



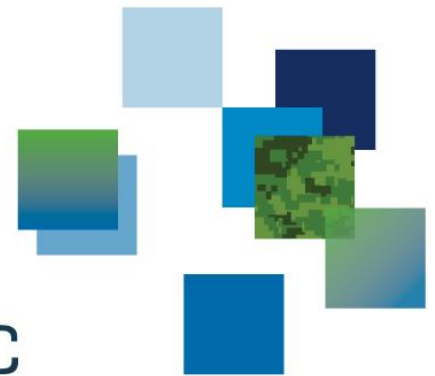
Defence Research and
Development Canada

Recherche et développement
pour la défense Canada

Accepting – and Understanding – Uncertainty: The Use of History for Military OR&A

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What is a Hard Situation?

- It is the normal in the strategic environment
- It might be described as a situation requiring decisions of such import as to potentially affect the institutional decision-making context for many years after.
- If this characterisation is accepted, it must be acknowledged that such decision-making is 'messy'.
 - Decision makers much consider myriad variables, most may not be quantifiable, to trigger actions whose effects may be difficult to envision
- Military OR is neither hard nor soft science, but rather the application of appropriate knowledge to particular problems using tailored methods.
- Historical thinking and analysis are essential and indispensable.

Why Historical Analysis?

- This is so because uncertainty within the strategic environment is the rule rather than the exception.
- Because historical analysis is based on something concrete – events that have occurred – such analysis is the best means to illuminate the fundamental issues upon which strategic analysis should be based.
- It provides essential context, and instils a sense of humility and pragmatism that comes from the knowledge that others have dealt with similar, if not duplicate, hard situations.
- In short, historical analysis and thinking historically can make contemporary hard situations easier to understand.

History as a Method

- How many times have you seen this?

“War is merely the continuation of policy by other means” Carl von Clausewitz.

The literal translation is ***“War is a mere continuation of policy with other means.”***

- Properly used, the historical method can help to understand what has remained constant over time and what has actually changed.
- Put simply, the historical method, as a matter of course, frames problems in a way that must account for evidence, the extent of its veracity, and the limits of its relevance to the issue at hand.
- It can easily be misapplied.

Common 'Pit-falls' in the use of history

- **'Presentism'**: a cognitive force exerted by present day concerns that can impair an objective look at the past and what it has to say about today's problems.
- A common tendency is to pass moral judgement on past events using modern rules of political correctness.
- One must not give an account of a situation that projects upon it features of the modern problem which it may not (although it may) possess, or incorrect or inappropriate conclusions may be drawn.
- Doing so encourages self-congratulation whereby we find ourselves morally superior to those in the past.
- In studying, writing, and using history, past events must be assessed objectively and without warping them to prove one's point.

Judging the Past using Modern Ideas Must Be Avoided

- For example, those in the 'Middle Ages' did not view themselves as living in an "in-between time"



“Dennis! There’s some lovely filth down here!”¹

¹ Quote from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*

Common 'Pit-falls' in the use of history

- **'Cherry-Picking'**: This is often referred to as 'confirmation bias', 'incomplete evidence', or 'stacking the deck'. But it is not always intentional, often a by-product of poor historical understanding.
- Either way, it distorts the view of the past, and disregards or diminishes the context within which individuals of the time experienced events and made decisions.
- History then becomes a 'grab-bag' of useful quotes drawn out of context to support a preconceived notion.
- Recall Clausewitz's alleged saying ***"War is merely the continuation of policy by other means"***? Again, the literal translation is ***"War is a mere continuation of policy with other means."*** The two are not the same – "get the basics wrong and grim consequences follow."¹

¹ James R. Holmes, "Everything You Know About Clausewitz is Wrong," <https://thediplomat.com/2014/11/everything-you-know-about-clausewitz-is-wrong/>

Common 'Pit-falls' in the use of history

- **False Analogy:** This is related to both 'presentism' and 'cherry-picking', and views two situations as identical without understanding the context of each situation.
- The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm)



- When discussing options to eliminate the missiles in Cuba, Robert Kennedy later recalled passing his brother a note that said "I know now how Tojo felt when he was planning Pear Harbour."

Mischaracterisation of History

- This happens frequently:
 - “Conflict has shifted from being a linear system where military powers smash away at each other until one is far too bloodied to continue, to fluid, unpredictable operations where agile and manoeuvrable forces function alongside civilians in order to achieve, one would hope, a shared operational and strategic aim.”¹
- Such claims are unsupported by the historical record, and reflect ‘cherry-picking’ of evidence and a superficial analysis of history.
- A more detailed and thorough analysis of history frequently yields different conclusions. Even in high intensity conflicts like the Second World War, one sees continual attempts to use various levers of power – diplomatic, economic, information – to achieve a strategic aim.
- Occasionally, mischaracterised history evolves into a national myth.

¹ Robert Grossman-Vermaas, “The Effects-based concept, MNE 3 and NMOs: an experimental analysis,” *Operational Research Division*, 5.

Confronting National Myth and Accepted Narrative

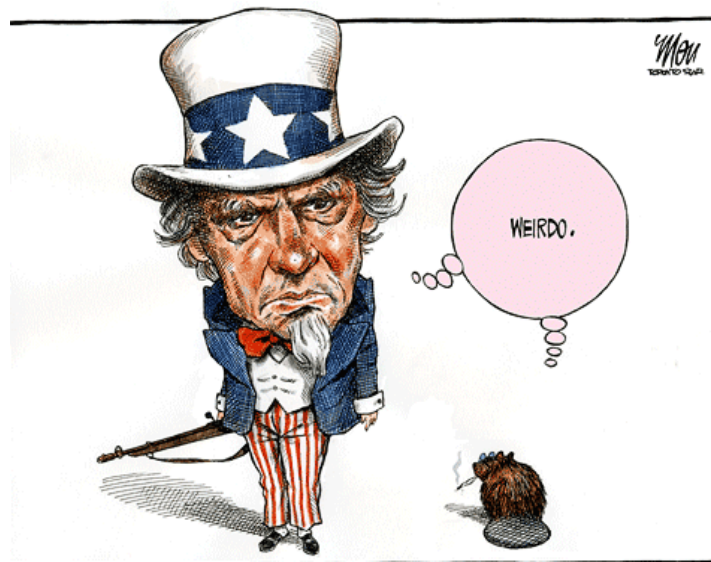
- ‘National myths’ are a persistent feature of the decision-making context and viewing them as historical fact must be avoided when trying to understand the actual problem at hand.
- How does one apply historical analysis to current hard challenges?
- In Canada’s case, as RJ Sutherland argued in his 1962 paper *Canada’s Strategic Situation and the Long Term Basis of Canadian Security*, “National strategy depends, in the final analysis, upon a very few elementary and brutal facts.”
- Chief amongst them is managing the defence relationship with the US.
- Canadian political leadership has not always been aware of this fact, and has not always acted accordingly.

The Tri-Command Study in 2007

- CDS/Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff sponsored study.
- OR&A asked by NORAD Deputy and Commander Canada Command to assist with the study.
- The most appropriate strategic analysis problem was not related to Courses of Action, but rather in challenging the set of assumptions themselves that were laid out to guide the study.
- In order to understand the current Canada-US defence relationship and its evolution forward, one must trace it back to its roots.
- Providing the essential context will help understand 'strategic culture'
- **Historical case-studies can prove not only helpful, but indispensable.**

The 'Story' of Canada-US Defence Relations

- The true 'story' is not as well understood as one might hope.
- In a speech to the Conference of Defence Associations Annual General Meeting, the Commander of NORAD and US Northern Command, General Victor Renuart, argued that “We have been friends for centuries. We have been partners for centuries.”
- US President Barack Obama claimed that “the very success of our friendship throughout history demands that we renew and deepen our co-operation”.
- The truth is that the friendship to which these leaders refer is fairly recent, and the two countries have different national experiences and history.
- That history continues to influence their strategic culture.



The 'Story' (Stories) of Canada-US Defence Relations

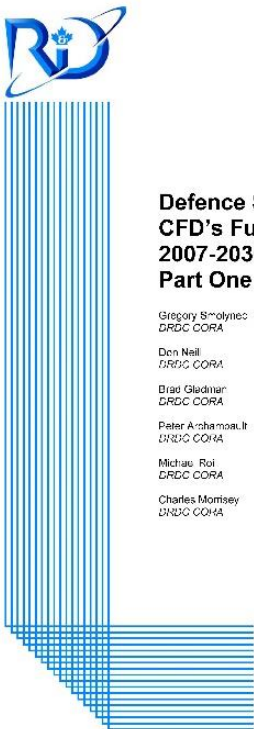
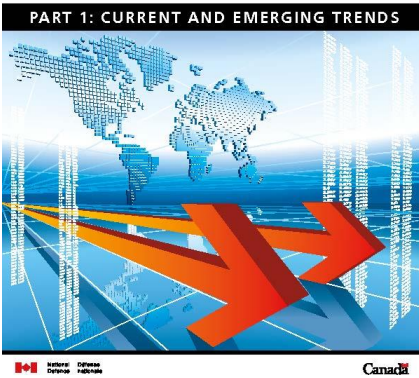
- At the time of the Tri-Command Study, it was felt the 'story' of Canada-US defence relations had to be traced back to its roots.
- From there, it would be possible to understand what has motivated decision-makers when key choices were at hand, and thus what this story says about the nature of 'strategic culture' in both countries.
- Put simply, strategic culture is the lens (built on national history and experience) through which a nation's leadership looks at the world.
- A useful example of Canadian political leadership failing to appreciate the importance of the Canada-US relationship can be seen in its decision-making during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, something in the paper you've all read.¹

¹ Brad Gladman, Peter Archambault, Neil Chuka, "Accepting – and Understanding – Uncertainty: The Use of History in Military OR&A," *International Society of Military Operational Research Conference paper*, 2019.

Force Development Lacking Historical Grounding

27 JANUARY 2009

The Future Security Environment 2008-2030



Defence Scientists' Reflections on CFD's Future Security Environment 2007-2030, Part One dated November 2007

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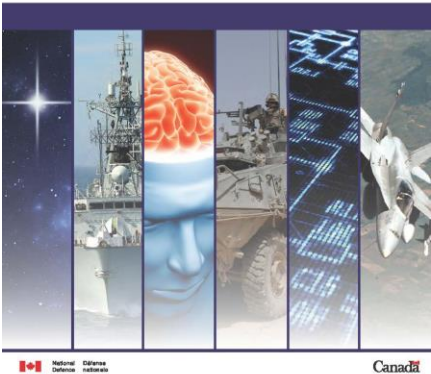
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February 2008

Defence R&D Canada
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20 OCTOBER 2009

Integrated Capstone Concept



Force Development Lacking Historical Grounding

- Future Security Environment (FSE) and Integrated Capstone Concept (ICC) made unjustifiable assumptions about contemporary and future operating environments that had no longer-term historical grounding and a very poor consideration of state behaviour.
- They both assumed 'asymmetric' and 'irregular' warfare and made force structure decisions on that basis.
- The danger comes from misunderstanding, for example, why major interstate warfare is less frequent compared to other types of conflict, which, in turn, could lead to a push for institutional change based on erroneous conclusions.

Force Development Lacking Historical Grounding

- Neither the FSE nor the ICC reflected the understanding that major, global conflict has always been anomalous, and did not acknowledge that the force development framework must always include those conflicts one cannot afford to lose.
- This matters less than the fact that these assumptions, along with a simple counting of 'types' of CAF missions post-1945 and post-Cold War, have been used to provide assessments of likely mission types for the future.
- **This leaves aside a consideration of the context in which those missions occurred – Russia being subdued post-Cold War and China not yet assertive internationally.**

Force Development Lacking Historical Grounding

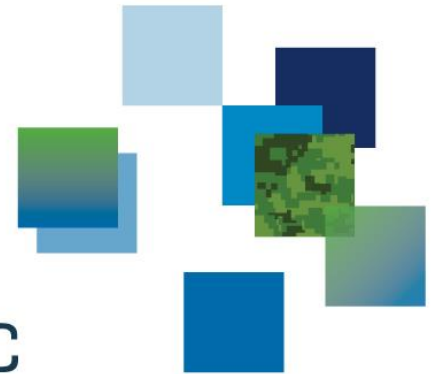
- Deterrence of major state actors is now, as during the Cold War, a primary consideration for the US and NATO, and must affect long-term military force development.
- Thus, while the purpose of those early revamped CAF joint force development processes and products were instigated for legitimate reasons, the results were unbalanced.
- A proper application of historical thinking, including how evidence is gathered and evaluated, would have led to a more institutionally relevant outcome.

Conclusions

- OR&A professionals must always remain mindful of history, and that it will shape decisions and the perspective of decision-makers.
- It is also prudent to use historical knowledge and methods to help decision-makers think about problems in a way that draws on the judgments, successes and failures of others in similar situations.
- Doing so in the way described can help guide the defence institution, and its leaders, into a future that will always be uncertain, but never as the result of a clean break with the past.
- Finally, some methods and approaches have been provided which OR&A practitioners can apply to challenge decisions built on errors of historical inquiry that contribute to a mischaracterisation of history.



Questions?



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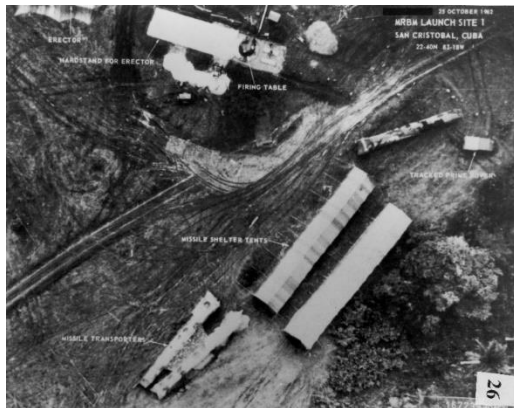
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SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGIE ET SAVOIR
POUR LA DÉFENSE ET LA SÉCURITÉ DU CANADA



Backup Slides

The Essence of Indecision: Canadian Strategic Decision-Making in the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962



On 22 October former Ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant, briefed Diefenbaker, MND Douglas Harkness, and External Affairs Secretary Howard Green on Soviet missiles in Cuba.

Military Advice Led to Confusion and Indecision

- After the US briefing, Minister of National Defence Douglas Harkness told the Chairman of the COSC to raise CAF readiness to match that of the US.
- Harkness later recalled that Miller told him his “legal right to take such action was not clear”¹ which led to an appeal to Diefenbaker and a lengthy Cabinet debate that showed a divided Continental alliance.



Douglas Harkness, Minister of National Defence 1960-63



Air Chief Marshal Frank Miller, CCOS and First CDS, 1960-66

¹ LAC, MG 32, Papers of Douglas Harkness, vol. 57, —The Nuclear Arms Question and the Political Crisis Which Arose From it in January and February, 1963,” 8-9.

Cuban Missile Crisis – Defence Decision-Making

MEMORANDUM

408 4421-W-5
(DND/CF 16)

12 Feb 60
(UNCLASSIFIED)

Draft Amendment – Army War Book
States of Military Vigilance

1. States of Military Vigilance for the Canadian Forces were adopted by the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 18 Jan 59. These states provide for precautionary measures that may be taken by the Services in Canada during periods of heightened international tension. They consist of military measures only, and can be ordered by the Chiefs of Staff Committee prior to the declaration of a formal alert by the Canadian Government.

2. These States of Military Vigilance have been added to the END War Book by Amendment No 1 dated 21 Dec 59. It is now intended to incorporate them in the Army War Book.

3. At Annex "A" is a proposed amendment to the Army War Book for review. Addressees are requested to forward their comments to DND/CF by 29 Feb 60, after which this amendment will be submitted to the AFCC for approval.

4. Column (b) in the draft new pages shows the military vigilance measures adopted for the Army by Chiefs of Staff Committee. Columns (c) and (d) outline implementing action to be taken on these measures. Comments should cover columns (c) and (d) of these pages only.

5. It will be noted that a certain amount of duplication, particularly between "Discreet" vigilance measures and "Simple" alert measures, will result from this amendment. A major revision of the END War Book is now in preparation, to remove these discrepancies and to bring the War Book into line with current concepts. A major revision of the Army War Book will follow, probably in mid-1960.

(s) J. H. Bailey
Colonel
DND/CF

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ALERT SYSTEM

PREVAILING INTERNATIONAL AND/OR MILITARY SITUATION	NORAD and U.S. NATIONAL SYSTEM	NATO (SACEUR & SACLA SYSTEM)
1. PEACE - TIME COLD WAR NORMAL	DEFCON 5	—
2. DELICATE OR STRAINED INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	DEFCONS 4 3	STATE OF MILITARY VIGILANCE
3. RELIABLE and CREDIBLE INFO. THAT ENEMY IS PREPARING TO ATTACK	DEFCON 2	SIMPLE
4. DEFINITE and CONCLUSIVE INDICATIONS that HOSTILITIES ARE IMMINENT	DEFCON 1	REINFORCED
5. HOSTILITIES HAVE COMMENCED	AIR DEFENCE EMERGENCY AND/OR DEFENCE EMERGENCY	GENERAL

So What?

On Historical Analysis

- For analysts, the historical method places a premium on inquiry and empirical evidence.
- The Cuban Missile Crisis case study demonstrates the need not only to challenge assumptions but also to understand the sources – and limitations – of information pertinent to a given decision.