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# International Relations in Professional Military Education

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# Infinity Journal

# A Note From The Editor

When Infinity Journal (IJ) was established in November 2010, our over arching reason to exist was that of informing and educating professional communities about strategy as it pertained to war and warfare. Thus it is a considerable pleasure and even honour to publish the proceedings of a conference held at the Norwegian Military Academy on International Relations in Professional Military Education (PME).

The need for professional military education to address the very reason for its existence may not be in doubt, but clearly there are a numbering of differing views as to why and even how this can best be addressed.

Today we seem to be slow at recovering the basics that were once intuitive to many military men and women, but that assertion may lack one critical detail. We may well have taught soldiers to shoot, but how well did we ever teach them when to shoot and when not to? Did it matter? Who, why and when you kill could be said to be the very core of any strategic argument. It can well be claimed that soldiers had a more natural understanding of strategy, back when policy and politicians better understood the use of violence and its consequences. Correctly read, the Law of Armed Conflict does little to restrain force. Rules of Engagement restrict force because they are the instruments of policy.

As Clausewitz made plain, you can do little that is militarily effective if the policy you are fighting for is "at fault," and as Afghanistan and Iraq both show, only certain policies allow for the use of violence.

At the heart of PME may lie the simple assertion that, in a democracy, or even a developed nation, military force must be subservient to political mastery, but it may also be PME's most important lesson to understand the very real limits of what force can achieve given a policy that does not fully understand its terrible necessity.

**William F. Owen**

Editor, Infinity Journal  
January 2016

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This article argues that educating future Army officers, at the pre-commissioning level, to enable strategic thinking and action is directly connected to the U.S. Army's expectations for leaders at all levels of command and is necessary to support the Army's leader development concept across an officer's career. The article will explain how the U.S. Military Academy approaches this educational responsibility and how the study of international relations contributes to this goal.

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The paper focuses on the challenge of getting practice-oriented cadets interested in learning IR theories which they perceive as abstract and remote from their foreseeable (medium-term) professional practice. It considers teaching IR from the perspective of the theory-practice divide. At the Netherlands Defense Academy we have designed two international security studies courses specifically to bridge the gap. At the heart of the first is a case study of a contemporary conflict. The second course zooms out to consider the strategic environment and defense policy. Both are structured around student-driven tutorial sessions, which puts cadets in charge of applying theory to their own future practice.

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## **International Relations in Interdisciplinary Professional Military Education: The Norwegian Model**

**27****Carsten F. Roennfeldt**

Norwegian Military Academy

By focusing on the way cadets learn international relations this article unfolds how professional military education at the Norwegian Military Academy has changed during the past decades. In an effort to enhance junior army officers' competence as strategic actors in rapidly evolving security contexts the Academy has increasingly emphasised learning over teaching and interdisciplinary over single disciplinary subjects.

## **From Territorial Defence to Expeditionary Forces. Mastering International Relations and Coping with Different Cultures Has Become a Strategic Necessity for Danish Officers**

**35****Dorthe Nyemann & Jørgen Staun**

Danish Army Academy and Royal Danish Defence College

After the Cold War the Danish Armed Forces moved away from its traditional role of territorial defense of Danish soil and towards a role as a globally deployable expeditionary force, imbedded with UK and/or US forces. This shift in national strategy amplified the requirements of the young officers' ability to think and act strategically in international missions. This article discusses to what extent this has been reflected in the education of the young officers.

## **Does Canada Educate Strategic Subalterns?**

**40****David Last, Ali Dizboni & H. Christian Breede**

Royal Military College of Canada

The classes and professors at Canada's RMC closely resemble those of a liberal arts university. Strategic thinking and practice are by-products of a broad education, not doctrine or direction from outside the university.

## **Teaching IR at Sandhurst: Blended Learning through an Integrated Approach**

**50****An Jacobs**

Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst

Unlike most European and North American Military Academies, The Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst in the UK offers a one-year commissioning course for officer cadets where blended learning is key. The article provides a concise insight into how IR-related academic subjects are taught at Sandhurst and emphasises the uniqueness of integrating academic subjects and military training. It assesses the apparent trend towards an enhanced appreciation and emphasis on the academic aspect of officer education and concludes with key current challenges and opportunities.

# Introduction: Developing Strategic-Minded Junior Officers

Scott A. Silverstone

The education of military officers is rarely treated as a strategic question. Yet within the classic “conceptual architecture of strategy” – the ways, means and ends that should define the main elements of state action[i] – the intellectual capabilities of the officer corps constitute a critical resource or means for executing strategy, a resource that is arguably no less important than the military hardware that governments invest in. In other words, officer education is a strategic issue because it determines whether leaders at all levels of the chain of command can actually convert the concepts that define strategic “ways” into the political ends that states seek. Given the complexity of the security problems that contemporary military forces are expected to solve, how we educate military officers to prepare them for these complex missions is of growing importance. The most conceptually sophisticated and logically coherent strategies devised by the most talented strategic planners will crumble if leaders on the ground do not understand how to put these strategies to work with the tools they have available. Once we recognize that military education is deeply embedded within the broader framework of strategic action, we can start asking important questions about the intellectual skills officers must possess and what they need to know to effectively link ways and ends in the pursuit of national goals.

The articles in this special issue of *Infinity Journal* take up this strategic question, but approach it from an angle that is largely neglected: the education of officer cadets at the pre-commissioning level of service. Professional Military Education (PME) is certainly a widely discussed and debated issue in research on defense capabilities and among government officials charged with developing and maintaining PME programs and institutions.[ii] Attention to PME is also evident at the international level; for example, the NATO alliance maintains a robust interest in the education of member states’ military officers and the professional education of officers in the large number of countries that participate in the Partnership for Peace program. PME is most often characterized as essential for interoperability among NATO allies and partner states working together in a range of military operations.[iii]

But even a cursory look at the work on PME by policy analysts and government officials will show that the discussion is almost exclusively focused on the education of mid-career and senior officers at national war colleges. In the NATO context, while the structure and content of PME remains a national prerogative for each member state, we have great visibility into how NATO countries educate their more senior officers and insight into varying national models, which facilitates the sharing of best practices and collaboration among multiple states in the development of leaders as strategic resources.

In contrast, the education of officers at the beginning of their careers is virtually ignored in the broader policy discussion and in research on PME. The authors of the articles in this special issue are in a particularly good position to reflect on the question of PME at the junior level and open a window on current practices; each serves on the faculty of a national military academy within a particular NATO member state, and together they represent a diverse set of countries and institutions, including Norway, the Netherlands, Canada, Denmark, the United States, Latvia, and the United Kingdom. Moreover, as scholars and educators of international relations, they are particularly attuned to the deeper strategic-political conditions their students will face when serving in the field in their national armies and as part of coalition operations.

The articles in this issue are based on the premise that officer education at the pre-commissioning level has strategic significance on two levels: 1) it is the foundation for effective action at junior levels of command, particularly for land forces; and 2) it sets the intellectual conditions necessary for continued professional growth as these officers advance to the senior ranks and take up what are traditionally considered “strategic” leadership positions. The second of these two claims is probably non-controversial; the first claim, however, requires some justification.

If the job of a junior military officer, leading a platoon or a company, was merely to destroy set targets or physically subdue designated enemy forces, particularly as part of large unit operations, then there might be little need to worry about that officer’s intellectual preparation. Heavy top-down control over small unit actions would relieve junior officers from having to think beyond the tactical problem of applying brute force to achieve rather simple physical effects on

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adversary forces. But among the diverse missions conducted by small units over the past several decades, conventional high intensity conflict has been rare. [iv] Instead, junior officers have been tasked to lead in counterinsurgency operations, peace enforcement missions, and in "nation building." Whether in Bosnia or Iraq, Afghanistan or Mali, military forces, as the strategic "means" deployed, were responsible for pursuing highly complex political and social endstates that defined the strategic effects being pursued. In turn, very young officers had to grapple with a complicated mixture of political, social, cultural, and economic variables affecting the behavior of adversaries, allies, and neutrals alike. And to be effective, they had to figure out how to manipulate these variables to produce the strategic goals set by higher policy (and to do so without simply resorting to the brute force at their disposal).

As Colin Gray noted in an earlier issue of this journal, there is "interdependency among levels (policy, strategy, operations, tactics)" of state action. "Both scholars and practitioners have observed that although E[nds], W[ays], M[ean]s is, and has to be, a hierarchy of authority, that characterization tends to obscure the degree of dependence of higher levels upon competence at lower... Strategic effect has to be built on tactical foundations." [v] This point goes beyond the notion of the "Strategic Corporal" that General Charles Krulak popularized when he was the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps in the late 1990s. General Krulak emphasized that in the midst of crisis, the actions of the most junior leaders at the squad level could have strategic effects on mission accomplishment, particularly when things go wrong. [vi] While Gray correctly notes that the work of leaders at lower levels in the chain of command "require direction by higher – which is to say operational, strategic, and political – authority," the authors of the articles here are concerned with the role of junior military officers as strategic actors who are often called on to consciously plan, direct, assess the effectiveness of, and adjust multidimensional operations that advance the political ends of their governments.

This brings us back to the question behind the articles in this special issue: how are we educating our young officer candidates to prepare them to confront the heavy intellectual challenges of strategic thought and action? As with any strategic resourcing question, decisions about officer education are set within a context of budgetary constraints, personnel cuts in the armed forces of many NATO members, differing national priorities, a shifting threat environment, and limited time to prepare officer cadets for the leadership roles they will assume. These issues are clearly evident in how the different authors address the question of officer education within their own institutions.

Despite the inevitable differences among their institutions and programs, two factors link the contributing authors. First, each of the contributors is preparing officers who will serve in the armies of NATO member states. The fact that many of their students have served, and will serve together in future alliance operations, means that they share a collective stake in developing the intellectual capabilities of officers across

NATO and in understanding the implications of education for the interoperability of NATO forces.

The second factor linking these articles is that each contributor has special responsibility for educating future officers in the general field of international relations and will boldly support the importance of study in this field (along with the broader social sciences, history, ethics and law) for young leaders who must translate strategic ways into strategic ends in complex operational settings. One of the *IJ Briefs* on this journal's website acknowledges the important relationship between strategy and international relations as an academic field of study and the fact that international relations theory is a valuable tool for explaining the behavior of states and non-state actors, which in turn can "help us make better policies and strategies." It also argues correctly that while theory can help us shape the practice of international relations, practice and experience must inform our theories of human behavior. [vii] The contributors to this issue, as educators responsible for the development of future military officers, appreciate the essential link between theory and practice and the need to make the international relations education of these particular students relevant to the professional demands they will face after graduation.

The relevance of international relations and related fields for officer education emerges from the role that platoon leaders and company commanders fill as strategic actors. Admittedly, this is a contentious position, but to clarify the point, consider the three nodes that define any strategy's basic components – the ways, means, and ends. These three nodes must logically cohere, and the relationship among them must rest on sound and generalizable claims about human behavior. In other words, it is the *connective tissue* among these three nodes that place the greatest intellectual demands on those who develop and execute strategy at any level in the chain of command. By connective tissue, we mean the theoretical or logical link between these nodes of strategy. The very idea of strategy hinges on predictive claims about cause and effect. What types of actions or conditions will likely produce what kinds of outcomes? And these predictions about cause and effect must be rooted in our ability to draw from (and critically evaluate) generalizations, or theories, about human behavior. It is here that the education of officers finds an outlet for supporting strategic thinking and action.

Within the architecture of strategy, cause and effect theorizing occurs at two levels. At the broadest level, we must understand the logical bridge that links strategic ways and the strategic ends we seek. [viii] Conceptually, why are certain types of actions likely to produce the ends desired? At the second level, we have theories of the operational art for executing these strategic ways in the real world. Specifically, how can we actually generate, organize and use diplomatic, informational, economic, and military means to produce desired political effects? It is impossible to comprehend, develop, or execute strategy without knowing the alternative theoretical or logical claims that strategy might be based on (see Figure 1 below).

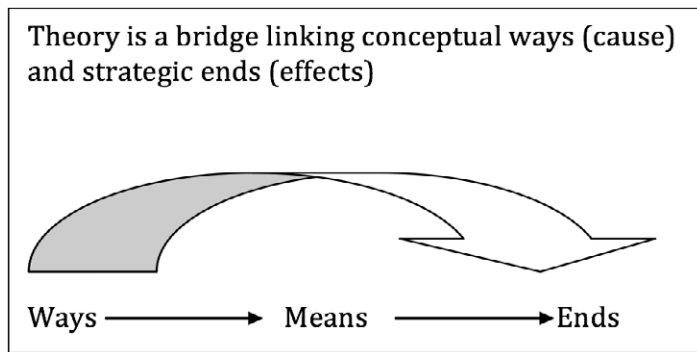


Figure 1. Two Levels of Theorizing for Strategic Action

Each of the articles in this issue explores the unique contributions of education in international relations (and the broader social sciences and history) to strategic thinking and action, and taken together, they open a window on the varying national programs represented here. The goal is not to provide a direct comparative study of these military academies, but to initiate inquiry into the education of young leaders within the professional military education systems of diverse NATO member states. Our premise is that what is taught, and how, are also strategic decisions, whether governments or their PME institutions explicitly recognize this or not. The articles show how much variation there is among NATO member military academies, including whether they support a specific service or provide joint education, whether all officer cadets are provided with an identical educational program or have choice among various degree programs, how they integrate academic education with military training, and the degree to which they focus on the professional needs of lieutenants versus educating for a long-term career.

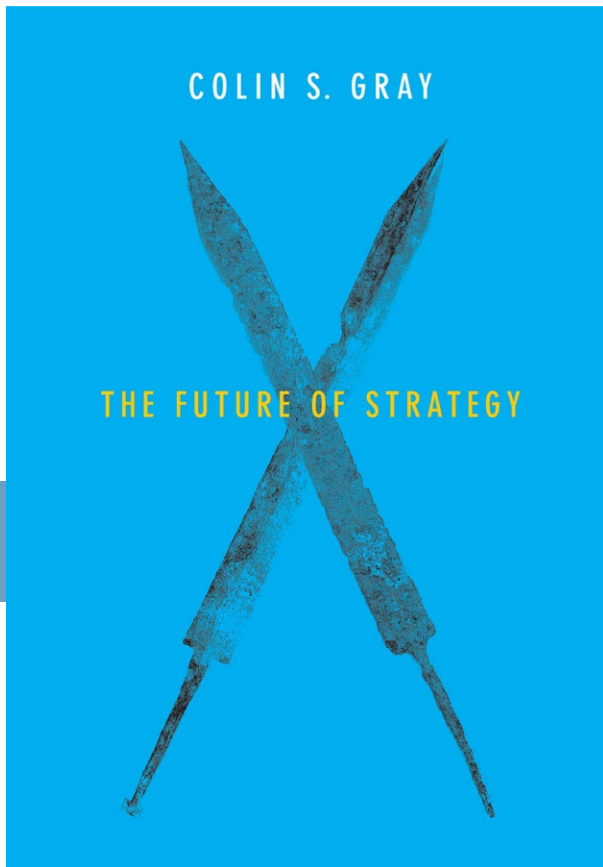
The contribution from Silverstone and Ramsey makes a case for educating cadets at the United States Military Academy for strategic thinking and action, it demonstrates how this objective nests within the U.S. Army's "Mission Command" initiative, and explains what the West Point curriculum, and the study of international relations, contribute to this larger goal. Nyemann and Staun explore how post-Cold War Danish "foreign policy activism" and expeditionary

army operations have increased the importance of officer education in political science, international relations and law at the Royal Danish Military Academy. Rothman focuses on how the international security studies program at the Netherlands Defense Academy bridges the gap between theory and practice in international relations, which is essential not only to ensure that the cadets' education is professionally relevant, but also to motivate their cadets to engage with and benefit from the coursework in their intellectual development. Roennfeldt presents a distinctive model used by the Norwegian Military Academy that integrates the study of history, political science, international relations, international law and ethics with operationally-focused studies of tactics and leadership. Last, Dizboni and Breede, drawing from the educational strategy at the Royal Military College of Canada, introduce the concept of "the learning subaltern," who sets out on a career-long quest for professionally relevant knowledge. This emergent approach to strategic education accommodates a wide range of ideas about strategy and international relations, which is suitable to the uncertainty of the post-Cold War, post-9/11, and possibly post-hegemonic eras. Rostoks examines the unique position of the Latvian National Defence Academy, which is working to move beyond the legacy of Soviet rule, the absence of Western social sciences until independence in 1991, and a heavy focus on tactics in Latvian PME, to determine the proper role for the study of political science and international relations for its future military officers. Jacobs discusses the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the UK which, unlike most European and North American Military Academies, offers a one-year commissioning course for officer cadets where blended learning is key. The article emphasizes the unique way IR-related academic subjects are integrated with military training and assesses the apparent trend towards an enhanced appreciation and emphasis on the academic aspects of officer education.

While we will not agree on each of the important questions raised, through this inquiry, which is long overdue, we hope to improve our ability to evaluate, collectively, whether we are actually developing military leaders – these essential strategic resources – who can carry out the complex strategic missions that their political leaders take on.

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# Who Are We Teaching - Future Second Lieutenants or Strategic Leaders? Education for Strategic Thinking and Action

**Scott A. Silverstone**

United States Military Academy at West Point

**Renee Ramsey**

United States Military Academy at West Point

Scott A. Silverstone has served as a professor of International Relations at the United States Military Academy at West Point since 2001. In 2012-2015 he directed West Point's International Relations Program. He was a U.S. Naval officer from 1986 to 1993 and he holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania. He is a Carnegie Fellow with the New America Foundation in Washington, D.C. and his research focuses on the causes of war.

Renee Ramsey is a Major in the United States Army who currently directs West Point's core curriculum international relations course. She is a graduate of West Point and holds an MPP from the Kennedy School at Harvard University. She is a Military Police officer who has served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan as an MP combat support platoon leader and company commander.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed here reflect those of the authors and do not reflect the official position of the United States Military Academy, the U.S. Army or Department of Defense*

Every spring, approximately 1,000 graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point are commissioned as new Second Lieutenants for the U.S. Army. Year in, year out, the Academy's faculty and staff devote countless hours to preparing cadets for this day, to ensure they have the intellectual tools, the leadership qualities, the basic military skills and physical conditioning necessary to move into critical positions as the Army's most junior commissioned officers. West Point's formal mission statement focuses on the task of ensuring that each graduate is a "commissioned leader

of character" that is "prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the United States Army." While this mission contains several focal points for the West Point program – *leaders of character, careers of professional excellence, service to the nation*, and the qualities of *officership* – the mission statement alone leaves much unsaid about the kinds of professional attributes U.S. Army officers need over the course of a full career in uniform.

While these new Second Lieutenants will spend the first six or so years of service focused on the demands of small unit leadership, the Academy conceives of a portion of its core mission to include educating these future Army officers for *strategic* thinking and action. Picking up on the core themes of this special issue of *Infinity Journal*, this article will argue that educating for strategic thinking and action at the pre-commissioning level is directly connected to the U.S. Army's expectations for leaders at all levels of command and it is necessary to support the Army's leader development concept across an officer's career. The article will explain how the U.S. Military Academy approaches this educational responsibility, and like the other articles in this special issue, it will conclude with a discussion of how the study of international relations contributes to this goal.

For some, the notion of strategic thinking and action at junior officer levels is a controversial claim. The word "strategy" is often treated as though it begins and ends at the highest levels of policy making. The president, supported by senior civilian and military advisors, develops national-level political objectives, the conceptual ways to achieve these objectives, and then mobilizes and deploys the resources necessary for executing the strategy. Approached from this perspective, young Army officers are merely the instruments of strategy. They receive and execute orders that someone much higher in the chain of command has developed with, hopefully, a carefully calculated understanding of how these tactical operations will contribute to national strategic ends. What business does a Platoon Leader, or even a Company Commander at the grade of Captain have in thinking and acting "strategically"? In fact, it is not hard to find Battalion Commanders who bluntly assert that they do not want their junior leaders thinking strategically; they simply want them to execute their operational tasks with skill and determination.

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This perspective on strategic thinking and action is reinforced by the structure of Professional Military Education in the U.S. Army. After commissioning, the next step for Second Lieutenants is the Basic Officer Leadership Course, which trains them in the tactical and small unit leadership skills they will need in the specific Army branch they have joined. Approximately four years later, young officers will attend the Captains Career Course, which provides branch specific tactical and technical knowledge needed to lead company-size units, while also providing skills necessary to analyze and solve military problems, communicate, and interact as members of a battalion or brigade staff. Strategy does not appear in formal education until the officer participates in the Intermediate Level Education (ILE) program when he or she reaches approximately ten years of commissioned service. But even in ILE the treatment of strategy is limited. Education on strategy is first treated deliberately if an officer attends a Senior Service College (SSC) in later years of a full career, but a relatively small numbers of officers in each year group is given this opportunity.

The objective of this article is not to challenge the formal structure of this system for educating Army officers across their careers. The goal is to argue for a broader conception of strategic thinking and action than the one offered above, to offer a way of understanding "strategic leadership" that is applicable to the education of officers *before* they are commissioned and that will be of value while they are still serving in the junior officer ranks.

The article is based on two core propositions. First, the education we provide cadets at the pre-commissioning level must help them develop a foundation for strategic thinking about war and warfare as junior officers. We are not merely graduating Second Lieutenants that are proficient small unit leaders in a tactical environment. As we have learned in Afghanistan and Iraq, Lieutenants and Captains are strategic actors who must have the intellectual ability to adapt the ways and means of their unit's operations to most effectively support the strategic-political objectives that are set much higher in the chain of command. As Lieutenant General H. R. McMaster has rightly observed, "conflict, unlike command, cannot be divided into discrete levels" – the tactical, operational and strategic[i] – because the essential task at each level of command is the same, to employ military forces in ways that are logically linked and in practice help produce the political goals that give any military mission its purpose.

The second proposition is that the undergraduate liberal education offered at military academies like West Point must help our graduates serve effectively as future strategic leaders when they reach advanced command and staff positions later in their careers. Their undergraduate education should help them leverage the formal education on strategy that the U.S. Army does offer to more senior officers and maximize their potential to excel at higher levels of strategic leadership. To this end, their undergraduate education should also inspire a strong professional commitment to continuous *personal* intellectual development *outside* their formal education. Excellence in strategic leadership depends on lifelong personal study. An undergraduate education cannot provide all the answers to the problems officers will face during their careers, but an effective education should provide guidance on the kinds of questions of enduring importance officers

should focus on in their personal reading and reflection.

The next section provides some background on how the U.S. Army formally approaches the education of officers on strategy. It will be evident that the formal system treats "strategy" as largely irrelevant until late in an officer's career. Building on this background, the article then presents a simple way of defining strategic thinking and action that can inform the education of cadets to help prepare them for commissioned service as strategic leaders across their careers. In keeping with the general theme of this special issue of *Infinity Journal*, the final section examines those aspects of West Point's leader development program and its academic program that are meant to serve this purpose, and it concludes by considering how the study of international relations (and the broader social sciences) and the humanities, with an emphasis on theory, supports this goal.

### Educating on Strategy in the U.S. Army

In June 2013, the U.S. Army published the first formal leader development strategy produced by senior leaders (the Army Leader Development Strategy 2013, or ALDS), which outlines the vision for leader development from pre-commission through general officer ranks. Among its guiding principles is the assertion that the security challenges faced by the Army make it imperative that all leaders "possess the ability to understand the security environment" in which they operate "and the contributions of all elements of national power." [ii] The Army views leader development as a continuous, integrated, and progressive process that involves three domains: the institutional domain that provides formal training and education; the operational domain, in which, as Julius Caesar might assert, "experience is the teacher of all things" [iii] ; and the self-development domain of personal study and reflection. [iv] It is important to note that the Army emphasizes operational experience as the source of the bulk of officer development. There are practical limitations on how much time its leaders can spend on formal education. As a result, the goal of the ALDS Program is to provide leaders with operational experiences that prepare them for their current responsibilities as well as future assignments. Junior leaders gain experience and technical competence, mid-grade leaders further develop their ability to direct organizations at the operational level, and senior leaders contribute to the development and implementation of national strategy. [v]

The use of this three-part leadership structure illustrates an important point: within the Army, *strategic leadership* is defined as a leadership *level* directly affiliated with senior ranks at advanced stages of an officer's career. This in turn is reflected in the content of the Professional Military Education system. At the intermediate *level* in an officer's career, education is universal for all officers in the grade of O-4 through a 10-month resident school at the Command and General Staff College or via distance learning and satellite modules. The curriculum is designed to prepare field grade officers for their next ten years of service, ground them in warfighting doctrine and advance their technical, tactical, and leadership competencies to be successful at more senior levels. [vi] Intermediate education focuses on the bridge from the tactical to operational levels of warfighting, but does not incorporate formal education in strategy. [vii]

The first formal education in strategy for officers typically occurs between 18 and 22 years of service, at the Army's Senior Service College (SSC) located at the U.S. Army War College (USAWC). According to the Army's doctrinal publication for leadership (ADRP 6-22), leaders at the strategic level must possess an understanding of political-military relationships at the national and international level, proficiency in the science of leadership theory and systems, education and experience in geopolitics and history, and "mastery of the strategic art." [viii] Officers are selected by a centralized board to attend the resident program or a variety of equivalent fellowships or joint SSCs. The USAWC curriculum includes national security policy and strategy, strategic leadership, regional studies, as well as military strategy and Department of Defense processes.

### Strategic Thinking and Action: What the U.S. Army Needs from its Leaders

Despite the fact that the formal study of strategy comes at a late stage in a typical officer's career, the U.S. Army does recognize that the ability to *think and act strategically* is essential for leaders at all levels in the chain of command. In other words, "strategic" can be defined as something more than a *level* in the chain of command; it can be defined as a set of *capabilities* an officer should possess. This is more implicit than explicit in how the Army defines the key traits all officers must possess, in such documents as the "U.S. Army Operating Concept: Winning in a Complex World," published recently by the Army's Training and Doctrine Command. The "Operating Concept" does not actually use the word "strategic" to define its officers. But it does present a set of intellectual characteristics and abilities, along with a conception of the operating environment and the demands placed on all levels of command, which can be considered a call for strategic thinking and action.

The definition of "strategic" thinking and action used here is consistent with the definition offered in the introduction to the articles that appear in this special issue of *Infinity Journal*. It is defined as a structured approach to thinking about problems and how to solve them. "Strategic" emphasizes purposeful behavior, specifically, action that is logically linked to larger goals. The "conceptual architecture of strategy" [ix] is rather simple and widely accepted by those who work with the topic, captured by the relationship between "ways," "means," and "ends." Every military action, even those conducted by small units at the lowest levels of command, become meaningful when placed within this structure, either because each tactical action contributes to the execution of the conceptual ways that the state uses to pursue its larger political ends, or they help develop the means (or the resources) necessary to pursue these political ends through military action.

As noted in the introduction to this special issue, while these three nodes – ways, means, and ends – define any strategy's basic components, it is the connective tissue among these three nodes that place the greatest intellectual demands on those who develop and execute strategy. It is here that the education of officers finds an outlet for supporting strategic thinking and action. Specifically, we mean the theoretical or logical link between these nodes of strategy. The very idea

of strategy hinges on predictive claims about cause and effect. What types of actions or conditions will likely produce what kinds of outcomes? And these predictions about cause and effect must be rooted in our ability to draw from generalizations, or theories, about human behavior.

Within the architecture of strategy, cause and effect theorizing occurs at two levels. At the broadest level, we must understand the logical bridge that links strategic ways and the strategic ends we seek. [x] Conceptually, why are certain types of actions likely to produce the ends desired? At the second level, we have theories of the operational art for executing these strategic ways in the real world. In other words, how can we actually generate, organize and use diplomatic, economic, and military means to produce desired political effects? It is impossible to comprehend, develop, or execute strategy without knowing the alternative theoretical or logical claims that strategy might be based on.

As the U.S. Army's Operating Concept makes clear, the intellectual ability to work within this framework of purposeful, cause and effect, behavior is a core competency for any officer. Moreover, the Operating Concept stresses the importance of understanding the *enduring* human dimensions of war and the contest of political wills that it represents, despite the great changes in the character of warfare over time. [xi] "Recent and ongoing conflicts reinforce the need to balance the technological focus of Army modernization with a recognition of the limits of technology and an emphasis on the human, cultural, and political continuities of armed conflict. Nations and organizations in the future will fight for the same reasons that the Greek historian Thucydides identified 2,500 years ago: fear, honor, and interest." [xii] The challenge for a military leader is to understand these motivations for political behavior, to identify the complex variables at work that shape behavior, and with this insight into cause and effect, to develop the means that will effectively produce the desired endstate.

According to the Operating Concept, "Army leaders think critically... assess the situation continuously, develop innovative solutions to problems, and remain mentally and physically agile to capitalize on opportunities." The ability to innovate under conditions of ambiguity is key, and "Innovation is the result of critical and creative thinking and the conversion of new ideas into valued outcomes. Innovation drives the development of new tools or methods that permit Army forces to anticipate future demands, stay ahead of determined enemies, and accomplish the mission." [xiii]

These intellectual characteristics, essential for strategic thinking and action, become most relevant for junior officers in the context of a leadership concept now central to U.S. Army operations: "Mission Command." In his introductory remarks to the Army's "Mission Command Strategy," General Odierno, former U.S. Army Chief of Staff, observed that this concept was implemented out of "operational necessity" in Afghanistan and Iraq. [xiv] Today, however, it has been codified as a formal leadership philosophy that will shape leader development, unit training and warfighting. Mission command is defined as "the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable *disciplined initiative* within the commander's intent to *empower agile and adaptive leaders* in the conduct of unified land operations." [xv] Army leaders



have recognized that widespread adoption of the mission command philosophy will require a cultural shift within the Army because commanders must “become comfortable with *decentralizing control* in order to foster *initiative* and *adaptation* by allowing subordinates the greatest freedom of action in *determining how best to accomplish the mission*.” [xvi]

To make this concept work, it is critical that commanders have confidence in decentralization of control (that it will not lead to disaster) and that junior officers actually deserve to be granted the authority to exercise initiative and adapt operations to best achieve strategic ends. This mission concept ultimately depends on education for strategic thinking and action, before an officer assumes this heavy responsibility.

### Educating for Strategic Thinking at West Point

Most American Army officers receive their commissions through Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs at various American colleges and universities or through Officer Candidate School (OCS) after they have a college degree. Yet the United States Military Academy at West Point is the only undergraduate institution in the United States whose primary mission is to educate all of its students for service as commissioned Army officers. Historically, West Point produces twice the number of combat arms officers and a disproportionately larger number of general officers as the other commissioning sources do. This puts West Point in a unique position, and puts a unique burden on its leadership, to address the issues discussed above.

What intellectual abilities are necessary not only to operate in an environment of complexity, but also to engage as a strategic actor pursuing complex political ends? What is the best content for a program of study that helps cadets develop these general intellectual attributes while making these future officers smarter in subject matter relevant to the strategic problems they will confront?

Over the past several years, the faculty and staff at West Point have had an opportunity to think about these questions from the ground up, to clarify the leadership development goals for their cadets, and to make changes in the structure of the curriculum to most effectively achieve these goals. Three major changes have emerged from this initiative: in 2010 the Academy implemented its new overarching cadet development model – the West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS); in the spring of 2013 the Academy finalized a new set of goals for its Academic Program; and in the fall of 2015 the Academy will launch a revised academic curriculum to take effect for the entering class of 2019.

A close look at West Point’s current developmental programs will reveal two observations relevant to the discussion above: 1) the Academy’s outcome goals do not explicitly declare that its developmental programs are meant to produce “strategic” thinkers and actors; 2) despite this, the goals and structure of the curriculum *in fact* seek to provide its graduates with the ability to think and act strategically as junior officers, and to leave West Point with an intellectual

foundation necessary for growth as strategic thinkers over the course of a career in service.[xvii] This fully aligns with the requirements of leadership at all levels articulated by the broader Army.

The West Point Leader Development System is the overarching concept for integrating cadet experiences across the academic, military, physical and character programs. While it defines eight developmental goals for graduates, one goal in particular – “Think Critically and Creatively” – establishes core competencies for strategic actors who must be able to do two things: *understand* and *innovate* in a cause and effect framework for action. According to the WPLDS Handbook, West Point graduates must be able to

“identify the essential aspects of situations and ask questions necessary to accurately define the parameters of a given challenge or opportunity. They engage both well-defined and ambiguous situations using methodical and reflective thinking as well as rapid analysis. Graduates gather and synthesize information using a wide range of techniques, and actively seek diverse viewpoints when appropriate. They reason quantitatively and qualitatively... They are open-minded and employ their knowledge and skills to make meaningful connections and distinctions across different experiences, concepts, perspectives, and cultures’.[xviii]

Perhaps most important, West Point’s goal is not to produce junior officers that are poised merely to execute fixed orders that flow down the chain of command. Instead, “When appropriate, graduates transform ideas or solutions into entirely new forms by diverging from conventional ways of thinking or reimagining established ideas, ways of thinking, or solutions.” [xix] *When appropriate* is a serious caveat to this goal; key leaders must judge how much latitude and under what conditions they will grant subordinates discretion to exercise innovative strategic thinking and action. But if the U.S. Army is serious about employing the Mission Command concept, decentralizing control and empowering adaptive, innovative subordinate leaders, then critical thinking and creativity are attributes that must be cultivated in the education of its officers prior to commissioning.

### The Role of International Relations and History

Throughout Army documents that address the demands on its leaders and how to develop leaders at all levels of command, the notion that the Army operates on a distinctly human terrain is ubiquitous. Certainly, the Army operates in a hard material world as well, which demands mastery of technology and an understanding of how to operate in a physical environment. Ultimately, however, the Army defines its purpose in terms of understanding and shaping human behavior to achieve the strategic ends set out by higher policy. From an educational perspective, this is where the study of the social sciences and humanities enter. West Point’s Academic Program Goals include preparing graduates to “apply concepts from the humanities and social sciences to understand and analyze the human condition.” And in a more strategic sense, this goal is refined to include preparing graduates to “understand, analyze, and know *how to influence* human behavior.” [xx]

The core curriculum, a broad and rigorous set of classes and experiences that form the liberal education all cadets receive, reflects the implicit assumption that all officers must be capable of working within the basic framework of strategic thought and action. Space limitations make it impossible to provide a comprehensive discussion of the many components of this liberal education and how they contribute to the objective. But consistent with the themes developed in this special issue of *Infinity Journal*, we will conclude with a brief focus on how the study of international relations at West Point complements the academic program and strategic thinking.

As an academic discipline and subfield of political science, the study of international relations is grounded in key questions that beg to be studied – and at West Point we focus on the broad questions of conflict and cooperation, among states, within states, and involving non-state actors – and the theories that propose generalizable explanations for these phenomena. Many scholars and practitioners have noted an apparent divide between the academic study of the field and the needs of those executing policy in the field. While it is important to recognize and minimize the tension that might exist here, our program treats this as an artificial distinction. It is impossible to develop the most elementary comprehension of human behavior in the real world – of states, of corporations, of insurgent groups, or suicide bombers – without theoretical generalizations that might explain the behavior we observe. And as noted above, when trying to shape that behavior through purposeful strategic action, theory becomes the essential connective tissue providing logical structure to the relationship between alternative strategic ways available and the strategic ends we might pursue.

To leverage the intellectual value of theorizing about human behavior, every cadet is required to take a theoretically grounded introductory international relations course. In this course we emphasize the importance of “intellectual pluralism,” an approach to understanding international politics that emphasizes the fact that no single theoretical school of thought can adequately provide insight into every complex phenomenon we are trying to explain. Cadets are encouraged to appreciate the strengths and limitations of rival theories and to develop the ability to use alternative logics as a tool to explore alternative explanations for

behavior observed on the human terrain they operate within. For those cadets that choose international relations as an academic major for in-depth study, their advanced coursework will include a heavy focus on the essential role of history for students of international relations. Studying history within an international relations framework helps them appreciate the questions that motivate the field, it illustrates the logic of different theories in action, allowing the student to tease out cause and effect claims motivating behavior in historical cases, and it offers empirical data for testing alternative theories of cause (ways/means) and effect (ends).

## Conclusion

We certainly appreciate the limitations on how much of the field of international relations students can absorb in a single class or even an academic major at the undergraduate level. The field is immensely complex, the theoretical literature continues to grow, the quantity of relevant history can be overwhelming, and it is impossible to keep up with the available information on real world events. Moreover, international relations is only one of a number of social sciences that can help future Army officers comprehend and strategically shape human behavior.

Despite these challenges, our ultimate goal is to establish a foundation for a lifetime of professional growth for our students as strategic thinkers and actors. And it begins by demonstrating the value of a self-conscious, systematic, and theoretically informed approach to the strategic questions they must address during their careers. We also hope to inspire them toward lifelong learning as the necessary means for developing their intellectual toolkit over the long term. Achieving these goals depends on our ability to think about our cadets as future strategic leaders, not twenty years after graduation, but throughout their careers and at every level of command.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed here reflect those of the authors and do not reflect the official position of the United States Military Academy, the U.S. Army or Department of Defense*



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- [xvi] U.S. Army Mission Command Strategy, 4. Emphasis added. This is in line with how ADRP 6-22 defines the "strategic art": "the skillful formulation, coordination, and application of ends, ways, and means to promote and defend the national interest." While "mastery" of the strategic art is something we cannot expect from younger officers, it is clear that junior leaders must engage in the strategic art if the Army's Mission Command concept is to work.
- [xvii] In fact, a foundational document that presents the developmental concepts used at West Point – Building Capacity to Lead - asserts that "West Point's curriculum provides a liberal education with experiences specifically designed to produce an adaptable Army officer who is ready for continued growth as a strategic thinker and leader." (p. 31). Available at <http://www.usma.edu/strategic/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/building%20the%20capacity%20to%20lead.pdf>. See also *Educating Future Army Officers for a Changing World*, (p. 9). Available at <http://www.usma.edu/strategic/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/EFAOCW.pdf>.
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# Theory for Real-Worlders: Teaching International Security Studies to Dutch Cadets

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## Introduction: theory, policy, practice

This paper is situated in the context of a debate that has been going on for at least 20 years, on the gap between theory and practice in international relations and related fields (such as international security studies, conflict studies and strategic studies). The debate can be characterized as one between “theorists” and “real-worlders”<sup>[i]</sup> in which the real-worlders worry that International Relations theory has become too abstract with little policy relevance. Even where relevant theory is available, it is not effectively communicated to policymakers.<sup>[ii]</sup> The theorists’ answer is that policy relevance is not the only or even the most important function of theory and that focusing too much on problem-solving theory can be bad for critical theory. <sup>[iii]</sup>

A similar “debate” takes place at the Netherlands Defense Academy every year during the international security studies courses between students and teachers. Military students, cadets<sup>[iv]</sup>, are committed real-worlders; their first question is how this course will help them when they take up their commissions as officers in the Dutch armed forces. The answer to this question is important; it determines how our students approach our courses and, by consequence, how well they do in it and how much of it will stick in their minds. Though the exchange between students and teachers doesn’t take the form of an academic debate (hence the quotation marks above), it isn’t a question that can be answered all at once. It is a question that is re-asked about every topic, theme and theory and answered not just in each class session but also in the structure of the course and even the curriculum.

In part, the problem is how to integrate research into

teaching; this has received increased attention in recent years.<sup>[v]</sup> However, the difficulty is considerably increased when students are accustomed to think of themselves as “doers, not thinkers”, a self-image that takes a surprisingly strong hold in only 4 months of initial military training before they enter the academic program. The “real-worlders” in the academic debate are scholars worrying about losing touch; our cadets are (perhaps overly) confident they are in touch but not so sure that we, civilian academics, are. This “debate” is the focus of this paper, though it will be necessary also to say a few things about the academic debate in which it is situated.

First, the theory-practice debate took a new turn in recent years. The debate started around the time that poststructuralism entered the field of international relations. Today, the relevance of constructivism for academic research is undeniable; Alexander Wendt tops *Foreign Policy*’s list of most influential scholar of the past 20 years.<sup>[vi]</sup> From the perspective of the academic discipline, one cannot in good faith teach a full course (or two) in international security studies that does not include constructivism. From the perspective of policy relevance, the case for constructivism has been strengthened by numerous applications to past and current conflicts, to foreign policy and to policymaking process. Even in the field of military strategy it has left its mark, for example on John Boyd’s influential OODA-loop or Chaoplexic warfare.<sup>[viii]</sup> Furthermore, as realists had been among the disregarded critics in the policy debate over the US invasion of Iraq, the experience shifted the focus away from the rationalist-constructivist split within IR with which the issue had been linked.<sup>[ix]</sup> At this point constructivism still stands out as one of the hardest theories for students to grasp, but it is no longer summarily dismissed by philosophical realists.

Second, it should be noted at the outset that the academic debate focuses on contributions to policy. This is not the perspective of our students, whose priority lies with practice. This practice can be provisionally defined as the execution of tasks given to the military by their political masters. There is policymaking at this level but it is not quite the sort or the level that the academic debate is about. One of our first arguments to our students is usually that it’s very useful for them to understand what is going on at that higher level of decision-making, the level at which their goals and their means (including those often frustrating rules of

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engagement) are set. Still, our students initially regard policy as something that is removed from practice. Only a few of them are interested in something they expect to encounter in the workplace only towards the end of their careers, the others have to be convinced. For cadets, the theory – practice gap is located in a different place from where the academic debaters put it.

On the other hand, I think the academic debate is too narrowly focused. Students of public policy are well aware that they should look not only at how policies are decided but also how they are carried out.[x] In the military domain, there is widespread recognition that the political leadership cannot micromanage the decisions that have to be taken by commanders on the ground. By design, therefore, the armed forces are not a dumb tool but an organization staffed by intelligent, capable people who have some autonomy in the ways in which they fulfill their tasks. This doesn't negate the real-worlders' question, it adds another dimension. We have the good luck that our students regularly remind us of this dimension.

Our students' curriculum underwent the influence of the Cold War in two ways, one the reform of military education and the other the great debates over the scope of security studies. They are not unrelated; both aim to understand a changing, more complex security environment. But they don't seem to mesh well in the classroom. The broadening of the security concept and the rise of constructivism has made security studies a tough subject for our students. It requires that they study some issues that might not interest them initially and take on some genuinely challenging philosophical questions. This makes it all the more important that we bridge the gap between theory and practice in our teaching. This paper explains the approach my colleagues and I at the Netherlands Defense Academy have taken.

This paper proceeds as follows. The next paragraph briefly describes the way military education has been organized in the Netherlands after the end of the Cold War. This provides the setting for our courses. After that, the paper focuses on two of them, International Security Studies I and II, which we have recently reorganized in a way that we think could bridge the gap. Paragraph three describes the content of these courses, paragraph four the didactic approach we're taking. The last paragraph examines the different uses of theory which our students pick up during the two ISS courses.

### Institutional context[xi]

Like other Western militaries, the Dutch armed forces changed considerably after the end of the Cold War. They became a smaller professional force aimed at joint and combined expeditionary operations. The changes affected military education in two ways. First, the draft had guaranteed a steady supply of high quality personnel in the past; effective recruitment of the same was thought to be next to impossible if entering the armed services would severely limit career prospects elsewhere. Normative concerns about being a good employer and practical considerations regarding effective recruitment converged on providing officers with good papers if they chose to leave the service, as indeed the majority of them was, and is, expected to do at some point

in their career. Second, the failure of Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica in 1995 hammered home the lesson that these operations were not the relatively simple peacekeeping missions of before. Where it had been possible during the Cold War to train extensively for a narrow range of well-defined missions, the armed forces now had to prepare their men and their officers for complex, multidimensional operations in wildly varying and often uncertain situations.

Both the Ministry of Defense, backed by parliament, and the military academies saw the need to reform military education. A single umbrella organization, the Netherlands Defense Academy (NLDA), was made responsible for all military education in order to better prepare officers for joint operations as well as contribute to a common *esprit de corps*. Under this umbrella, training focusing on the tactical-technical level of operations is usually service-specific and separate, since operations are rarely joined at this level (though they are quite frequently carried out in conjunction with operations by other branches). Job-specific training is done at separate training facilities after the cadets finish their NLDA-program. The NLDA has, however, set a common core curriculum for officers in all branches. Joint service education is part of the career courses for majors and lieutenant-colonels. At the primary military education level, the common core can be taught separately but the curriculum is the same. It consists of overview courses in international security, strategy, military ethics, law, management and technology, and military operations, with emphasis on the latter.

Primary military education is offered in two forms. Some 300 to 400 cadets per year follow a short model course consisting of the common core, primary military training and job-specific training, altogether taking about a year and a half to complete. This program is aimed at cadets with a prior university or vocational college[xii] degree (but this is not a requirement). The idea is that their training can be short as they already have some of the required learning skills. Meanwhile, approximately 100 to 150 cadets take a long model education, consisting of a full bachelor's program plus military and job-specific training (ca. 4 years in total). While promotion to higher ranks is not reserved to BA-program graduates and they are not put on a fast-track to promotion, it is expected that they will perform better, get quicker promotions and eventually outnumber their non-BA colleagues. This two-tier system is not new, the NLDA's forerunners have always offered both long and short programs, but these were now integrated and updated. Ministry of Education oversight over the Bachelor degree programs followed in 2006, as a means to guarantee the value of the diploma.[xiii] Having a choice between accreditation as university or vocational college education, the NLDA chose to upgrade rather than downgrade.

As the BA-programs go above and beyond the basic requirements for officers in the armed forces, there is room for specialization. A newly integrated Faculty of Military Sciences offers three Bachelor degree programs: War Studies, Military Management Studies, and Military Systems and Technology. Each of these programs fulfills a demand from the armed forces. Navy, Airforce and Army Engineers need graduates with an understanding of the technical aspects of their weapon systems. Military Management Studies provides controllers, personnel managers, logistics officers and others whose main



task is “behind the frontlines” (though that demarcation isn’t always clear anymore in today’s battlespace). War Studies is focused on the “frontlines” themselves, the actual warfighting and peacekeeping operations, as well as military policing and border control, that are the armed forces’ primary task. All three Bachelor programs start with the common core (50 ECTS or 1400 hours). This leaves two and a half years (150 ECTS or 4200 hours) for specialization.

Ministry of Education requirements meant the Faculty’s diploma’s came under the authority of a foundation that is formally independent from the armed forces, though their interests are reflected in the foundation’s board of directors which seats (retired) officers alongside civilian academics. In all other respects, the Faculty is a part of the armed forces, under the aegis of the NLDA and above that, the joint Central Services Command.[xiv] These reforms meant that the Faculty of Military Sciences now has two sets of expectations to fulfill. One is from the armed forces, which expect a crop of new recruits every year that is capable of exercising the duties of lieutenant in the short run and those of higher echelon officers in the long run. The armed forces are the Faculty’s paymaster and its *raison d’être*. The other is from the organization overseeing the quality of academic degrees, called the NVAO (Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization). This body accredits universities’ and vocational colleges’ degree programs after a thorough investigation and does regular checks to see if the quality of teaching remains at that level. The committees visiting the NLDA have allowed some divergence from civilian norms, for example allowing the bachelor’s degree program to be reserved for military students, but the course material, the teaching methods and the staff’s research output (from military teachers as well as from civilian academics) are nonetheless held to academic disciplinary standards.

International security is included in the common core followed by all BA students as well as the short form cadets. Unfortunately, this means we have little time and very large classes. From the perspective of the theory-practice debate, we can do more in the courses for the Bachelor Degree in War Studies, where we have smaller classes (usually between 20 and 40 cadets) and more time. The chair in International Security Studies is responsible for four courses in this program, in addition to the core course. In the second half of this paper, I focus specifically on two of these, International Security Studies I and International Security Studies II (ISS1 and ISS2) which we have recently reorganized. Both are second year courses, so they are exclusive to the War Studies program but they follow shortly after the common core. As explained above, the choices made in reforming military education, and accreditation in particular, meant that the curriculum follows civilian disciplinary standards, which means that abstract stuff such as grand theory is included. Knowing from experience that our cadets do not always see the relevance of the subject matter, we redesigned the two ISS courses specifically to demonstrate the utility of IR theory for military practice and planning. In the next section of the paper I explain why and how.

## The International Security Studies courses

ISS1 and ISS2 together cover the standard content of International Security handbooks, ranging from grand theory to long-term trends to security organizations to contemporary challenges. At 6 EC each, or 336 study hours total, we have room to add a few topics that aren’t included in most books that we think should have been (though our textbook[xv] is over 600 pages and we grant that choices have to be made if it is not to become too unwieldy). In particular, we have added informal power structures (including patronage and clientelism) to the topics for ISS1 and scenario building to ISS2.

In dividing the topics over the two courses we have not adhered to the standard subdivisions and instead let ourselves be guided by practice. Those topics that are useful during the conduct of military operations are assigned to ISS1, while those that are relevant for military planning are taught in ISS2. This division largely coincides with the division between traditional and broad security studies. More importantly, it allows us to structure our courses around a sequence of tutorials. In ISS1 our students make their own analysis of an ongoing conflict. In ISS2 they construct their own scenario analysis.

Both courses are made up of 10 lectures and 8 tutorial sessions. Class convenes two times per week, once for lectures and once for tutorials, except in the first week when there hasn’t been enough time for the students to properly prepare for a tutorial. Each session is two times 45 minutes with a 5-minute break between them. The rest of the time is reserved for students to study on their own. We expect that they spend about 30 hours on their paper and presentation and the remaining 100 hours on preparation for classes and the exam. Both courses are graded on a paper and presentation for the tutorial sessions (more on that below) and an exam on the reading materials and the lectures; both count for half the final grade. For the tutorial sessions, the class will be split up if necessary, so that each tutorial group will have around 15 students.

We start ISS1 with a trick, telling our students “security studies can help analyze *any* conflict, so you, the class, can choose which case we’ll study in this course.” The purpose is to demonstrate relevance on the students’ terms as well as to give the students a stake in the course. It also helps to keep things fresh for teachers. It does require more preparation to acquire knowledge of the case but not that much because it is the students’ task to dig up the information they need and analyze the case themselves. (In the next section I discuss how we organize this.) I tested the case study concept in several classes and every time the case chosen was either recently in the news or one in which the Dutch armed forces took a direct role, so cases in which my colleagues and I would be interested anyway.[xvi]

ISS1 covers topics that link easily to current conflicts: war, ethnic conflict, informal power structures, alliances and international organizations, terrorism and counterinsurgency, coercion, peacekeeping, and humanitarian intervention.

Grand theory enters the course naturally through discussions on the motivations of various actors, whether they are self-interested or altruistic, why self-interested realists would pretend to be idealists, how idealists can play power games, and so on; from here, the step to academic theory consists for the most part of systematizing the students' arguments. While the exact topic of each tutorial session is not known beforehand, the discussion generally focuses on causes of the conflict first, then moves to the dynamic during the conflict and finally moves to ways to potentially resolve the conflict. We have organized the lectures around these three themes in that order, so they feed into the tutorial discussion.

The second international security course, ISS2, uses a similar set-up. This time we challenge the students to think about long-term planning for the armed forces. How should they be trained and organized? What materiel will they need? And before that can be answered, what challenges will they face in approximately twenty years time? Our model for this is a MoD review undertaken between 2008 and 2010 which set out different scenarios for future deployment alongside the requirements for the armed forces to fulfill their assigned tasks.[xvii] The course is structured around scenario-building, with each tutorial session discussing whether a particular issue or trend should be included in the scenario or not, and if yes, how it should be weighed.

Naturally, ISS2 starts with a lecture about constructing scenarios, followed by two lectures on the functions of theory and developments in IR theory. We discuss problem-solving and critical theory, the rise of constructivism and the broadening of the security concept. The focus in these lectures is on how particular viewpoints are represented and how interests are weighed. We follow these up with a series of lectures on the topics that will be discussed in the tutorial sessions, grouped thematically. One theme is broadening security, with discussion on the issues of poverty, health and climate change. Another is which actors to focus on, which combines discussion on states, IGOs and NGOs with human security. Globalization, migration, crime and energy security can also be bundled together. So can conflict prevention, nuclear proliferation and the arms trade. Each of these issues and approaches raises questions about the environment in which the military will operate 20 years from now; how to answer them is the central problem of the tutorial sessions.

### Tutorials and assignments

In ISS1, every tutorial session opens with presentations from cadets, presenting their own research. This sets the direction of class discussion for that session, which is otherwise free to develop according to the interests of the students. Whenever class discussion hits on a topic that needs further research, that question becomes the assignment for one of the next week's presentations. If there are not enough assignments for the next week's cadets, the teacher steps in 15 minutes before the end of the session to have the class set the other assignments. This means that cadets do not know in advance which topic they will research, they all have equal time to do their assignment. It also means that the students receive their assignment from their colleagues. The class is set up as a

collaborative effort between the students and the teacher. While the assignments are individually graded, this approach quietly builds on the cadets' code of comradeship. As each week builds on the previous, the gradual accumulation of knowledge and insight results in more probing questions, some of which cannot be answered definitively but which nevertheless demonstrate the value of sustained research. As the cadets' understanding of the case grows, their views on how best to use (or not use) military force to resolve it inevitably changes.

Assignments for ISS1 take the form of a presentation and a 1000 word paper on the same subject. The paper is due in class during the next lecture session that is (as far as planning allows) two days before the next tutorial session, five days after the tutorial session in which the assignment was set. The timing makes it so that students can't use the lecture on the topic for their paper though they can of course use the course literature and they can use the two days between their paper and their presentation to include salient points from the lecture. For the most part, however, the students' presentations stand as independent contributions to class discussion alongside our lectures and are even given a bit more prominence as they're held during the same tutorial session. Students are required to use at least three academic articles or book chapters for their paper, which they are expected to summarize in a few sentences, so they have to relate the case to academic theory. This ensures that students take the time to research their topic before they make their presentation. It also ensures that class discussion is informed by real knowledge and insight. Finally, the two-day period between paper and presentation ensures that the teacher knows beforehand what direction the presentation will take.

In both ISS1 and ISS2 the oral presentations are kept short, ideally fewer than two minutes (but we give students a bit of grace). This forces the student to distinguish between what's important and what's not. Students are otherwise free to choose the form of their presentation, whether they want to use visual aids or not, whether they want to present the information they dug up neutrally or argue for one perspective. After all (two or three) presentations have been held, the rest of the class has the opportunity to ask for clarification or further information. This Q&A shifts gradually into open and substantive debate. In our experience, cadets are unwilling to criticize each other when someone's grade is at stake; we take away this concern by grading the papers before the presentations and by not grading the presentations substantially (they are marked sufficient/insufficient).

For ISS2 the assignments also consist of a paper and a presentation but they are more structured. The theme for each week is known in advance. On the other hand, the questions facing the cadets are still in debate: authors are divided on whether and to what extent grand theory does or should influence policymaking, whether and to what extent the security concept should be broadened, whether the armed forces should have a role in any particular issue area. On one level, our students can borrow arguments from one author or another but the choices are their own. On another, they should recognize that such choices are political in nature, that these are questions on which politicians and the

public will have a say (a point that is explicit and emphatic in securitization theory, included in the lectures for the course). It is more important for them to understand the terms of the debate than to know which way the decision will go. The practical issue for our students is that they should limit the branches of their scenario to keep it manageable. A strong argument on one side of an issue can be reason not to branch. Another option is to bundle together a number of issues. We already do this in our lectures but the students are encouraged to question whether we did it right; we deliberately diverge from the way our textbook orders its chapters.[xviii]

Just as in ISS1, it is important that the individual assignments are part of a common project. Again we hope to enlist the cadets' comradeship and again we aim to demonstrate how the accumulation of knowledge and insight enhances practice. While it is not practical to integrate the individual papers in a full-sized report (certainly not on the scale of the 317 page government report), the class is expected at the end of the course to produce the outline of one, in the form of scenario matrices alongside a summary of the arguments for including or excluding particular variables or issue areas.

Compared to its forerunner, ISS2 focuses on more explicitly academic material. We have also moved from the level of practice (as cadets see it) to the level of policy. Thirdly, and most importantly, ISS2 emphasizes epistemology. How does one know whether a trend will continue or not? What assumptions are needed to arrive at a usable, concise and yet accurate scenario matrix? As our students ponder how much confidence they should place in their predictions, they are gaining real insight in research methods and even a bit of philosophy of science and we are sure to tell them – but only afterwards. The course shows that knowledge and insight are relevant to practice even when they are uncertain enough that they result in multiple scenario branches.

### The relevance of theory

Our approach makes the students collectively and individually responsible for the integration of theory and practice. The teacher's role is occasionally to correct misinformation but mostly to coach the students in how to conduct their analysis. Naturally we each have our own opinions but we try to avoid intervening substantively in the students' debates unless they ask a direct question. The temptation for us is to answer these questions in such a way that we steer the discussion while for the students, it is to fall back on the teacher's knowledge. While we probably haven't always resisted the urge, we do our best to turn these questions back over to our students.

An effective trick is to ask a student to put himself in the shoes of an actor in the situation they are analyzing. What are his (or her) goals? Which constraints does he accept? Which factors affect his position? Which actors does he deal with? The student can act it out if he wants, we can even assign another student the role of one of those actors. We have found that this exercise (almost an impromptu simulation game[xix]) makes it easier to relate abstract ideas to concrete cases and, importantly, to show where the problems with their

implementation lie. On one memorable occasion, more than half of my class was acting. It started with one student taking the role of a warlord transitioning to civilian government (the case was South-Sudan). When asked who he was interacting with, he picked another student to represent the international community, another to represent oil interests, another to play a rival warlord, two more to play subordinate warlords for each of them and two more to represent local communities of different ethnic backgrounds. He proceeded to analyze that his own position depended internationally on peaceful transition but domestically on patronage so that he had an interest in playing along while underhandedly sabotaging the process and that he had an opportunity to do so by playing on ethnic tensions and the fears of his rival. From there, it was a small step to the idea of a spoiler and the next student's assignment. We have even adapted the content of our courses, including spoilers in the conflict resolution lecture for next year's course. Our inclusion of informal power structures (patronage and clientelism) also followed from discussions in previous classes.

Our students move gradually from the instrumental use of theory, "directly applying ideas in some specific way – corresponding to giving recommendations on how to act in a given situation" [xx], to the conceptual, "geared toward understanding rather than recommendation" [xxi], though they would certainly prefer it if understanding eventually yielded recommendation. In ISS2, they also address the symbolic use of theory, "legitimizing or critiquing an already established policy." [xxii] Through requiring students to put themselves in the shoes of different actors, we move beyond problem-solving theory to impart understanding of the multiplicity of political perspectives and the value-laden character of theorizing. We show that defense policy is, consciously or not, grounded in grand theory on the causes of war, the nature of the international system, and so on, and also requires insight in research methods (constructing hypotheses, data-gathering and -analysis) and even philosophy of science (e.g. how much confidence to place in predictions). At the same time, the focus on practical relevance in both courses alerts us, the teachers, to themes and topics that are undertheorized or at least excluded from consideration under the rubric of international security studies, whose inclusion would improve understanding as well as practice.

### Conclusion

The two courses presented in this paper together constitute an attempt to overcome the problem of cadets' disinterest in IR theory. Our approach privileges the perspective of military practice. In the tutorial sessions, we put real-worlders in charge. It is up to them to judge whether a theory is relevant to the case they are discussing. And yet, our classes have their fair share of even these abstract and philosophically demanding theories. The most important reason for this outcome is that such theories are relevant. The second reason, and the one this paper focused on, is that we put our students in the position to find this out themselves.

We have done this by structuring both our international



security studies courses around a sequence of tutorials. In the tutorial sessions, cadets analyze practical issues: a contemporary conflict in ISS1, medium-term defense policy in ISS2. Literature and lectures are divided over the two courses and scheduled so that they feed into the discussion in the tutorial sessions. The division of topics roughly matches that between traditional and broad security studies. Together both courses cover the full range of topics, themes and theories in contemporary Security Studies. Reorganizing the topics is only a small part of our approach, however; the main thing is putting cadets in charge of class discussion and, thereby, of

applying theory to practice. In this way we entice students to make the effort themselves.

The consequence of our approach is that we, as teachers, cannot have preconceived ideas about how exactly the theories should link to military practice; having "the right answers" ahead of the course would defeat the purpose. What we do have is an overall notion that IR theory is useful because it helps officers to understand the factors that shape the behavior of potential allies and opponents. Within this broad frame, we strive to be open to our students' ideas.

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- [ii] E.g. George, A. L. (1993). *Bridging the gap: Theory and practice in foreign policy*. Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press. Nye, J. S. Jr. (2008). "Bridging the Gap between Theory and Policy." *Political Psychology*, vol.29 no.4: 593-603. Walt, S. M. (2011). *International affairs and the public sphere*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ., John F. Kennedy School of Government.
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- [iv] I use cadet as the inclusive term for students of all branches, including naval cadets. Students in the last year of the BA program can reach the rank of officer cadet, or midshipman; all of these are included except when specifically noted.
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- [xi] This paragraph borrows extensively from Klinkert, W. (2012). *Mars naar de wetenschap: het streven naar de wetenschappelijk opgeleide officier, 1890-2011*. NLDA.
- [xii] The Dutch educational system distinguishes between universities and "hogescholen" (polytechnics) which offer practice-oriented education at a somewhat lower level; in countries that do not make this distinction most of these programs are also university programs.
- [xiii] A Master program in War Studies was established in 2013, also under MoE oversight. This program is not a part of the MoD's career training courses. I lack the space to discuss it further in this article.
- [xiv] Separating the BA from the practical military training and the Faculty from the training staff has the disadvantage that cadets divide their time between the two. Incidentally, the continuing division of practical training between branches means that naval cadets and midshipmen experience these pressures and time constraints at different times than their army colleagues and, separately, their airforce colleagues and their marechaussee colleagues; the decade-long, ongoing process of developing a common time-table constitutes an interesting case study in bureaucratic politics.
- [xv] Williams, P.D. (2013). *Security Studies, An Introduction* 2nd ed., London: Routledge.
- [xvi] The cases were: South-Sudan civil war (ISS1 tutorial sequence); Mali civil war; the rise of ISIS (tutorial sequences in previous courses); Yemen civil war and Saudi intervention; and the crisis in Ukraine (single session exercises).
- [xvii] Ministerie van Defensie (2010), *Eindrapport Toekomstverkenningen Defensie*, available at: [http://www.fsw.vu.nl/nl/Images/Eindrapport%20Verkenningen\\_tcm30-168292.pdf](http://www.fsw.vu.nl/nl/Images/Eindrapport%20Verkenningen_tcm30-168292.pdf) (last checked May 4, 2015).
- [xviii] Our current textbook (Williams 2013) does a good job of describing the debates. While the authors of the various chapters usually show where they stand, they happily don't agree.
- [xix] Pallister, K. (2015). "Teaching globalization and development through a simulation." *PS, Political Science & Politics*, vol.48 no.2: 364-367. Pallister describes the benefits of simulation games as "increased student engagement, development of teamwork skills, and potentially improved student learning", which is in line with our teaching philosophy. However, simulation games are scripted in advance by the teacher and usually stand apart from other class sessions, which makes them harder to integrate into the discussion. (They are also time-consuming to set up; see also Glazier, R. A. (2011) "Running Simulations without Ruining Your Life: Simple Ways to Incorporate Active Learning into Your Teaching." *Journal of Political Science Education*, Vol.7 no.4: 375-393.) By contrast our improvised simulations are set up collaboratively and quickly, can be started, stopped, resumed or modified on the go, making it easier to integrate them into the surrounding class discussion.
- [xx] Eriksson, "On the policy relevance of theory", 2014, 100.
- [xxi] Eriksson, "On the policy relevance of theory", 2014, 101.
- [xxii] Eriksson, "On the policy relevance of theory", 2014, 101.

# IR, or No IR? The Potential Contribution of IR Subjects to Professional Military Education at the Latvian National Defence Academy

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## Introduction

This paper looks at the element of international relations (IR) courses at the Latvian National Defence Academy (LNDA) and poses the question of whether IR courses should assume a more prominent role in professional military education (PME). By doing this, it also examines both the actual and potential contribution of IR courses to the education of officer cadets in Latvia. The choice in favour of, or against the strengthening of, the IR component in military education is usually not regarded as a strategic choice. This paper puts forth the opposite claim. Although military strategy at its basis can indeed be described as "the direction and use made of force for the purposes of policy as decided by politics",<sup>[i]</sup> thus emphasising the divide between political decision-makers and the military, many Western nations (see other articles in this edition of the journal) use international relations to help cadets develop a strategic mind-set. Why would strategy and IR otherwise comprise such an important element in the education of higher level commanding officers?<sup>[ii]</sup> In addition, because the behaviour and choices made by junior military officers affect strategic outcomes, their understanding of cause and effect relationships, when they confront a hostile environment far away from their home countries, becomes a crucial part of the explanation for the success or failure of any given operation. Strategy is likely to fail, unless junior officers have a good understanding of how they can contribute to the achievement of strategic goals. Besides, in a few decades, today's officer cadets are likely to

become the shapers of collective beliefs about what can and cannot be accomplished with the assistance of military means. Is the choice to shape the minds of those who will themselves shape strategy a few decades down the road not the most strategic choice? Beliefs about cause and effect relations regarding interactions with other communities are an important element that shapes strategy. Thus, choices regarding the contents of PME are strategic choices.

The following sections address the IR element in officer cadet education at the LNDA. The first section provides background information on the development of professional military education after Latvia had regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The second section looks at the current IR element in officer cadet military education and assesses the present debate about whether there should be more IR and in what form it should be taught at the LNDA. The third section goes beyond the information provided in the previous sections and looks at the potential contribution that IR can provide, not only in terms of specific IR theories, concepts and case studies, but also in terms of other potential contributions, such as the use of the social scientific method of inquiry, academic writing, and the practice of English skills. The section concludes that a limited number of IR courses have recently been added to study programmes at the LNDA, but further progress is unlikely because the key focus of study programmes is on the military tactical aspects of officer cadet education.

## The organisation of PME in Latvia

Latvia is situated in the Baltic Sea region of the northern part of Europe. After a brief period of independent statehood from 1918 until 1940, Latvia's statehood was interrupted by the Soviet occupation. However, Latvia's independence was restored shortly before the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The creation of an independent military was among the first tasks to be completed in the aftermath of the restoration of independence. Along with this came the need to have a military education institution which would provide PME education and allow for the replacement of the old cadres who had received their training in Soviet military education institutions. In addition, it was imperative for the Latvian military to win public trust which had been severely

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damaged by Soviet military practices. A number of Latvians had been forced to take part in the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan, and this only added to the overall negative views of the Soviet military. By the time Latvia joined NATO in 2004, however, public attitudes towards the Latvian Armed Forces were already favourable with 55 per cent trusting the military and only 26 per cent having negative views. In comparison, public confidence in the police was much lower and stood at 43 per cent.[iii] A recent public opinion survey commissioned by the Ministry of Defence in 2014 indicated that public confidence in the Latvian military has grown even further with 64 per cent of respondents having positive views of the Latvian military.[iv]

The origins of the LNDA date back to 1919 when the War College was established less than a year after the declaration of independence. It was operational until 1940 when Soviet troops occupied Latvia. The Latvian National Defence Academy, which was established in early 1992, is seen as a successor to the War College. In the early 1990s, the main aim of the LNDA was to educate the officer corps of the newly independent Latvia. Shortly after the establishment of the LNDA, the first commanding officers' course was organised. The first batch of officers graduated after taking a course which was just 6 month long.[v] At the time, the Russian military was still present in Latvia and only withdrew under intense international pressure in 1994. While the first efforts at military education were mostly aimed at establishing a core group of military officers, later attempts were focused more on the quality of education. Today, the LNDA is the only higher education institution in Latvia with a focus on professional military education with accredited professional bachelor's and master's programmes.

The work of the LNDA is largely conditioned by several basic characteristics pertaining to Latvia. Latvia is a small country with a population of just under 2 million. It has a small military; the needs of which have never been high on the government agenda. The bulk of the government's time in the 1990s was devoted to managing the painful process of transitioning to democracy and a market economy. The needs of the Latvian military, however, became politically more salient shortly before joining NATO, but the attention paid to the needs of the military declined after 2004. The draft was abolished in 2007, and today Latvia has an all-volunteer military force of slightly more than 5,000. In addition, Latvia has a Home Guard force of approximately 11,000. In the wake of the economic crisis in 2008, Latvia's defence budget suffered the heaviest cuts. In 2010, Latvia's defence spending was 45 per cent lower than in 2008.[vi] As a consequence, the defence budget slipped below 1 per cent of GDP. It has recovered somewhat since then but it is still nowhere near the pre-crisis level (which was also below the NATO 2 per cent threshold). In absolute terms, Latvia's defence budget for 2015 is just 253.8 million euros, a 12 per cent increase from 2014.[vii] (In comparison, Danish defence expenditure for 2015 amounts to 2,800 million euros).[viii] In 2014, the Latvian parliament passed a law which outlined the rate at which Latvia would increase its defence spending in order to achieve the 2 per cent benchmark in 2020. It is likely that the number of troops will increase as well. It remains to be seen whether political decision makers will follow through with this plan.

The Latvian military has participated in international operations since the mid-1990s. In terms of the number of

troops, Latvia's most significant contributions were to the US-led effort in Iraq and the still continuing NATO operation in Afghanistan. In addition to the security guarantees contained in NATO Article 5, participation in international operations was seen as an important factor contributing in a positive way to Latvia's security, presumably, by strengthening the resolve of the NATO allies to defend Latvia. Although the logic behind this argument is questionable, it largely explains the reasoning behind Latvia's increased participation in NATO's ISAF operation in Afghanistan during the economic downturn in 2008-2010, when the defence budget faced severe cuts. In 2014, the war in Ukraine changed strategic thinking in Latvia. Although Latvia is still likely to take part in international operations, together with its NATO allies, there is a greater focus on national security and the need to increase defence spending in order to invest more in defence capabilities. In summary, Latvia has a small military which was established in the early 1990s, with its development being hindered by the recent economic crisis. Although there has been renewed interest in the strengthening of the military recently, it is clear that there are no quick and easy solutions to the structural problems and legacies of the transition period.

### IR in Latvia's PME

International relations is usually considered to be one of the subfields in political science, which in turn belongs to the group of social sciences. Unfortunately, modern Western-style social sciences are relatively new in Latvia. Political science and international relations, in particular, were heavily controlled and distorted under Soviet rule. International relations were interpreted in ideological terms as a collision between the socialist Soviet Union and its allies, against the hostile capitalist West. Thus, political science and international relations in Latvia were in a sorry state when the Soviet Union dissolved. However, social sciences were seen as vital in building a successful democratic and capitalist society. Therefore, civilian universities took the lead by establishing study programmes in economics, business, law, and political science, often with Western assistance to establish such programmes and provide training to lecturers. This welcome trend, however, had a limited impact on social science subjects at the LNDA, as there was not much cross-fertilisation between the LNDA and civilian universities. The LNDA was reluctant to draw upon the emerging political science and IR expertise from civilian universities, due to a lack of appreciation of the added value that IR can bring to officer cadet education. This stands in stark contrast to PME in other NATO member states. This is, to some extent, understandable because military education in Latvia had to be created from scratch and the main focus was therefore on the military tactical aspects of the officers' education.

Today, the LNDA offers 4 professional undergraduate study programmes and one postgraduate programme in cooperation with the Baltic Defence College,[ix] situated in Tartu, Estonia. The four professional undergraduate programmes that the LNDA offers are "Land Force Military Leadership", "Naval Force Military Leadership", "Air Force Military Leadership", and "Commanding Officer". The latter programme is aimed at applicants who already have an undergraduate degree. The length of this study programme is 1 year and 3 months. The other three programmes are designed for holders of a secondary school certificate, and

are taught in close cooperation with Riga Technical University and the Latvian Maritime Academy. The length of these three programmes is 4 years and 9 months. Applicants to these study programmes are required to pass prior training at the National Armed Forces Infantry School (13 weeks) and the School of Instructors (8 weeks) in order to be admitted to the LNDA. Prior training of 8 weeks is also required for applicants to the "Commanding Officer" study programme. Upon the completion of studies, cadets receive a professional bachelor's degree in their respective field of study and receive the military rank of second lieutenant.

All undergraduate professional programmes at the LNDA feature a wide range of courses with a focus on military tactics. In terms of non-military subjects engineering, mathematics and natural sciences clearly dominate over social sciences. During their studies, students are exposed to such social science subjects as political science, sociology, social anthropology and project management. In addition, cadets are offered courses in economics, international humanitarian law, crisis management, and a number of other elective courses. Each undergraduate study programme has its own specific focus, but courses that are offered from social science and related disciplines are very similar across all three – Land, Naval and Air Force – programmes. Until recently, there were no courses focusing exclusively on IR theoretical or practical issues as part of the curriculum. Moreover, IR theories and concepts were not integrated into courses dealing with the art of war and military leadership.

IR courses are a relatively new addition to undergraduate programmes at the LNDA. Several IR courses have been made available to cadets commencing from 2013. These courses, however, are not mandatory and are taught only when cadets choose them from among the other alternatives. Thus, there are two elements in this picture that need to be explained. First, the former situation, when no IR courses were offered to cadets, should be explained. And, second, the current upward trend with more IR courses being introduced into LNDA study programmes also needs to be explained. The following paragraphs deal with these two issues.

First, there are two possible explanations with regard to the initial exclusion of IR courses: such courses were not deemed important enough to be included in the course curriculum, or such courses were not available. The first explanation implies that there was a strategic choice in favour of not including IR courses in the curriculum. It can be assumed that there are limits to what can be included in any study programme. Thus, cadets could benefit from IR courses being included in the study programme, but other subjects were regarded as simply more important. The second explanation assumes that courses are built on the existing expertise within the LNDA where IR experts were simply unavailable. With a significant number of courses already outsourced to Riga Technical University and the Latvian Maritime Academy, it was decided that priority would be given to offering such courses which would be taught by teaching staff at the LNDA, even though this would mean that a number of potentially interesting courses – such as IR subjects – would be excluded.

The available evidence from interviews suggests that the exclusion of IR courses from the curricula of LNDA programmes has indeed been motivated by strategic considerations in the sense that there was, and still is, a strong consensus that priority should be given to courses directly related

to the military profession.[x] However, it seems that issues related to the availability of IR courses have also played a certain role because the expertise required to deliver even a basic introductory course on international relations was not available at the LNDA and its research branch, the Centre for Security and Defence Research (CSDR). The limited ties with the universities at which such expertise was available provided additional obstacles to outsourcing IR courses from beyond the LNDA. Moreover, there was little regional expertise in Latvia on the Balkans, the Middle East and Central Asia. Thus, while Latvian military personnel certainly needed additional training prior to international operations in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan, the existing IR expert community did not have specific expertise on the regions and countries where Latvian troops were performing their duties with other NATO and partner countries' militaries.

Second, three factors are of particular importance with regard to the partial inclusion of IR courses in undergraduate programmes at the LNDA. First, there has been a notable change in terms of greater openness to the internationalisation of higher education at the LNDA. Although the Latvian military as such has been extensively internationalised, due to Latvia's NATO membership, Baltic military cooperation and participation in international military operations together with other NATO allies, the internationalisation was less intensive in the sphere of PME. Recent years, however, have witnessed increasing changes within Latvian PME. Second, the increased availability of IR expertise at the LNDA has certainly contributed to the inclusion of IR courses in study programmes. The overhaul of the Centre for Security and Strategic Research (CSSR), the research branch of the LNDA, which now hosts 4 researchers with PhDs (one in economics and three in political science) has to a great extent contributed to the increasing availability of IR expertise. Third, there has been a conscious move to provide officer cadets with the possibility of choosing from a pool of non-mandatory subjects. Thus, IR subjects are now offered as optional courses at the LNDA. In addition, the course on political science is being gradually phased out and replaced by other courses on politics and international relations.

Although there has been a somewhat noticeable shift in thinking about PME at the LNDA, it falls short of a strategic choice towards the greater inclusion of IR courses in undergraduate study programmes. Thus far, no decision has been made to include IR courses in the mandatory part of the four undergraduate study programmes. This means that IR courses are being taught on an ad hoc basis with very few students attending these courses. Professor Žaneta Ozoliņa, who taught an IR course "Latvian Security Politics" in the spring semester of 2015, commented that there were very few, if any, preferences expressed on the content of her course and teaching methods by the LNDA. This course focused on international security and Latvian security policy. Unfortunately, the cadets who attended her course lacked a basic understanding of IR theories and concepts and were thus largely unaware of the place of security studies within IR studies.[xi]

In summary, IR subjects and courses have gradually been introduced to the LNDA, albeit on a limited scale. This move, however, has not been motivated by a coherent strategic vision and falls short of establishing IR courses as part of the body of mandatory or core courses taught at the LNDA.

This process has largely been motivated by the increased availability of IR expertise rather than by a deep appreciation of the added value that such courses can bring to PME in Latvia. The next section, in turn, deals with the potential contribution that IR studies can make to PME in Latvia.

### **The contribution of IR to PME – more than just theories and concepts?**

It should by now be clear that the current approach to integrating IR subjects into the curriculum is less than strategic at the LNDA. This begs the question, however, about the potential added value of teaching IR to cadets. Indeed, the benefits are many, and are not confined to IR theories and concepts. The remaining part of this section looks at some of the theoretical material that IR could offer to officer cadets and then goes beyond these theoretical instruments in order to assess other potential contributions that IR courses can bring to the table. Although the main focus of this section is on PME in Latvia, some of the contributions discussed in the following paragraphs may be relevant in other countries as well.

IR studies can provide added value to Latvian cadets in several ways. First, IR studies are especially relevant in small countries that are heavily affected by the international environment. This is not to claim that IR studies are not relevant in medium-sized countries and for the great powers. Quite to the contrary. The great powers have the capacity to use military means either on their own, or with allies, and therefore domestic discussions on their role in the international system are inevitable. The great powers have the ability to shape their regional environment and can exert influence beyond their regional setting. The behaviour of small countries, in turn, is shaped by great power politics. For Latvia, IR issues have become an inalienable part of any discussion on its security and development. Latvia's security depends on Russia's domestic politics and foreign policy aims, and EU and NATO policies towards Russia. Latvia's economic development is also seen in terms of relations between Russia and the West. Thus, IR studies can help cadets to make sense of Latvia's regional and global international environment. IR studies can help cadets to grasp the basic images of international politics such as realism and liberalism and explain differences between Russia's foreign policy and EU and NATO policies.

Second, there is a military aspect to virtually all IR theories. Although IR studies deal with both cooperation and conflict, IR scholars mostly emphasise conflict over cooperation. Sometimes differences among states are resolved through armed conflict, and this is where the military has a significant role to play. The application of military instruments, however, is contingent upon many factors, as states use military means for different reasons that can be grounded in realpolitik, liberal values, normative considerations, and domestic politics. Thus, it is essential for cadets to consider the wide range of reasons behind the application of military force in international politics.

Several caveats are in order, however. Although a better understanding of domestic and international contexts can help the military to improve performance, certain aspects of IR studies are of limited use. Examples are international economic relations, foreign policy decision-making, regional integration and area studies of countries and regions to

which the military is unlikely to be deployed to etc. Moreover, there are certain aspects of IR studies that are clearly problematic from the perspective of military practitioners. For example, recent studies on foreign imposed regime change and democracy export have emphasised that external intervention is unlikely to result in stable democratic order (or any sort of stable political order for that matter). This is at odds with what the military have been tasked to do in Iraq and Afghanistan, which means that these efforts are likely to be less than fully successful. Although such studies are clearly relevant for military practitioners, their main message is that external military interventions are unlikely to achieve their key objectives. Arguably, if political decision-makers and the general public forget lessons from past instances of regime change, it should be up to the military to remind them of the limited success rate of such previous efforts. Although IR-based military expertise is not a substitute for political decision-making, it may facilitate a discussion on how the military can assist the government in formulating and pursuing strategic aims with regards to foreign political entities. Thus, IR studies for military practitioners should not only focus on devising better strategies aimed at removing the various obstacles that stand in the way of military organisations achieving their aims in international operations, but may also serve as a platform for engaging in an informed dialogue with political decision-makers on what can and cannot be achieved with the assistance of military means.

Third, IR studies are especially relevant for states such as Latvia where PME is still in a state of formation for reasons not always related to the specific theories and concepts that this subfield has to offer. IR courses can serve as a platform for practicing the English language and learning about methods used in social sciences. In Latvia, even the basic texts of the IR sub-discipline have not been translated into Latvian. Thus, mandatory reading for IR courses at all Latvian higher education institutions are almost exclusively in English. Studying IR from literature published in English has its practical purposes and applications because English is also the preferred language of communication for Latvian military personnel within the NATO alliance.

Another potential way to use IR courses, for purposes not confined to the specifics of this sub-discipline, would be to integrate the basics of academic writing and research into such courses. At the end of their studies at the LNDA, cadets have to complete an undergraduate dissertation. Unfortunately, cadets receive little prior training in academic writing. The lack of training in academic writing may result in poor quality undergraduate dissertations.[xii] Although this is not something that can be remedied easily, a number of steps can be taken to move in the right direction. One option would be to integrate academic writing and research design into IR courses in such a way that these elements would supplement the core aspects of IR classes. Achieving a proper synergy between the core elements of an IR course and academic writing is an arduous task because this would require course instructors to provide timely feedback. As for students, they would have to re-work their research papers at least once after receiving feedback on their work. Synergy would only be achieved when cadets submit research papers that correspond to high academic standards both in terms of content (IR part of the assignment) and research design (academic writing part of the assignment). Although academic writing would normally be part of the curriculum as a separate study course, there is nothing unusual about



pursuing multiple goals within a single course. It is evident that it would be difficult to integrate specific IR courses in LNDA study programmes because officer cadets already face a very heavy workload,[xiii] therefore priority should be given to courses that pursue multiple learning objectives.

In summary, IR theories and concepts deal with the strategic aspects of the use of military force in international relations. Arguably, junior officers are likely to spend their first years after completing their PME at the LNDA operating at the platoon level and therefore do not need IR courses. Such an understanding of the relationship between education and the professional requirements of junior officers, however, is outdated and misinterprets the role of education, including military education. IR studies, albeit usually emphasising the importance of strategic decision-making, nevertheless broaden the worldview of young officers. Education, in the modern sense, does not prepare individuals for their first professional assignment. Education prepares individuals for life. Why should PME be different?

## Conclusion

Should the LNDA offer IR courses to its cadets? Should it increase the proportion of IR courses in the curriculum? Arguably, the answer to the first question is an emphatic 'yes'. This conclusion is strengthened by the current trend of including a more prominent IR element in LNDA study programmes. The benefits of including IR courses in PME are mainly related to cadets being better informed about the domestic and international context within which they will be operating. A better understanding of the strategic environment may help junior officers to adjust their behaviour at the tactical level. However, IR courses may offer a broader range of benefits because international relations courses can also be used for other related purposes such as improving academic writing skills, English proficiency, and the ability to conduct research. As to the second question, it remains to

be seen whether the proportion of IR courses at the LNDA can be increased. Currently, IR courses are not mandatory for all cadets, therefore the first step towards increasing the profile of these courses would be to move one course from the elective part of the four programmes to the group of courses that form the core of the four PME undergraduate programmes at the LNDA. Even such an incremental step may become contentious. The timing for such a decision is unfortunate because the proportion of IR courses was increased at military academies in response to the changing security environment after the Cold War and the increasing participation of Western militaries in international operations (in NATO's case – out of area operations). Russia's aggression in Ukraine has had a significant impact on Latvia's security priorities, and the focus for the Latvian military has shifted back from participation into international operations to homeland defence. In addition, the Latvian military is likely to face an increase in terms of the tasks and functions that it will have to perform in the coming years. Cooperation with NATO allies is also likely to become more intensive. Thus, the answer to the question posed in the title of this paper would be along the lines of 'IR, or some IR'.

This article has argued that the choices regarding the content and organisation of studies for cadets in PME should be regarded as strategic choices. The initial exclusion of IR courses from the curricula of LNDA professional programmes was indeed motivated by strategic considerations. It was motivated by placing priority on those aspects of military education that did not fall under the banner of social sciences. The later choice, regarding the gradual inclusion of IR courses in the curriculum, was motivated by the sudden availability of academic staff at the CSSR and by a gradual recognition that IR courses should be offered to cadets at least as elective courses. However, the changes did not go as far as to include at least one IR course in the list of mandatory courses. The result of this partial opening can be best described as an untenable status quo which stops short of fully recognising the value that IR courses can add to PME.

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Photo by Didrik Linnerud, Army, Norwegian Armed Forces

# International Relations in Interdisciplinary Professional Military Education: The Norwegian Model

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"In 1991 my overriding task as a platoon commander was to defend a crossroads in Norway," one of my military colleagues said and continued "one which invading troops were expected to use. It was a massive task and exclusively requiring military skills. I was to give the enemy as much resistance as possible and would most likely die in the effort. 13 years later I was in Afghanistan as chief of a company operation centre. Our task was to instil a sense of security in Kabul by neutralising enemy cells living under cover among civilians. To solve this task I liaised with a host of military and civilian actors like the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghans, and humanitarian organisations, Norwegians, including top-bureaucrats in the Norwegian Ministry of Defence. It required my traditional military skills but also whatever I had gathered of linguistic, intercultural, political, legal and other skills. It was an entirely different ballgame." [i]

That officers in the early part of their careers have been faced with such changes to their *modus operandi* will be obvious to most. What is not obvious, however, is how professional military education shall prepare officers to carry out their duties in such new contexts. The educational choices made will be of crucial importance to the ability of combat leaders on the ground to put into effect strategic plans and further national interests, as argued in the introduction of this special edition. This article aims to clarify the Norwegian Military Academy's choices on these issues and the reasoning behind them. It does so with a more particular focus on *what* junior army

officers learn, and *how* they learn it, in the academic field of international relations and the closely related field of political science.

Four debates in the educational sciences have informed the Academy's choices and shall also frame this article. They are used as points of reference when presenting efforts to increase the relevance and quality of the Academy's bachelor study programme: Military Studies – Leadership and Land Power. Each debate is here presented as pairs of opposing notions that could be seen as extreme positions on principle lines of controversy: [ii]

- University versus professional education [iii]
- Teaching versus learning [iv]
- Single- versus interdisciplinary educational models [v]
- Education versus publication. [vi]

The basic argument will be that for the last decade cadets' formation in political science and international relations has moved in tune with the Academy's educational reforms from left to right on these lines of debate – i.e. from an emphasis on teaching towards learning, from a single- to an interdisciplinary educational model, and from an emphasis on education towards publications. As a result the disciplines political science and international relations play a more important role today in enhancing junior officers' professional identity and their understanding of how context influence the utility of military force. Arguably, this model of professional military education will make cadets more capable of fulfilling the role as, what the introduction labels, "strategic actors".

We commence by presenting major changes to the Norwegian Military Academy's study programme since 2005, before presenting implications for its political science and international relations' components. Note that the educational designs are presented in an ideal type manner, not in order to idealise but to better communicate the Academy's main ideas. Important modifications will be addressed in the concluding section. The effects of the Academy's education are also discussed along with the difficulties involved in finding relevant parameters to make such evaluations.

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## Ten years of educational reform

Two reforms have changed the Norwegian Military Academy's study programme. The Academy is Norway's oldest institution for higher education and since 1750 an autonomous educational institution within the Army. This changed when the Academy became subject to the national body of law on higher education in 2005. For the purpose of this article two implications should be mentioned. First, a two-year formation of young army officers was transformed to a three-year bachelor degree preparing them primarily for the role as platoon commander and secondly for a life-long military career. Some of these will 15 years further into this career be offered a graduate professional military education of one to two years' duration at the Norwegian Staff College. Second, the Academy's *instructors*, which is the term used for civilians and military educational staff, were tasked to contribute to research and development with academic publications.

In 2012 another reform was implemented. It was driven from within the Academy as an effort to increase the relevance and quality of the education in the face of changing political and operational contexts. A dozen of key figures to the military profession – from battalion commanders to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs – were asked to clarify their expectations to a young army officer.[vii] Against this background the Academy changed its primary educational focus from platoon to company commander and formulated ten objectives that give today's professional military education direction. Among others, they stipulate that an undergraduate officer shall be able to:

- explain the rationale, capabilities and limitations of military force
- make judgments about how different operational contexts influence one's own operational approach
- lead and develop oneself and others with conviction in constantly changing operational contexts.[viii]

To meet these objectives the study programme was transformed into eight interdisciplinary subjects, sub-divided into thematic blocks.[ix]

## The contribution of political science and international relations

The study programme prior to the 2005 reform may serve as a baseline to clarify what is considered a relevant and high-quality professional military education for army officers today. Until then the political science and international relations component of the officer's diploma was Norwegian-Security-Policy, a 40 hours single-discipline course. Instructors gave formal lectures to classes of 40 cadets based on a 250 pages syllabus addressing a relatively broad range of topics and using the approach of the Copenhagen School to frame Norway's relations with major powers and with major intergovernmental security organisations.[x] The format was inspired by a standard university bachelor-level course. The major difference was that cadets had a full timetable of classes eight hours a day in several separate disciplines with homework to be done in the evenings. A written exam

concluded the course. However, exam results, formal and informal feedback indicated that cadets had a rather superficial understanding of the issues being taught, few found it nice-to-know competence, while most struggled to understand how these theoretical lectures could help them make better decisions as military leaders. A frequent question was: "What do these theories imply for me?" Instructors' efforts to introduce it as need-to-know competence stressing the importance of understanding the political ends they were meant to achieve and the political context in which they were to do it, came across as too farfetched to carry conviction.

Gradually, the Academy concluded that an educational design was required that could trigger cadets' interest in the academic disciplines, give them a deeper understanding of the issues involved and more clearly communicate how they could help cadets to become the military leaders the government and the Norwegian society at large expect them to be.[xi]

In 2005 two courses were developed to meet this shortcoming. An interdisciplinary War-and-Society course introduced cadets to the rationale of the military profession. It focused on the political function of military forces in Western states, the cardinal importance of officers in the establishment of Western states in the early modern era, how war has formed societies and societies formed warfare, and how these overarching changes shaped the role of the military profession. The course was informed by key concepts in political science and international relations, such as state, international system, war, balance of power, collective security, nationalism, ideologies, and related mainstream theories, such as realism, liberalism and The English School. Yet these theoretical ideas were now introduced in an orchestrated and mutually reinforcing manner with military history, war history and military theory. This interdisciplinary approach helped cadets appreciate the bigger picture and it informed their professional self-esteem making them more confident talking with relatives about their professional choice, with people critical to the armed forces, and other related topics. Therefore, the course was commonly referred to as the foundation of the professional military education. A quantitative improvement of the interdisciplinary approach was that political science and international relations, although interdisciplinary, now had cadets' attention throughout five entire weeks supported by an 800-page syllabus.

To meet the demand of more explicitly linking international relations to tactical military tasks, it was integrated in an interdisciplinary course on peacekeeping and counterinsurgency operations that had a full semester. In addition to the already-mentioned academic subjects of military theory, military history, and war history this course eventually began to include inputs from tactics. The primary focus was on doctrines and operational aspects. However, now cadets also learned about the role of UN mandated military operations within the broader international security architecture of collective security, and how changing political contexts influenced the operational designs and principles of peacekeeping missions. The cases used to illustrate it were the Suez Crises 1956, Lebanon 1978, Bosnia 1992, and eventually Congo 2010.[xii] With Malay 1950 and Afghanistan 2010 cadets were introduced to the political strategy in counterinsurgency, the role of military forces in



that context and spurred to link that to the War-and-Society course syllabus.[xiii] Departing from real-life historical tactical tasks at company level cadets developed their own plans and executed them in simple war-games based on, among others, information and ideas gathered from international relations syllabus and lectures. General Rupert Smith's reminder that there is a difference between what one can do and what one can achieve with military force served as a guiding star throughout the course.[xiv] The learning-by-reading-and-doing approach on successive case studies aimed to instil in cadets a strategic mind-set that could link ends, means and ways along the lines elaborated on in the introductory chapter of this edition.

The latter points to a change in didactic methods from teaching to learning increasingly used at the Norwegian Military Academy since 2005. Deep-learning strategies were introduced to "fix" the problem of cadets' superficial understandings of academic subjects.[xv] Rather than instructors informing cadets about international relations themes and trying to convince them that the academic insights were directly relevant for them as combat leaders, the table was turned. In seminar groups each cadet was now tasked to convince others, instructors included, how international relations competence was useful to solve a given tactical task in a politically more expedient manner. Hence, the number of formal lectures was reduced and cadet-active learning methods took their place.[xvi] This required giving cadets more time to prepare for seminar groups. As a consequence classes were reduced by 40 per cent to allow study time during the Peacekeeping-and-Counterinsurgency course.

The 2012-reform has taken the pedagogical model described above a step further and applied it more broadly in the bachelor study programme. The internal reform was triggered by the Ministry of Education's implementation of the European Union's Qualifications Framework where study programmes had to be described through learning outcomes detailing what students having fulfilled a study programme should know, understand, and be able to do.[xvii] The Academy, which for some time had felt a need to direct better many relatively independent disciplines and activities towards a few common goals, used that framework to develop 10 programme-level learning outcomes. Today, practically all academic and military disciplines are oriented towards the achievement of those outcomes. European credit points are no longer given to individual disciplines but divided between the bachelor degree's eight interdisciplinary subjects each concluded with one interdisciplinary exam.

This is a radical change from pre-2012 where each discipline had a specified percentage of cadets' time and syllabus and an opportunity to test cadets in exams. After 2012 disciplines will be included in the interdisciplinary subjects only to the extent the respective instructors can justify to decision makers in the Academy's Department of Education how their academic inputs contribute to the learning outcomes.

The new approach may be illustrated with an outline of the first semester's interdisciplinary subject The-Military-Profession made up of three interdisciplinary thematic blocks: The-Officer-and-the-State, The-Officer-and-War, and Civil-Military-Relations. The subject purports to help cadets achieve the

already-mentioned learning outcome: Explain the rationale... of military force. It does so largely in line with the reasoning and approach of the pre-2012 War-and-Society course, but it now also includes public international law and ethics and extends to ten succeeding weeks. At the end of the term each cadet clarifies in a written assignment how he or she as an officer foresees to bridge the gap between society's expectations, the demands of war and his or her own shortcomings, be they academic or physical. The purpose is to enhance their professional identity and to motivate them to learn. To address the first side of the gap they must draw from political science and international relations syllabus introduced during The-Officer-and-the-State. This departs from Buzan's conception of the state as an idea, institutions and a physical base.[xviii]

The second interdisciplinary subject in which political science and international relations contribute is Leadership-of-Operations beginning from the outset of the second semester. It is divided into the three thematic blocks: Regular-Warfare, Irregular-Warfare and Crisis-Management, each allocated nine, six and one months respectively, and is designed to meet the learning outcomes:

- explain ... the capabilities and limitations of military force
- make judgments about how different operational contexts influence one's own operational approach
- lead ... with conviction in constantly changing operational contexts.

To this end the subject largely applies the cadet-active learning method used in the Peacekeeping-and-Counterinsurgency course since 2005. Some 12 case studies have been selected to illustrate a variety of tactical manoeuvres. Reasoning along the lines of Mission Command, the broader context in which a given military unit is to achieve its tactical objectives is explored from different academic disciplines including international relations, history of war, and public international law.[xix] Inspired by the 2005 reform's take on identified shortcomings – notably the "What do these theories imply for me?"-question – international relations is introduced to help cadets solve specific tactical tasks in a more politically expedient manner.

This may be illustrated by the first major case in the Regular-Warfare thematic block. To learn offensive rifle-company tactics, cadets are given the task of British 2 Para's attack on Goose Green during the Falklands Campaign 1982, at the face of it a suicidal task. Cadets immediately see the need to learn to fight, which to them reinforces the importance of the disciplines tactics and leadership. To trigger their interest in the bigger picture international relations instructors ask questions like: "Why are you here in the first place?" "How does the Thatcher government foresee to regain control over the Falklands?" and "What is the role of military force in that endeavour?" Such questions move their focus from mere survival to the political dimension of their professional responsibilities.

20 days are set aside to the Falklands case. It commences with eight days and a 300-page syllabus on war history, international relations and public international law, before

tactics and leadership get involved.[xx] In international relations cadets use Putnam's Two-level Games perspective as an analytical tool to understand the domestic and international considerations that shape a government's foreign policy.[xxi] They identify the dynamics and constraints that guided Britain in the war and gave the political rationale for 2 Para's offensive at Goose Green. The prisms of realism and liberalism help to unfold Britain's policy to key international actors and to discuss potentials and limitations of the government's early decision to use military force as a means to regain control over the Falklands. Britain's utter dependence on international support is a surprise to cadets, for example that ground troops were unlikely to have reached the Falklands' shores without the logistical support of the United States and without France's efforts to reduce the British convoys' vulnerability to the French-produced Argentine Exocet missiles.

Following from these studies cadets realise that military force was only one, and arguable not the most important, of several means of power the British government used to achieve its short- and long-term goals in the campaign. Different concepts and means of power are introduced to help cadets organise their ideas about how Britain influenced the US, Argentina and other key target groups. In particular, attention is drawn to the Thatcher government's combined use of diplomacy and military force to achieve its war ends. The attack on Goose Green is presented as a case that is irrational from a military point of view but highly important from a political one; the crucial support from allies was fading and Thatcher desperately needed to win a military battle to convince them that the war would soon be over. Preparing cadets to deal with such dilemmas between operational and political concerns, they are set up for debate in *pro* and *con* teams to discuss whether it was right of Brigadier Thompson, Commander of the Landing Forces, to oppose that particular 2 Para offensive.

In the same vein, other key international relations themes are introduced in subsequent cases. Norway's different security strategies – neutrality, collective security and alliance – are studied in conjunction with another company offensive during the invasion of Norway in spring 1940. Success on the battlefield in Northern Norway was to little avail for Norwegian troops when the political context changed by the end of May. Making this link between operational and political objectives, cadets use mainstream international relations theories and security strategies to understand contemporary Norwegian defence policy, identify the underpinning ideas and hence the political ends of the armed forces. The role of the United Nations in international security and its utility and limitations within the framework of collective security is introduced in relation to a case from Korea 1950. In addition, the role of media in a globalised world and implications for troops on the ground are briefly treated during a case on company tactics in urban areas from Iraq 2003.

Irregular-Warfare is the second major thematic block in Leadership-of-Operations and basically a continuation of the pre-2012 course Peacekeeping-and-Counterinsurgency. The objective of international relations instructors is still to cultivate cadets' strategic mind-set in a way that meets shortcomings identified prior to 2005. This is primarily done by applying

international relations theories and concepts with which cadets at this stage have become familiar. In case studies they address troop-contributing governments' interests *vis-à-vis* their electorates, allies, multilateral organisations, as well as towards the authorities and people among which the troops are deployed. They also discuss the political utility and limitations of military force compared to informational, diplomatic and other means of power when solving specific tactical tasks.

Crisis-Management is a minor thematic block in Leadership-of-Operations, but probably more than any other tactical tasks it requires a strategic mind-set in officers at the lowest operational echelon. Cadets are introduced to the highly politicised military tasks in intra-state crises, such as the one Norway experienced during the terrorist attack carried out on 22 July 2011, as well as in inter-state crises.[xxii] Departing from a fictive case emphasis is given to the communicative dimensions of military posture and acts.

### Comparison with university study programmes

Against this background, we shall now compare and contrast the political science and international relations competence cadets acquire at the Norwegian Military Academy with that which university undergraduates normally gain. This can be done by pointing to the key objective of the Academy, which is to provide research-based education of high quality that is relevant to the practical nature of the army officer profession. [xxiii]

From this follows a similarity between the Academy and universities: both educations convey research-based knowledge.[xxiv] 90 per cent of the cadets' political science and international relations syllabus holds an academic quality comparable to that used at university bachelor levels. Moreover, the educational institutions draw from the same body of scientific knowledge, for example the schools of realism and liberalism.

The main difference is that the Academy educates for a profession. While a university degree in international relations shall cultivate candidates' general theoretical competence in the field, the Academy sees the discipline as a support for the development of officer competence. This may be described as the kind of theoretical and practice-based competence army officers need to fulfil the military's contract with society, in particular to achieve the government's political ends by means of military force.[xxv] In this context, theoretical understanding can make a valuable difference only to the extent the officer in charge is capable of using it with advantage in solving the practical task he faces. Along this line of reasoning, the Norwegian Military Academy has narrowed the scope of political science and international relations theories and concepts compared to university courses.

A related factor limiting the scope of themes is the Academy's decision-making procedures to define the content of interdisciplinary subjects. Relevant knowledge from the disciplines is included in the subjects only to the extent the



respective instructor is capable of convincing decision-makers in the Academy's Educational Department of the relevance with regard to learning outcomes. In competition with other disciplines on a host of issues deemed highly relevant to the military profession the criterion for inclusion tends to be the practical utility of themes. Hence, the Academy gives priority to the security dimension of political science and international relations and within them to the more traditional perspectives. The reason is to familiarise cadets with the most commonly used ideas and concepts underpinning contemporary debates on Norwegian security policy. It follows that, for example, realism is prioritised over constructivism, Buzan's notion of a state over securitisation theory, and NATO over the EU.

In addition, the didactic change from teaching to learning requires that cadets have more time to prepare for seminar groups. They are not primarily listening to a formal lecture, but tasked to more time-consuming studying to explain implications of ideas in the syllabus. For example during a WWII case cadets discuss questions like: "How did Communism, Fascism and Liberalism respectively influence the views and the conduct of war?"

### Evaluating effect

The final and crucial question to be addressed here is whether it works. This is as simple to ask as it is difficult to answer. One way the Norwegian Military Academy approaches this question is through its Quality Management System. This departs from the above-mentioned learning outcomes. However, it is not evident whose and which standards should be used to measure levels of achievement. Addressing this question opens to a broader debate about the purpose of professional military education.

In line with the overall aims of the Academy's strategy, the Quality Management System evaluates feedback from battalion and company commanders who have received officers recently graduated from the Norwegian Military Academy. Overall, their responses are positive or very positive with regard to the junior officers' attitude, initiative and theoretical competence. Better basic soldiering and leadership skills are in demand, however.[xxvi]

Another parameter is comparison with grading systems in the university sector. The Academy's exams and bachelor theses related to political science and international relations are graded by university scholars teaching in the same fields at bachelor level. So far, results suggest that cadets hold an academic level comparable to universities. However, testing what a cadet has learned in an interdisciplinary subject is torn between two objectives: competence in the individual disciplines that make up the subject on the one hand, and on the other hand competence to combine knowledge from different disciplines to reach a more comprehensive understanding of the broader subject. The Academy has dealt with this dilemma in two different ways for the past three years. One is to test cadets in each discipline by means of individually written exams with no books or notes allowed. For example, this year one of the exam questions

in the interdisciplinary subject Military-Profession was: "Based on your political science- and international relations-related syllabus explain why Norway needs officers and discuss what this implies for you as an officer". The other way is to strike a balance between the two objectives. The subject Leadership-of-Operations does this with an eight-day exam organised along the lines of Mission Command. It involves separate yet interconnected sub-examinations, both oral and written, and commences by testing each cadet's ability to use academic disciplines, such as international relations and intercultural communication, to understand the context of a given tactical task. The exam continues to the planning of operations, to giving orders and simple war-gaming their plan to test their competence in tactics and leadership. The 2015 exam was based on a fictive Norwegian company deployment to Mali. Understanding of the political science and international relations syllabus was tested with the exam question: "What do you consider to be MINUSMA's primary task? Explain briefly how you would contribute to that at company level."

The Quality Management System also evaluates how those directly involved in the learning process experience its effects. This includes the cadets. Inclinations to question the relevance of their views in this context should be balanced by the critical importance pedagogical literature pays to the motivation of the individual who learns.[xxvii] The interdisciplinary subjects of which political science and international relations form part generally receive high scores, although the disciplines are not evaluated on their own terms.

The last criterion to be mentioned here is the Norwegian Military Academy's production of research and development. In line with the general trend in the university sector, this criterion is increasingly used by the Ministry of Education for evaluating the Academy's study programme. Peer-reviewed publications and PhD theses are produced but so far not to an extent that compares to universities.

### Reconsidering strategic choices

The purpose of this article has been to present the Norwegian take on strategic choices in the education of junior army officer with a particular focus on how this has influenced the way cadets learn political science and international relations at the Norwegian Military Academy. It shows that the two academic disciplines' contribution to the professional military education has boosted significantly the last 10 years. This is partly due to the increased importance paid to contextual aspects of military operations in the multiple kinds of armed conflicts Norwegian Armed Forces have been tasked to deal with recently. It is also due to two major reforms – an externally driven in 2005 and an internal one in 2012 – that placed the formation of officers from the exclusive domain of the Ministry of Defence towards that of the Ministry of Education. While adapting to these trends the Academy has maintained focus on the practical nature of the military profession. Hence, cadets are introduced to political science and international relations, not as taught at universities, but in a manner where the practical utility of academic knowledge is brought to the fore. Theoretical perspectives are selected,

presented and applied for the purpose of developing the kind of strategic mind-set that may enable army officers to shape military activities in line with political objectives. To this end, the Academy applies an educational framework that focuses attention on a few learning outcomes. The formation is organised in interdisciplinary subjects and applies a variety of cadet-active learning methods.

As stipulated from the outset, the Academy's educational design has been presented in an ideal-type manner to clarify its fundamental ideas. Needless to say, the practicalities and constraints of everyday life in an institution of higher education and budgetary reductions limit the extent to which the Academy is able to carry out the ideas as intended. As a sobering measure and with reference to the four major debates in the educational sciences that have framed this article, we shall now address some of the major difficulties faced. This will highlight some of the challenges the Academy needs to come to terms with.

Deep-learning strategies are time-consuming for cadets and compared to formal lectures do compromise the scope of academic themes instructors can introduce to cadets. Finding the right balance is a point of dispute. Second, interdisciplinary subjects are time consuming also for instructors. There are rarely sufficient instructor resources to plan and deliver subjects in a manner that fully exploits potential synergies. Finding the right balance between educational ambitions and resources will always be a challenge. Further, the extent to and ways in which individual disciplines shall

form part of a subject is a matter of controversy among those involved. For the Academy's direction there is a fine balance to be struck between allowing dedicated instructors in their respective fields of expertise to find a useful interdisciplinary mix and the need to reduce conflicts in a corps of instructors whose cooperation at the end of the day is premised on the goodwill among colleagues. [xxviii] Another challenge is that military instructors tend to hold their positions only a few years. Newcomers' ideas about what they want to teach cadets do not necessarily fit into the Academy's interdisciplinary approach and they need time and the support of colleagues to contribute fully within the institutional framework. The last dilemma to be mentioned is the Academy's need to meet the Army's demand for competent officers and the Ministry of Education's demands for research and development. In the ideal world there need not be any conflict as long as instructors' research can improve the quality of cadets' education. However, with limited instructor resources there is often a choice to be made on where the main effort shall be.

The framework from the educational sciences used here may be useful in the broader debate about professional military education. The diversity of study programmes at national military academies within the alliance is striking. The reasons for this can be many but the four dimensions may inspire initial efforts to clarify how the study programme of one's national military academy differs from that of others and to reconsider the strength and weaknesses of one's approach to prepare young officers for their principal task: to use their tools at their level in ways that serves the state, its strategic plans and political ends.

## References

[i] Major Tor-Erik Hanssen, conversation at the Norwegian Military Academy, 6. November 2014.

[ii] The didactic perspectives presented here draw on a 2005 Norwegian Military Academy policy paper "Concept for Learning and Development", in particular a chapter by the Academy's instructor in the educational sciences, Finn Gravem, pp. 59-78, available at <http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/Documents/konsept-1.doc>; also Mona Stokke and Tina Mathisen (2011) "Form eller innhold? En evaluering av tiltaket '60 seconds' i strategiundervisningen ved Krigsskolen", ØF-rapport no. 13, Østlandsforskning, available at <http://www.ostforsk.no/publikasjoner/form-eller-innhold-en-evaluering-av-tiltaket-60-seconds-i-strategiundervisningen-ved-krigsskolen>

[iii] See, for example, Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt (1973) *The American University*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University; Eliot Freidson (1994) *Professionalism Reborn: Theory, Prophecy and Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.14. From a university education point of view one would appreciate the relevance and quality of cadets' formation at Norwegian Military Academy from the perspective of a broad variety of scholarly disciplines – such as English, scientific methodology and international relations – along criteria established within each academic field of knowledge. Alternatively, from the point of view of professional education one would evaluate relevance and quality with regard to the profession's specific role in society – i.e. the ability to prepare officers to further a state's ends by the management of violence, see Samuel P. Huntington (1957) *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. New York: Belknap Press, p.11.

[iv] See Robert Barr and John Tagg (1995) "From Teaching to Learning – a New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education", *Change*, Vol.27, No.6, pp.13-25; Line Wittek and Laurence Habib (2013) "Quality Teaching and Learning as Practice Within Different Disciplinary Discourses", *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Vol.25, No. 3, pp.275-287. Approaching education from the perspective of teaching focuses on those who master a field of expertise and concerns how they best inform students about that field. In an extreme variant, this may take the form of a one-way formal lecture to a large audience. Others see education as learning and consequently depart from the individual student and how he, or she, learns. This point of departure suggests that the task of an educational institution is to create learning arenas. In an extreme variant, educational staff create learning arenas tailored to the specific needs of individual student.

[v] See Tanya Augsburg (2006) *Becoming Interdisciplinary: An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*. New York: Kendall/Hunt Publishing; Kirsti Lauvås and Per Lauvås (2004) *Tverrfaglig Samarbeid: Perspektiv og Strategi*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. A single-disciplinary approach introduces students to disciplines on their own terms in separate classes. An interdisciplinary approach uses a number of disciplines to give a more comprehensive understanding of a common theme, while each discipline uses the same approach to introduce its theories and concepts.

[vi] See John Biggs (2001) "The reflective institution: assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning", *Higher Education*, Vol.41, No.3, pp.221-238; Per Olav Aamodt, Elisabeth Hovdhaugen, and Tine S. Prøitz (2013) "Utdanningskvalitet i høyere utdanning", NIFU report no. 6, available at <http://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/280081/NIFUrapport2014-6.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. This dimension aims to capture the quality of higher education. In the context of this article, the Ministry of Education generally evaluates the quality of institutions of higher education in terms of academic staff's research and development production, whereas the army evaluates the quality of the Norwegian Military Academy according to its undergraduates' competence as junior military leaders.

[vii] Findings presented in a Norwegian Military Academy report by Dean Reidar Skaug on the education of future officers, available at <http://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/id/134452/KS%20fagrapport%202012-2015%20Utdanning%20for%20fremtidens%20offiserer.pdf>

[viii] See the Norwegian Military Academy's Programme of Studies, p.11, available at [http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/krigsskolen/student-ved-krigsskolen/studiehandbok/Documents/2014-05-15%20\(U\)%20Studiehaandbok%20KSO%202014-2015%20montert.pdf](http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/krigsskolen/student-ved-krigsskolen/studiehandbok/Documents/2014-05-15%20(U)%20Studiehaandbok%20KSO%202014-2015%20montert.pdf)

[ix] Inter-disciplinary subjects at the Norwegian Military Academy combine two to ten academic and practical disciplines – like tactics, international relations, leadership, English, etc. – in an orchestrated manner to achieve a few common educational objectives.

[x] Syllabus included Iver B. Neumann and Ståle Ulriksen (1997) "Norsk forsvars og sikkerhetspolitikk" in Knutsen et. al. eds. *Norges utenrikspolitikk*. Oslo: Cappelen akademisk forlag, pp. 80-105, and Østerud, Øyvind (1996) *Statsvitenskap: Innføring i Politisk Analyse*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, as well as articles by Adam Roberts, Anders Kjølberg, and others. Policy documents as white papers from the Ministry of Defence also formed part of the reading list.

[xi] The debate on surface and deep learning was central in these discussions, see Paul Ramsden (1992) *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.

[xii] International Relations syllabus in the 2014-15 course included parts of Thomas G. Weiss et al (2014) *The United Nations and Changing World Politics*. Boulder: Westview Press; Alex J. Bellamy and Paul Williams (2010) *Understanding Peacekeeping*. Cambridge: Polity Press; and Trevor Findlay (2002) *The Use of Force in UN Peace Operations*. New York: Oxford University Press. Among United Nations documents used were Security Council resolutions and United Nations (2008) *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, available at [http://www.challengesforum.org/Global/Reports/External%20Reports/Capstone\\_Doctrine\\_ENG.pdf?epslanguage=en](http://www.challengesforum.org/Global/Reports/External%20Reports/Capstone_Doctrine_ENG.pdf?epslanguage=en)

[xiii] In 2015 political science- and international relations-related texts on counterinsurgency included Alex Marshall (2010) "Imperial Nostalgia, the liberal lie, and the perils of postmodern counterinsurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgency*, Vol.21, No.2, pp. 233-258; Gilles Dorransoro (2009) *The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and Tore Nyhamar (2010) *Utfordringer og strategi i freds- og stabiliseringsoperasjoner*. Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag. Political parts of relevant doctrines are also studied such as the US Army (2006) *Field Manuel 3-24*, available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24fd.pdf>, §1-40; Mao Tse Tung (1978) *Militærskrifter i Utvalg*. Oslo: Oktober forlag; and Robert Thompson (2005) *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. St. Petersburg, Florida: Hailer Publishing.

[xiv] Rupert Smith (2005) *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*. London: Penguin Group, pp.9-10.

[xv] Paul Ramsden (1988) *Improving Learning: New Perspectives*. London: Kogan Page.

[xvi] Gerd Bjørke (2006) *Aktive læringsformer: Handbok for studenter og lærere i høgre utdanning*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

[xvii] See European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System Users' Guide, p.13, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/ects-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/docs/ects-guide_en.pdf)

[xviii] Barry Buzan (2009) *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*. Colchester: European Consortium for Political Research, pp.65-103. Of the interdisciplinary theme's 800-pages syllabus political science and international relations contains, in addition to much from the above-presented War-and-Society course, notably Torstein Hjøllum (2008) *Den Norske Nasjonalstaten*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm, outlining the development of political dynamics and institutions in Norway since the renaissance; and Michael Walzer (1970) *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War and Citizenship*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.77-98 discussing the implications of the Hobbesian versus the Rousseauian social contract for a state's citizens.

[xix] On Mission Command see chapter 5 in US Army Field Manual 3-0 Operations, available at <http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-0.pdf>

[xx] The main work here is Lawrence Freedman (2005) *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign*. London: Routledge, which addresses key political issues at state and international level and connects them to military concerns and dilemmas on the ground in the Falklands.

[xxi] As explained in Gunnar Fermann (2011) "Utenrikspolitikk som Begrep, Intensjon og Atferd" in Jon Hovi and Raino Malnes ed. *Anarki, Makt og Normer – Innføring i Internasjonal Politikk*. Oslo: Abstrakt forlag, pp.28-37, 50-58.

[xxii] The main International Relations syllabus is here Tormod Heier and Anders Kjølberg (2013) *Mellom Fred og Krig: Norsk Militær Kriseshåndtering*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

[xxiii] See the Norwegian Military Academy's Programme of Studies, p.11, available at [http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/krigsskolen/student-ved-krigsskolen/studiehandbok/Documents/2014-05-15%20\(U\)%20Studiehaandbok%20KSO%202014-2015%20montert.pdf](http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/krigsskolen/student-ved-krigsskolen/studiehandbok/Documents/2014-05-15%20(U)%20Studiehaandbok%20KSO%202014-2015%20montert.pdf); and the Academy's Strategy and Values, available at <http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/krigsskolen/om-krigsskolen/strategi-og-verdier/Sider/strategi-og-verdier.aspx>

[xxiv] See Norwegian Military Academy's Programme of Studies, p.10, available at [http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/krigsskolen/student-ved-krigsskolen/studiehandbok/Documents/2014-05-15%20\(U\)%20Studiehaandbok%20KSO%202014-2015%20montert.pdf](http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/krigsskolen/student-ved-krigsskolen/studiehandbok/Documents/2014-05-15%20(U)%20Studiehaandbok%20KSO%202014-2015%20montert.pdf)

[xxv] See Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Doctrine (2007), chapter 6, available at <http://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/99256/FFOD.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

[xxvi] Norwegian Military Academy's Quality Assessment report 2013-2014 of 23. October 2014, pp.43-47, available from Norwegian Military Academy library see <http://hogskolene.forsvaret.no/krigsskolen/biblioteket/Sider/biblioteket.aspx>

[xxvii] Paul Ramsden (1988) *Improving Learning: New Perspectives*. London: Kogan Page.

[xxviii] See also Kirsti Lauvås and Per Lauvås (2004) *Tverrfaglig Samarbeid: Perspektiv og Strategi*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

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# From Territorial Defence to Expeditionary Forces. Mastering International Relations and Coping with Different Cultures Has Become a Strategic Necessity for Danish Officers

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After the Cold War the Danish Armed Forces moved away from their traditional role of territorial defence of Danish soil and the 'near abroad' NATO-area in northern West Germany against a symmetric opponent, the Warsaw Pact, towards a role as a globally deployable expeditionary force underpinning the strategic choices of the Danish state. Thus, Danish foreign and security policy in the late 1990s and especially after 2001 followed what has been labeled a "super Atlanticist" course aligning Denmark with the one power which is thought to be able to guarantee Danish national security, namely the United States (through a plug-and-play relationship with the United Kingdom). This strategic choice has had a remarkable effect on the Danish Armed Forces. It has participated in all of the so-called "new" or asymmetric wars[i] that the United States and Britain have fought since the end of the Cold War: Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, and now Iraq again. The armed

forces have therefore professionalized in profound ways. It has also had a large effect on the education of the Danish officer corps, especially within the realm of international relations and political science. Not due to a deliberate strategic choice within the Defence Ministry or the Ministry of Education, but due to an incremental change over the years following a 'demand-supply' logic because of the war-participation - and with a certain time lag, as the war-participation made the long need for revisions to officers' education clear to all. The shift towards expeditionary forces deployable in far-away places within multinational alliance structures made it a matter of necessity for the officer corps at all levels to develop a better understanding to cope with complex strategic settings, featuring a number of stakeholders as well as numerous causes, drivers and triggers. Thus, the role of the officer was widened to include not only the traditional "warrior", the leader in combat, the business leader, as well as the trainer and educator of soldiers, but also the role of "the diplomat", an officer capable of working in international missions in multinational and multicultural organisations. Now, the education of the Danish officer corps is changing once again. But this time, it is not because of a change in the security outlook as an effect of what is perceived as a reawakened Russia - that is, back towards territorial defence - but because of simple austerity measures following the financial crisis in 2008. This article explores the course of these changes and the logics behind them by following the changes made in the officer's education at the Royal Danish Army Academy (RDAA).

## Relevance and resources

For many years the teaching of the topics of political science, international relations and international law was a rather autonomous practice at the Royal Danish Army Academy (RDAA). A small group of professional teachers decided on their own what needed to be taught to the young cadets. There seemed to be two important questions that guided the decisions on what to teach: relevance and resources. The question of relevance was mostly answered in the frame of the overall interest in security and democracy. The cadets needed knowledge and understanding of our own democracy and the role they were to play in it (and most importantly - what role not to play). They needed to know

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the legal ground rules in the relations among states and they needed to know the overall dynamics of stability, instability, security and conflict in the international system. They also needed to understand the current issues and ongoing conflicts, mostly seen from a Danish perspective as a small state in a Northern European setting.

During the Cold War – and on through the start of the 1990s – the focus was on territorial defence against a symmetric adversary: the Warsaw Pact forces. If war came, it would be a war for national survival, most likely involving tactical nuclear weapons used on Danish soil. Thus, the role of the young officer was first and foremost to lead men in battle and most likely to die trying. Secondly, he was to be able to train his soldiers – often unmotivated draftees – and prepare them for battle. That battle, for most of the Danish land forces, would have taken place in the southern part of Jutland or in the northern parts of West Germany, trying to stop a presumed overwhelming attacking force from the Warsaw Pact. The tactical education was therefore attuned to traditional military tasks such as clearing, attacking, patrolling and guard service. Focus was on operating stand-alone units under sovereign Danish command. Only staff officers of higher rank would work more closely with other NATO forces during exercises. The conscripts, the corporals, the sergeants as well as the young officers would have little or no contact with other NATO forces. Overall the education had many more dimensions than it has today. Physical training was to a lesser extent focused on preparing for battle (which seemed unlikely), but instead focused on individual physical durability exercised through running or swimming, and on building team spirit, through team sports such as soccer. The role of the officer as business leader made the topic of business administration necessary. Language study did not just focus on English as it does today, with cadets also choosing between French and German. Leadership was also an important part of the education as was psychology. The list was long. Each discipline gave the cadet competence within its field, but the curriculum was not focused on providing the cadets with the ability to conduct strategic thinking and action drawing on knowledge from the entire spectrum of disciplines in future tasks. The education mirrored the international environment: the officers had to be ready for a task all expected would never come or would be over within days. With that prospect, it was hard to stay focused.

For the faculty in IR the question of resources was answered in negotiations with teachers from the many other disciplines – how much time and focus could political science and international relations consume this year compared to last year? It was an ongoing competition and the resources available could always be used. In trying to give the cadets the very best, the discussions among the faculty teaching IR often took as their point of departure how to pass on as much of what the faculty had been taught in civilian universities as possible. The philosophy seemed to be “the same but easier”. What was taught needed to be more simple, easier to understand, faster to comprehend, with less complexity but still useful for coming officers. In finding the right textbook, the right academic articles, the right approach in the classroom, this was central. At the very end of the course, what the faculty wanted to accomplish was to give the cadets an overall understanding of the disciplines of political science, international relations and international

law. This way of teaching and selecting topics for the cadets had many fine qualities and the ongoing discussions did provide a good and rich understanding of the political environment surrounding the officers’ room for maneuver. As the international environment changed and Danish officers faced difficult challenges in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s it slowly forced the staff at the RDAA to transform towards a more focused and more responsive curriculum. Relevance began to mean something different than before and the traditional way of planning and teaching political science and international relations came to an end.

### A matter of state power

As early as the Danish Defence Agreement at Parliament in 1960 it was policy that the Officer Academies in Denmark must teach the cadets about democracy. The explanation is – as is often the case in political science – basically about power. One of the important lessons to be learned from history’s many coups, rebellions and revolutions, is that the decisive factor for a successful revolution is often that the leaders of the revolution or rebellion manage to get the country’s military forces, especially the officer corps, on the side of the revolution – the Russian Revolution in 1917 being a case in point. In other words, it is in the interest of the state to ensure that the officer corps broadly shares what in international relations theory is called “the idea of the state”.<sup>[ii]</sup> That is, the founding ideas of the state on which the state bases its power and legitimacy. And since Denmark is a representative democracy, the state has an interest in ensuring that the officer corps broadly shares this foundational idea of the state. It is of course not the task of the RDAA or the other Officer Academies to turn our cadets into good democrats. We are to turn our cadets into good officers. However, we build on the democratic foundations laid by the whole of the public education system, which starts with the values conveyed in Kindergarten, in Primary school, in citizens’ general “upbringing” in associations (foreningslivet), in conversations about this and that within the family, in discussions among friends and acquaintances, and in discussions in the media.<sup>[iii]</sup> Thus, the content of the syllabus on Danish Politics concerning democracy was merely a “brush-up” course in how selected parts of the Danish political system work, supplemented with classical discussions on Plato and Socrates, as well as discussions on Danish thinkers on democracy such as Hal Koch and Alf Ross. Also, the domestic political process – the key elements of the parliament’s decision which precedes the deployment of a military contingent in an international conflict – was touched upon.

### An expeditionary army demands strategic thinking officers

Since the end of the bipolarity of the Cold War, Denmark has followed a foreign policy path branded “foreign policy activism” or “military activism”.<sup>[iv]</sup> Successive Danish defence committees concluded that there was no longer any conventional military threat towards Danish territory.<sup>[v]</sup> Thus, during the 1990s Denmark moved from territorial defence/ deterrence and the occasional UN-led “peacekeeping” role<sup>[vi]</sup> during the Cold War and developed into a self-declared “strategic actor”, which participates directly in

combatting declared enemies through military and other means.[vii] While the governments of the conservative Prime Minister Poul Schlüter (1982-1993) and the social democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (1993-2001) had already chosen to steer Danish foreign policy closer towards the United States[viii], the pro-US line in Danish foreign policy was markedly enhanced under the leadership of Prime Minister and later NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2001-2007) after the 9/11 attack on New York and Washington.[ix] The Atlantic orientation which had characterized Danish foreign policy thinking since the end of World War II was replaced by what some have labeled the "super Atlanticism" of Anders Fogh Rasmussen.[x] Relations with Washington went from having been warm in the 1990s to become unprecedentedly close after 2001. Along with Britain, Denmark became America's favorite partner in Europe.[xi]

The proponents of foreign policy activism have primarily argued that with the absence of a direct military threat to Danish territory, the *raison d'être* of the Danish armed forces was to function as an expeditionary force to be used as a foreign policy tool of the Danish state, in order to underpin the special relationship with the one power that can guarantee Danish national security (through NATO), namely the United States. Following the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, Denmark has thus followed the "path of the United Kingdom and played the part of the loyal ally staunchly supporting the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The two countries deployed to the same areas of operations and adopted the same positions and policies across a broad range of issues affecting the transatlantic relationship".[xii] Therefore, there has been a shift in focus away from deterrence of great power wars to handling of wars in weak or fragile states. Today, the Danish army, navy and air force are all geared and equipped for global deployment, in order to handle threats far away from Danish territory. But the Danish army, air force and navy are no longer able to fulfill the role of conventional military deterrence and as such can no longer defend Danish territory.[xiii]

In order to function as officers in an expeditionary army taking part in multinational operations far away from Danish soil, the Danish officer corps first had to develop an understanding of the basic international legal and political conditions for the deployment of military forces in international conflicts. The rationale was that junior officers must also have a solid background knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the mission area and on the regional and international dynamics at play in the conflict. What regional powers affect, for example, conditions in Afghanistan, what are their interests and what is the reason for this? Here subjects like IR and international law come into play. For the "new wars" – the so-called asymmetric or hybrid wars that Denmark has participated in since the end of the Cold War – have one feature in common, and that is that the legitimacy of the war is not a foregone conclusion, even if the Danish population in successive polls over the years has shown persistent support for Denmark's participation in all of these wars (notwithstanding public debate about the political and judicial legitimacy of the war in Iraq). The new wars are not fought for the nation's survival, but in order to convey a US-led political will framed within global (Western) values. In the "new wars", war is an instrument of the (Western) international community's intervention. Where armies previously only had

to win, in the "new wars" armies must prevent breaches of international law, ensure human rights and maintain the basic principles of a Western-led, global world order.[xiv] Thus, in the "new wars", legitimacy does not come automatically. Danish citizens' security perceptions are only rarely affected by events in the far away countries of conflict, where Danish soldiers are deployed nowadays. The wars' rationales are therefore weighed against numerous other community issues – should we rather spend our money on new nurseries, new schools or new highways? Could we follow a more peaceful path towards securing Danish national interests? The core of the matter is that the legitimacy of the "new wars" must be won and maintained. This not only makes it paramount that Danish soldiers on international missions have a firm grounding in Western values, in international law, in the Laws of War, and that they know the contours of the dynamics of the international power games that are at play in the missions. It also makes it paramount for the young officers to be able to make their case. One of the cultural side-effects of the Danish democratic tradition – if you ask a man like the anthropologist Prakash Reddy – is that Danish society is "characterized by a strong equality urge. The idea that everyone has the same status, whether they are subordinates or work with highly specialized things, is accepted completely by the Danes ... This extreme equality urge is why no Danes recognize that anyone stand above them".[xv] This is a sentiment which is even more pronounced among young people today than it was at the beginning of the 1990s. And although soldiers obviously belong to the military system, and officers thus have the privilege that they can order a subordinate to do what is commanded, Danish soldiers of today are also characterized by this cultural sense of equality because of the simple fact that they are Danes. This means that Danish officers are expected to be able in most cases to convince their subordinates of something, most often using good arguments and factual reasons instead of issuing direct orders. And this makes a strategic outlook a basic necessity for a Danish commanding officer. Thus, one of the central tasks of Political Science at the Royal Danish Army Academy is practicing argumentative skills for a given position. Political Science is home to rational, factual arguments. And it is also home to the fine nuances, ambiguity and suspended judgment that may be paramount in forming a sustainable argument.

### The year 2006 - culture matters

As already mentioned new demands on officers in an expeditionary army created a need for a solid understanding of Danish national interests among the officers and awareness and application of international law and the laws of war. However as complicated as this is, events during the year 2006 showed that it is not enough to make sure that future officers are properly prepared for missions abroad. Knowledge of cultural differences is essential too.

Awareness of this came from experiences first in the war in Iraq and later in the ISAF missions in Afghanistan. However, what really opened the Danish public's eyes to this new globalized reality were the events following the publication of 12 caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten in September 2005.[xvi] The crisis that followed in the beginning of 2006 after the exposure



of the Mohammed cartoons was in many ways a result of globalization. The phenomenon had of course been on the public agenda for years – and it had also been included in the IR teaching at the Academy. Now it struck Danish society as “a true fact”, a reality that felt different and much more acute than “just talking about it” in general terms. What at first glance for most people appeared to be maybe offensive, but still largely irrelevant drawings in the conservative newspaper Jyllands-Posten depicting the Prophet Mohammed mattered greatly to a group of minorities within Danish society, and after a while it mattered even more abroad.[xvii] The drawings spread worldwide fuelled Muslim outrage, resulting in at least 200 dead worldwide. The Danish and Norwegian diplomatic missions in Damascus in Syria were set on fire, in Beirut in Lebanon rioters burned down the Danish diplomatic mission, and in Afghanistan security forces killed protesters who tried to storm the American air base at Bagram. There were also riots in many Western capitals, although less violent. Denmark was in its greatest crisis internationally since World War II and reactions among Danish decision makers to the events included elements of panic. One of the conclusions drawn among the staff at the Royal Danish Army Academy was that a lack of knowledge of other cultures in the Danish society as a whole but also in the officers’ ranks was obvious and deeply problematic. In addition, our officers’ experiences in both Iraq and Afghanistan pointed to the fact that knowledge of other peoples’ culture, religion and values was essential to success in multinational missions in weak or fragile states far away from Danish soil. Other militaries had of course known this for many years[xviii] , but for Danish officers this was a new experience. These were our first global missions where support from the local population was an essential part of success but not a given fact. Thus, it was decided that cultural studies was needed for the future officers. Cultural studies were to become an integral part of understanding international society, the way other states function, etc. It also became clear that understanding other cultures was an essential part of working in international missions in order to get in contact with the local population. It was part of the strategy to find out what the important issues are in local communities. Cultural understanding should become an essential guideline for the behavior of soldiers in contact with locals in “search and arrest” operations, in information gathering operations and in negotiations with the heads of communities. Among the officers in the Danish army there has been a long historical tradition, stemming from the German “Auftrag Taktik”, which more or less translates to “mission command” – the idea that giving the commander close to the actual action some or even extensive room for maneuver within the overall frame of the mission gives the best results. The closer the battle comes to the people, the more the battle is about hearts and minds and about changing or transforming societies towards Western values and institutions, the more we need a culturally aware and strategically thinking officer as leader of small units. Junior officers are the key actors in transforming political will into practical solutions on the ground.

After a while, it became clear that for us at the RDAA cultural studies was to be taught less as a discipline in its own right than as a sub-discipline supporting strategic thinking in a military environment. More often cultural studies had the function of bridging a wide range of disciplines that up until now had been completely separated in the classroom: English, leadership, tactics and IR. Our conclusion was that

cultural understanding was important for the officer corps in coming to grips with the political situation in a given state, in tactical planning of operations, in leadership, as well as concerning contact with locals and even more so in training, mentoring and partnering with local army and police forces. Effective cooperation in multinational staffs also requires some understanding of how other nations work, prioritize and socialize. In many ways, the issues of culture became the interdisciplinary link that had been missing in the education of junior officers at the RDAA earlier on. For the disciplines of political science and international relations, the Mohammed cartoons and the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan took the question of relevance of the topics for the cadets in a new direction. The overriding themes were still matters of security and democracy. But it became more than that. The cadets still needed a solid knowledge of democracy in order to understand their own society and the role of the armed forces therein, but they also needed this basic understanding of democracy in order to understand the strategies for development in the countries where Denmark was now engaged. The matter of security was still relevant in understanding the global dynamics of the international system. But in teaching matters of security it also became relevant and necessary to be able to apply the logics of security on the regional, national and even group level in order for the cadets to use this knowledge in a more practical way than was ever expected earlier on. One might say that the level of taxonomy in IR and Security Studies needed to perform the expected duties of a young officer was heightened markedly.

Planning a syllabus for cultural studies was rather difficult. How were we to prepare for the next mission, which could be almost anywhere in the world? And how did we move beyond teaching “appropriate behavior” to a deeper understanding of culture and how it affects the mindset of us and the communities we engage in? What has been tried so far is a short introduction to anthropology and an introduction to a few important theories on what culture is and how it evolves combined with a few case studies giving the cadets the chance to reflect on their own views on culture, on their own prejudices and values and on what role culture plays, when we try to change other societies by doing capacity building, nation building, trying to establish “rule of law” or just building a local school for both boys and girls.

Discovering cultural studies as the interdisciplinary link between the different subjects at the RDAA did also change the education in a more fundamental way by introducing 2 interdisciplinary “synthesis” courses of 5 weeks towards the end of the curriculum. The basic idea was to ask the cadets to solve a tactical question that required the use of analytical tools from the rest of the disciplines in order to give a good answer. One scenario was a UN mission in the eastern part of DR Congo. The other was an ISAF mission in Afghanistan. During the 5 weeks the cadets faced continuous challenges that made it necessary to gather knowledge about the conflicts in the state and on its borders and the history leading up to this. They had to use their knowledge about leadership and about physical resilience and training, and they were to conduct negotiations with locals using interpreters. They were to conduct patrols and other assignments using skills from tactics, leadership and cultural studies in combination. The idea was that this would enhance the cadets’ multi-



dimensional competences and strengthen their role as strategic thinkers and doers.

### New educational reforms

The international financial crisis in 2008 had a great impact on the Danish economy and a lot of reforms have swept through the public sector the last few years. The area of defense has not gone untouched. At the end of 2012 it was decided to reform the entire educational structure for officers. The principles that led these changes were the following: firstly, what can be achieved in the civilian educational system should not be taken place at academies for officers. Consequently future officers will not attend the Academy unless they have a civilian degree either at bachelor's level or an (equivalent) shorter educational program combined with experience as a sergeant. The second principle that is to guide the new educational structure for officers is the principle of "just in time" and "just enough". In order to save money and achieve efficiency it was decided to divide the "package of education" for future officers into small parts that are only given to the ones who need it when they need it in order to take on new assignments or tasks. The end result is a structure where the officer academies provide a *Diploma in Military Studies*, which takes about half the time – three semesters – to obtain in comparison with the previous education (Bachelor in Military Studies), after which the

individual can take a wide range of extra courses if needed, dubbed "a running sushi".

The first cadets started in August 2015 so at present we do not have much experience. What many are anxious about is the expected lack of military experience and tactical understanding that the future officers will end up with, when they are shipped out on their first missions. International humanitarian law, political science and international relations have faced an extensive cut back. Also the enhanced focus on cultural studies, so central for participating in international missions, has been cut markedly. In the future we must be even more on the spot when it comes to debates about what a young officer needs to be able to do his job. As this paper has shown the "wars of choice" have actually amplified the requirements of the young officers in the last 15 years, in order to secure legitimacy among his subordinates, in order not to make mistakes at the tactical level with negative strategic results when it comes to international law or cultural understanding, but also to keep the officers aware of underlying logics in weak states in the pursuit of nation building, security sector reform or other developments set out at the political level but often carried out by the military on the ground in difficult environments. Logics of "just in time" and "just enough" may not correspond very well with the demands on the officer listed above. And it certainly does not correspond well with the idea that the ability to engage in strategic thinking and action should be taught and developed while the cadets are still young.

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# Does Canada Educate Strategic Subalterns?

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## Introduction

The distinction between studying strategy and practicing it is important. This article explains how strategy and international relations are taught at Canada's Royal Military College. The idea that strategic thinking is a by-product of a broad university education is relevant to any country whose officers must think for themselves early in their careers.

RMC's professors, military and civilian, behave like professors

in other Canadian universities. This results in a curriculum not easily controlled by higher headquarters or the shifting dictates of policy, but entirely compatible with traditions of critical thinking and the democratic state. It means that the products of Canada's military college education are more likely to be independent thinkers, even if they are not deep thinkers or strategic practitioners. It has also influenced Canada's strategic contribution to the soft power of defence education diplomacy, through reference curricula and officer seminars. Teaching *about* strategy is not the same as *practicing* strategy, and we parse the courses offered at RMC to demonstrate that we do more of the former than the latter. Comparative studies indicate that other countries with military universities do likewise.[i]

*Infinity Journal* quotes Colin Gray: "Military strategy is the direction and use made of force and the threat of force for the purposes of policy as decided by politics." [ii] The editors emphasize the instrumentality of strategy, and the tripartite conception of policy ends (what is to be achieved), strategic ways (how it is to be achieved), and military means (what military forces therefore do). Any staff-educated military officer would agree, but we question this understanding. No strategy is limited to military means, and the focus on force as an instrument is unnecessary and inappropriately limiting in foundational education. Canada's Royal Military College was established as a school for leaders—a military instrument in a national development strategy—before Canada had a professional army in which its graduates could serve.[iii] No state pursues policy ends with exclusively military means, so the idea that strategic education of young officers should (normatively) or does (empirically) concentrate on military means must be ruled out. The emphasis on the conduct of war and military tactics is also inappropriate. Long ago, war departments became defence departments. This is not just a semantic change; few of the world's 193 UN member states conceive of "winning wars" as their principal means of achieving security, and would be ill advised to do so. We are concerned not with "military strategy" but with the broader and more utilitarian term, strategy.

We are concerned primarily with states, because we are writing about a state institution preparing leaders to serve the state. This leads us to focus on academic disciplines privileging analysis of states, their components, interactions, and interests. These disciplines are political science and

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international relations, but also extend to geography, history, economics, business, and psychology. Strategy is by nature multidisciplinary.

We begin our discussion with a systems view of strategic education, and consider four ways in which it can be shaped. Canada's approach is emergent, rather than doctrinal, directed, or referenced. We then consider university curriculum as a means of shaping strategic education. Educational theory describes curriculum as content, but also pedagogy, and the context in which the content is developed and delivered. We conclude that Canada's RMC does not need an imposed strategy to teach strategists—that would bring danger—but its professors and practitioners must monitor emergent teaching for gaps and weaknesses. The best practices of research universities will help to guard against these problems.

Canada's approach is relevant for any state consuming the strategic thought of others, not least to warn against the dangers of thought collectives and ideologies that serve powerful interests. As we parse the content and context of teaching that shapes thinking about strategy, we should also be aware of the role of strategic producers and epistemic communities.[iv] These common understandings are essential for collective action, but can also become the drumbeat that drives us to wars not of our making.

### A systems view of strategic education

Power is an essentially contested concept, but is central to strategic thinking, particularly coercion. In *Power: A Radical View*, Steven Lukes introduced a third dimension to the traditional conception of power based on force and persuasion. If the first dimension is the ability to coerce, and the second dimension is the ability to influence or manipulate through the rule-sets that are applied to a decision, the third dimension is to shape the concepts by which the agenda is defined.[vi] Luke's third dimension, system bias, illuminates the importance of strategic education:

"Decisions are choices consciously and intentionally made...whereas the bias of the system can be mobilized, recreated, and reinforced in ways that are neither consciously chosen nor the intended result of ... individual choices... Is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people... from having grievances... by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things..?" [vii]

Consider the Cold War defeat of materialist conceptions of history and class struggle, the prevailing neo-liberal world economic order, the narrative of the war on terror, and the nature of "freedoms" defended in expeditionary wars. For countries like Canada to have any strategic choice, professionals must be sufficiently aware to think critically about the exercise of power in pursuit of interests. They must be educated from early in their careers to interrogate the public interest, the national interest, and the nature of the private interests embedded in the third dimension of power shaping their decision-making environment. Without this strategic awareness arising from education, they can only

accept their role in the existing order of things. Should that worry us?

Accepting their role in the existing order is a junior officer's lot in life, so is strategic thinking unnecessary, or perhaps even counter-productive in pre-commissioning education? Not if we see entry-level education as part of a system of strategic education that adapts to changing circumstances. In Figure 1, we can imagine recruits socialized and educated to see the world in a particular way, before they are recruited to military colleges and academies, where they are introduced to various views of the world, often in tune with the understandings to which they might be exposed in civilian post-secondary education, though perhaps less critical of the *status quo*.

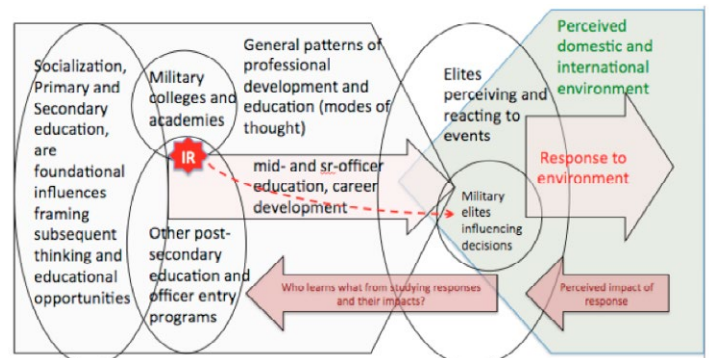


Figure 1 A systems view of strategic education

Curriculum at a small military college may not have much of an impact on military elites, their influence, their responses to the environment, or on learning from their responses to environment. It may have more impact if it reflects a prevailing mode of thought (which itself has an impact), or if it is able to change a prevailing mode of thought through intellectual force. It may be important to resist prevailing modes of thought. Military academies and staff colleges may be more attuned to learning strategic lessons (the leftward arrow). If so, they may be ahead of their civilian university counterparts in their response to change. This is more likely if they have the characteristics of a research university concentrating on high quality original scholarship, rather than a teaching college relaying knowledge developed elsewhere.[viii]

Curricula at military colleges may be directed by authority, guided by doctrine, established by guidelines or frameworks, or may emerge from the processes of a university. In the traditions of the university, no authority outside RMC dictates its curriculum. However, it is subject to Defence Administrative Orders and Directives that guide learning and professional development, and that collectively constitute the Canadian Forces Individual Training and Education System (CFITES). A senior academic involved in developing this doctrine for RMC's higher headquarters, the Canadian Defence Academy (CDA), recently mused about the lack of impact of these orders and directives.[ix]

Ruling out direction, and ignoring doctrine and directives, might reference curricula provide a guide to developing strategic thinkers at RMC? Following NATO's 2004 Istanbul Declaration on a Partnership Action Plan for Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB) the Curriculum Development



Working Group of the Consortium of Defence Academies generated reference curricula for generic officer professional military education.[x] This reference curriculum assumes the pluralistic governance and permissive intellectual environment of a university. It is organized by phase (pre-commissioning, junior officer, and intermediate officer) around themes: Profession of Arms; Command, Leadership and Ethics; and Defence and Security Studies.[xi] RMC's experience, along with 10 other participating countries, contributed to its formulation, and an RMC professor was the principal author. The reference curricula are a product of RMC's emergent experience, rather than a guide. RMC's curriculum is therefore the emergent product of a military university, rather than the product of direction, doctrine, or international guidelines.

### An Emergent Educational Strategy

RMC's curriculum emerges from the experience of more than sixty years of university education within RMC, producing the permissive environment and climate of interrogation described in NATO's reference curriculum for officers. While a decision must be made to change a directed or doctrinal education strategy, an emergent strategy will adapt over time as individual subject experts adjust their content and pedagogy to new circumstances.[xii]

RMC degree programs are reviewed on a seven-year cycle, through an institutional quality assurance process (IQAP), which includes self-study and external visitors. Academic Deans and department chairs play a leadership role.[xiii] New courses are periodically added, and descriptions are approved through university governance: by the Syllabus Committee with representatives of each department; and by Faculty Council consisting of Heads and Deans. Course descriptions are brief and change rarely. Course outlines or syllabi are extensive, and change annually, but are often only available within a teaching department and to students. Exams are retained, but it is often difficult to know exactly what is going on inside classrooms, even for a department chair. Confidence in the professors is therefore essential.

In the Faculty of Arts, most teaching is by civilian professors who have the equivalent of tenure (60 of 73 faculty), however a third of arts faculty (24 of 73) are serving or retired military officers. Only about 14 percent (143 of 1021 on site courses in 2015-2016) are taught by sessional hires, but the ratio is closer to 90 percent for off-site and distance courses.

Department	Civilian faculty...	...including retired military	Military faculty, in addition
English	9	0	1
French	7	0	0
History	9	4	1
Management and Economics <sup>xiv</sup>	16	3	2
Military Psychology and Leadership	10	2	5
Political Science	9	2	4
TOTALS	60	11	13

Table 1 Arts faculty distribution by department, 2015

Some departments are more significant than others for the teaching of strategy. Early in RMC's life, diplomatic and military history dominated the teaching of international relations and questions of national and military strategy. A survey of course descriptions shows that history continued to provide the largest number of courses with international content into the 1990s, despite a steady rise in political science courses, and the addition of new courses in psychology, management, and even languages that are relevant to international relations and strategic thought.[xv]

Student choice of courses and programs is not entirely free. Cadets come to RMC having been assigned to military occupations. Some occupations demand specified degree patterns. Engineers require engineering or science degrees. Logisticians may require a business or management degree. These are choices made *outside* RMC by branches and services of the Canadian Forces. A decision made *inside* RMC concerns the subjects of the "core curriculum" required of all cadets regardless of degree program.

### The international and strategic content of curriculum

Strategy is understood to be a multidisciplinary study, encompassing political, historical, economic, and other subjects affecting the utility of force and the pursuit of national objectives. The program Military and Strategic Studies, typically attracting about ten percent of RMC students, includes history, politics, and psychology courses in an 8:4:2 ratio. But to describe what is taught about international relations and strategy across RMC's curriculum, we need to deduce relevant categories from course descriptions.

Freedman argues that the concept of strategy has consistently eluded definition. It has broadened from its roots as the art of the general—*strategos* in Ancient Greek—to any situation influenced by the actions of an opponent. A recent text aimed at undergraduates studying strategy offers eight different definitions that range from narrow concepts of the application of military power to broader ideas of what constitutes national power. Colin Gray provides a definition involving 17 dimensions across three categories. His categories of 'people' and 'war,' for example, can be thought of as part of the structure and relationships within which strategy is pursued.

With these concepts in mind, we can parse the content of RMC courses relevant to the theory and practice of strategy. Describing and analyzing Clausewitz or Sun Tzu represents theory; playing the board game *Risk*, or participating in a Model NATO simulation represents practice. In the appendix, we identify for each course the categories of strategic thought and practice to which cadets are exposed. Three of our categories apply to the theory of strategy, and two apply to its practice, although these categories obviously intersect.





Figure 2 Deduced categories of strategic and international content in RMC courses

RMC's core curriculum represents a liberal education. It includes mandatory courses in mathematics, chemistry, physics, information technology, literature, history, psychology, and political science, for all degree programs. Amongst the mandatory credits, two are particularly relevant to strategic thinking. *An Introduction to Military History and Thought*, from Napoleon to the present (History 271) uses the Paret textbook, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, and familiarizes students with the canon of strategic thought and its impact on war: Clausewitz, Moltke, Mahan, Douhet, Kahn, Schelling and others. Students are usually told about strategic thinking and resulting strategies, rather than undertaking exercises to think strategically or develop strategies; they study strategy without practicing it.

The second core course with strategic content is *An Introduction to International Relations*, (Politics 116). It addresses theories (realism, liberalism, constructivism, and so on) and their utility for describing and analyzing international events. Cases involve foreign policy-making, national interest, security and weapons technology, regional and global organizations, international political economy, and globalization. This is a lecture and discussion course, with a newly introduced burden-sharing simulation in four of 13 sessions.

All cadets take *An Introduction to Military History and Thought*, and cadets in science or arts degree programs take *An Introduction to International Relations*. Students in engineering (about 40 percent of cadets) substitute a course on technology and society to fulfill the requirements for engineering accreditation. More than 70 course descriptions in the current course calendar have some international or strategic content, but enrolment in most courses is a fraction of the cadet body.[xviii] Choice of electives and the credit system make it difficult to generalize, but most cadets in the Faculty of Arts have probably taken two or three courses with international or strategic content in addition to the mandatory courses listed above. We have listed courses in an appendix, with our assessment of strategic content and average enrolment.

History and political science (including political geography) account for the largest number of courses with strategic or international content – 33 and 25 respectively. The most

common category by far is theoretical approaches to strategic relationships—geographical relationships in political geography, or alliances and hostilities in histories of warfare, diplomacy, and great power interactions. Strategic thought—by philosophers of war like Thucydides, Sun Tzu or Clausewitz, or “great captains” like Marlborough, Napoleon, or Eisenhower—is also found mainly in history. Political science includes theories of international relations, and functional models of deterrence, and strategy. The structures within which strategy is pursued—international institutions, norms and rules of international behaviour, international law, and political and economic organizations—are addressed mainly in political science courses. Strategic insight (knowing yourself and understanding the motivations and intentions of others) is found in psychology and business courses, and courses on international literature.

The most striking observation from our survey of course descriptions is the dearth of strategic *practice* relevant to international conflict and national security. The small number of students participating in Model UN and Model NATO simulations will be augmented from this year with a new simulation integral to the core international relations course. Outside this, only cadets majoring in business are required to take courses with practical (business) strategy exercises implied in course descriptions.

Our categorization is loose, and could be argued for each course. Course descriptions do not constrain pedagogy, so a course on the history of relations between Canada and the US or on the diplomacy of Europe's ascendancy might be taught through content-heavy lectures alone, or augmented with simulations, “what-if” scenario-building, and strategy games testing the application of concepts.

Research on higher education and professional development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) emphasises that curriculum is not limited to content, but includes the context in which the material is developed and presented, and the pedagogy used to engage the students in learning the material.[xix] We have addressed above RMC's internal institutional context, and will consider below the external context and the evolution of pedagogy.

### The external context of curriculum

What is going on outside the college affects how professors develop and present their material, and how students learn. Cadets have an intense personal interest in events that are likely to affect their lives, welfare, and careers. Professors, a third with military experience, are also driven by their experiences. We can think of the external context for teaching strategy and international relations as a layered hierarchy, with the curriculum content and pedagogy at the centre. Government policies and pronouncements, including the frameworks and directives for implementing them, have an effect. The International Policy Statement, the Canada First Defence Policy, Arctic sovereignty, and Millennium Development Goals, have all appeared in recent course syllabi. Beyond these pronouncements are national and international circumstances and events, which are connected and overlapping. But when these external events make their way into content, they do so through the vehicle

of pedagogy, which is shaped by the lenses professors bring to their teaching: theoretical lenses like realism and constructivism; disciplinary lenses like history, economics, and politics; institutional lenses, which consist of the rules governing us; organizational lenses, which consist of the people to whom we are connected; and personal lenses reflecting our individual experiences (Figure 3). Professors inevitably reproduce these lenses through teaching—consciously or inadvertently, effectively or incompletely—but lenses are also adjusted over time (learning occurs in both directions).[xx]

Professors are aware of international and national events, and may make a conscious effort to relate current events or broad patterns to the content of their courses. Cadets studying at RMC are aware that national and international events affect them. Post-Cold War enthusiasm for peacekeeping and stabilization, and the sudden impact of 9/11 and America's wars on terrorism affected some course titles and descriptions. Seminars, student presentations, simulations, assignments, research projects, and conferences were all tilted towards the new themes of the day. Notwithstanding this superficial topicality, the basic frameworks for teaching history and political science – the disciplinary lenses through which professors view their subjects – follow the rhythm of scholarly publications and associations, not newscasts.

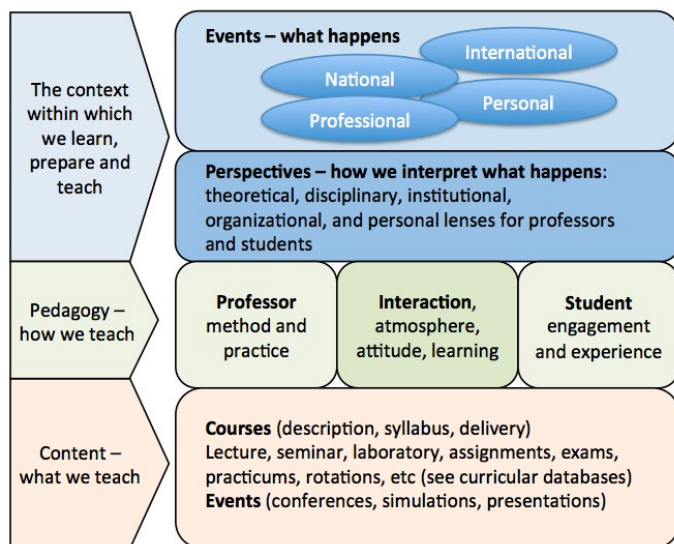


Figure 3 Content, pedagogy, and context for teaching strategy

### Pedagogical choices and innovation

Pedagogy in the classroom—the method and practice of teaching—is the responsibility of individual professors. Institutional quality assurance provides feedback at the end of each course on organization, professionalism in the class, general impressions, and student participation. The format would be familiar in most Canadian civilian universities. The feedback goes to professors, Department Heads, and Deans, but is not very useful for revising or improving course delivery; conversations with students and colleagues are more commonly cited as reasons for changing pedagogy.

An annual award for teaching excellence encourages innovation, but collaboration across departmental and disciplinary boundaries remains rare.

A recent volume, *Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations*, has several chapters relevant to teaching strategic studies and international relations at a military college. In "Teaching to Practitioners," John Craig advocates putting practical experience to work in theory-driven cases, in order to give practitioners a context to analyze their experiences.[xxi] This is obviously applicable to mid-career staff college courses where students have a decade or more of service, but it highlights that most cadets have little relevant experience. Practitioner-instructors must fill this gap by providing the bridge between theory and practice. Experience is not limited to military instructors. Periodically, RMC has been fortunate to have politicians, police officers, bureaucrats, lawyers, diplomats, and international civil servants in the classroom. One particularly effective professor, a former defence scientist and policy analyst, reflected on the decision to teach for praxis:

"...as an undergrad & grad student I was generally taught in a way that was most suited to me becoming a professor. That was something I had never intended ... So, I tried to teach ... in a way that offered students what I always referred to as a toolkit that they might use in their professional careers. I avoided consciously teaching them to become professors." [xxii]

This represents an important departure from normal university practice in the arts, where most professors are career academics, but it is common in professional schools for medicine, engineering, business and law. Even amongst the two thirds of arts faculty professors who are more conventional academics (Table 1) there is a sense of vocation for teaching young officers, which is reflected in decisions about classroom management. The opportunity to accompany cadets on battlefield tours also represents an important form of socialization for professors, and this influences pedagogy.[xxiii]

The majority of classes are conducted as lectures (if larger than 30) and seminars with student presentations and discussions (if the teaching ratio permits). The Oxford tutorial method, in which a tutor provides readings for a small number of students to digest and analyze through interaction with the tutor, is particularly suited to the small class size of many of the upper year electives.[xixv] But it does not encourage simulations and applied knowledge in realistic scenarios. Internships with other government departments and summer on-job education are limited to three or four openings per year.

A semi-annual Forum on Technological & Pedagogical Innovation in Education, sponsored by the Dean of Continuing Studies, offers an opportunity to share innovations and experiments, and these seem to be accelerating. Recent presentations have addressed research on use of electronic books, critical thinking seminars, use of student response devices in large classes (clicker systems), and use of social media in language teaching. The unit of analysis, however, seems to be limited to the individual course, rather than to

programs and the integration of the broader curriculum along themes like strategic thinking. We can refer again to *Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations* for guidance. Andreas Broscheid describes principles for developing team-based learning,[xxv] and we can imagine this being applied across disciplines drawing on economics, political science, and business administration in a multidisciplinary learning community.[xxvi] This may be precisely the pedagogy necessary to develop strategic thinking for new challenges in a world of corporations larger than states, state enterprises engaged in national security, and free-market principles eroding human security. We have not achieved this level of integration, and meeting disciplinary standards within each academic department militates against progress.

RMC's classrooms do not operate in isolation. In the sequence of officer education, RMC represents the first professional development period, or DP1. Mid-career joint command and Staff College constitutes DP3, and Colonels and Generals or Flag Officers are developed through formal courses and experience at DP4 and DP5.[xxvii] Senior civil servants and military officers assembled in Ottawa in June 2015 for the third of a series of conferences on the state of national security practitioners in Canada. The series is driven by problems experienced by the Government of Canada as a whole as it navigates new challenges to national security like extremism and environmental degradation, as well as new tools and capabilities like the controversial anti-terror legislation Bill C-51. The need for sound strategic judgement has never been more evident.[xxviii] Military thinkers play an important role in this process. The liberal dispersion of RMC graduates at every level—in uniform and out—is testimony to the relevance of the core curriculum, and the wide range of electives.

## Conclusions

Teaching international relations and strategic studies to officer cadets before commissioning does not constitute teaching strategic practice. Canada's RMC does not have a strategy for teaching strategic thinkers, nor for integrating strategic thought into its courses on international relations. What is taught, and how it is taught, emerges from the internal processes of a military university. The collective governance of course descriptions and program contents is contingent upon faculty hires, tenure, and academic freedom in the classroom. This constitutes an emergent strategy by default. The Canadian Forces Individual Training and Education System represents an invisible support to this default, by providing mechanisms for individual course accreditation, equivalencies, and educational advancement. The fact that educators are oblivious to it is not important. Nor have NATO reference curricula impinged on RMC's offerings; rather, the influence has been in the other direction. This may continue as long as RMC operates like a university—innovating and developing course materials based on research independent of direction or policy. University practices are a bulwark against directives and policies that may be the products of short-term expedience, managerial ambition, and the ignorance of generalists *in situ* for short periods, focused on

servicing partisan political or personal rather than public interests.[xxix] Soldier-scholars, civilian experts, and learning subalterns in a military university, teaching and learning the ropes of political science, economics, international relations, and the theory and practice of strategy are a vital resource for elite decision-makers.

There are risks inherent in an emergent educational strategy. The first risk is that the characteristics of a research university can be lost due to scarce resources or top-down meddling—directives and policies inimical to free enquiry. The second is that free enquiry won't meet policy need; the university may not have the mass or dynamism to respond effectively to its environment, and to meet the needs of policy-makers and practicing strategists. These two dangers are mutually reinforcing; we face a virtuous circle of research excellence, enhanced reputation, and benign neglect permitting research excellence, or a vicious circle of irrelevance, resource cuts, and marginalization, exacerbating irrelevance and resource cuts.[xxx] The systems view of strategic education, and the presence of RMC graduates in many government departments and agencies concerned with national security give us the opportunity for synergies that make a virtuous circle more likely, but not inevitable.

A third risk is evident in RMC's heavy weighting towards theory—students do more studying, and less practice. This reflects the demands of education in international relations, political science, economics, history, and the other academic disciplines. Competent gamers without a broad education are unlikely to have a sophisticated and worldly understanding of events, causes and effects. But learning within each discipline is inherently constrained:

"Historical knowledge is necessary but insufficient in strategic analysis... ...good strategic analysis is high-end *political* analysis—which is a very interdisciplinary business...From the perspective of strategic analysis, most of the complex theories of IR are useless. [Strategic analysts] ... need techniques that allow open and objective critique... So, forecasting techniques such as Bayesian analysis, various kinds of trend analysis, risk analysis, multiple criteria decision analysis, the theory of games, and conflict analysis were all techniques that were used." [xxxi]

There is remarkably little conflict analysis in RMC's undergraduate program, underscoring the significance of individual faculty skills in shaping the curriculum. Hires are important, and help to shape the research and teaching programs available to the academic core of the military university.

We conclude that Canada's RMC does not need an imposed strategy to teach strategic practitioners. That would bring greater risk of the vicious circle of marginal quality and declining relevance. But professors and practitioners together must monitor the emergent educational strategy for gaps and weaknesses. These go beyond the weakness of disciplinary schisms alluded to by practitioners like Jim Finan. They extend to prevailing modes of thought. Like most



countries, Canada is a strategic consumer, buffeted by the strategies and thinking of the US. Emerging challenges like survival migration, food security, global climate change, and epidemic disease should change the ways we think about the use of military assets to achieve security.

A research university with free enquiry and a flexible curriculum can hedge against the unknown better than directions and policies. Connections with government, the flow-through of practitioners, and the integration of undergraduate and graduate teaching are also strengths of the emergent educational strategy. They represent a comparative advantage for smaller countries like Canada.

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- [xii] We explore evolution further in the article, David Last, Ali Dizboni, Christian Breede, "Teaching International Relations at Canada's Royal Military College: Sixty years of evolution and its implications," forthcoming.
- [xiii] Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) Manual. Kingston, ON: Royal Military College of Canada, 2010.
- [xiv] Formerly the Department of Business Administration
- [xv] Current course descriptions can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar at [www.rmc.ca](http://www.rmc.ca). A survey of historical course descriptions is available online at [https://www.othree.ca/pcp/gserphome/gserp/blogs/reporting\\_on\\_ir\\_and\\_strategy\\_education](https://www.othree.ca/pcp/gserphome/gserp/blogs/reporting_on_ir_and_strategy_education)
- [xvi] Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 3rd Edition (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003), xviii.
- [xvii] John Baylis and James J. Wirtz, "Strategy in the Contemporary World: Strategy After 9/11" in John Baylis, James J. Wirtz, and Colin S. Gray eds. *Strategy in the Contemporary World 4th Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5
- [xviii] For simplicity and consistency, we discuss only English-language courses and content. Most courses and all programs are offered in both French and English. Francophone cadets make up about 24 percent of the cadet wing, and about 40 percent of courses offered are taught in French in any given year, although taken by only about 20 percent of students, because many Francophones take courses in English, but the reverse is not true. Enrolment ratio is discussed in the appendix.
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- [xxi] John Craig, "Teaching Politics to Practitioners," in *Handbook on Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations*, John Ishimaya, William J. Miller, and Eszter Simon, editors. (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2015), 28-34.
- [xxii] Correspondence from Dr. James Finan, strategic policy analyst and professor emeritus, 2 June 2015.
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- [xxxi] Correspondence from Dr. James Finan, former strategic policy analyst and professor emeritus, 2 June 2015. In his correspondence, he cited Thomas L. Saaty, *Decision Making for Leaders: The Analytical Hierarchy Process for Decisions in a Complex World*, London: Wadsworth, 1982; and Niall M. Fraser and Kieth Hipel, *Conflict Analysis: Models and Resolutions*, New York: North-Holland, 1984.



## Appendix: Strategic and International Content of Courses listed in RMC Undergraduate Calendar, 2014-2015

### Key Content:

- T** THOUGHT – the ideas of significant strategists, usually historical, military or political, like Clausewitz or Sun Tzu
- R** RELATIONSHIPS – usually in the form of narratives about how relationships changed over time as a result of strategies and circumstances, but not demanding prescription. Cases in international relations, or studies of diplomatic history are typical of this category
- S** STRUCTURES – including international organizations, policy-making bodies, political geography, establishing knowledge of the context within which strategy is pursued. This is most common in political science courses
- I** INSIGHT – understanding the other, and ways in which the values and thinking of other actors impact on interests and strategies.
- P** PRACTICE – how to apply strategies to practical problems, e.g. game theory, analysis, interpretation of events, culminating in prescriptions for action, or the actual conduct of a game or simulation

Mandatory for: A=Arts degrees; S=Science degrees; E=engineering degrees; M=Military and strategic studies degrees; H=history degrees; B=business degrees; P=politics degrees; S=psychology degrees.

Enrolment ratio: The intent is to indicate the proportion of graduates likely to have taken the course. Mandatory core for all students is 100 percent (e.g. HIE271). Mandatory for arts and science degrees is 60 percent (e.g. POE116). Mandatory for most arts programs is 10 percent. Mandatory for business or psychology is 15 percent. Popular elective is 10 percent. Boutique course is 2 percent. These are indicators only; actual enrolment will fluctuate. Arts electives – the majority of the courses – are likely to have been taken by less than one percent of any graduating class.

Course number and title	Key content	Mandatory for	Enrolment ratio
HIE271 Introduction to Military History and Thought	T, R	all	100
POE116 Introduction to International Relations	T, R, P	A, S	60
BAE238 Introduction to Strategic management	I	B	14
HIE202 Introduction to Canadian Military History	R	M, H	11
HIE270 Introduction to Military History	R	M, H	11
GOE202 Introduction to Political Geography	R	M	7
HIE380 Peacekeeping and Peacemaking	R, S	M	7
HIE470 Strategy and Strategists	T	M	7
POE317 Introduction to Contemporary Strategic Studies	T, S, R	M	7
POE460 Analysis of Contemporary International Conflicts	T, T	M	7
POE462 International Security	T, R	M	7
HIE284 Modern Europe	R	H	4
BAE438 Strategic Management	I, P		2
BAE402 Advanced strategic Management	I, P		2
BAE462 Brand Strategy	I, P		2
POE413 Nuclear Weapons & International Relations	S, R		1
BAE268 Introduction to Defence Resource Management	I		1

Course number and title	Key content	Mandatory for	Enrolment ratio
BAE101 Introduction to Defence Management and Decision making	I		1
ECE424 Economics of Defence	I		1
ECE424 Economics of National Security	I		1
ENE384 Post-Colonial Literature of Africa, South Asia, and The West Indies	I		1
ENE481A World Literature I	I		1
ENE483B World Literature II	I		1
FRF322B Civilisation de la francophonie II	I		1
GOE305 World Regional Geography: Europe or/and the Americas	R		1
GOE307 World Regional Geography: Europe or/and the Africa	R		1
GOE404 Issues in Contemporary Geopolitics	R		1
GOE470 Problems in Political Geography: Europe and Former Soviet Union	R		1
GOE472 Understanding Post-Soviet Europe and Asia	R		1
HIE272 Brief History of Air Warfare	R		1
HIE275 Survey of Technology, Society and Warfare	S		1
HIE340 History of the First World War	R		1
HIE342 History of the Second World War	R		1
HIE345 The Canadian Way of War	T, S		1
HIE346 The History of the Canadian Forces Operations	R		1
HIE356 War and Tradition in the Islamic world	T, S		1
HIE358 War and Peace in the Modern Islamic World	R, S		1
HIE369 Diplomacy of Europe's Global Ascendancy	R		1
HIE371 Introduction to War and Strategy	T		1
HIE372 The Diplomacy of Great Power Rivalry: International History, 1870-1914	R		1
HIE374 From World War to World War: International History 1914-1945	R		1
HIE377 The Cold War	R		1
HIE379 Cold War, Limited War, Diplomacy: International History, 1945-1991	R		1
HIE392 European Imperialism - Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries	R		1
HIE405 History of the relations between Canada and the United States	R		1
HIE406 Canadian External Relations	R		1
HIE408 Canadian Defence Policy	R		1
HIE416 The United States as an Emerging World Power to 1919	R		1
HIE418 The United States as World Power (1919 to the present)	R		1
HIE421 Canadian Naval History	R		1
HIE423 Naval History: the Age of Steam	R		1
HIE448 The Rise of Modern Communism and Fascism	R, S, I		1
HIE454 War, Peace and Diplomacy Foreign Policies of Great Powers since 1815	R, T, S,		1
HIE461 Air Warfare in World Conflict, 1903-1945	T, R		1
HIE463 Air Warfare in Cold War and Small Wars, 1945-2010	T, R		1
HIE476 Guerilla and Revolutionary War	T, R, I		1
HIE477 an Introduction to the History of Terrorism	T, R		1
HIE481 First World War in the Middle East	R		1
POE210 Introduction to Peace Keeping	T		1
POE310 International Relations Theory	T		1

Course number and title	Key content	Mandatory for	Enrolment ratio
POE319 (DL) Terrorism: History and Strategy	I, T		1
POE324 International Organizations	S		1
POE410 International Conflict Management	S, I		1
POE412 American Foreign and Security Policy	R		1
POE421 Political Ideologies	I		1
POE423 Regional Comparative Politics	I, R		1
POE435 Terrorism and Political Violence	I, T		1
POE436 International Law of the Sea	S		1
POE437 Contemporary Regimes: States, and Nations	I		1
POE440 Foresight Tools and Methods for Public Policy	T, I		1
POE486 Air and Space Law	S		1
POE488 The Law of Armed Conflict	S		1
PSE301 Organizational Behavior and Leadership	I		1
PSE312 Applied Military Psychology	I		1
PSE324 Cross-Cultural Psychology	I		1
PSE346 Persuasion and Influence	I		1
PSE380 Psychology and Philosophy of Religious Conflict	I		1
PSE401 Military Professionalism and Ethics	I, S		1
PSE462 Human Factor in Applied Military Science	I		1
SOE320 Sociology of Armed forces	I		1
SOE330 Humanitarianism	S, R		1



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# Teaching IR at Sandhurst: Blended Learning through an Integrated Approach

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## Introduction

The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) was formed in 1947, bringing together the Royal Military Academy (RMA) and the Royal Military College (RMC) to train the regular officers of the British Army. Its then two-year course included both military and academic subjects, while national service and short service officers were trained at officer cadet schools (OCS) (Sale, 1972). One of those schools, the Mons Barracks in Aldershot continued to train short service cadets, graduate entrants and territorials after the abolishment of conscription in 1960, but in 1972 the responsibilities of Mons were entirely assigned to RMAS (MoD, 2015). As one of the major milestones in British officer training, this reformed the commissioning programme substantially. Academic studies were condensed and only offered to future regular officers, while all officer cadets undertook a six-month military course. Since then, a range of reform efforts has been carried out, which has led to the current system (Interview 2, 2015).

The history of the Sandhurst Commissioning Course (CC) has seen much debate on the appropriate percentage of academic education as part of the overall course and these debates have generated a variety of adaptations to the programme. The reasons behind these changes have been triggered by strategic and budgetary reasons alike. Arguably,

the interface between the desire to improve the image and intellectual capability of the British Officer on the one hand, and financial restraints on the other, has historically resulted in compromised decisions on the matter (Downes, 1992). An increasing percentage of Sandhurst officer cadets arrive at Sandhurst with some form of academic degree (currently up to 85 percent), and the Academy has also enhanced the significance of academic education. This trend does not, however, reflect a historical desire in the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) to make the completion of undergraduate studies a requirement for the British regular officer (Speech, Hackett). Instead, it reflects the desire to prevent a deepening intellectual deficit of British army officers.

The regular CC currently is a yearlong course where military training and academic education are integrated into an experience of blended learning, accommodating officer cadets from a wide variety of backgrounds. The uniqueness of the Sandhurst approach of blended learning through integrating academic education and military training, in a particularly demanding physical and intellectual course, will be pertinent throughout this article. It will address the nature of this system, with a specific focus on teaching international relations (IR).

The next pages will shed light on the blended learning approach at Sandhurst, elaborate on the current academic programme in the field of international relations (IR) and assess the apparent trend towards an enhanced appreciation and emphasis on the academic aspect of officer education. It will start by providing an overview of academic courses at the RMAS to put teaching IR in a broader context. These paragraphs will clarify not only the diversity of the academic subjects, but also demonstrate how they are integrated into military training. The article subsequently discusses the latest and indeed very recent academic milestone at RMAS of providing the opportunity to complete a postgraduate certificate (one third of a postgraduate degree) for those officer cadets that are eligible and have the right amount of ambition to undertake that level of education. Offering an undergraduate strand of the regular CC as well as a parallel-running postgraduate strand has only become a reality at Sandhurst in January 2015 and is therefore an interesting work in progress. The article subsequently addresses officers' continuous professional development in the IR sphere and a range of short courses that are offered. The final section will

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conclude with a range of key challenges and opportunities for teaching IR at Sandhurst.

### Sandhurst Academic Courses

The Sandhurst officer cadets arrive at the academy with a wide variety of backgrounds. Around 85 percent are university graduates, but others enter Sandhurst with General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels ('GCE A-levels') or equivalents, while yet another group are serving soldiers who have been selected for officer training. About ten per cent of every intake are non-British overseas cadets, who have been chosen by their own national army to train at Sandhurst. This indicates that while a large group comes with a university degree, it is not a requirement to Sandhurst entry. As will be explained later, the programme in the very least provides them with a foundation to further pursue an undergraduate degree.

The Regular Commissioning Course (CC) takes just under a year; 48 weeks, including recess periods. There are three intakes a year, with courses starting in January, May and September. Officer cadets are assigned to a platoon and one of (usually) two companies. They face three terms of about 14 weeks each, labelling them as juniors, intermediates, and seniors respectively.

A number of shorter courses are also run at Sandhurst, such as the Army Reserve Commissioning Course, the Late Entry Officers Course (LEOC), and the training course for Professionally Qualified Officers (PQOs) holding professional qualifications such as medicine and law. All the courses offered at Sandhurst cover military and academic subjects and it is the latter that we direct our attention to.

Unlike many other military academies, Sandhurst is not a university, it favours a highly integrated approach where academic subjects are taught alongside military training. The blended learning approach Sandhurst favours means students can have military tactics training followed by two hours of academic education, followed by another two hours of physical training. The days are long and the programme is famous for being extremely intense while demanding the utmost effort from officer cadets. With a mixed student population of university graduates from different disciplines, A-level graduates and selected serving soldiers, streamlining the academic part of the Sandhurst programme is a well-acknowledged challenge that transcends academic departments. At the same time, however, this mixture is also among the key strengths in terms of diversity. The mixture of a Sandhurst intake will not only enhance their collective learning experience by sharing experiences, but the Sandhurst rationale is that this will also make young officers more fit for a variety of purposes early on in their career.

The academic subjects are taught across three departments, including the Department of Defence and International Affairs (DIA), the Department of War Studies (WS), and the Department of Communications and Behavioural Science (CABS). While the latter two will inevitably touch upon current affairs and international security issues, teaching IR is really

the core business of DIA. However, both WS and CABS offer complementary and vital branches of social science-related academic education for the officer cadets.

The Department of War Studies is responsible for the study of war and modern military history, covering five key areas: theories of war, manoeuvre of warfare, expeditionary operations, insurgency and counter-insurgency, and 'officership'. A highlight of the War Studies course is Exercise Normandy Scholar, during which all officer cadets spend two full days in Normandy examining real tactical-level scenarios from the 1944 campaign. Demonstrating the integrated Sandhurst approach, this exercise helps the students develop an understanding of command, decision-making and leadership (MoD, 2015).

The Communication and Applied Behavioural Science course at RMA Sandhurst provides another branch of social sciences and is designed to acquire insight in what motivates people, group dynamics, and decision-making. The key themes covered are motivating, communicating and influencing, problem-solving, creative thinking and negotiation skills for the young officer. The CABS flagship exercise is Exercise Agile Influence, a company-sized simulation where officer cadets are faced with the need to develop flexibility of thought and response (MoD, 2015).

Across academic departments, pitching the education of Officer Cadets at the appropriate level has been a challenge throughout the history of Sandhurst. In that sense, Sandhurst has recently entered a new era and is currently experiencing what no doubt will be a milestone in its academic record. While up until recently the academic education for all British cadets at Sandhurst was taught at undergraduate level, for which the Open University offers accreditation of a first-year BA course, in January 2015, Sandhurst started the first ever term where the academic courses are offered in two separate but parallel-running strands; on undergraduate and postgraduate level respectively. The creation of a postgraduate level course leading to a certificate (PG Cert) demonstrates not only the acknowledgement of students' extremely varying backgrounds but also the increasing importance given to academic officer education. Those with the relevant ambition and eligibility can opt for postgraduate classes and if successful, will be offered a PG Cert accredited by the University of Cranfield. Before elaborating on the newly developed postgraduate course, this essay turns to how IR is taught in the regular CC at undergraduate level.

### International Relations in the Regular Commissioning Course

The 14 lecturers that make up DIA deliver classes on a wide selection of topics within the realm of international security and defence issues, and cover a variety of teaching requirements. Apart from the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, which will be the main focus of this essay, DIA teaching requirements also include the Overseas Cadets CC, the Law of Armed Conflict (with a link to Exercise Broadsword), the Late Entry Officers Course, the Professionally Qualified Officers, the Military Analysis Course for Captains,

and the Defence Diplomacy courses (delivered overseas).

The overall aim of DIA courses at the undergraduate level is in fact threefold. Firstly, it endeavours to make the officer cadets capable of identifying, analysing and evaluating a range of fundamental contemporary international security challenges. This includes identifying sources of conflict, strategic drivers and international trends that jointly shape the contemporary operational context. Secondly, DIA courses strive to enable the student to evaluate the means by which states, institutions and policy-makers respond to international security challenges, with continuous attention for the efficiency of military force and the British international role. The third aim of DIA courses cuts across various subjects and revolves around ensuring the Officer Cadet develops the academic skills necessary to evaluate a variety of sources, and communicate their analysis convincingly verbally and in writing. These are considered transferable skills, vital to their continuous professional development. It demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes of IR-related teaching put as much emphasis on intellectual transferable skills as on acquiring the knowledge and understanding of the international security context. While the first two aims are covered throughout 29 DIA classes, the transferable skills are measured in the assessment (Defence Gateway, 2015).

As the Sandhurst commissioning course starts with five extremely demanding weeks of military training, the first contact with the DIA lecturer takes place partway through the junior term. The ten DIA seminars taught during this term provide an overview of the key issues in international relations and security studies, covering the changing nature of the security system, principles of power, US power and rising and emerging powers, democracy and human rights, peace and stability, the UN system and *jus ad bellum*.

The intermediate term then moves on to look at various security risks and threats, as well as potential security responses. Over the course of 10 DIA seminars, it explores terrorism, various unconventional security threats, fragile states and looks at stabilisation and peace operations in general and in Afghanistan and the Middle East more specifically.

The senior and final term then has two sessions on European security issues (security landscape and responses) and a remaining five sessions on Britain's foreign, security and defence policies. In addition, the senior officer cadets attend six sessions on the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), covering the key principles, responsibilities, issues related to captured persons (CPERS), and rules of engagement in *Jus in Bello*. The LOAC training is integrated within the penultimate exercise, Exercise Broadsword, where the practical application of *Jus in Bello* is tested (Defence Gateway 2015).

While the bulk of DIA teaching is conducted in seminars where students are expected to actively contribute to class discussions and debates and continuously assessed on their behaviour and cooperation during the sessions, other classes are taught at platoon-level (LOAC) or even in general lectures where an entire intake is gathered.

Across academic departments, an integrated approach is favoured which is reflected in the involvement of academic

staff in military exercises. For DIA this not only means jointly writing Exercise Broadsword (Ex BS) with military counterparts, but also providing political input and legal expertise on the exercise. This ranges from ensuring that the civilian population understands the roles they are playing at every stage of the two week long exercise, to functioning as a Political Advisor or journalist to test officer cadets in their interaction with civilian experts. The presence of academic personnel on Ex BS is to enhance the learning experience of the officer cadets and maximise their learning potential.

The final session of DIA, at the end of the cadets' senior term, is referred to as 'contemporary developments', which could be described as a miniature conference, where students are encouraged to ask a panel of DIA staff questions on current affairs, often related to their potential future deployments.

Mixed teaching methods require mixed methods of assessment. Thirty per cent of the students' assessments for the DIA grade of the CC at undergraduate level relate to their behaviour in class. The continuous assessment element reflects the importance given to ensuring that officer cadets convey analytically balanced and evidence-based arguments at all times, as well as the ability to actively listen constructively and contribute to class debates. To emphasise the importance of both research and oral communication skills, twenty per cent is dedicated to a presentation in the intermediate term, where students are given a research question with high relevance to the contemporary international security landscape. After independently researching the topic, they present their findings in class and subsequently take the lead in a class debate on the topic. It is at the end of the second term that students start complementing their verbal skills with written ones and are expected to demonstrate the incorporation of their learning outcomes in writing. Hence, forty per cent of the DIA assessment at undergraduate level is awarded to what is termed 'The Commandant's Research Paper', a 2500 word essay on a DIA-related topic. At the end of the Commissioning Course, there is a prize for the best DIA Commandant's Research Paper. The remaining ten per cent covers a LOAC test where students demonstrate their understanding of the key legal principles, responsibilities and rules of engagement when at war.

### A New Academic Era

Following experiences of the British Army in Iraq and Afghanistan, the realisation grew that future deployment was moving into an area of uncertainty. There was a growing recognition of the importance of the intellectual agility of officers, and an enhanced desire to not only reenergise intellectual education in the army, but to train and educate more creative and bespoke problem-solvers (Melvin, 2012). The realisation triggered a general trend in army education with a focus on enhanced adult learning, where the student is given more responsibility for his or her own learning process. This led to the development of a Higher Education Policy to cultivate intellectual training (Chatham House, 2011).

As a consequence of the Higher Education Policy, the academic courses at Sandhurst are currently going through an intensive phase of reform, introducing postgraduate

level academic courses for those officer cadets that have the ambition and the eligibility[i] to undertake the first stage of postgraduate education (PG Cert). This not only reflects a desire to maximise the students' learning potential while at Sandhurst, but also reinforces an ongoing trend of enhanced importance being given to continuous intellectual development once they commission from Sandhurst and leave the academy. As PG Cert is accredited by Cranfield University, it gives students the opportunity to further build upon the credits acquired and pursue a full Master's Degree. Just like the undergraduate strand, the PG Cert is taught across the three academic departments.

The aim of the postgraduate DIA course currently reads as follows:

"To critically evaluate a range of fundamental 21st [century] international security challenges - including long-term strategic drivers, enduring sources of conflict and international trends - shaping the contemporary operational environment and the means by which institutions and policy-makers respond to these challenges, with a particular focus on the efficiency of military force" (Defence Gateway, 2015).

While this may not sound fundamentally different from the abovementioned aim of the undergraduate strand of the Commissioning Course, the academic departments of Sandhurst, in cooperation with the University of Cranfield as the accrediting institution, have put some significant differences in place to distinguish the PG Cert from the undergraduate course, and ensure postgraduate level teaching. Firstly, the course is organised in two separate modules, running over three terms of officer cadet training. As a consequence, there is less room to introduce key concepts of international relations and security studies than in the undergraduate strand, and the first module instead focuses on the nature and challenges of the contemporary international security environment. The second module assesses a variety of potential security responses from a British and wider international context. While the learning outcomes are not overly different from undergraduate teaching at first sight, much more emphasis is put on critical evaluation, and creative analysis.

This is also reflected in the enhanced level of pre-seminar reading the officer cadets are required to complete, the aim of which is to result in not only current, but also conceptual and theoretical class discussions. Finally, the assessment criteria for the undergraduate and postgraduate DIA courses inevitably differ as well. While there is still substantial emphasis on continuous assessment and essay-writing skills, and while the requirements for LOAC and Exercise Broadsword remain the same, the students also have to pass an essay-based 2-hour written exam.

It is important to note that at the time of writing the running of the postgraduate academic strand is still very much a work in progress and therefore still faces some inevitable teething problems. Administratively, as well as academically, the intake of January 2015 have been the guinea pigs of the new academic era. As the first intake has not yet completed a full commissioning course, it is impossible at this stage to

evaluate the postgraduate course as a whole. As is common during the initial phases of a new programme, there is flexibility for students to transfer from postgraduate to undergraduate throughout the course if this would be desirable or advisable.

What we can say at this point, however, is that Sandhurst, where intensive military, command, and leadership training are high on the agenda, has seen a trend of maximising the future academic and intellectual potential of its officer cadets.

### Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

While Sandhurst aims to provide young officers with a solid military and academic basis for their future careers, the diversity of those careers is also taken into account. While some commissioned officers will have a life-long career in the British army and progress to Brigadier level and above, others will favour a shorter time in the military and will make the shift to a civilian profession much earlier on. To cater for all those different career options is not the ambition of the Sandhurst programme. Rather, for providing a workable academic and military starting point for career development and further continuous professional development, post-commissioning is key to the Sandhurst mission. The relative brevity of the overall CC compared to officer training in other NATO countries, the diverse backgrounds of the officer cadets upon their arrival at the academy, as well as the range of ambitions they have, means the Commissioning Course is perceived by many in the British Army as a starting point rather than an end result.

Since the two-year commissioning course was reduced to one year in the 1980s, the attention given to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has increased substantially (Melvin 2012). Intensive CPD packages are offered to provide the link between stage one of the officer career (post-Sandhurst) and the intermediate command and staff course taught at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham (Interview 1, 2015). Continuous professional development is offered throughout their career by means of a variety of short(er) courses.

One such example of a short course is the Military Analysis course that is offered to all Captains and forms part of their CPD, which is required prior to attendance at the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (ICSC) (Land), which is accredited for 20 credits by Kings College London. The aim of the Military Analysis course is to develop the ability to challenge and critically test hypotheses in order to produce the flexibility of thought and attitude required by Captains, using the medium of contemporary defence studies (MA Course Book, 2015). It comprises modules taught jointly by an RMAA DIA academic and a military Officer Tutor at one of the Army Education Centres. The design and development of these modules is done by RMAA academics and falls under the DIA (and WAS) teaching requirements. The continuous updating and redesigning of the Military Analysis course to fit the Captains of today is a testimony that the Sandhurst academic curriculum is a starting point, perhaps a means to an end, but by no means the end as such.



## Short Courses

As has been shown, the wide range of topics covered under international relations, security studies and foreign and defence policy feature as key academic subjects throughout the 48 weeks commissioning course and beyond. But the importance Sandhurst allocates to understanding the international security landscape and developing the desirable analytical academic skills is also reflected in a range of short courses taught at the Academy. While these courses offer very similar subjects, and focus on developing similar skill sets, their delivery is heavily condensed and adjusted to the limited time available.

The DIA component of the Late Entry Commissioning Course (LEOC), for example, is an intensive module delivered over two and a half days. It is a foundation course designed to help Late Entry Officers develop better conceptual and analytical skills and a more nuanced understanding of the strategic, legal and political context of conflict. The course begins by examining the wider strategic environment within which the United Kingdom operates and then proceeds to link these strands vis-à-vis British foreign and defence policy (DIA Component of LEOC, 2015).

It provides a strong foundation for Late Entry Captains, who will proceed to take the abovementioned Military Analysis course. The skills developed during LEOC will be further developed, and the topics discussed will be studied in greater depth during the Military Analysis course. Although the DIA component of LEOC is a demanding and intellectually rewarding course in its own right, this means that it not only gives the students more confidence for continuous professional development, but it will also demonstrate what students can expect from their future Military Analysis courses.

Another short course that requires DIA involvement is the Professionally Qualified Officers course. This course runs twice a year and is loaded with 40-60 commissioned officers of the British Army and, occasionally, students from overseas armed forces. Students are typically qualified professionally in an area of Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Veterinary Science, or Theology. The DIA component of the Regular Professionally Qualified Officers Course (Regular PQO) is currently delivered in 6 double periods – spread over three to four weeks. The sessions are followed by a Final Debate exercise, which is run jointly by the DIA and War Studies departments. The aim of the DIA component is to enhance the intellectual development of PQO officers by developing knowledge and understanding of the strategic and legal context in which the United Kingdom operates in the contemporary international security environment, as well as to help with further intellectual development, specifically contextual, conceptual and analytical skills (PQO Course, 2015).

In addition, the DIA lecturers are involved in delivering academic courses in the context of international security for a variety of other groups, such as the reserve CC, the reserve soldiers' CC, and the reserve PQOs' course. Add to this the DIA teaching requirement for the overseas cadets, and it highlights the complexity of schedules and involvement.

However, having the same department responsible for teaching defence and international affairs subjects in a wide variety of courses and across different levels allows for continuity and coherence of courses and learning.

## Overseas Cadets

Running parallel with the undergraduate and postgraduate commissioning course is the Language and Culture Fair, or the DIA component taught to overseas cadets. While some overseas cadets with a high level of English and/or the appropriate undergraduate degree are allowed to take part in the regular undergraduate or postgraduate courses respectively, the majority follow a specially designed course to meet their requirements. While the aims and objectives, the themes and subjects discussed, and the learning outcomes envisaged are not overly different to what has been discussed for the regular CC, there are some appropriate differences. Firstly, the specific focus on Britain's foreign, security and defence policies and Britain's place in the role is substituted with a more global approach to the subjects and there is an added focus on their own countries of origin. The handbook offered and reading suggested, as well as class debates, has taken into account that many overseas cadets are non-native speakers, and the overall assessment criteria are also different, as there are no undergraduate or postgraduate credits to be gathered.

## Conclusion: Key Challenges and Opportunities

This article has provided a concise insight on how IR-related academic subjects are taught at Sandhurst. With an emphasis on the uniqueness of the Sandhurst CC, it has highlighted a range of choices that have led to the current academic education. While learning is a dynamic matter, a few key challenges and opportunities for academic education at Sandhurst can be identified at this stage.

Firstly, in a constantly changing world and international security system, with a wide diversity of threats at home and abroad, it is vital to keep the topics taught up to speed with the international context the officer cadets will potentially operate in on their first deployments. It has been demonstrated that the Sandhurst IR curriculum is not rooted in conceptual thinking but in current affairs, and endeavours to be more about IR as such than about IR theories. This also means it has to be amenable to the rapidly changing world and the core security issues therein. This requires not only adjusting the topics, case studies and reading material for seminars, student presentations and essay questions, but more importantly it requires the capability to detect trends and issues in the international security landscape that are or will potentially become of relevance to the British army. DIA takes the lead on the continuous updating of the Sandhurst IR curriculum, but can reach out to the wider Academy and MoD to ensure coherence. While the requirement to be observant about trends in the international security landscape is perhaps not different for any other military academy, the relative short duration of the Sandhurst course compared to other countries' officer training means that time



has to be spent wisely and valuably.

Secondly, the students arriving at Sandhurst come from a variety of backgrounds. While the recent creation of two parallel branches of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching has brought some solace in this respect, there is still substantial diversity within those two groups. The undergraduate branch is made up of selected serving soldiers, A-level graduates and students with a bachelor's degree that were not entitled to join the postgraduate strand, or chose not to. While all officer cadets in the undergraduate strand have university degrees, the subjects they have previously studied vary widely and are as diverse as engineering, outdoor leadership, English literature and political science. Exceptionally, there might also be an eligible overseas cadet present in these classes. Catering for all these backgrounds while still delivering a postgraduate programme proves a challenging task. Again, Sandhurst differs from many military academies in other NATO countries, where students arrive when they are 18 years of age and are expected to complete a full academic curriculum by the time they become an officer. Sandhurst has no ambition

of being a university or offering a full academic university degree. Rather, it sees opportunity in diversity, and strives to get the best of all worlds. The range of courses that Sandhurst offers is designed to maximise the learning potential of every officer cadet.

Thirdly and finally, the integrated approach favouring blended learning is challenging for personnel, scheduling, and time-related issues. It requires a constant exchange between civilian and military personnel at all levels; from Director of Studies and Commandant level to academic lecturers and military instructors. While this is challenging in terms of fitting all the relevant elements together to create the best learning environment possible, it also comes with opportunities. As civilian and military personnel constantly interact with each other to maximise the learning potential of the officer cadets, they will have a better understanding of and respect for each other's worlds than might be the case in military academies where this interaction is kept at a minimum. This in turn allows for a clearer link in the learning process between the strategic and the operational, something that is highly valued by hybrid institutions like Sandhurst.

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[i] Students with a lower second class honors postgraduate degree (2.2) and above are allowed to enter the postgraduate strand, and those with a third class honors degree (3rd) have to take an entrance exam. Given the early stages of the implementation of the postgraduate degree, the Academy, in cooperation with Cranfield University, might still decide to change this.



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