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'HI VIS, LOW VIS': THE FUTURE INTEGRATED ROLES OF CANADIAN CONVENTIONAL LAND FORCES AND CANADIAN SPECIAL OPERATION FORCES

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AIM

1. The aim of this paper is twofold: to underscore the importance of conventional land forces in the Canadian Army (CA) in addressing emerging global threats; and to highlight the necessity of a growing interdependence between conventional land forces and Special Operations Forces (SOF) to win in a conventional, unconventional or hybrid warfare environment.¹

Every age has its own kind of war, its own limiting conditions, and its own peculiar preconceptions.

– Clausewitz

INTRODUCTION

2. The trend for Western governments to expand SOF² and increasingly employ this capability on expeditionary missions has risen significantly since 9/11.³ Frequently viewed as the preferred course of action over conventional land forces, the surreptitious nature of SOF

¹ This paper will not cover the tactical specifications of core tasks and assumes the reader has a proficient understanding of CA and CANSOF roles, tasks and capabilities.

² "Special Operation Forces are organizations containing specially selected personnel that are organized, equipped and trained to conduct high-risk, high value special operations to achieve military, political, economic or informational objectives by using special and unique operational methodologies in hostile, denied or politically sensitive areas to achieve desired tactical, operational and/or strategic effects in times of peace, conflict or war...Special operations differ from conventional operations in the degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, modes of employment, independence from friendly support and dependence on detailed operational intelligence." Department of National Defence, *CANSOFCOM Capstone Concept For Special Operations*, 2009, 26.

³ Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, "Top Secret America: A Look At The Military's Joint Special Operations Command," *The Washington Post*, 2 September 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/top-secret-america-a-look-at-the-militarys-joint-special-operations-command/2011/08/30/gIQAvYuAxJ_story.html

missions is advantageous for political decision-makers wanting to avoid headlines coupled with a rising public aversion to see 'boots on the ground.'⁴

3. This is no different in Canada. Since the closure of Canada's mission in Afghanistan, the Government's foreign & defence policy has favoured a robust employment of Canadian Special Operations Forces (CANSOF) – principally, Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) and the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR) – around the world while the CA has largely remained in a support and assist role. The CA continues to force generate soldiers for employment across the full spectrum of operations (FSO) at home and abroad, but many would question the relevance of conventional land forces given the threat Western nations now face, and will continue to face, in the foreseeable future. Amid this "age of the commando,"⁵ is SOF gradually replacing the need for conventional land forces?

4. This paper will contend that the future of Canada's conventional land forces will continue to play an important role on the international stage,⁶ and that the CA and CANSOF will increasingly transition into a necessary interdependence as new threats emerge. The requirement for conventional land forces will be discussed first followed by the requirement for a growing interdependency between the CA and CANSOF. This paper will culminate by identifying challenges that the CA must overcome in order to move forward as a professional, combat-capable and relevant force in the 21st century.

DISCUSSION

Strategy, Not The Instrument: The Persisting Requirement For Conventional Land Forces

⁴ A reference to conventional land forces - namely the combat arms: infantry, armoured, artillery and combat engineers - which represented the majority of fighting, dying and, at times, returning with operational stress and/or physical injuries from a decade of combined toil in Iraq, Afghanistan and other hot spots around the globe.

⁵ Matt Gallagher, "Welcome to the Age of the Commando," *New York Times*, 30 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/opinion/sunday/welcome-to-the-age-of-the-commando.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region®ion=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region&_r=1

⁶ This paper will not refer to the CA's role in domestic operations.

5. Modern warfare continues to intensify technologically and the forms of warfare are rapidly changing depending on the foe. This reality has prompted some to question if conventional land forces⁷ are obsolete, and if not entirely obsolete, should they be restructured to revolve around SOF?⁸
6. The propensity for Western nations, however, who do not wish to confront belligerent states on a conventional scale does not signal the apparent obsolescence or the need for a radical shift in conventional forces, nor does it address the reasons for this ostensible reluctance toward conventional warfare.
7. Historically and presently, states have used and continue to use conventional forces to meet their political aims. History is replete with examples; America's invasion in Iraq in 2003 and Russia's incursion into Crimea in 2014 are two modern cases in point. This does not infer, however, that conventional warfare is the *only* form of warfare that is being waged. Among belligerent states, hybrid warfare⁹ is indeed becoming more prevalent, "flummoxing policy makers and military planners"¹⁰ and the West must be sufficiently nimble to counter this threat. But to do this properly, the focus must remain on *strategy* and not the instrument, and rather than divest the instrument (the particular force), governments must re-examine the strategy (why, when, where and how to apply the force).

⁷ Conventional land forces are typically comprised of Regular and Reserve Forces soldiers who primarily use conventional weapons and battlefield tactics against a known enemy in open confrontation. In strict conventional warfare, opposing forces are well-defined and have as their objective the destruction of their opponent's military. This is not to suggest that conventional land forces cannot and do not engage unconventional enemies or engage in unconventional warfare.

⁸ Stephen Biddle, "Special Forces and the Future of Warfare: Will SOF Predominate in 2020?" *Strategic Studies Institute*, U.S. Army War College (24 May 2004): 1.

⁹ "Hybrid warfare is a term that [seeks] to capture the blurring and blending of previously separate categories of conflict. It uses a blend of military, economic, diplomatic, criminal, and informational means to achieve desired political goals." Nadia Schadlow, "The Problem With Hybrid Warfare," *War On The Rocks*, 2 April 2015, <http://warontherocks.com/2015/04/the-problem-with-hybrid-warfare/>

¹⁰ Robert Haddick, "America's Military Is Dangerously Obsolete," *The National Interest*, 10 April 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/americas-military-dangerously-obsolete-12598>

8. The CA has re-examined its strategy. In the 2014 document, *Advancing With Purpose: The Army Strategy*, the mission is clear: “The Army will generate combat-effective, multi-purpose land forces to meet Canada’s defence objectives.”¹¹ Maintaining Level 5 as its “vital ground,”¹² the CA sees the apex of its fundamental skill set remaining in the conventional realm of warfare in order to meet the demands of tomorrow’s battle-space. Outlined in *Land Operations 2021 – Adaptive Dispersed Operations: The Force Employment Concept for Canada’s Army of Tomorrow*, the CA projects its role in the future as adapting technologically but retaining its core function of conventional warfare:

The force needs to be adaptive and agile, dispersed in time, space and purpose, and able to concentrate to meet local near-peer or *conventional* threats.” This force will have enhanced precision, lethality and protection. *The requirement for mass or ‘boots on the ground,’ remains extant.* What distinguishes the adaptive dispersed operations-capable Army of Tomorrow from the Army of Today is that the former will be characterized by a robust, persistent information network linking to soldiers, sensors, combat platforms and commanders.¹³

9. The bottom line is that “the emphasis on the army’s competency – land warfare across the spectrum of conflict – will be most essential to ultimate success.”¹⁴ When “technology inevitably fails,”¹⁵ what mechanisms are in place to achieve success against an adversary?¹⁶

10. Writing on the need for conventional land forces to counter future emerging threats, the previous Commander of the Canadian Army, Lieutenant-General (Retired) Peter Devlin writes: “The army will continue to be an infantry-based, medium-weight force, capable of full-spectrum

¹¹ Department of National Defence, *Advancing With Purpose: The Army Strategy, 3rd Edition*, 2014, 9.

¹² In CA levels of training, Level 5 refers to a combined arms sub-unit (combat team) comprised of mechanized infantry, armour, artillery and combat engineer assets brought together to generate land combat power across the five operational functions: command, sense, act, shield and sustain. *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 14-15 (emphasis in italics added).

¹⁴ Department of National Defence, *Land Operations 2021 - Adaptive Dispersed Operations: The Force Employment Concept for Canada's Army of Tomorrow*, 2007, 8.

¹⁵ A quote by a Canadian SOF operator speaking from personal experience to JCSP 42 students.

¹⁶ With all of its technological advancements militarily including a nuclear capability, Russia still opted to use conventional force to annex Crimea. Likewise, China currently asserts conventional power in the South China Sea against perceived US aggression in disputed international waters. Similarly, Israel maintains a robust conventional land force capability to deal with the unconventional tactics of neighbouring terrorist organizations.

operations, which exploits the concepts and culture of the combined arms team.”¹⁷ During his recent address at the C.D. Howe Institute on the vision and priorities for the CAF, the Canadian Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Jonathan Vance stated “conventional warfare is on the rise.”¹⁸ Gauntlets will continue to be thrown down and conventional forces must therefore remain adaptive and agile in order to address these problems.¹⁹

11. Other the other hand, in the current Canadian political climate, there is a decreasing appetite for ‘boots on the ground.’²⁰ Conventional forces are big, heavy, costly and loud²¹ which oftentimes disqualifies these types of forces as an option.²² Conversely, CANSOF’s claim to be “low vis,²³ high yield” speaks to their ability to mitigate these issues²⁴ avoiding unwanted press. However, even SOF is not immune to the reality of casualties, nor to the media.²⁵

¹⁷Peter Devlin, “Army Futures,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2009), <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo11/no1/09-devlin-eng.asp>

¹⁸ Jonathan Vance, “Chief of the Defence Staff Vision and Priorities for the Canadian Armed Forces,” (address to C.D. Howe Institute, Toronto, ON, 4 February 2016), with permission. General Vance was referring to the increasing proclivity of state and non-state actors to acquire and employ conventional weapons such as small arms, tanks and artillery mixed with unconventional means such as chemical weapons.

¹⁹ Of course, pundits of conventional warfare point to the (oftentimes) heavy toll of human life expended. This is a grim reality to be sure. General Vance recognizes this reality: “We [modern militaries] don’t win battles on the ground at all costs anymore...The public’s willingness to accept casualties is not high.” (*Ibid*). However, attrition warfare must never be seen as tantamount to conventional warfare, as many wrongly assume. Rather, manoeuvre warfare – whether applied to conventional, unconventional or hybrid warfare – seeks to target the mind of the enemy commander in order to subdue him without physical attrition if possible. *Land Operations 2021* amplifies this: “Adaptive dispersed operations are ground in manoeuvre warfare theory and an effects-based approach, in that they are undertaken to create enhanced positional, psychological and temporal advantages over the adversary, vice attrition, in that they employ a synergistic application of capabilities to produce cascading and cumulative effects to achieve a desired outcome.” (21).

²⁰ The cost is significant: Canada spent more than \$20 billion on the war in Afghanistan and cost 158 Canadian lives and more than 2,000 wounded. Adam Day, “The Last Days of a Bad War,” *Legion*, January/February 2014, 33.

²¹ Big: The typical composition of Canadian land force contingents are no smaller than sub-unit size for non-kinetic missions and no smaller than battle group size for kinetic missions; Heavy: the CA is a medium-weight force supported by armour capabilities and therefore requires significant logistical lift to deploy (coined in the 2011 Leslie Report on Transformation as having “too much tail for too few teeth”); Costly: Given the size and weight of the CA, missions are costly not only in terms of fiscal expenditures, but human expenditures; Loud: The CA incurs a large media footprint which has the potential (depending on the success or failure on the mission) to undermine the government’s initial decision to deploy conventional forces.

²² The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) Canada maintains with certain countries demands specific criteria (eg. minimal troop visibility and caps on deployed military personnel) be met, which, in turn limits the employment options for conventional forces.

²³ Abbreviated for “visibility”.

12. In his unclassified SOF '101' brief, former Commander CANSOFCOM, Lieutenant-General (Retired) D. Michael Day, asserted: "We [SOF] shape your [conventional forces] actions in advance and are of limited value in your decisive engagements."²⁶ This quote is significant for three reasons: First, not only does it presuppose the need for conventional forces in modern conflict across the FSO, but secondly it implies that SOF exists to support the "value [of] decisive engagements" by conventional land forces. Lastly, to achieve this effect, it implies a differentiation in roles and capabilities, thus meriting the requirement of both types of forces. In other words, "SOF is not a panacea."²⁷ Debunking the myths and managing the over-zealous expectations of some, Day adds, "there is no 'magic SOF dust' to be sprinkled on a conventional battle-space."²⁸

13. Nevertheless, it would appear that CANSOF is the "easy button" for political decision-makers, but is it the *right* button? What are the second and third order effects of consistently employing SOF?

14. First, an overemphasis on CANSOF will not immediately but eventually signal the numerical decline of the CA. SOF cannot be created overnight and requires mature and experienced soldiers to undergo selection. Since the majority of SOF operators come from a land environment background, the CA could plausibly become an institution that exists solely to force

²⁴ Highly agile and adaptable, CANSOF operates in condensed-in-size organizations with little C2 "overhead" enabling flexibility and increased efficiency. The high-to-immediate readiness, rapid deployability, low fiscal cost and classified status makes SOF an ideal choice with a minimal media signature.

²⁵ The "CNN effect" of U.S. Staff Sergeant Bill Cleveland (MH-60 crew member of "Super 64", 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment) being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in 1993 and Sergeant Drew Doiron (member of CSOR killed during Operation IMPACT) on front cover of *Macleans* in 2014 are two stark reminders.

²⁶ Emily Spencer (editor), *"By, With, Through": A SOF Global Engagement Strategy* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2014), 184.

²⁷ Matt Gallagher, "Welcome to the Age of the Commando," *New York Times*, 30 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/opinion/sunday/welcome-to-the-age-of-the-commando.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region®ion=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region&_r=1

²⁸ Emily Spencer (editor), *"By, With, Through": A SOF Global Engagement Strategy* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2014), 184.

generate SOF personnel to the detriment of producing soldiers to be employed in CA units.²⁹ As one Battalion commander put it, “we are hemorrhaging soldiers to CANSOF.”

15. Second, an overuse of SOF assets sends a clear and potentially damaging message to the CA of being *inutile*. The Hollywood glamorized sentiment of “the super soldier”³⁰ has the possibility of harming the fighting morale of an army. Hailed as Britain’s greatest general in the Second World War, Field Marshal Viscount William Slim, commander of the legendary British 14th Army, made this observation concerning special forces:

Armies do not win wars by means of a few bodies of super-soldiers but by the average quality of their standard units. Anything, whatever short cuts to victory it may promise, which thus weakens the Army spirit, is dangerous...Any well-trained infantry battalion should be to do what a commando can do; in the Fourteenth Army they could and did.³¹

16. Third, given the high tempo within Western SOF communities, there is an escalating rate of burn out.³² This poses hazard not only to the operators themselves, but the missions they can safely and effectively sustain.

17. Lastly, what does an excessive use of SOF communicate to the next generation of Canadians (and the international community) about the gravity and cost of war? One could argue that the horrors of war become reduced and instead replaced by the sensation and glorification of SOF, in turn, producing national apathy. One writer observes:

²⁹ Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, disagreed with Churchill's eagerness to create the Special Operations Executive (SOE) believing "it was a dangerous drain on the quality of an infantry battalion." Emily Spencer, *“By, With, Through”: A SOF Global Engagement Strategy* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2014), 120-121.

³⁰ Matt Gallagher, "Welcome to the Age of the Commando," *New York Times*, 30 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/opinion/sunday/welcome-to-the-age-of-the-commando.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region®ion=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region&_r=3

³¹ William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1956), 547.

³² Rowan Scarborough, "Obama Runs Special Forces Into The Ground," *The Washington Times*, 11 March 2014, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/11/special-ops-forces-wearing-thin-from-high-demand/?page=all> . In JTF2, it is not uncommon for non-commissioned officers (NCO) to be in the double-digits for operational tours.

In the political sense, the [SOF] policy works. The secrecy surrounding Special Ops keeps the heavy human costs of war off the front pages. But in doing so, it also keeps the nonmilitary public wholly disconnected from the armed violence carried out in our name. It enables our state of perpetual warfare, and ensures that as little as we care and understand today, we'll care and understand even less tomorrow.³³

18. Long term regional and global security and stability comes at a *commitment cost*. And the cost is time. The CDS's assessment is that "Canada will be in the middle east for generations."³⁴ Conventional forces, by their role, structure and size, are well-suited for this endeavour, able to operate across the FSO. However, basic statehood foreign policy means that "you've got to pay to play"³⁵ or "you're off the team."³⁶ Canada cannot succumb to the temptation of contribution warfare³⁷ – being seen just to be seen out of sheer bureaucratic necessity – but must demonstrate the political and moral resolve to commit to winning.³⁸ An approach to 'winning' will now be examined in the following section of this paper.

Distinct Yet Complementary – CA and CANSOF Interdependency

³³ Matt Gallagher, "Welcome to the Age of the Commando," *New York Times*, 30 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/31/opinion/sunday/welcome-to-the-age-of-the-commando.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-right-region®ion=opinion-c-col-right-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-right-region&_r=3

³⁴ Jonathan Vance, "Chief of the Defence Staff Vision and Priorities for the Canadian Armed Forces," (address to C.D. Howe Institute, Toronto, ON, 4 February 2016).

³⁵ A principle in international relations vernacular that speaks to a state's requirement to use its military in order to have a credible voice and political bargaining chip in the international forum. It is therefore very interesting to note that the Government of Canada's decision to withdraw all six CF-18 fighter jets from the coalition against ISIS in favour of increasing the military training mission in Iraq has not been received well by a number of countries. As a result, Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan was snubbed by U.S. Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter and French Defence Minister Jean-Yves le Drian and left off the invitation list to two high-level coalition meetings in Paris. This supports the argument that the "pay to play" rule is not merely equivalent to SOF Task Force behind enemy lines, but a visible, decisive conventional presence (in this case, predominantly coalition air forces).

³⁶ Chris Kilford, "When You Waver On Foreign Affairs, You're Off The Team," *Ottawa Citizen*, 4 February 2016, <http://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/chris-kilford-when-you-waver-on-foreign-affairs-youre-off-the-team>

³⁷ Jonathan Vance, "Chief of the Defence Staff Vision and Priorities for the Canadian Armed Forces," (address to C.D. Howe Institute, Toronto, ON, 4 February 2016). General Vance went on to say: "We need ask ourselves, 'what can we get done?' We owe it to Canadians, the government and to ourselves to get it right."

³⁸ General Douglas MacArthur once said "it is fatal to enter any war without the will to win it."

19. The future global threat paradigm demands an increased interdependence between conventional forces and SOF. The U.S. military recognizes the need to “devise more flexible combinations of special operations and conventional forces”.³⁹ In 2013, a special report titled *The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces* made the following recommendations:

To provide cost-effective and innovative defence options and reduce the danger of overstretch for special operations forces, new ways of combining with conventional forces to conduct small-footprint missions should be devised. The army plans to provide regionally aligned forces to geographic combatant commands on a multiyear timetable, but these formations will need to be highly scalable and tailored to meet the need. To ensure more flexible combinations of special operations forces and conventional forces...Defence policymakers should mandate the urgent formation of scalable conventional force packages to include "enablers" (such as airlift, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), "thickeners" (additional infantry), and specialties. These elements should form habitual relationships with special operations units to train and deploy together routinely.⁴⁰

20. It is interesting to note that these conventional force "enablers", "thickeners" and specialties (coupled with SOF capabilities) not only provide a decisive kinetic advantage over the adversary in the future,⁴¹ but they mitigate the disadvantages of an exclusive reliance on SOF outlined in the previous section. Due to the reality of modern warfare, an overlap of roles and tasks exist at times⁴² between conventional forces and SOF. Dubbed by Churchill as "the ministry of ungentlemanly warfare,"⁴³ historically, unconventional warfare (UW) was predominantly the domain of SOF, but in recent years, appears to be leaking into the domain of

³⁹ Linda Robinson, *The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Special Report No. 66, April 2013), 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴¹ The author of this paper is not suggesting that kinetic force will be the definitive component defeating future adversaries. A comprehensive, whole-of-government approach must be taken particularly in the realm of hybrid warfare. Notwithstanding, the focus of this paper will remain on conventional land forces' capabilities.

⁴² Aside from “the degree of physical and political risk, operational techniques, modes of employment, independence from friendly support and dependence of detailed operational intelligence,” (Department of National Defence, *CANSOFCOM Capstone Concept For Special Operations*, 2009, 26), there is a commonality between conventional forces (infantry) and SOF (predominantly infantry background) based on land forces tactics, techniques and procedures that are at times interchangeable.

⁴³ A reference to British Special Operations Executive (SOE) in WWII.

conventional forces more commonly. McRaven's six principles of special operations⁴⁴ are not unique to SOF (conventional forces apply these same principles⁴⁵) and there is an increasing interconnectivity of tasks between conventional land forces and SOF (see Figure 1).

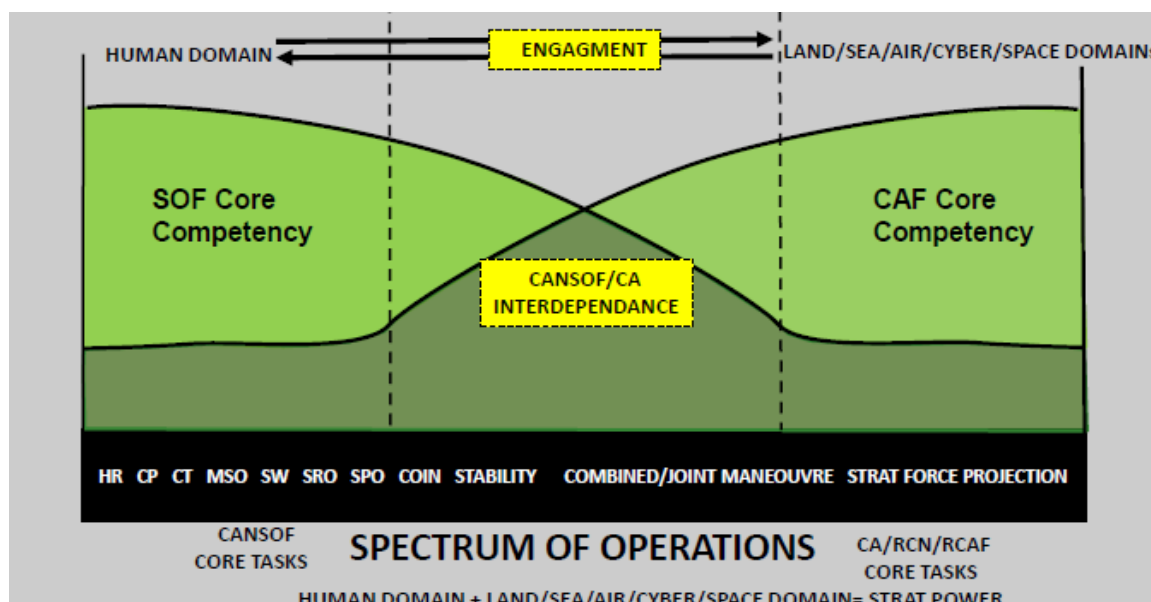


Figure 1 – Conventional and SOF Spectrum of Operations⁴⁶

21. Granted, UW has a wide range definition, but part of its tenet "to organize, train, equip, advise and assist indigenous and surrogate forces in military and paramilitary operations"⁴⁷ sounds very similar to what the Canadian Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLT) – colloquially known as "omelettes" – the CA successfully spearheaded in Kandahar alongside the conventional role of the battle group (BG). In Kabul, CA soldiers as junior as Corporals⁴⁸ were

⁴⁴ William H. McRaven, *The Theory of Special Operations* (Monterey: Naval Post Graduate School, June 1993), 11. These principles are: simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed and purpose.

⁴⁵ All of McRaven's principles are contained in conventional forces doctrine by name with the exception of repetition which, one could argue, is a form of basic military discipline.

⁴⁶ This slide (titled "Applicability of Forces Across the Range of Military Operations") was sourced from the presentation "Special Operations Forces Functions and Capabilities" delivered 18 January 2016 at the Canadian Forces College. Note: The author of this paper does not subscribe entirely to this graph and would point out that the human domain is not exclusively belong inside a SOF construct. Depending on the type of operation, the CA, and Five Eyes conventional land forces by extension, can and do operate within the human domain extensively.

⁴⁷ Tony Balasevicius, "Unconventional Warfare: The Missing Link In The Future Of Land Operations," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 7 (2007), <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo9/no4/07-balasevicius-eng.asp>

⁴⁸ Corporals employed in instructor roles had completed the Primary Leadership Qualification (PLQ) as a prerequisite for deployment on CCTM-A.

responsible for training elements of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and National Security Forces (ANSF) as part of Canadian Contribution to the Training Mission in Afghanistan (CCTM-A). In 2014, elements of the CA deployed on Operation REASSURANCE⁴⁹ and currently CA troops are deployed on Operation UNIFIER⁵⁰ as part of the coalition effort to conduct military training and capacity building in Ukraine. Following this logic, is the CA not suitable to train the Kurdish forces in Iraq?⁵¹

22. Would the CA be comfortable and structured with taking on more of an "ungentlemanly [style of] warfare"?⁵² Dr. Paul Mitchell in "What Is An Army For?" states "the CA should develop its own UW capability."⁵³ Others concur and broaden the application. In the U.S. paradigm, for example, Lieutenant-Colonel Richard B. Davenport suggests that given the global threat environment and emerging nature of warfare, conventional forces will become more like SOF and the SOF more like the CIA.⁵⁴ In short, everyone must adapt. Cautioning against SOF overspecializing, Commander CANSOFCOM, Brigadier-General Mike Rouleau believes "there

⁴⁹ The mission of Operation REASSURANCE is to support NATO assurance measures in Central and Eastern Europe. *National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces*, accessed 5 February 2016, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/nato-ee.page>

⁵⁰ The mission of Operation UNIFIER is to conduct military training and capacity building in Ukraine. *National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces*, accessed 5 February 2016, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/op-unifier.page>

⁵¹ CANSOF is presently performing this task (amid a myriad of other tasks) as part of Operation IMPACT. While it is fully acknowledged that the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) criteria may preclude conventional land forces, given the level of brutality employed by ISIS, one wonders if the Canadian government would still opt to send SOF even if conventional forces were permitted to operate within the host nation.

⁵² According to Peter Beinart, professor of political science at the City University of New York and contributor to *The Atlantic*, "the core problem is that most politicians are selling war on the cheap" when faced with emerging threats like ISIS. [Peter Beinart, "Why Attacking ISIS Won't Make Americans Safer," *The Atlantic*, March 2016 issue, accessed 6 February 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/03/why-attacking-isis-wont-make-americans-safer/426861/>]. Quoted from *Foreign Affairs* magazine authors, Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, comment: "... liberal and accountable democratic governments find it difficult to marshal either the staying power or the savagery that is usually required to suppress an unruly and committed indigenous group... such as ISIS". [Chris Kilford, "When You Waver On Foreign Affairs, You're Off The Team," *Ottawa Citizen*, 4 February 2016, <http://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/chris-kilford-when-you-waver-on-foreign-affairs-youre-off-the-team>]

⁵³ Paul T. Mitchell, "What's An Army For? The Future Of The Canadian Forces," *Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies*, 4 February 2013, <http://canadianmilitaryhistory.ca/whats-an-army-for-the-future-of-the-canadian-forces-by-dr-paul-t-mitchell/>

⁵⁴ Richard B. Davenport, "The Future of Interdependence: Conventional Forces Will Look More Like SOF, SOF Will Look More Like The CIA," *Special Warfare*, Vol. 10 (June 2014): 23.

must be a versatility of employment or an ability to be a “specialized SOF generalist”.⁵⁵

Arguably, the CA's speciality is that it does not specialize and as a result, is oftentimes "spread too thin." Dr. Mitchell foresees the danger in continuing this trend: "The CA, facing budget cuts, will have trouble maintaining a wide range of proficiencies across the spectrum of conflict."⁵⁶

Military analyst and author, Tony Balasevicius, goes even further: “Canada cannot have capabilities that cover the full spectrum of SOF missions and must explore options that give her the most flexibility regarding employment within its resource envelope.”⁵⁷

23. Added "enablers" and "thickeners" will be challenging for the CA to obtain in light of the government's anticipated budget cuts to defence. Notwithstanding, according to LGen (Ret'd) Day, the requirement for a merging interdependency between the CA and CANSOF seems to be the way of the future:

In line with the CDS's vision of the CF as “...an integrated military force, built upon core service and formation competencies, achieving strategic effect with naval, air, land, and special operations forces supporting each other in operations while, along with our Defence Team support, forging relationships with, and working alongside, allies and government agencies/departments as well as non-governmental organizations,” CANSOFCOM will continue to evolve fully nested in the larger CF context.⁵⁸

Dr. Howard G. Coombs concurs:

The stakes are too high and the penalties too unforgiving for conventional forces and SOF to not move beyond being prisoners of historical experience and doctrine

⁵⁵ Emily Spencer (editor), *“By, With, Through”: A SOF Global Engagement Strategy* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2014), 193.

⁵⁶ Paul T. Mitchell, "What's An Army For? The Future Of The Canadian Forces," *Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies*, 4 February 2013, <http://canadianmilitaryhistory.ca/whats-an-army-for-the-future-of-the-canadian-forces-by-dr-paul-t-mitchell/>

⁵⁷ Bernd Horn and Tony Balasevicius (editors), *Casting Light on the Shadows: Canadian Perspectives on Special Operations Forces* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 251.

⁵⁸ D. Michael Day and Bernd Horn, “Canadian Special Operations Command: The Maturation of a National Command,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Autumn 2010): 74.

in order to design and affect activities that will contribute to durable and lasting success in whole of government operations.⁵⁹

CA Challenges

24. Despite the CA's doctrinal affirmation for the present and future requirement for conventional land forces,⁶⁰ there are lingering issues that degrade the Army's warfighting capability preventing a greater interdependency with CANSOF.

25. The difficulty in obtaining healthy consensus within the CA to be able to move forward is symptomatic of larger inconsistencies and fractions within the respective corps.⁶¹ By contrast, SOF culture is born out of unity – unity of purpose (standing mission, government's 'no fail' option), unity of command (structure, efficiencies, enablers) and unity of competency (skills, attributes) – which fosters foundational trust in the institution. This type of unity, however, seems to be more fragile not only in the CA, but across the forces. How can the forces “cut the fat”⁶² when "there is very little fat" to cut?⁶³ And how does the CA's ‘train as you fight, fight as you train’ maxim line up with “train to excite”⁶⁴ philosophy exactly? In light of the

⁵⁹ Emily Spencer (editor), *“By, With, Through”: A SOF Global Engagement Strategy* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2014), 195.

⁶⁰ Principally, *Advancing With Purpose: The Army Strategy, 3rd Edition* and *Land Operations 2021 - Adaptive Dispersed Operations: The Force Employment Concept for Canada's Army of Tomorrow*

⁶¹ For example, the Royal Canadian Infantry Corps (RCIC) has yet to reach consensus on the light forces issue despite years of debate. Some ardently contend that a parachute capability must remain extant in the CA while others argue passionately that the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS) does not specify a requirement for this capability, and therefore, parachute companies should be re-rolled into mechanized infantry companies.

⁶² Mercedes Stephenson, "Top General Fights To Cut The Fat In The Forces," *Vancouver 24 Hrs*, 25 February 2011, <http://vancouver.24hrs.ca/News/national/2011/02/25/17415656.html>

⁶³ Steven Chase, "'Very Little Fat' In Military, Says Canada's New Top Soldier," *The Globe and Mail*, 29 October 2012, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/very-little-fat-in-military-says-canadas-new-top-soldier/article4718996/>

⁶⁴ Peter Devlin, “Army Futures,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2009): 2. The author of this paper takes issue with the "train to excite" philosophy. Creative, challenging and relevant training is essential and should be conducted frequently within a unit's individual training (IT) and collective training (CT) cycle. IT and CT, if planned and led properly, should be synonymous with exciting training that is conducive to combat-capable units. However, striving for solely an end state of emotional excitement runs the risk of orienting training on separate, non-converging trajectories that do not produce optimal results. Second, "train to excite" connotes a type of training that is well-received because it is geared specifically for the primary target audience (PTA), but not necessarily because it is required and relevant to further enhance combat readiness.

government's plans to have a "leaner, more agile" military,⁶⁵ the impacts to the CA are, at present, uncertain. The CA's capstone document – *Advancing With Purpose* – now leaves room for two basic questions: Where is the CA advancing? And what is the purpose? Clear and robust doctrine is fine so long as it mirrors the actual direction and purpose of a force. A Defence White Paper is sorely needed⁶⁶ and the CA must work diligently to build a unified vision for the future before it can effectively provide added value to an interdependency with CANSOF.

26. The adaptable, "can do" culture within the SOF community (aptly represented in their slogan, "We will find a way") is contagious and perfectly summarizes the highly professional, incredibly motivated and staunchly mission-oriented posture of CANSOF. This philosophy is executed from the no-lag flash-to-bang strategic decision-making process to the tactical level, mission command-infused style of leadership. In comparison, the CA's slogan – "strong, proud, ready" – is an inspiring motto to live up to, but is this an accurate representation of the CA presently?⁶⁷ Commenting on the woefully low readiness levels in the CA, one senior officer commented: "We are working ourselves out of a job." According to this same senior officer, the CA is hung up over self-imposed restraints while CANSOF, not wedded to a particular way of

⁶⁵ Liberal Party of Canada, "Investing In Our Military," accessed 6 February 2016, <https://www.liberal.ca/realchange/investing-in-our-military/>

⁶⁶ David J. Bercuson, "Time For A New Defence White Paper," *Legion Magazine*, January/February 2016, 20-21.

⁶⁷ Is the CA attaining the benchmark of its own slogan? What are the metrics for gauging "strong, proud, ready"? There are issues in the CA that must not be overlooked: First, considerable mental and physical resilience deficiencies (Is the CA "strong?"); Second, retention is a major issue given the rise in personnel exiting the forces (Are people "proud" to serve in an institution they are leaving in droves, or remain in yet are disillusioned with "train to excite" promises as their *raison d'être*?); Lastly, readiness speaks to three aspects, generally speaking: states of readiness (ie. force posture), levels of readiness (ie. mandated training benchmarks) and personnel readiness (physical, psychological clearance to deploy). Degrees of readiness vary and operational readiness (OPRED) declarations only occur once a unit has completed the training requirements inside an eight month Managed Readiness Plan (MRP) cycle. Regarding deployability, the CA is big and slow when it needs to move, particularly overseas. The gunfighter adage 'slow is smooth and smooth is fast' might apply to tactical decision-making, but the CA's deliberate process hamstrings its ability to provide the very effect it outlines in its doctrine: "...capable of being deployed by a variety of means, rapidly responding to...international threats in complex environments." Department of National Defence, *Advancing With Purpose: The Army Strategy, 3rd Edition*, 2014, 10. (Is the CA "ready" to face emerging threats like ISIS given the aforementioned "strong" and "proud" deficiencies, and what is the state of the CA's overall readiness to meet these threats?)

doing things, is "outmanoeuvring the Army" by retaining flexibility and provides the Government of Canada with viable, time-responsive options.⁶⁸ Davenport asks:

Is the Army an adaptive hierarchy that can change to meet the future of a decentralized world? Change is hard to do, especially when most of the Army force is conventional by nature, thinking within a land-domain construct where "overwhelming force" is the over arching objective.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

27. The CAF, as the last resort of the Government of Canada, cannot and must not fail.⁷⁰ To this end, a comprehensive defence review is in order. The Government of Canada's intended course of action to create a "leaner, more agile" military must prudently take into account the requirement for both SOF and conventional land forces, as well as the requirement to move toward a greater degree of interoperability between the CA and CANSOF.

28. The CA has proven extremely effective in executing land operations across the FSO, but it cannot rest on its laurels. The CA must overcome some key challenges while simultaneously not forsaking its core: conventional warfighting. Slogans must be reinforced with actual professional deliverables; the duty is to train, not entertain, soldiers.⁷¹

29. It is clear that the proclivity of Western governments toward employment of SOF as a one-size-fits-all approach is neither sustainable nor sufficiently comprehensive in addressing the myriad of emerging regional and global threats. A highly professional, mission-oriented, rapidly

⁶⁸ Is the CA's new line "It's hard to stay focused when you're not getting much ice time?" Slogan marketing - "strong, proud, ready" - is marginally effective insofar as the actual profession of arms goes. Admittedly, it will draw formal ball attendees and 5K and half marathon running enthusiasts respectively, but slogans alone cannot operate alongside an unassailable mindset that says "We *will* find a way."

⁶⁹ Richard B. Davenport, "The Future of Interdependence: Conventional Forces Will Look More Like SOF, SOF Will Look More Like The CIA," (*Special Warfare*, Vol. 10, June 2014), 25.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Vance, "Chief of the Defence Staff Vision and Priorities for the Canadian Armed Forces," (address to C.D. Howe Institute, Toronto, ON, 4 February 2016).

⁷¹ While visiting Canadian soldiers deployed abroad on an international exercise, the General Officer gently admonished the sub-unit commander in response to a comment that the soldiers indicated they would seek to leave the Army if there were no upcoming operational tours: "Remember, our job is not to entertain soldiers but to make sure they're ready [for operations]."

deployable, mentally and physically resilient, well-led Army with a unified purpose is what the CA aspires to be. The CA must be well-poised to act when the Government of Canada directs the CDS to provide combat effective land forces that are adaptable, highly skilled, innovative and work together with CANSOF to meet the conventional, unconventional and hybrid threats of the 21st century.

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