Engagement Between Peace and War: How Soldiers and Military Institutions Adapt

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Executive Summary

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Key Insights

The future security environment is complex and fluid

We are moving towards a de-structured world of complexity and adversity. Grey Zone, economic, cyber, space and environmental threats will persist and pose cognitive, political, and resource challenges. The space between war and peace is complex and ambiguous, and actors must be agile and adaptive, learning to think strategically but also learn within this dynamic environment. Complexities also exist internally as militaries navigate more complicated relationships with the societies they serve.

Flexibility, agility, and adaptability will be required to rapidly respond to emerging peace and security threats

Agile responses to hybrid warfare threats have been slow as a result of the tradition-bound nature of our organizations. Adaptability must be possessed by soldiers and institutions. Although the solider is the target actor, adaptation from institutions is required based on their way of instilling skill sets in soldiers. Adaptability requires partnering for preparedness prior to warning signs. In adapting, we must be cognisant of the danger of being overwhelmed by complexity and falling into a loop of reflection without making progress.

The Grey Zone will be a profound piece of the puzzle in how we consider operations

Describing - rather than defining – the Grey Zone is imperative to allow for flexibility of the term, as this complex conflict area is continuously changing.

We must change the way we teach, train, and employ leaders

Our ability to think critically, creatively, and have understanding of context - from senior leadership to individual soldiers - will lead to strategic success. Technology will be critical for education and adaptive training as it provides innovative and efficient cognitive and physical human performance optimization. The development and nurturing of strategic competencies within leadership provides a space for the integration of issues increasing in prevalence, such as gender, spirituality, and the environment.

A whole of government approach is necessary to adapt to the changing security environment

Adapting to emerging security challenges requires a broad, interdisciplinary approach that should not be left solely to the military. A collaborative effort involving civil society, military, law enforcement and political actors is required to approach security challenges. However, disconnections between military and political objectives prove to be a barrier to strategic success. Creating a culture of organizational, operational and institutional excellence requires the selection of personnel in key leadership positions that can build relationships with other whole of government partners.

A whole of partnership approach is desired, but faces operationalization challenges

A transnational, whole of partnership approach provides political balance at home and abroad, and is required to sustain mutual supports and interests. Defence and intelligence communities such as NATO and The Five Eyes face institutional adaptation challenges, such as being locked in reactive rather than proactive patterns. Adversaries are challenging the seams of these organizations, moving to areas where alliances do not wish to engage and concentrating on our perceived strengths to generate weaknesses.
We must think in terms of resiliency

Resiliency requires interagency cooperation that goes beyond peaceful coexistence. When we consider strategic success, we must think in terms of sustainable and resilient objectives. Proactive information sharing, strong economies, human capital investment, as well as the integration of cultures, personalities, communications and intellect will be the foundation of a resilient strategic future.