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## CHILD SOLDIERS AND HUMAN SECURITY: CANADA HAS THE WILL, BUT LOST ITS WAY

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JCSP 43 DL

*Exercise Solo Flight*

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LCol S.M. House

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## **Child Soldiers and Human Security: Canada Has the Will, but Lost its Way**

‘At that time if you remember we’ve got Bosnia and the whole Balkans exploding with massive demands of troops, we’ve got Somalia still operating but slowing down, Cambodia, Mozambique was cranking up, Angola was there, Liberia. There were 16 operational missions going on around the world with a lot of troops committed from a lot of nations to those missions. And so when this mission came forward it was made clear to me that, one, it had to be done on the cheap and, two, people were peace-keeping’d out, they just had enough. The keenness to go into central Africa even on a Chapter VI success story was simply not there. Instead of having the full effective force that I wanted, I ended up with a force of 2,600 of which 350 were military observers -- that is, they don’t carry any weapons . . .’ LGen (Ret’d) Roméo Dallaire <sup>1</sup>

If the Facebook masses in groups like ‘The Mess Tent’ are to be believed, the “way we’ve always done it” is the only way. None of this new-aged GBA+ analysis, and the opinions of lawyer wrangling politicians, who pay millions to terrorists and open our borders to refugees while cutting support to veterans, should not be considered when planning military missions. Certainly none of this gender nonsense need be discussed when force generating a Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) mission, regardless of its cultural and societal context, because “when I was in, you had to be good at your job to serve. . . . not just be a woman.”<sup>2</sup>

This paper argues that the Trudeau Government’s values drove their will towards a human security focused peacekeeping contribution, with aspirations of taking a leading role amongst United Nations (UN) allies in countering the child soldier epidemic. They lost their way when interests, both economic and political, outweighed their values, resulting in a watered down role to mitigate political risk, limiting the positive impact the CAF could have delivered.

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<sup>1</sup> Kopel, Ted, Romeo Dallaire. “A Good Man in Hell.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: (12 June 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Brewster, Murray. “Freeland unveils government’s 5-year women, peace and security plan.” CBC News: (1 Nov 2017). <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-women-peacekeeping-mission-1.4381373> (accessed 26 April 2018).

The current Government of Canada (GoC) came into office with many public goals, not least of which a widely supported renewed peacekeeping role.<sup>3</sup> Many of their foreign policy initiatives, such as Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, with action items related to preserving human dignity, climate action, and the empowerment of women and girls,<sup>4</sup> show the government's values are based on the broader definition of Human Security.<sup>5</sup> Despite the unenviable position of having to stick-handle the Omar Khadr legal battle, they acknowledged and acted upon their commitments to international resolutions, such as the Paris Principles.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, this government had the will to act in line with its values, yet it brought ever mounting backlash.

The election of President Donald Trump deteriorated cohesion with our closest security ally; United States (US) Government policies since January 2017 demonstrate their belief in state security from a realist perspective. Closing their borders to Muslim majority countries and denouncing Palestinian interests by moving their embassy to Jerusalem are examples which speak to their divergent viewpoint. Appeasing this ally remains fundamental to Canadian interests, notably with on-going economic pressure to salvage the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

This paper begins with evidence of the GOC's lofty goals while selecting a UN peacekeeping mission, highlighting its international leadership in the realm of child soldiers.

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<sup>3</sup> Von Hlatky, Stefanie. "Trudeau's Promises: From Coalition Operations to Peacekeeping and Beyond." Canadian Defence Association Institute, Ottawa, ON: (3 June 2016) <https://cdainstitute.ca/cda-institute-analysis-trudeau-s-promises-from-coalition-operations-to-peacekeeping-and-beyond/> (accessed 15 May 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Canada. "Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy." Ottawa: (5 April 2018). [http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng](http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng) (accessed 15 May 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Kerr, Pauline. "Human Security." In *Contemporary Security Studies*, edited by Alan Collins. New York: Oxford University Press: (2013), 104.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations. "The Paris Principles." Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. UNICEF: (Feb 2007).

Then explores how interests-based influences deterred them into a watered down mission support role. These include economic and security interests contingent on US-Canada relations, and political interests of a government seeking re-election. Facing opposition on issues ranging from their insufficient support for ill and injured soldiers, to media interest on the child soldier situation in Mali; this weighs on public support for a possibly bloody mission. Finally, a discussion on the global security challenge of child soldier recruitment and Canada's lost opportunity to lead the charge against it.

### **When there's a will...**

When evidence of impending genocide in Rwanda presented itself through a credible informant to UN Force Commander, LGen Romeo Dallaire, he quickly sent word to UN HQ; which was received by another Canadian Army General and future Chief of Defence Staff, MGen Barille. Dallaire was talking to a peer, yet his warning went unheeded, as there was no will to do the right thing, only a politically astute yet complacent route. Dallaire's simple words "... peux ce que veux. Allons-y" fell on deaf ears. Today's GoC wants to challenge the 'way it's always been done', in the interest of human security.<sup>7</sup> Partnerships between hard power resources, such as the CAF, and well-earned international soft power influence could enable this will.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately Canadian economic and security interests reliant on our closest ally, the US, and political interests heightened by pre-election media attention, all caused Canada to lose its way.

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<sup>7</sup> "Human Security." In Contemporary Security Studies, . . . , 104.

<sup>8</sup> Nye, Joseph. "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power." Foreign Affairs 88, no. 4 (2009).

Shortly after the election, the Trudeau government's actions demonstrated a focus on the broadest definition of human security.<sup>9</sup> As an example, all Cabinet Ministers' mandate letters noted the effort to curb climate change, which further found its way into the new defense policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged".<sup>10</sup> More specifically, Minister of National Defence's (MND) initial mandate letter specifically tasks support to UN Peace Operations; a marked change from recent CAF Operations.<sup>11</sup> Further, the government announced in November 2017 a 5-year plan to increase numbers of women in peacekeeping to support UN gender-based violence investigations and gender-diversity in policing.<sup>12</sup>

The GoC's values quickly turned to action when the CAF was leveraged through Operation PROVISION, towards resettlement of 25,000 Syrian Refugees.<sup>13</sup> One final example of GoC's will to enable human security goals, despite its unpopularity, was the highly publicized Omar Khadr settlement and apology.<sup>14</sup> The misplaced anger this brought about, through significant media coverage, failed to adequately acknowledge that this decision was neither random nor a precedent.

The best documented case of ill-treatment and abuse of a child soldier in detention is certainly that of Omar Khadr. Khadr was born in Canada and brought to Pakistan and Afghanistan as a young child by his parents. . . . The military tribunals that tried Khadr contained no special provisions for child defendants or consideration of the goals of rehabilitation and reintegration, allowed the consideration of information obtained through coercive means or torture, and were not independent or impartial. The UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, and advocacy

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). "New Dimensions of Human Security." In Human Development Report 1994, edited by Inge Kaul. New York: Oxford University Press, (1994), 22-24.

<sup>10</sup> Canada. Cabinet Mandate Letters. Ottawa: Office of the Prime Minister. <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/mandate-letters> (accessed 20 May 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Canada. Minister of National Defence Mandate Letter. Ottawa: Office of the Prime Minister: (12 Nov 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Brewster, Murray. "Freeland unveils government's 5-year women, peace and security plan."

<sup>13</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. "Operation PROVISION." <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/op-provision.page> (accessed 15 May 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Fife, Robert. "Ottawa pays out \$10.5-million to Khadr amid potential legal battle." The Globe and Mail, Ottawa: (7 July 2017).

organizations such as Amnesty International have all expressed grave concern over the treatment of Khadr at the hands of American authorities, and many academic articles have analysed the illegality of his treatment.<sup>15</sup>

The settlement could have demonstrated the GoC's deep understanding of human rights issues,<sup>16</sup> the consequences of the child soldier epidemic, and a launching point for a transparent discussion of the GoC's security sector reform (SSR) goals. Canada was putting its money where its mouth was; with behind the scenes efforts to place Canada in a leading role in tackling the child soldier issue; Dallaire himself suggested just that.<sup>17</sup>

As Canada re-engages with the United Nations, it can demonstrate leadership with respect to providing guidelines, training and moral authority on the need to prioritize and actively end the recruitment and use of child soldiers. This can be Canada's contribution to capacity building of UN peace operations now and into the future. This can change the way peacekeeping is done.<sup>18</sup>

His ringing endorsement was in response to two significant successes. In early 2017, Canada published joint doctrine note (JDN) 2017-01 Child Soldiers, which details the CAF's interest in preventing recruitment and use of children as soldiers.<sup>19</sup> It codifies the myriad conventions, like the Paris Principles' child soldier definition,<sup>20</sup> NATO commitments,<sup>21</sup> and describes planning factors and tasks during land operations,<sup>22</sup> ensuring commanders at all levels

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<sup>15</sup> Whitman, Shelly, Darin Reeves, and Dustin Johnson. "Addressing the Gaps in Security Sector Training: The Detention of Child Soldiers." *Protecting Children Against*

*Torture in Detention: Global Solutions for a Global Problem*. Washington College of Law, 393.

<sup>16</sup> Mackinnon, Steven. "Why we had to pay Khadr." Mcleans, Rogers Digital Media: (26 July 2017). <https://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/why-we-had-to-settle-with-omar-khadr/> (accessed 15 May 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Dallaire, LGen Roméo (Ret'd), Shelley Whitman. "Canada Can Lead Crusade to Stop Use of Child Soldiers." The Star: (Nov 2017). <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2017/11/17/canada-can-lead-crusade-to-stop-use-of-child-soldiers-dallaire-whitman.html> (accessed 26 April 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. "Joint Doctrine Note - 2017-01: Child Soldiers." First Edition. Strategic Joint Staff: Canadian Forces Warfare Centre: (2017), 1-2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 1-3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 1-8.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 2-3 – 2-14.

acknowledge these expectations. JDN 2017-01 was the first of its kind,<sup>23</sup> and described as setting a Canadian baseline for both the prevention of child soldiers' use, and preparation for CAF members who will inevitably face them in conflict.<sup>24</sup> The second success was the November 2017 hosting of UN delegations in Vancouver.

On Wednesday, the Canadian government released the Vancouver Principles as part of the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial. Endorsed by UN troop contributing countries, the Vancouver Principles seek to equip peacekeepers with the knowledge and tools to proactively prevent the six grave violations against children — outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612 — specifically their recruitment and use as child soldiers.<sup>25</sup>

These principles sought to link ratified agreements with research, describe the social, economic and cultural impacts of child soldier usage, and to collaboratively hold each other to a higher standard within the security sector.<sup>26</sup> This opportunity to influence our allies showed Canada projecting its values abroad, and is lockstep with the government's defence policy. "In short, Canada – by virtue of our geography, our history, our diversity and our natural wealth – is called to leadership."<sup>27</sup>

### **There's a way**

At times a nation's values contest its interests. Canada has a level of prestige in the world that allows it to act in line with its values, without necessarily affecting its interests.

Unfortunately, not all interests are national ones like economy and security; some are political

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<sup>23</sup> Canada. "Canadian Armed Forces Sets Precedent with Child Soldier Doctrine". Ottawa (2 Mar 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Dallaire, LGen Roméo (Ret'd), Shelley Whitman. "Statement on Canadian Armed Forces Doctrine on Child Soldiers." The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, Dalhousie University: (9 Feb 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Canada. Office of the Prime Minister. "Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers." Vancouver, British Columbia: (15 November 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. "Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy." Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017, 49.

motivations of a ruling party. The aforementioned successes that demonstrate Canadian will caused some political road blocks for the Liberal party. Simultaneously, the election of President Trump brought a new and challenging relationship with our biggest ally. These interests-based influenced resulted in Canada losing its way.

Throughout 2016 and 2017, not long after the Afghanistan mission, the GoC was still facing the mission's fallout; a steep increase in soldier suicides while not fulfilling the election promise to return lifelong pensions for ill and injured veterans. Primarily brought on by PTSD, these suicides are frequently attributable to moral wounds. On-going mental health struggles of veterans and soldiers were insufficiently resourced, and this timing overlapped with the Khadr settlement. Rather than opening a national discussion on potential CAF roles during a peace operation and the security threat posed by the use and abuse of children in conflict, it instead negatively influenced the views of many about the validity of the child soldier plight. Worse, at least from an allied interests-based perspective, international organizations like amnesty international placed the black eye partially on Canada, but primarily on the US mishandling and torture of a child soldier.<sup>28</sup> Trudeau expressed anger and frustration about the settlement as well; some of this frustration was clearly directed at the US.<sup>29</sup>

The Khadr settlement's impact on Liberal party interests essentially laid the narrative that Trudeau fights suicidal veterans in court, while making a convicted terrorist a millionaire, all while media interest grew on what peace operation would be assigned to the CAF. The surge in suicides, the government announcement of our newly minted doctrine,<sup>30</sup> and the costly

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<sup>28</sup> Whitman, Shelly, Darin Reeves, and Dustin Johnson. "Addressing the Gaps in Security Sector Training: The Detention of Child Soldiers." . . . , 393.

<sup>29</sup> Loriggio, Paola. "Trudeau tells town hall heckler that he's also angry about Omar Khadr's settlement." The Canadian Press, Hamilton: (10 January 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Canada. "Canadian Armed Forces Sets Precedent with Child Soldier Doctrine". Ottawa (2 Mar 2017).

implications of mishandling child soldiers buoyed the media's curiosity. The Globe and Mail's article 'Military prepares for possible clashes with child soldiers on future missions', quoted JDN 2017-01, noting "significant psychological impacts for the personnel involved, particularly if those encounters involve engaging armed children," including a link to another article 'CAF suicides attributable to the Afghanistan mission'. It also referenced Canadian doctrine noting how these interactions can affect public support for the mission; spurring thoughts of a child death at the hands of Canadian soldiers opens other past political wounds.

It also cautions that the Canadian public could easily sour on a mission where soldiers end up in conflicts against children. If an engagement with child soldiers "is not well-handled, and communicated effectively, there is strong potential for significant negative impact on the mission, locally, in Canada, and at the international level." Jordan Owens, a spokeswoman for Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan, said this new doctrine should not be construed as an acknowledgment that Canada will deploy troops to Mali. "The Canadian Armed Forces continually revise and update doctrinal documents in order to ensure operational effectiveness and relevance."<sup>31</sup>

Just like that backpedaling begins in the spring of 2017 and many are left to wonder if Canada will have any meaningful impact on the yet to be announced peace operation. Motivation to address the bad press was at an all time low, as economic interests were also misaligned with Canada's once leading values. Shortly following Trump's inauguration, Trudeau began instead to favour the interests-based goal of supporting our US allies; evidenced by an updated mandate letter to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chrystia Freeland. In it, she is charged both with expanding Canadian diplomacy through a UN leadership role on peace operations, and working with the MND to align CAF deployments with Canada's national interests.<sup>32</sup> Singling out multilateral commitments, as Freeland was being assigned the NAFTA file, is telling of

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<sup>31</sup> Mackinnon, Steven. "Why we had to pay Khadr." Mcleans, Rogers Digital Media: (26 July 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Canada. Minister of Foreign Affairs Mandate Letter. Ottawa: Office of the Prime Minister. (1 Feb 2017).

policy objectives the Prime Minister had front of mind. Freeland's new mandate quickly cued the media that mission announcement delays were required to align any deployment with the interests of our most important ally. In short, our values were trumped.<sup>33</sup>

As Trump became more vocal with his NAFTA threats, claiming "people don't realize Canada has been very rough on the United States. Everyone thinks of Canada as being wonderful, .. But they've outsmarted our politicians for many years. . ." <sup>34</sup> Trump's rhetoric was sending a message, as his noise has serious implications on investments in Canada; which impacts Trudeau's promises to create middle class jobs.<sup>35</sup> Trump's antics infer an expectation of support, which the GoC has been strong-armed into acknowledging, through the renewed mandate letters and in choosing the CAF's mission.

It's as though the Dallaire project, who once lauded the Canadian Government and CAF efforts, began to read the tea leaves from the fall out of winter and spring 2017. The yet announced mission would not include Canadian leadership on the Child Soldier file; long overdue acknowledgement within the security sector. Canada's disappointing change of direction maybe had a small part in the following passage, as the Trudeau-Obama years were long gone.

"Rising tides of xenophobia, toxic nationalism, and violent rhetoric threaten our diverse and inclusive societies at home and abroad, while the world seems to be retreating from critical international institutions and the very democratic values that underpin peace and the rule of law. . . . The renewed hope of the past eight years has now been fully replaced by doubt, cynicism, and the sense of impending crisis."<sup>36</sup>  
Canada had the will, but through a toxic mix of machismo and media, lost its way.

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<sup>33</sup> Chase, Steven. "'National interest' to guide future troop deployments, Trudeau tells Freeland." *The Globe and Mail*. Ottawa: (2 Feb 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Robertson, Colin. "Managing Trump: The Canadian Response." *Canadian Global Affairs Institute* (April 2017), 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, Dustin. "Children and Conflict in a Changing World." Letter from the Editor. *Allons-y: Theory Into Action*. Vol 2. Dalhousie University, Halifax N.S.: (August 2017).

Despite the displayed will to do things differently, such as acknowledging gender-diversification impacts in peacekeeping, leading in doctrine development and owning Canadian mistakes through the Khadr settlement, it stalled this momentum after the US election. This dragged out the mission timeline into the run up to the next election; a peace operation, with a leadership role on the child soldier file was not something they could wrap up neatly. Winning an election with media coverage of soldier suicides worsened with the possibility of mission deaths, or child soldiers killed at the hands of Canadian soldiers, quelled their desire to make a true difference.

The most telling evidence that Canada checked out of a leadership role is the contrast between the Operational Support Intelligence (OSINT) Country Report dated April 2018 by the Canadian Forces Intelligence Group (CFINTGP) and the Mali country report published by The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative. Both reports mention notable armed groups that require monitoring who pose a credible threat, including Groupe Autodefence Touareg Imghad et Allies (GATIA),<sup>37</sup> National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA),<sup>38</sup> and Ansar Dine. The Dallaire country report notes their significant recruitment and kidnaping of children for use as soldiers, scouts at checkpoints, and as sex slaves.<sup>39</sup> The OSINT report never uses the term ‘child soldier’ within its 213-pages. Without acknowledging a problem, it’s impossible to address “. . . the presence of child soldiers within an area of operations and potentially the root causes of their recruitment . . .”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative. “Mali Country Report: Children & Security.” (updated 31 January 2017), 16.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. “Joint Doctrine Note - 2017-01: Child Soldiers.”, 1-6.

## Allons'y!

‘Lester B. Pearson put Canada on the map through the creation of the concept of peacekeeping but the world has changed a great deal since that time. War has changed and therefore our approaches to addressing conflict must change. It is now time for Canada to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions overall.’<sup>41</sup>

What is known about the CAF Mali mission is that it will consist of the deployment of six helicopters and a 250-personnel contingent of aircrew and support. Mission analysis would consider this putting the cart before the horse, referring to doctrine, the JDN notes that desired end state will be assigned by higher authority based on mission objectives; these in turn define the required tasks.<sup>42</sup> Essentially knowing the tasks of the small Canadian contingent, has driven media interest in what the milestones for success may be; details on this remain equally light as we prepare to deploy. Had the GoC’s will turned into action, what would their desired end state in Mali have been and what, if any, objectives are known about the CAF mission to Mali?

Recently documents were tabled in Parliament that show the Liberal government has yet to define benchmarks for success for its mission in Mali. "Specific success metrics for this mission will be developed as a result of further planning, discussions with the UN, partners and the host nation," Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan wrote.<sup>43</sup>

The MND’s statement leaves us running in circles; therefore based on the human security goals the GoC displayed during their mandate, perhaps the JDN provides clues to a potential end state, “. . . if the end state is to establish enduring stability, then the presence of child soldiers

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<sup>41</sup> Dallaire, LGen Roméo (Ret’d), Shelley Whitman. “Canada Can Lead. . .

<sup>42</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. “Joint Doctrine Note - 2017-01: Child Soldiers.”, 2-6.

<sup>43</sup> Brewster, Murray. “Mali delegation taps Canadian expertise documenting human rights abuses.” CBC News: (22 May 2018).

will drive certain objectives and tasks . . .”<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the doctrine notes tasks could include disarmament, recruitment prevention and liaison with IOs, NGOs, and other government or local organizations.<sup>45</sup> Another important step of mission analysis in defining the problem space is a GBA+ assessment of the operating environment.

. . . Analysis needs to focus not only on the local population in the mission area (who are the child soldiers? What are the age groups, sex, and ethnic makeup of the child soldiers? Who are the traditional caregivers in the region? What is the gender makeup of armed groups who employ child soldiers?), but also the need for a diverse range of personnel in the mission area to support interaction with the local populace, or potentially provide for better interaction with child soldiers as examples. . . . This is not to suggest that quotas need to be established, but the MA must acknowledge, where relevant, the advantages that a more balanced force would provide and apply that to developing the joint statement of operational requirements (JSOR) . . .”<sup>46</sup>

This doctrinal reference, combined with a review of CAF tasking orders, in which no position is tagged to a specific gender, show that Facebook fears of unqualified women taking mission positions away from men were baseless, despite the recirculation of media coverage upon mission announcement that the GoC intends to increase the number of women in peacekeeping over the next 5-years.<sup>47</sup> All that seems deducible about how mission analysis was conducted is that Canada shied away from the exact types of roles that would enable enduring stability, when a better communication strategy of their SSR goals may have quelled the media flurry that brought up old political wounds.

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<sup>44</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. “Joint Doctrine Note - 2017-01: Child Soldiers.”, 2-6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. “Joint Doctrine Note - 2017-01: Child Soldiers.” 2-7.

<sup>47</sup> Brewster, Murray. “Freeland unveils government's 5-year women, peace and security plan.”

## **Let's go!**

The uses of children as weapons of war are not chosen through sheer happenstance. They are a tactical and strategic choice, deployed to achieve a specific aim. Through this doctrine and the coordination of training that will follow across all branches of the Canadian Armed Forces, our men and women in uniform will be able to attrite this tactical and strategic use of children at its root and reduce casualties on all sides.<sup>48</sup>

The way forward requires two things. First, acknowledgement that the child soldier epidemic is a security issue, vice a social issue whereby it has landed on civil society organizations to tackle; which gives troop contributing nations an excuse to avoid their commitments.<sup>49</sup> Second, focusing on prevention rather than just disarmament, or in soldier speak, denying the enemy a capability. Here is a solution space where Canada would be uniquely suited to lead; CAF involvement in Mali should have focused on SSR by addressing training gaps and leveraging our progressive government's human security focus to innovate how peace support operations are conducted.

Fresh off a mentorship and training role in Afghanistan, this skillset remains a core capability of CAF soldiers. Lessons learned from that mission created an understanding that both pre-deployment training of own forces, including scenarios and role playing to prepare for potential interactions, and the mentorship of host nation forces are critical to enduring stability.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Dallaire, LGen Roméo (Ret'd), Shelley Whitman. "Statement on Canadian Armed Forces Doctrine on Child Soldiers."

<sup>49</sup> Whitman, Shelley, Sam Holland. "Innovation in the Prevention of the Use of Child Soldiers: Women in the Security Sector." Prism. Centre for Complex Operations: (Feb 2014), 166.

<sup>50</sup> Whitman, Shelly. "Improving the Interactions between Child Soldiers and Security Forces: The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, Experiences from the Field." Peace and Stability Operations Journal Online, Volume 3, Issue 1 (October, 2012), 24.

This is particularly true in Mali where both state and non-state actors are known to use underage combatants, therefore prevention is paramount.<sup>51</sup>

Professionalization training of military and police officers requires time and attention on the subject of child soldiers. In many cases the very officers that may become the “new and integrated militaries” have either used child soldiers or have been child soldiers themselves. Breaking the cycle of recruitment requires an understanding of this dynamic.<sup>52</sup>

Canada has made a firm commitment to implement UNSCR 1612, Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) resolutions. In line with the identified NATO priorities, the Child Soldiers JDN identifies specific training tasks CAF forces should be prepare for. These include training of allies and operational partner nations, and raising awareness of child soldier issues in local forces, particularly the six grave violations identified by the UN.<sup>53</sup> It encourages dialogue with perpetrators of CAAC violations, regardless if they are member nations or opposition armed groups.<sup>54</sup> Clearly, CAF doctrine has evolved far beyond ‘the way we’ve always done it’. Doing so in Mali would have created security sector impact, through the operational edge of denying child soldier use to enemy forces. Finally, while developing the mission the GoC should have included in all political messaging its requirement and commitment to implement the tasks of UNSCR 1612, to better socialize an impactful mission in an effort to influence media coverage, and in turn, public support.<sup>55</sup>

A robust training mission would be further enhanced by CAF diversity, including the gender component. The GoC continually indicates a belief that gender-diversity brings strength,

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<sup>51</sup> Chase, Steven. “Military prepares for possible clashes with child soldiers on future missions.” *The Globe and Mail*. Ottawa: (2 Mar 2017).

<sup>52</sup> Whitman, Shelly. “Improving the Interactions between Child Soldiers and Security Forces, 24.

<sup>53</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. “Joint Doctrine Note - 2017-01: Child Soldiers.”, 1-8.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 1-9.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 1-8.

yet it chose not to walk-the-walk in Mali. Both in literature and practice it's recognized that women's contribution to enabling peace is both valuable and distinctly effective through their perspective and approachability in certain communities and cultures.<sup>56</sup> Women are often viewed in conflict zones as victims in a passive role; in fact they can aptly provide the lacking strategic and tactical security sector advantages.<sup>57</sup> This dated view of women is not only present in failed or failing states, it persists in stable democracies;<sup>58</sup> dubbed 'the warrior framework'.

. . . the real hurdle for women in participating fully in military operations today has little to do with their physical and mental abilities, but rather revolves around social and cultural issues characterizing the "warrior framework." . . . the discussion on the inclusion of women over emphasizes ideas of combat operations without proper regard for the broader range of roles in peace support, humanitarian efforts, and domestic operations. This must be addressed in light of the contemporary challenges posed by the tactical and strategic use of child soldiers.<sup>59</sup>

SSR requires countries like Canada to move from policies to practices to create new approaches in preventing child soldier use; despite backlash founded in misconceptions and comfortable gender-stereotyped mediocrity. Canada's earlier indication of increasing its number of women peacekeepers was founded on proof that this provides tactical advantages, and specific requirements critical to peace operations, including:

- Empowering women in the host community;
- Addressing specific needs of female ex-combatants during the process of demobilizing and reintegration into civilian life;
- Helping make the peacekeeping force approachable to women in the community;
- Interviewing survivors of gender-based violence;
- Mentoring female cadets at police and military academies; [and]

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<sup>56</sup> Whitman, Shelley, Sam Holland. "Innovation in the Prevention of the Use of Child Soldiers, 167.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 173-174.

<sup>58</sup> Caprioli, M. "Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (June 2005): 161-178.

<sup>59</sup> Whitman, Shelley, Sam Holland. "Innovation in the Prevention of the Use of Child Soldiers, 168.

- Interacting with women in societies where women are prohibited from speaking to men.<sup>60</sup>

These benefits are hard to argue; unless deemed unnecessary to security sector actors and allies. It's hoped Canadian society would advocate their importance, unfortunately the GoC backed down from leading this in practice. Perhaps fearing loss of public support for a mission that might see female soldiers in conflict with child soldiers,<sup>61</sup> even within ROEs was considered too great a political risk. A more robust communication strategy surrounding awareness of how women in peacekeeping leadership roles boosts child protections, thereby preventing their recruitment as an enemy capability, could have mitigated their political interests-based concerns.<sup>62</sup>

It's not too late to regain a leading role in child soldier prevention and SSR. Perhaps after dipping their toe in Mali, with CAF successes, a more robust and nuanced training and mentorship role could be attempted. Further, the on-going evolution of CAF doctrine is likely to expand from the current JDN, which only defines 'vulnerable peoples'<sup>63</sup> into a more wholesome set of doctrinal principles on how and why the protection of vulnerable peoples (e.g. refugees, internally displaced and marginalized persons. . .) limits recruitment by armed groups thereby reducing risks to own forces; while enhancing human security writ large.

In focusing solely upon disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and not upon the complete eradication of the use of child soldiers, the international community has merely attempted to fix the broken, rather than to protect the whole. Until this issue is elevated within the security agenda, the international community will continue to

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 167-168.

<sup>61</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. "Joint Doctrine Note - 2017-01: Child Soldiers.", 1-6.

<sup>62</sup> Whitman, Shelley, Sam Holland. "Innovation in the Prevention of the Use of Child Soldiers, 175.

<sup>63</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. "Joint Doctrine Note - 2017-01: Child Soldiers.", 1-1.

squander opportunities to prevent the recruitment of children into armed forces and groups.<sup>64</sup>

A progressive Canadian Government came into power in 2015, bringing about a will to tackle security from the human perspective while demonstrating potential for a leading role in SSR. As their mandate progressed, their values became influenced from both an economic perspective with the election and rhetoric of Trump, blustering about ‘bad deals’ and political concerns, tied to moral wounds plaguing Afghanistan veterans and social media driven anger of the Khadr settlement.

Canada still has the will, it understands the magnitude of the child soldier problem, and it has the tools to enable solutions. The federal government must elevate the child soldier issue to one of security through a more aggressive foreign policy approach in a failed or failing state and conduct a comprehensive, whole of government action plan to address the gender dimension and other human security problems. This should include a more impactful CAF mission, encompassing training, mentorship, and diversified gender peacekeeping leadership to improve intelligence, monitoring and influence. Canada is not ‘peacekeeping’d’ out’ and understands the risks. It is time to fully renew the commitment to peacekeeping; it is time for Canada to not disappoint on this front again.

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<sup>64</sup> Whitman, Shelly, Darin Reeves, and Dustin Johnson. “Addressing the Gaps in Security Sector Training: The Detention of Child Soldiers.” 395-396.

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