

**Professional Studies Paper**

**The Fight Against Extremism in the Trans-Sahel:**  
The Utilization of Soft Power by the Department of State to  
Establish, Develop, and Strengthen Potential Partnerships

*by*

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### **Abstract:**

*Terrorist activity in Trans-Sahel region of Africa remains a challenge to U.S. national security. Under the Obama administration, soft power became a core principle of his foreign policy strategy. The question I present in this thesis is how the U.S. government, specifically the Department of State, infuses soft power into the foreign arena to achieve its strategic goals and under what conditions can public diplomacy be an effective instrument of U.S. power.*

*A country's soft power rests on its resources of ideas, values, and policies. The soft power methods available to the Department of State are limited if one utilizes a traditional definition of soft power. I propose that if one modifies the traditional definition of soft power to include training and foreign aid, the Department can and does effectively utilize soft power in the Trans-Sahel region of Africa. By reinforcing existing, and implementing new soft power "plus" programs (e.g. the use of influence, training and foreign aid) in the Trans Sahel, the U.S. will continue to effect long-term substantive changes and build potential partners in the region thus effectively countering extremist ideology and accomplish its foreign policy objectives.*

## I. Introduction

“At least five suicide bombers targeted a village in Chad that is home to thousands of Nigerians who have fled Islamic extremist violence, killing at least 36 people and wounding about 50 others in what appeared to be coordinated attacks”<sup>1</sup> “Men shouting "God is great" and armed with guns and throwing grenades stormed into the Radisson Blue Hotel in Mali's capital Friday morning and seized 170 hostages”<sup>2</sup> These are the headlines we have seen recently coming from the Trans-Sahel region of Africa. The Trans-Sahel region of Africa experienced significant levels of terrorist activity in 2014 and 2015. As the global reach of terrorism (Boko Haram, AQ, and ISIL) continues to spread throughout Africa there is chronic instability throughout the region. How does the United States respond?

“The debate over whether U.S. interests abroad are better served by hard power - coercive means such as military force - or soft power - less aggressive means of persuasion, such as diplomacy, economic aid, and propaganda - is perennial. Since becoming president, Barack Obama has emphasized soft power, suggesting that an over-reliance on military force has alienated many of the United States’ friends and allies without achieving much in return.”<sup>3</sup>

Many have heard the axiom “you can kill a person but you cannot kill an idea.” So the question I present in this paper is how does the U.S. government, specifically the Department of State, infuse “ideas” into the foreign arena to achieve its strategic goals and under what conditions can public diplomacy be an effective instrument of U.S. power? The soft power methods available to the Department of State are limited if one utilizes a traditional definition of “soft power.” However, expanding the definition of soft power to incorporate training and foreign aid demonstrates the Department of State can and does effectively utilize soft power in the Trans-Sahel region to accomplish its U.S. foreign policy objectives in spite of the negative

press from the region. My objective with this paper is to move the conversation to a deeper level of review and analysis in concrete and specific ways. I will discuss the Department's soft-power strategy in the Trans-Sahel, follow with specific instances State uses soft power "plus," present some implications of the use of soft power "plus," and conclude with several U.S. Strategic Policy Recommendations.

## **II. Department of State and its Mission in the Trans-Sahel Region**

Within the Executive Branch, the Department of State is the lead U.S. foreign affairs agency. The Department advances U.S. foreign policy objectives and interests through the use of economic development, and public diplomacy.<sup>4</sup> For this paper I will focus primarily on the public diplomacy aspect within the Department. "The mission of American public diplomacy is to support the U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and Government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world."<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned, public diplomacy is one of the pillars of the Department's foreign policy mission. What now is described as soft power, historically, would equate to the engagement of public diplomacy by the Department. The promotion of "good governance" and "rule of law" with foreign governments and institutions would also fall under the umbrella of public diplomacy. With a growing interest in the Trans-Sahel region, the Department of State, through its public diplomacy efforts, training, and foreign aid, continues to fill a void in this critical area of Africa.

### **III. Hard Power vs. Soft Power vs. Soft Power “Plus”**

The U.S. is unquestionably the most powerful country in the world, with great capabilities and abundant resources. So, why are the U.S., and the West, finding it so problematic to win the war on terror? How is it that after fourteen years of war and conflict the U.S. is still struggling to find a way to dissuade disaffected populations from joining terrorist organizations? Can the U.S. apply its far reaching power to influence other governments to join the global effort in this war? Although many experts have suggested a range of options in applying power to defeat terrorism, the reality is, there is a limit to power, especially in the case of military power against unconventional forces and organizations.

To appreciate the impact of power, one must first understand the concept of power. In broad terms, power is the ability to influence actions in order to achieve a desired outcome. In other words, “power is the ability to effect the outcomes you want, and if necessary, to change the behavior of others to make this happen.”<sup>6</sup>

So what is hard power? Typically, hard power is categorized by coercion and inducements. Coercion is the threat or the use of military force, as well as the enforcement of economic sanctions. It is often referred to as the “stick.” Inducement is the ability to influence a desired behavior through a reward or an incentive. It is often referred to as the “carrot.” “Military and Economic power are both examples of hard command power that can be used to induce others to change their position.”<sup>7</sup>

As such, there are limits to hard power. Reliance on hard power presents a number of potential problems for U.S. policy. Military force can be used incorrectly, hindering the U.S. in achieving its national objectives and eroding public support. Another criticism of hard power is

that once it ends the affected state or organization can, and often does, revert back to its original behavior. Perhaps the most significant drawback to hard power is the cost. It is estimated the U.S. has spent over 5 trillion dollars on the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan over the last fourteen years. After fourteen years of the use of hard power in the war on Islamic extremism these efforts have done little overall to change a deteriorating global security situation. One can even argue the growing hostility against direct U.S. military action has made the situation worse and contributed greatly to the increased recruiting of members and supporters of extremist organizations. Although fully acknowledging the luxury of hindsight, a different strategy may have achieved a more sustainable outcome without incurring such a considerable cost in blood and treasure.

Joseph Nye, who introduced the phrase “soft power,” states “A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its examples, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness... this aspect of power – getting others to want what you want... it co-opts people rather than coerces them.”<sup>8</sup> Soft power seeks to influence or persuade through the power of attraction. Through that soft power influence other countries or organizations are then attracted to our ideas, political values, and institutions contrasting hard power which relies on threats, sanctions, and restrictions aimed at changing behavior by making a state behave in a way that it would not.

As with hard power, there are limits to soft power as well. The primary limitation is the difficulty to accurately gauge and measure when soft power has had an impact and the desired affects have been achieved. At best, efforts to measure the effects of soft power are opaque. How long does it take to change, influence, and grow American ideas and values in a climate of extremism... 5 years, 10 years, 15 years? Although not a limit *per se*, there are those who have

opposing viewpoints. The more vocal opponents to the effectiveness of soft power fall generally into the political spectrum of the neoconservative movement. In general, “neocons” tend to reject Nye’s concept of soft power and believe an aggressive, direct, hard power approach is the only “realistic” approach when dealing with extremist organizations. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is but one example of this opposition. In fact, “he admits to not even understanding the term, claiming that popularity is ephemeral and should not guide U.S. foreign policy.” He further asserts “America is strong enough to do as it wishes with or without the world’s approval and should simply accept that others will envy and resent it.”<sup>9</sup>

Under the Obama administration, soft power became a core piece of its foreign policy strategy. This strategy was popularized by Hillary Clinton during her confirmation hearing for the position of Secretary of State in 2009. During her hearing she stated “We must use what has been called smart power - the full range of tools at our disposal - diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural - picking the right tool, or combination of tools, for each situation. With smart power, diplomacy will be the vanguard of foreign policy.”<sup>10</sup> The generally accepted definition of the term soft power does not include foreign aid and training and focuses primarily on influence and persuasion. If we were to modify the definition of soft power and add “plus” to it, we could then expand the functionality of soft power by incorporating foreign aid and training more aligning with the current administrations objectives. The foreign aid and training provided to various countries by the Department greatly impacts our “influence” in those countries and fully utilizes the principles of soft power “plus.”

#### **IV. Contemporary use of soft power “plus” in the Trans-Sahel**

The ‘traditional’ Trans-Sahel region of Africa, from west to east, incorporates parts of northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, extreme south of Algeria,

Niger, extreme north of Nigeria, central Chad, central and southern Sudan, and northern Eritrea. The countries that compose the Trans - Sahel receive substantial foreign aid and assistance from the U.S., other Western countries, the United Nations, European Union, African Union, and other international organizations. In addition to significant assistance from the various other countries and international organizations, the Department of State maintains a substantial diplomatic effort in the Trans-Sahel region. As mentioned previously, one of the core tenants of the Department of State's public diplomacy efforts is the promotion of good governance and rule of law. In order to fulfill its mission, the Department provides significant training, foreign aid and assistance to the region. Due to the scale and scope of this paper I will focus primarily on the Department of State's Anti-Terrorist Assistance (ATA) and International Law Enforcement Academy programs; USAID's Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced program; and conclude with the combined U.S. Government efforts, primarily the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.

“Since its creation in 1983, the ATA program has served as the primary provider of U.S. government antiterrorism training and equipment to law-enforcement agencies of partner nations throughout the world, and has delivered counterterrorism training to more than 90,000 law enforcement personnel from 154 countries... ATA courses help partner nations build law enforcement capacity in investigations, border security, protection of critical targets, leadership and management, regional coordination and cooperation, critical incident management, and cyber security.”<sup>11</sup>

The Department's ATA program is robust in the Tran-Sahel region and conducts training in the countries of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. In FY13 and FY14, the ATA program spent \$7,849,733 and \$7,800,000, respectively, with nearly 694 students from the Trans-Sahel countries attending the various types of training.<sup>12</sup> In

the following paragraphs I will provide some examples of the training that was recently conducted in the various Trans-Sahel countries.

In Algeria, to enhance its capacity to deal effectively with security challenges within its borders and defend against threats to regional stability, Algerian law enforcement agencies participated in the Department's ATA program trainings to enhance investigative capacities, border security, and response capacity to critical incidents. Additionally, ATA conducted a Regional Border Control Management course for security officials from Algeria, Niger, and Tunisia.<sup>13</sup> In Burkina Faso, the ATA program provided training and equipment related to managing terrorist incidents, forensic examination of terrorist crime scenes, and post-blast investigation.<sup>14</sup> Chad continues its participation in the program as well. In 2014 ATA provided training on civil aviation security, interviewing terrorist suspects, and provided two boats to assist the Chadian River Police Brigade.<sup>15</sup> The U.S. resumed security assistance cooperation with Malian security forces in 2014, with an emphasis on institution building, civilian control, and respect for human rights. To help strengthen Malian counterterrorism crisis response capacity, the ATA program offered a crisis management seminar for senior Malian officials involved in planning responses to terrorist incidents.<sup>16</sup>

Also in the region and throughout 2014, the Mauritanian security forces personnel participated in eight courses funded by the ATA program, which provided tactical and technical skills related to border security and investigative capacity building, with a particular emphasis on regional cooperation.<sup>17</sup> The Nigerian government participated in ATA counterterrorism capacity building programs as well. Nigerian police, customs officials, and immigration officers participated in interagency training to build their law enforcement sector's ability to utilize

effectively all agencies in tackling rural border security challenges.<sup>18</sup> The robust ATA program continues to provide extensive, wide-ranging law enforcement training in the Trans-Sahel.

An additional instance of the effective use of soft power “plus” by the Department of State is the operation of its International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEA). “The mission of the ILEAs are to support emerging democracies, help protect U.S. interests through international cooperation, and to promote social, political and economic stability by combating crime.”<sup>19</sup> The Department’s ILEAs for all of Africa is located in Gaborone, Botswana. The ILEA mission in Africa “is to buttress democratic governance through the rule of law; enhance the functioning of free markets through improved legislation and law enforcement; and increase social, political, and economic stability by combating narcotics trafficking and crime.”<sup>20</sup> Since its creation, the ILEA in Africa has trained over 4,500 law enforcement officials from 34 different African countries<sup>21</sup> and incorporates the Trans-Sahel countries of Nigeria and Burkina Faso. As the ILEA mission continues to expand, additional Sahelian countries are currently being assessed for future entry into the program.

Foreign aid and development is a key component to soft power “plus.” The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the agency primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid. In this capacity, USAID currently operates and maintains extensive aid and developmental programs in the Trans-Sahel region.

In furtherance of State Department efforts to develop the Trans-Sahel, in 2014, USAID established the Resilience in the Sahel-Enhanced (RISE) program as a new initiative to build resilience in the Trans-Sahel. “USAID, under the new RISE program, committed more than \$130 million over the first two years of a five-year effort to build resilience in West Africa’s Sahel, a region where chronic poverty, food insecurity, drought, and violent extremism collide -

and some 18.7 million people faced food insecurity in 2012 due to severe drought for the third time in a decade.”<sup>22</sup> Across the Trans-Sahel, RISE works in conjunction with existing U.S. assistance programs and brings together the multiple development partners and local governments. This initiative brings together humanitarian and developmental funding to address both humanitarian needs, economic stability, and to strengthen governmental institutions. The RISE program is estimated to assist an “estimated 1.9 million beneficiaries in these areas move from vulnerability to viability, lessening their need for humanitarian assistance in the future.”<sup>23</sup> In addition to the RISE program, USAID provided “\$85 million in humanitarian assistance to address the immediate symptoms of food insecurity and set the basis for development for an estimated one million beneficiaries in Chad, Mali, and Niger.”<sup>24</sup> Through the use of foreign aid, the Department of State and USAID continues to expand the use of soft-power “plus” in the Trans-Sahel as we acknowledge economic development as one of the many key countermeasures used to weaken insurgencies, and strengthen pro-western host national governments.

The final contemporary use of soft power “plus” within the Trans-Sahel I will discuss is the implementation of the combined U.S. Government effort of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. “In the aftermath of the terrorist takeover of northern Mali... the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) has been the United States primary vehicle to assist these and other countries in the region to improve their capacity to monitor and control border areas and improve their overall counterterrorism capability.”<sup>25</sup> The TSCTP is a coordinated and comprehensive U.S. Government approach to building long-term security capacity in the Trans-Sahel region, specifically in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia.

The partnership is designed to support partner and regional efforts to contain and marginalize terrorist organizations, disrupt efforts to recruit and train extremists, counter efforts to establish safe havens, and disrupt foreign fighter networks.<sup>26</sup> The TSCTP is a U.S. funded and implemented, multi-faceted, multi-year effort by USAID and DOD, “designed to build the capacity and cooperation of military, law enforcement, and civilian actors across North and West Africa to counter terrorism.”<sup>27</sup> Along with U.S. military and law enforcement training, and equipment assistance, several TSCTP programs have “worked to counter the pull of violent extremism on youth, including educational and training courses in Algeria and Morocco, and extensive youth employment and outreach programs, community development, and media activities in Niger and Chad.”<sup>28</sup> According to the Government Accounting Office “As of late 2013, U.S. agencies reported disbursing nearly \$140 million of the approximately \$288 million allocated for TSCTP between fiscal years 2009 and 2013. Mali, Mauritania, and Niger were the top three recipients of bilateral funding.”<sup>29</sup>

These four State Department efforts mentioned are but a few contemporary examples of the use of soft power “plus” in the Trans-Sahel. The U.S. Government’s comprehensive approach to promoting good governance and rule of law programs, combined with the efforts of various other Western nations, the U.N., and NGO’s, begins to more accurately reflect and provide a greater understanding of the robust efforts to stabilize the Trans-Sahel region.

Before I transition to the next area of discussion, it is best that I remind the reader once again the inherent limits of soft power. The primary limit to soft power is its difficulty to be accurately measured and determined to have had an impact. How does one recognize when the desired affects have been achieved fully or in part? Over a period of time how does one actually measure the soft power that has been implemented? These are questions that remain a source of

concern and problematic, especially in light of evidence that our soft power efforts are not succeeding as the vignettes introducing this paper seems to suggest. As stated previously, efforts to measure the effects of soft power are complicated. In an effort to demonstrate and “measure” the effectiveness of soft power “plus,” I will now discuss some of the implications and long term effects of our soft power “plus” efforts have had within the region. Although not a complete method of fully capturing and measuring the impact and effect of soft power, the implications listed below do however reflect some of the desired effects of our soft power efforts.

#### **V. Implications of the use of soft power “plus” in the Trans-Sahel**

Public Diplomacy and the use of soft power should be comprehensive and executed at all levels of the U.S. Government. The use of soft power “plus” (e.g. influence, training, and foreign aid) has the ability to bridge the gap between the traditional linear efforts of the U.S. Government and add stability to the Trans-Sahel region. If implemented correctly, the use of soft power “plus” will increase the stability and capabilities of the host national governments, provide greater levels of continuity between the U.S. and host national governments, with an end result of stimulating greater cooperation in the region.

One of the recognized key elements to our current and future strategy of support to the region is that in order to succeed the U.S. Government will need to bridge the gaps of support between the traditional linear efforts of the various governmental agencies. This realization of the need to promote a comprehensive and whole of government approach can be seen through our incorporation of the Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economics (DIME) model. As you will observe, this model incorporates the four fundamental elements of our foreign policy objectives. Our acceptance and adherence to this combined, joint effort model can be clearly demonstrated by the creation and implementation of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism

Partnership (TSCTP). The TSCTP has both military and non-military components to it. Operation Enduring Freedom - Trans Sahara (OEF-TS) is the military component of the program, and the Diplomacy and Economics elements of the model are the Department of State and USAID's economic and educational efforts. "Regional cooperation, a strategic objective of U.S. assistance programming in this region, has increased substantially in West Africa among most of the partners of TSCTP."<sup>30</sup>

Stability and capability within the region is paramount to our overall efforts and can be accomplished by the use of soft power "plus." The U.S. combined effort promotes and reinforces the fundamental objective of laying a foundation of good governance and the rule of law within host nation governments. The Department of State's law enforcement training programs (e.g. ATA and ILEA) were established to directly support those objectives by increasing stability, building capacity and strengthening capabilities amongst countries in the region. The law enforcement training programs are the Department's attempt to provide western quality training, and institution building assistance in the region, and to assist in their efforts to deal effectively with their security challenges and to combat transnational crimes and terrorism.

Although not specific to the Trans-Sahel region, the following is a prime example of what the ATA program can accomplish. While I was assigned as the Deputy Regional Security Officer in Baghdad, Iraq from 2014-15, one of my responsibilities was to oversee and manage the Department's ATA program. Our ATA program was sizable and I saw first-hand how effective our efforts were at building capacity and capabilities. For many years the ATA program had trained the Iraq police's counter terrorist units, eventually comprising of several hundred personnel. Due to their high levels of superior training and capabilities, they were used extensively by the Iraqi government for high risk, critical assignments, serving as a vanguard

alongside Iraqi Special Forces units to counter ISIS in 2014-15. The unit was highly successful and effective on the battlefield countering the ISIS threat, but unfortunately, due to their prolonged, extensive use they suffered extreme casualty rates, up to 85%, and through attrition eventually ceased to function as a whole unit. Although the end results were tragic, their high levels of capabilities, and unit cohesion in the face of such loss, demonstrates a commitment to the central government and the rule of law. Their actions stand as a testament to the high levels of quality training and soft power “plus” influence provided by the ATA program.

In conjunction with the State Departments law enforcement efforts, the TSCTP, albeit on a larger and broader scale, furthers the U.S.’s strategic foreign policy goals and objectives. A positive example of our TSCTP efforts can be seen during events of the coup, more specifically the subsequent counter-coup, which occurred in Mali in 2012. “Mali is considered one of the only functioning democracies in the region. This week's coup represents a major setback for the nation” Although President Amadou Toumani Toure’s democratically elected government would eventually fall, and the counter-coup to re-install him would not prevail, the actions of the Malian 33<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Regiment (the primary actors in the counter-coup and extensively trained by U.S. special operations forces) to retain the democratically elected Toure government were in part due to the democratic values implanted and continuously reinforced into their unit by their U.S. Military trainers over the protracted years of training provided.<sup>31</sup> The positive shift in core democratic values and the greater adherence to the belief in the “Western” ideas of rule of law and good governance of the 33<sup>rd</sup> parachute Regiment remains as a testament to the potential for success in the region. Both the State Department’s efforts, and the partner agencies associated with the TSCTP, are slowly but surely making positive headway with the host-national governments of the Trans-Sahel. By strengthening the core values and ideas associated with the

rule of law, and ensuring good governance is in place, the resultant effects of stability and capacity bolsters the regions ability to effectively fight and counter extremism.

For my final point regarding the implications of soft power “plus” I will present how continuity and cooperation are key elements to our future successes within the Trans-Sahel. Soft power “plus” builds that continuity and increase the potential for future cooperation with the host national governments. Between the ATA and ILEA programs alone, significant numbers of host-national law enforcement, and other mid and senior level government officials, have been trained by the Department of State and have been exposed to professional, western quality training and ideas. The relationships that are being developed over the training periods build a strong, solid foundation for continuity and fostering further cooperation between the United States and the host country students being trained.

The long term benefits and cooperation from host-country officials who have had extensive contact with U.S. officials is crucial. Their exposure to our core values, rule of law, civil governance, and the high value we place on human rights, can in many cases have a direct result towards U.S. efforts and our foreign policy objectives. It is not so much that the host-country officials are familiar with the U.S., the key to success is that they understand how we think, how we process information, and most importantly what our deep seated ideas, beliefs, and core values are. Below are several vignettes of instances when I personally experienced as a Department of State employee the long term benefits of soft power, specifically when pertaining to cooperation and assistance.

While assigned to the Embassy in Malaysia, the Chief of the Federal Police Force had in his past spent a full year in the U.S. attending law enforcement training as a mid-level police officer. His long term interaction with Americans was crucial as he better understood how we

thought, our mannerisms, and what our core values and ideas as a society were. This greater, in-depth understanding is crucial. There are many occasions when we interact with mid and senior level host-country officials and when they do not understand our cultural differences and peculiarities, it can have negative implications to our short and long term relationship. The Malaysian senior police officer's extensive, direct exposure to U.S. law enforcement training officials, and Americans in general, allowed him to see, feel, and experience the United States at a level that few host national officials ever get to experience. Our professional relationship did not have to begin at zero. In the end, his cooperation during my assignment was very beneficial to the overall relationship between our two countries while we successfully coordinated law enforcement and counter-terrorism issues.

The second personal example that reflects the positive effects of soft power occurred during the two years I served with the Department of State in Pakistan. While assigned to the Consulates in Lahore and Karachi, the vast majority of the mid to senior level Pakistani military and police officials had family members living in either the United States or United Kingdom. This in-direct exposure to our peoples, values, and ideas by either their relatives, or gathered directly during their own travels to visit those relatives, greatly influenced their outlook and led to their greater understanding of "who we are," and more importantly, "what they can be." Although these officials were constrained by their political masters, their unfiltered, positive exposure to the Western way of life, our core values and ideas was instrumental when conducting official business with them in Pakistan. In almost all of the cases were the Pakistani officials had a greater understanding and direct exposure to our Western values and ideas they were by far more cooperative and accommodating than their counterparts who had not been exposed directly to the west through familiar connections or training.

These are but a few personal examples of how soft power “plus” can directly influence greater cooperation and garner future assistance. Over the course of eighteen years with the Foreign Service, I have witnessed on many other occasions the positive effects of our soft power on host-national officials. Now multiply that by the hundreds, if not thousands, with the Department of States’ robust training programs and liaison efforts working with senior and mid-level law enforcement officials having taken place throughout the Trans-Sahel. Couple the State Department’s individual efforts with those of the combined efforts of the TSCTP our influence expands considerably. This positive, vital interaction pays direct dividends when establishing, developing and strengthening potential partners within any region. Although the long term benefits of the training are not easily quantifiable, this association is certainly a foundation for success when developing relationships with host-national officials.

## **VI. Recommendations and Conclusion**

By reinforcing existing and the implementation of new soft power programs within the Trans Sahel, the U.S. can effectively counter extremist ideology. As U.S. efforts to understand the conditions and political environment of the extremist ideologies increases, the United States will be able to develop and employ indirect strategies that recognize the complexities of dealing with radical Islamic groups. As these indirect strategies develop and are implemented, these soft power actions will offer a more likely victory in the long term with minimal hard power expended.

Below are my recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Continue and expand the U.S. Government’s soft power “plus” efforts through influence, training and foreign aid, in the Trans-Sahel;

**Recommendation 2:** Through the use of public diplomacy, establish a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world;

**Recommendation 3:** Use the full range of conventional (i.e. television and radio) and new media technologies (i.e. blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube) to promote American values;

**Recommendation 4:** Challenge, isolate and marginalize the extremist's ideology of oppression and hate with a positive message of hope and opportunity, and support the moderate voices within the Trans-Sahel.

In the end, a country's soft power rests on its resources of ideas, values, and policies. Public diplomacy has a long history as a means of promoting a country's soft power and was essential in winning the cold war. "The current struggle against transnational terrorism is a struggle to win hearts and minds, and the current overreliance on hard power alone is not the path to success."<sup>32</sup> Although hard power provides immediate satisfaction and may be required at times, do we as a nation have the wear-with-all to go the long, hard route and maintain our soft power programs to effect long term, deep rooted changes? We must if we are to succeed!

In conclusion, through a comprehensive approach and a persistent presence the U.S. can affect these necessary changes. With the use of soft power "plus" by the Department of State, combined with the joint Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and other similar efforts, the United States will continue to effect long-term, substantive changes and build potential partners in the Trans-Sahel region.

## Endnotes:

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- <sup>2</sup> Associated Press, "Radisson Hotel in Mali Attacked, 170 hostages taken," News article from the AP, on November 20, 2015. (<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/a683382aa23f4c7eb180574166dd31a0/us-embassy-shooter-radisson-bamako-mali-americans-should>), Viewed article on November 20, 2015.
- <sup>3</sup> Klare, Michael T., "Hard Power, Soft Power, and Energy Power: The New Foreign Policy Tool," Foreign Affairs, March 3, 2015, p 1.
- <sup>4</sup> United States Department of State, "Diplomacy in Action – Department Organizations - Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs," website <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/dos/436.htm>, accessed on December 2, 2015.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Nye, Joseph S., "The Paradox of American Power," (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., p 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp 8-9.
- <sup>9</sup> Bohorquez, Tysha, "Book Review - Soft Power -The Means to Success in World Politics," Article from the UCLA International Institute - Asia, on December 01, 2005, <http://www.international.ucla.edu/asia/article/34734>, Viewed article on January 25, 2016.
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- <sup>11</sup> United States Department of State, "Diplomacy in Action – Anti- Terrorism Assistance Program," website <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/programs/index.htm#ATA>, accessed on November 2, 2015.
- <sup>12</sup> Scarantino, Thomas, United States Department of State Desk Officer for the Anti-Terrorist Assistance Desk Officer, Files associated with the ATA program in Africa, specifically, the training records for the Trans-Sahel, received information electronically on October 22, 2015 via email.
- <sup>13</sup> United States Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2014," United States Department of State Publication, Bureau of Counterterrorism, June 2015, p. 160.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp 13-14.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., p 19.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., p 30.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., p 34.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., p 43.
- <sup>19</sup> United States Department of State, "Diplomacy in Action - International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA)," website <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/c/crime/ilea>, accessed on November 2, 2015.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
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