategy. While it spent money on fixed-wing search and rescue, on support to Canadian Forces operations, on the joint support ship, and to cover out-of-country deployments, it made note of the ongoing defence review that was to identify Canada's defence priorities and the future capabilities of the Canadian Forces, and that a strategic plan to guide future spending plans would be forthcoming.[52] That plan, the Strategic Capabilities Investment Plan (SCIP), was published in May 2004.

The budget story is clear. In successive years *Strategy 2020* played less and less a role in the consideration of the Defence budgets. In 2000, it was specifically linked to new spending; and in 2001, although no reference was made to *Strategy 2020*, the new spending was consistent with the goals of *Strategy 2020*; but by 2004 *Strategy 2020* was de facto dead and the government promised both a defence review and the SCIP. At least in terms of how our strategy played out in the budgets critical to its implementation it is not possible to conclude that *Strategy 2020* was implemented. Following the money, *Strategy 2020* was SOS.[53] As SOS, *Strategy 2020* provides evidence of both a strategic opportunity lost, and a lack of a strategic thinking culture.

Strategic Capabilities Investment Plan

The SCIP was presented to the Department of National Defence on 11 May, 2004, with a covering letter signed by both the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Acting

[51] Defence site, "Budget 2004," http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/reports/budget04/budget04_e.asp; Internet, accessed 11 May 2006.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] Strategy on the shelf as noted earlier.

Deputy Minister. It set out a high-level plan for the investment in defence capabilities for the ensuing 15 years to enable the Canadian Forces to make strategic and planned choices. The SCIP was to help ensure that investments in defence capabilities were aligned with the priorities of the Government and Canadians.[54]

The SCIP established four major capability-based thrusts: knowledge-based command and sense; support and mobility; force generation; and conduct operations. Having discussed the capability gaps in each area, the SCIP then identified key projects in each and reported the relative amounts allocated to each thrust: 15% for command and sense; 24% for support and mobility; 3% for force generation; and more than 50% for conduct operations.

Notwithstanding the significant work that contributed to the SCIP, it was neither strategic nor capabilities based.

As argued earlier in this paper, an acquisition does not constitute a strategic acquisition simply because it uses up dollars that otherwise could have been provided to another project, and simply because the Canadian Forces may well employ the equipment for decades. For an acquisition to be strategic it must be aligned with the intent of the Government of Canada. In 2004, the official intent of the Government of Canada remained the 1994 White Paper. That document was not officially replaced until the release of the Defence Policy Statement in 2005. Lacking the foundation of the intent of the Government of Canada, the SCIP cannot be considered strategic.

Also, the SCIP was not capabilities based – it was thrust based certainly, but not capability based. In the Canadian Forces a capability is defined as the combination of six

[54] Department of National Defence, *Strategic Capability Investment Plan* (Ottawa: Chief of the Defence Staff and Deputy Minister, 11 May 2004); Available on Internet: http://www.vcds.forces.gc.ca/dgsp/pubs/rep-pub/ddm/scip/letter2_e.asp

components. These six components are the personnel, the research and development, the infrastructure, the concepts, the information technology, and the equipment itself. These six areas are known collectively as PRICIE. The SCIP notes that it does not include the elements other than the equipment it identifies, and provides a horizon one target (five-year target) the drafting of the human resources (personnel), research and development, infrastructure, concepts plans needed to flesh out the capabilities.[55] As such, SCIP reveals itself to be an equipment plan rather than a capability plan.

Education in Strategic Thought

As culture is taught, the final section of analysis will consider whether formal education in the Canadian Forces includes strategic thinking. The first issue to be dealt with is whether strategic thinking *can* be taught, and on this question there are opposing views. Fundamental to this question is whether intuition, the foundation element of strategic thinking, is learned. In *On Management,* Henry Mintzberg documents his debate on intuition with Herbert Simon, a gentleman who won a Nobel Prize in 1978 for his work in organizational behaviour. As reported by Henry Mintzberg, Herbert Simon viewed intuition as "analysis frozen into habit", a view Henry Mintzberg considers to be far too narrow because it does not account for creative insight.[56]

A full exploration of the sources of intuition would require significant additional research beyond the scope of this paper. However, there is considerable agreement that organizations are quite able to discourage "creative insight". Henry Mintzberg relates the

[55] *Ibid.*
[56] Henry Mintzberg, *Mintzberg on Management,* 67.

story of Texas Instruments, their adoption of very formal strategic planning, and their scrapping of this planning approach in the early 1980s. The strategic planning had been initiated to control and direct growth in the company, but it broke down. Ironically, it became "an overly complex management system – including matrix management and numbers-dominated strategic planning that tended to smother entrepreneurship."[57]

So, whether strategic thinking can be taught or not remains an open question, but it is more widely accepted that it can be encouraged or discouraged. In this analysis of Canadian Forces culture, as it is taught in formal education and courses, it is reasonable to determine whether there are efforts to teach strategic thinking, to teach the expectation of strategic thinking, and to teach the encouragement of strategic thinking.

In this regard not all professional development courses would have to include discussion on strategic thinking in order to conclude that a culture of strategic thinking existed. Instead it would be reasonable to look for discussion of strategic thinking in the most-senior development course – the National Security Studies Course (NSSC).

The NSSC has the aim to prepare general/flag officers, selected colonels/naval captains and civilian equivalents, for strategic leadership responsibilities in the development, direction and management of national security and defence policy.[58] NSSC was developed to meet the needs of senior officer education in the principles of command, the application of doctrine, and the interface between the political and military spheres of interest. By intent, course members are challenged to think critically and

[57] Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning,* 296.
[58] Department of National Defence, *NSSC Program Syllabus, 2006 Edition*, (Toronto: Canadian Forces College, 2005)

analytically about issues facing military forces in general and the Canadian Forces in particular.[59]

The syllabus sets out program goals in four areas: strategic command and executive leadership, defence management, national security and international affairs, and strategic concepts. Further, learning outcomes and objectives are defined for each goal.

Within the strategic command and executive leadership area, learning outcomes and objectives do not mention strategic thinking. However, Learning Objective N103d is to "Examine the role of executive leaders in establishing an organizational vision and a strategy for its implementation."[60] This is to be achieved through a lecture and follow on discussion for which the reference materials provided are *Strategy 2020* and links to the DGSP website. As concluded earlier, *Strategy 2020* provides some evidence of strategic planning but was rendered out of date by 2004. Also, conclusions regarding DGSP included that the organization was not structured to convert strategic thinking into strategic plans. Even allowing for the highest caliber of lecturer, this lone session based on out-dated reference material would contribute little to setting an expectation that senior officers should engage in strategic thinking.

Within the defence management area, learning outcomes and objectives include mention of strategic thinking. The syllabus identifies N/DS 562/CKM LE-1, Strategic Decision Making: Processes, Support Tools and Analysis. The lecturer is to discuss decision analysis processes and tools used within the Canadian Forces in support of

[59] *Ibid.,* 1-2/2.
[60] *Ibid.,* 2-A-2/4.

strategic decision making.[61] Analysis, processes and tools are all elements of strategic planning and not of strategic thinking. A second relevant learning objective is N/DS 562/CKM LE-2, Strategic Thinking and Policy Planning Process which seeks to examine the thinking frameworks being used in policy development and planning process at the strategic level.[62] Again the outcomes consider processes – this supports strategic planning more than provides education in the need to engage in strategic thinking. A third relevant activity in this area is Exercise Strategic Bridge, an exercise to develop a strategic capability investment plan to meet select roles and capabilities. The development of a plan to meet select roles and capabilities previously envisioned constitutes strategic planning vice strategic thinking.

Within the National Security and International Affairs area there are no objectives that include strategic thinking as a discipline, nor are expectations set for strategic thinking.

Within the Strategic Concepts area there is considerable coverage of the factors that influence the formulations of grand strategy and national military strategy. These factors are discussed as considerations, but there is no discussion of linkages, intuition and intent. As such, discussion of these factors contributes elements for strategic planning but sets no expectations of strategic thinking. This area also includes two Field Study Exercises: Strategic Play and Strategic Power. The former provides an opportunity to practice, in a domestic scenario, inter-agency national level consequence management. The latter provides an opportunity to practice, in an international scenario, inter-departmental national level crisis management. Both exercises require solutions to the

[61] *Ibid.*, 3-B-4/5
[62] *Ibid.,* 3-B-4/5.

problems posed in the scenario using existing resources – there is no discussion of a longer-term timeframe. “Strategic” for these exercises is more properly replaced by “Central Government”, or “Whole of Government”. As such this area sets no expectations for strategic thinking.

All together, the analysis of the syllabus of NSSC reveals some elements and fundamentals of strategic planning. This is not to say that NSSC does not challenge the student to think critically of the role of the Canadian Forces – far from it, NSSCexposes and encourages considerable critical thought. Notwithstanding the combination of some elements of strategic planning and the challenge of critical thinking, the analysis of the syllabus does not support conclusions that strategic thinking is taught at NSSC, that expectations of strategic thinking are set, or that NSSC teaches students about the value of encouraging creative or intuitive thinking.

PART III – CONCLUDING MATERIAL

Summary

The culture of the Canadian Forces matters. It is the shared set of basic assumptions and the correct way to perceive and think that we teach and reinforce to help shape and manage the Canadian Forces itself. Given the importance of strategy to the Canadian military, strategy, and therefore strategic thinking, should be a clearly identifiable element of its culture.

Culture, as something that is taught, is observable in an organization. If the culture of the Canadian Forces includes strategic thinking, it would be observable in our

statements of philosophy and values, in the behaviour of our leadership, in the selection and promotion of our personnel, in the design and effect of our organization, in the documents we publish, and in our education.

The assessment of these elements of Canadian Forces culture reveals an incomplete mosaic at best. The gaps in the cultural mosaic are found in our communicated values, in our recruitment and promotion of personnel, our organization, our strategic level documents and in our education.

The Canadian Forces statement of philosophy and values, *Duty with Honour*, makes no explicit reference to strategic thinking, and makes few references to components of strategic thinking, and as such does not set or teach expectations with respect to strategic thinking. Similarly, personnel are not evaluated for preference for strategic thinking at the time of recruitment, nor are they evaluated for their ability to think strategically when considered for promotion and advancement. As for our organization, simply having a "strategic" headquarters does not, in itself, constitute evidence of strategic thinking. In fact the organization and conduct of NDHQ reveals neither facilitation of strategic thinking, nor a fully developed staff that can capture strategic thinking and turn it into a practical strategy that can be implemented. Moreover, although the Canadian Forces from time to time engages in significant effort to produce forward-looking documents such as Strategy 2020 and the SCIP, on evaluation these documents are not strategies because they lack the means for their implementation – and the resources, or means, have not followed. Finally, the most senior developmental course run by the Canadian Forces, NSSC, reveals some elements relating to strategic planning, but sets no expectations of strategic thinking.

In contrast, the new vision of the Canadian Forces, as generated and extensively communicated by the Chief of the Defence Staff , and as documented in the Defence Policy Statement, links perspectives, takes a long term view in concert with government objectives, reflects both intuition and creativity, and focuses on intent -- clear evidence of strategic thinking.

On balance, the gaps in the cultural mosaic outweigh the evidence of strategic thinking in the form of the new Canadian Forces vision.

What About Transformation?

What about transformation? Notwithstanding the arguments presented in this paper, does not the current transformation, pervasive and having far-reaching and long term effect on the Canadian Forces, indicate an organizational culture of strategic thinking? The short answer is no it does not.

The current transformation of the Canadian Forces is unquestionably the result of the creative, intuitive and strategic thinking of one individual, the CDS. It is not the contention of this paper that individuals in the Canadian Forces are unable to think strategically, but rather that the institution does not have a culture that expects and demands such thinking. The advent of a strategic vision is to be expected in organizations whether the organization knows what to do with the vision or not. The actions of the Canadian Forces in response to the vision are far more revealing in terms of our culture than is the advent of the vision itself.

The Canadian Forces, response has been to create ways to develop, refine and then implement the new vision. The CDS Action Teams and the Chief of Transformation are the two most compelling examples of this. Such creation was necessary because the Canadian Forces had no institutional machinery – neither doctrine, procedure or organization – that could take the vision and accomplish the further development, refinement and implementation. The strategic thought had no home in the Canadian Forces.

And notwithstanding the creativity that is being employed to develop, refine and implement the current vision these actions are focused on only this vision. The CDS Action Teams and the Chief of Transformation have been disbanded. Who is in place to catch the next creative vision and refine it? The current vision captured many in the Canadian Forces because it was refreshing and filled a vacuum. Unless a home is created for strategic thought in the Canadian Forces, then the next vision, whenever it presents itself, will arrive into an equally empty intellectual vacuum.

Conclusion

The Canadian Forces do not have a home for strategic thinking because the Canadian Forces do not have a culture of strategic thought. Strategic thinking is not among the values that are taught and reinforced. Strategic thinking is never formally evaluated during the recruitment or career of Canadian Forces personnel. Strategic thinking is not evident in Canadian Forces' organization, nor in the implementation of Strategy 2020 or the SCIP. When confronted by strategic thought as has been the case

with the new vision, the Canadian Forces created both temporary organizations and processes to understand, refine and implement the vision.

Not having a strategic culture has significant impacts for the Canadian Forces. Not having a culture of strategic thinking means the Canadian Forces confuse "strategic" with central, or with pan-government. The Canadian Forces confuse strategic thinking with strategic planning – even though the skills, processes and outcomes are fundamentally different. Moreover, the Canadian Forces create partial strategies that are difficult to communicate to government, and find it difficult to set priorities and defend major capital acquisitions. Not having a culture of strategic thinking, the Canadian Forces must question whether the current transformation, based on the vision and strength of the Chief of the Defence Staff, is to be our last for the foreseeable future.

Today, the Canadian Forces are as unaware or unperturbed as was O'Rourke in the belly of the Oillipheist. It need not be this way. If strategic thinking is a behaviour the Canadian Forces wishes to include in its culture then the steps forward are clear. Senior leadership must demonstrate that they take time to engage in strategic thinking. Personnel must be selected, rewarded and promoted based on their ability to engage in strategic thinking. Organizations must be designed to facilitate and capture the strategic insights that arise from throughout the Canadian Forces – most importantly from the senior leadership whose instincts and intuition have been earned through hard experience. The Canadian Forces must publish a strategy, follow it, challenge it and change it so that it remains both alive and relevant. The Canadian Forces College must separate strategic planning from strategic thinking, and craft courses and exercises to draw out these complementary activities.

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