

## Fighting for the Cause

Major Andrew B. Godefroy CD, PhD

**D**r. Denton, in response (CMJ Vol. 8, No. 1) to my earlier letter to the editor (Vol. 7, No. 4) should not misinterpret my riposte to his syllogistic article (Vol.7, No.2 – *The End of Asymmetry – Force Disparity and the Aims of War*) as an *ad hominem abusive or argumentum ad personam*. Such are the weapons of armchair generals and pundits, not warrior scholars. My point was very carefully considered, and remains that it is factually erroneous to assume that military planners and executors are ignorant to the many factors that may constrain, restrain, and shape international security, or that we suffer some ‘cognitive gap’ when it comes to understanding ‘the kind of operations that real security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires.’ Ignoring second and third order effects of conflicts and suggesting that they can simply be wished away by unilateral disarmament or outright avoidance is naïve. ‘Real security’ that Dr. Denton pines for is not achieved the same way one would discipline a misbehaving child – you cannot simply threaten to send the belligerents to bed without their supper if they don’t come around. Conflict does not go away simply because you ignore it, avoid it, or pretend it does not influence the end state. Not all belligerents are interested in seeing your light, and it is dangerous to assume otherwise.

Although I commend Dr. Denton’s efforts to inject a new term into international security and Canadian Forces (CF) conceptual development, I stand by my original criticism of his ideas (not him individually – I’m sure he’s a nice man). He is quite right to point out that the term ‘asymmetry’ is not a useful term to describe 21<sup>st</sup> Century warfare. Big surprise this term was brought to fruition in the 1990s not by just military planners but by a score of academics anxious to become the subject matter expert *du jour*. His characterization of ‘force disparity,’ however, suffers from a selectively Orwellian poaching of historical facts, much in the same way as that other awful ‘buzz term,’ ‘fourth generation warfare’ cherry picks its way across history to create false dividers for explaining the evolution of warfare.

Denton’s perception that western militaries remain blinded by the promise of high technology and ignore the human dimension of conflict, combat, and its resolution is another major flaw in his article, and

another perception that has been largely sustained, not by the military, but by academics and their associated think tanks. Technology alone cannot win wars. We in the military know this, and have known it for some time. His argument is also grounded in the assertion that CF force development does not consider the disparity between forces in its assessments of the future security environment or in its conceptual and doctrinal design of forces. In fact, it does. Dr. Denton’s argument that the CF should reorient itself to a poorly armed constabulary, somehow magically avoid certain levels of violence in a theatre of conflict, and attempt to focus solely on aid and reconstruction while ignoring security, sparks past images of politicians waving papers and promising long-lasting peace. History repeatedly punishes those who succumb to this folly.

General Robert E. Lee, an illustrious US Civil War commanding officer, was claimed to have once lamented: “It appears we have appointed our worst generals to command forces, and our most gifted and brilliant to edit newspapers! In fact, I discovered by reading newspapers that these editor-geniuses plainly saw all my strategic defects from the start, yet failed to inform me until it was too late. Accordingly, I’m readily willing to yield my command to these obviously superior intellects, and I’ll, in turn, do my best for the cause by writing editorials after the fact.”

Personally, I lament the fact that we too will suffer an endless series of great ideas from those far out of touch with the realities of complex conflict or of the complex processes required to manage or solve them. I have little tolerance for the repeated attempts to paint soldiers as ‘knuckle draggers,’ and I would welcome Dr. Denton to close his own ‘cognitive gap’ a little and actually have a look at the Canadian Army Journal, for which I have the privilege to serve as editor. The more substantive debate he desperately seeks is alive and well in its pages, and it has been thus for the better part of a decade.

If Dr. Denton is so convinced ‘force disparity’ is the way to go, then I invite him to quit the ‘substantive debate’ and start producing some substantive evidence and fact to support his approach. I formally invite him to submit an article to our pages for publication. Otherwise, ‘force disparity’ is just the latest buzz term in a field that already suffers from too many buzz terms and buzz words.

Major Andrew B. Godefroy

### Causing the Fight Peter H. Denton, PhD

**M**ajor Godefroy believes he is “fighting for the cause” when he is merely taking an offensive stance. Even more than “the war on terror,” I believe his “cause” remains indistinct and peopled with antagonists of his own creation.

While I will leave the interested CMJ reader to identify the repeated misconstrues of my original article, Godefroy’s latest response moves beyond the intemperate to the apoplectic. The collateral damage he inflicts upon ‘armchair generals and pundits’ everywhere – along with academics, think tanks, editors, and politicians – is amusing, if largely undeserved. (By the way, Lee lost.)

I share his intolerance of those unidentified souls who would depict soldiers as “knuckle draggers” and wonder why he brought it up. Although he likes the turn of a good (if meaningless) phrase (like “selectively Orwellian poaching of historical facts”), if he wants to chastise historical cherry picking – and it doesn’t strike too close to home – he might want to go after the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). When it comes to his denial that “military planners and executors are ignorant to [sic] the many factors that may constrain, restrain, and shape international security,” however, I realize we live in different universes. In mine, the last hundred years reflect increasing insecurity and bloodshed, much of it the result of governments and their armed forces.

Determining how much is the fault of folk like Major Godefroy would be an interesting, if daunting, task. It would be more fruitful to analyze the failures of larger social systems, in which the Major Godefroys of the last century, it seems, are uncomprehendingly complicit.

His rejection of the idea that armed forces are blinded by the promise of high technology demonstrates the self-referential logic displayed elsewhere in his writing – no doubt, in his universe, the Joint Strike Fighter is a low technology solution to the problems of airline security. I would also be intrigued to hear his ideas on Canada’s low technology contributions to future space warfare.

One might easily argue that the problems faced by the Canadian Forces (CF) since at least Korea have resulted from poor political leadership and under-funding, tolerated by a Canadian public unable to articulate a clear role for its armed forces. In the

21<sup>st</sup> Century, public support and intelligent political leadership are crucial if the CF is to be more than the “poorly armed constabulary” Godefroy accuses me (again, incorrectly) of advocating. In the future, when we deploy our troops, there should be far fewer lessons that need to be learned the hard way.

As I am unaware of Godefroy’s record, I must defer to his self-depiction as a “warrior scholar.” He should not be so dismissive, however, of those who contribute other expertise in the service of their country and humanity as a whole.

I remember, as a youngster, meeting a nice little old man, an accountant who had been a friend of my grandfather, over lunch one day in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. Only years later, and thanks to Pierre Berton (and the *Canadian Army Journal* in Spring 2005), did I learn that then-Capt Harvey Crowell had led “C” Company of the 85<sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia Highlanders out of the trenches, leading the final assault that captured Vimy Ridge, before returning to his books and providing years of dedicated leadership to Acadia University. The success of these green troops (who accomplished what the professional warriors had not) was due in large part to their training by Crowell and their battalion commanders, one of whom was adjutant Major James Layton Ralston, a lawyer and politician (not a professional warrior) – and cousin to my grandmother – who went on to become Minister of National Defence.

Recent history teaches us that it is easier to start a war than to stop one or to predict its outcome, and that, however expensive it is to “buy” peace through development, it is much more costly to engage in a war without end. Whether or not Godefroy likes the terms “fourth generation warfare” or “force disparity,” achieving human security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will require more than “tally ho!” from combat enthusiasts.

Words, like our other tools, are means to an end – but they can be just as lethal as any hardware in our arsenals. We need new words, and new ideas – from all corners – as well as the courage to apply lessons learned if we are to change our world for the better.

I accept Major Godefroy’s invitation to submit some of my own words to his journal.

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