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THE HYBRID SHADOW: CANADA'S FUTURE ROLE IN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

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Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

**THE HYBRID SHADOW:
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THE HYBRID SHADOW: CANADA'S FUTURE ROLE IN PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

In recent years, the topics of hybrid warfare and protection of civilians (PoC) have become a focus of discussion in both academic and military circles. They are linked through basic cause and effect; with hybrid war comes an increased need for human security. Their presence in the same battlespace will ultimately encapsulate the unpredictable nature of future global conflict. I will assert that given the anticipated dire effects that hybrid tactics will have on innocents, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is now in a position to make PoC a solitary objective for foreign operations. I will show that such consideration will ultimately lend weight to the Government of Canada's recent foreign policy shift to traditional peacekeeping and protectionist themes. I will further assert that despite an increased level of risk, a human security role in global conflict zones built on a comprehensive framework learned from Afghanistan will heighten Canada's international credibility.

Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War' may have first referenced the idea of hybrid warfare in its quote that "supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting."¹ The modern use of the phrase 'hybrid warfare' first gained prominence when it was used to describe the irregular actions of Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2005.² These fighters were initially labeled as 'hybrid' by military analysts as they used decentralized guerilla tactics and modern technology to stay hidden within the general population. The term 'hybrid war' was then further

¹ Tzu, Sun. The Art of War (6th Century BC) Ancient Chinese Military Treatise. Various publications.

² Piotrowski, Marcin. 'Hezbollah: The Model of a Hybrid Threat' Polish Institute of International Affairs. March 2015.

defined by Frank Hoffman in 2006 as that which takes existing state conflict and blends it in with protracted irregular war.³ As of 2014, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has also recognized this emerging threat blend and officially recognized it within doctrine. According to one recent NATO paper, it is a new conflict defined by “a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures employed in a highly integrated design.”⁴ One expert attributes its dual relevance to the physical and psychological planes to the leverage gained from both kinetic and non-kinetic means.⁵ As opposed to a predictable course of action undertaken by a known adversary, one can therefore summarize that hybrid warfare is a unique synergy of politics, economy, crime and technology.

As hybrid warfare is feverously discussed within the confines of doctrinal change, there is also caution offered that it not be a convenient catch-all for techniques not fitting within conventional tactics. One Canadian analyst, Colonel Bernd Horn, highlights a unique counter-argument to fully embracing hybrid warfare. He questions whether it is really a *new* concept; no different than other tactical advantages that an enemy seeks to capitalize on. In fact, Horn argues that hybrid warfare is really about “utilizing the full spectrum of one’s resources to seek to achieve a desired political end-state”⁶. To this point, the United States version of hybrid warfare is labelled as ‘grey zone warfare’; a term more general in scope and recently included in its strategic policy documents and recent defence reviews⁷. While labelling and interpretation may differ between various experts, for the purpose of this paper, hybrid warfare will remain as a descriptor of this methodology of future warfighting.

³ Hoffman, Frank. ‘Conflict in the 21st Century: the Rise of Hybrid Wars. Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. 2007. P. 38.

⁴ Deep, Alex. “Hybrid war: old concept, new techniques.” Small Wars Journal. March 2015.

⁵ Hoffman, Frank. “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges.” Small Wars Journal. Issue 52. 2009. P.36

⁶ Horn, Bernd. ‘Hybrid Warfare: Is Canada Ready?’ Mackenzie Institute (2017). P. 1.

⁷ Boucher, Jean-Christophe, ‘Hybrid Warfare and Civil-Military Relations’. Canadian Global Affairs Institute (2017). P.1.

The annexation of eastern Ukraine by Russian military forces in early 2014 has been universally referred to by many military authors as a modern example of hybrid war.⁸ Russia quickly achieved political and military control of the Ukraine and Donbas regions and seemingly caught NATO unaware. According to one analyst, this was accomplished through incitement of separatist violence, deceptive information operations, and cyber-attacks across the lower Baltic States.⁹ There is no shortage of military opinions on how Russia achieved strategic intent in this innovative operation, but the negative impact it had on civilians cannot be overlooked.

United Nations (UN) observers in the Ukraine reported in 2016 that in the wake of this hybrid war, approximately 2821 civilians were killed, 980,000 were displaced, and thousands were victims of crimes against humanity.¹⁰ As this type of conflict was multi-modal and comprehensive in methodology, one cannot simply attribute the entirety of this impact to conventional munition effects. In fact, there were over 6500 cyber-attacks launched, countless terrorist bombings, entire power grids crippled and electoral data results tampered with.¹¹ Beyond the obvious concern for deterrence, one can therefore conclude that, using the Ukraine conflict as a recent and relevant example, there will be an immediate need to intervene in a hybrid warfare environment in order to shield civilian populations.

Central to understanding the impact that hybrid warfare will have on civilians in future conflict is first to understand why there exists a need to protect them. Civilians, and those not

⁸ Cotter, Brian. "*De-escalation and Hybrid War.*" Article for Three Swords Magazine. Issue 31 (2017). P.1.

⁹ Gardner, Hall. Hybrid Warfare: 'Iranian and Russian Versions of "Little Green Men".' NATO Research Paper. Dec 2015. P. 8.

¹⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine - 16 August to 15 November 2017". OHCHR. 12 December 2017.

¹¹ Lee, Robert. 'Analysis of the Cyber Attack on the Ukraine Power Grid.' White Research Paper. Industrial Control Systems. March 2016. P.1-2.

engaged in combat, are considered ‘protected persons’ under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC). These laws have been in existence for sixty years and date back to the establishment of the Geneva Convention. The intent was to establish global standards pertaining to the treatment of innocents so as to never repeat the horrific collateral effects of World War Two.¹² Both IHL and LOAC are considered legal frameworks that allow for protection of the very basic of human rights. Certain groups, such as the elderly, women, children, and displaced persons hold an even higher priority within this framework. A recent human security study concluded that despite the existence of these long-standing rules of war, it is innocent men, women and children that still comprise the overwhelming majority of victims in modern conflict.¹³ To better understand how PoC is defined, the International Red Cross has recently outlined this as the efforts that seek to reduce civilian risks from physical violence, secure access to essential services and resources, and contribute to a secure, stable, and just environment over the long-term.¹⁴

It is important to highlight the fact that hybrid warfare is particularly effective on the modern battlefield in the manner in which it cloaks its sources through deception and technology. One researcher points out that, as was evident in the Ukraine, adversaries will seek to cause ambiguity and confusion as primary effects¹⁵. What one can draw from this observation is that this will lead to less-definable threats and make it difficult to discern ‘friend from foe’. As was learned in Afghanistan and Iraq, inaccurate target identification and collateral damage has an

¹² ICRC. ‘What is International Humanitarian Law?’ International Red Cross Advisory Service Information Bulletin (2018). P.1.

¹³ Blatter, Airela. Global Solutions Fact Sheet.
<https://globalsolutions.org/files/public/documents/CP-Factsheet-Protecting-Civilians-in-Armed-Conflict.pdf>.

¹⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ‘Enhancing Protection for Civilians in Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence.’ Geneva. Sept 2008. P. 9.

¹⁵ Abbott, Kathleen. ‘Understanding and Countering Hybrid Warfare: Next Steps for NATO’. University of Ottawa Research Paper. Ottawa, Canada. P.15.

equally negative effect as the direct targeting of civilians by the enemy. As well, heightened security posture caused by this perpetual state of confusion caused by hybrid tactics can serve to both isolate and de-legitimize a deployed peacekeeping force.

Hybrid warfare's impact on civilians is certainly not limited to the effects of blurred lines within a given battlespace or conflict zone. With an ever-increasing reliance on communication infrastructure, one must also consider the impact that cyber-disruption will have on civilians. One technology expert highlights that the disruptive effects of cyber black-outs will catastrophically alter daily living patterns within populated areas.¹⁶ Political destabilization and false propaganda through manipulation of media sources may further add to this sphere of chaos. One researcher even adds that cyber devaluation of currency is another effective hybrid means to achieve financial collapse.¹⁷ All of these cumulative effects may subsequently force mass urban and rural relocation and manifest itself in displaced persons scattering beyond borders. Much like violent separatist activity was supported by Russia in the Baltic States in 2014, if existing criminal and terrorist organizations are leveraged to incite chaos, displaced persons will be the most vulnerable. Given this disturbing evidence as to the effects that this type of warfare brings to human security, the focus then turns to the role that Canada can play in facing this ominous threat.

Canada is certainly not ignorant to this asymmetric form of global conflict, nor is it to the plight of innocents abroad. As an integral part of both NATO and the UN, Canada has a long history of recognizing that civilians are considered internationally protected persons.¹⁸ In Bosnia

¹⁶ Radiflow Security Report: 'Ukraine Cyber Attack Analysis'. Web link: http://radiflow.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ukraine_cyber_attack_report.pdf.

¹⁷ Abbott, Kathleen. 'Understanding and Countering Hybrid Warfare: Next Steps for NATO'. University of Ottawa Research Paper. Ottawa, Canada. P.19.

¹⁸ United Nations Association of Canada Fact Sheet. 'The Canadian Contribution to Peacekeeping'. Web Link: http://unac.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/CdnUNPkpgBooklet_e.pdf. P.7.

and Rwanda in the early 1990's, Canadian peacekeepers found themselves interceding to shield civilians from ethnic cleansing. In Libya in 2011, Canada was also part of enforcing the NATO no-fly zone that prevented aerial attacks on refugee convoys. Its current contribution to airlift operations in Mali and presence in the Ukraine are also modern day flavours of its commitment to both protectionism and deterrence of hybrid warfare.¹⁹ This past and continuing focus is impressive, but has yet to be bundled into one decisive approach. According to one researcher, roles in protecting civilians and countering humanitarian effects of war still remains a secondary and unintended consequence of Canada's past and present peacekeeping missions.²⁰ The main difficulty in steering away from this trend has been largely documented as that of 'political will', so there is a need to examine whether Canada is ready for change.

Typically, the Canadian government has to work hard in both the House and Commons and in the court of public opinion to justify placing CAF members in harm's way. Critics of a humanitarian intervention-type force see it as a dangerous affront to self-determination and a violation of international law in itself.²¹ Other analysts have argued that global police-style interventions to deter human security issues should be avoided as they are ineffective and support militarization. To counter this argument, it is important to point out that Canada is a dominant Western military force with a modern capability to respond. While it may be perceived as coercive diplomacy, the majority of defence experts agree that military intervention to protect civilians will be an overt action that would seek to *prevent* further escalation of violence.²²

¹⁹ Ormiston, Susan. CBC news report: 'Quite a formidable foe' Ukraine facing: Canadian training commander' (2016).

²⁰ Keenan, Marla and Beadle, Alex. 'Operationalizing the Protection of Civilians in NATO Operations.' *International Journal of Security and Development* (2015). P.3.

²¹ Collins, Allan. 'Contemporary Security Studies.' Third Edition. Oxford University Press (2013). P. 295.

²² Crocker, Chester, Fen Hampson, and Pamela Aall. 'Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World.' US Institute of Peace Press (2007). P. 291.

Intervention is no longer being viewed as a ‘last resort’ and it would appear that human security is becoming a legitimate concern for most nations. The Canadian experience in Bosnia and Rwanda alone has clearly shown that operating under restrictive parameters of non-intervention defies modern society’s acceptable core values.

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) recently pointed out that military action can be “legitimate as an anticipatory measure”, and without such action, our society would be in an untenable position of waiting until genocide begins.²³ As was stated earlier, the fundamental roadblock for humanitarian intervention has often been reported as being that of political support. Doing anything outside of keeping the peace or calling out one side of the conflict over another was typically seen as a contravention of the higher UN or NATO mandate. Canada’s own political will, however, would now appear to be open for change, and this is most self-evident in its recent revision of its foreign policy.

Canada’s foreign policy has historically reflected global alliance loyalty in the form of financial, diplomatic and military contributions to missions abroad when and as required. This has led to Canada gaining a significant international reputation as a measured yet decisive country in protecting freedom abroad. Since the 2015 federal election, Canada’s Liberal government has signalled their awareness to a greater human protectionist responsibility. In his first address to the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver, British Columbia, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated,

“The nature of conflict has changed. So too have the demands of peace operations. Discrete offerings and one-off commitments have gotten us this far, but we won’t be able

²³ The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) ‘The Responsibility to Protect’ (Ottawa;The International Development research Centre. 2001. P. 33.

to deliver true, transformative change without a real institutional change. Canada is prepared to help lead that charge.”²⁴

Fresh from a twelve year period of prolonged combat in Afghanistan and Syria, the Trudeau government would appear to be building on this mantra to see the CAF returning to a more traditional peacekeeping mandate. In acknowledging this particular shift, Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland framed this ‘way back’ in her introductory address to the House of Commons as all about stepping up and robustly supporting rules-based international order.²⁵

The significance of this political shift is that it is in direct alignment with Canada’s commitment to the UN Responsibility to Protect (R2P). R2P, first adopted by Canada in 2005, was important as it firmly entrenched the concept of human security into CAF doctrine. It formally recognized human security as centric on people in terms of physical, economic and social aspects.²⁶ At The 2017 UN Peacekeeping Conference, Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan referenced this commitment by proclaiming the need to modernize peacekeeping with a focus on protecting civilians.²⁷ Current Canadian Army Commander, Lieutenant-General Paul Mynnyk highlighted that one of the newest CAF priorities was contributing to international peace and stabilization operations.²⁸ These statements are indicative of a unique opportunity for Canada to publicly reassert itself on core protectionist principles. Given the research examined within this

²⁴ Government of Canada. Prime Minister’s Office Press Release: ‘*Canada bolsters peacekeeping and civilian protection measures.*’ 15 Nov 2017. P.1.

²⁵ Government of Canada. Global Affairs Canada media release. ‘*Address by Minister Freeland on Canada’s foreign policy priorities.*’ June 2017. Ottawa, Canada. P.1.

²⁶ Haq, Mahbub. Human Development Report 1994. Report for United Nations. Oxford Press (1994). P.22.

²⁷ Ramsay, Tracy. ‘*Canadian domestic and foreign policy challenged at UN ministerial conference in Vancouver.*’ Ricochet news media story. 22 Nov 2017.

²⁸ Moulton, Nathan. ‘*Defence Policy Provides Clarity to Balance Army Priorities.*’ Canadian Army Today Article. Fall 2017 issue. P. 9.

paper, the hybrid battlespace would certainly qualify as an applicable proving ground for Canada to play a decisive role in this regard.

In order to effectively tie in deterrence of collateral hybrid effects with the focus on humanitarian operations, Canada would need to make PoC a singular operational objective. While Canadian soldiers have undertaken protective roles within peacekeeping and combat missions in the past, it has never been a stand-alone function. One military author points out that the UN, in particular, has suffered a lack of credibility from its peacekeepers not making prevention of attacks on civilians their sole focus²⁹. Canada is already in a position wherein it can generate a mission-specific task force to deploy globally; the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) being the ideal example. As well, Canadian combat rotations during the Afghanistan conflict were built around an all-arms battalion force with integral logistical support. The Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force have similar deployable formations that enable rapid sea and air mobility on a moment's notice. Canada need only leverage this existing doctrine and experience to develop a similar response capability with a PoC mission. Given that the focus to this point has been on the encroaching effects of hybrid warfare into the civilian domain, composition of such a force would need to reflect balance. Luckily, Canada's has previous experience in this area from the application of the comprehensive approach in Afghanistan.

Canada's first fully comprehensive approach mission was in Kandahar City, Afghanistan. Beginning in 2006, it was established through the 3-D (Defence, Development and Diplomacy) strategic vision.³⁰ Effectively combining defence and diplomatic efforts abroad based on this

²⁹ United Nations Mission Review: Democratic Republic of Congo. 2014 publication. P.74.

³⁰ Berthiaume, L. "The Three-D Approach is Here to Stay." Embassy, 31 October, Issue 178 (002). P.5.

approach was tactically achieved via the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). This PRT operated from Camp Nathan Smith for five years and was Canada's first pairing of military and civilian components joined in a holistic projection of national interests.³¹ It included elements of a CAF infantry company, Correction Services Canada (CSC), Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAIT), and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). According to one PRT after-action review, that while tactically successful in its projects, the comprehensive approach in Afghanistan became pre-occupied with kinetic activities, suffered from lack of strategic vision, and the skills of contributing partners were never fully leveraged.³²

As it has been illustrated that hybrid warfare operates between military and civilian environments, a modern human security-focused capability could be Canada's opportunity to build on those PRT lessons learned. PoC in a hybrid landscape could allow the unique opportunity to operate under a more focused intent, and afford the chance to leverage new and applicable government partnerships. Canada can build on the PRT concept and add relevant capabilities from other cooperative security and crisis management partners. To emphasize this point, Canada has added significant deterrent capabilities in the last two years alone that would be the force multipliers it needs in this regard. Examples include Public Safety Canada's creation of a new cyber defence task force and the Department of National Defence's drone procurement and expansion of Special Forces capabilities.³³

³¹ Gammer, Nicholas. *"Integrating civilian-military operations: the comprehensive approach and the ATF experience, 2008-2009."* Canadian Foreign Policy Journal 19. June 2013. P.215

³² Chief Review Services. Evaluation of CF/DND Participation in the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team. Department of National Defence (2007). P. 23.

³³ Berthiaume, Lee. "Canada Increases Defence Spending by 14 Billion over 10 Years." Maclean's magazine article. June 2017.

Balanced inclusion would make a civilian-military protection component built on a comprehensive approach Canada's flagship on the international stage. In support of this particular concept, a European Advisory panel recently proposed that PoC can be accomplished via a form of 'Human Security Response Force'; comprised of two thirds military and one third police and civil development specialists.³⁴ This is indicative of a shift that validates that a well-equipped and balanced military force can significantly reduce the likelihood of humanitarian crisis. Given that we have evaluated the effects of hybrid warfare as a synergy of political, economic, military criminal and technological means, such a comprehensive capability would be a well-suited 'mirror image' for deterrence.

Hybrid warfare has been presented here as a new form of warfighting that will require Canada to examine its doctrine and adapt to any gaps that may exist. In countering this multi-mode conflict, both defence and foreign policy have a unique opportunity to focus on an issue that requires closer attention; PoC. As we have seen, human security continues to be threatened as warfighting advances into the hybrid era. It has been shown that PoC is a task that Canada is capable of and presently has the political backing to succeed in. Despite its criticism of being militaristic in approach, it is clear that any mission linked to a protectionist mandate will also promote public support. It is a mission framework most citizens can understand and all soldiers can identify with.

With globalization concerns and continued diplomatic conflict between the United States and both North Korea and China, conventional preparation still prevails. It is not necessary to radically divert from this thinking, but the proposal here is that Canada enhance its global reputation by protecting civilians in the wake of hybrid warfare. This form of conflict does not

³⁴ Collins, Allan. 'Contemporary Security Studies.' Third Edition. Oxford University Press (2013). P.149.

invalidate existing military doctrine, it will require varied skillsets and build on comprehensive practices learned from Afghanistan. The CAF is now in a unique position to make PoC a solitary objective for its foreign operations. As was validated herein, this will lend weight to the Government of Canada's recent foreign policy shift to protectionist and peacekeeping themes and further heighten its credibility on the international stage. Unlike conventional war, hybrid conflict may not have identifiable weaknesses to exploit, but it will most certainly have a civilian component at its core. It is a viable conclusion that safeguarding this can be Canada's center of gravity for success.

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