



CANADA'S DEFENCE POLICY REVIEW

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PREPARED BY

John Coniconde, MA Candidate
Mischa Longman, MA Candidate



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary recipients of this report are for the Honourable Anita Anand, Minister of National Defence and General Wayne Eyre, Chief of Defence Staff of the Canadian Armed Forces.

In 2017, the Department of National Defence released its current landmark policy for Canadian defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. Notably, this policy document highlights the need for Canada to defend its interests and respond to threats posed in the “grey zone”, a conceptual space that exists just beneath the standard for armed warfare and involves the mixed use of military and civilian resources for coercive means (SSE, 2017). Despite the importance placed on understanding this concept, leading to its explicit inclusion in SSE, neither CAF nor DND have established a shared definition of what exactly this grey zone is, or how Canada is to effectively act within it. Through several ongoing involvements in ungoverned spaces and nation-building operations around the world, Canada is arguably involved in its own grey zone activity, despite this lack of settled institutional understanding of the topic. This paper concludes that the current gap in CAF doctrine and DND understanding of grey zone conflict creates intertwined risks, both in defending Canada’s interests from adversarial activity in this space as well as in ensuring accountability for Canada’s own actions within it.

To address this gap, this review puts forward several options which will enhance Canada’s ability to act within the grey zone as a responsible international actor, accountable to both domestic and international law governing the use of armed force and democratic civilian oversight of the military. Ultimately, this review recommends implementing options 1 and 2.

Policy options include the formation of an interdepartmental working group consisting of both CAF and DND as well as several other national security and legal stakeholders within the Federal Government. Insights from these stakeholders will be combined to form a cohesive picture of Canada’s interests, capabilities, and restraints within the grey zone, expanding the concept from an obscure military term of art into a multi-faceted cross-departmental definition with clear legal guidelines for future implementation into CAF doctrine. Ultimately, this will ensure that Canadians are protected from a widely acknowledged emerging threat while balancing the unique risks faced by a democratic state acting within the grey zone, beyond peace but short of war.

ABBREVIATIONS

BTH - *Beyond the Horizon (2020)*

CAF - Canadian Armed Forces

CANSOFCOM - Canadian Special Operations Command

CFJP - Canadian Forces Joint Publication

CJOC - Canadian Joint Operations Command

DATE - Decisive Action Training Environment

DND - Department of National Defence

DRDC - Defence Research and Development Canada

JAG - Judge Advocate General

MINDS - Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NDDN - Parliamentary Committee on National Defence

OP - Operation

PMO - Prime Minister's Office

SSE - *Strong, Secure, and Engaged (2017)*

UNSC - United Nations Security Council

BACKGROUND, HISTORY AND POLICY PROCESS

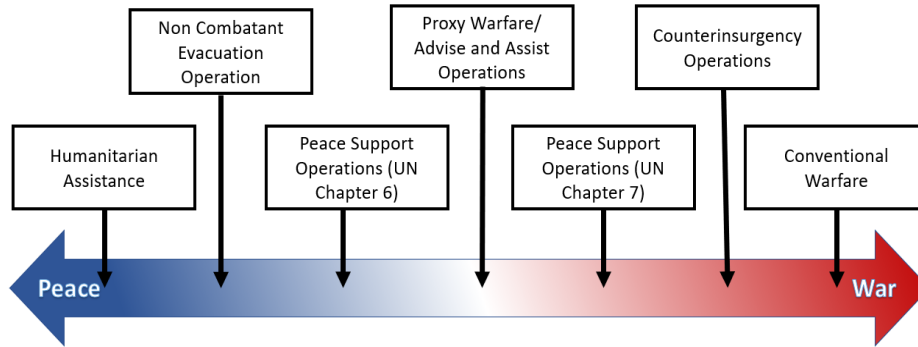
Problems Facing the Nation

The annexation of Crimea and the emergence of ungoverned spaces, hybrid warfare, and the so-called “grey zone” has significantly challenged the traditional role of military operations in democratic states. In a speech by former CJOC commander, Lieutenant General Michael Rouleau: “The future of CAF operations is described as a crumpled piece of paper; they are no longer linear and distinct.” The CAF will need to address issues of both state and non-state actors operating in an aggressive manner which nevertheless falls short of the traditional thresholds for war or armed conflict, which will serve as this paper’s tentative definition for grey zone conflict. (See Figure 1 of Annex) In addition, hybrid warfare is defined as the tactical subset of grey zone conflict deployed under certain conditions and in varying degrees. This policy paper aims to address and formulate a policy governing CAF operation in the grey zone, without compromising Canada’s values of democratic oversight and civilian control of the military.

“The future of CAF operations is described as a crumpled piece of paper; they are no longer linear and distinct.”

As of September 2021, CAF operations OP UNIFIER in Ukraine and OP IMPACT in Iraq are ongoing examples of the Canadian military advising and assisting states with ungoverned and hybrid spaces, as well as broader Canadian participation within the grey zone through the blending of military and civilian resources. Although current DND/CAF policies SSE (2017) and Beyond the Horizon (BTH) (2020) address the emergence of hybrid and ungoverned spaces and the need for Canada to act within them, a gap is present as to how CAF should conduct itself in future hybrid environments. Current CAF Joint Doctrine does not include any reference to grey zone operations, and according to a 2020 DRDC Scientific Letter, neither CAF nor DND have any shared organizational definition of the term despite its appearance in SSE in 2017. The absence of a shared definition contributes to a lack of overall strategic clarity and guidance. This reflects the CAF and DND’s priority in adapting to the future of grey zone conflicts. Acknowledging the importance of the grey zone without formally defining it in official doctrine reflects the broader issue of Canada’s uncertain role within the emerging multipolar global security environment, one which is characterized by grey zone activity on the part of great powers such as China and Russia.

Spectrum of CAF Operations



Furthermore, this lack of cohesive guidance or policy oversight as to Canadian conduct within the grey zone presents a risk to more than operational effectiveness; participation in grey zone conflict presents a potential challenge to democratic oversight and accountability. Given that militaries in democratic states are constrained by complex networks of international and domestic law as well as decentralized governance structures, a principal-agent problem may potentially arise when CAF/DND is conducting grey zone activities against non-democratic opponents who lack the same constraints.

Past Policies / Critical and Decisive Moments

- **2005** – Government of Canada International Policy Statement – This 2005 DND policy paper foreshadows the need for the Canadian military's involvement in failed and failing states.
- **2009** – The Chilcot Inquiry begins in the UK on the conduct of the Iraq War, concluding in 2016 with the failure of hybrid strategies in that conflict. Canada conducted clandestine operations where Canadian officers served in the Multinational Corps - Iraq. This contrasted with Canada's official opposition to deploying Canadian military personnel as part of the 2003 US-led Iraq War.
- **2011** - Canada's decision to deploy CANSOFCOM personnel in Mali and other fragile states – this defence commitment reflects Canada's commitment in training foreign militaries by its special forces.
- **2014** - The annexation of Crimea and hostilities indicates Russia's willingness to destabilize and conduct military operations beyond war. Canada's subsequent decision to train Ukraine's Armed Forces for military operations in Eastern Ukraine exposes Canada to the reality of grey zone conflicts.
- **2015** - OP UNIFIER, the CAF's advise-and-assist mission to the Ukraine's Armed Forces.
- **2016** - OP REASSURANCE is established as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence mission in the Baltics. CAF contribution beyond deterrence addresses new threats such as disinformation, non-state actors, and hybrid warfare.
- **2017** - *Strong, Secure, Engaged* CAF/DND's latest Defence Policy which addresses an emerging multipolar security environment and future military operations that arise.
- **2020** – *Beyond the Horizon* CANSOFCOM's defence policy notes how the international rules-based system is challenged by major power competition and emerging threats such as disinformation. The distinction and blurring of lines between national security and the rule of law will challenge Canada's special forces.
- **2021** - The collapse of the Afghan government to the Taliban is an indicator of the failure of western state-building and counter-insurgency initiatives which Canada contributed from 2001 to 2014.

Constraints

1) Blurring Lines of Conventional War

Grey zone conflicts fall below the threshold of conventional war or war involving the military forces of nation-states. Canada's adversaries take advantage of grey zone conflicts given that attribution to certain states of military and subversive actions is often difficult.

2) Legal

Liberal democratic states must balance conducting military operations under international law and democratic accountability. Grey zone state and non-state actors, particularly authoritarian, do not follow international legal norms.

3) Cultural Change within CAF/DND

Military organizations are generally hesitant to civilian oversight in operational matters. Adopting a defence policy that takes into account a whole of government approach will be difficult.

POLICY ANALYSIS

Interests and Values

A CAF and DND led policy addressing grey zone conflicts is in line with the national interests of upholding international law and the rules-based order, multilateralism, national sovereignty, and effective force generation.

Maintenance of international peace and security

The maintenance of international peace and security is predicated on the commitments and actions of nation-states. The future of CAF involvement in grey zone conflicts shall respect the territorial and sovereign integrity of their areas of operation. Indeed, Canada is highly unlikely to conduct grey zone operations as a standalone force. Hence, the CAF will need to conduct operations with NATO and ad-hoc coalitions.

Maintaining Canadian sovereignty

Ultimately, the CAF's contribution to multilateral organizations must consider Canadian national sovereignty. In other words, operations are to be directed towards Canada's interests both at home and abroad. Finally, Canada must be able to ensure that it can readily contribute both in personnel numbers and modern and appropriate equipment that is suitable to the needs of an operation. This will require increased Parliamentary oversight of the CAF and Canada's role from policy taker to policy maker.

Willingness to work with bilateral and multilateral defence partners - United States, NATO, and Other Allies

Canadian values in the defence sphere include its liberal-democratic model of governance and civil-military affairs, as well as maintaining its mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral security relationships with the U.S, NATO, and other allies. Conflict in the grey zone pits undemocratic states against their democratic counterparts in an asymmetrical fashion, to the disadvantage of democracies. Specifically, non-democratic states can utilize authoritarian centralization, domestic legal structures, economic pressure, and support for non-state proxies more readily compared to democracies.

Ultimately, CAF capacity to operate in hybrid and grey zone operations must go beyond providing advice and assistance. It must also be an adaptable and multilayered fighting force of its own, capable of responding to grey zone aggression in a means which is effective while remaining in line with international law and Canadian democratic values. This means learning from allies who have operational experience and a history of dealing with external and regional adversaries such as in the Asia Pacific region.

Stakeholders

Allies

CAF: Capacity Building Operations

CAF missions involving capacity building or advise and assist missions benefit from a Canadian-based doctrine to train allies on the threats of hybrid warfare.

Other Governmental Departments

A whole of government approach will include stakeholders from all relevant government departments such as Global Affairs Canada, Department of Justice and Public Safety Canada.

NATO alliance members

NATO allies consistently acknowledge the emergence of hybrid warfare environments and movement away from interstate conflict, along with increased involvement of non-state actors such as insurgents, terrorists, criminal networks and civilians.

Detractors

Revisionist and adversarial foreign states

Authoritarian and non-democratic states will likely view Canadian military grey zone strategy as reactionary.

“Fortress Canada” thinkers

Thinkers who argue that Canada’s increased involvement in international operations will likely increase threats against national security. Hence, the Canadian military should only be a force for international peace and self-defense.

DND/CAF Domestic Critics

Public perceptions of CAF sexual misconduct and the stickiness of CAF culture may be used as arguments against CAF and DND developing its own policies. In other words, grey zone conflicts will need to consider a whole of government approach.

Mixed

The United States

Canada and the United States share a deep defence yet imperfect geopolitical relationship. Future operations involving the US will likely implicate Canada in the form of military involvement.¹

¹ “Mixed” refers to stakeholders which may support certain policies while rejecting others.

Programmatic Needs

There needs to be a clear and shared standard operating procedure between all service commands operating in a grey zone environment. This also remains true for a common operating procedure in conducting hybrid warfare. This remains a challenge given that CAF has yet to be involved in combat operations involving elements of grey zone environments. Hence, future CAF involvement implicates democratic nations in conflicts where actions/policies must be upheld by democratic accountability. The social, political, economic, and military elements of grey zone conflicts will need to adopt a policy that encompasses the whole of government approach.

COSTED OPTIONS

Option 1: An updated, grey zone-aware doctrine for responding to disinformation, cyber and psychological operations from a hostile actor

Current CAF Joint Doctrine does not include any reference to grey zone operations, despite its appearance in SSE in 2017. The absence of a shared definition contributes to a lack of overall strategic clarity and guidance. This understanding must first be built through convening an interdepartmental working group to establish a theoretical foundation for updating CAF joint doctrine to address threats in the grey zone and guide Canada's existing actions. Reflecting the whole-of-government nature of grey zone activity, this group will go beyond DND and CAF in order to loop in national security and legal stakeholders such as Public Safety Canada, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Global Affairs Canada, the Department of Justice and the Privy Council Office. Input from these departments will be solicited to ensure that Canadian activity in the grey zone is understood across the federal government and is not kept the sole concern of DND.

This will also share the burden of managing Canada's understanding of the grey zone from its current state, in which it is primarily a little-mentioned CANSOFCOM activity. The task of this group will consist of defining grey zone conflict and establishing firm legal guardrails for Canadian activity in this space. From this point on, DND and CAF will determine how each branch of the Canadian military is implicated in turn and incorporate this understanding into updated joint doctrine on Psychological, Cyber and Information Operations separately.



In addition to the involvement of the Department of Justice, this process will require extensive in-house consultation with the office of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) in order to establish this definition and its implications for CAF/DND, with strict adherence to both international and domestic law. This will ensure that new doctrine is crafted with awareness of the potential ramifications for the use of force, collective defence (See Annex - UN Charter, Article 51, NATO Washington Treaty, Article 5) and a legal operational standard for attribution. This option does not require additional up-front procurement or materiel but will have far-reaching consequences towards determining how existing resources are to be used. However, this option will also formalize Canada's potential involvement in the grey zone, which has already been established as blurring the lines between traditional military conflict and civilian activities. This could be considered undesirable, and is in part the reason why doctrine, oversight and legal constraints play such a fundamental role in controlling such a strategy.

Option 2: Establish a New CAF Joint Information Warfare Doctrine

There is an inherent gap in CAF joint doctrine of information warfare. Information warfare is the manipulation of information to enable an adversarial actor to undermine political, economic, and social attitudes and confidence of the target state. Tactics of information warfare in the strategic, operational, and tactical level are utilized to enable adversaries to conduct activities below the threshold of war. This was evident during Russia's destabilization and information warfare campaigns against Ukraine prior to the annexation of Crimea. Hence, an information warfare doctrine will enable the CAF to identify and mitigate risks to both itself and its allies in identifying subversive elements. This information warfare doctrine will be made in consultation with the CAF's Judge Advocate General (JAG) to ensure that the doctrine will not compromise international and Canadian domestic law. However, this option further emphasizes Canada's involvement in operations involving attribution to state and state actors, which are often difficult to isolate and would lead to increased geopolitical tensions with suspect states.

The doctrine will supplement the Canadian Forces Joint Publication (CFJP) 3-10.1 Psychological Operations and CFJP 3-10.2 Public Affairs which were last updated in 2004. The doctrine will base its information off the United Military's 2012 Joint Publication called JP 3-13 Information Operations.

Option 3: Adoption of a (tentative) CAF Hybrid Warfare Doctrine

A new CAF Hybrid Warfare Doctrine is required to set a common understanding for all service branches. The Hybrid Warfare doctrine is meant to be curtailed to specific mission requirements given that hybrid warfare is dependent on the environment. For example, hybrid warfare situated

in the South China Sea will include naval and air elements. (Echeverria 38) Compared to Hybrid Warfare in Latvia which is land based.

In addition, the CAF will adopt the Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE), the training program currently adopted by the United States Army and Canadian Army. DATE will enable CAF planners and decision makers in operations involving conventional, unconventional, terrorist, criminal, and cyber elements (Echevarria 6). As a matter of testing this doctrine, the CAF should be prepared to conduct international training operations with its NATO partners in conducting hybrid warfare. The tentative caveat of this doctrine asserts that the CAF will need to be engaged in actual military operations that encompass the definition of hybrid warfare established in option 1. This option will require significant military procurement of equipment/training programs along with operational costs.

Implementation

This policy review recommends implementing options 1 then 2, given that both are the most feasible options towards addressing the lack of a defence policy focusing on grey zone conflict. First, the adoption of a definition will provide strategic clarity for the CAF. Second, addressing the information warfare element of hybrid warfare is the next logical step given that future adversaries will likely subvert Canadian domestic and strategic interests first prior to engaging in conventional conflict.

Expected Impact

If these options are both undertaken, the expected impact will be a clear delineation of CAF and DND role in acting within the grey zone in the defence of Canadian interests, while circumventing the principal-agent problem created by allowing the concept to remain obscure and undefined. This will create a durable legal operational standard for CAF to operate within, while also laying the initial groundwork for other federal departments in potential future collaboration on grey zone issues.

Finally, adopting option 3 will likely be the longest option to achieve. Given the mixture of conventional and unconventional elements, the CAF may need to adopt kinetic responses by means of military force that require the procurement of equipment in conducting training exercises and actual military operations within a hybrid warfare environment. In sum, options 1 and 2 do not require substantial new material investments in contrast to option 3. Ultimately, Canadian voters will be more reluctant to conduct operations which may place Canadian lives in danger in testing a tentative CAF hybrid warfare doctrine. This will already strain Canada's Parliamentary oversight given internal and cultural changes within the CAF. Canadian voters will ultimately need to be shown that their military is working in becoming a credible institution first at home then abroad.

Timeline

Options	Timeline	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)
Option 1: An updated, grey-zone-aware doctrine for responding to disinformation, cyber and psychological operations from a hostile actor.	January 2022 to April 2023	<p>Produce an organizational definition of grey zone conflict and operations across CAF/DND</p> <p>Set written and consultation-driven legal guidelines for the conduct of Canadian actors engaged in grey zone activity</p>
Option 2: Adopt a CAF Joint Information Warfare (IW) Doctrine	May 2023 to May 2024	Establish new CFJP Information Warfare Doctrine based on the US Military's <i>JP 3-13 Information Operations</i> .
Option 3: Adoption of a (tentative) CAF Hybrid Warfare Doctrine	May 2024 - May 2026	<p>The CAF Joint Hybrid Warfare Doctrine will form part of a 2026 Defence White Paper that supersedes the current Strong, Secure, and Engaged (2017) defence policy.</p> <p>Conduct international exercises with NATO partners that involve hybrid warfare.</p> <p>The implementation of both IW and hybrid warfare doctrine in an actual hybrid warfare operation as defined in option 1.</p> <p>Sub-KPI's may look into Canadian public support for military operations in hybrid warfare environments and the resilience of the Canadian public to information warfare</p>

		<p>tactics such as an adversary's disinformation campaigns.</p> <p>A sub-KPI on democratic accountability could be undertaken by the Auditor General's office on the legality along with Parliamentary committee oversight into CAF operations involving elements of hybrid warfare.</p>
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Communication Strategy

Successful adoption of a transformative DND/CAF grey zone policy is interlinked with a successful communications strategy, for two key reasons:

1. To deter potential adversaries from seeing Canada or Canadian concerns as attractive targets for grey zone aggression.
2. To ensure that Canadian personnel, policymakers, and citizens - as well as international allies - understand the Canadian policy on grey zone conflict, and that Canada will remain an accountable, responsible actor.

It is in the national interest that awareness of the policy is clearly communicated to each of these stakeholders. A DND press release on both the opening of consultations as well as the program's conclusion would be basic steps, as would a communique through the PMO's communications office; in communicating this policy as functioning within Canada's alliance commitments, NATO's Public Diplomacy Division could be used as an avenue for amplifying this message to both allies and potential adversaries. Domestically, hearings on the policy in the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN) and the Senate's National Security and Defence committee could both serve to publicize the policy, as well as place it squarely within Canada's primary mechanisms of civil-military accountability.

To facilitate academic outreach, the CAF can continue to utilize the Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) Program created for *Strong, Secure, and Engaged* (2017). MINDS will enable DND and CAF to reach out to academics and subject matter experts on international affairs, military technology, and hybrid warfare. For example, outreach can involve an expert briefing series that will enable DND to gain insight into grey zone conflicts from the academic community. This conference can be communicated via social media to universities through the Department of National Defence.

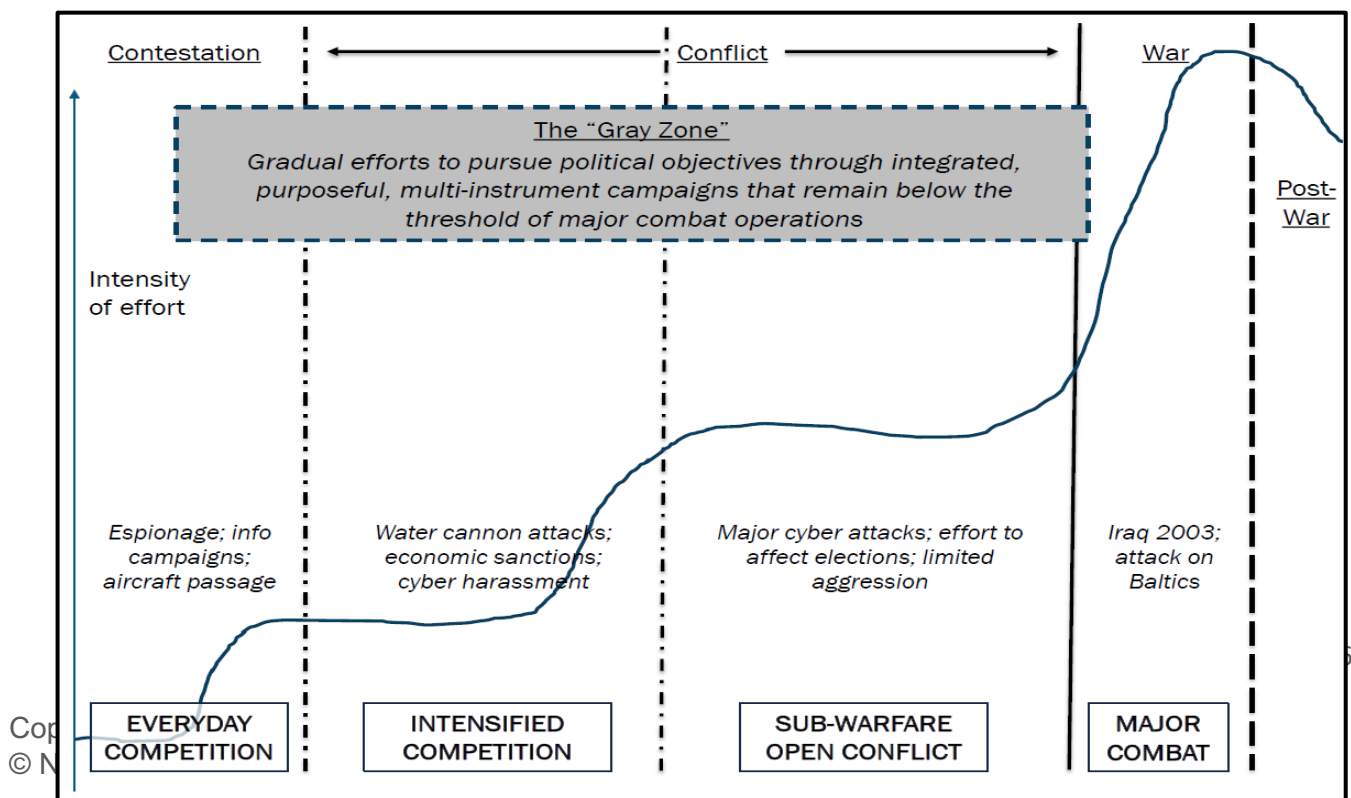
APPENDICES

Annex A:

A Canadian defence policy oriented towards operating in the grey zone would need to work in concert with Canada's international treaty commitments, particularly Article 51 of the UN Charter, as well as Article 5 of the NATO Washington Treaty. Article 51 of the UN Charter states "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations". Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty on which NATO is founded similarly states "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all" and obligates the parties to engage in collective self-defence of the attacked member. Grey zone conflict complicates these treaties, as it is specifically designed to remain below the threshold of an armed attack as defined in these treaties.

As such, grey zone conflict that crosses these thresholds through unintentional escalation or the successful attribution of a proxy risks triggering the invocation of the right to self-defence on the part of the attacked state. Notably in the case of NATO, the Brussels Summit on June 14, 2021 affirmed that the organization views cyberattacks as potentially fulfilling the requirement of an "armed attack", triggering Article 5 for member states and explicitly linking the concept to deterring hybrid attacks in the grey zone.

Figure 1 – Diagram from "The Gray Zone and the Future of Conflict" lecture by Michael Mazarr (2018)



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