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CANADIAN NATIONAL STRATEGY AND THE ROLE OF EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

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Russian hybrid warfare threatens the Ukraine. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is deepening. NATO is divided about exercises to bolster the Baltic republics. Libya hasn't stabilized since NATO bombing. More than a decade of investment in Iraq and Afghanistan looks unlikely to pay off with peace. American leadership in the Middle East seems to be faltering as Washington itself faces gridlock and domestic protest. Future American leadership is uncertain, with populist revolts undermining traditional political parties. Angry and fearful citizens voted to take Britain out of Europe, almost to their own surprise, and Scotland and Northern Ireland might not want to go. Canadians seem equally fascinated and appalled by turns. The Trudeau honeymoon is waning, and the Defence Policy Review is unlikely to produce anything approaching a consensus.

"Where are the strategic leaders and deep thinkers who will chart the course through the apparently new and dramatic changes in our security environment? Who will clarify policy choices and their consequences?"

Who will speak to policy choices if military executives are unable to explain and debate in public? We are like rabbits in the headlights, scatter-brained squirrels, or old dogs barely raising an ear to the din. Everything is new and shocking, paralyzing our actions, or everything is urgent and requires immediate response? Or it is all the same old story, and nothing new is needed? Where are the strategic leaders and deep thinkers who will chart the course through the apparently new and dramatic changes in our security environment? Who will clarify policy choices and their consequences? Two recent contributions to the CDA Institute Analysis series from veteran campaigners provide a framework for coherent national strategy and a warning about the pitfalls of past reviews.[1] These are good starting points for thought, but won't produce a substantive debate based on knowledge to which many are not privy.

In this brief I will discuss the concept of professional executives, security education, and national strategy, concluding with a call for the executive equivalent of academic freedom. Canadian Generals and Deputy Ministers don't write much in public. Political leaders and the policy establishment would benefit from more debate in the open. Let the security executives speak with their own voices and knowledge, so Canadians understand our options. Executives who communicate effectively to the public will help to build a policy consensus that serves social cohesion, human, national, and international security. Political leadership can set the boundaries of that debate.

Security and Military Executives

Defence departments and military forces don't have a monopoly on security issues, but defence policy tends inappropriately to monopolize discussions of security. This is true even in Canada, where defence is traditionally not a senior ministry. Canada doesn't appreciate big personalities in its Generals. John de Chastelaine was a throwback to an earlier era. Rick Hillier and Walt Natync-

zyk were socialized by their American experience, and are liked or disliked for it. The Canadian norm is less colourful. Who remembers the yeoman service of John Anderson, Maurice Baril, or Ray Henault? This should make it easier for civilian executives to contribute to the security and strategy debate in Canada.

Military and civilian executives have different expertise. From the trenches of the middling but experienced military staff, prompted by the push of professionalism and the pull of intermittent senior leader interest, we have endlessly studied leadership, its demands, and its requirements. The interest from senior leaders has been intermittent because the demands on them have been relentless and often well beyond the scope of their preparation for the positions in which they find themselves. Interviews with senior officers suggest that they have often felt unprepared for their roles in senior management.[2] Civilian executives can sympathize on matters of strategy and security, but may be ahead of Generals on finance and management, so they should be part of the same conversation on security, and together might draw from a deeper well of professional and leadership knowledge that is both civil and military.

In common with military forces around the world, Canada's officers are part of an inverted profession. They begin as specialists – Army, Navy, or Air Force, operators, logisticians, communicators, and others. As they progress through their professional mid-career and senior officer education, they learn to integrate those specialties and eventually, as effective generalists, they become Generals or Admirals. Are they up to the task of guiding the institution, developing coherent strategy, and advising political leaders? Can they integrate the prudence and wisdom needed to achieve human, national, and international security in chaotic and changing times? Society needs them to test their intellectual depth and agility in a wider marketplace of ideas as they rise to positions of leadership.

Security professionals in any country are part of a system of competing professions making plausible claims to contribute to security: international security through expeditions, national security through police and public safety, or human security through health and welfare. With the shadows of big wars in our collective memory, military education gives inadequate attention to integrating non-military dimensions of security. By making a strong case to militarize problems, we sometimes apply inappropriate instruments. The separation of military and non-military expertise, and the competition between professional groups representing different interests are an inevitable consequence of social organization,[3] but also reflects fragmented departmental mandates. Even without conflating ministry mandates, accessible forums for debate can help to make professional competition more useful to society.

Professional Education

The military culture of continuous education and professional development is envied by some civil servants who must struggle to find time for courses, like the ones Colonels and Generals are required to undertake. By some accounts, the introduction of higher education and broader thinking has been forced on an anti-intellectual institution,[4] and others see the transformation as incomplete and fragile.[5] But all accounts agree that the process of developing strategic leaders has been regularly re-examined in Canada. Reports by Rowley (1969), Davis (1974), Evraire (1988), Morton (1995), and reforms instituted by Hillier (2007) have been revisited by military leadership at each step.[6] The latest round began with reports by Major General Mike Jeffery (2008) and by Jeffery and Sutherland (2010), followed by the Giguere report (2014) on Project Strategic Leader.[7] The focus of these reports was development of military executives, but the problems Generals and Admirals confront require a whole-of-society understanding, and a whole-of-government response. Civilians responsible for any dimension of security – human, national, or international – could benefit from military executive education, and military executive education would benefit from their inclusion, to dilute the focus on defence and expand the understanding of security.

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Trained incapacity is a theme running through social and professional transformation, and it is familiar to military leaders. The more you know about how to do something, the harder it is to learn a new way to do it.[8] The adage that Generals prepare to fight the last war, and the content of professional military education, are both surprisingly consistent around the world, even as most states face changing circumstances and new challenges. Could this be related to the failure of security professionals to produce security? Are military educators getting it half right, or more than half wrong?

Military executives may suffer from trained incapacity to address new security challenges. The data below (Table 1) reflect a sample of significant mid-sized countries in each region. They illustrate mid-career professional education focused on the technical business of conducting military operations. We know a great deal about conducting military operations, and invest a great deal in transferring that knowledge to successive generations of military leaders, who arrive at senior levels competent in the arts of war, but less confident in the pursuit of security. Staff colleges in most countries in the world are consistent in their content and focus, delivering what any Canadian staff college graduate would recognize as a professional body of military knowledge. But there is also a demonstrable shortfall in real-world competencies for some key knowledge affecting security, and little generation of evidence-based knowledge sought in other professions like police, engineering,

TABLE 1: Comparison of Mid-Career Staff Colleges in mid-sized countries

	Level	NDC	Strat	FDP	PES	ops	org	reg	Mgt	mtd	PSO	civ	Int'l	T:E	Uni	Degr	Pub
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
ARG	SO	Y										Y	3	1:2	2	B,M	A
AUS	OT	Y			X			X	X	X	X	N	21	2:1	1	P	A
CHI	OT	N		X	X							Y	4	4:1	2	B,M	A
EGY	OT	Y		X	X				X	X	X	N	16	12:1	3	M	A
GHA	OT	N										N	15	2:1	2	M	N
ITA	SO	Y					X	X			X	N	25	1:1	3	M	N
JAM	OT	N	X	X	X				X	X	X	N	9	4:1	3	P	N
KEN	OT	Y	X		X				X			N	13	4:1	3	B	N
MAL	OT	Y						X	X			Y	23	1:2	2	P	N
NIG	OT	Y						X	X	X		N	3	1:1	2	M	N
POL	OT	Y	X	X	X							Y	9	5:1	1	M	Q
RSA	OT	Y										N	5	2:1	2	P	A
SWE	OT	Y			X				X	X	X	N	6	3:1	2	M	N
UAE	OT	N			X				X		X	N	5	2:1	2	B	A

X indicates that the subject does not appear as a major component of mid-career education. This does not indicate that it is not addressed, but usually implies that it is addressed in a different way, either before or after mid-career staff college, in specialized courses, or in some cases abroad. Table compiled by author from data collected by Sean Wyatt, funded by Fulbright Canada.

1. ISO country code. Countries were selected as representative mid-sized countries with significant intellectual infrastructure (SciMagor) in each of 12 Regional Security Communities (see Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* [Cambridge University Press, 2003]).
2. Level: SO – strategic and operational, including foreign and defence policy; OT – operational and tactical, including focus on brigade and division joint operations, or lower. Institutions were selected for being the main source of mid-career military education (students with 10-15 years of service, at rank of Major, Lieutenant-Colonel or equivalent).
3. NDC – is there a higher "national defence college" equivalent for education of executive leaders, run by the Ministry of Defence but including civilians?
4. Strategic studies and national strategy.
5. National foreign and defence policy, usually in international context.
6. Political, economic, and social studies of the state and/or international system.
7. Operations, including environments (land, sea, air) and joint – this is the core common content for mid-career military education.
8. Organization and capabilities of armed forces.
9. Regulations and procedures of armed forces.
10. Management and budgeting for defence.
11. Analytical tools, operations research, and research methodology.
12. Peace support operations, conflict analysis, and conflict management.
13. Are civilian students routinely included in the mid-course staff college?
14. If international students are included, how many countries are mentioned in current institutional descriptions.
15. Ratio of *techne* (know-how, or technical and practical knowledge) to *episteme* (scientific and social science knowledge including theory and analysis). The ratio was calculated using available knowledge about credits, schedules, and subject content. Average ratio is about 3:1.
16. Does the institution function more like a university or a training institute? 1 – operates autonomously or within an accredited university responsible to a national ministry of education; 2 – somewhat like a university, with some full time academic staff engaged in most components of the courses, some institutional autonomy, and some academic freedom; 3 – more like a training institution, with mainly military staff and mainly external academic or subject experts.
17. Degrees awarded on completion, either by the institution or an affiliated university. B-bachelors, M-masters, P-course credit towards university degrees can be earned.
18. In-house scholarly or professional publication: A-Annual, Q-Quarterly, N-None.

and health.

Who will analyse military roles in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Libya, or future roles in Israel-Palestine, the Baltic states, and Africa, and determine how they contribute to security? Building new security knowledge is handicapped by segmented academic disciplines, competing paradigms and assumptions (think of realism, liberal internationalism and Marxism as world-views in international relations), professional isolation, and the influence of power and money. Police knowledge is advanced by work in sociology, criminology, and legal studies. Systematic reviews (Campbell Collaboration) help police forces to compare the results of different approaches to crime and violence.[9] Medicine and public health invest enormous resources in evaluation of policies and the impact of expenditures. Military research tends to be limited to the application of systems to tasks, rather the impact of operations and strategies over time. Academic studies questioning the utility of force, or demonstrating the success of nonviolent strategies seldom make it into staff college curricula.[10]

Rather than adding years of education, we should consider the type of education policy leaders accumulate over their careers. Specialists need technical know-how (*techne*), but executives need to combine know-how with scientific knowledge (*episteme*) to produce practical wisdom (*phronesis*). *Phronesis* is a sense of what is ethically practical under particular circumstances, rather than universal scientific truth, and it is the heart of social policy and thus of security policy.[11] Is it ethically practical to invest billions in F-35 fighters or ballistic missile defence? Is food security and community resilience a better investment? Is it ethically practical to sustain a Canadian defence industry, or to abandon it? Is it ethically practical to send troops to trip-wire missions, or to eschew treaty obligations? Do trip-wire deployments protect or provoke? If executives could lead a measured discussion of policy options, these need not be emotionally contentious issues, that divide and alienate one group or another. But executives may not have been well-prepared to lead such debates, either in Canada or abroad.

Globally, the ratio of *techne* to *episteme* in mid-career military education (command and staff colleges) is probably about 3:1 at mid-career, meaning that most of the world's military professionals have little formal preparation to address policy questions as they enter senior ranks. It is also a democratic norm to constrain expertise in deference to elected politicians; good soldiers keep their mouths shut in public, for good reason. The public debate in security policy tends to be dominated by amateurs in a way that would be laughable in other fields. In a cohesive and manageable society, experts take comfort in special access and back-room influence. But this can be disastrous in combination with unruly democracy, referenda, proportional representation, and populist movements. Competent policy debates have never been more important.

There are many ways to allow government executives to speak freely without fear of undermining political authority over the public service, but academic discourse is the best. The Chatham House Rule (no attribution) is common in elite discussions, but falls short of contributing to open discussion and public engagement. It obscures the source of expertise, and is redolent of clubby old world London. Executives might be taken "offline" by secondments to universities and think tanks, or given sabbaticals, but this reduces their contemporary authority. Blogs, tweets, and editorials are not forms conducive to reasoned argument, and are more likely to polarize than build public consensus. Largely overlooked is the potential of academic debate concurrent with senior service. Students test ideas amongst their peers in seminars and with written papers. The written work of senior civil servants is important, unpublished 'grey' literature, and 'grey' papers could be made more widely available as part of the public debate on important policy issues. This is not original. We have often seen more fluid boundaries between personal identities and ideas, reflected in the formulaic statement, "the views of the author do not necessarily represent those of…"

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Executives in general, and military executives in particular, have spent most of their careers in technical worlds, and need an academic forum in which to discuss policy issues, to hone their skills and contribute to public policy debate and confidence in government. Canada, fortunately, is well-placed to provide this. Its university network is amongst the best in the world, and although education is a provincial responsibility, it has strong federally responsive security education institutions in the Royal Military College, Canadian Forces College, and Collège Militaire Royale de St Jean. Without committing busy executives to more long courses, regular engagement with their military and civilian peers in a safe intellectual space will hone their *phronetic* capacity.

A fascinating study of Canadian executives recently probed four layers of capability that executives themselves suggested developing: coping with new problems; engaging intelligently in demanding circumstances; interfering with flawed processes by nudging or "collibrating" (balancing acts to help one actor or handicap another) and rewriting the rules as perspectives change.[12] A forum or seminar of their peers, in which the best of their products are circulated as part of policy debate prior to public dissemination would help to lead what Hubbard and Paquet call "collaborative decentred meta-governance" and what executives themselves might describe as helping the public and the politicians to get policy right.

For security policy, collaborative decentralized meta-governance can't stop at national boundaries. Broad societal security problems from deterrence and peacekeeping to survival migration, food

security, trade, technology, and employment can't be addressed only within state boundaries; they need to be understood and addressed across boundaries. Security executives are most useful when they can help both politicians and the public to understand the environment and the outside 'other' in the security equation. Major powers have always sought to influence their allies and shape the security debate,[13] but international participation in mid-career staff colleges is widespread and rising amongst mid-sized states. Internationalization of executive education has lagged, and this is an area in which Canada has the capacity to lead, if it chooses to do so, recognizing that all security solutions are international.

National Strategy and Security

Strategy traditionally consists of policies and actions designed to achieve aims. Aims are set by political leaders, and executives develop the policies and actions necessary to carry them out. But this isn't how the world really works. The world isn't linear. All causal chains in the social world are dense, interlinked, and loop back on each other,[14] so that perceptions of what might happen in the future affect the present, and reinterpretations of the past change our options for the future. Leaders need advice and executives must develop options, and options shape narratives that affect outcomes and understanding.

A national strategy for a middle power has to go beyond hitching its fate to a powerful neighbour. Looking at violent extremism, populist revolt against elites, and trade block tensions, we can see echoes of the past. Nineteenth century globalization, trade competition and the euphoria at the beginning of the Great War were followed by depression and social dislocation, and two collective responses – fascism and communism – which shaped the twentieth century.[15] We know that security paradigms of the past haven't always worked: appeasement, deterrence, balancing powers, arms control, and declarations of peace. Today we have new challenges beyond the reach of most nation-states: climate change, survival migration, transnational extremism, and commercial actors competing with state functions. These are the challenges for today's security executives, and our Defence Policy Review.

Building and preserving social cohesion and resilience to economic and environmental shocks must be part of a national strategy. This includes managing the economic shocks of neo-liberal globalization (financial crisis, industrial decline, and trade policy adjustments) or the political shocks that can be administered by populist rejection of neo-liberal globalization (Trump, Sanders, and Brexit). These are big questions, which the ideological predispositions of political leaders disqualify them from addressing effectively. Responsible security executives can't just wait to be given their marching orders by political leaders. Their knowledge and position makes them part of the discus-

sion; if the discussion is kept amongst elites, policy will suffer from punishment by populists or manipulation by demagogues. Thus, healthy public debate including public service expertise must be part of the social response to change. It will improve policy options and reduce the space for manipulation between the public and political and economic elites.

There will be worries and accusations that executives debating policy in public are interfering to serve their own interests, or usurping elected politicians, or condescending to an ignorant public. If grey papers from Generals and deputy ministers become widely circulated, will they cloud the policy debate rather than illuminating it? One way to distinguish between policy direction and discussion amongst executives is to label discussion pieces as academic work, and grant academic freedom to those so engaged. Peer review can determine when grey papers are ready for wider circulation, and web publications linked to digital governance can engage wider participation.[16]

Conclusion

An educated and meritocratic public service has been the hallmark and grail of good governance since the Enlightenment. Good governance is the essential foundation for human security, national security, and international security. Canada has the national institutions to contribute to whole-of-government security education and executive development. It can enable them with minor changes to policy and law, permitting wider engagement by senior public servants.

Generals, Admirals, and civilian executives should study and debate security together in the broadest context, and the best products of their intellectual efforts should contribute to open discussion of security policy. This is how other professions have advanced to serve society, and it is time for the security professions to join them.

About the Author

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