TEAM DEFENCE INFORMATION CANADA

SELF-SUSTAINING FORCES CONCEPT

Welcome to Part 1 of Self-Sustaining Forces—a series examining the self-reinforcing systems, feedback loops, and resilient structures required to thrive in an increasingly volatile world. In this inaugural article, Clive Morgan and Steve Green break down how the global shift from efficiency to resilience is redrawing the boundaries between national Defence and economic survival—and why logistics has become the primary modern battlespace.

Article 1: Constant Competition – Why Logistics Has Become a Battlespace

By Clive Morgan and Steve Green

We no longer live in a world defined by a binary flip-switch between war and peace. That illusion has shattered. Today, we live in an era of constant competition.

It is an unrelenting, below-the-threshold struggle for resources, transportation space, data networks, critical minerals, and ultimate sovereignty. The traditional lines on a map haven't disappeared, but the real friction is happening along the global arteries that connect them.

For decades, Western militaries and corporate enterprises shared a singular obsession: efficiency. We optimised for the lowest cost and the shortest lead time. Supply chains stretched comfortably across continents, inventory was minimised to satisfy "just-in-time" financial metrics, and global markets were naively assumed to remain permanently accessible, open, and benign.

The result? A highly sophisticated, hyper-optimised global system that performed exceptionally well—while the sun was shining. But the strategic climate has fundamentally shifted. The operational weather is turning violent, and the optimisation for efficiency has left us acutely vulnerable

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The Weaponisation of the Everyday

Today, strategic adversaries do not wait for a formal declaration of conflict or an overt kinetic strike before applying pressure. Instead, grey-zone statecraft dictates that the battle begins long before the first shot is fired. Economic coercion, state-sponsored cyber-attacks, the monopolisation of critical mineral dependencies, targeted infrastructure disruption, and coordinated information operations are no longer rare anomalies; they are routine instruments of competitive statecraft.

According to the joint EU-NATO Task Force on the Resilience of Critical Infrastructure, strategic competitors are actively exploiting vulnerabilities by targeting cross-cutting

sectors like energy, transport, and digital infrastructure to gather intelligence, deny access, or paralyse a nation's ability to respond during a crisis. We see this unfolding in real-time beneath the waves, where threats to critical undersea data cables and pipelines in the Baltic and Red Seas demonstrate how easily global logistics can be held hostage without a single troop crossing a land border.

This paradigm shift has profound implications for Canada. The exact same vulnerabilities that cripple corporate civilian supply chains now directly jeopardise National Defence. The security of the state is no longer siloed within the military. If a cyber-attack targets maritime logistics or terminal management systems at our major ports, it simultaneously strangles domestic economic prosperity and freezes military operational readiness. A bottleneck in semiconductor manufacturing stalls commercial automotive lines and grounds next-generation military platforms alike.

The hard truth we must face: The boundary between economic security and national security has evaporated.

The High Stakes of the Canadian Arctic

Nowhere is this blurring of lines more visible, or more urgent, than in the Canadian Arctic. As climate change accelerates and northern ice recedes, the Arctic is transforming into a highly contested arena of geopolitical competition.

Remote northern communities and isolated military installations rely on exceptionally long, brittle, and seasonal supply chains. Weather anomalies, permafrost degradation, infrastructure failures, or intentional geopolitical disruptions can rapidly degrade both civilian community resilience and military operational effectiveness.

Canada’s updated Defence policy explicitly acknowledges this reality. The Department of National Defence (DND) is confronting an environment where climate, range, and limited redundancy amplify every single risk. If you cannot sustain your presence in the Far North, you cannot reinforce sovereignty over it.

To survive in this contested logistics environment, Canada is forced to innovate. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has responded by activating its *Joint Logistics Modernisation Campaign Plan*, aimed at transforming the Defence Supply Chain (DSC) into a digitised "system of systems."

Furthermore, we are seeing the rise of critical public-private initiatives like the recently launched Arctic Defence Logistics Platform (ADLP), which utilises deep Indigenous partnerships and regional joint ventures to build a year-round logistics backbone. This integration proves that northern sovereignty cannot be managed with a standard doctrinal template; it requires local, embedded execution that turns community resilience into a national shield.

The Blueprint for Resilience: Dual-Use Ecosystems

The answer to this systemic vulnerability is not isolationism. We cannot and must not pull up the drawbridge and turn inwards. The answer is **deliberate resilience**.

To survive an era of constant competition, Canada must build dynamic, **dual-use capability ecosystems**—industrial structures that drive economic growth during peacetime but can instantly pivot to support national defence readiness during a crisis. This philosophy underpins Canada's landmark *Defence Industrial Strategy*. By moving away from the old transactional procurement models, the newly minted Defence Investment Agency (DIA) is pioneering a "Build – Buy – Partner" Canadian policy framework designed to foster homegrown champions and secure sovereign control over domestic supply chains.

Traditional Approach (Efficiency Focus)	Future Framework (Resilience Focus)
Just-In-Time Inventory	Strategic Redundancy & Depth
Single-Source Foreign Suppliers	Diversified, Trusted Alliances
Fragile Global Supply Lines	Localised, Near-Sourced Clusters
Siloed Military Infrastructure	Integrated Dual-Use Ecosystems

We must lean heavily into four key pillars to anchor this resilience:

- **Distributed Food, Energy Water and Materiel Systems (FEWMS):** Deploying micro-grids, localised renewable energy sources, and low-carbon systems to

ensure that military bases and northern communities remain operationally viable even if centralised food, energy water and materiel supply chains are disrupted.

- **Sovereign Industrial Capacity:** Incentivising small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) through initiatives like the Industrial and Technological Benefits (ITB) Policy to ensure that the intellectual property, engineering skills, and manufacturing facilities remain firmly within Canadian borders.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** Shifting toward Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and additive manufacturing allows us to build components off-site in controlled environments. This shortens assembly times in austere environments like the Arctic and insulates production from external supply shocks.
- **Circular Economy Solutions:** Reducing reliance on volatile foreign markets for raw inputs by mastering the recycling, reclaiming, and repurposing critical minerals and advanced materials domestically.

Sustainability is a Security Imperative

The ultimate insight here is one that leaders in both the boardroom and the Military Headquarters must internalise: *Sustainability is not a passive corporate social responsibility exercise. It is a core national security imperative*.

When we talk about transition, reduction, and localisation, we are talking about survival. A nation capable of producing its own critical resources, processing its own food, and manufacturing its own technology locally is a nation that is immensely difficult to economically coerce. A military capable of sustaining its own equipment through a robust domestic industrial base is a military that is incredibly hard to defeat. A local community capable of maintaining power and communications during an extended supply chain disruption is a society that is nearly impossible to destabilise.

The modern battlespace has spilled over its historical geographic boundaries. It has quietly expanded to encompass our maritime shipping lanes, our digital networks, our electrical grids, and our factory floors.

The nations and corporations that recognise this reality first—and proactively invest in structural resilience over short-term efficiency—will capture a monumental strategic advantage. Those that lag behind will find themselves vulnerable to forces they cannot see, combatting threats they failed to prepare for.

The question is no longer whether logistics has become a contested battlespace. The question is whether our public institutions, our private enterprises, and our leadership are courageous enough to change the way they operate within it.

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