

**Elucidating the Future:  
Soldiers and their Civil-Military Environment**

# *The Profession of Arms and Competing Values: Making Sense*

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## **Introduction**

The objective of this short paper is to briefly present the background and a few points about the publication “Duty with Honor: The Profession of Arms in Canada”<sup>43</sup>, with an emphasis on the question of values. The possibility of competing values operating within the military environment is pointed out by asking *how* military members *make sense* of that environment. Finally, this *making sense* is envisaged as an evolving process towards a more mature identity development.

## **Looking back**

The 1990s was a period when the Canadian Forces saw changes in the geopolitical scene, new kinds of peace operations, reductions in force strength, resource reductions, increased operational tempo, and new mission requirements. The CF also realized that social changes were affecting the Defense organization: specifically, the declining birthrate in Canada, increasing multi-cultural diversity, and technological advances<sup>44</sup>. At the senior level within the organization there were concerns about expectations for accountability, openness and transparency. Those changes and concerns were indications of an organization that needed to reflect on its *raison d’être*.

During that period, the Somalia incident reinforced criticism of the military leadership and tarnished the image of the Canadian Forces. This

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<sup>43</sup> Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, *Duty with Honor. The Profession of arms in Canada*. Kingston, 2003, This publication is available on line at: <http://www.cda-acd.forces.gc.ca>. from 17 MAR 2005 A summary is also available.

<sup>44</sup> McKee, Brian, *Canadian Demographic and Social trends*, DND, Directorate of Strategic Human Resources, November 2002.

incident was an example of a “dysfunctional period” or so-called a “decade of darkness<sup>45</sup>.” Antisocial norms, beliefs, values and practices suggested a gap between professional and institutional loyalties, and poor or inappropriate leadership and lack of ethical conduct by senior leaders characterized that period of failures.

The *Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia* called for “significant investments in military professionalism including the strengthening of leader development<sup>46</sup>.” New directions for officers and non-commissioned members’ (NCM) development are clearly stated in this following recommendation: “Values and beliefs are to be integrated into recruiting and training programs, professional development activities and performance assessments of members of the Canadian Forces at all levels.” (Recommendation 9)

The values and beliefs mentioned by the Commission demonstrate the relationship between military and Canadian values with particular attention given to professional values and the military ethos. By attributing the Somalia incident to a failure of military values, the Commission recognized the necessity of defining the military ethos and its traditional core values of integrity, courage, loyalty, selflessness and self-discipline; of strengthening respect for the rule of law, including military law and discipline, civilian law, laws of war, and international humanitarian law; and of integrating Canadian societal values such as fairness, decency, respect for human rights, compassion and justice, into the profession’s self-image<sup>47</sup>.

Following the Commission’s recommendations, a first document called *Canadian Officership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Officership 2020)* (The *NCM Corps 2020* was published in 2003<sup>48</sup>) outlined considerations for future

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<sup>45</sup> See also Scott Taylor and Brian Nolan, *Tarnished Brass*, Toronto: Lester Publishing Limited, 1996 and Michel Purnelle, *Une armée en déroute*, Montreal: Editions Liber, 1996.

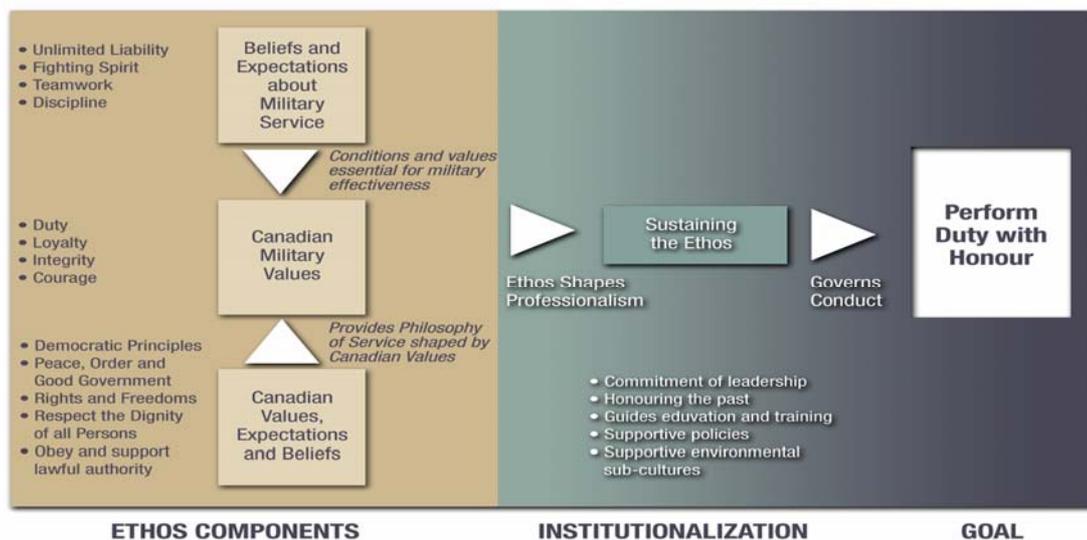
<sup>46</sup> Okros, Al., “Development of the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute”, presentation at the Center for Hemispheric Defence Studies, Washington DC, May 22-25, 2001, p.3.

<sup>47</sup> Wenek, Karl, “Looking back: Canadian Forces Leadership problems and challenges identified in recent reports and studies”, Unpublished document, June 2002, p.8/32.

<sup>48</sup> DND, March 2001, DND January 2003.

officer development. Among those considerations was the recognition of the central role that leadership plays in the military profession. The need for a center of excellence with a multi-disciplinary approach where leadership theories, concepts and practices could be studied and developed was identified. The Canadian Forces Leadership Institute (CFLI) was created in 2001 with research areas that included diversity and gender analysis, ethics, societal values, lessons learned and other affiliated topics. Moreover, CFLI research was undertaken from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including psychology, sociology, history, political science, philosophy and anthropology.

The document “Duty with Honor: The Profession of Arms in Canada”, published in 2003 by the Leadership Institute, presents the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the profession, shows how, in practice, it serves Canada and Canadian interests, and codifies for the first time what it means to be a Canadian military professional. For the purpose of this presentation, only three key elements of that publication are highlighted. First, everyone in uniform is accountable to the profession of arms; second, members are expected to embrace specific beliefs and expectations about military service, Canadian values, and Canadian military values; and third, members subscribe to the “military ethos” which is at the core of the profession (See Figure I).



(Figure I – From *Duty with honor*, p. 33)

As you can see, three levels of constructs (values, beliefs and expectations) are incorporated within the profession of arms and cannot be dissociated from it legitimately. Military members, through socialization, formal education and training, in fact structure and shape their professional identity around them. Because members are coming from, and return to, the society, their identity has to be in concordance with “the parent community<sup>49</sup>.” However, stating the obvious, we are assuming that Canadians joining the forces embrace and have integrated values that are defended by Canadian society (e.g., equal rights, freedom of choice and expression, respect for the dignity of all person, human security, obey and support lawful authority). As you all know, the interpretation of societal values can differ from one person to another. In that case how does an organization such as the military know that all members understand and interpret values the same way that are (supposedly) commonly accepted as part of a democratic society<sup>50</sup>?

The second level of values speaks about the values that are inherent to the profession of arms. The Canadian military values (i.e., duty, loyalty, integrity, courage) reflect the “importance of moral factors in operations<sup>51</sup>.” Essentially, they are qualities that can be perceived, as a “code of behavior” for those who undertake to protect Canadian society by force of arms<sup>52</sup>. In addition, specific expectations (third level) are also attached to that profession: unlimited liability, fighting spirit, discipline, teamwork, duty, loyalty, integrity and courage<sup>53</sup>. These expectations distinguish members of Canadian Forces from the rest of the society and “serve to develop the military members’ professional self-portrait<sup>54</sup>.” This “distance” from the rest of the society is important because it creates a separate entity that is still grounded in the broader social context. As a consequence, one may ask how does an individual manage to balance this dual composition (separate from and part of)?

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<sup>49</sup> *Duty with Honor, Op.cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>50</sup> See Adam, M. *Sex in the snow*, Canada: Penguin Books, 1997 and *Fire and Ice*, Canada: Penguin Books, 2003.

<sup>51</sup> *Duty with Honor, Op.cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>52</sup> Leadership foundation p. 2/8.

<sup>53</sup> *Duty of Honor, Op.cit.*, p.26.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

According to *Duty with Honor*, the answer is found in the definition of the military ethos, which captures the three levels of values and is defined as the “living spirit”, one that finds full expression through the conduct of members of the profession<sup>55</sup>. However, the difficult task is to identify and develop ways to encourage the internalization of the military ethos and to facilitate appropriate expression of it.

### **Competing Values and *Making Sense***

This whole notion of values has influenced the way members should see themselves as professionals. The values-based approach has prepared military members to adopt a professional identity that has a direct consequence on *how* they will behave. In my point of view, however, this approach becomes an imperative, which does not take into considerations the perspective on *how* military members make sense of what it means to be in the Canadian Forces? This *making sense* underlines a *tension* between what is expected by the society and by the military, and *how* an individual will structure his/her identity when facing those expectations. To answer that question is to suggest that the society has a direct impact on *how* to define the role of the military and *how* the individual should perceive himself/herself in that role. Civil control of the military in Canada, as in most other modern democracies, is more than a tradition: It is detailed in Canadian Law as part of the National Defence Act. Legalities aside, however, from a societal point of view, the role of the military should reflect a democratic ideal. That is why Canadian society is still supporting, for example, peacekeeping missions because it is a contribution sustaining this democratic ideal<sup>56</sup>. However, in this changing world, peacekeeping doesn't seem to be sufficient. In a presentation delivered at the Royal military of Canada, His Excellency John Ralston Saul, Canadian philosopher, said that the role of peacekeeping has “gradually evolved into something called peacemaking, which in turn evolved into – and we haven't really got a

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>56</sup> Winslow, Donna, “Canadian society and its army” in *Towards the brave new world: Canada's army in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Horn, Bernd and Peter Gizewski (ed), Directorate of Land Strategic Concepts, Ontario: Kingston, 2003.

noun for it – dealing with irregular warfare. Let’s call it an expertise in irregular warfare<sup>57</sup>.” It seems that today’s concern is to try to deal with an uncertain and increasingly complex institutional identity. In that context, *how* does an individual construct his/her identity as a military member? The *how* is the center of gravity that sustains the fundamental process towards a more complex way of *making sense* of what is required by the society and the military profession. To make sense for an individual is to *think* about the structure of his/her own identity. Here we are talking about identity development. In today’s world, what is the level of identity development required for military members? At what point in their lifetime development as human beings, for example, should they be able to take a broader view of the world, of themselves and of their profession?

### **Looking ahead**

This brief presentation has raised more questions than providing answers: meaning it’s making us *think*. To make us *think* about *how* we prepare officers and NCMs to become members of the profession of arms? *How* are we preparing them for the uncertain and complex world that they will face as members of the profession? Do we encourage them to *think* about what the society and the military are expecting of them? Do we encourage them to become more mature in their process of identity development? All those questions (and more) are related to *how* we emphasize education in addition to training<sup>58</sup> To understand and facilitate a balance between these two ways of learning, research in the area of identity development is needed. In that context, the research in human development by Robert Kegan<sup>59</sup> is very enlightening. Kegan’s

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<sup>57</sup> Ralston Saul, John, “A new era of irregular warfare”, J.D. Young memorial Lecture, Lecture delivered to faculty and cadets, Royal Military College, Kingston, Ont. February 4, 2004. Unpublished document.

<sup>58</sup> See this interesting paper for recommendations and implications for officer professional identity development. Forsythe, G.B., S. Snook, P. Lewis and P. Bartone, “Making sense of Officership: developing a professional identity for 21<sup>st</sup> century army officers”, in *The future of the army profession*, Matthew, L.J. (ed), McGraw-Hill Primis Custom Publishing, 2002, pp. 357-378.

<sup>59</sup> Kegan, Robert, *The evolving self*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

work describes *how* individuals evolve from one perspective to a more integrated and complex view. In my point of view, when designing and implementing programs, the Canadian Forces should keep this evolutionary process (*meaning-making*) in mind. By doing so it will ensure that individuals are prepared to exercise their personal judgment and self-discipline. It will also address the need for growth in regard to learning and encourage critical thinking. By ensuring this *meaning-making* process, the Canadian Forces will generate military *professionals* who are capable of functioning in an uncertain and unpredictable world. The result will be the full expression of *Duty with Honor*.