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CANADA IN CONFLICT: REGAINING THE INITIATIVE

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AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to provide the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and his Liaison Officer to the Privy Council Office (PCO) with broad insights into how Canada, supported by the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), can seek to regain the initiative in the contemporary environment. There are two aspects which will be discussed, spanning three recommendations. First, Canadians and the Government of Canada (GC) need PCO to provide leadership in interdepartmental coordination, not just provision of advice. Secondly, the CAF must continue to grow and it must mature in several key areas.

INTRODUCTION

2. Defence and security practitioners take as a given that Canada and the West is in a global competition with China, Russia and a host of lesser ascendant regional powers. There are many different ways of characterizing the contemporary environment such as: Hybrid War, Grey Zone Conflict, the Gerasimov Doctrine, etc.¹ Recent examples include how Russia absorbed the Crimea with barely any military action or how China continues to expand its territorial waters, flaunt United Nations resolutions, and expand its influences globally. Each of these activities pose security threats to Canada and the global order. What is clear is that adversary nations are using all available tools and methods in a coordinated manner to pursue their interests – Canada must do the same.

¹ Dani Belo, "Conflict in the Absence of War: A Comparative Analysis of China and Russia Engagements in Gray Zone Conflicts," Canadian Foreign Policy Journal, published online 29 July 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2019.1644358>: 3; and McDermott, Roger N. "Does Russia have a Gerasimov Doctrine?" Parameters 46, no. 1 (Spring, 2016): 97-105, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1802710137?accountid=9867>: 98-99.

There are two thrusts that the Government must pursue in order to address the pressures that Canada faces. Principally, it must establish a coherent strategy and ensure a coordinated execution of the strategy – this role should fall to PCO under the office of a National Institutions Coordinator (NIC). The second thrust is that each Department should self-assess and posture itself to support the NIC. In particular, for the CAF this means growing select forces which are best able to operate below the level of war (Strategic Communications, Special Operations Forces, and Cyberspace Forces). As well, CAF needs to restructure the Cyberspace Forces in order to consolidate focus and enhance responsiveness. In short, the solution space for Canada to regain the initiative in hybrid warfare rests with the GC and not solely with the CAF.

DISCUSSION

3. Each nation has a range of powers Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic – known as DIME – that it can use to achieve first and second order effects across a range of disciplines namely, Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Industry – known as PMESII.² Canadian institutions must determine what efforts they can undertake and what impacts they could have, essentially we must apply effects based operations and targeting methodologies to the application of the instruments of national power.³ Two main lines of effort must be pursued concurrently at the national level in order to apply Canada's national power effectively. The first effort centers on understanding; understanding Canadian values as well as the general and specific nature

² R. Hillson, "the DIME/PMESII Model Suite Requirements Project," U.S. Naval Research Laboratory Review 2009: 235. As with many paradigms there are variations on the theme, however nuances are not germane to the essence of the arguments made within this paper.

³ For example, the RCN often deploys to secure global shipping. The CA and SOF are stability influencers affecting commodity prices for the regions into which they deploy (Iraq, African UN missions, etc).

of the conflict. The second effort is that of understanding and coordination; determining what can and will be done.

4. As part of the first effort, Canada must define Canada's core values and interests. Collectively we must go back to first principles – we must select and then maintain a singular aim. Strong Secure Engaged (SSE) puts it well, “Canadian security and prosperity remain Canada's primary strategic interests”, though this author submits that Canada's core unifying aim is prosperity through security.⁴ This implies stable access to financial and material resources, freedoms and privileges at the individual and corporate levels, and the rule of law to govern competing interactions. We must understand the filigree and pomp of ‘moral obligation’ and of the exportation of the western ideals of universal human rights, international security and of globalization are merely our current ways and means, not ends – that the ends are distinctly rooted in the prosperity of Canadian citizens.

5. The another aspect is well underway, but must be supported and inculcated – the Canadian populace must understand that we are in conflict, that our standard of living is being threatened. Canadians must have some understanding of the nature of the conflict. Commensurate with the populace's understanding, Canadian institutions will be given freedom of manoeuvre, they will be given both functional and societal imperatives.⁵ Critically, Canadian institutions (particularly security and intelligence agencies) must be

⁴ Department of National Defence, Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy, (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2017): 59.

⁵ Department of National Defence, CFP A-PA-005-000, *Leadership in the Canadian Armed Forces: Conceptual Foundations*. Ottawa, DND Canada, 2005: 18. Functional imperative referring to what needs to be done and the societal imperative referring to the manner in which it is done.

seen to be fighting for Canadians; Canada cannot afford to have discord and disconnect between its populace and the Institutions entrusted to address their interests.

6. Culminating the first effort, is to understand the nature of the conflict itself.

Borrowing from game theory and Simon Sinek, conflict of this nature is not finite and cannot be ‘won’ or ‘lost’ in simple binary terms.⁶ Failing the complete annihilation or assimilation of all competing nations they will continue to compete with us; though the strategies, capabilities used, and ‘overtness’ may vary with their relative sizes and intentions. The conflict is and will remain one of perpetual competition and therefore is one which requires a strategy extending out many years, potentially decades.

7. As a result, we must carefully assess, through a lens of national values and interests what is driving each of the major and ascending powers; how are they employing national powers for their gain, and how do they exert influence on other nations to achieve their aims. For example: how China’s Belt and Road Initiative begins with diplomatic and economic leverage to establish a military presence to further expansionist interests all with a view to secure prosperity for their nation.⁷ Or how Russia coordinates informational and military operations to protect Russia and the Russian diaspora from the West (ie Crimea, Turkey, and former provinces of the Ukraine).⁸ In order to disrupt and eventually deny adversary influence it is essential to

⁶ “What Game Theory Teaches Us About War: Simon Sinek,” YouTube video, 9:48, posted by “TED Archive,” 8 November 2016 Simon Sinek Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bFs6ZiynSU&t=4s>.

⁷ Weifeng Zhou & Mario Esteban, “Beyond Balancing: China’s approach towards the Belt and Road Initiative,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 27:112, 487-501, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10670564.2018.1433476>.

⁸ Tor Bukkvoll, “Why Putin Went To War: Ideology, Interests And Decision-Making In The Russian Use Of Force In Crimea And Donbas,” *Contemporary Politics*, 22:3, 267-282, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201310>.

understand why and how an enemy is using its national powers. This is a task which currently falls to the Privy Council's National Security and Intelligence Advisor (NSIA), providing national level intelligence assessments and a "challenge function for the security and intelligence communities."⁹ The NSIA is a key body where all intelligence silos converge; it represents the culmination of the Canadian Security and Intelligence enterprise's assessment of the 'as-is' situation.

8. Having established the 'as-is' the GC must pursue the second line of effort – it must coordinate the instruments of national power. This will require a sage and exacting assessment of the first, second, and third order effects of national activities on Canadians. This drives a requirement for non-partisan, non-political organization. The current structure of the GC retains much of the power and authority in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) as well as Cabinet and its committees – both of which are highly temporal and subject to finite political and individual aspirations. Consequently, the PMO and Cabinet are not well suited for decades long strategy development and implementation.

9. Though elements of strategy are conducted within each of the Institutions and though the PMO provides direction through mandate letters the PMO does not have the resources, expertise or longevity to conceive of, execute, and coordinate long term campaigns. What Canada needs is a central coordinating body in the PCO and of equivalent level to the NSIA. This proposed role, National Institutions Coordinator (NIC) would be responsible for establishing and implementing a non-partisan national strategy based on our values and interests. The NIC, as part of the PCO, would be well

⁹ House of Commons, National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, Annual Report 2018, (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2018), Table 1, page 20

positioned to inform and shepherd the Prime Minister's mandates to Canadian Institutions, while also remaining non-partisan and enacting and pursuing interests on behalf of Canadians.

10. In being situated within the PCO it would it be well connected with the various extant committees who coordinate and provide advice through the Clerk to the PM and his committees. None of the current secretariats in the PCO have coordination of federal departments and agencies within their primary mandate, they are focused on the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. In fact, the role of the PCO is to, "provide non-partisan advice, ... ensure the smooth functioning of cabinet, [and] ... foster a high-performing and accountable Public Service."¹⁰ The Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (Operations) does have a limited coordination role, but only insofar as domestic programs are concerned and is closely tied to the functioning of an associated cabinet committee.¹¹ The NIC would be internationally focused and have a decidedly firmer hand on intergovernmental coordination and priorities, in this then it would be at best complementary. The Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (Plans and Consultation) would also be complementary in that they have a mandate broader than domestic however, they are restricted to provision of advice and information largely focused on macroeconomics and confirmation of the consistency of policy and strategy.¹² The NIC as proposed would align with Plans and Consultation but would go several steps further. The NIC would work with the NSIA and Departments to establish a Canadian strategy and implement operational plans for

¹⁰ The Privy Council Office, *The Role and Structure of the Privy Council Office* (Ottawa: Canadian Communications Group, 2017), 1.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 4

¹² *Ibid*, 6-7

periodic review and consideration by the PM and his Cabinet.¹³ On top of exercising this leadership function it would be responsible for the on-going management of the plan, adjusting it and seizing opportunities as they present themselves.

11. The more Canadians adopt a conflict or mobilization mindset the more forward leaning and effective the NIC will become. Akin to how the NSIA must be able to breakdown institutional intelligence silos, the NIC must be able to dissolve real and apparent barriers between Canadian institutions' ability to coordinate and collaborate as necessary. It should be noted that the NIC has a sequel objective, as it attains maturity, to synchronize with commercial and non-profit organizations.¹⁴ However, the initial focus of the NIC, aligned with Canadian interests, would be to make inroads where our competitor's effects have not yet fully matured. Once Canada begins to regain the initiative the NIC will be able to more proactively pursue our national values and interests in advance of and potentially to the exclusion of our competitors.

12. Turing to the CAF there are two main lines of effort it must undertake to posture itself to support the GC in regaining the initiative and to exploit the gains wherever possible. As will be explained, the CAF must grow in key areas: Strategic Communications, SOF, and Cyberspace Forces. Additionally, a restructuring of the Cyberspace Forces an independent Force Generator/Employer exclusively under the CDS is required.

¹³ This being a key control and feedback mechanism.

¹⁴ There is significant precedence for CAF. Partnering with NGOs as part of nation building or provide naval escort in contested shipping lanes. These, and other creative opportunities, must be built upon.

13. The CAF is under-resourced; the CAF must mobilize. It has committed its strategic reserves in the execution of its current tasks; strategically CAF has culminated and is at great risk. Reassuringly, the CAF has always grown proportionally to the perception of threat.¹⁵ However, at least in the short term, CAF's growth will be marginal at best¹⁶ and thus the CAF must be extremely judicious to preference capabilities which will best address the challenges of hybrid warfare, namely Strategic Communications (StratCom), SOF, and Cyberspace much of which is included in SSE.¹⁷ The following sections will focus on aspects which are not already included in Strong Secure Engaged.

14. The first priority, though omitted from SSE, is StratCom. In terms of impact per person, the ability to communicate our messages is paramount; what people believe is what becomes reality. This military capability must be employed as such while remaining aligned with national narratives. We must use our StratCom capability to secure friendly audiences and influence targeted neutral audiences, in time pivoting to select adversary or aligned audiences.¹⁸ These target audiences may include Canadians (insofar as generating awareness not just of the operation but the nature of the threats

¹⁵ Peter F. Dawson, "Canadian Military Mobilization," *London School of Economics and Political Science*, Vol 16, Issue 1, 1989): 42,44. Pre-WW1 the force was 60,000 (3,000 regular and 57,000 militia), and grew to 630,000. Pre-WW2 the force was 38,000 (4,000 regular and 34,000 militia) and grew to over a million.

¹⁶ SSE, 13.

¹⁷ It should be noted that the other Departments and Agencies used as instruments of national power should also consider these as a model for their own growth and development of response options. All departments should be able to effectively (and under the coordination of the NIC) convey Canada's messaging at home and abroad. Canadians were highly comfortable with domestically produced propaganda during previous period of threat. Finally, small highly professional specialized and resourced teams can have asymmetric effect – this fact extends well beyond CANSOFCOM and into several other departments.

¹⁸ Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation, "NATO Strategic Communications Handbook (Draft for Use)", Ver 9.1.21 – 21 March 2015. The role of StratCom is much broader than this, but applied at the national level limited examples have been provided of its essential capabilities.

being addressed; bolstering targeted recruiting; etc), our forces deployed (maintaining morale and motivation) as well as neutral and adversarial audiences (our values, our resolve, inconsistencies in adversary narratives). As the CAF increasingly employs SOF and Cyberspace forces in the pursuit of the initiative, messaging of our activities will be our greatest combat force multiplier.

15. The second is SOF. Again, impact per person is exceptionally high.

CANSOFCOM is heavily engaged in global operations and is well postured to address emergent, extremist and peer threats to Canada.¹⁹ As an effort to sustain, there have been proven strategic benefits to operations in Africa and Globally. In the future, direct operations against peer and ascendant nations would need to be well coordinated with security agencies. The key challenge in growing CANSOFCOM is not its attractiveness as an organization, but rather the percentage of soldiers willing and able to pass the rigorous physical and psychological selection regime. The current ratio of personnel in SOF to CAF is roughly 1:50; growth of SOF requires growth of CAF in a commensurate ratio.

16. The third are certain activities in the Cyber Domain. The nuanced preference here must be Active Cyber Operations and Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). Regarding Cyber Defence, risk has already been accepted and subsequently mitigated through partnerships with SSC and CSE's Canadian Center for Cyber Security. Further it is noteworthy that the bulk of CAF's vital ground and ability to employ defensive measures against the most

¹⁹ Olson, Eric T. "U.S. Special Operations: Context and Capabilities in Irregular Warfare." *Joint Force Quarterly* 56 (First, 2010): 64-70. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/203619856?accountid=9867>.

likely and most dangerous threats are outside its mandate.²⁰ As well, given CSE's new mandate it is readily seen that CAF has ceded responsibility for the defence the cyberspace approaches to Canada. As Canada's "force of last resort" the CAF cannot further cede or under-resource its responsibility to respond with military cyberspace effects. Underpinning NSIA's understanding of the 'as-is' as well as all operations in the Cyber Domain is Intelligence, particularly SIGINT. CAF already has a mature SIGINT capability, it should continue to grow it in order to address the exponentially increasing needs of Active Cyber Operations.²¹

17. The final recommendation for CAF is organizational in nature. The role of the CAF is to deliver military effects on behalf of the Government of Canada (GC), and the primary role of the DND is to support and enable the CAF in this endeavor – roles which have become blurred. It would be apocryphal to suggest military Air Power should be beholden to anyone but the CDS, but this is precisely the case with Cyber Power. The CDS does not have the freedom to employ and shape the fastest growing power in the CAF. The CDS is at the bureaucratic mercy of the DM and his ADM's – neither of whom have a mandate to deliver military effects. Tangibly this results in CAF's Cyber Forces at the operational level being entirely consumed with institutional information

²⁰ It suffices to say that Industrial security remains critical, but beyond CAF's ability to influence meaningfully. Secondly, CFNOC's mandate is tightly restricted to only CAF systems, however much of the infrastructure and information that CAF relies on daily is within the purview of SSC and CSE. The most likely threat is compromise of systems on the unclassified system, but this is also the most dangerous threat given the CAF logistics and administrative functions and databases which are on the DWAN or other unclassified enclaves.

²¹ The Communications Security Establishment Act, s. 15-20. With Bill C-59 having passed this community includes CSE with whom a strong partnership has long been being developed and matured within CFIOG. C.F. SSE, 72.

systems,²² consequently CAF's cyberspace operations are not well integrated into the Joint force from either the Force Generation or Force Employment perspectives. It is readily apparent that such a transformation would be organizationally difficult – but it will pay immense dividends for CAF's ability to conceive, plan, execute and force generate cyberspace capabilities.

CONCLUSION

18. Canada remains in a global conflict. We are participants in an 'infinite game' and must respond accordingly at the national level. We must be prepared to mobilize and structure the civil service and the armed forces to being to address our short and long term interests within an overall view to our central values – the prosperity of Canadians. Though Russia, China and the ascendant powers pose a threat we will be able to address them if the following recommendations are adopted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. There are three core recommendations that must be addressed if Canada is to regain the initiative and continue to pursue Canadian prosperity:

- a. Instil a National Institutions Coordinator within PCO to establish and maintain a coordinated plan for the use of Canada's national powers.

²² BGen Patrice Sabourin, Canadian Cyberspace Division Campaign Plan, 8 February 2019. Though the lines of effort speak to cyberspace operations, the actual priorities are sadly illuminating: Deliver on SSE, Improve Video Conferencing, Operationalize Support for the PEGASUS Gateway, Mature the DEFSOC, Support the Joint Targeting Enterprise Architecture, Deploy Windows 10, Execute NDHQ Move to Carling Campus. The least precise priority 'deliver on SSE' might refer to cyberspace operations, however the remainder are entirely information systems support challenges. At the operational level, the Canadian Cyberspace Division priorities are anything but cyberspace operations.

- b. Grow the CAF, giving preference to: StratCom, SOF and certain Cyberspace forces.
- c. Reorganize the Cyberspace Forces to have a singular Chain of Command to the CDS.

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