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**SPECIAL OPERATIONS:  
THE "SMART" CHOICE FOR  
FOREIGN POLICY**

by

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## **Abstract**

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The use of DOD, specifically Special Operations, in the implementation of Foreign Policy for areas not in conflict. This will demonstrate how SOF is used as part of a greater soft power apparatus in regard to foreign policy endeavors. Members of the national security staff, the state department and members of congress have been hesitant to allow DOD to operate in countries of concern but not necessarily in conflict. I argue that the trend of limiting shaping activities such as network building, train and equip, or MISO which are seen as too risky or too politically sensitive, has the effect of limiting military options later. By allowing SOF, to utilize Special Warfare principles supporting Prevent, Shape and Win methodology early in countries of concern can prevent future conflicts.





## **SPECIAL OPERATIONS: THE “SMART” CHOICE FOR FOREIGN POLICY**

*“We must not look upon the use of military forces only as a last resort but as potentially the best first option when combined with other instruments of national and international power”*

CJCS ADM Mike Mullen<sup>1</sup>.

### **Introduction**

As ADM Mullen indicates, the military as a whole has a mission set far broader than “killing people and breaking things.” It has been called upon repeatedly to perform humanitarian assistance, to train friendly security forces, and to provide military support for public diplomacy in places like Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti, and the Sinai, as well as in regions impacted by the Global War on Terror. This paper will examine how the United States should effectively employ Special Operations Forces (SOF) as a soft power tool within a smart power concept to accomplish Foreign Policy objectives in countries not in conflict. It will also discuss how the Department of Defense (DOD) can be used as part of a greater influence apparatus in regard to foreign policy endeavors.

Harvard professor, Joseph Nye Jr. is known for the concepts of hard and soft power. Hard power is often commanding and coercive, essentially one country ordering another country to do something.<sup>2</sup> It is commonly associated with military force, but it can also take the form of diplomatic demarches, the withholding of aid, or implementation of aggressive economic sanctions. All of these tools are used to gain leverage through diplomatic rather than through military channels.

Dr. Nye describes soft power as “when one country gets other countries to want what it wants.” This is what “might be called co-optive or soft power, [a]contrast with

'hard' or 'command' power".<sup>3</sup> One aspect of this research is to demonstrate the military's role in soft power. Since 2008 the trend is has been to recognize the application of both hard and soft power as "smart power." According to Nye, "smart power is the ability to combine the hard power of coercion with the soft power of attraction into a successful strategy".<sup>4</sup> This research will demonstrate that Special Operations Forces (SOF) are well suited to assist with the application of both hard and soft power to achieve smart policy objectives.

Hollywood, in many ways, provides the U.S. its most well-known soft power tool. The export of television shows such as Baywatch and movies such as Starsky and Hutch have provided "likeable characters with whom individuals in other nations can identify".<sup>5</sup> While Baywatch is certainly a late cold war example, current entertainment is no less applicable. The argument for soft power is that such an approach makes American culture and American values more accessible, thereby enabling individuals within those nations to seek to be more like the United States. Likewise, Special Operations can apply soft power concepts beyond basic military-to-military (MIL-MIL) training. SOF has the ability to inform and influence disenfranchised youth through television dramas, commercials, or public service announcements, which introduce ideas that reinforce U.S. objectives and values, (such as basic universal equal rights, or compassion for others). SOF can help plant the seeds of these ideas without having to brand them as US initiatives, which may be otherwise ignored by a biased audience.

Additionally, SOF elements can assist with building a viable middle class through training and educational programs, assist in influencing leaders both friendly and enemy, all while being prepared to apply hard power through the use of strikes.<sup>6</sup>

SOF supports these efforts as part of its Special Warfare mission, which provides support to public diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, infrastructure development, and professionalization of security forces. A renewed emphasis on Special Warfare doctrine has emerged as result of re-examining the SOF mission set in a post war on terror environment, and is expanded upon on pages 23-25.

Lieutenant Colonel Lindsey J. Borg, in *Communicating with Intent*, asserts that *“There is overlap of effort between U.S. government departments and agencies to bring the instruments of power to bear for the nation. For instance, the DOD is not simply confined to the military instrument of power; it also has roles—supporting and leading—within the diplomatic, information, and economic realms. For example, the regional combatant commanders and their forces represent the United States to international leaders and populations, supporting U.S. diplomacy. Within the information domain, military presence exists in forms that range from space-based satellites to interpersonal communication. Lastly, enforcement of blockades and some types of sanctions are examples of military support to the nation’s economic instrument of power”*.<sup>7</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Borg’s paper speaks to capabilities that reside in the military at large. This paper contends that many of the capabilities attributed to the military as a whole are collectively resident in the realm of SOF. Further, this paper contends that SOF is better suited for the conduct of these operations than most of the conventional force because of extensive training and revisions to SOF doctrine. For example, Military Information Support Operations (MISO), function within the information domain discussed above and have assisted in diplomacy through their support to public

diplomacy efforts, one notable example was the support they provided in 2003 with the introduction of Iraq's new currency. MISO efforts provided the population information on the roll-out of the currency and resulted in a smooth transition for banking without causing panic for the consumer. Of course, MISO is only one branch within SOF, but lessons gleaned from this example can be extrapolated to demonstrate the soft power support capabilities that each of the other branches has to bolster interagency efforts.

Co-optive soft power has historically been used principally to avoid or prevent conflict. In military circles this concept is often referred to as "shaping". "Shaping" lacks an official definition in either the military joint publication on terms, JP1-2, or the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 5 Handbook 3 TAGS/Terms Handbook, but it is understood by the community to be the collection of activities and actions taken in a country to either prevent conflict or to create conditions favorable to the United States in case of conflict. Despite the previous assertion that there is space for the use of military capabilities within soft power, members of the National Security Staff, the State Department, and members of Congress have resisted allowing DOD to operate in countries of concern that are not in conflict. Ironically, this resistance to early DOD involvement designed to 'shape' events on the ground prior to the escalation of violence in a given nation has the unintended effect of obstructing the success of future military operations.

The U.S. military has operated as part of the greater foreign policy apparatus since its inception. It has built long term relationships with allies such Great Britain, Germany, Japan and South Korea. Normal MIL- MIL activities associated with countries such as these are not in question. Rather, what is in question is how to

handle less stable situations in countries with whom we have shaky relations or countries who may be on the precipice of failure (failed state). In these countries, shaping activities such as network building, training and equipping, or Military Information Support Operations (MISO) are viewed by the U.S. foreign policy apparatus as too risky, too politically sensitive, or having the potential to jeopardize state sovereignty. However, allowing DOD, and in particular SOF, to utilize the Prevent, Shape and Win methodology early in countries of concern yet not in conflict can prevent conflict escalation or future conflicts.

The rhetorical battle and behind-the-scenes debate is more than an issue of trust between DOD and DOS. It is occurring against the backdrop of a larger discussion over the future role of the military and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) within the foreign policy arena. However, based on current guidance which is under review, this debate and hesitancy to use the military does not conform to presidential guidance. In reference to partner capacity building and global leadership, the *Defense Strategic Guidance* (issued in January 2012) states that “*Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities.*”<sup>8</sup> There is no other force within the DOD better suited than SOF to work in small tailored teams working with or advising foreign nationals.

United States Special Operation Command (USSOCOM or SOCOM) is the four star headquarters charged with overseeing the special operations forces from each of the services as well as the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). The service specific Special Operations Forces are the Marine Special Operations Command

(MARSOC), formed in 2006.<sup>9</sup> The Naval Special Warfare (NAVSPECWAR), most notable for their SEAL (Sea, Air and Land) Component. The Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC). Finally, comprising roughly 50% of all SOF is the Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). USASOC is home to the Special Forces (SF or Green Berets), Special Operations Aviation, Rangers, Military Information Support (MISO) formerly known as Psychological Operations (PSYOP), and Civil Affairs (CA).

SOCOM has 10 core activities as laid out by congress in Title X US code. These include Direct Action (DA), Strategic Reconnaissance (SR), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Civil Affairs (CA), Counter Terrorism (CT), Military Information Support Operations (MISO), Humanitarian Assistance (HA), Theater Search and Rescue, and Activities specified by the President or SECDEF.<sup>10</sup> SOCOM has divided these tasks into two categories; Surgical Strike and Special Warfare. Surgical Strike, as the name suggests, encompasses both the direct approach of targeting key individuals, and either killing or capturing them (commonly referred to as counter terrorism (CT)), as well as combating weapons of mass destruction. For example, the raid on Usama Bin Laden's compound in Abbotabad, Pakistan is the most notable example of Surgical Strike. Special Warfare is essentially everything else, and leans heavily toward Unconventional Warfare, Foreign Internal Defense, Stability Operations and Counter Insurgency.<sup>11</sup> Within these tasks, the Special Warfare component of SOF operations has the widest set of available tools to offer foreign policy decision makers wishing to leverage military soft power capabilities. These additional capabilities will be expanded on in the doctrine portion of this paper.

## **For the Reader**

Although all services play a role in executing these SW tasks, Army SOF developed and currently owns much of the doctrine associated with them. For that reason, this paper will primarily focus on Army SOF (ARSOF). Additionally, this research will use the phrase “countries of concern, but not in conflict” which encompasses “Crisis Country” often cited by the Council on Foreign Relations, and the military phraseology of “permissive” and “non-permissive environments.” All of these phrases are used at different points herein based on the source referenced. The reader should take all them to mean a country with whom we have shaky diplomatic relations or is on the verge of failure. The use of the phrase “elements of national power” refers simply to diplomatic, information, military and economic (DIME) sources of power. Finally, this research is predicated on the underlying assumption that foreign policy is about influence--the ability to leverage political, economic, or military influence over a foreign power or entity to achieve the US government’s objectives.

### **Framing the problem**

The phrase Whole of Government (WOG) came into vogue during the last decade and refers to plans or efforts that span across multiple elements of national power and focus on a singular outcome. The example most often cited is the Marshall plan, which focused on the reconstruction of Europe following WWII. In today’s lexicon the Marshall plan would be considered an application of “Smart Power”. In theory, Afghanistan was intended to be an example for WOG planning, but unfortunately it never came to fruition. This failure has been generally blamed on a lack of commitment of resources from agencies other than the military. This paper contends, however that Afghanistan is a poor example because it is an active conflict zone, which is not the environment many agencies are trained to deal with. For this reason, this paper will

focus on the pre-conflict environment. Unfortunately, even in a pre-conflict environment, this WOG approach is functionally plagued by systemic issues which undermine its efficacy. Nye agrees, stating: “Many official instruments of soft power—public diplomacy, broadcasting, exchange programs, development assistance, disaster relief, military to military contacts—are scattered around the government and there is no overarching strategy or budget that even tries to integrate them with hard power into an overarching national security strategy”.<sup>12</sup> The primary counter to this sentiment is that military is already over involved in diplomatic activities, and that there should be a larger investment in and use of other governmental agencies. This argument assumes a zero sum game (i.e. DOS can only expand if DOD decreases), which is not the case. That said, obstacles and barriers to WOG success do exist. Such obstacles include entrenched bureaucratic structures, (who reports to who, and what agency or department serves as the clearing house for approval); budgetary, (WOG projects transcend the budgetary authority of one specific agency. Therefore, projects often fall outside of the primary line-items appropriated in individual agency budgets, and are instead pursued on an ad hoc basis); authority and capability, (who has permission to act doesn’t always have the capability to act); and finally, prioritization, (is this project the number one priority for all involved?). Some of these obstacles can only be fixed at the highest levels of government but many are not insurmountable at the lowest levels. Foreign policy is often about influencing foreign populations at the individual level. This paper will address the barriers to WOG planning and implementation listed above, and propose potential solutions or counterarguments.

STRUCTURAL: There is currently a lack of overarching structure or coordinating mechanism at the policy level of the United States Government (USG), which has a negative impact on the implementation of foreign policy at the national level. Although some perceive this to be the intended function of the National Security Council, the NSC is not organized as a command and control element with the ability to coordinate and de-conflict at this level. The first example is DOD to DOS coordination. The DOD is separated into regional combatant commands commonly referred to as COCOMs. Each is responsible for a number of countries in a certain region. On the other hand, the DOS is split into Bureaus, most of which do not directly align with the nations encompassed by each COCOM. Additionally, some Bureaus may be organized based on function and not grouped according to region at all, such as the Bureau of International Organization Affairs<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, a COCOM Commander may need to coordinate with multiple organizations within the State Department alone, in addition to the CIA or other governmental organizations that may have an interest in a particular country. In addition to these organizational issues, there is also the political issue of the ambassadorial trump card. Ambassadors are appointed by the President of the United States, and technically speaking, do not work for the SECSTATE. Therefore, when a COCOM, the CIA, and DOS regional bureau do come to some level of agreement on an issue, it can still be vetoed by the ambassador. Granted, this doesn't happen often, but it does happen, and in the event that it does, the issue goes to the President during a NSC meeting for adjudication.

SOF can assist in overcoming these challenges at the embassy level. In some cases, ambassadors have allowed Theater Special Operation Commands to form small SOF headquarters, referred to as SOCFWDs, in their embassies. Each headquarter is small and tailored to the needs of the particular country, and they can serve multiple functions within the

embassy depending on the needs of the ambassador. One such function is the coordination and tracking of activities with other elements within the embassy. This allows different elements within the embassy to track shared initiatives or to de-conflict efforts with the host nation government.

The second structural example is informational. Much of our foreign policy is about influence, as is Special Warfare. Influence in its basic form is “to cause adversaries or others to behave in a manner favorable to Army forces” or, in the case of foreign policy, to behave in a manner favorable to US goals and objectives.<sup>14</sup> MIL-MIL activities, combined with inform and influence activities of MISO and the development projects done by CA, are all about creating good will and access to members of the host nation. It is the synchronization of all of these activities that is intended to reach a certain result with foreign diplomats, soldiers and civilians. Information is the big part of all elements of national power, and is used by the NSS, DOS, DOD and Treasury. However, not since the dissolution of United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1999 has there been a central clearing house for information intended for the outside world. “The USIA's mission was to understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad”.<sup>15</sup> Today, that mission is diffused among the Military Information Support Operations forces within ARSOF, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the relatively new Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC)<sup>16</sup> (within DOS's Bureau of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs). The vacuum created in the absence of a coordinating mechanism has created an environment of dysfunctional competition and friction. Adding to the dysfunction is the fact that there are four separate bureaus within Bureau of Public Diplomacy and

Public Affairs that all have some level of foreign communications responsibility.<sup>17</sup> These various entities often operate under different authorities, from fully attributed (US or partner branded) to clandestine (not openly acknowledged by the US), and there is no directed coordination between them. So it is possible to create informational fratricide between elements of DOS, DOD and others without even realizing it. At the country level, the ambassador will determine how often his team meets and what is covered. Often, the deputy chief of mission will host a separate follow-on meeting where a SOCFWD can assist in this de-confliction of influence efforts at the country level. For whatever reason, many embassy teams don't use execution matrixes for tracking progress and this is something that a SOCFWD can do well; providing additional value to the overall team. An execution matrix in a simplistic form will include a project (operation) and any critical support activities (in order of execution) over time (calendar) and can be used to track cost based on each activity as well.

BUDGETARY: Much of the way we fund our government is constitutionally based. For instance, the founding fathers believed the military should only be funded for a two year period of time: "To raise and support Armies, but no appropriation of money to that use for a longer term than two years."<sup>18</sup> On the other hand' other governmental organizations may function on multi-year budget lines. The real issue with the budget is amount and priority. To continue with the informational example above, each of the interested parties' receive a finite amount of money for print, radio etc., and each may wish to do something in country "X." However, country "X" may be the DOS South and Central Asia Bureau's number one priority country, but it is CENTCOM's fourth priority country, the sixth country for the CSCC, and it does not

even make the top ten at the CIA. This leaves all agencies and departments wondering where country “X” falls within the parameters of U.S. national security priorities. How much budgetary authority will be granted to advance U.S. interests in that country, and who will have the authority to spend appropriated funds? The National Security Council, in coordination with the respective committees of Congress, should invest intellectual capital in developing a strategic plan for each region and for each country of the world. Such a plan would provide guidance for individual agency heads and go a long way towards synchronizing soft and hard power elements. As under all strategic plans, various departments and agencies will then have to justify expenditures and budgetary line-items to ensure that they support the strategic guidance set forth by the President. This would force some level of operational coordination within the NSS while maintaining congressional oversight of the spending. This obstacle is the hardest to navigate at the lower levels because budgetary parameters are relatively inflexible at the lowest common denominator. For this reason, the best solution would include a streamlining mechanism to ensure that various members of the embassy team are not all purchasing the same resource separately, as well as a coordinating body to strategically spend portions of their independent budget in support of a mutual project. This can be coordinated with the SOCFWD execution matrix mentioned previously. While the necessity of planning, tracking and execution may appear clear, in reality it is the lack of such a system that often creates prioritization and resource issues. SOF operational design directly addresses this issue and will be discussed at on page 26.

AUTHORITY: Authorities,’ in this context, refer to the authority derived from constitutional mandates, congressional legislation, presidential findings, or from

directives passed down by the National Security Staff to act within or on behalf of the U.S. government (“Congress shall --- provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States”<sup>19</sup>). The complexities involved in understanding and maximizing authorities in the contemporary operating environment is almost an art form and almost always involves advice from an agency’s lawyer. Requesting new authorities is a lengthy process, but both may be necessary to accomplish state foreign policy objectives.

For example the use of SOF as a clandestine force may be required in a non-permissive environment and can be done within Title X of US code<sup>20</sup>. Because each of the governmental organizations derives its authority from a separate source the CIA will then require a Presidential Finding for covert action. SOF normally functions under DOD authority derived through SECDEF approval. Each organization, whether it is State, Treasury, Energy or Homeland Security, has a certain amount of power delegated to it for approval of actions, efforts etc. The final authority for action within a foreign country usually rests with the ambassador, with a few exceptions (such as a country we are at war with, in which case the senior military commander usually holds that authority). So once again, any coordinated action rests first with a good set of priorities (Countries) established by the President and the National Security Council, then each of the departments determine if they have a role in that country, once that is determined, they seek authority to operate usually while submitting the budget request to cover the actions required. Even if all of that is done, coordination of specific actions are often left to the country level. This is another point where a SOCFWD is helpful. It can assist the ambassador in understanding how to maximize existing military

authorities, while potentially requesting additional ones. These individuals can also coordinate with other embassy elements to see what authorities they possess which military activities could support. Because this happens most often with the CIA, SOF and are usually required because of security clearance issues (think Bin Laden raid).

CAPABILITY: Our diplomatic corps is a tiny fraction of our government, (roughly 6,600 Foreign Service Officers)<sup>21</sup> yet they are responsible for representing the USA in more than 265 embassies, consulates, and other diplomatic missions around the globe.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, the CIA, Department of Energy, Department of the Treasury, and others are even smaller, and in many cases with a limited number of personnel staffed to focus on foreign policy. Fortunately, robust military to military engagements, including international schooling opportunities and frequent coalition-style deployments, have created an opening for the development of strong personal relationships between SOF personnel and nations to which we otherwise have limited diplomatic access. Indeed, in some limited cases, SOF may be the only available tool for engagement thanks to those relationships. Moreover, SOF soldiers combine the unique ability to operate in both permissive and non-permissive environments with a strong foundation of cultural competency and language training. This allows them to easily transition in ever-changing environments.

Because many whole-of-government efforts really come down to capability and resources, DOD is often tasked with items outside of its primary mission to prepare for and execute war. This may be interpreted as mission creep, but it falls in line with our nation's strategic interests. The 2013 defense priorities document states that "U.S. forces will conduct a sustainable pace of presence operations abroad, including

rotational deployments and bilateral and multilateral training exercises. These activities reinforce deterrence, help to build the capacity and competence of U.S., allied, and partner forces for internal and external defense, strengthen alliance cohesion, and increase U.S. influence”.<sup>23</sup> SOF’s focus on Special Warfare training and cultural competence in fluid scenarios, performing tasks outside the norm for conventional military forces, allows it to be flexible in assisting in foreign policy efforts.

### **SOF Counterarguments.**

Seemingly the main argument against the use of SOF is the overall militarization of foreign policy and its potential negative impact on foreign politics. Retired General and former Ambassador Karl Eikenberry asserts that “America’s foreign policy has become excessively militarized over the past few decades.”<sup>24</sup> Additionally, opponents assert that SOF operators are soldiers and not diplomats, and that regardless of their extensive cultural and language training, they will always view a given situation through a military rather than a diplomatic lens. In Dana Priest’s *The Mission*, she uses Operation Focus Relief from 2001 in Nigeria as her case study. She claims that “military programs did little to help political systems move from dictatorship to democracy, or economies from government control to the free market.”<sup>25</sup> She does, however, caveat this by saying that the operation failed to include the necessary number of teachers, economists, or agronomists in the operation<sup>26</sup>. This case is not representative of the value of the military in foreign policy because it was a small unit with a mission small in scope. They were sent strictly in a MIL-MIL capacity to train Nigerian soldiers in basic tactics, and were not integrated in to the embassy country team as part of a larger unified effort. For the military to be successful in supporting pre-

conflict diplomatic efforts, their activities must be tied to coordinated efforts. These activities are often directly tied to the embassy's Mission Support Plan (MSP). Much of what is discussed here is how a SOCFWD with its associated SOF elements can help support MSP goals by creating operational synergy with ongoing efforts inside a country team. As mentioned, Ms. Priest's example is one of limited scope and was planned as MIL-MIL from the beginning. It is akin to sending USAID to build a school and then complaining that they didn't teach the children how to read. The whole assumption behind a WOG plan is that everyone brings something to table and that those efforts are timed and coordinated to maximize outcomes. The military is well-versed in assisting in coordination efforts, and SOF can bring additional capabilities to bear which don't reside in the conventional force.

Another concern is the loss of control when military chains of command are operating alongside civilian authorities. These are all understandable concerns, which are compounded by the risk of exposure of any authorized clandestine activities and the national embarrassments that often accompany such disclosures. Whether it is SF collecting intelligence, or MISO using delayed attribution techniques in the media (even with ambassadorial approval), such situations can generate an uneasy relationship with the host country if they are exposed. All of these objections are understandable, but "Smart Power" application would see the reward as greater than the risk. The following addresses some of the objections directly.

Undermining diplomatic efforts: This concern was brought forward in a 2006 report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.<sup>27</sup> The report stated that "Some foreign officials question what appears to them as a new emphasis by the United States

on military approaches to problems that are not seen as lending themselves to military solutions [...] [Further], some host countries have elements in both government and general society who are highly suspicious of potential American coercion".<sup>28</sup> The mere presence of elite forces, however, should instead be viewed as an available tool that an ambassador can use to gain leverage with his host government by demonstrating that he has the ability to provide a level of training or assistance not found elsewhere. Whether through training in basic security tactics from Special Forces, building infrastructure with Civil Affairs, or training governmental people in art of influence with MISO, that ambassador can demonstrate a level of support that is not easily replicated by other countries.

Further, it is important to underscore the fact that the US Army is aware of political sensitivities, and has updated some Army Doctrinal Publications (ADP) to reflect this awareness. For example, ADP 3-05 (Special Operations) states that "Many special operations are conducted to advance critical political objectives. Army special operations forces understand that their actions can have international consequences. Whether conducting operations independently or in coordination with partners, special operations forces must consider the political effects of their actions."<sup>29</sup>

Soldiers, not diplomats: The lack of faith by state department personnel in soldiers has been made clear. "Civilian embassy staff in a number of countries expressed skepticism about the need for and the potential for error by new military personnel."<sup>30</sup> The potential of SOF to integrate with ongoing efforts within an embassy is greater than with conventional forces or civilian contractors. Much like its forefathers in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), SOF trains in foreign languages and cross-

cultural communication, and prides itself on its ability to transition between mission requirements.

Loyalty versus authority: This is fundamentally a trust issue between the ambassador and the military personnel. The ambassador needs to know everything the military is doing in his country, and (s)he needs to feel that those activities are value added. Functionally, any deployed unit owes a home station or higher command a certain amount of communication and coordination, and there can be no military operations or training allowed in most countries without ambassadorial consent. The ambassador not only controls which military forces are allowed in country, and when they are allowed to enter the nation, (s)he also must approve each individual operation prior to action. Unfortunately, there is an underlying assumption (misconception) that all SOF activities are clandestine. This couldn't be further from the truth. Many special warfare activities are fully attributed to the forces who conduct those activities. Any actions which are not fully attributed are done so with ambassadorial approval. Ultimately, Special Warfare doctrine is based on influencing foreign audiences and not by trying to influence the ambassador. The Council on Foreign Relations report reiterates, "Ambassadors are the President's personal representative and top U.S. official in-country. Every ambassador has country clearance authority. Often permission to work at the embassy is granted routinely to inter-agency personnel coming on either permanent or temporary assignment. But every ambassador has the power to deny clearance or to suspend it once granted".<sup>31</sup>

Political risk of clandestine activity: In many cases, SOF has the ability to do far more than just teach foreign nationals basic military skills. In those cases where

additional intelligence is required (usually HUMINT), where networks of people are needed to be developed for information gathering, where education systems require expansion, or influence in general is needed, then various elements within SOF are capable of filling these gaps clandestinely. Of course, the crux of the issue is appropriately defining risks and rewards especially in countries with whom we have minimal diplomatic relationships. Many elements within SOF receive additional in-depth training and understand the nuances that are required to operate in these environments. Furthermore, there will not be any clandestine activity that the ambassador has not first approved.

### **Methodology for the way ahead.**

*“As we end today's wars and reshape our Armed Forces, we will ensure that our military is agile, flexible, and ready for the full range of contingencies. In particular, we will continue to invest in the capabilities critical to future success, including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; counterterrorism; countering weapons of mass destruction; operating in anti-access environments; and prevailing in all domains.” (President Obama, 2012)<sup>32</sup>*

The President speaks to what programs or operations we will continue to invest in, but not to how we will implement them. General Raymond Odierno, the Chief of Staff of the Army, is advocating for the military to employ a Prevent, Shape and Win methodology:

*“[The] Army has three principal and interconnected roles in my mind: Prevent, Shape and Win. First, we must prevent conflict. We do this by maintaining*

*credibility. This credibility is based on our capacity, our readiness, and our modernization to avert miscalculation by potential adversaries. [...]We must be able to operate across any operational environment, in a broad mission set, including regular and irregular warfare, stability operations, counterinsurgency, humanitarian assistance, and any other mission that is out there. Second, we shape the international environment through strong military relationships with allies and by building partner capacity. It is through these sustained relationships that we will be able to gain future access when needed. And finally, when necessary, we stand ready to win our nation's wars.*<sup>33</sup>

The combination of President Obama's and General Odierno's statements are taken as guidance for the Army. As a result there has been a series of white papers written as precursors for updating doctrine; the Strategic Land Power Task Force paper and the Land Cyber paper are the two most prevalent. In 2013 US Army Cyber Command authored the Land Cyber white paper in which it defines the various components of Prevent, Shape and Win as: "Prevent, is to deter adversaries by holding them at risk with credible capabilities. Shape, is to extend the reach and access by forces through cyberspace to enable security and stability for all U.S. interests. Win, is to quickly isolate, overwhelm, and dominate the threat on land and cyberspace through unified maneuver and action to meet objectives".<sup>34</sup> Whether land forces or cyber forces, much of the focus remains on Irregular warfare (IW) activities such as COIN, HA, and partner capacity building, all of which are core missions sets for SOF.

The President's and General Odierno's guidance is also supported in the 2013 white paper on strategic land power titled "Winning the Clash of Wills". This document,

which is signed by the senior SOF commander, the Army Chief, and the Marine Corps Commandant, introduces the concept of the “Human Domain”<sup>35</sup> as the key warfighting function. Because conflict is inherently a human activity, this document focuses on engagement, and it accomplishes this engagement through the use of land forces. The document specifically talks about preventing wars through long term relationship building using small footprints and tailor made forces, all of which are concepts introduced by SOF<sup>36</sup>. There is a recent evolution of SOF and how their updated concepts and doctrine position them too be the premier force to accomplish the Army Chief’s methodology.

### **Defining SOF capabilities; SF, MISO, CA.**

As previously mentioned, ARSOF or Army Special Operations comprises roughly 50% of the entire SOCOM force, with its origins going back to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in WWII. Although a deep exploration of the evolution of SOF is unnecessary for the purposes of this paper, it is important to understand that much of the present day Special Warfare doctrine is derived from OSS operations. The OSS was best known for small teams of culturally astute soldiers who could work behind enemy lines, often masquerading as civilians, to disrupt enemy activity. They helped to form guerilla groups, intelligence gathering networks, and sometimes shadow governments at the local level; all to accomplish our national objective of defeating the Nazis. Therefore, much of what this paper supports is a call for a return to SOF roots.

While ARSOF also includes the Rangers and the Special Aviation Regiment, they are not typically the lead elements for planning or execution in the foreign policy realm. The main elements that do typically work with country teams (Interagency team

within a single embassy) are what is referred to as “the three legged stool,” which consists of SF, CA and MISO. Each of these organizations have a primary mission set and bring a set of capabilities to the effort and as a combined organization they create a synergy that most other organizations lack.

The Special Forces are “are experts in unconventional warfare [...], plan, prepare for, and when directed, deploy to conduct unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance and direct actions in support of U.S. national policy objectives”.<sup>37</sup> MISO are “regional and language-trained experts who understand political, cultural, ethnic and religious subtleties [...]planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals in a manner favorable to the US policy and national objectives”.<sup>38</sup> And CA are “specifically trained and educated to shape foreign political-military environments by working through and with host nations, regional partners, and indigenous populations. These forces, and the operations they conduct, are the commander’s asset to purposefully engage nonmilitary organizations, institutions, and populations”.<sup>39</sup> In addition to these basic mission sets, USASOC has developed a set of SOF planning principles and operational design specifically to support shaping operations.

LTG Charles Cleveland, Commander of the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC,) is the main proponent for the development of Special Warfare methodology<sup>40</sup>. To that end he created his vision for ARSOF 2022. To quote LTG Cleveland, ARSOF 2022 is the “maturation of foundational precepts including SOF

Operational Art, the Human Domain, the 7<sup>th</sup> Warfighting function, Special Warfare and Surgical Strike, while also defining the six enabling concepts that provide the framework to achieve the ARSOF 2022 vision”.<sup>41</sup>

The ARSOF vision outlines the ability to understand and identify the need for special operations campaigns within a strategic context, and the development of the Officers and Soldiers who can apply those operations as required. These campaigns will require “persistence, distributed command and control, low visibility operations and small scale non-standard logistics support” to be successful.<sup>42</sup> The intention is that SOF can have a strategic impact by accomplishing the nation’s goals in semi and non-permissive environments when other departments and agencies are limited in their access or capability to do so.

To paraphrase multiple current SOF documents<sup>43</sup>, having small, tailored made SOF elements from the three main tribes (SF, CA and MISO), working together under the direction of the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC), SOF can achieve national level strategic objectives. This is exemplified by the use of a SOC FWD (Special Operations Command Forward). These tailored units work with the US country team under the approval of the American ambassador alongside their interagency counterparts to accomplish goals related to intelligence, influence, training and support. These teams often augment the country team by working with local national in places where embassy folks normally don’t go or with foreign ministerial folks whose support may be required to achieve embassy objectives. A generic example would be a Sheik that has helped either embassy of military personnel and needs assistance in his village with water and education. USAID can act as a general contractor for all the projects in

order to keep a civilian face on the effort. Unfortunately, USAID only has money for a well but CA has money and authority to build a school. MISO could then work with minister of education to get textbooks or to get a new curriculum approved. The SF team assists with training security guards for the school. The SOCFWD contracting officer can help fund basic materials such as desks and blackboards. In the end that embassy now has access to a village it did not previously.

To quote ARSOF 2022, the SOF strategy will provide commanders and ambassadors “scalable nodes with unmatched tactical skill and language and cultural expertise, which establish persistent and distributed networks that provide the nation precise and nuanced asymmetric capability”.<sup>44</sup> To make this new vision a reality it must be codified in doctrine, and USASOC has begun that process (FM 3-18 “Special Forces Operations” in March, 2012, followed by Army Doctrinal Publication ADP 3-05, “Special Operations” in August, 2012).<sup>45</sup> These documents serve as the cornerstone of this evolving doctrine and they discuss at length the need for persistent engagement by tailored forces to achieve long term effects. Persistent engagement means reoccurring contact with security forces, and other designated groups and individuals approved by the ambassador.

USASOC continued with doctrine development by publishing the *Planner’s Handbook for SOF Operational Design* in August of 2013. As of 2012, the Army introduced the Army Design Methodology (ADM) referred to as Operational Design.<sup>46</sup> Operational Design is the art of planning campaign warfare and SOF Operational Design is a nuanced version that literally puts culture up front and takes into account the human terrain while applying the ARSOF 10 core missions. Importantly, SOF

Operational Design does not forsake the current OP Design elements. In fact, it is the foundation of the SOF OP design, but this new version “calibrates its application the unconventional type operations and unified action/whole of government approaches that will be more common place than their direct action counterpart” in the future.<sup>47</sup>

### **How SOF interacts with other governmental efforts**

To demonstrate the application of SOF in support of foreign policy, this paper will discuss three hypothetical examples: two in which the use of SOF in conjunction with other governmental entities can be helpful, and one in which the lack of SOF assistance can be detrimental. In all three examples the topic of networks, or surrogates, are part of the mix activities that SOF can provide. These are distinctly different from other networks created for solely for intelligence, as is often associated with the CIA. SOF focuses on a broader network of people who provide access to everything from ministerial staff members, to truck drivers, to journalists. As the network grows it can be used to assist on other embassy efforts. The CIA are experts at creating sources to provide HUMINT, but its mission set usually includes little else. One Obama official is quoted as saying “The CIA missed Tunisia, They Missed Egypt. They Missed Libya. They missed them individually and they missed them collectively.”<sup>48</sup> This criticism may be somewhat unfair, as many CIA successes are, by definition, never heralded. However, it is worth considering that the key difference between SOF and CIA networks is that SOF networks are doers as much as gatherers. A CIA source may provide information but a SOF may also deliver information if required. A SOF developed network is multidimensional covering all elements of national power. It is a nuanced difference, but one worth bearing in mind.

For the first example, this paper will look at country that has a semi-permissive environment, defined as any country with a friendly government that has either ungoverned spaces or militant groups (i.e. Yemen). By using SOF, the country team can establish a network of friendly elements with access to portions of the country considered off limits to the government. This network can be used by all elements of SOF to identify key communicators, recommend viable development projects like schools or hospitals, gain intelligence on potential threats, and to interact with local leaders and the media. While the network is being established, the Special Operations Forces will conduct Foreign Internal Defense (FID) to increase the security force capability against militants or other threats. MISO can then provide support in three major ways: (1) undermine the militant ideology or tactics in the media; (2) support ongoing efforts with the country team's public diplomacy section; and (3) support the FID effort through professionalization training or actual MISO training (if allowed by the host nation). The Civil Affairs soldiers will assist with coordination of efforts with NGOs or aid organizations such as USAID in the expansion of development projects. When these actions are combined with current efforts of the country team they become a WOG plan at the country level. All of these efforts can be codified in at least two places: the first is the Mission Support Plan produced yearly by the country team for the DOS. The second is the Operations Plans at the COCOM and the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC). These combined planning efforts will assist in establishing effective coordination of all involved, as well as assisting in splitting costs or finding funding solutions from one entity that may not be available to another, thus becoming an example of "smart power".

The previous example demonstrates the use of SOF as part of the greater country team. SOF can also act as the single or lead entity in a semi to non-permissive country, for these purposes defined as a nation with whom we have had very little diplomatic access, and within which we have had virtually no relationship with its citizenry (i.e. Somalia or Iran). Special Operations Forces can begin with an in-depth analysis on the key leaders, communicators, media, schools, military, governmental organizations as well as other cultural aspects. SOF would then look for how to begin establishing a friendly network, similar to the one described in the previous paragraph, within that country without actually being there. This process takes time, but it will eventually help to create lines of communication to citizens of the country in question. As these long term relationships are developed, they will create various opportunities for the USG. For instance, should the diplomatic situation improve, and the US gains access to the country, then this pre-set network provides the administrative a more comprehensive understanding of the situation on the ground and affords them partners with whom they can work during future operations. On the other hand, if the diplomatic situation degrades, we can use the network to help mitigate the risk of escalating violence. If unable or unwilling to prevent escalation, then SOF networks are able to operate independently and can assist all elements of statecraft by “shaping” it in our favor by acting as a guerrilla force, collecting intelligence, and establishing safe zones for displaced people, or providing access to media space. In many cases these efforts can be controlled from outside the country in question, but such an approach would require the assistance of neighboring country.

Lastly, this paper will examine how ineffective the USG diplomatic influence is without the use of SOF. The theoretical country in this case would be similar to a Niger or Mali, a country often in crisis, but over which we have little political influence. Lacking any long term relations built with the military, politicians, or the press, there may be no apparent indicators or warnings of impending violence, regime change or a grass roots upheaval. This is not to say that a country team is not well plugged into their assigned country, but often Special Warfare activity will gain access and placement for members of SOF or the surrogate network that can provide insight that might otherwise be lost. For example, such information can be gleaned if a SF soldier conducting MIL-MIL activities perceives the threat of a coup d'état, if a CA soldier is working with a construction company that is missing a load of explosives, or if a MISO soldier hears from a local media source that riots have been planned in a certain location. All of these examples are not at the exclusion of country team members, but are in addition to and can help an ambassador deal with a fluid environment. Additionally, in the event of a crisis, SOF is usually better trained and equipped to deal with the fallout.

### **Analysis.**

The concerns over the militarization of foreign policy will not subside any time soon. Until, however, there is a more equitable distribution of resources or a shift in governmental prioritization the military will be asked to fill roles outside its core mission. The key is utilizing the right military tool to accomplish a non-standard mission and the case of SOF being that tool is a strong one.

The current trend and collective agreement is that a WOG approach (“Smart Power”) is always better than any one agency unilaterally pursuing an objective.

According to Dr. Nye “the importance of developing an integrated grand strategy that combines hard military power with soft attractive power. In the struggle against terrorism, we need to use hard power against the hard core terrorists, but we cannot hope to win unless we gain the hearts and minds.”<sup>49</sup> When it comes to DOD support to hearts and minds or a country in crisis or operating in a semi-permissive environment, SOF should be the number one tool in the military toolkit.

Special Operations has had to overcome the misconceptions that SOF solely consists of SF soldiers with beards and sunglasses, or that all they do is clandestine. Additionally, there have been examples of disciplinary issues, most notably the recent prostitute scandal involving both Secret Service officers and SOF members in South America. These issues have been few and far between but unfortunately they have been highly visible in the public eye and have added to the general mistrust. As a result they have needed to rebuild trust with some ambassadors around the world. SOF as a whole has missed some great trust building opportunities over the past decade because of a large focus on Surgical Strike operations. Further, since the completion of Iraq and events of the Arab Spring SF had to re-acquaint itself with its unconventional warfare roots in order to identify its role in the future. The result is a true renaissance in Special Warfare across the SOF community. This renaissance is driven by the TSOC commanders in their pursuit of support to the ambassadors in their region. They are from a generation of SOF officers who remember the primary focus of UW prior to the events of 9/11. They understand the application of influence beyond the barrel of a gun, and they seek to prove that SOF is the only force that truly pursues cultural flexibility, understands low visibility operations, and is capable of both kinetic and non-kinetic

activities. Strategic implications are not lost on the SOF soldier and they understand there are greater implications for U.S. Policy if “Smart Power” plans are not pursued, especially in at-risk countries. In such situations, the potential cost of not utilizing SOF as a tool in the early stages risks only having force as an option from DOD after a conflict has escalated.

### **Conclusion.**

The President, SECDEF and Army Chief have made it clear that the future involves small forces responding to dynamic threats around world. Updated SOF Doctrine is compatible direction and with the Chief’s Prevent, Shape and Win methodology. Despite concerns of the militarization of foreign policy, there is no better force than SOF to adjust between the demands of hard and soft power. The combination of updated doctrine, SOF OP design, and better training make SOF a key force for “Smart Power” success. Special Operations Forces possess capabilities beyond kinetic strike and direct action that can aid in the development of foreign allies or can degrade the strength of perceived enemies. Therefore, if the USG wants the military to be anything other than a hammer it has to allow Special Operations organizations to participate much earlier in the engagement process otherwise military options quickly dwindle to kinetic options only.

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