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SECURITY FORCE CAPACITY BUILDING: WHERE DOES CANADA'S RE-FOCUSED MISSION FIT?

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Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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INTRODUCTION

On 8 February 2016, Prime Minister Trudeau announced that the Government of Canada (GoC) would end the bombing campaign against the so called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in order to adopt a new approach based on promoting regional security and stability. "Equipping, advising and assisting local troops", Trudeau states, "is the best way Canada can support."¹ Canada's new contribution in the fight against ISIS as part of the Middle East Stabilization Force (MESF) is envisioned to be a comprehensive approach, both from a Whole of Government (WoG) and a regional perspective. Although there are some enablers that will remain in place to support the coalition's kinetic operations, the military nexus of this mission will be focused on building partner capacity (BPC), that is to say helping local forces develop the capacity to handle their own security concerns.²

In explaining this policy decision, senior government officials used terminology consistent with both counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine and Security Sector Reform (SSR) concepts. At a glance language such as "holistic approach," "long term stability" and "integration" has led many to believe that a coherent and comprehensive government strategy was in place.³ A closer look at this new mission however reveals one glaring omission in order to be considered a complete plan - commitment. Although the mission has now been extended until 31 March 2017,⁴ this limited timeframe raises concerns about the viability of achieving the strategic end state and causes one to question the mission's objectives.

¹ "ISIS airstrikes by Canada to end by Feb. 22, training forces to triple." CBC News. February 8, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/justin-trudeau-canada-isis-fight-announcement-1.343827>

² Seth E. Anderson. "Building Partner Capacity." Marine Corps Gazette 96, no. 1 (Jan 2012): 51.

³ CPAC. Headline Politics - News Conference – Canada's ISIS Mission. February 8, 2016. <http://www.cpac.ca/en/programs/headline-politics/episodes/90006749/>

⁴ The GoC has declared that the mission will be extended until 2017 with the prospect of being reassessed at later date.

This paper will demonstrate that although Canada's renewed military contribution to the fight against ISIS is meaningful, it is likely to fall short in achieving the enduring effects of a true capacity building effort. First, this paper will explore the field of capacity building and will attempt to frame the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) 'advise and assist' mission from a doctrinal perspective. From there it will show that the BPC concept has rightly grown in importance and practice among our closest allies, and that Canada despite its experience in Afghanistan, lags behind in terms of institutionalizing its own best practices. Notwithstanding its growth over the last decade, capacity building remains as challenging as ever to implement due to its inherent complexity and the irregularity of today's conflicts. Following this, the paper will examine Canada's re-focused capacity building mission in Iraq with a view to assess its likely effectiveness as it relates to the proven and enduring tenets of capacity building.

This paper is not a criticism of the GoC's policy decision nor does it intend to de-value the tremendous hard work and sacrifice of Canada's brave soldiers, sailors and aviators who are currently engaged in the fight against ISIS. It is, however, a critical analysis of the CAF's proposed 'advise and assist' mission as part the broader BPC context. It was written with a view to determine if and how the CAF can achieve the enduring goals of a true BPC mission given the realities of the current situation.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND DOCTRINE

In the simplest terms, capacity building is about helping others help themselves. It is a concept that has important applications in several disciplines including business, health services, security reform and sustainable development. Capacity building in a broad sense is perhaps best represented by the Chinese proverb which says: *Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.* Conceptually there are overarching

principles that can be applied to diverse capacity building domains, as there are unique factors that must be considered for each application. This paper will frame the capacity building discussion within the security sector and, in particular, developing the capacity of partner militaries.

This subset of capacity building is commonly referred to as Security Force Capacity Building (SFCB) or Security Force Assistance (SFA). Within joint allied doctrine, SFCB is viewed as an element of a wider SSR campaign,⁵ and can best be classified as a stability operation, with the understanding that it will "assist in moving a campaign down the spectrum of conflict, and thus improve the overall security situation."⁶ Over the last decade, SFCB has emerged prominently in several Department of Defense (DoD) publications, U.S. doctrine, COIN manuals and academic research. In 2011, ABCA⁷ published a lengthy capacity building handbook to address its growing importance. Despite this recent trend, there is no formal or agreed definition of SFCB. That being said, the various publications are consistent in their spirit and characterization of SFCB.

SFCB can be generally defined as the process of increasing the ability of other countries to take care of their own internal and regional security concerns.⁸ According to John Teichert, it involves targeted efforts to improve the collective capabilities and performance of host nation (HN) forces.⁹ CAF capstone doctrine uses terminology such as *restoration*, *reform* and *development* when discussing SFCB and remains consistent in describing its overall desired effects, which according to CAF Joint Publication 1.0 is to "develop operationally effective

⁵ ABCA Publication 369. "Security Force Capacity Building Handbook." Edition 2. 1 July 2011. vi.

⁶ Government of Canada. Land Operations B-GL-300-001/FP-001. Department of National Defence, 2008. 7-107.

⁷ ABCA A is a program aimed at optimizing interoperability and standardization of training and equipment between the armies of the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

⁸ Seth E. Anderson. "Building Partner Capacity." 51.

⁹ John E. Teichert. "The Building Partner Capacity Imperative." DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management 31, no. 2 (August 2009):117.

national forces that are capable of maintaining a secure and stable environment that permits the full development of the authority of the national government.”¹⁰

Despite its growing prominence in recent military campaigns, SFCB is not a new doctrinal concept. Over a century ago T.E. Lawrence recognized its significance in *Twenty Seven Article* where he wrote "Do not try to do too much with your own hands . . . It is their war, and you are to help them, not win it for them."¹¹ SFCB did not disappear nor was it forgotten about over the last hundred years. There are several historical examples in which SFCB existed in some aspect of the military strategy. Capacity building partnerships with HN forces were seen in Malaya (1950-1960), Korea (1950-1953), Vietnam (1954-1975), Sierra Leone (2000-2013) and Afghanistan (2009 – ongoing).¹² Given the scope and impacts of these noteworthy conflicts, it is somewhat surprising that SFCB has only recently gained so much attention and traction as a legitimate tool of national policy.

That being said, it would be amiss to cite Vietnam as model of success for future SFCB operations. Arguably, the set-backs faced by the US Army in building the capacity of the South Vietnamese might even make decision makers weary to get engaged in SFCB missions. One of the main counter arguments on this topic is that contributing nations may inadvertently develop the fighting capacity of the wrong force. Teichert urges caution in the field of SCFB to ensure that resources and efforts are applied to strengthen the factions that align with Canadian and coalition interests.¹³ History has shown that this has not always been the case.¹⁴ The lesson for

¹⁰ Government of Canada. CFJP 1.0 Canadian Military Doctrine. Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 2009.6-13.

¹¹ T.E. Lawrence. *Twenty Seven Articles*. Published in the US by Praetorian Press 2011, Originally published in the Arab Bulletin 20 August 1917.

¹² Tyler Wentzell. "Security Forces Capacity Building: Local ownership versus human capital." *Canadian Military Journal* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 17-18.

¹³ John E. Teichert. "The Building Partner Capacity Imperative." 118.

¹⁴ It is alleged that the Central Intelligence Agency program to support the Afghan Mujahideen from 1979 to 1989 set in motion the emergence of the Taliban and the events that led to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

decision makers is to understand the complexity and challenges of SFCB operations, and to acknowledge the importance of enabling a HN to legitimately handle its own security challenges.

Whether because of its experience in Vietnam or its lessons from Afghanistan, the U.S. has recognized capacity building as an indispensable element of foreign policy.¹⁵ SFCB is seen in prominent allied policy publications, including the 2012 US Defense strategy entitled *Sustaining U.S Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century*. In its cover letter, President Obama called upon the US to "join with allies and partners around the world to build their capacity to promote security, prosperity and human dignity."¹⁶ "Building partner capacity is no longer a nicety," states James Roberts, deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, "it is a fundamental component of national defense."¹⁷ The US DoD appears to be leading the charge in terms of institutionalizing SFCB, which is bound to have important impacts its allies and partner nations.

Recent government initiatives and policy decisions indicate that Canada is not far behind. Some might argue that Canada is not behind at all, citing Canada's noteworthy contribution to the training mission in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2014 and the establishment of the Peace Support Training Centre to highlight this point. That being said, *capacity building* as a prominent instrument of national policy is really just starting to build momentum and appear in defence lexicon. The 2015 mandate letter to Canada's Minister of National Defence (MND) shows its growing importance in stating that one of the MND's top priorities shall be on "... refocussing Canada's efforts in the region on the training of local forces and humanitarian support."¹⁸ The

¹⁵ Donald Rumsfeld. Quadrennial Defense Review Report. Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 2006. 83.

¹⁶ James Q. Roberts. "Building the Capabilities and Capacity of Partners: Is this Defense Business?" PRISM (Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS)) 4, no. 2 (2013): 67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁸ Justin Trudeau. "Minister of National Defence Mandate Letter." Prime Minister of Canada. <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-national-defence-mandate-letter#sthash.doWykLk7.dpuf>.

Commander of the Canadian Army further supported this notion in an address to the Canadian Forces College, where he stated that “capacity building is a growth industry for the army.”¹⁹

THE FUTURE OF CAPACITY BUILDING

Does this growth simply represent a tendency to follow the U.S.’s lead regarding defence matters, or is there a greater purpose for its emergence? The literature suggests that are two important considerations that are driving the shift towards SFCB as a standalone mission. The first is the characterization of the future security environment and the second are domestic limitations.

THE FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT (FSE)

The FSE is a complicated and vast field of study with political, social, security, environmental and economic implications. For the purpose of this paper, however, the discussion of the FSE will remain focused on security as it relates specifically to SFCB. The CAF's capstone document this subject characterizes the FSE as being full of *chaos* and *instability*.²⁰ Although the potential for conventional state-on-state conflict exist, Sadowski and Becker assess evolving asymmetric threats and non-state adversaries will become more and more prevalent.²¹

A 2004 UN report concluded that weak states will pose the greatest threat to international security and former Secretary of Defence Robert Gates said that dealing with fractured or failing

¹⁹ Lieutenant- General Hainse, Commander of the Canadian Army, Presentation to JCSP 42, Canadian Forces College, Toronto. 7 April 2016.

²⁰ Department of National Defence. The Future Security Environment 2013-2040. 17 Wing Winnipeg Publishing Office, 2014.

²¹ David Sadowski and Jeff Becker. "Beyond the “Hybrid” Threat: Asserting the Essential Unity of Warfare." Small Wars Journal, 12.

states is the main security challenge of this time.²² It follows that there will exist numerous destabilizing factors that when combined together will overwhelm a weakened states' ability to effectively govern, resulting in security concerns and humanitarian challenges within their territorial borders and regions.²³ Teichert elaborates on this point by explaining that national leaders will be challenged to exert elements of national power and will eventually be unable to contain security threats. Future conflicts will be compounded by and in some cases caused by poverty, corruption, criminal activity, disease and unemployment.²⁴

John Nagl, well known military strategist and counter insurgency expert, succinctly highlights the importance of SFCB in future conflicts. He states that "foreign forces cannot defeat an insurgency. The best they can hope for is to create the conditions that will enable local forces to win it for them."²⁵ Given this characterization of the FSE, and in particular the centrality of the 'weakened state', it is not surprising that the GoC has refocussed its efforts and appears to be making a conscious capacity building effort.

DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS

The second aspect for why capacity is growing in popularity has to do with domestic constraints – both in terms of resources and public perception. At the time of writing this paper, the Canadian Department of National Defence is undergoing a significant strategic review called the Defence Policy Review (DPR). The GoC faces the difficult challenge of weighing the *cost-benefit* of future military capabilities and missions in the face of a reduced defence budget.

According to Jane's Defence, DND spending has been steadily declining since 2007, or has at

²²Robert Gates. "Helping Others Defend Themselves." *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2010: 8.

²³ Department of National Defence. *The Future Security Environment*. 34.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁵ John Nagl. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. 135.

least remained constant at best.²⁶ And this is not expected to change, the most recent Liberal budget suggests a \$400 million decrease in the baseline funding when compared to the current year.²⁷ Furthermore, researchers from the RAND Corporation contend that this is a reality that is also taking place amongst our closest allies. Acknowledging this trend, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is seeking to advance the concept of 'Smart Defense', which envisions a "greater reliance on sharing and pooling capabilities, setting priorities and coordinating efforts better."²⁸ Indeed, SFCB fits nicely into this new way of thinking and meets Canada's desire to maintain a strong commitment to NATO.²⁹

SFCB is less expensive than traditional military campaigns for two reasons. First, it is far less demanding in terms of resources, including personnel and equipment, despite the prolonged nature of typical SFCB missions.³⁰ Canada's current 'advise and assist' mission in Iraq for example only 70 has soldiers on the ground along with minimal equipment and a small sustainment footprint. Moreover, this cost is *expected* to gradually decrease over time. As Wentzel points out, the ratio of trainers should decrease as HN forces become more proficient.³¹

Although it is less expensive in the overall number of personnel, it can still be costly from a leadership, experience and specialist perspective. In SFCB missions, there is a heavy reliance on experienced Officers and Senior Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) which has the potential to create a leadership gap in Canada.³² Furthermore, some SFCB models call for

²⁶ Andrew MacDonald. "Canadian Defence Industry Overview." IHS Jane's 360. May 28, 2015. <http://www.janes.com/article/51769/canadian-defence-industry-overview-can2015d2>.

²⁷ Murray Brewster. National Post. March 22, 2016. <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-politics/liberal-budget-puts-off-military-equipment-purchases-but-bumps-up-spending-on-veterans>.

²⁸ NATO. "Secretary General's Annual Report 2011." January 26, 2012. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_82646.htm#Modernizing_NATO.

²⁹ Justin Trudeau. "Minister of National Defence Mandate Letter."

³⁰ James Q. Roberts. "Building the Capabilities and Capacity of Partners: Is this Defense Business? 65.

³¹ Tyler Wentzell. "Security Forces Capacity Building: Local ownership versus human capital." 20.

³² *Ibid.*, 19.

embedded team of highly specialized trainers and this often necessitates the use Special Operations Forces (SOF) who are continually in high demand and could potentially be used more strategically.³³

Human capital factors aside, it remains that SFCB missions are far less costly compared to the mobilization of a large scale conventional force to a high intensity combat zone. Roberts acknowledges that "partner capacity building is not cheap", but notes that it is far more efficient compared to the alternative, citing US DoD operational costs in Afghanistan to support his argument.³⁴ SFCB is supposed to pre-emptive in nature and is therefore expected to eliminate, or as a minimum mitigate the requirement to deploy conventional forces at a later stage. Teichert points out that SFCB is the most efficient and effective when it is viewed as a proactive approach as opposed to a reactive one. He posits that a contributing partner nation can achieve the same goals with fewer assets and less commitment when it is preventative in nature.³⁵ This is a critical characteristic of an effective SFCB mission and is the central argument for why SFCB has the potential to be so cost effective. As the proverb goes, *a stitch in time saves nine*.

In addition to resource efficiency, public perception is also cited a reason for why SFCB is growing in popularity as a defence strategy.³⁶ Simply put, it is about balancing risk. SFCB missions allow elected officials to use the military to achieve strategic effects and a visible response without having to risk the safety and security of its members. The debate surrounding the new mission became particularly interesting when the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) stated that Canadian soldiers would be close to the frontline and that there are inherent dangers in

³³ The Operation IMPACT press release from 2015 implies the use of SOF for the new mission in saying that it will deploy "CAF personnel with high-demand skill sets."

³⁴ James Q. Roberts. "Building the Capabilities and Capacity of Partners: Is this Defense Business? 68.

³⁵ John E. Teichert. "The Building Partner Capacity Imperative." 124.

³⁶ Christopher Paul, Brian Gordon, and Jennifer Moroney. A Building Partner Capacity Assessment Framework. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015. 17.

operating in this environment.³⁷ Despite the CDS's steadfast position that this was a non-combat mission, the public remains concerned about the safety of CAF members and holds the GoC to account for the responsible deployment of military forces. SFCB operations provide a balanced military option that demonstrates a certain degree of resolve without accepting undue risk. Canadians appear content to deploy forces in a more permissive role. Indeed SFCB meets this stance, and given the weight of public opinion in a democracy such as Canada, it should not be surprising that SFCB appears to be a strategy of growing importance.

This section has shown that there are two important factors shaping the narrative surrounding the current and future role of SFCB. The future operating environment, combined with domestic constraints, such as resource limitation and public acceptance, are leading policy makers to consider the use SFCB as a current and future military strategy of choice. Given that SFCB is an appropriate strategy and one in which Canada and our allies have experience in, why is it proving so challenging to do well?

THE CHALLENGES OF PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING

Although there is a wealth of academic and military thought applied to capacity building, there does not appear to be an agreed to framework from which to design and implement an effective SFCB mission. As Lucius and Rietjens put it - there is no single solution to capacity building.³⁸ This does not come as a surprise given the complexity of the FSE and the domestic considerations as discussed above. That being said, the ABCA Program and the RAND Corporation offer a balanced and comprehensive analysis of SCFB planning considerations.

³⁷ Bruce Champion-Smith. "Canada's military mission in Iraq: A close-up look at the fight against ISIS." CTV News. April 28, 2016. <http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/canada-s-military-mission-in-iraq-a-close-up-look-at-the-fight-against-isis-1.2879789>.

³⁸ Gerald Lucius and Sebastiaan Rietjens. *Effective Civil-Military Interaction in Peace Operations: Theory and Practice*. Springer, 2016.

The ABCA SFCB handbook attempts a level of standardization, but acknowledges that no common doctrine exists between partners. Although the handbook reaffirms that “there is no universal template for SFCB,”³⁹ it does however offer seven foundational principles built on recent operational experience by coalition partners. The RAND Corporation, on the other hand, provides several detailed case studies and advanced logic models in order to derive what they consider to be SFCB operational factors. RAND stops short of calling them ‘criteria for success’, but identifies a correlation between its nine principles and successful SFCB missions. The following section will focus on the two common themes between the RAND research, ABCA publication and academic literature, with a view to set the context for understanding Canada’s current and future ‘advise and assist’ mission. The two themes to be examined are *sustainment* and *comprehensiveness*.

SUSTAINMENT

The principle of sustainment is primarily about being able to maintain the specific capacity over the long term. This is a broad principle that emphasises numerous factors such as commitment, equipment, refresher training, HN absorptive capacity, political will, resourcing and funding to name a few.⁴⁰ This idea captures the true essence and inherent value of capacity building. It highlights that SCFB needs to be viewed as a long term commitment in order to have the greatest impact. This raises an essential question: Is it possible to achieve objectives and/or gain value from a limited SFCB mission? If so, what should be the expectations be?

This question can be addressed by looking at three typical SFCB models. The first involves building the capacity of current allies and partners with already mature military forces,

³⁹ ABCA Publication 369. "Security Force Capacity Building Handbook." vi.

⁴⁰ Christopher Paul, Jennifer Moroney, and Beth Grill . What works best when building Partner Capacity in Challenging contexts? Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015. Xiii.

the second involves building an institutional security capacity in weakened states and the third is about fixing tactical shortcoming of indigenous forces. The first two models entail a higher degree of sustainment, while the last implies a shorter term objective. This last category is more limited in nature and has the potential to leave a nation with a false sense of security and confidence. Lieutenant General (Retired) James M. Dubik, former Commander of Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq notes that an overreliance on combat enablers may in fact have a partner with the same or worse short comings that were present initially.⁴¹

Wentzel considers fixing tactical shortcoming 'void filling' and argues that when done incorrectly, risks the HN developing a dependency on foreign military support instead of actually developing a security capacity.⁴² From this standpoint, HN forces would be less incentivised to take ownership of the full scope of the security issue which goes against the essence of capacity building. Moreover, tactical deficiencies are more often the result of institutional deficiencies such as leadership development, recruiting, education, acquisition, maintenance, logistics, command and control framework, and HR policies.⁴³

Therefore, the third short term approach does not meet capacity building objectives. A limited SFCB mission is insufficient because it does not address the institutional security challenges and its effects are generally short lived. That being said, the RAND Corporation still sees the value in such missions as long as partner expectations are clearly managed at all stages of a mission.⁴⁴ RAND researchers suggest that so long as contributing nations, allies and partner

⁴¹ James M. Dubik, "A closer look at the 'Build Partner Capacity' Mission." *Army* 62, no. 1 (Jan 2012): 15.

⁴² Tyler Wentzell. "Security Forces Capacity Building: Local ownership versus human capital." 19.

⁴³ Keith A. Detwiler. "One among many: Building Partner Capacity in a Multinational Command." Carlisle, Pennsylvania: US Army War College, 34.

⁴⁴ Jennifer Moroney, Jennifer, Nancy E Blacker, and Renee Buhr. *Building Partner Capabilities for Coalition Conditions*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2007. 23.

nations have the same common understanding and realistic expectations; limited SFCB missions can still prove useful in achieving military objectives and short term effects.

However, in order for the *full potential* of a SFCB mission to be realized, the developed capabilities need to be sustainable over the long term. Dubik notes that, if partner capacity is expected to last, there is the requirement for improved institutional and support systems.⁴⁵ This brings us to the second key consideration in planning SCFB missions.

COMPREHENSIVNESS

One might consider the DIME model as a possible framework from which to solve a capacity building from a comprehensive approach. In a recent *Foreign Affairs* article, Robert Gates was critical of the U.S. for a lack of attention paid to the institutional capacity and the human capital needed to sustain capacity building over the long term.⁴⁶ Indeed only a compressive strategy aligns government stakeholders, coalition partners and the HN towards common objectives, shared understanding of the environment and strategies that are “built on the primacies of the rule of law, accountability and transparency.”⁴⁷

Reforms aimed solely at increasing the capacity of security forces without ensuring their democratic accountability are not consistent with the SSR concept. Only a comprehensive approach can alleviate the underlying sources of instability, while simultaneously building the capacity for legitimate governance.⁴⁸ Legitimacy is a common theme throughout capacity building literature and will play a fundament role in the FSE as discussed earlier. Legitimacy is

⁴⁵ James M. Dubik,. "A closer look at the 'Build Partner Capacity' Mission." 15.

⁴⁶Robert Gates. "Helping Others Defend Themselves". 4.

⁴⁷ James M. Dubik,. "A closer look at the 'Build Partner Capacity' Mission." 16.

⁴⁸ Albrech Schnabel and Marc Krupanski. "Evolving Internal Roles of the Armed Forces: Lessosn for Building Partner Capacity." PRISM: a journal of the Center for Complex Operations 4, no. 4 (Dec 2013): 119-137.128.

the functional framework from which to exercise control over security forces and Roberts succinctly describes this concept from a SCFB perspective:

When the partner takes the shot, he is displaying his sovereignty to his own population and to the enemy. He is seen as governing. When he relies on us to do so on his behalf, he forfeits his political legitimacy, and permits the enemy to brand him as a little more than a puppet.

The ABCA Handbook also recognizes the presence and necessity of multiple actors in SFCB operations.⁴⁹ The challenge, however, is in achieving unity of effort. Unity of effort in this context is slightly more broad than aligning stakeholders, it also implies that the SFCB mission is unified in terms of national strategy and national security. RAND researchers posit that capacity building can neither be sustainable nor comprehensible if it does not meet national goals and plans.⁵⁰

This section has examined some of the complexities and challenges in effectively planning for a SFCB operation. Scholars and practitioners conclude that there is ‘no universal template’ and emphasize routinely that flexibility ought to be a planning consideration at the outset.⁵¹ The overarching themes of *sustainment* and *comprehensiveness* serve as useful foundations from which to examine Canada’s new mission in Iraq.

CANADA'S RE-FOCUSED MISSION

What *do* we know about Canada’s new mission in Iraq within the context of SCFB? First, we have been told that the mission will be restructured in order to focus on training local ground

⁴⁹ ABCA Publication 369. "Security Force Capacity Building Handbook." 1-1.

⁵⁰ Christopher Paul, A Building Partner Capacity Assessment Framework. 17.

⁵¹ ABCA Publication 369. "Security Force Capacity Building Handbook." 1-2.

troops to fight ISIS in northern Iraq and it is understood that this will be done by approximately 200 special forces troops, which in a threefold increase to the current SOF footprint. The use of military personnel with specialized skill sets certainly meets the characteristics of a SFCB mission and exemplifies the human capital costs as discussed earlier.

The small military footprint and limited time commitment implies that perhaps the objective is really about fixing the tactical shortcomings of HN force. The HN forces in this case are, however, the Kurdish forces operating out of Northern Iraq - not the Iraqi Army as would be expected. Given the regional and ethnic dynamics, some critics posit that there exist the potential to create harmful 'ripple effects'. Dr Walter Dorn, a professor at the Canadian Forces College, states that "with the Kurds there is the danger that we [the CAF] are supporting a secessionist movement."⁵² To make matters even worse, a 2016 report by Amnesty International accused the Kurdish forces of ethnic cleansing in the same region that the CAF is helping liberate.⁵³

Nonetheless, the Kurds have proven to be reliable allies, and when backed by Western forces, in some ways have proven more dependable than Iraqi forces. One author in the *Small Wars Journal* suggests that no amount of training will be enough to defeat the enemy, rather "if we want to our allies to truly be in charge of their own defense, we need to focus on building forces with the desire to win, and with the willingness to die."⁵⁴ He argues that in order to succeed, *will* is more important than tactical proficiency. Despite speculation about the Kurdish

⁵² David Pugliese, David. The 'ripple effect': Canada's training of Kurds could also empower them to separate from Iraq. February 6, 2016. <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/the-ripple-effect-canadas-training-of-kurds-could-also-empower-them-to-separate-from-iraq>.

⁵³ Amnesty International. *Banished and Dispossessed: Forced Displacement and Deliberate Destruction in Northern Iraq*. London: Peter Benenson House, 2016.

⁵⁴ Yinon Weiss. "What if the Military Has Been Focusing on the Wrong Thing the Whole Time?" *Small Wars Journal*, 2014 November 2014.

motives, their determination and willingness to fight appears steadfast. In this sense, perhaps the GoC is capitalizing on the Kurdish *will* to rationalize this partnership.

In light of the current situation then, is it possible that Canada is undermining the principles of capacity building by backing the Kurdish force? At a foreign policy conference in Ottawa, the MND acknowledged that the alternatives for defeating ISIS in northern Iraq are limited.⁵⁵ It is well understood that tension exists between the Kurdish people and the Iraqi government, and therefore, at a glance, this strategy would appear to disregard the importance of *legitimacy* in SFCB operations. On the other hand, given that this is already a semi-autonomous region with a quasi-Kurdistan Government, perhaps this is simply an acknowledgment by the GoC that Iraqi legitimacy and effective governance over this Kurdish region is simply not attainable. From this stand point, the approach may prove to be an effective strategy for the short term, recognizing the potential for regional instability in the long term.

There are, however, some elements of the refocused mission that will address some of the longer term issues. In terms of comprehensiveness, Canada's new contribution appears to meet the criteria of a WoG approach and indicates a certain degree of united national effort. The contribution of \$1.6 billion over 3 years is dispersed among numerous departments and is meant to address a myriad of destabilizing factors such as humanitarian relief, counterterrorism, refugee management and diplomacy to name a few.⁵⁶ While this is not a significant contribution relative to the total coalition effort, and by itself will be insufficient to address the institutional foundations for capacity building, it is certainly a step in the right direction and a valid attempt at adopting a comprehensive approach.

⁵⁵ David Pugliese, David. The 'ripple effect': Canada's training of Kurds could also empower them to separate from Iraq. February 6, 2016

⁵⁶ Government of Canada. *Operation IMPACT*. 2015. www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad-current/op-impact.page (accessed 03 23, 2016)

The main downfall to this approach is that the fact that the commitment has been limited to three years. This raises doubts about the sustainment of the mission. Roberts would call this strategy ‘patchwork’ and one that signals mixed messages to our partners and allies. He reaffirms that true SFCB “may need to span a decade or more” and that the end state is to build an enduring capacity that can be self-sustained over time.”⁵⁷ When asked about the CAF's new mission in Iraq, former SOF Commanding Officer, retired Lieutenant-Colonel Stephen Day said that “two to three years is not going to get the job done.”⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

SFCB has existed in military doctrine for decades, although implemented somewhat inconsistently over the last 50 years. However, the nature of the future security environment, coupled with the domestic realities such as shrinking defence budgets and fickle public opinion, makes SFCB is a valid military and political strategy for now and the future. Still, *sustainment* and *comprehensiveness* represent key challenges when planning SFCB missions and currently Canada has approached each of these with mixed results.

Although Canada’s new mission maintains elements of capacity building and presents the mission publicly as such, it will likely not achieve enduring effects in its current form. Canada's strategy is lacking. On one hand, it has elements of comprehensiveness and unity of effort; on the other hand, it lacks the fundamentals of sustainment and commitment. The actions instead indicate a shorter term objective primarily focused on defeating ISIS. Canada has adopted a model based on ‘fixing the tactical shortcoming of indigenous forces’, despite the potential to

⁵⁷ Robert Gates. "Helping Others Defend Themselves". 4.

⁵⁸ Murray Brewster. "Canada's role in fight against ISIS to be discussed by Trudeau cabinet 'soon'." *CBC News*. January 26, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-cabinet-isis-iraq-mission-1.3419419>.

undermine some of the principles of capacity building, such as legitimacy and ownership. In backing the Kurdish forces instead of the Iraqi Army, Canada succumbs to one of the main counter arguments in SFCB and only time will tell if this is an effective strategy. Alternatively, Canada may be approaching the situation with caution, flexibility and with realistic expectations. Such an approach acknowledges the complexities in SCFB operations and provides the GoC with the ability to incrementally and gradually address the shortfalls of its strategy, such as sustainability.

There is no doubt that the CAF's contribution to regional security and stability are valuable within the context of the coalitions' wider efforts. What is important is for the GoC to establish realistic expectations and objectives for a mission claiming to be grounded in 'capacity building' as its focus. Stakeholders at home and abroad will have very different understandings of Canada's commitment. Thus it is imperative that the GoC communicate clearly and work transparently to manage expectations, to build upon its successes and to learn from its failures in order to apply the principles of capacity building and more effectively contribute to regional security and stability.

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