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Major Stephen Paish

JCSP 48

Exercise Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 48 – PCEMI 48

2021 – 2022

Exercise Solo Flight – Exercice Solo Flight

**More Than Gender, More Than a Game:
GBA(+) Wargaming in Canadian Army Training**

Major Stephen Paish

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The Canadian Army (CA) has a problem. The Government of Canada tasks it to perform complicated missions that are permeated with human and societal factors such as passion, emotion, and identity. Succeeding in a complex operational environment requires more than sound tactics and CA doctrine acknowledges this. *Land Operations* notes that the mix of the factors mentioned above “complicates” the conduct of operations and saliently urges the reader to grasp that “Success is dependent upon understanding the environment and its constituent elements and systems.”¹ Reading the doctrine begs the question: How does the CA prepare its soldiers and staff(s) to understand the complexity of their operating environment when preparing to deploy on operations?

The CA is good at preparing its soldiers to understand how their conventional adversaries and geography shape the operational plan. Routine planning processes such as the combat estimate and the operational planning process (OPP) help unit staff comfortably deduce possible adversarial actions and terrain limitations. The staff can then use Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and CA Doctrine to help guide these deductions into a plan.² Once the plan is created established tools, such as wargaming or rehearsals, help CA personnel visualize and refine it. Preparing for conventional operations is arguably a comfortable and well-understand process for the CA.

However, the CA is bad at training its soldiers to grasp the human aspects of the environment. How did historical experiences shape local populations? What impacts

¹ Department of National Defence, “B-GL-300-001: Land Operations,” 2008, 2–1, https://mars.cfc.forces.gc.ca/CFCLearn/pluginfile.php/35926/mod_resource/content/1/B-GL-300-001-FP-001%20%282008%29.pdf.

² Department of National Defence, “Canadian Forces Joint Publication, CFJP 3.0 Operations” (Her Majesty the Queen, 2010).1-1.

could our operations have on vulnerable segments of the host nation? Regardless of the scenario, these are all tough questions without readily available doctrinal answers. Some guidelines such as *Canadian Forces Joint Doctrine Note 2017-01 Child Soldiers* and the *CDS Directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions into CAF Planning and Operations* exist, but they are strategic-level guidance. A Task Force (TF) staff officer or a CA soldier cannot use these documents to refine a plan to the fidelity required at the tactical level. Nor can these soldiers use traditional CA wargames work to assist them with visualizing and understanding the intersection of social and cultural identities at play in their operating environment.³ The CA does not possess the tools to help prepare its soldiers to seek to understand the human environment during operations. This lack of training aides is a critical gap.

Wargaming offers the CA a solution to this problem. However, the organization will need to think creatively by accepting and using non-traditional wargames. This paper will demonstrate that non-traditional wargames can be a valuable vehicle to prepare CA soldiers and staff to understand and employ Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA (+)) considerations during deployments. A discussion of how the CA defines and utilizes GBA (+) will reveal the multitude of human considerations associated with the term. By understanding the human-centric nature of GBA (+), one can analyze what styles and mechanics should exist in a wargame to make it appropriate for soldiers to use as a learning aide.

³ Analyzing these factors is colloquially known as using “Gender Based Analysis (+).” GBA (+) is the methodology adopted by the Government of Canada in 2015. It is also used by some personnel as a shorthand description of the various factors in the human environment rather than a methodological tool. This paper will explore GBA (+) in detail later.

OPP wargames and Kriegspiel variants focused on tactical actions will not work. So, what will? Civilian games such as *This War of Mine* offer potential by creating a player experience that explores problems associated with vulnerable populations during a conflict. While practical, current civilian games may not offer enough value for the CA to adopt directly. Bespoke games are required. Understanding non-traditional wargame mechanics such as legacy games and semi-cooperative teamwork will allow the CA to create suitable GBA (+) wargames. This in turn will enhance CA capacity to deploy soldiers and staff that understand the human terrain and have a better chance at achieving mission success.

GBA (+): Just Gender?

GBA (+) is the primary method for the CA to integrate human-environmental considerations into planning and preparation; however, the tool is often associated primarily with gender considerations. CDS direction on implementing GBA (+) notes that the framework is “synonymous with “applying” Gender perspectives.”⁴ Unfortunately for the CAF, the implementation of GBA (+) came simultaneously with the CAF’s attempts to tackle sexual misconduct during Operation Honour. The simultaneous release of the independent initiatives led to CAF members conflating GBA (+) as a policy agenda in support of reducing sexual misconduct via Operation Honour rather than an independent framework.⁵ This narrow focus on gender undermines the

⁴ Chief of the Defence Staff, “CDS Directive for Integrating UNCSR 1325 and Related Resolutions Into CAF Planning and Operations,” January 29, 2016, A 2-2.

⁵ Rachael Johnstone and Bessma Momani, “Gender Mainstreaming in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence: Lessons on the Implementation of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+),” *Armed Forces & Society* 48, no. 2 (April 2022): 254, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X20956722>.

intended potential for GBA (+). While GBA (+) addresses gender equality, it is also intended for broader intersectional analysis. The online course includes a module entitled “Moving Beyond Sex and Gender” and saliently notes that, “Our lived experiences are affected and shaped by how intersecting identity factors interact with our specific sociocultural, political, and economic context.”⁶ This definition is an excellent description of what the CA calls the human environment. The intersection of identity with societal, political, and economics is the human environment that the CA needs to prepare its soldiers to understand during operations. To use GBA (+) effectively, the CA needs to adopt the second part of the CAF definition, namely, “The “Plus” highlights that GBA (+) goes beyond gender, and includes the examination of a range of other intersecting identity factors (such as age, education, language, geography, culture and income).”⁷ Understanding that GBA (+) incorporates more than gender is only the first step. The CA still needs to apply it.

The CA struggles to integrate GBA (+) into planning and operations. Part of the problem comes from confusion about using GBA (+) as an analytical tool. The CDS directive on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 clearly states that GBA (+) is “An analytical competency the federal government uses to advance gender equality in Canada.”⁸ CA members take an online course hosted by the Department for the Status of Women to gain this competency. The course offers broad outlines on how to use GBA

⁶ Women and Gender Equality Canada, “Introduction to GBA+,” March 31, 2021, https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/gbaplus-course-cours-acspplus/eng/mod03/mod03_03_02.html.

⁷ Chief of the Defence Staff, “CDS Directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions Into CAF Planning and Operations,” A 2-2. This paper uses the wholistic definition of GBA (+) that includes intersection of identity with various human factors.

⁸ Chief of the Defence Staff, “CDS Directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325...,” Annex 1-2.

(+). For example, the course asks candidates to keep gender and diversity issues in mind as they “Identify the issue, challenge their assumptions, research and consult..”⁹ While these are good guidelines, the lack of detail in the online program decreases GBA (+) ’s utility at the tactical level. The course does not adequately prepare soldiers and staff to integrate GBA (+) considerations into their operations. The CAF and CA recognized this gap and sought to rectify it by providing specialized training to create Gender Advisors (GENADs) to help apply GBA (+) at the institutional level and Gender Focal Points (GFPs) to integrate gender perspectives at the unit and tactical level.¹⁰ However, GFPs remain a rare commodity. If the CA is serious about preparing its soldiers to understand and integrate GBA (+) considerations on operations, then more training aids are required. Wargaming can help.

Wargame Use in the CA

The CA does not have a wargaming culture. Aside from wargaming associated with plan refinement, there are no official wargames that the CA uses to develop their soldiers. Part of the problem lies with an organizational aversion to losing. CA training philosophy concentrates on individuals and collective units refining tactical skills known as Battle Task Standards (BTS). The CA aims to practice and validate BTS by creating a “Positive experience...in a controlled environment.”¹¹ Tactical and operational wargames

⁹ Canada, “Introduction to GBA+.”

¹⁰ Johnstone and Momani, “Gender Mainstreaming in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence,” 253.

¹¹ Chris Hillier and Canadian Forces College, *Analytical Wargaming: Enabling Operational Readiness*, Book, Whole (Toronto, Ont.: Canadian Forces College, 2019), 6, <https://go.exlibris.link/ZHL88Vrc>.

are often competitive and result in a winner and a loser which does not align with the positive training experience sought by the CA.¹²

Even if CA training culture shifted to embrace competitive wargaming, the army lacks the doctrine to implement it. No official CA wargaming handbook like the *UK MOD Wargaming Handbook* or the *Camberley Kriegspiel* exists.¹³ Commanding Officers and Sub-Unit Commanders do not have a list of recommended games to play within their unit. Although the Canadian Army Command and Staff College (CACSC) is currently working on creating games for professional development, it is unknown if there will be widespread adoption of the final product across the CA. Perhaps the most significant barrier to the CA embracing wargaming is the absence of a dedicated course to train soldiers in the styles and uses of wargaming. The CAF has a nascent Wargaming Advisor Course that trains officers and SNCOs on the theory and practical uses of wargames and teaches them how to advise operational level staff and commanders to use wargames in planning and operations but the CA does not.¹⁴ The CA cannot train “disciplines” of wargaming to spread the gospel amongst the force. With so much wargame capability missing, what does the CA do with its limited wargaming resources?

CA wargames focus on helping to refine a tactical plan. While there is no CA doctrine on the circumstances where wargaming could benefit training, a section on wargaming exists within the OPP handbook issued by the CACSC. The handbook notes

¹² When the author was an Observer Controller Trainer (OCT) at the CA Collective Manoeuvre Training Centre it was consistently reinforced that the lessons given to the training audience were to be mostly positive. When tactical loss was not adjudicated by the exercise control, OCTs were instructed to have the training audience come to their own conclusions on whether an action would have led to significant loss.

¹³ Andrew Godefroy, “Solo Flight Questions,” March 28, 2022.

¹⁴ “Canadian Joint Warfare Centre Wargaming Course,” *PAXsims* (blog), June 4, 2021, <https://paxsims.wordpress.com/2021/06/03/canadian-joint-warfare-centre-wargaming-course/>.

that the wargame within OPP assists commanders and staff with visualizing an upcoming operation as well as generates discussion on the identification of risks and points of friction.¹⁵ The OPP wargame is not analytical, nor, often owing to time constraints, is it iterative. Instead, this wargame style enables participants with detailed technical expertise to reason through possible tactical issues with their plans.

This wargame style does not prepare CA soldiers to understand the human environment in operations. Because doctrinal concepts are the baseline for player actions, participants rarely need to challenge their foundational tactical assumptions. Doctrine is rooted in success in past iterations of conflict. While doctrinal concepts can evolve, they are nowhere as transient as human emotions and associated conceptions of identity. Additionally, the OPP wargame's dependence on visualization does not mesh well with understanding a tactical action's possible GBA (+) implications. Soldiers can visualize a tank squadron's space and distance when advancing to contact. It is a part of their environment. Visualizing the fear and anxiety of a refugee passing through a host nation checkpoint to get to a culturally significant site is more challenging. It is not like forming a combat team advance. CA soldiers often have not lived the experiences of vulnerable populations in a warzone, and our version of wargaming cannot give us this experience.¹⁶ While the OPP handbook prescribes a different game style for stability operations that focuses on understanding the human environment, it does not account for lack of personal experience. The focus of the stability operations wargame is not to seek understanding of

¹⁵ CACSC, "The Operational Planning Process: OPP Handbook," April 2018, 71.

¹⁶ I do not mean to imply that there are no members in the CAF with refugee or vulnerable population experience. Rather most CAF members lack this lived experience and would struggle to play a wargame that is based on visualization that depends on the possession of background knowledge and experience.

the local human factors but rather to assess if they will negatively or positively impact a Line of Operation during a campaign.¹⁷ This wargame style is closer to applying GBA (+) in operations. It attempts to assess CA operational effects on a local populace and compensate for these effects on mission success. However, the mechanics still greatly suffer from the same lack of player experience.

Civilian GBA (+) Wargame Options

Civilian wargames that incorporate GBA (+) considerations exist. While most of these games do not specifically involve military tactical decision-making, they fall into a helpful definition of wargaming offered by game designer Kacper Kwiatkowski.

Kwiatkowski notes that “a general consensus exists that all such games must explore and represent some feature or aspect of human behaviour directly bearing on the conduct of war, even if the game subject itself does not concern organized violent conflict or warfare.”¹⁸ The exploration of civilian behaviour in commercial wargames takes various forms. The type of game that is mechanically closest to CA wargaming would be disaster relief training scenarios used by various humanitarian agencies to train their personnel in tactical decision-making. However, the tactical decisions that players must make are human-centric and involve “political tensions, hostile militias, coordination problems and even feckless officials or NGOs that may complicate operations.”¹⁹ Other available games delve deeper into human emotions, identities, and interactions using different

¹⁷ CACSC, “The Operational Planning Process: OPP Handbook,” 88.

¹⁸ Kacper Kwiatkowski, “Civilian Casualties: Shifting Perspective in This War of Mine,” in *Zones of Control: Perspectives on Wargaming*, ed. Pat Harrigan and Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, Game Histories (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2016), 692.

¹⁹ Rex Brynen, “Gaming the Non Kinetic,” in *Zones of Control: Perspectives on Wargaming*, ed. Pat Harrigan and Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, Game Histories (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2016), 498.

game mechanics than the CA is used to. The World Bank employs role-playing in a fictional UN scenario to train its personnel in the dynamics of operating in developing nations.²⁰ Commercial games, such as *This War of Mine*, simulate the experience of a vulnerable civilian population living in a warzone during hostilities. In isolation, these games will not meet the requirements of the CA to train soldiers and staff in the human environment. However, an analysis of the games reveals essential game mechanics that the CA must incorporate in any GBA (+) wargame.

The World Bank's *Gender and Energy Role Playing* game offers many excellent gameplay mechanics for integrating GBA (+) considerations into a wargame. A creation of an iterative design process from 2017 to 2019, the game seeks to teach World Bank employees how to apply their "Gender Tag" methodology to fictional projects that are under consideration.²¹ The game's primary objective is to teach employees how to negotiate the integration of women into potential projects with recalcitrant host nation representatives. While this aim does not translate directly to the requirements of the CA, especially given the existing conflation of GBA (+) with gender only, the mechanics of role-playing are an excellent medium for teaching the subject. In the World Bank game participants must role play all aspects of the project, including host nation civil servants who do not share their cultural views and may be hostile to aspects of intersectional analysis. Role-Playing this conflict is a deliberate game design. The guidebook notes, "Role play allows participants to experience challenging situations while interacting with

²⁰ Brynen, "Gaming the Non Kinetic," 498.

²¹ Nicolina Angelou et al., "Gender and Energy Role Playing Training Guidebook" (World Bank, March 2019), 1, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/823481551763820142/pdf/Gender-and-Energy-Role-Playing-Training-Guidebook.pdf>.

each other in a structured way; it enables them to acquire experience and explore different strategies in a supportive environment.”²² Acquiring experience is a critical requirement for any game used by the CA. As discussed, CA soldiers and staff will likely not have the background experience of the vulnerable populations in the operational environment. Role-playing offers an inexpensive and effective method for CA personnel to acquire this experience by confronting identities and viewpoints that are not their own. However, selecting the World Bank model as a CA GBA (+) game comes with limitations.

The CA needs to tailor role-playing games to match the training objective. Because the ability for players to learn comes from visualizing and experiencing interactions within a foreign context, the game’s universe needs to be realistic. Generating scenarios and interactions that match an operational theatre’s specific societal or cultural problems will require the CA to seek outside technical assistance. Experts or people with experience will need to vet the game narrative and scenario for realism. Aside from the traditional issue of requiring security clearances for civilian personnel assisting training, the CA will need to be cognizant that some of the experience required may come with bias or viewpoints that do not align with the CAF. In the World Bank game participants must confront characters that believe things that the CA would view as misogynistic or hateful.²³ Replicating these views in a role-playing game requires the CA to assess the value of realism. Suppose the CA is too hesitant to bring in people with host nation experience and views antithetical to the CA. In that case, the game design may risk

²² Nicolina Angelou et al. “Gender-and-Energy-Role-Playing-Training-Guidebook.Pdf,” 13.

²³ Angelou et al., “Gender and Energy Role Playing Training Guidebook,” Annex-Talking Points.

portraying these individuals as characters as cliches and their viewpoints as tropes rather than a deeply held belief that our soldiers will have to contend with. This lack of realism risks player disengagement due to potential disbelief in the utility of the game. A good compromise involves having vulnerable populations inform the main design of the game with some background research/interviews between game designers and people who have held power in the operating environment.

Any role-playing game adopted by the CA should be semi-cooperative. Our soldiers must grapple with opposing viewpoints like those found in the World Bank game; however, it is important not to train personnel to view host nations or vulnerable populations as adversaries. On the other hand, a cooperative game would not work either. Purely cooperative games force all parties must work together to achieve a common goal or win condition.²⁴ It is unrealistic to expect that the players who play the host nation or vulnerable population will have the same goals and motivations as the CA. A semi-cooperative game design addresses both issues and provides a promising avenue for learning GBA (+) considerations. In this type of game, there is a central loss condition. In practical terms, this ranges from the disintegration of the security situation, or loss of sovereignty, to a descent into sectarian violence. Players work to avoid the loss condition while attempting to achieve goals that are important to their interests.²⁵ While there is a possibility of winning, the fact that all players can lose drives realism and enhances the relationship between narrative and game experience. A semi-cooperative

²⁴ Geoffrey Engelstein and Isaac Shalev, *Building Blocks of Tabletop Game Design: An Encyclopedia of Mechanisms*, 1st ed., Book, Whole (Milton: CRC Press, 2019), 4, <https://doi.org/10.1201/9780429430701>. A cooperative game is defined as one where, “players coordinate their actions to achieve a common win condition or conditions. Players win or lose the game together.”

²⁵ Engelstein and Shalev, *Building Blocks of Tabletop Game Design...*, 15.

role-playing game provides the CA with an excellent tool to practice thinking of achieving military objectives but doing so in a way that requires understanding vulnerable populations and protecting their interests as the CA fights.

The computer game *This War of Mine* offers an avenue for CA personnel to experience the struggles of civilians caught in a conflict. In the game the player controls a group of civilians attempting to survive in a city that is under siege between two military factions. The game includes elements of role-play intertwined with strategic decision-making. Players must decide how their characters will meet their base needs while keeping the group safe. To enable realism, the game allows players the freedom to decide how they will accomplish their objectives. They can use violence, negotiation, or other less ethical methods of obtaining food, shelter, or supplies. However, choices come with consequences. The game makes use of a unique feature called a conscience mechanic.

This mechanic is central to the game experience as:

Each character has a predefined personality type and reacts differently to different events. Most people, for example, are not comfortable with hurting another person; doing so will deeply affect their mood and may even lead to depression, which causes instability and the lack of will to perform tasks. On the other hand, there are particularly empathetic people who gain additional motivation from helping others, even when they do so at their own cost.²⁶

Tying player actions to mental health outcomes enhances the realism of the game.

Violence begets grief and suffering, and players must weigh the necessity of surviving at the cost of their sense of ethics. This struggle forms the central role-playing narrative experience of the game.

This War of Mine highlights the need for GBA (+) wargames to craft a narrative experience. Because personal and cultural experiences shape identities, the closest the

²⁶ Kwiatkowski, "Civilian Casualties: Shifting Perspective in *This War of Mine*," 698.

CA can give their soldiers these experiences is through narrative experiences. Games like *This War of Mine* provide an avenue for players to come close to having a “lived experience.”²⁷ While simulations do not meet the exact definition of a lived experience due to the lack of human-to-human interaction, the cognitive stresses generated by the ethical choices in *This War of Mine* force the player to wrestle with their preconceptions. As Ed Mcgrady saliently puts it, “Wargames are about understanding, not knowledge. They are about ideas, not facts. They are about people, not technology...they help us make better decisions by sharpening and refining the stories we tell ourselves.”²⁸ *This War of Mine* provides an avenue to challenge and refine the fragmented and haphazard institutional story the CA tells its soldiers about vulnerable populations in conflict zones. However, the game is not a panacea. While an immersive and engaging narrative generates understanding, *This War of Mine* does not incorporate the requirement for tactical decision-making during an assigned mission.

The board game *Aftershock* mixes tactical decision-making with humanitarian considerations. The game aims to explore intergovernmental agency and NGO cooperation during a disaster relief operation in a fictional country.²⁹ Players attempt to achieve tactical actions that result in strategic success by addressing the population's humanitarian needs while retaining public support. However, the base game's

²⁷ “Lived Experience,” Oxford Reference, accessed April 21, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100109997>. Oxford Reference defines Lived Experience as “Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people. It may also refer to knowledge of people gained from direct face-to-face interaction rather than through a technological medium.”

²⁸ Ed Mcgrady, “Getting the Story Right about Wargaming,” War on the Rocks, November 8, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/getting-the-story-right-about-wargaming/>. Underlining added for emphasis.

²⁹ “AFTERSHOCK | PAXsims,” accessed March 27, 2022, <https://paxsims.wordpress.com/aftershock/>.

humanitarian tasks do not enable an in-depth exploration of the impact of player decisions on the vulnerable populations of the fictional country. Recognizing this lack of fidelity, the designers recently released an expansion pack: *Aftershock Gender Dimensions*. As the title suggests, the focus of the expansion is building the depth of gender-based challenges while still using the main game rules. The game asks players to grapple with sexual and gender-based violence, navigate cultural norms, and incorporate local vulnerable populations as partners.³⁰ However, it aims to balance thinking about gender with the requirement to achieve the mission. The instruction booklet for game facilitators notes, “It may not always be the case, for example, that meeting a gender challenge should be a player’s top priority, especially when they face many other urgent demands on their time and resources.”³¹ A negative effect or penalty occurs if the player ignores or fails to incorporate the current gender challenge. These effects will not prevent a player from achieving victory but will impact their standings within the group. *Aftershock* demonstrates that combining a focus on mission objectives with GBA (+) factors into a game is possible. The focus on humanitarian relief from an other government departments’ (OGD) perspective and the expansion set’s focus on gender vice intersectionality prevent it from being directly importable to the CA. However, it is a great starting point.

While available civilian wargames do not offer a complete solution for the CA’s training gap, they provide vital insights into game design mechanics required for any

³⁰ “AFTERSHOCK Expansion Set #1 - Gender Dimensions,” accessed April 21, 2022, <https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/aftershock-expansion-set-1-gender-dimensions>.

³¹ Rex Brynen and Thomas Fisher, “Aftershock: Expansion Set 1 Gender Dimensions,” July 22, 2016, 5, www.paxsims.org.

future game. CA soldiers must be open to deviating from their wargaming comfort zone. Civilian wargames that train GBA (+) considerations focus less on tactical decision-making with military units and more on the impacts of human behaviour. Soldiers can confront how vulnerable populations perceive them by playing role-playing games. The understanding gained from role-playing is enhanced when the game is semi-cooperative or not focused on promoting individual achievements. Where time and resources may not permit the use of role-playing games, simulation appears to offer another alternative. *This War of Mine* demonstrates that computer games allow players an avenue to effectively wrestle with ethical decisions faced by vulnerable populations during a conflict. There is not a “one size fits all” solution to the CA’s problem. However, with an understanding of the tenets of civilian GBA (+) games, it is possible to create a roadmap for future CA GBA (+) games.

Where does it all fit in?

During work-up training, a TF Commander and their staffs need to focus on solving problems related to the upcoming deployment. The injection of GBA (+) wargaming throughout the OPP can help improve the solution without detracting from the tactical planning focus. The commander leads the OPP.³² They must understand the make-up of vulnerable populations in the operating environment and their views on CAF involvement. While the G2, GFP, and other members need to be involved in any GBA (+) wargaming, the entire OPP will suffer if the commander does not understand the nature of the human environment. During the “Initiation” phase of OPP, the commander,

³² CACSC, “The Operational Planning Process: OPP Handbook,” 11.

possibly informed by a hasty IPB defining the operational environment, should think of what operational GBA (+) information they need to understand. This guidance can be communicated to the COS or Ops O and turned into plans to use various wargames throughout the OPP. During OPP initiation, the commander and staff need to outline the experts required to run their GBA (+) wargames to provide realism to the game and give the TF Staff time to contract these personnel.

Integration of role-playing games during OPP's "Orientation" phase is essential. As discussed earlier, role-playing games such as the World Bank Gender Game facilitate players' understanding of various groups' viewpoints and identities. This understanding aligns perfectly with what this stage of OPP is trying to accomplish. The CA OPP handbook notes that orientation "might also be called "Understanding" because shared understanding must be the primary product of [the stage]." ³³ While the understanding that the staff and commander seek to achieve is more holistic than just the GBA (+) considerations of the operational environment, role-playing games will help to identify factors and narratives that may be present. The games can also provide a baseline for reference in future planning activities. For example, a narrative game could help a commander derive a standard set of assumptions about the viewpoints of groups within the operating environment. They could then attempt to confirm or deny these assumptions during the preliminary theatre tactical reconnaissance. At a minimum, the injection of GBA (+) role-playing games into the initial stages of the OPP will help produce better deductions during the later phases of planning.

³³ CACSC, "The Operational Planning Process: OPP Handbook," 14.

Legacy versions of role-playing games provide a way for TF Staff to wargame the long-term consequences of their plans. TF Staff need to look after a myriad of tasks to prepare the unit or formation for deployment. While a GBA (+) role-playing game may be helpful at the start of the work-up, the staff can lose lessons or follow-up tasks in the daily churn of meeting CA or Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) remits. Because legacy games save the board state, staff can revisit the game via a routine that fits the tempo of the task force. In the spirit of the classic OPP wargame, legacy GBA (+) games will help the staff visualize an operation. Playing a game over several months or years in-game time allows the staff to project out possible consequences of their plans and adjust the plan as required.

Soldiers of a TF also need to learn about the dynamics of the operational human environment prior to deployment. Unfortunately, much like their staff counterparts, most work-up training programmes focus soldiers on accomplishing specific gateways required for deployment at the expense of professional development. Individual Battle Task Standards (IBTS), DLN courses, and learning to work together as a team occupy most of a soldier's time. Faced with these accomplishing these essential tasks, how does a TF fit in professional GBA (+) training without compromising CJOC mandates? Computer simulations such as *This War of Mine* offer one possibility. If the CA adopted *This War of Mine* or commissioned a game that could be played on a cell or computer and made it available, soldiers could play it when not occupied. This engagement assumes that the game would need to be appealing enough to attract players and SNCOs who were also playing or discussing the game with their sections.

But if soldiers were engaged, how would their leadership ensure that they learn or take positive lessons from the game? The TF could prescribe (Professional Development) PD periods at the section or platoon level. TF leadership should run the PD sessions prior to ensure that they can facilitate any questions or discussions from the sections and platoons. While a one-size-fits-all game like *This War of Mine* will not give the soldiers a precise appreciation for the viewpoints of vulnerable populations in their upcoming operation, it will create a framework for understanding the excruciating ethical decisions civilians take during a conflict. Role-playing games can supplement this framework. The scope of the role-playing game would need to be different from the one played by the TF staff. Interactions between players should focus on those that soldiers would encounter during the deployment. For example, an infantry section should confront or role-play local groups specific to their potential areas of operations.

Building these proposed games is likely beyond the current capability of the CA. While some efforts are underway to create a gaming culture at the CACSC, the resident expertise to create a role-playing game or adapt games like *This War of Mine* does not exist. However, the CA can leverage a few CAF initiatives to create the proficiency required. The Canadian Joint Warfare Centre runs a wargaming advisor course. While the course prepares members to advise on the utility of wargames at the Strategic and Operational level, the CA can adapt the course's lectures on the theory and mechanics of wargaming for the tactical level.³⁴ Some CA officers also receive in-depth training on wargame styles, mechanics, and learn to create a wargame on the Joint Command and

³⁴ CJWC, "CANFORGEN 035/22: Course Solicitation 2022 Wargaming Advisor Course," March 10, 2022.

Staff Programme (JCSP) complementary studies course DS 501.³⁵ As these officers will most likely command various units within the CA, they can act as a temporary fix to implement GBA (+) wargaming at the TF level until the CA builds institutional capacity.

Conclusion

GBA (+) is an essential but misunderstood tool for CA planners and soldiers. When applying GBA (+), the CA and the CAF focus on the gender aspect at the expense of utilizing the more critical part: intersectionality. While the initial gender focus is understandable, due to a CDS initiating directive that fixated on gender coming simultaneously with Operation Honour, the CA needs to move beyond this narrow interpretation of GBA (+). Only by incorporating intersectionality into GBA (+) applications and then using this framework during work-up training can the CA truly prepare its soldiers for the tasks assigned to it by the Government of Canada.

However, none of the CA's primary planning and training aides, wargames, cannot currently train or incorporate GBA (+) considerations. Tactical decision-making wargames are excellent for having junior leaders think through potential combat decisions, but they do not force the player to wrestle with the myriad complexities of the human environment. The OPP wargame facilitates staff and commander visualization of the battlefield. However, it cannot provide the necessary details to wrestle with the ethical and moral choices vulnerable populations may have because of the TF's plan. Both soldiers and staff require better options for their training.

³⁵ Dr Robert C Engen, "CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE 2021–2022 JOINT COMMAND AND STAFF PROGRAMME 48 DS/CF501 — WARGAMING," 2021, 11.

CA soldiers are the instruments by which the CA interacts with various populations in the operating environment. The results of daily human interactions between detachments and the local populace often form the basis of tactical and strategic success. These soldiers need to understand the rich and varied identities and narratives in play in their environment. Any training to prepare them for this needs to facilitate giving the soldiers as close to a “lived experience” as is possible.

On the other hand, staff need to understand the GBA (+) impacts of the commander’s plans and orders on the local populations. While offering a viable military solution, does the plan negatively or disproportionately impact a vulnerable population? What are the real risks the commander is assuming in the human terrain by adopting this plan? Are the commander’s assumptions about the identities at play in the AO valid? These are all considerations that staff need to integrate into their planning and work-up training prior to deployment.

Fortunately, civilian wargames offer an avenue for the CA to integrate GBA (+) into their training and planning regimes. Role-playing games like the World Bank’s scenario highlight demonstrate that the CA can attempt to understand vulnerable populations and the root of identities that may be contradictory to CAF ethics and values. *This War of Mine* is an excellent example of how a simple simulation can introduce personnel to the devastating ethical conflicts civilians face in war zones. While most civilian wargames that use GBA (+) principles are not directly portable to the CA, analyzing the critical mechanics involved reveals that the principles of cooperation, realism in narrative development, and a focus on understanding identities are fundamental. With time and training, these games can be modified and scaled for use by

staff and soldiers. If the CA is serious about training their personnel to use GBA (+) in training and operations, they need to rethink their wargames. Civilian games offer a great place to start.

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