



Canadian Civil-Military Relations, 1939-1941

A Case Study in Strategic Dialogue

Paul Dickson
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Strategic Analysis Section

DRDC CORA TM 2011-116
July 2011

Defence R&D Canada
Center for Operational Research and Analysis



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Defence R&D Canada – Centre for Operational Research and Analysis (CORA)

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Abstract

Second World War political and military decision makers faced a complex set of issues; the success and scale of Canada's wartime effort tends to obscure that reality. The ability of decision makers to understand and shape the future was constrained by a number of factors during the critical years, 1939-41. Two stand out, and will be the subject of two case studies in national security decision making. This Technical Memorandum looks at the impact of the fall of France in June 1940 on the established pattern of decision-making in Canadian civil-military relations. This episode lent credence to the views of military advisors and increased their influence in national strategic discussions. The second case study, and the subject of a companion Technical Memorandum, will examine the debates about military power in 1940 in the context of the strategic vacuum left by the new constitutional relationship with Great Britain, the growing importance of the United States and the upheaval in western geopolitics resulting from the collapse of France, perceived as the West's foremost military power. In consequence, Canadian strategic planners engaged in what was probably the first substantive debate about how Canada should exercise its new constitutional independence in pursuit of strategic objectives in the world, a debate that manifested itself in discussions regarding the size and use of Canada's military.

The research for this Technical Memorandum falls within the existing DRDC Advanced Research Program (ARP) project on strategic military planning (PG 0, 10 ac).

Résumé

Les décideurs politiques et militaires de la Seconde Guerre mondiale ont fait face à des questions complexes; or, la réussite et l'ampleur de l'effort de guerre du Canada a tendance à obscurcir cette réalité. La capacité des décideurs à comprendre et à façonner l'avenir a été limitée par un certain nombre de facteurs durant les années cruciales, c'est-à-dire de 1939 à 1941. Deux d'entre eux se démarquent et feront l'objet de deux études de cas dans le domaine de la prise de décisions sur la sécurité nationale. Le présent document technique examine l'incidence de la chute de la France en juin 1940 sur le régime établi de prise de décisions dans les relations civilo-militaires canadiennes. Cet épisode a ajouté foi aux points de vue des conseillers militaires et accru leur influence dans les discussions stratégiques à l'échelle nationale. La deuxième étude de cas, sujet d'un document technique connexe, examinera les débats concernant la puissance militaire en 1940 dans le contexte du vide stratégique laissé par la nouvelle relation constitutionnelle avec la Grande-Bretagne, de l'importance grandissante des États-Unis et des bouleversements dans la géopolitique occidentale par suite de l'effondrement de la France, perçue comme la principale puissance militaire de l'Occident. En conséquence, les spécialistes canadiens de la planification stratégique se sont engagés dans ce qui était probablement le premier débat de fond sur la façon dont le Canada devrait exercer sa nouvelle indépendance constitutionnelle afin d'atteindre des objectifs stratégiques sur la scène mondiale, débat qui s'est manifesté dans les discussions sur la taille et l'utilisation des forces militaires du Canada.

La recherche effectuée pour le présent document technique relève du projet actuel de Programme de recherche avancée (PRA) de RDDC sur la planification militaire stratégique (PG 0, 10 ac).

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Executive summary

Canadian Civil-Military Relations, 1939-1941

**Paul Dickson and Michael Roi; DRDC CORA TM 2011-116; Defence R&D
Canada – CORA, July 2011**

Second World War political and military decision makers and planners faced a complex set of issues; the success and scale of Canada's wartime effort tends to obscure that reality. The ability of decision makers to understand and shape the future was constrained by a number of factors during the critical years, 1940-41. Two stand out, and will be the subject of two case studies in national security decision making. The first Technical Memorandum looks at the impact of the fall of France in June 1940 on the established pattern of decision-making in Canadian civil-military relations. This episode lent credence to the views of military advisors and increased their influence in national strategic discussions. The second case study, and the subject of a companion Technical Memorandum, examines the debates about military power in 1940 in the context of the strategic vacuum left by the new constitutional relationship with Great Britain, the growing importance of the United States and the upheaval in western geopolitics resulting from the collapse of France, perceived as the west's foremost military power. In consequence, Canadian strategic planners engaged in what was probably the first substantive debate about how Canada should exercise its new constitutional independence in pursuit of strategic objectives in the world, a debate that manifested itself in discussions regarding the size and use of Canada's military.

Canadian civil-military relations are usually understood through the prism of Samuel Huntington's "normal" theory of objective civilian control of the military. Civilian authorities develop policy and a subordinate but professional military executes that policy. Canadian civil-military relations rarely fit this mould, which suggests that either the relationship is flawed or that the theory is limited as a means of understanding what does or should occur. An examination of the role played by General H.D.G. Crerar, the Chief of the General Staff during 1940-41, in discussions with politicians and civilian counterparts during this critical period in world affairs illustrates a number of themes that animate Canada's wartime civil-military dynamic, and suggests that a nuanced strategic dialogue is a more appropriate framework to understand the contemporary civil-military relationship than the simple dichotomy that elected officials and their civilian advisors do policy and the military executes it.

When Crerar assumed the post of CGS, the government had determined on a modest military effort, focused on the air force, with its main energies directed towards industry and agriculture. Senior military leadership had, however, a different vision for Canada's war effort, and the army leaders had by 1940 acquired the tools to ensure their advice was heard and frequently implemented. Wartime circumstances, particularly the crisis situation that the fall of France evoked, were important but they in no way dictated the shape Canada's forces ought to take. Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King and influential cabinet ministers like Minister of National Defence for the Navy Angus MacDonald were still opposed to large ground forces and it took all the senior staff's political skill, plus British support, to win over the Cabinet to such a commitment. In the end, the army view triumphed and a two corps First Canadian Army of five divisions and two armoured brigades was approved by the government. The other services followed suit and Canada, a country of ten million, eventually put 1 million men and women into

uniform. This unprecedented expansion suggests that the Canadian civil-military relationship cannot be best understood through the prism of traditional theories of civil-military relations that focus on the subordination of the military strategy to political policy and a consequent sharp division of responsibilities between civil (including both political and bureaucratic civilian leadership) and military professionals (for example Huntington's normal theory). Rather, it is better analyzed as a dialogue between elected officials (politicians) and their advisors, both civilian and military. At the strategic level, the policy, strategy, military plans and the consequent operations are interwoven, iterative not sequential, and the result of an ongoing dialogue, not just between two discrete bodies, but amongst all those who constitute the civil-military nexus. With its hard divisions between the civilian and military players, the normal theory of civil-military relations remains at odds, in fact, with the historical evidence of past examples of effective strategic level Canadian national security decision-making and the use of military power, including the case study discussed in this Technical Memorandum. Equally, however, the normal theory assumes both a certain maturity and type of military professionalism, not always evident in the still developing Canadian military profession and absolves, to an extent, the civilian and political authorities from a level of understanding of war and defence necessary to engage the national military as policy and strategy are discussed. The normal theory presupposes that the means and ways of implementing strategy are discrete activities, with minimal impact on the ends, and therefore safe in the hands of military professionals. Finally, neither the military nor the civil authorities, traditionally represented by elected officials, acted as discrete entities.

Sommaire

Canadian Civil-Military Relations, 1939-1941

**Paul Dickson and Michael Roi; DRDC CORA TM 2011-116; Defence R&D
Canada – CARO, juillet 2011**

Les décideurs politiques et militaires de la Seconde Guerre mondiale ont fait face à des questions complexes; or, la réussite et l'ampleur de l'effort de guerre du Canada a tendance à obscurcir cette réalité. La capacité des décideurs à comprendre et à façonner l'avenir a été limitée par un certain nombre de facteurs durant les années cruciales, c'est-à-dire de 1939 à 1941. Deux d'entre eux se démarquent et feront l'objet de deux études de cas dans le domaine de la prise de décisions sur la sécurité nationale. Le premier document technique examine l'incidence de la chute de la France en juin 1940 sur le régime établi de prise de décisions dans les relations civilo-militaires canadiennes. Cet épisode a ajouté foi aux points de vue des conseillers militaires et accru leur influence dans les discussions stratégiques à l'échelle nationale. La deuxième étude de cas, sujet d'un document technique connexe, examine les débats concernant la puissance militaire en 1940 dans le contexte du vide stratégique laissé par la nouvelle relation constitutionnelle avec la Grande-Bretagne, de l'importance grandissante des États-Unis et des bouleversements dans la géopolitique occidentale par suite de l'effondrement de la France, perçue comme la principale puissance militaire de l'Occident. En conséquence, les spécialistes canadiens de la planification stratégique se sont engagés dans ce qui était probablement le premier débat de fond sur la façon dont le Canada devrait exercer sa nouvelle indépendance constitutionnelle afin d'atteindre des objectifs stratégiques sur la scène mondiale, débat qui s'est manifesté dans les discussions sur la taille et l'utilisation des forces militaires du Canada.

Les relations civilo-militaires canadiennes se comprennent généralement dans l'optique de la théorie « normale » de Samuel Huntington ayant trait au contrôle civil objectif des forces militaires. Les autorités civiles élaborent la politique, et des forces militaires subordonnées mais professionnelles l'appliquent. Or, les relations civilo-militaires canadiennes correspondent rarement à ce modèle, d'où la supposition que la relation est déficiente ou que la théorie présente des limites comme moyen de comprendre ce qui arrive ou devrait arriver. Un examen du rôle joué par le Général H.D.G. Crerar, le chef d'état-major général en 1940-1941, dans les discussions avec les politiques et homologues civils durant cette période cruciale sur la scène internationale, illustre un certain nombre de thèmes qui animent la dynamique civilo-militaire canadienne en temps de guerre, et laisse entendre qu'un dialogue stratégique nuancé constitue un cadre plus approprié pour comprendre la relation civilo-militaire contemporaine que la simple dichotomie selon laquelle les représentants élus et leurs conseillers civils élaborent la politique et les forces militaires l'appliquent.

Lorsque le Gén Crerar a assumé les fonctions de chef d'état-major général, le gouvernement avait opté pour un effort militaire modeste, axé sur la force aérienne, et décidé d'orienter le gros de son énergie vers l'industrie et l'agriculture. Toutefois, les hauts dirigeants militaires avaient une vision différente de l'effort de guerre du Canada et, en 1940, les chefs de l'Armée avaient acquis les outils nécessaires pour s'assurer que leurs conseils étaient entendus et fréquemment mis en

œuvre. Bien qu'importants, le contexte de la guerre et, particulièrement, la situation de crise provoquée par la chute de la France n'ont aucunement déterminé la forme que devraient prendre les forces du Canada. Le premier ministre W.L. Mackenzie King et des membres influents du Cabinet, comme le ministre de la Défense nationale pour la Marine, Angus MacDonald, étaient toujours opposés à la mise sur pied de forces terrestres imposantes, et il a fallu toute l'habileté politique de l'état-major supérieur, ainsi que l'appui des Britanniques, pour faire accepter cet engagement par le Cabinet. En définitive, le point de vue de l'Armée l'a emporté, et le gouvernement a approuvé l'établissement d'une Première Armée canadienne constituée de deux corps, soit cinq divisions et deux brigades blindées. Les autres services ont suivi, et le Canada, dont la population était de dix millions d'habitants, a finalement compté un million d'hommes et de femmes en uniforme. Cette expansion sans précédent laisse supposer que la meilleure façon de comprendre les relations civilo-militaires canadiennes ne peut pas résider dans l'optique des théories traditionnelles des relations civilo-militaires qui sont axées sur la subordination de la stratégie militaire à la politique militaire et une nette répartition des responsabilités entre les professionnels civils (y compris les dirigeants politiques et bureaucratiques) et militaires (par exemple, selon la théorie normale de Huntington). Il est en fait préférable de l'analyser comme un dialogue entre les représentants élus (politiques) et leurs conseillers, tant civils que militaires. Au niveau stratégique, la politique, la stratégie, les plans militaires et les opérations qui en découlent sont interdépendants, itératifs mais non séquentiels, et sont le résultat d'un dialogue continu, pas seulement entre deux entités distinctes mais entre toutes celles qui constituent le réseau civilo-militaire. Avec ses divisions bien nettes entre les intervenants civils et militaires, la théorie normale des relations civilo-militaires demeure en conflit, en fait, avec la preuve historique d'exemples antérieurs d'une prise de décisions stratégiques efficaces du Canada en matière de sécurité nationale et de l'utilisation de la puissance militaire, y compris l'étude de cas traitée dans le présent document technique. Toutefois, la théorie normale suppose également à la fois une certaine maturité et un certain type de professionnalisme militaire, qui ne sont pas toujours évidents dans la profession militaire canadienne encore en développement; dans une certaine mesure, elle décharge les autorités civiles et politiques d'un niveau de compréhension de la guerre et de la défense qui est nécessaire pour faire participer les forces militaires nationales aux discussions en cours sur la politique et la stratégie. La théorie normale présuppose que les moyens de mettre en œuvre la stratégie sont des activités distinctes ayant une incidence minimale sur les fins recherchées et qu'ils sont donc en sécurité dans les mains de professionnels militaires. Enfin, ni les autorités militaires ni les autorités civiles, traditionnellement représentées par des élus, n'agissaient en tant qu'entités distinctes.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers and Dr. Greg Smolyneć for their insightful comments and helpful suggestions. Any errors that remain or omissions are, as always, the responsibility of the authors.

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim

In 1939, the Canadian Permanent Active Militia, renamed the Canadian Army in 1940, had an authorized strength of 4,268. The Non-Permanent Active Militia's authorized strength was 86,308. From that starting point, Canada eventually fielded a full field army (First Canadian Army) and, at war's end, one of the world's largest navies and the fourth largest air force. At its peak strength in June 1944, the Canadian Army had enlisted 495,073 men and women, organized into two tank brigades, eight divisions, two corps and an army, a remarkable expansion by any measure.¹ The Air Force and the Navy showed similar increases, all three services combining to put 1,086,343 men and women in uniform. Today we celebrate this achievement, indeed perceive it as a national accomplishment, the logical and moral response to the world crisis and existential threat posed by Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. But there was nothing natural or inevitable about the scale and scope of Canada's Second World War effort. It was a choice and not the first choice for many of Canada's political leaders. In the words of a recent reviewer of a book on the "fateful choices" made that summer "more than most periods in history, the summer of 1940 was pregnant with a veritable brood of...plausible futures."² That was true for the choices facing Canada in that fateful period.

The rapid expansion and substance of Canada's military effort have been, for the most part, explained as the result of the crisis facing Canada, the Commonwealth and the Allies during the Second World War. Nazi Germany was on the verge of victory in the summer of 1940 and the logic of that situation seemed to dictate, at least in hindsight, that Canada, united in the face of this clear threat to national survival and more broadly western civilization, commit itself to an all-out war effort. The looming threat of a Japanese attack in the Pacific and then the reality of the staggering victories in 1941 and early 1942 only buttress this explanation. In contrast to today, the issues seemed simple and straightforward, decisions and consequences were clear, and the future almost preordained. The road to victory was tough, but clearly marked.

Unfortunately, the warm nostalgic glow that has enveloped Canada's Second World War effort obscures the complexity of the issues facing political and military decision makers and planners at the time. The ability of decision makers to understand and shape the future was constrained by a number of factors during the critical years, 1940-41. Two stand out and they will be the subject of two case studies in national security decision making. The first, the subject of this Technical Memorandum, is this study of civil-military relations and the dialogue that underpins them, focusing on the period 1939-41 and the civil-military dynamic that manifested itself during the war. The course of this dialogue resulted primarily from the relationship between the Minister of

¹ "Appendix A: Strength and Casualties-Canadian Army," C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War The Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War: Volume I* (Ottawa, 1955), pp. 522-3.

² Niall Ferguson, "'What Might Have Happened' - A Review of Ian Kershaw's Fateful Choices," *Times Literary Supplement* 19 September 2007, p.3.

National Defence, 1940-44, J.L. Ralston, and his chief military advisor, General H.D.G. Crerar, Chief of the General Staff, 1940-1941, but was made possible by the fall of France and the crisis of Allied arms in 1940-41. These dramatic and threatening developments would alter the customary pre-war decision-making relationship between the dominant civilian leadership and the traditionally marginalized military. To be clear, the new circumstances did not dictate a clear course of action but they did permit the military voice to be heard and its advice to carry added weight. It would be a mistake to regard this episode simply as wartime expediency, an interruption to the preferred practice of a subordinate military divorced from national policy discussions. Rather, it is an example of strategic decision-making at its best, reflecting a deep engagement and dialogue between civilian and military leaders, who successfully formulated a national strategy and allotted the necessary resources to its achievement.

A second historical case study, to be published separately, will be an examination of the use of the military as an instrument of national power. The crisis of 1940 highlighted for Canada the strategic vacuum left by the new constitutional relationship with Great Britain, the growing importance of the United States and the upheaval in western geopolitics resulting from the collapse of France, perceived by many to be the West's foremost military power. What followed was probably the first substantive debate about how Canada should exercise its new constitutional independence in pursuit of strategic objectives in the world, focused primarily on the military and the scope, use and scale of the military effort. The results took the form of First Canadian Army, as well as a significant naval and air effort, but that effort came at a cost, a cost resulting in part from the failure to have a comprehensive debate about Canada's strategic environment and Canadian strategic interests. Was a large army effort, and the overhead of two corps and an army headquarters, the best means to secure Canada's interests? Was the massive expansion of the armed forces, in part to secure greater Canadian autonomy, undertaken for the right reasons? What effects were expected or desired from the insistence that senior command of the Canadian army (and navy and air force) be exercised by a Canadian? These were discussed, but rarely in the context of national interests, and the marriage of policy and strategy. In 1940, Canada's role in the war was not clear. Crerar played an important, perhaps decisive, part in defining the country's war effort. The issues he grappled with – how does Canada engage the world? what are its interests? and, how could it best secure its interest on the international stage? – were as complex and as difficult then as any situation faced today.

1.2 Methodology

This study uses historical research and analysis for the purposes of re-examining a critical period in Canadian national strategy formulation. In doing so, it draws on the historical literature and makes extensive use of primary source material such as private papers and government documents from the period. Throughout our historical examination of the decision-making of 1940-41, we have tried to show the interplay between the formal aspects of the civil-military relationship – the administrative / bureaucratic procedures and organizational structures that underpinned the dialogue between politicians, civil servants and military advisors – as well as the understanding that participants had of their respective roles in making decisions about the plans, preparations and uses of Canadian military power. By examining both decision-making structures

and the assumptions of decision-makers specifically towards military power, this study also highlights certain continuities in Canadian strategy formulation from the past to today that might be described as enduring characteristics of Canadian “strategic culture.”³

While this study is undoubtedly a work of history, this is not its sole or even principal objective. By looking first at Canadian civil-military relations in the years preceding the Second World War, with a particular focus on military planning and the influence of senior military advisors, and then comparing this period to the wartime experiences of General Harry Crerar in shaping Canadian military plans, this study casts new light on the “actual” nature of the civil-military relationship and national security decision-making process in Canada. It suggests that the simple dichotomy associated with the so-called normal theory of civil-military relations (discussed in chapter 2 below) wherein civilians do policy and the military executes it does not match the historical evidence of strategy formulation and military planning in this period. This study is not, therefore, simply a narrative history of the critical wartime decisions made by Prime Minister Mackenzie King’s Government to expand the Canadian military in response to the global conflict, but rather it is also an important case study of Canadian national-security decision-making, drawing on the recent literature of civil-military relations to illustrate the shortcomings of the normal theory.

³ The concept of “strategic culture” was originally introduced by the political scientist Jack Snyder in the late-1970s. As Jeffrey Lantis points out, “Snyder applied his strategic cultural framework to interpret the development of Soviet and American nuclear doctrines as products of different organizational, historical, and political contexts and technological constraints. He claimed that these different cultural contexts led U.S. and Soviet decision-makers to ask different questions about the use of nuclear weapons and develop unique answers.” Jeffrey S. Lantis, “Strategic Culture and National Security Policy,” *International Studies Review* 4, 3 (Autumn 2002), p. 94. See the pathbreaking studies by Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options*. Rand Report R-2154-AF (Santa Monica: RAND, 1977) and Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croon Helm, 1979).

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2 Civil-Military Relations in Canada: The Gap between Theory and Practice

In Canada, there has been a strong preference for what Eliot Cohen calls the normal theory of civil-military relations. The normal theory refers to the widely accepted ideas prevalent in Western Society identified by Samuel Huntington in his path-breaking 1957 study of civil military relations in the post-Second World War era (*The Soldier and the State*).⁴ Huntington's key prescription for ensuring democratic civilian control over the military is the establishment of a sharp division between civilian and military roles. "Politics is beyond the scope of military competence," Huntington insists, "and the participation of military officers in politics undermines their professionalism, curtailing their professional competence, dividing the profession against itself, and substituting extraneous values for professional values. The military officer must remain neutral politically." Conversely, military matters remain the exclusive domain of the professional military officers. Under the normal theory, politicians set and articulate policy and, once this is settled, soldiers create military strategy and conduct operations. Each side remains within its own distinct sphere with discrete and almost mutually exclusive knowledge.⁵

There is another dimension to the normal theory that has been frequently raised in defence of its virtues, namely that it enshrines the right of civilian authorities, presumably meaning elected officials, to be "wrong" about the defence policies and priorities they choose.⁶ The implicit

⁴ This acceptance of Huntington's theory has been more passive than active since it is unlikely that many politicians and senior civil servants have read Huntington's book. Huntington's theory reflected long-established ideas stretching back to the seventeenth century. The book represented, in essence, a systematic effort to codify the commonly-accepted principles of civil-military relations encapsulated in the expression "civil control of the military." Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

⁵ Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), pp. 4-5, 242-49; Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, p. 456. Hew Strachan has likewise drawn attention to the predominance of the Huntington theory, which he believes has hampered strategy formulation in western democratic states because of a slavish devotion to this sharp divide between civil and military leaders. See Hew Strachan, "Making Strategy: Civil-Military Relations after Iraq," *Survival* 48, 3 (Autumn 2006), p. p. 66.

⁶ This point of view has been argued recently in Philippe Lagassé, *Accountability for National Defence: Ministerial Responsibility, Military Command and Parliamentary Oversight*. IRPP Study # 4 (March 2010), p. 35. In essence, this study amounts to a defence of the normal theory, describing an idealized (almost textbook) notion of civilian control of the military, which ought, in the author's view, to be seriously circumscribed in its participation in national strategic discussions. Lagassé also assumes the existence of knowledgeable civilian experts able to provide oversight to the military, downplaying numerous studies that describe the declining expertise in the ranks of the senior civil service because of frequent posting changes and insufficient time in individual departments. On declining departmental expertise, see Thomas S. Axworthy and Julie Burch, *Closing the Implementation Gap: Improving capacity, accountability, performance and human resource quality in the Canadian and Ontario public service* (The Centre for the Study of Democracy, School of Policy Studies at Queen's University, January 2010), p. 9;

assumption here is that tight civilian control over the military remains necessary to safeguard democratic institutions. This assumption is firmly grounded in democratic theory, which asserts that power ultimately rests with the people and their elected representatives and requires that the predilections of the armed services be subordinate to civilian preferences. Tight control ensures that the military does not threaten the political authority of civilian governments. But one has to question the basis of this anxiety especially when looking at countries where the military has never posed a challenge to civil authorities.⁷ These concerns about the distinct spheres of civilian and military responsibilities have become essentially an exaggeration of misplaced fears of military encroachments on democratic prerogatives and the politicization of the officer corps. The result of these exaggerated concerns is policy that does not understand the military instrument and military advice that does not provide policy with the information necessary to form coherent strategy.⁸

In looking at the US military's compliance with democratic theory, Peter Feaver makes the important observation that: "The American military has internalized the view that to be professional means that it does not directly challenge civilian political authority for control of the government." On a practical level (*vice* theoretical one), therefore, there is no prospect of a military coup in the US or, for that matter, in any other western democratic state; military forces in modern democracies willingly recognize and accept civilian control. Feaver adds a further caveat to the argument that civilians have the right to be wrong by pointing out that the military's acceptance of civilian oversight "is not the same thing as saying that the American military always acts so as to obey without challenge any civil order."⁹ While generally compliant with the theory of civil control, the actual relationship between civilians and the military, as seen in historical practice, resembles an ongoing dialogue where substance matters rather than a clear Huntingtonian principle of separation between spheres.

Historical research and recent studies in national security decision making have drawn attention to the conceptual and practical flaws in the Huntington theory of civil-military relations.¹⁰

and Donald J. Savoie, *Breaking the Bargain: Public Servants, Ministers, and Parliament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 136-68.

⁷ Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants. Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 11, 65-68.

⁸ Hew Strachan, "The Lost Meaning of Strategy," *Survival* 47, 3 (Autumn 2005), p. 47.

⁹ Feaver, *Armed Servants*, p. 11.

¹⁰ Not all the criticism has sought to overturn completely the Huntington theory, but the net effect of this recent scholarship is an evolving theory of civil-military relations that calls for greater and sustained dialogue between military and civilian leaders rather than the sharp Huntingtonian division between spheres. See, for example, Thomas C. Bruneau, Florina Christiana Matei and Sak Sakoda, "National Security Councils: Their Potential Functions in Democratic Civil-Military Relations," *Defense & Security Analysis* 25, 3 (Sept. 2009), 255-69; Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Christiana Matei, "Towards a New Conceptualization of Democratization and Civil-Military Relations," *Democratization* 15, 5 (Dec. 2008), 909-29; Cohen, *Supreme Command*, pp. 241-64; Feaver, *Armed Servants*; Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Koln, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians. The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2001); Peter D. Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil Military Relations and The Use of Force* (Princeton: Princeton

Contrary to the Huntington theory with its sharp division between civilian and military spheres, an increasing number of scholars such as Hew Strachan insist that “[e]ffective civil-military relations in practice rely on a dialogue.” Strachan adds that: “Policy is ill conceived if it asks the armed forces to do things which are not consistent with their capabilities or with the true nature of war.”¹¹ This is not simply about the need for politicians to heed the advice of military professionals. Rather, this evolving theory of civil-military relations emphatically argues for deep and sustained civilian and political engagement in strategizing, planning and overseeing the use of military power.¹² To do so, political decision makers and their civilian advisors must become more knowledgeable of military affairs. This remains a major challenge in Canada where historically there has been little political incentive to acquire this type of specialized knowledge.

Recent historical work highlights that civil-military dialogue is most fruitful when all parties have at least some understanding of the others’ spheres. A prime example is the critical wartime leadership of President Abraham Lincoln during the US Civil War; the President’s impressive leadership remains a model in many ways for executive leadership in a democracy at war.¹³ Far from restricting himself to the policy sphere alone, the President played an active and ongoing role in the Union’s evolving strategy providing and modifying political direction throughout the conflict, appointing and firing key military leaders based on their performances and shaping the military strategy of Union forces. Cohen insists that “Lincoln exercised a constant oversight of the war effort from beginning to end...[The President] did not hesitate to overrule his military advisers – not just after he found his feet as commander in chief, but at the earliest stage of the war.”¹⁴ As President and commander-in-chief, Lincoln set out to become more knowledgeable of military affairs, including devoting time to familiarize himself with key works of military history and theory and taking a keen interest in the weaponry used by Union Forces.¹⁵ In short, Lincoln sought and maintained an informed dialogue with his senior commanders over military strategy and campaign plans. The President did not simply provide direction and sit back and watch events unfold. He kept a close watch on the progress of the campaigns by visiting the frontlines himself or sending his representatives.

University Press, 2004); M.L. Roi and Greg Smolyne, “Canadian Civil-Military Relations: International Leadership, Military Capacity and Overreach,” *International Journal* 65, 3 (Summer 2010), 705-24; Strachan, “The Lost Meaning of Strategy,” pp. 49-52; and idem., “Making Strategy,” pp. 78-80.

¹¹ Strachan, “Making Strategy,” p. 67.

¹² It is interesting to note the conclusion drawn by the Manley Panel about the need for sustained high level Canadian political engagement in dealing with the conflict in Afghanistan. As the Panel asserts: “These coordinating efforts would have stronger effect, and achieve greater cross-government coherence, if they were led by the Prime Minister, supported by a cabinet committee and staffed by a single full-time task force. Fulfilling Canada’s commitment in Afghanistan requires the political energy only a Prime Minister can impart.” Independent Panel on Canada’s Future Role in Afghanistan [Manley Panel]. *Final Report* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2008), p. 28.

¹³ See James M. McPherson, *Tried By War. Abraham Lincoln as Commander In Chief* (New York: Penguin, 2008); and Cohen, *Supreme Command*, chap. 2.

¹⁴ Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 17.

¹⁵ McPherson, *Tried By War*, pp. 3-8, 41-48, 191, 265-270; and Cohen, *Supreme Command*, pp. 21-25.

Lincoln's example demonstrates that strategy formulation and national strategic decision-making require a continual and well-informed dialogue and interaction between civilian and military leaders. The essence of strategy and modern democratic civil-military relations must be a fulsome and sustained dialogue between statesmen and soldiers for the sake of ensuring the coherence of policy and military capabilities in the context of the dynamic interaction with adversaries or operational situations that continue to unfold.¹⁶ Lincoln grasped that war was dynamic, that circumstances changed and that he had to remain engaged, as commander in chief, in fine-tuning strategy. Cohen captures well the need for ongoing engagement by political leadership in the evolution of military strategy, epitomized by Lincoln's handling of the US Civil War:

As often occurs in war, the fundamental objectives changed as a result of the interactions that the fighting brought about. The "normal" theory of civil-military relations presents the statesman as the setter of goals and the designer of the outline of the war, but fails to take into account the ways in which the conduct of war causes objectives and strategic methods alike to change. Lincoln's original strategic concept, reasonable though it was, could not and did not stand the test of struggle. The changes that he found necessary reflect not the inadequacy of his original conceptions but the nature of war itself, which compels those who wage it to change their goals and courses of action no less than their techniques.¹⁷

Unlike Lincoln, as the following case study shows, Prime Minister Mackenzie King did not attempt to develop a better understanding of the military instrument he wielded as a wartime leader. Although King was not a constitutional "commander-in-chief" he exercised executive authority over defence policy and strategy. Indeed, acting as own minister in charge of foreign policy and as the "prime" minister in a war cabinet not reliant on the Liberal caucus for his position, he arguably wielded as much if not more executive authority than Lincoln. Until changes were introduced to cabinet meetings in 1940, he exercised extraordinary control over wartime discussions and decisions. While there may be variations between republican and parliamentary democratic systems in terms of executive authority in times of major conflict, successful wartime leaders like Winston Churchill, Georges Clemenceau and Lincoln have all understood that "they could not lead if they did not know an enormous amount about the business of war."¹⁸ Prime Minister Mackenzie King's failure to develop a deeper understanding of the

¹⁶ In many ways, US President Dwight Eisenhower – who had previous experience at the highest reaches of grand strategy as the former Supreme Allied Commander Europe – created an excellent environment for ongoing dialogue among civilians and military professionals on his national security decision-making team. The President personally chaired National Security Council (NSC) meetings, missing only 6 out of a total of 179 meetings during the first four years of his Presidency. As Andrew Krepinevich and Barry Watts point out, "there can be little doubt that that the president himself played an active, direct and *persistent* role in developing the administration's 'New Look' strategy Andrew F. Krepinevich and Barry D. Watts, *Regaining Strategic Competence. Strategy for the Long Haul* (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), p. 48 (italics in original). Also see Michèle A. Flournoy and Shawn W. Brimley, "Strategic Planning for National Security. A New Project Solarium," *JFQ* 41, 2 (2006), p. 82.

¹⁷ Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 32.

¹⁸ Cohen, *Supreme Command*, p. 214.

military as well as his prewar dependence on civilian advisors for defence policy advice left him in the peculiar circumstances of having little choice during the wartime crisis but to depend on the advice of his senior military commanders, such as Crerar and McNaughton, even while he distrusted and resented their ideas and influence. These generals were certainly prepared to “stray” beyond Huntington’s concept of the rightful “military sphere” to give advice. Similarly, while King might fit Huntington’s ideal in principle, in practice his actual wartime relationship with his military advisors suggests the limits of understanding civil-military relations through the prism of the normal theory. This case study reveals that Canadian civil-military relations have not always in practice adhered to the Huntington ideal. Furthermore, the normal theory does not reflect the messy and dynamic reality of developing strategy and as such is not a useful measure of the health of the civil-military relationship. A more assertive military voice is, at least in part, the result of the absence of a political partner or other civilian advisor fully able to contribute to an informed dialogue on the use of military power. As such, we argue that the “ideal” civil-military relationship is one rooted in an ongoing dialogue where politics and military considerations converge in strategy development, respecting the principle that the responsibility for decisions rests ultimately with the political authority.

3 The Interwar Period: Schooling the Army in Civil-Military Relations

3.1 A Growing Sense of Military Professionalism

In the decades between the two World Wars, Canada's government was small and its responsibilities few. Defence policy and analysis, while nominally a ministerial responsibility, were really the purview of the Prime Minister, advised by a small coterie of senior public servants from the Department of External Affairs. This was, in part, a function of size. The civil service was small. Its ethos was only then being established by civil service "mandarins" who, in a process outlined in *The Ottawa Men*, carved out a policy-making role that laid the foundation for the relationship in Canada between the politician and the public servant where the latter conceived as well as executed policy. In short, it was during this period that the notion of the public servant as non-politicized expert was taking shape. The men staffing External Affairs in the interwar years have been held up as the primary example of the new breed of public servant who brought intellectual rigour to questions of public policy.¹⁹

In a similar fashion, Canada's military also sought a role as professional advisors on, and in the analysis of, Canadian defence policy, its goals and the use military power. There was a desire to be seen as collaborators in the formulation of defence policy and national strategy not simply implementers. To that end, senior officers attempted to forge a new relationship between themselves as military advisors and the Canadian state, a quest made more complex by the reality that they were at the same time trying to define what it meant to be a Canadian military professional. The army, as the senior service, led this effort. By the mid-1930s, the underlying objective of the army's agenda of rearmament and military planning was the establishment of the legitimacy of the military profession. To achieve this recognition, the military sought to demonstrate its expertise in the military arts as well as its skill in discerning the defence implications of international geo-politics. By demonstrating its professionalism, it was anticipated that the military voice would be heard in the discussions that took place in the center of government.

Through the 1920s there was a running debate over the military's role in defence policy centring not just on how, but when, and if, it should exercise a role as advisor to the minister rather than to the civilian civil service. This debate focused on a few key questions. A critical question dealt with who should speak for the military, which was debated between the Deputy-Minister (DM) G.J. Desbarats and the Army Chief of Staff (COS) Major-General J.H. MacBrien. They argued over who should act as the government's chief military advisor, and what constituted military rather than policy advice. Desbarats guarded against any infringement as he saw it on the civil authority's prerogatives in policy discussions, while MacBrien openly challenged the DM's

¹⁹ J.L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935 - 1957* (Toronto: Oxford, 1982); Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1986).

interpretation that only civilians should contribute to government policy. Moreover, the General actively set out to redefine this relationship. MacBrien worked to establish formal military plans in anticipation of different conflict scenarios. He believed that these would also shape policy. In an October 1926 memorandum prepared in anticipation of the 1926 Imperial Conference, MacBrien argued that “Policy in order to be carried through to its logical conclusion must have behind it Force.” He then bemoaned the fact that “we have had no clear statement of military policy since 1905,” concluding that the “Canadian government should decide on the size of the military force it is prepared to maintain in peace.” The COS also advocated the creation of an interdepartmental committee modelled on the Committee of Imperial Defence. In 1926, he pressed for a revival of a Canadian Interdepartmental Committee, recommending for membership himself, the Director of the Naval Staff, the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (DMO and I) and a representative from the RCAF.²⁰ The establishment of plans and a committee would, MacBrien insisted, help cement the military’s position as the government’s military advisors.

MacBrien’s efforts led to the creation of the Joint Staff Committee, founded in 1927, with a membership of the three senior officers of the services and a Secretary. However, this step towards solidifying the military as advisors was undermined by intense inter-service rivalry between the COS and the Director of the Naval Service. The integration of the three services into one Department of National Defence (DND) in 1924 was to have provided, it was hoped, “more effective military advice ... more economically” but this expectation remained unfulfilled because of the struggle to define the hierarchy between the three service chiefs.²¹ The question of who should speak for the military – the Deputy Minister, the army, or all of the service chiefs – and the ongoing inter-service rivalry constrained discussion of the substance of the advice itself and weakened the military’s case.²²

Stephen Harris has shown that there was no consensus on the issue of who should speak for the military amongst the senior army officer corps; neither was there consensus on what they should speak of, nor on where military advice ended, and strategy and policy development began. The schism over the degree to which the army should be involved in policy discussions, much less formulation, was evident in the disagreements over the army’s planning between the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, Brigadier J.M. Sutherland-Brown, and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff Brigadier Andrew McNaughton. Inter-war military planning manifested itself in a series of defence schemes, each one dedicated to addressing what Canadian army (and imperial) planners deemed the most likely threats to Canada’s security: defence against the United States, defence against a European coalition, and defence against Japan. To this was added a fourth possibility: the dispatch of a small expeditionary force in the event of a minor overseas – read imperial – crisis. The defence schemes produced in the 1920s were also, as noted by Harris, an attempt to ensure that the civil authorities could not discard the military’s advice in the event of

²⁰ RG24, C-5075, HQC 3574, MacBrien to Minister, 26 March 1926.

²¹ Norman Hillmer and William McAndrew, “The Cunning of Restraint - General J.H. MacBrien and the Problems of Peacetime Soldiering,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 8 (Spring 1979): 41-46.

²² Stephen Harris, *Canadian Brass* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p.154.

war; they were also viewed with suspicion by some within the military as well as the government, as a challenge to the nature of ministerial prerogatives, involving the army planners in policy formulation. This became a divisive issue within the army. Defence Scheme No.1, the plan for defence against the United States, was developed and approved by the minister with little comment in 1921, and then revisited in 1926. But, home defence was not contentious. However, in 1923, Brown was “stunned” by McNaughton’s recommendations for reorganizing Canada’s defence forces from fifteen divisions to a smaller, and more realistic, expeditionary force. Brown believed it implied a shift in Canada’s defence priorities and policy away from home defence, insisting that such a momentous policy change was the government’s responsibility to decide. The issue resurfaced again in 1926 but the debate suggests that, while Brown tied professional legitimacy to implementing government policy to the best of the army’s ability, McNaughton argued that neither the army nor the country were served by adhering to unrealistic policies.²³ The gap between the government’s unrealistic defence expectations and Canadian military capacity remains a central concern today.²⁴

Military planning would emerge as a key driver in the military’s search for professional legitimacy and a voice in policy formulation. It was largely the prerogative of the Canadian army as the senior service. During the 1920s, Canadian defence planning was predicated on the maintenance of a skeleton regular and militia force – the Permanent and Non-Permanent Active Militia – to be used in aid of the civil power, as defence against an invasion by American forces and as the foundation for expansion and the dispatch to Europe of an expeditionary force. The latter concern in particular, combined with the desire to maintain the hard won expertise of the Canadian Corps from the Great War and the belief that the assistance to Great Britain would be the Canadian military’s most likely role, resulted in a decision to plan on paper for a force of fifteen divisions.²⁵ As previously noted, by the mid-1920s, senior army staff officers doubted the feasibility of raising and equipping such a force and the assumption – the defence of Canadian territory – upon which it was based. By 1926, although the fifteen division force and the defence of Canada rationale continued to be the stated policy guidance for defence planners, the senior military chiefs and the Minister of Defence conceded that an expeditionary force dispatched to fight in Europe was the “more likely” contingency and plans were drawn up for the dispatch of a small expeditionary contingent. It was approved by the Minister, but did not go to cabinet, and there is no evidence that any political leader beyond the Minister knew of its existence.²⁶

Initiatives that skirted the edge between policy development, planning and implementation were not welcomed by the government. When the Canadian Infantry Association lobbied on behalf of the military with the Minister of National Defence J.L.Ralston, Desbarats interceded and cut off

²³ Ibid., pp. 170-5.

²⁴ See Roi and Smolyneec, “Canadian Civil-Military Relations.”

²⁵ LAC, Andrew McNaughton Papers (MP), MG30E133 Series II, Vol 100, Currie to McNaughton, 25 Feb 1919; RG24, C-5056, HQC 4451, “Policy for Selection of Staff Officers,” 15 March 1919; Correspondence, Secretary, Military Council to Adjutant-General, 19 March 1920

²⁶ James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression* (Toronto, University of Toronto, 1968), p. 82-84.

all discussion: “This is a matter for Parliament to decide.”²⁷ MacBrien achieved little and his successor did not share his appetite for policy, or his view of the military’s role. Moreover, MacBrien’s “interim” successor, Major-General Herbert Cyril Thacker, acquiesced to some critical changes that diluted the army and the military’s standing with the department, most notably Thacker agreed to Ralston’s request that the position of Chief of Staff be changed to Chief of the General Staff; the Minister also reconstituted a “Militia Council.” The latter decision elevated the Adjutant-General (AG), Master-General of the Ordnance (MGO) and Quarter-Master General (QMG) to a position equal to that of the Chief of the General Staff by giving them the right of access to the Minister. This further diluted and diminished the army’s ability to speak with one voice. While these were changes that had been proposed when DND was reorganized in 1924, they had been resisted by MacBrien. Thacker’s successors and their staff would expend much effort through the 1930s trying to restore the position of the COS and, more importantly, the right of direct access to the Minister.²⁸

Resistance to establishing a military advisory role came from other corners as well. External Affairs was hostile to real and perceived incursions by the military into foreign and defence policy areas considered the purview of civilians. O.D. Skelton, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, consistently restricted the flow of information to the Department of National Defence.²⁹ Skelton kept a close eye and a tight rein on the public pronouncements of military personnel; he monitored all public talks. The Under-Secretary was particularly sensitive to comments that implied imperial commitments. A talk on “Canadian Defence Problems” to the Royal Institute of International Affairs proposed by Andrew McNaughton in 1927 prompted a flurry of correspondence between the Canadian High Commissioner in London Peter Larkin, McNaughton and King. Wary of overstepping himself, McNaughton cancelled the talk but not before King had spoken to Skelton regarding its implications. While Skelton believed that “McNaughton is pretty careful” and he doubted that he “would have stepped outside proper bounds,” he viewed Larkin’s precautions as well advised. “I noticed,” wrote Skelton, “an address in London a year or so ago by Colonel [H.D.G.] Crerar which was out and out advocacy of Imperialist policy in defence.”³⁰ King praised Larkin for making enquiries “when it was proposed that a member of the [Canadian] General Staff ... open a discussion on a subject which might well involve considerations of policy.” Not long after, however, in 1928, McNaughton stepped out of bounds in an address to the Canadian Club in Vancouver and was chastised by the Chief of the General Staff for comments that were dangerously close to “statements of policy.”³¹

²⁷ Alexander Morrison, *The Voice of Defence: The History of the Conference of Defence Associations* (Ottawa: DND, 1982), 64-5; RG24, HQC 3574, Thacker to Deputy-Minister, 26 Oct 1927; Deputy-Minister to Skelton, 31 Oct 1927.

²⁸ Harris, *Canadian Brass*, pp. 155-7; National Defence Headquarters (DND), Directorate of History (DHist), “National Defence Headquarters: Proposed Reorganization.”

²⁹ *Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year Ending 1926* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1926), p. 7.

³⁰ LAC, Mackenzie King Papers, MG26 J2, Correspondence, 122882.

³¹ Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, p. 258.

3.2 McNaughton and the Military's Emerging Advisory Role

Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton became CGS in 1928 and became the voice of the military over the next decade. His pre-eminence amongst the service chiefs was recognized, although not formalized, by the Prime Minister R.B. Bennett after 1930 and the new Minister of Defence, Lieutenant-Colonel D.M. Sutherland. The CGS was able to bypass both the naval chief and the Senior Air Officer and speak directly to the Minister; he also resolved the issue of the Deputy-Minister's "undefined position of control" – characterized by McNaughton as the tendency of the civilian administrator to meddle in military policy – by ignoring, first, Desbarats and, then, his successor, Colonel L.R. LaFleche. Importantly though, none of McNaughton's changes was formalized, despite attempts in 1932 and 1933.

McNaughton's attempts to redefine the role of the military in providing advice did not stop there. During the first half of the decade McNaughton was able to staff the HQ with like-minded subordinates, and to dominate the other services through his political connections and intellect. He also established the army's General Staff as the planning center of the armed forces, recognizing that the legitimacy of military advice would ultimately be rooted in the substance of its analysis. This task alone was daunting. The number of officers staffing the tiny army section in the Wood Building at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa was small, from a low of forty-eight in 1929 to a high of sixty-nine in early 1939.³²

Two men who would play key roles in shaping the army's approach to the civil-military dialogue during the 1930s and the Second World War were appointed to the General Staff over the next few years: Harry Crerar and Maurice Pope. Crerar and Pope were examples of the new breed of professional army career officer: educated, well-read, well-connected and eager to play a role as professionals military advisors. Their careers had followed similar paths. Following exemplary service during the First World War, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Crerar attended the United Kingdom (UK) Staff College at Camberley from 1922-24, followed by a two year posting to the War Office.³³ Crerar was appointed GSO 1 at the Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence, assuming the position on 1 May 1929. Pope, a few years Crerar's junior and also a veteran of the war, followed close behind: Staff College in 1924 and a year and a half with the Directorate of Staff Duties at the War Office from 1931-33.

These two military officers took a keen interest in the inter-related subjects of national strategy, defence policy and international relations. By the early 1930s, both looked at the Canadian army's potential commitments in the context of the constitutional and imperial developments of the 1920s.³⁴ They still believed that Canada's first line of defence was Britain and that the country benefitted immensely from being able to draw on British military resources and institutions, but they recognized that the country had a wider interest in a secure Western Europe

³² *Report of the Department of National Defence, 1929-39.*

³³ CP, Vol 22 (D380), Crerar to McNaughton, 19 Dec 1926; High Commissioner to Crerar, 10 Dec 1924; McNaughton to Crerar, 18 Feb 1925.

³⁴ MP, Vol 4, File: "Disarmament Book G: Canada's Attitude Towards Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations," 10/9/30; "Convention for Financial Assistance," 10/9/30

and Asia-Pacific.³⁵ They also understood the growing importance of popular and elite opinion, which they believed would likely draw Canada into a war involving Britain. Writing in the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* in 1930, Crerar observed that government policies were “an approximate reflection of the views of the people electing them...it profits little to discuss the improved machinery for the co-ordination of imperial defence until the demand...has been created.” Demand must come from the “layman” as it was “he who governs policy, which in turn, controls the measures for defence.”³⁶ He concluded that while co-ordination at the highest levels was the key to effective defence policy, an educated citizen was necessary to enable the government to create and implement one.³⁷

With those ends in mind, the army senior staff attempted to establish and influence a network of contacts across the political spectrum, ranging from luminaries at External Affairs like Lester Pearson to influential, but sceptical, foreign policy and defence analysts such as Escott Reid, National Secretary of the Canadian Institute for International Affairs (CIIA), to the leftwing isolationist Professor F.R. Scott of McGill University. They debated Canada’s political and international obligations in forums such as the CIIA and various regimental and service associations. Unofficially, Crerar circulated confidential General Staff memorandums like “Political Obligations and Military Problems of Canada” which were designed to show that military personnel were considering their roles in a larger national strategic context and pressing for Canada to accept the international responsibilities of nationhood.³⁸

McNaughton actively promoted these informal links, directing his subordinates to do what they could to “help along [the army’s] good relations with the ‘diplomats’.”³⁹ McNaughton sought

³⁵ Maurice A. Pope, *Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Maurice Pope* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1962), pp. 70-72; See the prize winning essays by Major M.A. Pope and Lieutenant C.P. Stacey on the assigned question: “Assuming that the roles of the armed forces of Canada are derived from our obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations; our obligations to the British Commonwealth of Nations; and our obligations in respect to National Defence: Discuss the roles which should be assigned to the armed forces of Canada, indicate the form which these forces should take and outline the organization required.” The essays were in the January 1931 and April 1931 issues of the *Canadian Defence Quarterly*. Crerar submitted an essay and was one of five “special and equal commendations.” See also Norman Hillmer, “Defence and Ideology: The Anglo-Canadian Military ‘Alliance’ in the 1930s,” *International Journal* 33 (Summer 1978), p. 600.

³⁶ Review of Major Walter Elliot’s “The Co-ordination of Imperial Defence,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 7, 3 (April 1930), 430.

³⁷ Quote from “Notes on Service Journals,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 10, 3 (April 1933), 382-3; See also *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 10, (January 1933) and *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 8, 4 (July 1931); First quote *Canadian Defence Quarterly* 8, 3 (April 1931), 426-7.

³⁸ CP, Vol 12 (D221); Crerar’s comments on F.R. Scott’s *Canada and the Commonwealth* and Escott Reid’s “The Future of the Commonwealth in the Light of Changing World Conditions,” illustrated Peacock’s influence on his views of imperial co-operation. See letter to Robertson 5 April 1933; CP, Vol 11, “Political Obligations and Military Problems of Canada,” Pearson to Crerar, 12 March 1931; Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, p. 42.

³⁹ CP, Vol 18 (D379), Crerar to W.H.P. Elkin’s, Commandant R.M.C., 8 May 1933; For examples of Crerar’s addresses and liaisons see Vol 13 (D228) and (D229).

both to acquiesce to the government's desire to inhibit the military from publically commenting on policy yet to provide the military's views in more discreet ways.⁴⁰ He encouraged as well the establishment of the Conference of Defence Associations, both to promote militia reorganization and professionalism but also to have an effective defence policy lobby group. McNaughton and Crerar both played roles in framing its agenda but were warned off too blatant a use of it for policy changes in 1932 by Minister Sutherland and by the hesitation of the CDA itself to involve DND in policy questions.⁴¹ On one level, the adherents of the normal theory might argue that these activities by McNaughton and Crerar could be described as transgressions into the civilian policy domain because they represented a form of political advocacy, "proselytizing the public" as one study put it.⁴² On another level, however, they can be seen as vital national developments in strategic culture, ensuring a national debate about the purpose and uses of Canadian military power.

The army under McNaughton went much further, however. It revised plans to dispatch expeditionary forces, in part due to practical considerations of planning, but also to cement their concepts of what should drive what, in modern parlance, would be characterized as "force development" for the next decade. Although the King government, prior to 1930 and on its return in 1935, had been cautious and instructed military planners not to formalize plans for "different hypothetical situations," army planners took advantage of the favourable political conditions under the Bennett government to draft specific plans for the scenario they considered should drive planning for future conflicts: Canada's participation in an overseas war in concert with the rest of the Empire. Cementing the dispatch of an expeditionary force as the key driver for defence planning required McNaughton to first quietly abolish Defence Scheme No. 1, the plan for war with the United States. Having worked hard to marginalize the idea within military planning circles during the late 1920s, in January 1931, he characterized defence against the United States as "quite incapable of being satisfactorily answered by Empire military action." Within a year, the scheme was reviewed by McNaughton, the Chief of the Naval Staff and Skelton, and orders went out cancelling the scheme. By 1933, all copies were ordered destroyed; one survived.⁴³

At the same time, McNaughton had revived work on Defence Scheme No. 3, which had languished during the late 1920s. A new DMO and I, supported by Crerar, submitted a draft scheme, which, using the figures drawn from the post-war reconstruction Otter Committee estimates, planned for the raising and equipping of a seven division expeditionary force for use in concert with the British and other dominion forces. The Minister D.M. Sutherland approved the scheme in January 1932.⁴⁴ It is not clear whether anyone else in the government was aware of it, but it became the basis for the army planning assumptions, and thus the armed forces, organization and training up to, and indeed after, the outbreak of the war. Two other plans were

⁴⁰ James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada, Volume 2: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1965), pp. 120-1.

⁴¹ Morrison, *The Voice of Defence*, p. 65.

⁴² Eayrs, *From the Great War to the Great Depression*, p. 104.

⁴³ C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: Volume 2: 1921-1948: The Mackenzie King Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), pp. 157-8.

⁴⁴ Eayrs, *From the Great War to the Great Depression*, pp. 84-5.

subsequently drafted: Defence Scheme No. 2 provided contingencies for potential conflict with Japan or a Japanese-American war and No. 4 for the dispatch of a small expeditionary force in the case of a “Minor Empire Crisis.” Defence Scheme No. 3 remained, nonetheless, the most likely contingency in the army planners’ view; preparing an expeditionary force was considered preparation for all likely contingencies, including home defence. It was not without controversy. Implementing the army re-organization necessary for Defence Scheme No. 3 met with resistance, political and military. Wiping out eight paper divisions meant dismantling a large number of politically important militia regiments. This proved impossible without strong political backing and in the throes of the Depression, the Conservative government grew wary of the political (and economic) implications of military reorganization.

Allowing the army to plan for future conflicts was one thing; increasing defence spending to implement the preparations necessary quite another. The Depression marginalized defence issues, to the detriment of the military. When McNaughton, as one of his final acts as CGS in 1935, prepared a memorandum entitled “The Defence of Canada” it highlighted the serious gaps in Canada’s military forces and the woeful state of defence. He was able to brief it to the Cabinet, but his argument that the military needed predictable increases in defence expenditures to restore capability fell on deaf ears (as it would for decades hence except in times of war). This was in part a result of the looming election and fragile economic climate. But it was also indicative of a political and strategic culture that found long term military planning an anathema.

The defeat of the Bennett government in the fall of 1935 marked another critical turning point in civil military relations and their evolution during the Second World War. When Mackenzie King became Prime Minister, McNaughton had already resigned, but he worked closely with his successor Major-General E.C. Ashton to ensure that the problems highlighted in his memorandum were brought to the attention of the new government. Soon after the election, Skelton had promised to send the memorandum to King, but it appears that it was not in King’s hands until Ian Mackenzie sent it to him early in 1936. King did not read it until August 1936, but defence issues were already becoming more important in his mind. King had taken the External Affairs portfolio, which he would hold until 1946. The Ethiopian crisis paralleled his government’s election, but it took the Rhineland Crisis and the publication of a British White Paper on Defence to prompt King to seriously consider defence. At the urging of the CDA, and the new Minister of National Defence Ian Mackenzie, the Prime Minister established a Cabinet Defence Committee (CDC) composed of the PM and the Ministers of Finance, National Defence and Justice. King, however, was motivated as much by the desire to control defence issues politically as he was to ensure proper defence preparation. The Minister of Justice was Ernest Lapointe, the senior minister from Quebec, and, as King noted to the House of Commons, he established the committee to ensure that “members of the cabinet should have the fullest possible information with respect to the general defence services” and to address “criticism that officers of the Department of National Defence were seeking to increase their own importance and to enlarge unduly the scope of the defence forces’.”⁴⁵ King thus recognized the need to educate himself and other politicians if they wanted to be able to hold their own in a dialogue about

⁴⁵ Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, pp. 137.

defence, but appears to have been driven by the belief that the real existential danger to Canada was too much, rather than too little, emphasis on defence.

King finally read McNaughton's assessment on 25 August 1936, as preparatory reading for the first CDC meeting on 26 August. By his own account, the PM was greatly disturbed by what he read. As his actions suggested, King was not oblivious to the dangers of Nazi Germany or a militaristic Japan. He was, in fact, so fearful of German designs that he applauded appeasement and any policy that might prevent the outbreak of war in Europe. This was also because he believed that if Britain went to war, so too must Canada. King was no isolationist. He valued the connection to Great Britain, and denigrated, in private, Skelton's "materialistic 'scientific' point of view and his antagonism towards...Britain." As a result of Skelton's isolationism, King had concluded that he himself "must control [foreign] policy."⁴⁶ King believed that Canada could not remain aloof if Britain found itself in a war for survival, but he noted at the time of Munich that while Canada must stand by Britain, "care has to be taken as to determining the part Canada may be called upon to play, and the steps towards that end."⁴⁷ He was certain that Canada's role need not be as extensive or as expensive in blood as it had been in the First World War.

The inaugural CDC was the military's first opportunity for direct contact with the political and civil authorities responsible for defence. The heads of the three services briefed the committee, with Skelton, and the DM in attendance, on the problems with their services and what it might take to remedy them. McNaughton's successor Ashton confirmed McNaughton's earlier assessment of the sorry state of Canada's defences. The government's other military advisors – subsequently called the Joint Staff Committee (JSC), with Crerar as secretary – provided similar assessments. Following the inaugural CDC meeting, members of the Joint Staff Committee were asked to prepare a common appreciation of military threats, and a five year plan for the consequent requirements for defence in response. It was presented at the second meeting of the CDC as a memorandum entitled "An Appreciation of the Defence Problems Confronting Canada, with Recommendations for the Development of the Armed Forces." Written by Crerar, it has been characterized as "among the key documents of Canadian history" for its forceful and insightful assessment of the international situation in 1936 and Canada's place within it.⁴⁸

Despite its import, the assessment was sidelined once the Cabinet had digested the proposed costs of rearming, as well as the implied commitments to wider Imperial defence requirements. While the merit of the arguments served notice that the military's analysis was astute, it was also clearly politically unpalatable. King was impressed by the senior officers of the three services, but he concluded that Canada could not afford to prepare for war, and that government must continue to rely "mainly on policies which make for peace."⁴⁹ His reaction set the tone for next few years; he preferred modest financial support for home defence with priority given to the Air Force as the least politically contentious of the three services.

⁴⁶ Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: Volume 2*, pp.13, and 214-16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁴⁸ Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, pp.138-9.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

At first glance, then, the King Liberal government and the new Minister of National Defence appeared receptive to the military's efforts to begin to prepare itself for war, although they trod a fine line when it came to publically committing to any course of action. The main cause for optimism from the military's perspective was the willingness of the politicians to educate themselves on Canada's military situation in light of heightened tensions in Europe and the Far East, an education that plays a critical component in an effective system of civil-military decision-making. Here the substance of the military assessments of domestic opinion and the global situation was critical. Crerar's memorandum to the CDC, with his conviction that public opinion would draw Canada into any major war in which Britain was involved and his assessments that the peace of 1918 was but a temporary armistice and that Britain's foreign policy was returning to its more traditional balance of power and away from League commitments proved far more accurate than the assessments done by the Department of External Affairs. However, the effect of these warnings was both an increase in anxiety among politicians at the lack of preparation for Canadian involvement in a potential conflict in Europe as well as a fear of those who articulated this message. The military appreciation of the changing relationship with Britain and its implication for defence policy and preparations, insights that sometimes escaped officials in External Affairs, were also cause for concern.⁵⁰ One positive result was that the new minister Ian Mackenzie trusted the advice of his military planners; he established a good relationship with Ashton and, in the context of a deteriorating international situation, proved responsive to the army's needs. Mackenzie, like the Prime Minister, was astonished at the "atrocious condition" of the country's defence forces as described by Ashton, and quickly approved the seven-division militia re-organization plan, although he believed this was primarily designed to facilitate home defence.⁵¹ 1936 also saw a small rise in defence spending.

This then appeared to be a new chapter in Canadian civil-military relations with the formation of a Canadian Defence Committee and the acceptance of the principle of interdepartmental liaison, thus opening an avenue for the Canadian military to voice its views on defence to the government.⁵² But 1936 proved, in some ways, the high water mark of the army's ability to establish an advisory role during the interwar period. For the next four years, Mackenzie King steered a cautious course, publicly denouncing any imperial or overseas defence commitments, while officials in External Affairs, particularly Skeleton and the desk officer charged with liaising with DND, Loring Christie, sought to disentangle Canada from Europe's affairs and marginalize the influence of the military in defence policy discussions.⁵³ The army's view of the international

⁵⁰ CP, Vol 14, D231, See, for example, "Appreciation of U.K. Government Policy in the Italo-Ethiopian Dispute," 1935, and Crerar to Bob Partiger, 12 Oct 1935; Vol 18, D381, Crerar noted that Britain was unprepared to take action in the Rhineland crisis of 1936. Crerar to W.M. Taylor, 11 April 1936; CP, Vol 11, D220, "The Statute of Westminster in its Bearing on the Armed Forces of the Crown," 1931.

⁵¹ DHist, Orde and Letson Interviews

⁵² CP, Vol 14 (D259), Crerar to Brigadier W.H.P. Elkins, D.O.C., M.D.2, 2 March 1935; Vol 11 (D218) "Scheme for the Re-organization of the Canadian Militia," 15 July 1935. Work had also begun on Defence Scheme 4, the plan to send a Canadian contingent to take part in a minor Empire crisis. HQS-5718, Vol 2733, RG24, NA.

⁵³ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), External Affairs Records (RG25), G1, Volume 1789, File 318-T, L.C. Christie, 31 May 1937

situation and Canada's response to it was the polar opposite of Skelton and Christie. Again, planning was at the nexus of the debate. The years 1936-1939, and indeed through the first year of the war, were thus characterized by the army's struggle to maintain the fundamentals of Defence Scheme No. 3, particularly preparing the expeditionary force, against equally determined efforts by others to avoid any planning that would legitimize the military voice and smack of an imperial commitment to Britain.

As a result, members of the army general staff became more assertive, swamping the MND with memoranda on their interpretations of international events and their implications for defence policy and Canada. These were also sent to officials at External Affairs and other observers in the belief that the "isolationist nationalism" that characterized their foreign policy reflected disillusionment with the League and that they could be convinced that the future of Canada's foreign and defence policy lay with Britain.⁵⁴ Skelton was already wary of the military or, more precisely, wary of their interpretations of international developments. Christie, characterized as cold and overly logical, saw little reason for Canadian involvement in what he dismissed as "European Affairs."⁵⁵ Crerar attempted to draw Christie into a debate by sending him a memorandum on "The Higher Direction of War, with Particular Reference to the British Empire." Christie gave it a frosty reception, dissecting it with characteristic bluntness.⁵⁶ Undeterred, Crerar concluded that what was needed was more of these exchanges between National Defence and External Affairs, not less.⁵⁷

Army personnel spoke across the country in closed forums, but all references to policy and international affairs in statements by Permanent Force Officers had, in 1935, to be cleared with the CGS.⁵⁸ When in November 1936, a sensationalized version of a confidential address at the Halifax Military Institute appeared on the front page of *The Halifax Chronicle* with the headline screaming that "General war is probable" all Permanent Force officers were barred from making public references to defence policy and international affairs.⁵⁹ Others were encouraged to speak out where government servants could not. The CDA was asked to bring more political pressure to bear on the government.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, pp. 208-9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-70.

⁵⁶ CP, Vol 10 (D211), Latter quote from Crerar to M.A. Pope, 11 April 1936; Stephen Harris, "The Canadian General Staff and the Higher Organization of Defence, 1919-1939," *War and Society* 3, 1 (May 1985), 91-96.

⁵⁷ CP, Vol 10 (D211), Last quote from Crerar to Colonel W.T. Torr, 13 Jan 1936; Vol 12 (D222), Reid to Crerar, 9 Jan 1936; MP, Vol 103, Series II, File: January 1935, "The Higher Direction of War."

⁵⁸ LAC, CP, Vol 12, (D222), Latter quote from Crerar to Alan Plaunt, CP, Vol 15, (D431), See Crerar to Colonel C.H.L. Sharman, 18 Feb 1935; Morrison, *The Voice of Defence*, pp. 65-6

⁵⁹ CP, Vol 11, D217, Lecture "An Appreciation, Defence Problems Confronting Canada"; RG24, Vol 2774, File: HQC 6670, Halifax Incident; CP, Vol 15, D431, Crerar to H.H. Matthews.

⁶⁰ CP, Vol 14, (D231), See, for example, "Appreciation of U.K. Government Policy in the Italo-Ethiopian Dispute," 1935, Crerar to Bob Partiger, 12 Oct 1935; Vol 18, (D381), Crerar noted that Britain was unprepared to take action in the Rhineland crisis of 1936. Crerar to W.M. Taylor, 11 April 1936; For an overview of Britain's changing defence and foreign policy see Michael L. Roi, *Alternative to Appeasement. Sir Robert Vansittart and Alliance Diplomacy, 1934-1937* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), chaps. 4-5; and

Access to the government remained problematic. By 1937, despite a good start, the Canadian Defence Committee met infrequently and it remained ineffectual, reflecting King's emphasis on "policies that make for peace" while marginalizing the military's calls for greater expenditure on defence. And with no direct access to the Minister or cabinet, or authority to liaise with other government departments, the military had few formal avenues to influence government policy. In March 1937, Crerar submitted a memorandum on "A Canadian Organization for the Higher Direction of National Defence" to the Minister. It was revised several times over the next eight months, but its basic recommendations on the establishment of sub-committees and the need to bring the service chiefs into the defence policy making process were unchanged.⁶¹ As a study of the organization of the Department of National Defence it was directed at correcting what Crerar and Pope perceived as an unnecessary encumbrance in the form of a "civilian ... Chief of Staff – the Deputy Minister." At the root of the problem was the practice whereby "professional advice is tendered to the Minister by a non-professional official." While the report also harshly criticized the "mediocre quality" of the collective output of the staffs at National Defence and bemoaned the lack of movement on tactical doctrine, equipment and administrative organization, the author blamed the problems on the absence of a clear government defence policy and the fact that the service's main duty had been "peace-time" administration.⁶² While access improved under Ian Mackenzie, it was informal and the organization remained largely unchanged.⁶³

3.3 Circumscribing Military Advice

By 1937, it appeared to many outside DND that the army had overstepped its mandate. In May 1937, Skelton and Christie used the occasion of the Imperial Conference as the pretext to assert their prerogatives as the main interpreters of international affairs for Mackenzie King. The catalyst for the decision was a UK Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence briefing paper, circulated in Ottawa before the conference, which advocated a centralized imperial defence and foreign policy.⁶⁴ The Chiefs of Staff briefing paper prompted a furious reaction from Skelton and Christie. Christie first questioned the propriety of the document itself: "Is it for the military staff to expound policies?" His answer was unequivocal. Despite the

David Dilks, "The Unnecessary War? Military Advice and Foreign Policy in Great Britain, 1931-1939," in Adrian Preston, Ed., *General Staffs and Diplomacy Before the Second World War* (London: Croon Helm, 1978), pp. 98-132

⁶¹ CP, Vol 11, D218, "Memorandum on A Canadian Organization for the Higher Direction of National Defence," 8 March 1937, 31 May 1937 and 28 Dec 1937.

⁶² First quote: CP, Vol 1, D3, Crerar to CGS, 30 Oct 1937; Vol 11, D218, Crerar to Victor Sifton, 8 Aug 1940, "The Organization of the Department of National Defence"; Granatstein interview Elliot Rodgers; RG25 G1, Vol 1785, File 283, Part I, Intelligence Summaries.

⁶³ LAC, Ian Mackenzie Papers, Vol 30, X-19, Ashton to the Minister, 14 Oct 1937; CP, Vol 11, D218, Crerar to Victor Sifton, 8 Aug 1940.

⁶⁴ One important objective was achieved when the position of the RCAF vis-à-vis the other services was given equal status and the Air Staff Senior Officer's elevation approved in principle. RG25, Vol 1789, File 318-T, Imperial Conference: Defence; DHist, Pope to Crerar, 14 May 1936; RG24, Vol 2684, HQS 5199, Vol 1, Memorandum, 7 Jan 1937.

fact that he acknowledged the interrelationship between foreign affairs, defence and constitutional questions, he observed that it was for the civil arm of the government to lay down policy and “then for the military to submit military plans accordingly.” In essence, Christie advocated for a civil-military relationship that reflected, in part, the tenets of the normal theory. Policy and strategy development and implementation were discrete and linear activities: politicians, advised by civilian experts, created policy; the military implemented it.

At the same time, Christie and Skelton told the Prime Minister that the British information on Canadian defence preparations had come from the official ‘liaison letters’ between Defence Headquarters and the War Office, the details of which Crerar had given Christie early in 1936 to promote better relations. When the Australian delegation proposed that the Commonwealth military planners at least be allowed, even in the absence of formal political commitments, to develop plans for cooperation, Christie’s response captured the military’s dilemma: “how [can] you really avoid political commitments in advance and at the same time produce General Staff plans in advance of such a character that they will prove practically worthwhile for the participants.” Christie raised a legitimate question, though he failed to offer any alternative basis upon which to base defence planning. As the Canadian military discovered, it was practically impossible to draw up plans for future imperial defence cooperation in the absence of political support to do so.⁶⁵

Subsequently, after consultation with Ian Mackenzie, the Prime Minister strictly limited the flow of information to the UK and allowed External Affairs to control the tap. Skelton “carefully instructed” the JSC and Crerar “as to the necessity of avoiding any conversations with [their] ‘opposite numbers’ ... which could be interpreted by them as being in the nature of a military commitment.” Crerar noted that the military was told they could “not even discuss the steps planned by the United Kingdom for the protection of Newfoundland” despite its obvious implications for Canadian defence. In case there was any doubt, he sat with Mackenzie King and went through the draft statement line by line deleting “any reference whatsoever to Empire Defence, even as regards consultation for cooperation.”⁶⁶ Over the next few years, Skelton and Christie became more obstructive, delaying the exchange of information, ignoring requests from the NDHQ to transmit letters or withholding their approval. They resisted the general staff’s attempts to establish inter-departmental sub-committees modelled after Britain’s Committee for Imperial Defence. And, as noted, after a promising start, the Canadian Defence Committee stopped meeting in 1937.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ LAC, RG25, Vol 1866, Skeleton to King, 16 Feb 1938; RG25 G1, Vol 1789, Christie Memorandum, 31 May 1937.

⁶⁶ RG24 (G1), Vol 1817, File 63, Series of letters between DMND and Skelton; Mackenzie Papers, Vol 30, X-12, Correspondence between King and MND; CP, Vol 10, D211, Pearson to Crerar, 19 March 1937; Mackenzie King Papers and Diary, 5 May 1937; CP, Vol 21, D329, Crerar to Stacey, 14 Sept 1951.

⁶⁷ RG25, Vol 1788, Documents on the Imperial Defence Conference; CP, Vol 9, D210, Crerar to Christie, January 1936, File: Correspondence with Loring Christie; John Hilliker, *Canada’s Department of External Affairs. Volume 1: The Early Years, 1909-1946* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s, 1990), pp. 200-9; Pope, *Memoirs*, 129-30.

Skelton clearly preferred the type of relationship with the military that follows the tenets of the normal theory, resting on the principles of unfettered civilian responsibility for defence policy development and the military charged with the task of policy implementation by identifying missions and consequent capabilities. In the context of the late-1930s and the major rearmament efforts of states across the globe, this was a myopic approach, especially given that no one could credibly guarantee that Canada could remain on the sidelines in a future war in Europe or Asia. No serious military professional could ignore the need to prepare for an expeditionary commitment; neither could they ignore the reality that Canada would fight alongside the British, a course of action anticipated by the military corollary to the 1931 Statute of Westminster, the Visiting Forces Act.

To maintain good relations with British planners, Crerar sent sensitive information to the War Office regarding coast defence via personal and secret letters to the British Military Attaché in Washington, evading External Affairs's close scrutiny of the liaison letters.⁶⁸ At the same time, planners did attempt to recast their plans in step with government directions, notably by modifying Defence Scheme No. 3 to present the overseas force as a "mobile force," mainly for home defence, unequivocally the government's first defence priority. It was qualified by noting that an overseas war was the more likely scenario of the two and the framework for expanding the expedition to seven divisions remained intact.⁶⁹ Crerar and Pope justified equipment procurements purely on the basis of home defence, even as they proceeded on the assumption that they were preparing for an overseas war.⁷⁰ In March 1938, a Standing Inter-departmental Committee on Defence Co-ordination, representing fifteen departments, and chaired by the Deputy Minister of National Defence and supervised by Pope, was established. This move, as well as the subsequent development of sub-committees on censorship and other aspects of defence organization, was viewed as a major triumph, even if it was only a small step. "[We] have, at last, succeeded in getting all Government departments actively concerned in their national responsibilities for war," wrote Crerar, positioning himself as an advocate of what would today be called a "whole of government" approach.⁷¹

From the late 1920s onward, McNaughton and other senior army officers tried to effect changes vis-à-vis External Affairs and the wider government to ensure a voice for defence in national strategic discussions. These efforts were modest and always framed in the context of promoting better inter-departmental dialogue. Bennett was sympathetic and appeared willing to give the Canadian military a greater voice in government discussions. Mackenzie King, too, understood the deplorable conditions of the forces and took modest steps to correct the deficiencies in light of the worsening international situation. However, his general views on European Affairs and his aversion to imperial defence commitments led him increasingly to prefer the advice of a small group in External Affairs, chiefly the Under-secretary Skelton. The outbreak of war in September

⁶⁸ DHist, 000.8(D3), DMO and I, Liaison Letters.

⁶⁹ See RG24, Vol 2646, File: HQS 3498; Harris, *Canadian Brass*, p. 183.

⁷⁰ Mackenzie King Papers, Vol 29, X-4, "The Requirements of Canadian Defence, 1936 and 1937"; CP, Vol 18, D381, Crerar to Pope, 19 Aug 1937, Pope to Crerar, 24 Aug 1937.

⁷¹ CP, Vol 10, D211, Crerar to Sir Ronald Adam, DCIGS, 1 June 1938.

1939 and the catastrophic events in the Spring of 1940 would eventually set the conditions for Crerar to play a more forceful role in national strategic discussions well beyond the influence wielded by military planners in the preceding decade.

4 The Civil-Military Balance and the Crisis 1939-41

4.1 Business as Usual

The outbreak of war did not immediately change the civil-military dynamic. While British military planners took Canada's military advice seriously, the Canadian government did not. Prime Minister Mackenzie King intended that Canada's military effort, and liability, would be strictly limited. He pressed hard to ensure that Canada's contribution would be industrial and agricultural; militarily, he focused on the air force as the cheapest and most cost-effective contribution Canada could make, at least in terms of lives. He was caught off guard by the army's announcement that it was ready to dispatch one division overseas. According to Ottawa journalist and insider Grant Dexter of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, when Ian MacKenzie "lost his head and permitted his officials, without cabinet sanction, to order the enlistment of 75,000 men in active service," the PM countermanded the instruction and "gave Ian and the general staff hell."⁷² As late as the spring of 1940, King argued to a Cabinet War Committee torn over whether to create a two-division corps that even this was excessive: "We could have used our money more effectively if it had all been confined to air and naval services." He conceded that the "national spirit, however, demanded an expeditionary force; would demand it having full national expression. I stressed the necessity of maintaining the pride and the morale of the little force we have by making them a complete entity." J.L. Ralston, then minister of finance, agreed.⁷³ However, British plans in 1939 to field 55 divisions, 14 from the Dominions, flew in the face of Canadian government policy, practice and rhetoric.

The army's pre-war plans proved to be the military's only means of informing the war effort until mid 1940. Political and civilian control was absolute. Control and direction of the war effort was centralized in the Cabinet. In December 1939, three months after Canada's declaration of war, nine "Committees of the Cabinet" were established to coordinate the war effort.⁷⁴ The overall supervision of the war effort, and thus the policy making power, was the responsibility of these nine committees. Defence policy formulation was in the hands of the small enclave of ministers known as the Cabinet War Committee (CWC). The CWC, which after July 1940, had a membership that included the three ministers responsible for the services – Minister of National Defence (J.L. Ralston), Minister of National Defence for Air and Associate Minister (C.G. Power) and Minister of National Defence for Naval Services (Angus L. Macdonald) – as well as the Ministers for Justice, Finance, Mines and Resources, Munitions and Supply, National War Services and the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The Under Secretary for State, Skelton and his successor, Norman Robertson attended regularly. However, the CWC's composition was never formally fixed and attendance depended on the Prime Minister's discretion and the issues at

⁷² Grant Dexter Papers (GDP), 2142, Series I, Section C, Transfer Case (TC) 2, "Memo of 8 Sept 1939.

⁷³ Jack Pickersergill, *The Mackenzie King Record, Volume 1, 1939-1944* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 76; J.R.M. Butler, *Grand Strategy, Volume II* (London: HMSO, 1957), pp. 29-33.

⁷⁴ Harris, "The Canadian General Staff and the Higher Organization of Defence," pp. 83-98.

hand. It was not until May 1940 that the Minister of Munitions and Supply was added; over the next two months, a Minister of National Defence for Air, a Minister of National Defence for Naval Services, and a Minister of National War Services became members, attending as required.

Initially, the agenda and thus participation were largely set by at the Prime Minister. Prior to 1940, the agenda was both politically and personality driven. Disorder was the rule in committee discussions. Within this structure the Prime Minister's influence was usually decisive, which was King's objective.⁷⁵ Mackenzie King's personal antipathy to military policies that he viewed as potentially divisive made this particularly important. The CWC continued to exclude the Chiefs of Staff – the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Chief of the Air Staff – from its meetings, a situation which did not formally change until June 1942 when the military chiefs were invited to attend approximately two meetings a month.

The anarchy of CWC meetings was largely the result of Mackenzie King's aversion to formal procedure and organization, which he feared would reduce his flexibility to set the agenda, thus reducing his control of government policy. The result, nevertheless, was disarray in the organization of the war effort. It took the weaknesses exposed by wartime expansion and the efforts of A.D. Heeney, appointed Clerk of the Privy Council, first Secretary of Cabinet and Secretary of the War Committee in March 1940, to provide the impetus to organize and record the meetings of the CWC.⁷⁶ Beginning in May 1940, Heeney's implementation of formal procedures for discussion within the CWC was an important turning point in King's control of war policy. Some of the control was removed from King's hands by establishing order and a set agenda. However, there was still no evidence of government strategy nor was military advice solicited to guide the committee's defence agenda.

Advice from the Chiefs of Staff was officially rendered to the civil authorities through the renamed JSC, the Defence Council. Membership of the Defence Council included: the Minister of National Defence, the Deputy Minister, the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of the Air Staff and the Chief of the Naval Staff, with Associate membership for the Adjutant-General, Master-General of the Ordnance, the Quartermaster-General and the Judge Advocate General. These associates weighted the Council in the army's favour but also made it an unwieldy decision making body. The council met regularly once a week after Canada declared war, but its influence remained marginal at best in matters of policy. It fed the MND and the cabinet memoranda – sometimes solicited, sometimes “spontaneous offerings” – and the council, in turn, was fed by inter-service sub-committees headed by responsible Directors from each service. The Minister had no mandate to report the council's decisions or advice to the government in any case. It was not until September 1944 that a Military Secretary was added to the Cabinet War Committee, driven in part by political concerns looming as a result of infantry shortages and demobilization questions as the end of the war seemed imminent.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), pp. 111-15.

⁷⁶ Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*, pp. 201-7.

⁷⁷ Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, pp. 123-30. The JSC became the DC when the Senior Air Officer was elevated to Chief of the Air Staff.

4.2 The Fall of France and Administrative Reforms

The fall of France was a catalyst for change. It revealed the inability of the civilians to formulate a strategy beyond limited liability, which the British had long abandoned, with a commensurate military effort at its core. Civilian leaders had neither the understanding to provide useful or even clear direction to the military. From a Canadian service perspective, the instability of the years 1940 through 1942 resulted in both great anxiety and great opportunity. The crisis in June of 1940 accelerated every aspect of the Canadian war effort. Among the most important changes were the weakening of Mackenzie King's "limited liability" approach, notably the removal of the financial restrictions previously imposed on the military's expansion, and the waning influence of the Department of External Affairs Under-Secretary, O.D. Skelton. With the weakening of two of the main features of Canada's foreign and defence policy – fiscal restraints and doubts about the necessity of a military commitment to Britain – firm direction for the expansion of the forces was now notably absent. The crisis-driven military expansion of the early summer of 1940 was not reconciled to any government defence policy or coherent assessment of what Canada's objectives should be in the war beyond Mackenzie King's national unity, no-conscription agenda. This may have been a sound political strategy, but provided no boundaries for understanding how to contribute to an Allied victory.

Neither did a change of ministers have any immediate impact. On 5 June 1940, Ralston accepted the portfolio of National Defence.⁷⁸ He expressed little confidence in the ability of the Permanent Force Staff at NDHQ to create a policy or plan to direct the expansion of the militia. In contrast, as the demands on the department grew so too did the number of senior civil servant positions. LeFleche retired as DM in early September 1939, and two Associate Acting Deputy Ministers, both military, were appointed, with one responsible for the Militia and the other for Air and Naval. A third AADM was added in March 1940, splitting the Air and Naval Portfolio. By September 1942, two Deputy Ministers for the Army appointments were created, one from an AADM and the second, a new appointment. Ralston also surrounded himself with civilian executive assistants, including the adamantly anti-Permanent force newspaperman, Victor Sifton of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and Colonel (ret'd) G.S. Currie, who would later be an AADM. With the aid of these men, Ralston began to consider policy for army expansion; input from the senior military staff was notably absent.⁷⁹

Crerar's appointment as Chief of the General Staff in July 1940 proved critical in reshaping the relationship between the civilians and the military at DND and giving a more prominent voice to the latter. The overseas forces were eager to shake things up in Ottawa, assuming that the quality of the headquarters staff was the main reason the military's advice was ignored. German success had also destroyed any illusions that the Anglo-Canadian armies were prepared for modern

⁷⁸ J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002), pp. 102-7.

⁷⁹ Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 129; Grant Dexter Papers (GDP), 2142, Series I, Section C, Transfer Case (TC) 2, Folder 18, "Memo of Conversation with Major-General H.D.G. Crerar," 13 Sept 1940; Richard S. Malone, *A Portrait of War, 1939-1943* (Don Mills: Totem Press, 1985), p. 59.

warfare. In July 1940, McNaughton suggested that Crerar return to Canada first as Vice-Chief of the General Staff, then as CGS.⁸⁰ McNaughton, nevertheless, had his doubts whether the ministerial walls could be breached. "I hope that he will be armed with sufficient authority to make his weight felt in the organization of military matters in Canada."⁸¹

From the outset, Crerar was determined to bring some order to Canada's war effort, but also to use the window of opportunity afforded by the crisis to shore up the positions of the army and the other services. His agenda will be explored in more detail in the second case study, but suffice it to say that his goals as CGS were the sum of his memories of the reputation of the First World War Canadian Corps, his estimation of the deficiencies of the Canadian military establishment gleaned during the 1930s, and his recent experiences and observations of the British defence establishment. Crerar's long term priorities included the introduction of the military professionals as the chief advisors for military strategy and even defence policy, a continuation of the struggle for professional legitimacy that characterised the inter-war period. His short-term priority was to reorganize Canada's military machine and give it some direction; training, recruitment, supply and organization had to be synchronized and aligned. The sum of these initiatives would be the First Canadian Army, to Crerar the key to ensuring the army's success during the war as well as to securing its post-war position as a national institution whose leadership were key policy advisors.

On route to Canada in July 1940, Crerar prepared a forceful memorandum for the Minister of National Defence that contained a statement of his objectives as CGS. He assumed that he was being brought back to Canada "to undertake constructive action in respect to the development of its land forces." Taking a characteristically broad view of "constructive action," Crerar produced a blunt assessment of the immediate and future needs of the Canadian military.⁸² He wanted to clear house at DND, but he also believed that wartime re-organization should not stop with the measures necessary to win the war but must go further. If not, it would be a wasted effort. He suggested that, while the urgency of the situation did not permit immediate large-scale reorganization, greater efficiency could be obtained from the existing machinery by a wholesale removal of "professionally unfit" Permanent force personnel and the establishment of "a well-balanced and properly co-ordinated Staff organization at the Department and in the Districts." Determined to increase the efficiency of NDHQ, he was convinced "from experience during the last nine months...that there [were] definite opportunities to effect improvement."

Crerar was equally committed to ensuring that, when the war ended, the armed forces did not return to their previous state, on the margins of the policy process. "We must not lose a moment," he emphasized, "in undertaking a thorough analysis of Canada's post-war military requirements

⁸⁰ CP, Vol 1, D15, CGS Files - Matters to app't as VCGS; LAC, Privy Council Records, RG2 7C, Cabinet War Committee Minutes, Vol 1, 4 July 1940.

⁸¹ Andrew McNaughton Papers (MP), MG30E133, Vol 230, File CC7/30-1, McNaughton to Brigadier-General Arthur Clarke, 10 July 1940.

⁸² First quote from CP, Vol 1, D4, Crerar to Colonel C.H.L. Sharman, 24 July 1940; He expressed similar sentiments to Price Montague and others; D13, Draft "Observations on Canadian Requirements in respect to the Army"; CP, Vol 23, D418, "Confidential Memorandum for the Minister, 15 July 1940."

and in planning a defence organization which will produce our future service needs with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of expense.” The true depth of his feeling on this point was clear in the statements excised from the final memorandum. “Even should victory be gained,” he wrote in the original, “it is as certain as anything can be that...the armed forces of Canada...will not be allowed to slip back into the stagnant backwaters of their pre-war existence.”⁸³

The substance of Crerar’s estimates of Canada’s army contribution was informed by British requirements and his own pre-war work on Canada’s mobilization plans. By the summer of 1940, Canada already had two divisions overseas and the decision had been made to form a Canadian Corps. Expediency dictated that units already formed be sent overseas as soon as equipment shortages allowed. Crerar also persuaded Ralston to approve the formation of the country’s first armoured formation.⁸⁴ He maintained, however, in his presentation to the Cabinet War Committee and in his first appreciation to the Minister in September 1940 that it was impossible to accurately forecast the shape the army might take ultimately. In a memorandum to the government in September 1940, Crerar noted, nevertheless, that the object of Canada’s long-term military effort should “be to raise land and air forces until our total [allied] power is sufficient to over-balance that of Germany.” His work on the pre-war mobilization plan, Defence Scheme 3, in which it was estimated that Canada could raise six divisions for overseas service, framed his conviction that such a force was possible. The British Cabinet, acting on the recommendation of the War office “Land Forces Committee,” authorized in September 1939 an army programme of fifty-five divisions by September 1941, a figure that included fourteen divisions from the Dominions. In the short term, equipment and manpower shortages would define what was possible for Canada to do in “furtherance of [the defeat of Germany]” but Crerar estimated that five to seven divisions, “of which one or more should be armoured,” could be maintained overseas on a voluntary enlistment basis. Crerar, however, had a much clearer vision of the size of the army than he publically admitted; a two corps army of six divisions became his goal. He fervently believed that in “the final stages of the battle it [would] be action by the armies which [would] bring about the decision.”⁸⁵

Once in Ottawa, Crerar was confronted by the necessity of bringing some order to the war effort in general, and the military in particular. “[The] pressure on the Government developed by recent events,” he observed in a letter to Lester Pearson, “has completely blown off the restrictive lid on the Canadian military effort and, as a result, there has been a lot of wasteful and uncoordinated expansion.”⁸⁶ His remarks to *Winnipeg Free Press* journalist Grant Dexter were less guarded. Crerar regarded “the existing war organization,” Dexter noted, “as most inefficient and

⁸³ CP, Vol 23, D418, Memorandum; CP, Vol 1, D13, Rough Draft of “Observations on Canadian Requirements in Respect to the Army,” CGS Files.

⁸⁴ RG2 7C, Volume 1, Cabinet War Committee Minutes, 26 July 1940

⁸⁵ LAC, RG2 7C, Volume 1, “The Canadian Army: Memorandum for the Minister, 3 September 1940”; CP, Volume 1, 958C.009(D1), 1942 Army Programme and the Canadian Chiefs of Staff “Appreciation of the War Effort. November 1941.”

⁸⁶ Lester Pearson Papers (LPP), Vol 3, Crerar to Pearson, 27 July 1940; CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 8 Aug 1940.

unsatisfactory...[He believes our] war effort largely botched.” Why? Crerar was clear on where the problem lay:

The organization was wrong from beginning to end ... war policy must be determined on the advice of the experts who were at the top of the services. At the present moment, the minister was taking advice from all directions. The Chief of the General Staff was the military expert of the minister. Under him there should be a staff coordinating body which would coordinate the operations of these other branches....The deputy minister had no business interfering in policy, nor had he any business interfering with the heads of the fighting services. The deputy minister’s job had never been rightly understood in Canada. He was not the deputy of the minister, as the title would indicate. He ought to be, as the under-secretary in England, merely the financial administrator - keeping the books straight and arranging the money end of things. He was purely an administrative man - administering the activities controlled and directed by the experts.⁸⁷

Crerar’s view that the Deputy Minister should not be the senior advisor on military issues was not widely shared, but Crerar acted on this conception of the military’s role in making policy. His first goal was to establish himself as Ralston’s chief advisor. He had been horrified to learn that Ralston was making decisions on a range of issues from military training to commitments without any representation from his military staff. Rumours circulated in Ottawa that Crerar threatened to resign if this was not corrected. He initiated daily morning meetings with Ralston, which remained the practice for the next year at least. From August 1940, Crerar’s first concern was establishing the parameters and policy for the army’s immediate expansion, armament and training. His sense of urgency was informed by equipment shortages and the enormous task that faced Britain and the Dominions in the summer of 1940: staving off Britain’s defeat and then turning to the offensive against Nazi Germany.⁸⁸

Crerar genuinely believed that the war could only be won on the ground.⁸⁹ But Crerar was also convinced that the army had a chance to emulate, and possibly surpass, the success and reputation of the Canadian Corps in the Great War. However, conscious of the political resistance to a large army commitment, he deliberately omitted any mention of the formation of a second corps or higher formations from the 1941 Army Programme. In an early draft of the programme prepared by the Assistant Director of Staff Duties and submitted to Crerar on 13 September 1940 prior to submission to the Cabinet, several items caught Crerar’s attention. One of the most important was a reference that hinted at a further expansion of the army organization: “We should begin consideration of the formation of a second corps including 3rd and 4th Divisions plus an additional armoured division.” For the politically attuned CGS, this went too far. “I would not mention a 2nd

⁸⁷ GDP, TC2, Folder 18, “Memo conversation with Major-General Crerar, 13 Sept, 1940.”

⁸⁸ RG2 7C, Vol 1, Cabinet War Committee Minutes (CWCM), 26 July 1940.

⁸⁹ CP, Vol 1, D1, 1942 Army Programme and the Canadian Chiefs of Staff “Appreciation of the War Effort. Nov 1941.”

Can[adian] Corps at this stage,” cautioned Crerar in his critique of the proposal, “that is for the future.”⁹⁰

As C.P. Stacey observed Crerar’s advent as CGS and his exposition to the War Cabinet on the strategic situation in July 1940 had strengthened the prestige of the Chiefs of Staff, and brought them some legitimacy, but retaining influence in ministerial circles remained a constant struggle in the face of the Prime Minister’s disdain for his military advisors.⁹¹ Crerar’s cautious approach to expanding the army indicated he had not forgotten that access and influence remained elusive. Privately, he was already contemplating a more ambitious army programme.⁹² For Crerar, establishing First Canadian Army would become the vehicle to fulfil his post-war aspirations for the army and a test of his ability to establish the Chief of the General Staff as the government’s chief military advisor.

For the remainder of 1940 and into 1941, equipment shortages and confusion over the exact shape that Canada’s army should take in the future were paramount in Crerar’s mind. The CGS’s inability, or unwillingness, to forecast accurately the “final casting” of the army was the product of a number of factors, not least the lack of agreement over the role of armour, infantry and artillery that characterized British and Canadian thinking in the aftermath of the fall of France through to the summer of 1942.⁹³ However, the biggest impediment to expansion was government resistance, led by Mackenzie King. Crerar recognized that the Prime Minister favoured a strong Canadian agricultural and industrial contribution rather than a military one. The government’s resistance to the formation of a Canadian Corps in the spring of 1940 had also brought home to Crerar the fact that the war had not changed the Liberal Prime Minister’s outlook on the army. Memories of First World War casualty lists and divisive debates over conscription were foremost in King’s mind. At the height of the crisis, on 5 June, King spoke to the Liberal caucus on the “necessity of keeping Canada united and our war effort being based on that: of balancing all matters, going just as far as we could, and not so far as to create a worse situation than the one we were trying to remedy.”⁹⁴

Privately, the CGS expressed doubts about King’s leadership abilities, confiding to Lester Pearson, “[there is] a widely held conviction that Mr. King’s great abilities are not suited to the conditions of the world today...It is a pity that a stronger opposition does not obtain in the House.”⁹⁵ Crerar had, however, acquired a degree of goodwill from King during his first appearance before the War Cabinet Committee on 26 July 1940 by showing an appreciation for factors other than those of military necessity. The CGS emphasized that equipment shortages

⁹⁰ Directorate of History (DHist), General H.D.G.Crerar Document Collection (CDC), 112.1(D16), Draft Copy of “Appreciation - What should be the nature of Canada’s military effort during the next year,” 13 Sept 1940 and Handwritten comments, Crerar to ADSD, “Canadian Army Programme.”

⁹¹ Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 129.

⁹² CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 8 August 1940.

⁹³ Cabinet War Committee Minutes (CWCMM), “Appreciation - What should be the Nature...” 25 Sept 1940.

⁹⁴ Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record, Volume 1*, p.76 and p. 87. ⁹⁵ LPP, Vol 3, Crerar to Pearson, 18 March 1941.

were more pressing than manpower needs and, by noting the importance of Canada's intermediary role between the United States and Britain, he promoted an idea favoured by the Prime Minister. King, judging the quality of his military advisors by their proximity to his viewpoint, liked the CGS's stance.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, a greater degree of King's antipathy was reserved always for the army and its leaders than any other service, conjuring up as it did visions of the First World War conscription crisis, which had divided Canadians along linguistic, ethnic and regional lines. King would repeatedly resist expansion plans for the army in Cabinet War Committee discussions. And privately, he railed against the General Staff and Ralston's support for their plans.⁹⁷

Access to the Cabinet War Committee provided one key to Crerar's mounting success. Crerar also needed to master and unify his own service, a political challenge as great as any he faced in 1940. Still, Crerar took as his main goal the establishment of the Chief of General Staff as the government's senior military advisor, a change he had touted since 1937 and which he judged critical for the long term stability of the war effort. It was not a goal shared by all, even within the army. The key to this change was the assertion of the predominance of the General Staff Branch and the CGS at NDHQ. Crerar believed that the efficiency of the Department depended on the subordination of the administrative branches of the Army staff to the General Staff's operational branch, the organization that obtained in Britain. Similarly, in February 1942, the United States Army would reorganize to give a single Chief of Staff "indisputable control" over all army forces and activities, including those performed by the civilian secretariat. This stability afforded the Chief of Staff the ability to delegate many details and focus on strategy, planning and strategic direction.⁹⁸

In Canada, while nominally the CGS predominated, the heads of the other branches – the Master-General of Ordnance, the Adjutant-General, the Quarter-Master-General and the Judge Advocate-General – had substantial influence on military as well as army policy through their status as Associate Members of the Defence Council. In 1937, Crerar had described the organization of the Defence Council as "defective" and he had recommended that the associate members be dropped to ensure equal representation for each service and to enable it to more effectively advise the Minister.⁹⁹

Following his first meeting with Ralston in July 1940, Crerar had asked the Minister to clarify the CGS's position relative to the heads of the other branches. Ralston then loosely defined Crerar's responsibilities in a memorandum entitled "Duties as Chief of the General Staff," which charged him with the integration and general direction of the military policy of the General Staff Branch. Crerar's predominance was implicitly recognized through the directive that all general policies

⁹⁶ RG2 7C, CWCM, Vol 1, 26 July 1940; King Diary, T151, Entry 26 July 1940; Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record: Volumes I*, p. 129.

⁹⁷ GDP, TC3, Folder 21, "Memo, Conversation with King, Feb 28, 1942."

⁹⁸ Paul Hammond, *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1961), pp.188-222.

⁹⁹ CP, Vol 11, D218, "Memorandum on A Canadian Organization for the Higher Direction of National Defence, First Draft, 8 March 1937."

were subject to his approval or comment and the charge that he was to investigate and re-organize each of the Branches in the interests of efficiency. Ralston, however, made no mention of initiating long term changes and he noted that, to save time, once policy was agreed upon he would take up matters directly with the Branch Heads.¹⁰⁰ Crerar anticipated problems with the loosely defined responsibilities and informed the Minister accordingly. In late July, he brought E.L.M. Burns back as a Special Assistant, later elevated to Assistant Deputy Chief of the General Staff, to analyze the army's organization and procedures. In the memorandum explaining the appointment to Ralston, Crerar observed that under the present established relationship of Military Members of Council, this "action to investigate the activities of the other Branches by my nominee will not be well received by the other Heads of Branches. Nor can the situation be definitely clarified until I occupy the same position to the Army Staff as the CNS and CAS does to the Staff of the other services. I recommend that this matter receive early consideration in the interest of efficiency and harmony."¹⁰¹ In the summer of 1940, Ralston responded to Crerar's recommendations by removing the "disproportionate Army representation" from the Defence Council to make room for the two new Ministers of National Defence.¹⁰² Despite these changes, the council remained ineffective as a policy advisory body but its administrative efficiency increased.

Crerar's forceful initiatives and proposals were not always well received within the department and army headquarters; despite repeated proposals from Crerar, Ralston steadfastly refused to designate the CGS with the rank of Lieutenant-General and it was rumoured that he never would while Crerar held the appointment. Some openly expressed their dislike of Crerar's encroachments on their prerogatives, the rapid advance of a junior officer and even Crerar's appointment of gunners, engineers and civilians to senior staff positions.¹⁰³ The "most controversial" appointments were not even exclusively of his own making. Philip Chester and Victor Sifton were two civilians who assumed joint command of the Ordnance Branch until the end of 1940 when Sifton became sole Master-General of the Ordnance. Their appointment caused the resentment of some military personnel, but Crerar noted in a letter to McNaughton that he was happy to have secured "some outstanding man in civil life who would look at our problems in procurement in the broadest possible way." He hoped that this would facilitate relations with C.D. Howe's "dollar a year men."¹⁰⁴ In contrast to some of his civilian counterparts, Crerar appears in retrospect to be fairly broad minded about working with civilians and willing to integrate their expertise into military planning.

Ralston, however, saw these appointments as a counter-balance to Crerar's ambition and growing influence over the direction of the war effort. The prevailing impression left with Ralston and others by Crerar's attempt to correct the imbalance within the Army Council was that he was

¹⁰⁰ Personnel Record Centre, Crerar's Personal Service File, File C, Press release July 1940; CP, Vol 23, D418, Memo to CGS, RE: Duties as Chief of the General Staff, 24 July 1940.

¹⁰¹ Vol 23, D418, "Memorandum to the Minister, 29 July 1940."

¹⁰² Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, p. 124.

¹⁰³ RG24, Vol 2853, HQC 8664(i), From Memorandum to CGS, 19 February 1940.

¹⁰⁴ CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 9 Sept 1940; Hayes, 65-70.

seeking personal aggrandizement as a virtual commander-in-chief. Sifton, commiserating with Grant Dexter over the perceived idiocy of the General Staff in March 1941, observed that “[Ralston] thinks Crerar is perhaps as good a soldier as we have available for the job in Canada but finds that he has very grave weaknesses of character. He is immensely ambitious and is constantly seeking to arrogate to himself the whole business of the department.”¹⁰⁵ Sifton was suspicious of Crerar’s motives (despite the fact that Crerar had recommended him for the position) but indirect in his rancour, preferring to use his position as Ralston’s confidant and former executive assistant to vent his frustration at what he perceived to be Crerar’s “empire-building.”¹⁰⁶ These sentiments were re-iterated by Ralston himself in conversations with Dexter and Sifton. Dexter reported that Ralston wanted “Victor to play a greater part on the military council, but to be tactful in the sense of not upsetting the boat. And, above all, he wants Victor to stand by him, to be available for general counsel and, as it were, to hold Crerar in check.” The Minister was increasingly disenchanted with the forceful Crerar and, egged on by Sifton, adopted a cautious attitude towards Crerar’s army and training programmes.¹⁰⁷

While Dexter probably overstated Ralston’s suspicions of Crerar, it was an example of how quickly war can change the delicate balance in the strategic dialogue and the importance of substance even over personalities. Crerar gradually won over his minister, at least to his ideas if not his character. Ralston’s “anglophilic” attachment to the British Empire, his stubborn determination to ensure that the men overseas were the government’s first consideration, even if that meant conscription, and his sense of responsibility to his portfolio made him open to Crerar’s arguments. Ralston’s seemingly tireless schedule and inability to delegate responsibility further sapped his ability to resist his military advisors. But perhaps the most important factor remained Ralston’s own perception that he did not have the expertise to challenge the military professionals. Concerned over the General Staff’s continual call for more men, an exasperated Ralston admitted to Grant Dexter in 1941, “[I am] minister but must act upon the advice of [my] staff of professional soldiers. Being a civilian, [I cannot] set aside [my] advisors simply because [I] disagreed with what they said. They knew; [I] did not know.”¹⁰⁸

Ralston’s lack of detailed knowledge certainly undermined his ability to engage in the kind of strategic dialogue necessary to formulate a coherent military strategy and plans to implement it. During this critical period when major decisions about Canada’s future war effort were made, the minister’s relationship with his military advisors became, in fact, increasingly adversarial. However, it was also clear that the unequal relationship between Ralston and his military advisors was creating new fault lines that did not fall strictly along the civil-military boundary. Ralston,

¹⁰⁵ GDP, TC2, Folder 19, “Memo of Conversation with Sifton, 25 March 1941.”

¹⁰⁶ GDP, TC2, Folder 19, Grant Dexter’s “Memo: Conversation with Sifton, March 25, 1941”; Malone, *A Portrait of War*, pp. 61-3.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, GDP, TC2, Folder 19, Memo, 12 June 1941 and Folder 20, Memo 10 October 1941; Malone, *A Portrait of War*, pp. 61-70.

¹⁰⁸ Quote from GDP, TC2, Folder 19, Memo, 10 Oct 1941; Granatstein, *Canada’s War*, pp. 106 and 214; Campbell, “James Layton Ralston and Manpower for the Canadian Army,” 1980.

though disenchanted, was willing to back his military advisors; so too were some other members of the Cabinet. King was not.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, Ralston's reliance on his more knowledgeable military advisors fit a larger pattern of civil-military relations. Lacking the technical expertise of military professionals, civilians frequently avoid what they perceive to be "specialist" discussions especially when these deal with military organization, conduct of operations, planning military missions, equipment and training. They compensate by focusing on areas in which they believe they possess an advantage such as control of resources and government policy formulation. As mentioned above, this has not been an entirely successful model of civil-military relations for democratic nations at war. Neither Ralston nor his Canadian Cabinet colleagues, and certainly not the Prime Minister, made an effort such as other successful wartime leaders had in the past to understand the military sphere or encourage a sustained dialogue. Sensing an opportunity to raise the military voice in the civil-military dialogue, Crerar pushed his plans forward.

4.3 Crerar and the Canadian Army of the Future

In September 1940, Crerar submitted the Army Programme for 1941. It called for a Canadian Corps of three divisions and an Armoured Brigade Group; a 4th Division and additional armoured forces would follow in 1941. He also proposed an extension of the training period of recruits to the Cabinet War Committee. Both proposals reflected a genuine belief that large ground forces, particularly armoured formations, were ultimately necessary to defeat Germany but they were also designed to have maximum appeal to the government. Ralston's remained wary of Crerar's views that changes were necessary to the National Resources Mobilization Act's 30-day compulsory training scheme. Crerar was subsequently more cautious, emphasizing both the training requirements of mechanized war, but observing that "at this stage nothing in the way of military training should be allowed to interfere with industrial production," a qualification guaranteed to appeal to Mackenzie King.¹¹⁰

The CGS's programme elicited an immediate response from the Minister of National Defence for Air who raised the issue of the proper emphasis of Canada's effort. Mackenzie King also made it clear to the Chiefs of Staff that he leaned towards the industrial and air effort and that the army programme might require modification as a result of the "increased contributions in the naval and air spheres."¹¹¹ Crerar's presentation also prompted an apprehensive note in King's diary: "Crerar...and his group pressed very hard for an increase in the Army. Want to have a Canadian army serving in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere. I feel we have to watch this particularly...What men and money we have should be put to the best advantage possible." The ministers, however, were impressed with the careful presentation of the army's case and the statistics that suggested that manpower would not be an issue. Subsequently, they requested the

¹⁰⁹ See Strachan, "Making Strategy."

¹¹⁰ J.L. Granatstein and J.M.Hitsman. *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 148-9.

¹¹¹ RG2 7C, Vol 1, CWCM, 1 Oct 1940.

CNS and CAS table similar programmes.¹¹² Most important, however, the army presentation established manpower and its relative distribution as the main metric by which the civilian advisors understood the military effort. As long as that effort could be maintained through a voluntary system without resort to conscription, the relative weight was a matter of conviction as much as analysis.

While the tabling of the General Staff's statistically backed programme and arguments was decisive in securing cabinet support, Crerar was also able to stir up public support for his proposals and thus put pressure on the government. Crerar gave a carefully considered speech to the Ottawa branch of the Canadian Club on 23 October 1940 that enabled Crerar ostensibly to answer public criticism of the government's efforts while promoting his own agenda. Initiated by Ralston, hundreds of copies were issued to the press and to prominent Canadians while the Minister of Justice and the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services critiqued the drafts. It was the only speaking engagement accepted by Crerar that fall, and it was favourably received.¹¹³ The Prime Minister's statements in cabinet indicated that he was impressed with the emphasis in Crerar's speech on a balanced force and his disclaimer that "the enlistment of large numbers of eager men is more quickly done than the less obvious, more complicated but equally essential action of gearing up industry to produce all the arms and equipment they need."¹¹⁴ The result was King's support for the extension of the training period, although he continued to voice his opposition to a larger army relative to the navy and air force. Ralston also championed the change, now convinced that "four months was the minimum time within which trainees could be taught the fundamentals of soldiering."¹¹⁵

The twin pillars of Crerar's army agenda were debated in the Cabinet for several months. However, the four month compulsory training scheme was accepted in principle from late October. But Crerar played one more card to tip the balance in his favour: the British. Ralston and Crerar left for Great Britain on 19 November 1940, and stayed until late January, to consult and collaborate with the United Kingdom government to "ensure that Canada's participation represents the best team work we can devise." This was a natural course given the Canadian role in the Empire war effort but one that was also a reflection of Ralston's modest confidence in his chief military advisor.¹¹⁶

The British wanted the maximum effort the Canadians could give, but wavered on the utility of simply dispatching ill-equipped divisions with no operational objective. The controversy centred on the potential employment of the Canadian forces.¹¹⁷ Crerar's programme already reflected what the British wanted from the Dominions: manpower to supply additional armoured divisions.

¹¹² King Diaries, T153, Dairy Entry, 1 Oct 1940; RG2 7C, Vol 1, CWCM, 1, 3, 10 Oct 1940.

¹¹³ CP, Vol 28, D420, Volume 28, "Address to Canadian Club of Ottawa, Sept-Nov, 1940."

¹¹⁴ CP, Vol 14, D258, "The Military Problem: Address to the Canadian Club, 23 Oct 1940"; RG2 7C, Vol 2, CWCM, 23 Oct 1940.

¹¹⁵ King Diary, T153, Dairy Entry, 23 Oct 1940; RG2 7C, Vol 2, CWCM, 23 Oct 1940.

¹¹⁶ LAC, J.L. Ralston Papers (RP), MG27 III B11, Vol 63, "English Trips Sept 1940-Jan 1941, Ralston Notebook"; CP, Vol 19, D338, Crerar to Hamilton Boswell, 11 Nov 1940.

¹¹⁷ National Archives KEW (NA), WO106/4872, XC8911, Possible Employment for Canadian Formations, 25 Nov 1940.

In discussions with the British in mid-December, confirmed on 2 January 1941, he stated that equipment shortages would delay formation of additional Canadian formations, particularly the armoured division; but Crerar was confident that “Canada could certainly provide more men for the armed forces.” The most immediate objective, he noted, was the formation of a Corps of three divisions; the provision “if the Government approved was added to the second draft of the minutes.”¹¹⁸ Once the British concurred with Crerar’s assessment, the Minister readily agreed to table before the Cabinet a modified army programme. That delayed the dispatch of a 4th Canadian Infantry Division until at least 1942 but promised an armoured division and “possibly” an armoured tank brigade. He did this by cable in early January 1941.¹¹⁹

A considerable anti-army faction had built up in the War Cabinet in Ralston’s absence, led by the Minister for National Defence Naval Service Angus Macdonald but with the Prime Minister’s acquiescence. However, Ralston returned on 24 January 1941 and four days later the army programme was approved in all its essentials.¹²⁰ Ralston’s support for the army programme was crucial to its success in cabinet, but so too was Crerar’s ability to promote his role as the government’s chief military advisor. In the absence of any competing visions, he was better able to secure civilian support for his views on the substance of military policy and to control the dialogue between the military and the civilians. The new reality in the relationship was that the government was dependent on the military’s knowledge and expertise. And Crerar understood that dependence. When necessary he told them what they wanted to hear, or couched his advice in the most palatable manner. Equally important was Ralston’s allegiance. “I must take my hat off to the Minister,” Crerar wrote, “for the way he backed my proposals up and got them through the War Committee.”¹²¹ He also recognized a pattern of reactions to the army programme and training scheme. “[They] required, firstly to be sold to the Minister and then to the Cabinet,” he observed, “[the] four month compulsory training took quite as much work and argument...no doubt because there were more local angles to it.”¹²² Similarly, Crerar noted the importance of British confirmation of his recommendations. “The recent visit [to England] with my Minister,” Crerar wrote to an old Staff College friend, “produced all the results I hoped and planned it would.”¹²³ Nor was the edge that his monopoly on statistics and projections gave him in the new procedurally organized Cabinet War Committee lost on him. In the manpower-driven discussions of a War Committee attuned to the political consequences of conscription, the General Staff’s carefully prepared statistics, programmes and appraisals gave it an important tool in its fight to increase influence and the size of its forces. However, it was also clear that the division within the civil-military nexus was between the pro and anti-conscriptionists, a divide that would become clearer when the army programme for 1942 was tabled.

¹¹⁸ NA, WO106/4872, “Notes of Meeting Held in the War Office, 17 Dec 1941.”

¹¹⁹ RG2 7C, Vol 3, CWCM, 8 Jan 1941; NA, WO106/4872, “Notes on Meeting at the War Office, 2 Jan 1941.”

¹²⁰ RG2 7C, Vol 3, CWCM, 24-28 Jan 1941; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, pp. 91-2.

¹²¹ LPP, Vol 3, Crerar to Pearson, 7 Feb 1941; CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 4 March 1941.

¹²² Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 4 March 1941.

¹²³ CP, Vol 19, D338, Crerar to Trappes-Lomax, 7 Feb 1941.

Events in 1941 suggested both the culmination of the shifting civil-military balance, and the apex of the army's ability to shape the dialogue. The Army Programme for 1942 and the decision to create a two corps First Canadian Army were the most visible evidence of the shift, but there were others, not explored in this paper. The most controversial example was probably Crerar's role in the dispatch of Canadian troops to Hong Kong. Although usually examined as distinct issues, the decision to send troops to Hong Kong and the selection of the units is better understood in the context of this shift in power and Crerar's broader agenda as CGS.

What these examples suggest was that, by 1941, Crerar was increasingly playing multiple roles, including what might be seen as that of a modern Deputy Minister, balancing departmental and military concerns with political interests, advising and advocating courses of action, some of which he was also engineering. As noted earlier, Crerar himself believed the DM's appointment to be administrative, implementing rather than shaping policy. But, whatever he publically stated, Crerar as CGS was not simply implementing policy. He gave a radio address in January 1941 aimed at providing the public with information on the direction of the war effort. The political and strategic consequences of policies informed his advice on questions ranging from the need to improve the road network with Prince Rupert in the event of a Japanese attack, to whether Canada should take over St. Pierre and Miquelon. Crerar proved increasingly sensitive to the political and public repercussions of his policies as CGS as 1941 progressed. Public confidence was important to army expansion for recruiting purposes, morale and, not least, to ensure political support. His influence within the Chiefs of Staff was high, but he failed to secure the co-ordinating bodies directed by the Prime Minister's Office that he hoped would centralize the national effort.¹²⁴ In the CGS's opinion, these structures would have firmly married the policy makers with their military as well as economic and financial experts. Crerar also worried that his ability to change the defence policy process to better reflect professional concerns was limited by his conceptions of training policy and practice. He wrote to Heeney, among others, to try and secure the support of the civil service.¹²⁵ Crerar was conscious of the need to maintain a broad base of support for reorganization without slowing the momentum of his army programme, which needed public support, or hindering his ability to properly train the army.

Still, Crerar continued to envision an even greater army effort. This was evident in his reaction to the government's approval, in April 1941, of the policy of mixing during basic training General Service volunteers for overseas service and men conscripted under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) for home defence. While it was a logical move to standardize training, Crerar also noted with satisfaction that it would increase the pressure on conscripts to "go GS."¹²⁶ He was not oblivious to the political implications, but minimized the possible strains on national unity. This was why he initiated policies to secure French-Canadian enlistments and senior

¹²⁴ CP, Vol 19, D338, Stan Kingsmill to Crerar, 23 Jan 1941; LPP, Vol 3, "Co-ordination of War Committees, Excerpts," Crerar to Pearson, 14 Nov 1941.

¹²⁵ CP, Vol 19, D338, Crerar to Heeney, 12 Feb 1941.

¹²⁶ CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 16 April 1941.

appointments for French-Canadian officers.¹²⁷ His statements on conscription also revealed that there was a growing disparity of views between the proponent of the all-volunteer army, McNaughton, and his one-time protégé. After the extension in May 1941 of NRMA service for home defence for the duration of the war, Crerar wrote McNaughton of the success and hinted at the possible long-term consequences:

I believe that a high proportion of these twenty-one year olds will volunteer for overseas service...All these represent several bites at the cherry – the cherry being conscription for overseas service anywhere. On the other hand, this progressive process is educating the public to what may well be inevitable and I believe if this comes to pass, the final stage will be taken with a minimum of fuss by all concerned.¹²⁸

He was not alone in the view that mixing the conscripts and volunteers during training would result in a high proportion of conscripts volunteering for overseas service. Victor Sifton, now master general of the ordnance, was also convinced that this was the appropriate approach and commended Crerar for being “agreeable” to the tactic, suggesting again that the differences did not always fall exclusively along the civilian and military divide. Sifton, however, wanted to avoid conscription; Crerar was almost fatalist in his attitude towards it.¹²⁹ But here both men were wrong, although perhaps Crerar’s acceptance of the inevitability of conscription is better understood in the context of ongoing German successes: Yugoslavia and Greece had just surrendered after painfully short campaigns. He genuinely believed that nothing short of an all-out effort would be required to defeat Germany, or to prevent Britain’s defeat.¹³⁰ Still, he was not oblivious to how his own actions were shaping the dialogue surrounding conscription, one of the most divisive Canadian issues.

Crerar was acutely conscious of the need to speak directly to public opinion. The unspectacular training policy combined with the inactivity of the Canadian troops, resulted in a sour media and public mood, one which the government and the military were hard pressed to quell. The Canadian army was a visible target for pro-conscriptionists and others who, not unlike Crerar, equated large ground forces with a commitment to total war.¹³¹ Consequently, Crerar bombarded Ralston with suggestions for establishing “confidence in the direction of affairs of this department.”¹³² Crerar’s suggestion in the Canadian Army Programme for 1941 that the Canadian militia be renamed the Canadian army – he characterized the Permanent Active Militia as “an awful mouthful” and Non-Permanent Active Militia as “a horribly unwieldy and unattractive

¹²⁷ GDP, TC2, Folder 20, “Memo: 6 Sept 1941”: CP, Vol 1, D7, Crerar to Price Montague, 29 June 1941; Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces, Volume I: 1763-1969; The Fear of a Parallel Army* (Ottawa: Her Majesty’s Printer, 1988), pp. 113-5.

¹²⁸ CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 16 April 1941; Crerar to McNaughton, 19 May 1941.

¹²⁹ GDP, Memo: 7 May 1941.

¹³⁰ CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 16 April 1941; Granatstein, *Canada’s Army*, pp. 191-3.

¹³¹ J.L. Granatstein, *The Politics of Survival: The Conservative Party of Canada, 1939-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1970), pp. 73-4.

¹³² CP, Vol 28, D419, Crerar to Ralston, 27 July 1940.

title” – illustrated the weight he attached to public perception.¹³³ His enlistment of the services of historian Charles P. Stacey to ensure that the exploits of the Canadian army were properly recorded was also a step in this direction.¹³⁴

The journalistic rumour mill suggested that Crerar had urged Ralston to initiate the first government sponsored national recruiting campaign when voluntary enlistments looked insufficient to meet the needs of the 1941 army programme; they were probably correct.¹³⁵ Also in May, to the Prime Minister’s horror, Ralston advocated greater activity for the overseas forces as one solution to the problem, a solution anticipated, if not precipitated, by Crerar. “I shall probably be sending you a telegram in the next day or so concerning the use of Canadians on ‘Commando’ work,” Crerar wrote to McNaughton one day before the Minister’s representation to the Committee. He added, “I feel it is in the interests of the Corps, if not the country [as] there is a not unnatural desire to see Canadians in the headlines these days.”¹³⁶ The media egged it on, observing that the army must “compete” for space in newspapers, and that they never did the “things that were worth printing.”¹³⁷

The degree to which the politicians had abrogated their responsibility did not go unnoticed. Suspicion abounded in political circles about the degree to which the Canadian army was directing Canada’s war effort. Munitions and Supply Minister C.D.Howe was the most prominent of a number of ministers who believed Ralston was under the General Staff’s thumb. Neither were relations between Ralston and Crerar good. Ralston purportedly resented Crerar’s demands for promotion, and despised the “general staff from top to bottom.” Sifton rankled at what he perceived to be Crerar’s vanity and machinations, suspecting, unfairly, that Crerar was deliberately sabotaging the recruiting campaign to ensure conscription. He also believed that Crerar, McNaughton and other senior army officers were involved in a nefarious “plot to double the size of the army.”¹³⁸ Given Sifton’s privileged position, his opinions, whether right or wrong, were bound to make an impression on the minister.

Crerar attempted to temper the public criticism through a carefully orchestrated press campaign, moves which did more to underline the imbalance in the relationship than ameliorate it. In late June 1941, the CGS asked McNaughton to issue a press release stressing the positive results of the “unspectacular but most necessary activities of our Basic, Advanced, Trades and Officers Training Centres and of my insistence on thorough section, platoon and company training being carried out before the more spectacular unit...exercises are undertaken.” McNaughton obliged,

¹³³ CP, Vol 28, D419, Crerar to Ralston, 27 July 1940; Vol 14, D258, Crerar to Stuart, 8 July 1939; DHist, Document Collection: Crerar, H.D.G., 112.1(D16), Recommended in Draft 3, “Canadian Army Programme for 1940 [sic]”; E.L.M.Burns claims authorship of this particular memorandum. E.L.M. Burns, *General Mud* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1970), pp. 102-3.

¹³⁴ C.P.Stacey, *A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian* (Ottawa: Deneau, 1983), pp. 64-6.

¹³⁵ Granatstein, *Canada's War*, pp. 201-5.

¹³⁶ CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 19 May 1941; RG2 7C, Vol 4, CWCM, 20 May 1941; Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 152-3; Journalists also had it that Crerar urged the recruiting campaign on Ralston. GDP, TC2, Folder 19, “Memo: 12 June 1941.”

¹³⁷ GDP, Memo: 12 June 1941.

¹³⁸ GDP, TC2, Folder 20, “Memo: 12 June 1941”; Rea, “A View From the Lecturn,” 3-16.

with little effect.¹³⁹ Crerar also created, with more success, an informal network of journalists, editors and educators, whom he implored to emphasize the positive aspects of the army effort and to keep politics out of “technical and professional” decisions. In July 1941, following a series of articles in the *The Globe and Mail* that accused the army general staff as being out of touch with modern warfare, and which harshly criticized Canadian training practices and organization, Crerar sent a four page plea to *Maclean's* editor Napier Moore to focus on his “responsibility...to render sincere and intelligent national service.” Crerar also sent him his several pages of his reactions to the *Globe's* ill-informed articles.¹⁴⁰ He soon met with Dexter in late July, asking for his advice on how to counter the criticism. Dexter recorded that Crerar was characterized by one observer as “exceedingly worried” over the “insidious” campaign of criticism, fearing it would shake morale, hurt recruiting and destroy public confidence in the army.¹⁴¹ Concrete results, however, were needed to dispel the malaise that was settling over the Canadian war effort.¹⁴² The decision to dispatch two battalions of Canadian troops to Hong Kong that fall was one result, exemplifying as well how muddled his advisory role had become. When, in September 1941, the British government enquired if, in light of the what they perceived to be an improved strategic situation in the Far East, Canada could contribute “one or two” battalions to bolster her garrison, the government turned to its CGS for advice. “[The] Canadian Army,” advised Crerar, “should definitely take this on.” Although he was the government’s chief or senior military advisor, ambiguously defined as that position was, Crerar’s positioning of his advice with regards to Hong Kong indicated that he was clearly considering both the political and military strategic implications of deployment decisions, not itself necessarily inappropriate but in the absence of clear political direction, potentially dangerous.¹⁴³ King and Ralston may have resented their dependence on, and distrusted the motives of, their generals, but they needed them nonetheless.¹⁴⁴

On 23 September 1941, Power submitted the British request to the Cabinet War Committee for consideration. A decision was deferred until the proposal could be thoroughly examined by the General Staff and Ralston, but in the end there was no real means of countering the rationale presented by Crerar and his staff. Canadians were sent to Hong Kong, where, in defence of the colony, most died or spent the rest of the war in Japanese prison camps.

The revised Army Programme for 1942, submitted in mid-November 1941, reflected Crerar’s focus on expanding the army for deployment against Germany and the optimistic assessment of the strategic situation in the Far East.¹⁴⁵ Sending two battalions of Canadian troops, and later a

¹³⁹ CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 26 June 1941; McNaughton to Crerar, 19 July 1941.

¹⁴⁰ CP, Vol 19, D333, Letters to *MacLeans* and *Calgary Post* in “Personal Correspondence, July 1941-Nov 1941”; GDP, TC2, Folder 20, J.W. Dafoe to Grant Dexter, 29 July 1941.

¹⁴¹ GDP, TC2, Folder 20, “Talk with Major-General Crerar, Memo 28 July 1941.”

¹⁴² CP, Vol 19, D333, Crerar to Burns, 13 July 1941.

¹⁴³ CP, Vol 23, D418, “Memorandum to CGS, Duties as Chief of the General Staff, July 24, 1940.”

¹⁴⁴ GDP, TC3, Folder 21, “Memo, Conversation with King, 28 Feb 1932”; H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1932-1939: The Prism of Unity* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976), pp. 182-3; Pickersgill, *The Mackenzie King Record, Volume I*, pp.12-14.

¹⁴⁵ CP, Vol 1, D1, “Army Programme, 1942-43”; RG2 7C, Vol 6, Reference to Chiefs of Staff “Monthly Appreciation”, HQS5199, 5 Nov 1941.

brigade headquarters, was not going to deter the Japanese from going to war, but Crerar observed that: "The proposed action, whatever the military risks of the enterprise, needed to be examined from the broad view as to its contributory value to the eventual winning of the war."¹⁴⁶ In other words, the strategic and even domestic political value of supporting the British defence of Hong Kong constituted the main calculus.

Decisions highlighted by the tragedy at Hong Kong were secondary to Crerar's agenda in the fall of 1941. Working feverishly to prepare his army programme for 1942, he built his proposals on an appreciation of the strategic situation as well as the crucial manpower estimates produced by his staff. With these assessments in hand, Crerar hoped to gain Cabinet War Committee acceptance of the programme "in principle," and then seek confirmation of his appreciation from the War Office and McNaughton.¹⁴⁷ His goal was an army formation.

Crerar's fixation on public and political opinion during the summer of 1941 was partially shaped by his understanding of what was required to secure his position to launch the next army programme in September 1941. It was certainly a tactical consideration to lever as much support from the ministers as possible. Conscious as well of the army's tenuous position among the Ministers of the War Cabinet, the CGS was determined that the army must maintain a solid front, focussing on his relationship with McNaughton and the overseas forces, an objective made more challenging given the growing disagreements over the expansion and employment of the Canadian forces as well as his doubts about McNaughton's temperament. Despite McNaughton's reluctance to endorse further expansion, Crerar was able to secure his support for a second corps before formally, or informally, broaching the subject with the MND.¹⁴⁸ All understood that for this round, manpower estimates would be the prerequisite for success, as training policy had been for his first army programme. He undoubtedly believed the estimates, confirming as they did the maximum potential of the army as presented in pre-war studies.¹⁴⁹

Crerar's next step was to secure his own minister's support. He presented his proposals to Ralston at the end of September 1941. Two aspects were notable. First was Crerar's provision that the "plans for the army should be such as can be implemented with our present system of voluntary enlistment for overseas service."¹⁵⁰ This reflected Crerar's belief in the strength of the volunteer system, but was also meant for government consumption. Unlike the Prime Minister, Crerar was prepared to accept conscription. The second noteworthy element was the proposal for the eventual formation of a "Canadian Armoured Corps" and a Canadian Army Headquarters, comprising a total of six overseas divisions. The proposed programme remained informal, its submission to the CWC dependant on the outcome of discussions with the British and McNaughton.

Ralston made no reply to the proposals. Rumours of the substance of the draft army programme had circulated among Ottawa's inner circles for at least a month prior to the formal proposals, but

¹⁴⁶ RG33-120, Vol 3, Telegram: Crerar to Campbell, 11 April 1942.

¹⁴⁷ CP, Vol 19, D333, Crerar to Burns, 13 July 1941.

¹⁴⁸ CP, Vol 1, D12, Crerar to McNaughton, 11 Aug 1941.

¹⁴⁹ CP, Vol 19, D333, from Crerar to Burns, 13 July 1941; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, p. 94.

¹⁵⁰ Stacey, *Six Years of War*, pp. 94-5.

Ralston, wary of further army expansion, was at a loss as to how to react. He believed, according to one observer, that Crerar had “let him down,” but he was unable to counter the carefully prepared estimates and projections of the General Staff.¹⁵¹ He decided to wait for the counsel of McNaughton and the British, sceptical enough of Crerar’s interpretation to consider making the trip overseas without his chief military advisor. The Minister also pointedly ignored a subtle warning from the Prime Minister that he should delay his trip to avoid contention with an increasingly irritable McNaughton, who had recently characterized Ralston as “completely unfitted” for his responsibilities as Defence Minister. Ralston believed he had McNaughton’s confidence. The journalistic rumour mill circulated the idea that McNaughton and Crerar were engaged in something more nefarious. Crerar’s approaches to the media had not gone unnoticed. Dexter suggested, for example, that the change in the *Globe’s* tone, from criticism of the army senior leadership to charges that the government was “refusing to exert Canada’s full power” was one by-product of Crerar’s campaigning for support for army expansion. He concluded, that the “general staff, perhaps unconsciously, has declared war on the government.”¹⁵²

Early in the fall of 1941, Crerar flew to England, the flight itself a measure of the urgency he felt; an eight-hour overseas flight was still a novelty in 1941 and one which Crerar described to his sister as nearly “record setting.” Once in England, Crerar proved adept at securing the allegiance of the War Office in his quest for an army headquarters over the next two months. His War Diary record of the conversations with the War Office establishment was written in such a way as to illustrate British support for Crerar’s two-Corps Canadian army, but on both occasions it was clear that he initiated the question of the organization of Canadian troops in the United Kingdom.¹⁵³

Nevertheless, McNaughton remained unconvinced; his biographer believed that it “may be doubted if McNaughton saw the creation of an army as [a] pressing need,” a point confirmed by a recent and comprehensive study of McNaughton as army commander.¹⁵⁴ In the conversations between the Minister, McNaughton and Crerar on the future expansion of the army, no mention of an army headquarters formation was recorded in the existing transcripts despite Crerar’s initiatives upon his arrival.¹⁵⁵ On Ralston’s return to Ottawa, he reported the British Secretary of State for War’s suggestion that “the most helpful addition to the Canadian forces overseas would be armoured formations.”¹⁵⁶ Ralston was also impressed by the “extreme gravity of the whole war situation” and the challenge posed by sustaining Canada’s current commitment. He did not mention an army headquarters.

¹⁵¹ GDP, TC3, Folder 22, “Memo: 4 March 1942, Conversation with Ralston.”

¹⁵² GDP, TC2, Folder 20, “Memo: 16 Sept, 1941,” and “Memo: Talk with Ralston, 10 Oct, 1941”;

J.R.Campbell, “James Layton Ralston and Manpower for the Canadian Army,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, 1986, p. 89.

¹⁵³ CP, Vol 15, WD, London Trip, 14 Oct 1941; LHC, Alanbrooke Papers (AP), 12/XIII/8, “Interview with Crerar for book on Brooke,” Undated.

¹⁵⁴ Swettenham, *McNaughton, Volume 2: 1939-1943* pp. 189-190; John Nelson Rickard, Lieutenant-General A.G.L. McNaughton and the Canadian Army, 1939-1943 (University of Toronto Press, 2010), pp. 58-9.

¹⁵⁵ Stacey, *Six Years of War*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁶ CP, Vol 15, WD, London Trip, 20 Oct 1941; RG2 7C, Vol 6, CWCM, 6 Nov 1941.

The proposed army headquarters was consequently excluded from the revised Army Programme for 1942 submitted to Ralston in mid-November. Crerar's programme, however, continued to reflect his optimistic assessment of Canada's manpower resources. He prefaced his comments on the proposal with a Chief of Staff appreciation that reversed King's priorities, suggesting the goal should be the "maintenance overseas of as large an Army as can be developed without marked penalty to the expansion of our Naval and Air Services and the output of our war industries." An argument followed for an additional armoured division and armoured brigade for overseas service, undoubtedly a reflection of the current state of opinion on the modest infantry support – one brigade – required in an armoured formation.¹⁵⁷

The manpower projections and the army programme again produced heated debates in the Cabinet War Committee and cabinet circles, a contest exacerbated by the concurrent submission of the air and naval programmes.¹⁵⁸ Despite the omission of any reference to an army headquarters, the conviction amongst Ralston's confidants was that the General Staff's objective was a Canadian overseas army formation. Privately, the Minister left the impression that his initial support for the army programme was half-hearted and that he viewed it as "a concoction of the brass hats."¹⁵⁹ Further reflection on the manpower estimates provided by the Adjutant-General's Branch gave the Minister pause, but Ralston tabled the proposals as the General Staff's and made no attempt to present them as initiatives with which he agreed, an approach indicative of the Minister's state of mind. At this juncture, the government was reluctant to approve more ground forces. Privately, King railed against the General Staff. "Generals are invariably wrong," King later confided to journalists Bruce Hutchinson and Grant Dexter, "all our generals were concerned about was to be in at the kill."¹⁶⁰ One has to ask the obvious question: what exactly did King imagine the Canadian Army's role would be in the defeat of the *Wehrmacht*? Other than vague ideas that supplies to the UK were important to the allied war effort, and that strategic bombing provided an alternative route to victory, one has to wonder how much King thought about Canadian strategy for the defeat of Nazi Germany. More important to him was the impact of that strategy on the Liberal party's and Canada's unity. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, King hoped that the need to defend the west coast would derail the program, focused as it was on Europe. It did not.

Ralston had overcome his doubts by the time discussions began in the Cabinet War Committee in earnest in early December. Much to King's dismay, Ralston announced his intention to back the army proposals to complete the six division force, including ancillary Corps and Army units, even if conscription was necessary.¹⁶¹ His frequent references to the British sacrifices and war effort suggest the influence of his recent trip to the United Kingdom. Whatever the reason for his change of heart, Ralston's support of the programme in cabinet proved critical. To secure King's

¹⁵⁷ CP, Vol 1, D1, "Army Programme, 1942-1943"; RG2 7C, Vol 6, Appendices CWCM, Reference to Chiefs of Staff "Monthly Appreciation, HQS5199, 5 Nov 1941."

¹⁵⁸ RG2 7C, CWCM, 2-4 Dec 1941.

¹⁵⁹ GDP, TC2, Folder 20, "Memo: 20 Nov 1941."

¹⁶⁰ GDP, TC3, Folder 21, "Memo, Conversation with King, 28 Feb 1942."

¹⁶¹ RG2 7C, Vol 6, CWCM, 2 Dec 1941.

support, dubious though it was, Ralston agreed to make no further commitments to army expansion, although he refused to provide assurances that conscription would not be necessary.¹⁶²

Part of the reason for Ralston's change of heart was, ironically, Crerar's shrewd use of the government's own lack of faith in its military advisors, a lack of faith reflected in the continued reliance on British military opinion, to obtain the ministerial support he needed to sway the other ministers. Crerar gained his long sought operational command, appointed as GOC, 1st Canadian Infantry Division.¹⁶³ Newly posted to divisional command, Crerar arrived in England on 23 December 1941 determined to promote an army formation. He and McNaughton conferred with the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces General, Sir Bernard Paget, on the future organization of the Canadian forces. After Crerar outlined his programme, he noted that it "was before the Government and that while final approval had not yet been given, the proposals were receiving very favourable consideration." This was, of course, not true – the programme was being hotly debated. When asked by Paget what organization would control the units suggested in the 1942 Army programme then under consideration, McNaughton stated that he "would prefer an Army HQ with two Corps."¹⁶⁴

Despite a lukewarm reception by Paget for this idea, McNaughton subsequently cabled the same message to Ralston. Somewhat incredulously, the Minister wired: "This involves a somewhat imposing expansion in overhead and did not understand it had been advocated by you."¹⁶⁵ McNaughton's advocacy, however, was secure and any doubts he had were stilled by the CIGS's stated support on 7 January 1942 for an "Army Headquarters which will...free the Corps Commander's hands for the job of commanding and training the fighting formations. That in itself is a full-time job!"¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, it appears that General Alan Brooke, recently named Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) threw his support behind the Canadian Army Headquarters idea based in part on his growing doubts about McNaughton's capabilities as an operational commander and concerns about the unchecked growth of Canadian troops outside the Corps purview.¹⁶⁷ Crerar cultivated the support of the War Office, persuading Brooke of the utility of a Canadian army formation in meetings in October and December in part because they viewed an army HQ as a means of removing McNaughton from operational command of the Canadian Corps. It was no coincidence that Brooke's letter to McNaughton on 7 January 1942

¹⁶² RG2 7C, Vol 3, CWCM, 15 July 1941 and 29 July 1941; GDP, TC2, Folder 20, "Memo: Conversation with Crerar, 28 July 1941."

¹⁶³ Crerar was not long in divisional command. He was Acting GOC, 1st Canadian Corps when McNaughton went on sick leave.

¹⁶⁴ RG24, Vol 13,683, War Diary, March 1942, "G" Branch, 1 Canadian Corps, "Memorandum: [Discussions with McNaughton, Paget and Crerar], 25 Dec 1941".

¹⁶⁵ RG24, Vol 13,683, Memorandum, 25 Dec 1941; CP, Vol 1, D18, "GOC Files 1941-1944, Memoranda General"; Stacey, *Six Years of War*, p. 96; John Swettenham, *McNaughton, Volume 2: 1939-1943* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), pp. 188-9.

¹⁶⁶ Stacey, *Six Years of War*, p. 97; Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: the Making of a General, 1887-1942* (Great Britain: Coronet Edition, 1984; 1st Edition, 1981), p. 479.

¹⁶⁷ Swettenham, *McNaughton, Volume II*, p. 188; Rickard, *McNaughton*, p.59.

suggesting an army headquarters followed on the heels of a lunch with Crerar that same day where their discussions centred on Crerar's ideas for the new "Force Headquarters."¹⁶⁸

The British sanction was enough to secure McNaughton's support for the idea of an army headquarters. His endorsement, with its explicit statement of British concurrence, was then enough to sway a reluctant, and weary, Minister of National Defence. The Prime Minister recorded his observations on Ralston's condition at the time. "I am really deeply concerned about Ralston. He has become obsessed with the Hong Kong matter...Looks much older and one can see is suffering intensely." Shaken by the outbreak of war in the Pacific and the disaster at Hong Kong, Ralston was again at the mercy of his military advisors. He endorsed the proposal for the army headquarters¹⁶⁹ and the Minister's support was critical in overcoming the last resistance to Crerar's proposals. Angus L. Macdonald, minister of defence for naval services, among others, also supported the army programme, even if conscription was necessary. Dexter recorded that King, fearing a cabinet split, agreed to the army programme, even as he quietly began to consider a plebiscite to release the government from its no conscription pledge.¹⁷⁰

The programme, including the proposal for an army headquarters, remained atop the War Cabinet agenda for several weeks, with no clear consensus in sight. It was the Japanese victories in the Pacific combined with Ralston's threats of resignation as well as Crerar's successor as CGS Lieutenant-General Ken Stuart's reassurances both that "the visible ceiling of army expansion" had been reached and that the commitments could be fulfilled through voluntary enlistments that forced King to concede a point he had no real means of countering. The idea of a sixth overseas division was dropped due to manpower anxieties but Crerar got his second corps and his army formation, plus 2 divisions for home defence.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ RG24, Vol 13,683, War Diary "G" Branch 1st Canadian Corps, "General Report from Canadian Corps for the Week Ending 10 January 1942"; LHC, AP, 5/5, Diary, 7 Jan 1942.

¹⁶⁹ RP, Vol 70, "Mr.Ralston's Personal Notes re Personal Preliminary Enquiry"; King Diaries, T171, 12 Feb 1942.

¹⁷⁰ GDP, TC2, "Memo: 22 Dec 1941."

¹⁷¹ RG2 7C, Vol 6, CWCM, 3 Dec 1941.

5 Conclusion

The collapse of France and the ensuing crisis of 1940, aptly called the “Fulcrum of the Twentieth Century” by David Reynolds, created the conditions for Crerar to play a more prominent role in determining Canada’s war effort.¹⁷² For the British and American governments, the defeat of France “came as a devastating shock.”¹⁷³ British strategy collapsed in May 1940 along with French armed forces following their defeat at Sedan. The strategy had been based on the assumption of a long conflict in which the Empire’s superior naval and financial resources would ensure victory over Nazi Germany. France’s defeat removed the key linchpin of British strategy for a long war. In its aftermath, Britain’s position looked bleak as victory over Germany simply could not be achieved by the British war effort alone. The fall of France was a catalyst for change in Canada’s war effort as well, but it was change shaped, and directed, by the government’s military advisors, chief among them Crerar. The collapse of the western allied armies revealed the shortcomings of Mackenzie King’s preferred “limited liability” strategy, but in the new and grave circumstances ushered in by the defeat of France, Canadian politicians and their civilian advisors seemed incapable of articulating a new strategy. The crisis in June of 1940 had the immediate consequence of removing some of the financial restrictions previously imposed on the military’s expansion. This crisis-driven military expansion was not reconciled to any government defence policy or coherent assessment of the what Canada’s objectives should be in the war beyond Mackenzie King’s national unity, no-conscription agenda. This may have been a sound political strategy, but provided no boundaries for understanding how to contribute to an Allied victory.

Crerar boldly stepped into this strategy void. In so doing, he was criticized for the strategy he advocated, which placed large ground forces at the center of Canada’s war effort. He was disparaged as well for his perceived incursions into the policy sphere and his personal ambition. These criticisms were not unfounded. He was ambitious, but that in and of itself is not bad. Crerar believed that all military professionals should aspire to high command. Similarly, King and others feared that fielding an army might require conscription, and avoiding this eventuality was paramount in their thinking. What King thought would be necessary for a Canadian war effort to defeat Germany, following the collapse of his limited liability strategy, remains unclear. In contrast, Crerar was firmly convinced that a significant ground effort would be required to defeat German forces in Europe, a belief that went beyond a simple parochial desire to promote his service. And, in hindsight, he was right. However, concerns over his incursions into the grey areas of the policy-strategy interface missed the underlying reality signalled by Crerar’s approach: a new, if short-lived, dialogue of equals was emerging, one that reflected a model of an inclusive civil-military relations more effective than the view that each should work in clearly divisible spheres, shaped by discrete expertise and a hierarchical relationship between civilians and the military.

¹⁷² David Reynolds, “1940: Fulcrum of the Twentieth Century?” *International Affairs* 66, 2 (Apr. 1990), 325-50.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 329, 334-35.

His appointment as Chief of the General Staff in July 1940 proved critical in reshaping the relationship between the politicians, civilian advisors and the military at the Department of National Defence and within the government as a whole. In his new position, Crerar first pushed for administrative reforms that enhanced the influence of CGS among the military advisors. He then took steps to reduce the influence of civilian officials in the department, relegating the DM and others so that they were, at a bare minimum, co-equals. The wartime crisis marginalized the foreign policy advisors. Returning from London in 1940, Crerar used his first hand knowledge of the British war effort to strengthen his position as a key military advisor to the government, impressing several politicians, including a skeptical Mackenzie King, with his solid grasp of the strategic situation in Europe. Crerar had also learned from past mistakes, especially from his previous experience as a senior staff officer under McNaughton in the 1930s, demonstrating an increasing sophistication in the manner in which he presented his ideas to the War Cabinet. Did he overstep bounds when considering the domestic and policy implications of his decisions, or when consolidating media support? Perhaps if the normal theory is applied, but less so if one considers the relationship from the perspective of a dynamic and evolving dialogue. He continued to push his rearmament schemes, but he was always careful to do so in a way that mitigated the potential of political antipathy. Seizing the opportunity presented by the fall of France, Crerar slowly built support for his army programme and, in the process, showed that he was adroit at overcoming bureaucratic and political obstacles to his views. Crerar proved he was able to succeed, as Colin Gray puts it, “in the no man’s land where politics/policy and military power meet” – the strategy bridge where national decisions about the use of military power for political purposes are made.¹⁷⁴ In the long run it cost him – when he succeeded in obtaining an operational command, neither King nor Ralston wished to retain Crerar in Ottawa on the grounds of his indispensability to organizing the war effort in the way President Roosevelt did with George Marshall, or Churchill did with Alan Brooke. However, Crerar was undoubtedly one of the few indispensable men in shaping Canada’s army and larger war effort.

The role of Crerar in shaping the decision of Mackenzie King’s Government in developing and fielding the First Canadian Army sheds important light on some enduring characteristics of civil-military relations in Canada and the difficulties faced by decision-makers in devising national plans for the use of military power. It also illustrates well the weaknesses of the normal theory, with its simple division between policy direction and policy implementation. In his study of the development of the office of the Chief of the Defence Staff, Doug Bland interprets this division as at the root of many of the tensions between the military and the civil authority. In the absence of clear defence policy and national strategy, senior military advisors, at times, “make their own interpretation of commitments based on their assessment of the national interest as well as professional loyalties.” The result, he argues, is that “In Canada, the history of the civil-military

¹⁷⁴ Colin S. Gray, *Schools for Strategy: Teaching Strategy for 21st Century Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) Publications, November 2009), p. 32. See also Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 17; and Antulio J. Echevarria, II, *Toward an American Way of War* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) Publications, March 2004), p. 16.

relation in the context of commitments has been a theory of unrelenting confusion and conflict between governments and military officers.”¹⁷⁵

We have argued that one of the key characteristics is in fact a dialogue between elected officials and their advisors, military and civilian. This dialogue can be characterized by conflicting views and advice, but often results in synthesis if not consensus. The conflict and tension is a natural and necessary part of that dialogue. Neither does the conflict fall along strict military and civil lines, or even between elected and non-elected advisors. Indeed, during the period 1939-41, stances on conscription crossed civil-military, elected and non-elected as well as party and regional lines. It also revealed another characteristic: the tendency of the defence bureaucracy to try and act as mediators between the military and elected officials, and the consequent tension between the military and the bureaucracy that results.¹⁷⁶ When Canada’s approach to war floundered in 1940 and the civilian leadership struggled to give the necessary direction to the country war effort in wake of the defeat of France, Crerar had some definite ideas about what Canada’s war effort should be and he actively set out to gain acceptance of his views, establishing a fulsome dialogue, in effect, with the politicians, concurrently working to diminish the distance between himself and his political masters. Mackenzie King and other civilian ministers may have resented Crerar’s growing influence and the logic of his arguments as well as his ambitions but they could hardly have dispensed with him or his advice. Personality and perception played a part in the pace of Crerar’s success, and his ultimate fate, but he was effective because at the height of the crisis in 1940, substance mattered.

Some sided with Crerar sooner than others, creating divisions amongst both the military and civilians. Still, the prime minister’s grudging reliance on his more knowledgeable military advisor fits a larger pattern of civil-military relations and dialogue in Canada. Lacking the technical expertise of military professionals, politicians and civilian officials frequently avoid what they perceive to be “specialist” discussions especially when these deal with military organization, conduct of operations, planning military missions, equipment and training, even though these are manifestations of shaping and implementing policy and strategy. They compensate by focusing on areas in which they believe they possess an advantage such as control of resources and government policy formulation. Conversely, Crerar pushed for more contact, not less, as much to educate (in his view at least), not merely to influence.

While it has been more than seventy years since the fall of France, the relationship between Mackenzie King and his military advisers like Crerar looks very much like the norm for Canadian civil-military relations in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Adhering consciously or subconsciously to the normal theory of civil-military relations and lacking in-depth knowledge of the military instrument at their disposal, today’s decision-makers continue to struggle with strategy formulation and rarely engage in sustained and informed dialogue with their military

¹⁷⁵ Doug Bland, *Chiefs of Defence: Government and the Unified Command of the Canadian Armed Forces* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute for Strategic Studies, 1995), p. 15.

¹⁷⁶ Desmond Morton, *Understanding Canadian Defence*, (Toronto: Penguin Canada), 2003, p. 168

advisors. As a result, they face difficulties translating military power into political effect in pursuit of national objectives.

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DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA		
(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall document is classified)		
<p>1. ORIGINATOR (The name and address of the organization preparing the document. Organizations for whom the document was prepared, e.g. Centre sponsoring a contractor's report, or tasking agency, are entered in section 8.)</p> <p>Defence R&D Canada – CORA 101 Colonel By Drive Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2</p>	<p>2. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION (Oversall security classification of the document including special warning terms if applicable.)</p> <p>UNCLASSIFIED (NON-CONTROLLED GOODS) DMC A REVIEW: GCEC December 2013</p>	
<p>3. TITLE (The complete document title as indicated on the title page. Its classification should be indicated by the appropriate abbreviation (S, C or U) in parentheses after the title.)</p> <p>Canadian Civil-Military Relations, 1939-1941: A Case Study in Strategic Dialogue</p>		
<p>4. AUTHORS (last name, followed by initials – ranks, titles, etc. not to be used)</p> <p>Dickson, P.: Roi, M.</p>		
<p>5. DATE OF PUBLICATION (Month and year of publication of document.)</p> <p>July 2011</p>	<p>6a. NO. OF PAGES (Total containing information, including Annexes, Appendices, etc.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">72</p>	<p>6b. NO. OF REFS (Total cited in document.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0</p>
<p>7. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (The category of the document, e.g. technical report, technical note or memorandum. If appropriate, enter the type of report, e.g. interim, progress, summary, annual or final. Give the inclusive dates when a specific reporting period is covered.)</p> <p>Technical Memorandum</p>		
<p>8. SPONSORING ACTIVITY (The name of the department project office or laboratory sponsoring the research and development – include address.)</p> <p>Defence R&D Canada – CORA 101 Colonel By Drive Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2</p>		
<p>9a. PROJECT OR GRANT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable research and development project or grant number under which the document was written. Please specify whether project or grant.)</p> <p>PG 0, 10 ac</p>	<p>9b. CONTRACT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable number under which the document was written.)</p>	
<p>10a. ORIGINATOR'S DOCUMENT NUMBER (The official document number by which the document is identified by the originating activity. This number must be unique to this document.)</p> <p>DRDC CORA TM 2011-116</p>	<p>10b. OTHER DOCUMENT NO(s). (Any other numbers which may be assigned this document either by the originator or by the sponsor.)</p>	
<p>11. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY (Any limitations on further dissemination of the document, other than those imposed by security classification.)</p> <p>Unlimited</p>		
<p>12. DOCUMENT ANNOUNCEMENT (Any limitation to the bibliographic announcement of this document. This will normally correspond to the Document Availability (11). However, where further distribution (beyond the audience specified in (11) is possible, a wider announcement audience may be selected.)</p> <p>Unlimited</p>		

13. ABSTRACT

Second World War political and military decision makers faced a complex set of issues; the success and scale of Canada's wartime effort tends to obscure that reality. The ability of decision makers to understand and shape the future was constrained by a number of factors during the critical years, 1939-41. Two stand out, and will be the subject of two case studies in national security decision making. The first Technical Memorandum looks at the impact of the fall of France in June 1940 on the established pattern of decision-making in Canadian civil-military relations. This episode lent credence to the views of military advisors and increased their influence in national strategic discussions. The second case study, and the subject of a companion Technical Memorandum, examines the debates about military power in 1940 in the context of the strategic vacuum left by the new constitutional relationship with Great Britain, the growing importance of the United States and the upheaval in western geopolitics resulting from the collapse of France, perceived as the West's foremost military power. In consequence, Canadian strategic planners engaged in what was probably the first substantive debate about how Canada should exercise its new constitutional independence in pursuit of strategic objectives in the world, a debate that manifested itself in discussions regarding the size and use of Canada's military.

The research for this Technical Memorandum falls within the existing DRDC Advanced Research Program (ARP) project on strategic military planning (PG 0, 10 ac).

Les décideurs politiques et militaires de la Seconde Guerre mondiale ont fait face à des questions complexes; or, la réussite et l'ampleur de l'effort de guerre du Canada a tendance à obscurcir cette réalité. La capacité des décideurs à comprendre et à façonner l'avenir a été limitée par un certain nombre de facteurs durant les années cruciales, c'est-à-dire de 1939 à 1941. Deux d'entre eux se démarquent et feront l'objet de deux études de cas dans le domaine de la prise de décisions sur la sécurité nationale. Le présent document technique examine l'incidence de la chute de la France en juin 1940 sur le régime établi de prise de décisions dans les relations civilo-militaires canadiennes. Cet épisode a ajouté foi aux points de vue des conseillers militaires et accru leur influence dans les discussions stratégiques à l'échelle nationale. La deuxième étude de cas, sujet d'un document technique connexe, examinera les débats concernant la puissance militaire en 1940 dans le contexte du vide stratégique laissé par la nouvelle relation constitutionnelle avec la Grande-Bretagne, de l'importance grandissante des États-Unis et des bouleversements dans la géopolitique occidentale par suite de l'effondrement de la France, perçue comme la principale puissance militaire de l'Occident. En conséquence, les spécialistes canadiens de la planification stratégique se sont engagés dans ce qui était probablement le premier débat de fond sur la façon dont le Canada devrait exercer sa nouvelle indépendance constitutionnelle afin d'atteindre des objectifs stratégiques sur la scène mondiale, débat qui s'est manifesté dans les discussions sur la taille et l'utilisation des forces militaires du Canada.

La recherche effectuée pour le présent document technique relève du projet actuel de Programme de recherche avancée (PRA) de RDDC sur la planification militaire stratégique (PG 0, 10 ac).

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Civil-Military Relations, World War Two, Strategy, Leadership, Canadian Army

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